Opposition in South Africa's New Democracy

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Introduction

The papers in this collection are all drawn from contributions made to a conference on 'Opposition in South Africa's New Democracy' which was hosted by the Department of Political Studies, Rhodes University and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, at Kariega Park in the Eastern Cape, 28–30 June 2000.

The conference was conceived in the wake of South Africa's second democratic general election, which was held in June 1999. Following its triumph in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) was again returned to power, this time with almost two-thirds of the vote, and hence because of South Africa's adoption of the national list system of proportional representation, nearly two-thirds of the members of parliament (MPs). Meanwhile, in contrast to the 266 seats won by the ANC, the remaining 134 seats were shared amongst some twelve opposition parties. This result appeared to reinforce analysis which suggested that the ANC was becoming a 'dominant' political party – that is, one that was unlikely to lose any electoral contest for national power in the foreseeable future.

This in turn aroused fears in some quarters that the ANC might become increasingly unaccountable, and perhaps increasingly arrogant in its use of the state machinery. Consequently, the post election period saw the development of a debate in the media about what role opposition parties – apparently excluded from power long term (although the Inkatha Freedom Party continued to serve as a junior partner in government with the ANC) – should and could play, especially given their state of fragmentation.

A larger number of difficult questions began to be posed: should the opposition parties seek to combine, and if so, along what lines and around what principles? Should they seek to oppose 'robustly' or 'constructively'? Was there a danger that unity amongst particular opposition parties might bring about a further racialisation of South African politics? But in addition, a further set of questions were also asked: as the majority of the existing opposition parties did not offer fundamentally different economic strategies from the government (which since 1994 had abandoned its social-democratically inclined Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP] in favour of a neo-liberal and conservative economic path known as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution [GEAR] policy), was it not more likely that real opposition to the government would emerge from within the Tripartite Alliance – comprising the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu)?

Indeed, it was increasingly often suggested that the ideological divide would soon see the SACP and Cosatu peeling away from the ANC to form a social-democratic opposition to the left, opening up the possibility of South African party politics moving away from divisions that revolved principally around 'race', to ones which centred around 'class'.

The objective of the conference was to consider such questions as these in depth, as well as debating

exactly what opposition was for. Emphasis was laid on the fact that it was in no way intended to be a 'congress of the opposition'; that is, a meeting to promote any particular agenda of opposition (such as encouraging a uniting of parties). Instead, it was designed to bring together leading social scientists and MPs drawn from both the ANC and opposition parties to discuss the legitimacy of, prospects for, and the role of, opposition given the present context of South African politics.

In the event, the conference proved even more topical than had been anticipated, as only a day or two before, the two largest opposition parties – the Democratic Party and the New National Party – announced their merger into the Democratic Alliance, a development which some interpret as presaging a shift towards a two-party system.

Prof. Roger Southall
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Opening Remarks

Michael Lange

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF), I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all.

This is the first time KAF is cooperating with the Rhodes University Department of Political Science and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Southall and his team for all the work they have put into this event.

From our side, we can only hope this conference on 'Opposition in South Africa's New Democracy' will contribute in a meaningful way to our common efforts to assist democratic transformation in the new South Africa.

KAF has had and maintains close contact with a variety of political forces and parties in South Africa. We are delighted that this conference is being held at a time when all political scientists and observers of note, are preoccupied not only with the role an opposition may play in our neighbouring country, Zimbabwe, but also with the possible effects of the realignment of opposition forces currently under way in South Africa.

1. A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Allow me to give a brief overview of KAF and why it is involved in South Africa.

KAF is one of five political foundations in Germany today and is closely affiliated to the Christian Democratic Union Party – a centrist political party in Germany, founded after the Second World War. It proudly bears the name of one of the founding members of the Christian Democratic Union Party, Konrad Adenauer, who subsequently became the first Chancellor of post-war Germany.

The international activities of KAF are rooted in the Christian concept of human nature. By advocating Christian values, the foundation is helping to establish Christian Democratic principles not only in Germany, but worldwide.

KAF has been cooperating with partners throughout the world for almost 40 years. Currently, some 80 representatives working abroad, oversee some 200 projects and programmes in more than 100 countries. It therefore comes as no surprise that international cooperation accounts for approximately half the foundation's total budget. In this manner, KAF makes its own contribution to policies serving peace and justice in international relations.

Our general aim as a political foundation working in South Africa, is to strengthen democracy and the rule of law while educating informed and responsible citizens, as well as political leaders, to play a more active part in the political and social lives of their communities.

More specifically, we want to inculcate democratic patterns of behaviour, including the ability to compromise, settle conflicts peacefully and help implement sustainable solutions to political problems.

We also believe it is vital for democracy, that the parliamentary multiparty system should function well. We therefore try to assist parliaments, composed of freely elected members representing the interests of the population and fulfilling adequately their function of controlling government, to work without restriction and outside interference.

At the same time we strive for the creation of freedom of action for a plurality of political

parties – especially opposition parties – because we believe that political parties and particularly opposition parties are indispensable in all democratic societies.

For this reason, KAF seeks to establish contact and cooperation with centrist political parties wherever possible, now that the single-party systems in Africa, as much as anywhere else, have been found incapable of living up to the challenge of development.

KAF currently has wide-ranging programmes in the different provinces of South Africa. Most centrist political forces of relevance benefit from these activities.

The foundation does not, however, only cooperate with political parties and their respective think-tanks, but also with reputable education and research institutions, as you will note from this event.

2. DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

A rapid change has taken place in Africa since the end of the Cold War, a decade ago. Almost the entire continent has, in an amazingly short time, made remarkable progress towards political participation and economic emancipation.

Most African countries have held 'more or less' competitive parliamentary elections – and approximately half of these have been declared free and fair by international monitoring teams.

In many cases, opposition parties were formed legally and could go public for the first time. They called, above all, for the abolition of one-party rule and the modernisation of electoral systems.

Parliamentary and presidential elections which give voters the opportunity to choose between parties, persons and programmes are today seen worldwide as an indicator of democracy. A proper democratic electoral process cannot be implemented without allowing a multiparty contest.

It is still remarkable to me that even autocrats, who have great reservations about multiparty systems and see them as a Western invention that is worthless in the African context – do not want to do without the election instrument altogether, since it seems the only means today to legitimise their claim to power in an international context.

At the same time, the notion of democratisation being a peaceful process is not necessarily correct. Although democracy is the only form

of power in which the appointment of the government is regulated peacefully, the call to political competition in election campaigns sometimes leads to an escalation of underlying tensions. This results in clashes between militant supporters. Some provinces in South Africa – namely KwaZulu-Natal – as well as our neighbour to the north, have seen more than enough of this.

What has been crucial for our expanding activities in Africa in general and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is the fact that democracy orientated institutions and structures have been developing considerably in recent years.

But there has been an emerging consensus among my colleagues that a simplistic imposition of Western-style multiparty systems on African societies is not as automatically beneficial as was imagined. This primarily has something to do with the unresolved question as to whether Westminster-style democracy is necessarily the only form of democracy suitable to the African concept of democracy, or opposition for that matter.

In a recent newspaper article, a former cabinet member in the first Government of National Unity (GNU) expressed his reservations regarding a 'white-dominated' debate about the possible role of a strong opposition, while highlighting the unease these circles feel with the concept of a GNU, where the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – a party clearly distinguishable from the African National Congress (ANC) – was nevertheless invited once again to serve with the ANC in a GNU; something difficult to explain from a Western point of view.

For him, this was another indication that it seems to be impossible, or at least questionable, to discuss opposition politics outside the context of the African concept of democracy.

3. OPPOSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since the last parliamentary elections we have nevertheless witnessed a 'new political fluidity' within opposition ranks seeking common ground and evaluating the possibility of stronger future cooperation.

Although many people have been sceptical about an election alliance of different, though like-minded, political parties before the last national elections, the fact that the governing parties as a result of that election command

such an overwhelming majority in parliament has made political – or parliamentary – life for South Africa's opposition parties even more difficult.

The need for a stronger opposition has since then taken centre stage in the political discourse, at least in white opposition circles.

The discussion concentrates on the situation in parliament and does not take into account opposition from beyond parliament, for example, from extra-parliamentary angles of civil society.

I believe that South Africa's civil society – and in particular institutions like a free press, the independent judiciary, the Public Protector, the special investigation units, etc. – has as much a role to play as the watchdog of government as does parliament. I hope we will shed more light on this feature of a system of 'checks and balances', with which a parliamentary opposition is otherwise entrusted.

Looking at the content of what an opposition could propagate as opposed to what the government is suggesting, some observers have come to the conclusion that there is little overall political/ideological space for an opposition to occupy when it comes to specific policy approaches. Many see alternative policies primarily on the left of what the current government is propagating and not on the right, where the current realignment is obviously taking place.

This assessment of the political/ideological landscape has been underlined by the recent talks about an alliance between the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the Socialist Party of Azania, the black consciousness breakaway faction of the Azanian People's Organisation.

For many, the most viable ideological opposition to current government policies may still come from within the ANC alliance itself, where communist and trade unionist alliance partners challenge the government from a leftist perspective on a continuous basis.

If there seems little that a realigned opposition could offer ideologically with regard to government policies, the question may be asked whether there is an alternative political leader who could encapsulate the aspirations of a groundswell opposition movement, similar to the one we witnessed developing in Zimbabwe recently.

Considering the necessity that such an alter-native leader should represent the majority of the South African population, does South Africa possess such a well-identified, acknowledged black leader or leadership right now? I believe the answer is, No!

Neither Magoba from the PAC, nor Holomisa from the United Democratic Movement (UDM) produced the kind of leadership necessary to win over the the black constituency in the last South African election, and they have not gained grassroots support since then.

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi has somewhat compromised his 'opposition credentials' by accepting a role in government for the second consecutive time.

Despite these reservations concerning the viability of a serious opposition challenge of the present government, there nevertheless seems room for more – if only administrative – cooperation between opposition forces.

Considering the fact that South Africa is facing municipal elections in the near future, there is a need for opposition parties to discuss how best to challenge the ANC alliances on this occasion, since the electoral system with regard to municipal elections obviously favours alliances, to the detriment of multiple opposition parties.

This aspect might have been the single most important reason for the cash strapped opposition parties to seriously look at cooperation at this point in time, which eventually – and to the surprise of many observers – produced the recent merger between the Democratic Party, the Federal Alliance and the New National Party.

The real challenge facing the new Democratic Alliance will nevertheless be – as it has been for the UDM before – to attract black support, while at the same time not losing white support. The UDM had to experience during the last election that South African society has not yet deracialised enough to allow for electoral success. Whether the situation will be different the next time around, has yet to be seen.

CONCLUSION

As much as South Africa today can be considered a consolidated democracy in which the development towards a constitutional, pluralistic state ruled by law appears to be irreversible, the recent events in Zimbabwe, and more so the reaction towards them in certain political cir-

cles in South Africa, should alert all of us who support a democratic system based on the rule of law, regular free and fair elections and good governance.

By transforming white minority rule to black majority government, only the foundations of a peaceful democratic society have been laid in South Africa. Building and maintaining South Africa's democratic dispensation on this foundation will depend on a continuing com-mitment by all segments of South Africa's diverse population to reconciliation and far reaching economic and social transformation; KAF is willing to continue to participate in this process.

I hope this conference will contribute to the discussion of the concept of democracy in an African society and to evaluating the meaning of opposition in such a context. I wish you suc-cessful deliberations.

Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems

Roger Southall

Contemporary debate in South Africa is not just about whether democracy will survive, but about the quality of that democracy if it does. The role, functions, legitimacy and capacity of political opposition, in a situation where it is highly fragmented, constitutes a key aspect of this debate, most notably because of the status of the African National Congress (ANC) as a dominant party since its assumption of power in 1994. Following a discussion of the meanings of 'opposition', this paper examines issues and problems for the idea and practice of opposition posed by the challenges of democratic consolidation and by the ANC's dominance. It is proposed that if opposition parties are to be perpetual electoral losers, then progress must be made towards entrenching the notion of opposition as accountability. It is concluded that the way forward for democracy and opposition in South Africa lies in efforts to overcome historic social cleavages in favour of an issue-oriented politics in which racial and ethnic affinities play a backstage role.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's first universal suffrage election in 1994 was widely hailed as a 'miracle', marking a transition from colonial-racial dictatorship to a condition of non-racial democracy elaborated around one of the most liberal-democratic constitutions in the world. More recently, this perspective has been sustained by the successful conduct of a second popular election in 1999, which – in the judgement of its foremost student – indicates that 'South Africa has travelled quite far along the road to democratic consolidation'.[1] Nonetheless, given

the desperate legacy of apartheid and the brevity of its democratic experience, it is not surprising that this optimistic viewpoint is generally tempered by quite a number of considerations. Lodge himself qualifies his assessment by observing that South Africa is challenged by the prevalence of alarming social inequalities and by the continuing weakness of 'the structural correlates of democratic endurance', and it is only too well known that democracy in South Africa may yet be blighted by a horrific crime rate, corruption, economic stagnation and regional mayhem as well as by a host of other socio-economic deficits. Yet increasingly the debate is not just about whether democracy in South Africa will survive, but about the *quality* of that democracy.[2]

The particular aspect of the debate with which this collection is concerned is that of the role, functions, legitimacy and capacity of political opposition, about which there is presently considerable argumentation. The debate starts from the fact of the current overwhelming political dominance of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the fragmentation of the opposition, which assisted by the party-list system of proportional representation (PR) is split between some 12 different parties which are represented in the National Assembly (*see table*).

Divided along grounds of history, ideology, aspiration, orientation, race and ethnicity, as well as by more immediate competition for electoral advantage, the parties of opposition are generally conceived to be struggling around major questions of tactics and strategy. How should they best 'oppose'? Should they work

The national election results, 1994 and 1999

	1994 % of Vote	1994 Seats in National Assembly	1999 % of Vote	1999 Seats in National Assembly
African National Congress (ANC)	62.65	252	66.36	266
Democratic Party (DP)	1.73	7	9.55	38
Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)	10.54	43	8.59	34
(New) National Party (NNP)	20.39	82	6.87	28
United Democratic Movement (UDM)	–	–	3.42	14
African Christian Democratic Movement	0.45	2	1.43	6
Freedom Front (FF)	2.17	9	0.80	3
United Christian Democratic Movement	–	–	0.78	3
Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)	1.25	5	0.71	3
Federal Alliance	–	–	0.54	2
Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging	–	–	0.29	1
Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo)	–	–	0.17	1
Totals	**100**	**400**	**100**	**400**

singly, or in combination? If the latter, in informal alliance or formal coalition? And is their best option to engage in 'constructive opposition' or should they be 'robust'? And as the parties themselves struggle with these dilemmas, commentators regularly suggest that the opposition as a whole faces an existential crisis wherein some parties will die and others decline, as only the fittest survive and prosper. Meanwhile, a common refrain emanating especially from the Democratic Party (DP) – which following the election of 1999 was elevated to the status of being the 'Official Opposition' – is that in its bid to establish its political hegemony, the ANC has embarked upon a deliberate project of defining robust opposition as illegitimate, and that it is engaged in marginalising and taming opposition in order to shore up its monopoly of power. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are those who argue that the best hope for rendering the government accountable to the electorate is if opposition effectively becomes internalised, if constituencies within the Tripartite Alliance – of the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) – keep alive the flame of criticism from within.[3]

An immediate answer to one of these dilemmas was given by the DP and the New National Party (NNP) in June 2000 when they announced their formation of a Democratic Alliance (DA). This represents a transitional step towards a comprehensive merger which has

come about largely on the DP's terms, not least because the NNP had proved so inept in adapting to the rigours and narrowed rewards of opposition after over 40 years in power since 1948.[4] However, while much of the current debate is understandably absorbed by the shapes of and prospects for opposition in South Africa, it is rather more importantly engaged with what can be termed the issue of necessity; that is, the extent to which opposition is an integral component of democracy, and how its survival and health can contribute to democratic consolidation.

This point can be developed by reference to two quotations from the *Mail & Guardian,* one of South Africa's most influential and highly respected weeklies. The first is from its Editorial which preceded the most recent election:

'How will political science classes ... look back on the general election of 1999? ... The answer, we would hope, will be that 1999 was the election which brought home to South Africa how integral a real opposition is to the concept of democracy.'[5]

'Real opposition', it went on to define as the posing of effective challenge to government in parliament, which it elaborated as requiring the threat that 'the government of the day faces the prospect of losing power if it fails to perform'. This, in turn, was in essence only a restatement of what its political commentator, Howard Barrell, had proclaimed some months earlier:

'If the first duty of an opposition party is to

oppose, or at very least test, government policy at every turn, its second is presumably to become the ruling party.'[6] As Barrell went on to observe, however, none of the opposition parties appeared to have any chance of replacing the ANC as government in the forthcoming election, or even the one after that. No party, in other words, can yet aspire to serving as an 'alternative government', and South African democracy is unlikely to be spared the rigours of the so-called 'turn-over test' for some years, perhaps decades, to come.

It is this dilemma that has spawned the post-apartheid debate around party dominance, as most notably expressed in *The Awkward Embrace: One Party Domination and Democracy,* edited by Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins.[7] The importance of this debate cannot be underestimated, for whereas the more optimistic assessments of the ANC's dominance propose this as likely to stabilise the new order and to guarantee democracy, Giliomee and Simkins themselves take a diametrically opposite view which argues that party dominance is rather more likely to close down opposition and, in effect, transform democracy into elective dictatorship.[8] Indeed, various contributions in this present collection furthers that debate via the elaboration of conservative and radical critiques of the ANC-in-power which, as is argued in the Conclusion, have a surprising amount in common. It will therefore be necessary to return to this debate below. However, any such discussion can attain a wider relevance only upon the basis of an attempt to locate the study of opposition in South Africa comparatively.

1. THE STUDY OF OPPOSITION

In the Preface of his landmark collection on *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*[9] (1966), Robert Dahl noted that of 'the three great milestones in the development of democratic institutions'– the right to vote, the right to be represented, and the right of organised opposition – it was the last which was 'wholly modern' to the extent that it was 'a recent unplanned invention that (had) been confined for the most part to a handful of countries in Western Europe and the English-speaking world',[10] with only about 30 of the then (1964) existing member states of the United Nations (UN) having political systems in which full

legal opposition among organised political parties had existed throughout the preceding decade.

Dahl's book stands as the first major attempt to understand the conditions under which political opposition can expect to flourish, and what patterns it is likely to assume – even though the politico-geographic scope of its coverage was limited to 'established democracies'. Yet, significantly, he was also writing as a committed advocate who conceived of opposition as a necessary ingredient of democracy, one who was inclined to the view that 'the existence of an opposition party is very nearly the most distinctive characteristic of democracy itself.'

This important supposition had recently (1965) become embodied in the foundation of the journal *Government and Opposition* by Professor Ghita Ionescu of the University of Manchester, a development which one commentator, Rodney Barker, was to describe as indicating the arrival of Opposition (with a capital 'O') as not only 'a valued element in democratic politics' but also as an accepted subject for academic dissection and examination.[11] Subsequently, however, the study of opposition attracted rather limited attention and in a recent overview, Jean Blondel complains that although the word 'opposition' is used daily to account for a variety of developments, 'its many meanings have not been systematically related to the differences among the political systems of the world'.[12] Various volumes did appear after Dahl's initial foray, yet they were only comparative in the sense that they dealt with more than one country, and their scope remained limited to a region or a particular type of political system. The problem, argues Blondel, is in large part the fact that opposition is a 'dependent' concept; that is, its character is tied to that of its government: apparently the only way to discover the character of opposition is by first examining regime, rule, authority or state. Nonetheless, he goes on to assert the importance of making progress towards a *theory* of the conditions under which opposition is likely to emerge, grow and decline in all different types of polity.[13]

The objectives of the present collection, restricted as it is to the study of a particular country, are far less ambitious than those espoused by Blondel, who was writing for a comparative volume dealing with the 'The

Repositioning of Opposition' in the context of the post-Cold War wave of democratisation. Most certainly, this set of essays will hope to contribute to the wider enterprise of the study of opposition more generally. However, the more particular concern of the conference on which this collection was based, and which inspires the different contributors, is a particular set of challenges which confront democratic politics in South Africa today. Emerging from the long drawn-out nightmare of apartheid authoritarianism, South Africa's new democracy ostensibly celebrates and rejoices in dissent, debate and diversity. Yet there are manifestly tendencies and traditions within the body politic which run counter to those aspirations and values. It is the increasing set of tensions between South Africa's formal commitment to democracy and its practice which have set the agenda for this set of studies around the issue of 'opposition'. That very term, however, requires careful explication before progress towards those wider objectives, of any sort whatsoever, can be made.

2. DEFINING OPPOSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

As Geraint Parry has observed, the attempt to define what constitutes 'opposition' is a highly contested matter.[14] Some analysts argue that to be meaningful it should be restricted to the idea of 'institutionalised opposition' within a context of established liberal democracy; others propose that opposition suggests representation and acceptance of difference; and yet others argue for extension of the term to incorporate a much wider range of anti-government behaviours that are normally found in the established, democratic world. None of these uses of opposition is 'right''or 'wrong', and all are employed in contemporary usage (as is illustrated by this collection). What is clearly important, therefore, is for any study of 'opposition' to define in what way that term is being used.

Barker tackled this issue some three decades ago when he noted that because the word 'opposition' has so many different meanings, there was the unfortunate consequence that the different phenomena are often treated as if they are the same. He therefore identified six uses of the term as follows. First, opposition may mean total resistance to the form and basis of the state; second, it may denote resistance to the

power of the state when the latter is viewed as an oppressive institution; third, it may refer to resistance to the group, faction or dynasty in command of the state, and to a denial of its legitimacy; fourth, it may be used to denote a loyal opposition which opposes the commanding group without either contesting its legitimacy, or threatening or rejecting the basis of the state or the constitution; fifth, opposition may refer to a system of checks and balances whereby the constitution guards against and corrects its own excesses; and finally, the term may describe the methods whereby the citizen or group modifies a government's actions or prevents its tyrannies, without condemning the latter as inherently oppressive. While noting that it is necessary to recognise the close relationship which often exists between the different activities referred to, Barker went on to argue that all these meanings, save one, have a long ancestry. For instance, 'Aquinas was ready to invoke Aristotle in defence of the overthrow of tyrants', and beliefs in the balance of power and the desire to furnish the citizen with safeguards against overweening public power have a secure pedigree in judicial and legal theory. In contrast, the idea of opposition as 'legal and loyal opposition' was remarkably new.[15]

Barker identified the fundamental requirement for the flourishing of opposition as some separation between the person or persons symbolising sovereignty, and those exercising government. Where, as throughout most European history, the integrity of the state and responsibility of government had been exercised by an absolute monarch, it was difficult to challenge one without the other. In contrast, oppositional politics had only developed in countries where a distinction had been allowed to grow between first order and second order conflicts, where there was a generalised acceptance of rules of fair play whereby those out of power expressed their grievances or demands for reform in a manner that did not challenge the essence of the existing state. Barker noted, furthermore, that even though legal opposition was recognised at the level of practical politics in European (especially British) politics throughout the 19th century, it was not valued or even greatly commented upon as a necessary or desirable feature of free, parliamentary states. Indeed, even though John Stuart Mill recognised that in any free state there would be diverse approaches to

political problems, he found no place for 'loyal opposition'. Although he was convinced of the necessity of critical debate, he saw that as sustained not by opposition but by a free press, which he saw as embodying a spirit of critical enquiry. And while he perceived parliament as performing as a restraint on government, he attributed this role to the whole body, and not any one faction within it. Mill, in other words, did not envisage opposition and dissent as being embodied in parties divided by irreconcilable divisions of principle, but as arising out of a multiplicity of opinion which shifted and changed as issues themselves changed.

Barker went on to chronicle how a long line of commentators continued to value the freedoms to oppose and criticise over the consolidation of those freedoms into political parties, which continued to be portrayed as factional. It was only after the Second World War that serious attention was granted to the idea of opposition as essential to democracy, a transition which implied an acceptance of relativism in political thinking, a suspicion of grand causes and ultimate ideals, and a preference for the functions of opposition over principles.

Barker ascribed this remarkable change in the status of opposition to changes in the political and intellectual environment. Party and opposition had existed for well over a century before they were given credit for sustaining democracy, yet their favourable recognition only became possible after the idea of the state came under attack – from pluralists and internationalists – after the First World War, and as paradoxically, the state began to expand its functions to assume positive responsibility for the general well-being of the population. As a result, political enquiry became increasingly directed to the examination of second order rather than constitutional politics, as solutions were sought to problems which would previously have been considered economic or religious rather than political; and although pluralist thinking often assumed an ultimate unity or need for constitutional balance, it also asserted the legitimacy of sectional principles which might not be compatible with the demands and desires of particular groups or individuals. Virtue therefore became lodged not in the ends – good government – to which democracy was previously considered instrumental, but in the very institutionalisation of dissent as a charac-

teristic of contemporary democratic government.

Barker's analysis of the development of the idea of opposition has much to say to our interpretation of the phenomenon of opposition in South Africa. For instance, the strategy of the ANC, from its foundation in 1912, might be interpreted:

• *as resisting the power of the settler state as an oppressive institution* from the formation of the settler state via the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 through to the capture of power by the National Party (NP) in 1948

• before thereafter transiting to *resistance to the post-1948* apartheid government based upon a rejection of its legitimacy, notably from 1960, after which time the ANC was banned and was forced into the adoption of armed struggle from exile

• then, subsequently, after having moved into government from 1994, it might be argued that the ANC views opposition *as most constructively embodied in constitutional checks and balances*

• or as *entailing pressure upon government directed from outside parliament by civil society,* from both within and beyond the Tripartite Alliance.

However, what the DP – and at times other parties – are increasingly arguing is that the ANC is reluctant to concede the idea of 'loyal opposition', especially insofar as such opposition emanates from parties that are 'historically white'.

As will be argued below, it is a welcome fact for democracy in South Africa that the ANC, as the leading force of the liberation movement, never rejected the basis of the state, even though it challenged its form as a racially constructed entity. What the ANC always wanted was not to overthrow the state, but for all persons of whatever race, colour or background to be able to participate in its affairs on an equal basis. This has important implications for the legitimacy of the post-apartheid state, and arguably places democracy in South Africa at a major advantage compared to the situation in many other African countries, where the very existence of the post-colonial state has been, or is being, severely tested by a variety of centripetal challenges centred around ethnic and regional polarities.[16] Nonetheless, for all that

Barker's clarifications can be employed to illuminate the study of opposition in South Africa historically, they can only take us so far in helping us to understand the present.

A first problem is that Barker's formulations are time-bound and Anglo-centric. Even as he was writing, in 1970, the notion of 'loyal opposition' did not sit comfortably with either Western presidentialism – as in the United States (US), where there has never been such an office as 'Leader of the Opposition' – or European parliamentarism, where opposition parties were those currently excluded from shifting multi-party coalitions or, as in the Italy of the day, were inclusive of Communist – not yet 'Euro-communist' – and neo-fascist parties which served in parliament yet rejected the principles upon which the constitution was based. In short, Barker's own vision of opposition was very much based upon the British model of opposition which was simultaneously intensely adversarial, yet founded upon an acceptance of the legitimacy of the state. In contrast, the situation in contemporary South Africa is much more fluid. For instance, the present constitution – in echo of Westminster – provides for recognition of the largest opposition party in parliament as 'Leader of the Opposition'. On the other hand, the electoral system, which is based on the party list system of PR, has produced a party system within which the opposition is highly fragmented; the physical lay-out of the National Assembly itself has been restructured to get away from Westminster-style confrontationalism; and the constitution formally eschews adversarialism in favour of the practice of 'cooperative governance', which at another level is expressed by an 'opposition' party – the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – serving in government. No wonder that the idea of opposition in contemporary South Africa is somewhat confused, even before any allowance is made yet more catholic notions of opposition as inter-party dissent and interest representation!

A degree of clarification is provided by our replacing the terminology of 'loyal opposition', with its Westminster-style connotations, with that of 'constitutional opposition', which as articulated by Giovanni Sartori envisions opposition opposing a government, not the political system as such.[17] Yet, *pace* Duverger, Sartori further notes that 'real alternative government'

customarily occurs only in two-party systems. In contrast, in pluralistic party systems, the most frequent pattern is coalition governments, in which all parties are likely to share, at different times, a fraction of governmental power – although in some such systems a centre party, or group of parties, are rarely forced to leave government while 'extreme' parties tend to remain excluded.[18] The relevant distinction, therefore, he argues, is between 'responsible' and 'irresponsible' opposition: 'An opposition which knows that it may be called upon to "respond", i.e. which is oriented towards governing and has a reasonable chance to govern, or to have access to governmental responsibility, is likely to behave responsibly, in a restrained and realistic fashion'. In contrast, a party which is not called upon to respond in this manner may well become irresponsible, taking a path that seeks to outbid the government by making wild promises. The mechanics of responsible opposition therefore rests upon two conditions: 'the constitutionalisation of politics and, additionally, the kind of inducements that are provided by the particular party system'.[19]

What may be drawn from this debate is the suggestion that, rather than looking – as most popular commentaries do – to the Westminster model of 'loyal opposition', the Western European model of 'overlapping and shifting' ('constitutional') oppositions is more akin to what actually obtains in South Africa at the moment. Furthermore, if this point is accepted, it may serve as something of a counter to the more gloomy prognoses which argue that South African democracy is doomed by the continuing fact of the fragmentation of opposition – despite the formation of the DA – and the present lack of prospects for the emergence of an identifiable alternative government. Nonetheless, it must be accepted that even this takes us only so far, for the following reasons.

First, the current debate around the idea of South Africa as a dominant party system raises awkward problems about whether or not post-apartheid politics is fully constitutionalised, and hence raises further questions about what might be meant by 'responsible opposition'. This has major implications for democratic 'consolidation'.

Second, the model of constitutional opposition – especially if such opposition takes place

in a context of ANC-party dominance and even if it is interpreted as taking place most meaningfully within and not outside the Tripartite Alliance – is still far more obsessed with providing alternative government than what can be argued is at the present juncture, a much more pressing issue – that is, the need for rendering government accountable. These two aspects will now be looked at in turn.

3. CONTEXTUALISING OPPOSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA: CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY AND PARTY DOMINANCE

Alfred Stepan has called for more attention to be given to 'how, after a democratic transition, the democratic opposition can help consolidate and deepen democracy'.[20] This is clearly an enormously important focus for South Africa, where the contemporary efforts to consolidate democracy are faced by a long history of racial inequality and cleavage, skewed in favour of a white minority which has now lost its monopoly hold on political power yet remains overwhelmingly in control of the economy. In such conditions – where as Schrire suggests in his paper (included in this volume), politics is not just about the struggle for wealth and power but is also, under the hegemony of the ANC, a drive for the attainment of a 'historic mission' – political conflict can too easily descend into a zero-sum game which could pull South Africa apart. What his analysis therefore suggests – as does that of Ivor Sarakinsky – is that precisely because South African democracy is peculiarly fragile, strategies of 'robust' or 'adversarial' opposition – as they have been pursued by the DP – are potentially dangerous, more likely to inflame racial antagonisms, and less likely to encourage acceptance of the legitimacy of opposition. Responsible opposition, they seem to say, needs to be much more nuanced, more attuned to the fragility of South Africa, and hence much more oriented to the promotion of national reconciliation and co-existence between the country's potentially warring racial and ethnic communities, although they would doubtless add that 'responsible opposition' ought to be rewarded by 'responsible government'. The essence of democracy, whether fragile or more solid, is, clearly, that responsibility should cut both ways.

Nonetheless, the immediate dilemma posed by such analyses is: how long should opposi-

tion parties be expected to act so 'responsibly'? At what moment should a democracy be adjudged to be sufficiently consolidated to allow for a transition from 'cooperative' to 'adversarial' opposition? What extent of authoritarianism, corruption or other abuses committed by government should be tolerated by an opposition fearing that democracy itself be undermined by robust challenge? And if such a democracy could not withstand such a challenge, would it be worth saving?

These questions are undoubtedly rendered more acute in the South African context by the reality of the ANC's hegemony, for as Giliomee and Simkins observe, there is a fundamental tension between dominant party rule and democracy.[21] Following Pempel,[22] they define dominant parties as those which manage to establish electoral dominance for an uninterrupted and prolonged period; dominance in the formation of governments, and dominance in determining the public agenda, notably with regard to its successful pursuit of a 'historic project'. However, whereas in some cases party dominance can pave the way to competitive democracy, in others it can lead to facade democracy, or a barely concealed authoritarianism. In seeking to extend Pempel's analysis – which was largely restricted to industrialised societies – to semi-industrialised countries (notably with regard to the rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI] in Mexico, the United Malays National Organisation [UMNO] in Malaysia, and the Kuomanting [KMT] in Taiwan), they seek to assess the prospects for democracy in South Africa now that it is under the apparently firmly established dominance of the ANC.[23]

In crude summary, what Giliomee and Simkins propose is that dominant parties in semi-industrialised countries are more likely to abuse power than in the industrialised cases studied by Pempel, the key difference being that in less advanced and highly unequal societies, a capitalist state has considerable difficulty in establishing any real autonomy from the capitalist interests on which it is dependent for investment decisions. Because they are compelled to maintain friendly relations with a business sector which they once considered to be the enemy, dominant parties in such countries are compelled to shed radical populism at an early stage. Yet to facilitate this compro-

mise, these parties establish a mass base which captures the popular sectors of society via, notably, the granting of concessions to organised labour – which is thereby effectively emasculated – thus shoring up the support of big business. Meanwhile, in countries like Malaysia and South Africa which have deep ethnic and/or racial divisions, the mass base of the dominant party simultaneously assumes an ethnic or racial form, particularly when growth and redistribution are modest. Consequently:

> 'Given the superiority of ethnic to class appeals, an alternation in government is much more unlikely in South Africa and Malaysia than in Mexico and Taiwan.'[24]

Giliomee and Simkins make three further observations with particular reference to South Africa. First, the liberal macroeconomics of the 1990s will put severe limitations upon government intervention in the private sector or on using state corporations to expand the share of African equity holding. The ANC will therefore have to live much longer with the white domination of the corporate structure than, for instance, UMNO has had to do with Chinese domination of corporations in Malaysia. Second, the ANC has enjoyed considerably less success than the KMT, PRI or UMNO in establishing itself as a coalition that spans both ethnic groups and classes. It remains unable to attract the support of the economically dominant white group, with the result that it is abandoning its 1994 election appeal of non-racialism for an increasingly explicit call for African solidarity.

As a result, given their superior political weight, the ANC is becoming an alliance of a black middle class and – unionised – labour aristocracy, whose interests increasingly take preference over the non-unionised and unemployed blacks. Third, in having to straddle the seemingly impossible contradictions posed by its need to reconcile the majority with diverse minorities, dominant party rule in South Africa has given rise to a 'syncretic state', which as in Malaysia operates multi-dimensionally, including mixing coercive with democratic procedures, engaging in ethnic mobilisation while cultivating a national following, and pursuing a combination of economic practices, ranging from liberal capitalism and state intervention into the economy, to rentier arrangements. Syncretism has therefore allowed the ANC to

mix non-racialism with Africanism, acceptance of the free market with regulation of the labour market, and state patronage of African contractors with continued near monopolies for white-controlled corporations. Finally, to contain the strains imposed by managing the syncretic state, the ANC leadership has embarked upon a strategy of concentrating as much power as possible over the party and state machinery in its own hands. Contesting rival interpretations which view ANC dominance as being undermined, in the medium term, by a shift away from race-based to interest-based voting by the electorate, or by hopes that democracy may be sustained by 'internal pluralism' within the ANC and by an 'external pluralism' – of opposition parties and civil society – without, Giliomee and Simkins similarly dismiss corporatism – which they see as riven by too many contradictions – as either a sustainable strategy for long-term growth or the maintenance of social harmony.

All in all, Giliomee and Simkins' prognosis is remarkably gloomy. The basic requisites for democracy in South Africa are not in place, while prospects are further damned by the fact and likely direction of ANC dominance. For liberal democracy to come about, democratic institutions would need to be greatly strengthened to counter the might of the executive, contain corruption, curb state patronage, maintain free and fair elections and include the opposition in formulating the identity of the nation. Even though none of these projects would be easily met by any dominant elite, their pursuit is the 'only way to build a liberal democracy'. The best hopes that democracy will ultimately be realised therefore lie with a mix of globalisation – which will put pressure upon corrupt or inefficient state-business links – and hopefully a refusal of the poor to allow the ANC to take their fate out of their own hands by launching a 'silent' economic revolution. Opposition forces would seem to be largely sidelined as agents of democracy.

James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer join up with Giliomee in extending this analysis in their paper, contained in this volume. Suffice it to say that their joint prognostications are no more cheerful this time around, with the added proviso that, in their view, the ANC is pursuing a set of strategies which are deeply alienating to South Africa's racial minorities while in no

way guaranteeing that the interests of the mass of blacks are best served by majoritarian hegemony.

Whether or not this interpretation is accepted, the dominant party thesis as put forward by Giliomee and his co-authors poses major challenges to any assessment of the prospects for opposition in South Africa.

First and foremost, the dominance of the ANC, as it is presented by Giliomee et al. suggests difficulties with Sartori's idea of 'constitutional opposition'. Precisely because the syncretic, dominant party state blurs distinctions between party and state – and legality and illegality – it is likely to also blur the distinction between what is and what is not constitutional. Or to put it another way, how 'responsibly' should an opposition party be expected to act if it is subjected to a barrage of legally dubious and coercive pressures?

Second, whereas Giliomee and Simkins see corporatism as, in effect, working to compromise opposition by entrenching ANC dominance, certain pro-labour analysts have proposed that the consolidation of democracy is dependent upon the need for a 'historic compromise' between organised labour and capital, thereby containing potentially destabilising class conflicts, if South Africa is to embark upon a sustainable growth strategy.[25] Eddie Webster pursues this analysis in the present collection, although he worries that if the ANC continues to pursue the neo-liberal economic policies it has pushed in recent years, that the established trade union movement will become increasingly marginalised. Even so, rather than suggesting – as do Habib and Taylor in their contribution – that Cosatu should therefore break the alliance with the ANC and constitute a labour- and class-based opposition, he argues more equivocally that Cosatu might emerge as a 'left pressure group' inside the alliance pushing for redistributive policies. But he adds that such a development would require from the ANC a degree of political tolerance that has rarely been found in Africa.

Third, if Giliomee and Simkins' characterisation of post-1994 South Africa as a syncretic state is accepted, then it implies that the present state of acute fragmentation among the parties of opposition is likely to endure. As Jesudason has noted, syncretism:

'(has) centrally framed the nature of opposition politics in Malaysia, whether the formal opposition parties or groups in civil society. Opposition political parties have great difficulty developing a coherent programme alternative to the ruling regime, because the state has a powerful ability to absorb diverse ideological orientations and interests in society, leaving only narrow constituencies for the opposition to cultivate.'[26]

Jesudason goes on to note that changes in Malaysia are more likely to come about from the loss of coherence of the ruling coalition than from more effective political opposition. Yet if opposition parties were to accept this argument, it would have major implications for their strategy. Can they realistically hope to 'shadow' the government in every sphere – as the DA attempts to do at the moment? Or should they accept that they merely represent 'narrow constituencies' and pursue their particular interests – as do, in effect, the smaller parties such as the African Christian Democratic Party and the Federal Alliance?

Not everything that Giliomee and Simkins say has to be accepted for it to be admitted that these are very real and testing dilemmas. On the one hand, they raise the issue of whether party dominance can be combined with sufficient internal democracy, and toleration of a diversity of viewpoints 'within the family', to counter potential democracy-suppressing tendencies. And on the other, if opposition parties are cast in the role of perpetual losers, then how might broader external pressures be brought to bear upon the ruling party? It may be proposed that, in part, this takes us back to something similar to Mill's notion of shifting opposition, and of parliament as a whole, civil society and a free press acting as a restraint upon government.

4. TOWARDS OPPOSITION AS ACCOUNTABILITY
Mill's vision of a legislature is of a body whose function is:

'to watch and control the government: to throw the light of publicity on its acts: to compel a full exposition and justification of all of them which any one considers questionable; to censure them if found condemnable, and, if the men who compose the government abuse their trust, or fulfil it in a manner which conflicts with the deliberate

sense of the nation, to expel them from
office ... In addition to this, the Parliament
has an office, not inferior even to this in
importance; to be at once the nation's
Committee of Grievances, and its Congress
of Opinions; an arena in which not only the
general opinion of the nation, but that of
every section of it ... can produce itself in
full light and challenge discussion; where
every person in the country may count upon
finding somebody who speaks his mind, as
well or better than he could speak it himself
– not to friends and partisans exclusively,
but in the face of opponents, to be tested by
adverse controversy ...'[27]

As indicated above, Mill's notion of an inde-
pendent legislature serving as a check upon the
executive has long been overtaken by the
development of parties, and the disciplines and
subordination to political leaderships that they
impose upon individual members of parlia-
ments. Nonetheless, his eloquent ideal contin-
ues to inform our visions of how representative
organs in society should reflect wider public
opinion and serve to constrain any abuse of
power.

After years of racial dictatorship, the call for
popularly accountable government was one of
the major demands that shaped the South
African transition. As a result, South Africa
now proudly proclaims itself as a constitutional
state and its government as bound by the rule of
law. Indeed, under the final constitution of
1996,[28] democracy is presented as being pro-
moted not only by the popularly elected
National Assembly's ultimate ability to dismiss
the Executive, but by government's freedom to
act being constrained by a Bill of Rights, an
independent judiciary and by a set of institu-
tions (the Public Protector, the Auditor-
General, the Independent Broadcasting
Authority, the Independent Electoral Com-
mission, and other commissions for Human
Rights, Gender Equality and for the Promotion
and Protection of the Rights of Cultural,
Religious and Linguistic Communities) whose
particular status is meant to provide for the
functioning of key bodies independently from
government and for the exercise of external
review of major areas of official performance.

There can be no serious debate about whether
or not South Africa now has a government
which is more accountable to society than its

predecessor NP counterparts which were elect-
ed on a racially restricted franchise and, latterly
at least, working in very close, yet almost whol-
ly opaque, collaboration with unaccountable
security services. That is now not the issue.
Much more important is the question whether
the constitutional provisions designed to render
government accountable under the new consti-
tution are working adequately. Unfortunately,
there are already more than sufficient indica-
tions that they are not.

Any statement like that needs to be placed in
context lest it be taken to be some wilful attack
upon the new government. The first point to
make is quite simply that the struggle to render
government actions accountable remains one of
the foremost challenges even in contemporary
advanced democracies. It is probably true to
say that virtually all governments prefer to act
behind a veil of secrecy if they can get away
with it. Yet experience proves that secrecy is a
closer friend of dictatorship than it is of democ-
racy. A second, more immediately alarming
point, is that after the hopes of a new dawn
raised by the democratic openings in Southern
Africa in the early 1990s, there are some
extremely worrying indicators that the region
might be about to embark upon a 'reverse
wave', with democracy being under acute pres-
sure in Zimbabwe, in considerable trouble in
countries such as Namibia and Lesotho, and
democratisation processes apparently stalled in
Swaziland and war-torn Angola. Indeed, a
recent report has indicated that media freedoms
are under severe assault and that Southern
Africa is becoming one of the most dangerous
regions in the world for journalists to work in.[29]
In short, if – as is so often asserted – South
Africa is to become a beacon of freedom for
Africa, and even an active agent for democracy
throughout the continent, then the question of
the accountability of its government has be kept
alive.

The immediate question that is posed by the
dominant party thesis is: how effective can
society in South Africa be in calling govern-
ment to account if there is no credible threat to
the government of being replaced at the polls?
Or, to put it another way, is government suffi-
ciently constrained by the checks and balances
formally provided for under the 1996 constitu-
tion?

There is already a substantial body of opinion

which would respond with a loud negative. By far the most vigorously articulated critique has been that of the DP, which has protested that the government is undermining the constitution by *inter alia* pursuing a policy of seeking to 'capture the state' by systematically deploying loyal and uncritical members of the ANC to all key organs of state; ignoring findings or failing to implement recommendations of the Auditor-General and various ad hoc judicial commissions appointed to probe corruption; assaulting the freedom of opposition parties to ask questions in parliament; seeking to de-legitimise opposition by demonising all criticism emanating from non-Africans as racist; and so on.[30]

Meanwhile, even though not all critics subscribe to the DP's entire panoply of complaints nor their world-view, many of their concerns have been echoed in, for instance, arguments that the abolition of constituencies under the national-list electoral system has empowered party bosses and increased the distance between voters and those they elect to represent them; that the government is starving the 'democracy promoting' commissions of funds to inhibit their capacity for investigation and criticism; and most notably, that the ANC government is seeking to curb the media – with a recent enquiry by the Human Rights Commission into racism in the media interpreted in many quarters as an ANC-aligned, Africanist assault upon press freedom.

Mamphele Ramphele has recently faulted what she deems to be significant 'silences', or the reluctance of intellectuals who identified with the liberation struggle to openly criticise what they deem to be mistakes or abuses by the ANC now it is in power lest they be construed as being 'anti-liberation'.[31] Such loyalty is seen as misplaced and, indeed, counter-productive to the realisation of the objectives for which the liberation struggle was fought in the long term. What she did not say – but which follows – is that when particular opposition parties, such as the DP, offer robust criticisms of the ANC, many intellectuals are reluctant to identify with them because first, they do not want to be seen as opponents of the government, and second, they do not wish to identify openly with the parties concerned, perhaps especially if they – the intellectuals – are white and they do not wish to be accused of consorting with opposition parties with whose historical backgrounds

and popular constituencies they are uncomfortable. As a result, criticisms which may have a wider support tend to become the public property of only the opposition parties, and the content of those criticisms therefore becomes blurred by the hurly-burly of insult, exchange, exaggeration and half-truth which, in South Africa as elsewhere, constitutes the negative aspect of party politics.

There is clearly no easy way forward, especially in a still racially polarised society where opposition can so easily become entangled with racial stereotyping and antagonisms. However, if we believe, with Mill, that, 'In all human affairs conflicting influences are required to keep one another alive and efficient even for their own proper uses',[32] then:

First, students of South African politics need to evince a greater commitment to serious empirical research concerning the actual functioning of the country's new institutions. Parties such as the DP may well come up with their own well-founded research, yet their motivations and findings are always likely to be contested more upon the basis of their authorship than upon their substantive content. Yet although it is necessary to be wary of any suggestion that academic research is value-free or 'more expert' than that done by political parties, the best of it will state its value-basis openly and strive for 'independence' and rigour. In this context it should be noted that any inter-party debate about how well – or otherwise – the constitutionally established checks and balances are doing in rendering government accountable, needs to be informed by a substantial body of accessible and well grounded study. Unfortunately, Ramphele's 'silences' seem to be accompanied by an alarming lack of professional interest by South African political scientists in such nitty-gritty areas as: the functioning of parliament, the working of provincial legislatures, the performance and impact of the 'democracy supporting' commissions, the interface between the government and the civil service, etc. Indeed, most such work seems to be undertaken by a handful of monitoring non-governmental organisations such as Institute for Democracy in South Africa and the Black Sash.

Second, following Dahl, the search for the conditions under which accountability can flourish in South Africa needs to be combined with a firm commitment to the legitimacy and

vigour of constitutional opposition as a necessary ingredient in democracy. This need not commit any analyst to the support of any particular party – even though individuals may choose to so align themselves – yet it should be linked to a firm assertion of the positive functions of opposition or, if a different word is more acceptable, diversity of opinion. Or as Shils put it some time ago, open opposition provides *inter alia* for:

• the institutionalised expression of conflicting interests
• the communication to government of interests which might otherwise be disregarded
• the improvement of performance by government by criticism of mistakes, omissions and injustices
• the enlightenment of the public, and the improvement of its qualifications for approving or disapproving of the actions of its rulers.[33]

Third, while it is probably too late, in Robert Mattes' terminology, to go 'Beyond Government and Opposition' by the constitutional provision for a strict separation of powers and the creation of an independent legislature wherein a fluid party system would allow for cross party collaboration as well as scope for independent activity by individual parliamentarians,[34] the need for the vigorous assertion of full opportunity for free debate in the face of any encroachments of that ideal remains paramount. This implies both positive and negative responsibilities: for instance, a demand for increased allocation of resources to the committee system – a relative, if struggling, success of the new parliamentary system – on the one hand; and an outright condemnation of such moves as a recent rewriting of the rules surrounding parliamentary question time which are clearly designed to hamper the opposition, on the other. At the same time, Mattes' formula suggests some possibility of hitching present conceptions of 'constructive opposition' and 'cooperative governance' to a Mill-like consideration of issues on their merits rather than simply upon party lines.

Fourth, it needs to be stressed that the task of criticism rests not only with opposition political parties but also with dissident elements within the ruling party, and with the wide diversity of interests, organisations and associations which are usually taken to constitute 'civil society'.

Such a recognition should necessarily imply a vigorous defence of the rights and freedoms of an independent media and press as a constitutive element of a democratic society. But much more than this, a radical perspective would urge the need for internal democratic processes within the ANC/Tripartite Alliance to bond the ruling party to its popular support base. Indeed, John Saul sees such linkages as vital to counteracting some of the 'autocratic ethos' that the ANC developed in exile.[35]

Fifth, if civil society is accorded a key role in counter-balancing government, then the conditions under which it may flourish will need to be addressed. The particular challenge, of course, is that civil society has been in decline in South Africa since 1994 through a combination of factors: problems of reorientation from 'resistance' to development, the drain of skilled activists to government, loss of funding, decline in union memberships, etc. Consequently, how to revive the vibrance and 'weight' of civil society organisations constitutes as urgent a task as elaborating how they should interact with both government and the political parties of opposition.

Finally, it needs to be emphasised that the demand for accountability should constitute as much a plank of 'loyal support' for implementation of any government agenda as much as it should underpin the promotion of a coherent alternative programme by any party of opposition.

CONCLUSION

This discussion has been pitched at a minimal objective of securing consensus around – in generous paraphrase of Barrington Moore – the assertion: 'no opposition, no democracy'. It seeks to build upon the growing uneasiness upon both the political left and the political right – a disquiet which is reflected in the majority of papers in this collection – that, whether it be for reasons to do with South Africa's complex legacy or certain tendencies exhibited by the ANC government, newly won democracy could be endangered by an effective capture of the state by the ruling party.[36]

Elaboration of this argument is complicated by two factors. First of all, as noted by Stepan, amidst the mass of literature considering the transitions to democracy around the world in recent decades, there has been a remarkable

failure to focus explicitly upon the state of and conditions for political opposition in newly democratised countries.[37] Instead, opposition as a phenomenon and necessary aspect of democratisation has tended to be sidelined as an aspect of regime change (oppositions becoming government), of dominant party systems (oppositions as victims), of civil society (oppositions subordinated to assessment of wider state-society linkages) or of democratic consolidation (opposition subordinated to a focus upon establishment of rights of association and democratic behaviours). In all probability the lack of interest is a product of the weakness of oppositions in many newly democratised countries once a transition has been achieved (not to mention the fact that parties which constitute oppositions, especially parties such as the NNP that have lost out in a regime change, often lack international respectability). Nonetheless, whatever the reason, it makes the task of assessing the role of opposition in contemporary South Africa that much more difficult.

Meanwhile, a second and related factor is that of minimalism: the suggestion that because things are better than they were, because South Africa has a certain threshold of democratisation, we should rest content and not expect too much. Indeed, often tagged on to this sort of argument is the question (posed, ironically, either from Africanist or racist quarters) of whether Africa should be judged by the same democratic standards as are applied to 'advanced' Western countries. This approach certainly has its merits, as demonstrated for instance by Wiseman's important statement of the case for 'Demo-optimism' in Africa,[38] yet it can too easily slide into a passive relativism – a political acceptance of the suggestion that a lower standard of civil rights and democracy is acceptable for Africans. Even if it is argued that the low levels of economic development and state integrity which obtain in most African states are unlikely to provide for the existence of vibrant popular counterweights to government, that perspective remains highly problematic as an agenda for either policy or political solidarity.

In any case, South Africa's considerably more advanced development status is widely considered to provide a firmer foundation for democratic consolidation than in most countries throughout the African continent, despite its enormous racial and socio-economic disparities and other deficits. Indeed, as Spence has noted, one of the striking aspects about South Africa's situation is the fact that the democratic arrangements adopted in 1994 drew heavily upon experience since 1910, and in this sense the new constitution was not an alien imposition but autochthonous. Despite the brutalities and racial exclusions of apartheid, ideas of constitutional government had had time to take root.[39] Hence the idea of opposition in South Africa is far from new. Furthermore, the 'pacted transition' was brought about by a trade-off which saw the ANC accept political power balanced by the continuing domination of the economy by white corporate capital. While the subsequent prospects for transformation (and continuity) are subject to diverse interpretations, this bargained settlement undoubtedly realised widespread agreement (going beyond elites) based upon the formalities of the interim 1994, and later the 1996, constitution. This in turn would seem to provide for a minimum consensus between those of significantly different ideological persuasions around the necessity of opposition, debate and diversity as a component of democracy, even if there will be considerable differences around the most suitable vehicles and modes for expressing, institutionalising and mobilising such differences.

Finally, there may well be one last area of agreement: that the way forward for democracy and opposition in South Africa lies in transition to an issue-oriented and ideologically based politics in which racial and ethnic affinities play a backstage role.[40] Or to put it another way, can South Africa overcome the legacy of its historic social cleavages to allow the content and characteristics of its political opposition to be shaped by issues and institutions rather than by communal sentiments?[41] Some interpretations of the present state of play suggest that this historically unlikely;[42] others claim that it is already in process and that South Africans are increasingly assessing their political options, rationally and pragmatically.[43]

Whatever our own particular assessments, few will dispute that progress towards nonracial democracy, the classic goal of the ANC, remains a decent enough goal to aim at.

ENDNOTES

1) Tom Lodge, *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's Second Popular Election,* (Johannesburg: Electoral Institute of South Africa and Witwatersrand University Press, 1999), p. 210.

2) Bruce Baker, The Quality of African Democracy: Why and How It Should be Measured *Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* 17, 2, pp 273-286; Roger Southall, The State of Democracy in South Africa, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 38, 3, 2000, pp. 147-170.

3) The South African Communist Party has had a long history of association with the ANC since its foundation (as the Communist Party of South Africa) in 1919. At present, it operates in a sort of marriage whereby its representatives are elected to parliament and other bodies as members of the ANC. The Tripartite Alliance is a formalised, yet loose, arrangement whereby the ANC, SACP and Cosatu work in harmony, although as the papers in this collection by Habib and Taylor, McKinley and Webster indicate, this relationship is presently under considerable strain.

4) On this, see the paper by Hennie Kotzé, included.

5) *Mail & Guardian,* 28 May–3 June 1999.

6) Howard Barrell, The Race for the Real Second Place. *Mail & Guardian,* 28 February–4 March 1999.

7) Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (Eds), *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Domination and Democracy,* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1999).

8) Op. cit, Giliomee and Simkins, Conclusion, p. 347.

9) Robert Dahl, (Ed), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

10) Dahl, *Political Oppositions,* p. xiii.

11) Rodney Barker, Introduction, in Rodney Barker (ed) *Studies in Opposition* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1971).

12) Jean Blondel, Political Opposition in the Contemporary World, *Government and Opposition,* 32, 4, 1997, p.462.

13) Jean Blondel, Political Opposition in the Contemporary World, p. 464.

14) Geraint Parry, Opposition Questions, *Government and Opposition,* 32, 4, 1997, pp. 457-461.

15) Barker, Introduction.

16) Christopher Clapham, Opposition in Tropical Africa, *Government and Opposition,* 32, 4, 1997, pp. 541-556.

17) Giovanni Sartori, Opposition and Control: Problems and Prospects, in Barker, *Studies in Opposition,* pp. 31-37.

18) Again, the Barker volume shows its age, with France and Italy cited as pluralistic party systems in which the respective communist parties were never involved in government. Subsequent to Sartori's paper, both parties did join governing coalitions, without the system breaking down.

19) Ibid p. 35.

20) Alfred Stepan, Democratic Opposition and Democratisation Theory, *Government and Opposition,* 32, 4, 1997, p. 657.

21) Giliomee and Simkins, *The Awkward Embrace,* p.337.

22) T.J. Pempel, (Ed) *Uncommon Democracies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

23) Giliomee and Simkins, *The Awkward Embrace,* pp. xv-xviii.

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25) Eddie Webster and Glenn Adler, Towards a Class Compromise in South Africa's Double Transition: Bargained Liberalisation and the Consolidation of Democracy, *Politics and Society,* 27, 3, 1999, pp. 363-371.

26) James Jesudason, The syncretic state and the structuring of oppositional politics in Malaysia, in Garry Rodan (Ed), *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia,* (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 128-160 (quote from p. 130).

27) John Stuart Mill, Representative Government, p. 239, in John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (London: J.M.Dent & Sons, 1971).

28) The democratic transition was overseen by an interim constitution (gazetted in 1994) which made provision for parliament to draw up a final constitution by 1996.

29) Sechaba ka'Nkosi, Hostility to press rises in Southern Africa, *Mail & Guardian,* 28 April–4 May, 2000 (citing the annual report of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists for 1999).

30) See, for instance, the DP's document *The Politics of Intolerance: How the ANC Attempts to De-legitimise its Opponents.*

31) Mamphele Ramphele, When good people are silent, *Mail & Guardian,* 10-16 December, 1999.

32) Mill, *Representative Government,* p.247.

33) Edward Shils, Opposition in the New States of Asia and Africa, in Barker, *Studies in Opposition,* pp. 45-78.

34) Robert Mattes, Beyond 'Government and Opposition': An Independent South African Legislature, *Politikon,* 20, 2, 1993, pp. 64-91.

35) John Saul, Liberation without Democracy? Rethinking the Experiences of the Southern African Liberation Movements, in Jonathan Hyslop, (Ed), *African Democracy in the Era of Globalisation,* (Johannesburg: Witwatersand University Press, 1999), pp. 167-178.

36) This view is also shared by observers who are far removed from the battlefield. See, for instance, Jack Spence, Opposition in South Africa, *Government and Opposition,* 32, 4, 1997, pp.522-538, who warns of the long-term danger of 'the emergence of a one-party state with all that it implies for probity of government and the virtues of accountability and transparency' (p. 539).

37) Alfred Stepan, Democratic Opposition, p. 657.

38) John Wiseman, The Continuing Case for Demo-Optimism in Africa, *Democratisation,* 6, 2, 1999, pp. 128-155.

39) Jack Spence, Opposition in South Africa, p. 524.

40) Cf, Stepan, Democratic Opposition, p. 670: '... recent experiences of democratisation underline the importance of also studying how opposition groups in civil society can themselves create new agenda items, and especially turn non-issues into issues'.

41) Cf. Blondel, Political Opposition, pp. 481-483.

42) This seems to be overall thrust of Giliomee and Simkins' analysis, for instance, their judgement that the ANC will remain dominant and preside over a regime that is decreasingly liberal, assisted by continuing electoral support from Xhosa, Sotho and urban Zulu ethnic blocs. See their Conclusion, in *The Awkward Embrace,* p. 353.

43) See, for instance, Steven Friedman, Who we are: voter participation, rationality and the 1999 election, *Politikon,* 26, 2, 1999, pp. 213-224.

The Realities of Opposition in South Africa: Legitimacy, Strategies and Consequences

Robert Schrire

A genuine democracy can almost be defined in terms of the existence of an effective opposition. However, in contexts where democracy is fragile because of factors such as ethnic divisions or religious conflicts, strong oppositions and/or robust strategies may endanger democracy itself. In contemporary South Africa, political loyalties are in large part determined by race and ethnicity. Political parties do not share a common view of the nature of politics. For historical reasons, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has a historic mission to transform the racial nature of the political economy, while the major opposition parties have a more modest and instrumental view of the political process. The context is therefore not favourable to textbook liberal democracy. However, if a core value of opposition is to contribute towards government accountability, other factors – the vertical restraints on power, and the influence of globalisation – may serve to improve the prospects for democracy significantly. Thus despite an unfavourable context for a functioning democracy – a dominant party, weak and fragmented opposition parties, and a historical legacy of racism and inequality – democracy may yet survive. It will not be the democracy which South Africa deserves, but it may be the democracy which it can sustain.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, a democracy can almost be defined in terms of the existence of an effective opposition.[1] The complex relationships between political parties will do much to determine the quality, and indeed the stability, of the political order. In fragile democracies, both the ruling and the opposition parties may have the capacity to destroy democracy itself. Thus both the balance of political forces and the respective party strategies will be critical in shaping political developments.

At the same time, it has long been recognised that the political system is only partly autonomous and that it is located in a context which may be more or less favourable to the establishment or consolidation of democracy.[2] Any discussion of political opposition must therefore be contextualised.

In the ideal world of democratic theory – based largely on the Western experience – we use as our model a polity in which the political forces are reasonably balanced and dynamic: at least a significant minority of the electorate is uncommitted to any party and will tip the balance periodically and thus make a change in government possible.[3] Two threats to democracy are eliminated by this definition. The first is a society which is based upon ethnic communities whose loyalty is to their group, and where there is the probability of ethnic censuses in which elections produce permanent winners and permanent losers. The second is the existence of a long-term imbalance which provides one party with a long-term numerical preponderance.

I would argue that in the South African context we need to explore several key questions if we wish to develop insights into the consequences of political parties and broader issues of democracy and accountability. Firstly, what are the social forces which underpin party alignments and which shape mass political behaviour? Secondly, what is the relationship

between the ruling party, the ANC, and the consolidation of democracy? Are its policies and actions towards other players, including the opposition, likely to make a viable democracy more or less likely? And thirdly, are the actions and strategies of the opposition parties likely to impact positively or negatively on the prospects for democratic consolidation? These issues are clearly too ambitious to be answered adequately within the space constraints of this paper. Nonetheless, the comments which follow are designed to serve as an introduction.

1. THE NATURE OF DEMOCRACY

Before we can begin the substantive analysis, it is important to first outline what is meant here by the concept of democracy.[4] It is generally accepted that an effective democracy entails more than simply periodic free and fair elections. All societies must devise mechanisms for determining the following:

Who will control the state? How will that control be established? Who will benefit from state actions? Who will pay the costs? Will the exercise of power be constrained?

In contemporary South Africa, the key issue is the degree to which these issues will be resolved not only in a technically democratic way – regular elections, accurate vote counting – but in the spirit of a democratic society which requires that:

- opposition parties are free to compete for electoral support and established and accepted procedures, including periodic free and fair elections, are in place
- groups within civil society, such as trade unions and business organisations, are free to interact with government to further their sectional interests
- civil liberties are recognised and protected, and the population has access to an independent mass media
- there is some form of separation of powers – at least at a minimum between the executive and the judiciary
- all parties – the ruling and the opposition – agree to play the political game by the rules. This implies that the losing parties accept the legitimacy of the winners who in turn accept the legitimacy of constitutional opposition.

2. THE SOCIAL BASIS OF POLITICS

It follows from the discussion above that

democracy is one of several possible systems of governance. However, the political system operates in a given socio-cultural context.[5] The nature of the cleavages, political cultures and history of the society will be critical influences on the polity, irrespective of the constitution in place. Other papers in this collection examine the debate about the nature of the South African electorate. Some conclude that the influence of race and ethnicity is on the decline and the importance of the independent voter is increasing – for instance, Mattes and Piombo.[6] Others argue that South Africa is a classical example of a plural society in which political affiliation is shaped almost exclusively by race/ethnic membership – for instance, Maloka.[7] The key issues for the future are the trends in ethnic mobilisation and allegiance.

For my purpose here, however, I would argue that the present party political alignment clearly reflects the influence of past racial/ethnic conflicts: the ANC remains at its core the party of African nationalism, in potential competition for African votes with parties such as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) and the New National Party (NNP). Although the last mentioned has lost most of its white support since 1994, it remains a party based on conservative Afrikaners now allied with conservative coloured people. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), after attempting to broaden its ethnic base prior to the 1994 election, is now once again a party supported largely by traditionalist Zulus. The Democratic Party (DP) remains a party based on white support although its traditional English support has been bolstered by conservative Afrikaners and coloureds who are attracted to its tough opposition stance. From the perspective of the ANC then, we would anticipate a certain ambivalence in its attitude to opposition parties. Firstly, given its own self image as a party which represents the 'nation', it is suspicious of most opposition parties, which it regards as ethnically based. Secondly, as the party charged with the historical challenge of 'transformation', it views some opposition strategies as illegitimate. These issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

3. CONCEPTIONS OF POLITICS

Given the communal elements of South African society, we would anticipate that the nature of

politics itself would be a contested issue. The various ethnic communities have experienced historically very different consequences from politics. For some, government was a beneficent force which furthered and protected their interests; for others, the state was an instrument used to oppress them and to impact negatively on their life choices.

How can political life be conceptualised?[8] I would argue that the following definitions of the nature of politics are themselves part of the political contest:

- Politics is about contests within a set of rules which give priority to the individual over the claims of society and the state. This is the world of Margaret Thatcher who claimed that there was no such thing as society, only individuals. Or as another Tory put it, 'Conservatives do not believe that political struggle is the most important thing in life ... The man who puts politics first is not fit to be called a civilised being ...'[9] Politics is important only at the margin because the role of the state itself is limited.
- Politics is the mechanism for modifying the allocations of economic values determined by the market. The invisible hand cannot be permitted to operate in isolation from the state and community. The state must enter into a partnership with the market to ensure that social values are protected. Politics is, at least in part, about social justice.
- The state is the instrument for the achievement of a 'historic mission'. This could entail the unification of an ethnic/national community, the righting of historical 'wrongs', or the construction of a society on the basis of new principles and institutions.
- Politics is about the struggle for wealth and power: to the victor the spoils. The victor may be an individual and his family/cronies, or it may include a clan or ethnic group. The key element is the cynical manipulation of the resources of the state for narrow self-interest. Politics becomes a zero-sum game.

Politics in all contexts involves a struggle for power between competing groups and interests over the issue of control over the instruments of power. In the modern world the state thus becomes the site of struggle. However, the consequences of this struggle will be shaped significantly by the role played by the state. In the first two cases above, the level of conflict would be low-to-moderate because the stakes are modest. In the third and fourth cases, we would anticipate a significantly higher level of conflict because of the zero-sum nature of the contest. Later in this paper we will examine where South African political parties locate themselves on the issue of the nature of politics and governance, and indicate some of the implications which follow.

4. THE ANC AND THE OPPOSITION

How do South African parties interpret the nature of politics? The ANC and its predecessors struggled for 80 years to win political liberation from white rule.[10] Given this history, it was almost inevitable that the party saw its role as a 'historical mission': to transform South African society from one based on race to one in which race and class are unrelated. The ascent to political power is viewed as only the beginning of this process which, if it is to be successful, must include black empowerment and a dramatic decrease in the magnitude of black poverty. The ANC looks to the political kingdom to achieve what, in their view, the market cannot do. In contrast, the major opposition parties, including the IFP, DP and NNP, argue (at least in theory) for a more modest conception of power. All stress the limits of political power, the advantages of a free market and the benefits of greater territorial decentralisation. The fundamental conception of the political is thus contested in South Africa.

For the ANC and the parties of the left, the status quo is illegitimate because it reflects the legacy of 80 years of white rule. The distribution of wealth, including land, incomes, human development and core values are all the result of racially discriminatory legislation and policies. From this perspective therefore, 'normal politics cannot take place in an abnormal society'. Against this, most of the opposition parties accept that the status quo is based upon a history of injustice. However, they argue that the state cannot be used effectively to undo the wrongs of the past. They thus support a market-oriented system which they believe will maximise growth rates and thus in time reduce the overall levels of poverty and inequality.

We thus have a clear conflict between the liberal view of politics as an instrumental process designed to influence society only at the margins and the view of the political as part of a

much larger historical mission represented by the ANC. This is compounded by the historical role played by the ANC in the liberation struggle. By definition, a liberation struggle has to be carried out in secrecy and with considerable ruthlessness. It represents, after all, a conspiracy designed to overthrow the existing order. No revolutionary who did not believe in the power of politics to transform human existence or who did not believe that the end justifies the means could be even remotely effective. The ANC, historically and into the present, has never perceived of itself as a mere political party. It is more than the instrument of the oppressed – it is the embodiment of the national will.

Until the fall of communism, ANC strategists envisaged a protracted armed struggle which would eventually lead to the fall of white domination. The ANC leadership was as stunned as most observers by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent surrender of power by the National Party (NP).

The ANC in power then, is torn between its intellect and its emotions and interests. Its key leaders – as sophisticated observers of the West and intellectual trends in general – are aware of the victory, at least for the present, of liberalism in both its economic and political forms.[11] Indeed in theory at least many of its leaders are liberals. On the other hand, its historical role in the liberation struggle and the massive inequities that characterise South African society, result in a party that is unwilling to accept a liberal view of politics and the political. This expresses itself in its ambivalence towards opposition parties in particular and the idea of opposition in general. A clear statement by then President Nelson Mandela illustrates this ambivalence when he stated that:

'(the opposition parties) have chosen to propagate a reactionary, dangerous and opportunistic position which argues that (because) a normal and stable democracy has been achieved ... their legitimate responsibility is to oppose us as the majority party ... (the implication, therefore is that they have) no responsibility both for our past and present; and consequently that they have a democratic obligation merely to discredit the ruling party so that they may gain power after the next elections.'[12]

Although we may certainly speculate about how an ANC, genuinely threatened with the loss of power, would act, the ANC has nonetheless acted as good democrats. At the national level, the party has played the political game by the rules: it has accepted the decisions of the courts even when the outcomes were unfavourable; it has at least tolerated the parliamentary opposition even if it has reduced the traditional role filled by the 'official opposition'. Even in the Western Cape, where after the 1999 election the ANC was excluded from the provincial government despite winning the largest vote of any party, it has served as the opposition.

Even so, the ANC remains ambivalent about the concept of legitimate opposition. While it recognises the philosophical justifications for an opposition, it harbours several serious reservations about the nature of opposition in contemporary South Africa. First, given its unqualified commitment to 'transformation', it maintains that opposition based upon a rejection of fundamental socio-economic change is not legitimate. It believes that all political parties, including the opposition, should support the nation-building enterprise. Secondly, it does not accept the legitimacy of opposition parties that are based upon the representation of minority interests. Given its own self-image as a non-racial organisation, it rejects the democratic credentials of parties which have, by design or otherwise, a limited multiracial support base.

To some extent then, the ANC wishes to determine, at least in theory, the nature of its own opposition. It has a clear view of what opposition parties should stand for and how their support should be structured. If the ANC could determine its own opposition, its political rivals would be a mirror of its own self-image.

A second critical determinant of the quality of a democracy is the conduct of opposition parties. Several typologies of systems of oppositions have been devised which range from extra-system opposition which seeks – via non-constitutional means – to overthrow the government, to models of 'loyal opposition' in which the legitimacy of the system itself is not in dispute.[13] Perhaps surprisingly, given South Africa's recent political history, neither the parliamentary nor extra-parliamentary organisations dispute the legitimacy of the constitutional order. Indeed, even the radical Africanist parties such as Azapo and the PAC, at least within parliament and the formal institutional world, accept as legitimate the constitutional

framework. All political opposition is thus institutionalised. The key debates revolve around which interests should be represented by which party and how this opposition should be expressed.

All societies are divided to a greater or lesser extent according to economic, ethnic and value lines. In contemporary South Africa, all the major players – the ANC, DP, IFP and NNP – are broadly centrist, at least in theory. The political debates revolve largely around technical issues such as the labour relations system, privatisation and law and order. Perhaps surprisingly, the radical and Africanist parties have remained marginalised.

South African politics is not, therefore, structured around ideology (left-centre-right) or class interests. While the DP is clearly right leaning, the ANC is a broad church which contains all economic interests within its ranks. Historical ties thus largely determine political loyalties. These ties generally coincide with ethnic membership. Opposition choices will thus have important political consequences despite the relatively weak electoral support of all the opposition parties. Each opposition strategy will have different consequences for the stability of the larger polity.

We may distinguish between three broad opposition strategies: robust, cooptive and cooperative:

4.1 Robust opposition
Robust opposition represents as much a style of politics as it reflects deep-seated policy and ideological disagreements. Indeed , in the United Kingdom, robust politics continues to characterise the relationship between the governing party and its opposition despite a remarkable degree of basic consensus on the key issues.

In South Africa only the DP has built its strategy around robust opposition. This opposition has, in general, not been based on profound philosophical conflicts with the ruling party. The thrust of its opposition has been the failure of the government to move more rapidly in areas such as labour market reforms and privatisation. Its most robust attacks have been against members of the government itself – for incompetence, corruption, and the lack of a sense of urgency. The strategy of the DP has been effective in terms of electoral results

although its influence on government performance has been limited. Certainly the dramatic growth in the DP's support since 1994 must be directly attributed to what it characterised during the 1999 election as its 'fight back' campaign and a public perception that the party is a tough and fearless critic of the ANC.

4.2 Cooptive opposition
An alternative form of opposition, usually found only in coalitions where no single party has a parliamentary majority, is the strategy adopted by the IFP. While competing fiercely in elections, and clinging to its identity as an autonomous political entity, the IFP has joined with the ANC in a coalition government at both national and provincial levels which has enabled it to be part of the government and participate at the highest levels in policy. Indeed, party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi was even offered the deputy presidency by President Mbeki after the 1999 election. However, the party has lacked either the talent or the will, or both, to use its potential leverage effectively. It has become in effect just another component of the ANC's 'broad church', at least at the national level. While party leaders individually have benefited from this strategy, it can be argued that the party itself has paid a high price for its cooption. Rank and file members of the party have been confused by a change in strategy which has seen the IFP moving from demonising the ANC to entering a coalition with it and, since 1994, the IFP has also lost most of its non-Zulu support base. Cooperation at the national level has, however, not ended the often violent struggle for support at the provincial level.

4.3 Cooperative opposition
The NNP attempted to develop in many ways the most subtle of strategies, that of cooperative opposition. In essence, this entailed rejecting a strategy which was based on an almost total rejection of government actions and moderating its rhetoric when criticising the government. The intention was not to antagonise the ANC by robust and frequently intemperate attacks, but to encourage the government to moderate policies which the NNP regards as unwise.

Tragically for the NNP, its supporters have either not understood this strategy or they have rejected it. The party has encountered the worst

of both worlds: on the one hand, the ANC has largely ignored the party while, on the other, traditional supporters have deserted to the DP in droves, attracted by the more robust style of criticisms of their traditional 'enemy'. The culmination of this process was the NNP's decision in mid-2000 to effectively disband and merge with the DP in the Democratic Alliance (DA).

4.4 Analysis of strategies of opposition

In an ideal democracy, where the voters are informed and rational, and ascriptive factors did not resonate, the strategies of opposition parties would be relatively unimportant. The natural rhythm of politics would continue – a period of party rule followed, sooner or later, by a change in government as a result of changes in the support base of the parties. South Africa, as illustrated above, is not a normal democracy for at least two reasons: its history made a political struggle inevitable and dictated that a new African-oriented government would unavoidably see its task as undertaking a 'historical mission'. Secondly, whatever the future may hold, electoral loyalties still seem to be largely based upon ethnic and racial factors. If a ruling party has the capacity to destroy a democracy through abusing the power it derives from control over the instruments of the state, then opposition parties in fragile societies may have similar power. Even short of explicit revolutionary intent, opposition parties may create a dynamic which, whether intended or not, destroys democracy itself. For example, parties which (either as official strategy or as a result of the inability of the party to control the actions of its supporters) use violence and the threat of violence to increase their support, can undermine the democratic order. Opposition promises of utopian outcomes may prevent the ruling party from adopting key policies which in time produce unmanageable problems. And the politics of ethnic mobilisation, with all its destructive consequences, are too recent a memory in South Africa to require further elaboration. What are the implications of these realities for opposition strategies?

The core of robust opposition is to oppose vigorously the actions of the government. Is it however, a suitable model for South Africa? I would argue that this strategy, generalised to other parties, would have catastrophic conse-

quences. I would argue that had De Klerk taken his party out of the post-1994 election of the Government of National Unity on the grounds of the total failure of the ANC to govern effectively and adopted a policy of robust opposition, democracy itself would have been endangered. Whites and many coloured voters would have rallied to the NP, but from a broader perspective, this would have reintroduced the race factor into politics explicitly. Foreign investors would have taken fright and the country's economy would have been substantially weakened. The outcome would have been a stronger NP, a weaker economy, and an alienated ANC under considerable pressure from its own supporters to 'fight back'. In a similar vein, had the IFP adopted a robust strategy of opposition, levels of violence and bloodshed, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, would have been significantly higher. Given the historical animosities between the ANC and the IFP, and between Buthelezi and the United Democratic Front (UDM) – which served as an internal surrogate for the ANC when it was still banned in the 1980s – the demonisation of their opponents would have been unavoidable. The participation of the IFP in a national coalition with the ANC has reduced, but not eliminated, levels of conflict and violence. In contrast, it is likely that neither of the other strategic options would have produced this outcome.

The DP was able to benefit from its strategy of robust opposition for two reasons: first, the decisions by its principal rivals, the NP and the IFP, not to engage in robust politics after 1994 created the space for the smaller DP to fill the gap. Secondly, precisely because the DP does not have an ethnic/historical constituency, it is in South African terms far less important than its smaller opposition rivals. Had the DP been a powerful party representing real interests, its strategy may have had disastrous national consequences. The formation of the DA, intended as an interim stage before the full merger of the DP and NNP takes place, therefore has uncertain implications. Irrespective of its liberal and non-racial policies, its support base remains limited to whites, coloureds and Indians, creating the perception in some quarters of a racial 'ganging-up' against Africans. On the other hand, the end to the competitive process of NNP and DP bidding for white and coloured votes, with its inevitable subliminal racist over-

tones, will now come to an end. It may now become possible for the formerly white opposition to move to the political centre and begin a genuine process of seeking to appeal to the African community.

What general conclusions follow? Under present circumstances, it is difficult to see how the opposition can become more effective and expand its support base. I have argued that South Africa's fragile democracy would paradoxically be weakened by a stronger opposition. Ethnic conflicts would be an inevitable consequence and many would argue that the ANC, after a titanic struggle for power, would play every card in its hand to retain its support base. The race card, and worse, would undoubtedly be brought into play.[14]

Yet is the future of democracy in South Africa inexorably bleak? I would argue not, for even if we accept that the ANC will remain in power for a lengthy period, the prospects are not hopeless. After all, one of the major functions of opposition is to ensure government accountability, and perhaps even an opposition with no immediate prospect of winning power can play this role.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the key values of a democracy is the degree to which the rulers are held accountable to the citizenry. Indeed one of the central arguments for the importance of an opposition is the thesis that power demands the creation of countervailing power if it is not to be abused. An opposition is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democratic accountability.

From this perspective then, the outlook for South Africa is not promising. The ANC, while paying lip service to liberal democracy, places its highest value on fulfilling its 'historic mission'. I do not doubt that it would play the racial card with ruthlessness if its power base was threatened. Even if its senior leaders were genuine political liberals, its followers, dependent upon the perks of power in a context of desperate poverty, would not easily follow a liberal line, as the events in KwaZulu-Natal indicate.

In many ways then, democracy would be threatened if opposition parties became more powerful. Firstly, the ANC would react in a way inimical to democracy to protect its ability to fulfil its 'historic mission'. Secondly, the

kind of effective opposition likely to emerge would be either ethnic (for instance, a robust white/Zulu alliance built around a rejuvenated IFP and NP), or the emergence of an effective African/populist alliance. Both would represent a real threat to the nascent democratic order. Only the emergence of a powerful moderate liberal alliance would not be a direct threat to democracy, and as our analysis indicates, such a development is highly improbable.

However, the situation is not so grim as this scenario would indicate. In the contemporary world of globalisation, other factors exist to limit state power and create at least some of the conditions conducive to elite accountability.[15] The global factors which limit party policies in the economic field such as the critical need to encourage foreign investment and retain human capital are well known and do not need to be repeated here. In addition, within this context, the full range of horizontal and vertical restraints on state power, such as the judiciary, and the various statutory bodies such as the public protector and the auditor general, become increasingly important.[16] This is not to claim that a dominant party would not have the political power to conquer these obstacles, for it clearly would, but the cost, from a global perspective, would be simply too great to make this a rational strategy. Furthermore, the rule of law is still taken seriously in South Africa.

When an ANC spokesperson recently publically criticised the court's decision to uphold the conviction for theft of the former ANC Western Cape leader, Rev. Alan Boesak, the heads of the High Court and the Constitutional Court repudiated this attack. The ANC later accepted that attacks on the integrity of the judiciary are unacceptable. In addition, South Africa is a complex society with a wide range of devices designed to contain state power: the provincial powers, the separation of power between the executive and the judiciary, and between the government and the central bank, and so on. Again, although opposition parties may not pose a credible electoral threat to the ANC, they remain powerful players: in two of the three key provinces, opposition parties are in effective control over the administration; one-third of the South African electorate supports opposition parties, including most of the wealthy and educated; and the parliamentary opposition has the critical mass to have some

influence within the legislature and to link up effectively with the mass media and powerful elements of civil society. A future united DP/NNP, as embodied in the DA, would certainly strengthen opposition in parliament and the provinces, especially the Western Cape.

CONCLUSION

South Africa is not a normal democracy. Given the recent past, the miracle is that democracy in any form operates. Without an effective opposition, it is difficult to hold leaders accountable. However accountability, despite its critical importance, is only one of several key values. In a democracy other values include stability, tolerance and peaceful regulation of conflict. In many socio-economic contexts these values may be in conflict with each other, for instance, robust opposition, while contributing to democratic accountability, may increase conflicts and levels of intolerance. Thus in unfavourable contexts, accountability may to some extent have to be traded in favour of other values. In KwaZulu-Natal, for example, it is clear that the IFP-ANC coalition decreases accountability and reinforces an elite cartel that is frequently corrupt and authoritarian. While it would be the ideal if the viable alternative was an effective opposition and genuine accountability, the indisputable reality is that a less inclusive administration would be accompanied by high levels of violence and civil unrest. The undoubted costs of a less accountable government are preferable to the actual alternatives available in the real world.

An accountable government does not depend solely upon a large opposition party. A strong and independent civil society, including a free press, strong economic association and powerful professional organisations can all contribute to more accountable government. The existing structures of vertical accountability in a context of globalisation may exercise some influence. The contemporary political opposition, while posing no electoral threat to the ANC, may nonetheless in synergy with civil society act to limit the emergence of significant abuses of power.

Thus despite the institutional framework of a sophisticated and liberal democratic order, democracy remains a fragile plant. While the ANC, for logical reasons derived from a history of racial exploitation sees its task as a 'histori-

cal mission' transcending the politics of detail experienced in a status quo democracy, parties like the DP view South Africa as a normal society and expect politics to be robust. This in itself creates seeds for conflict. More importantly, however, is the fragility of the democratic order. In a country of great poverty, a political class has emerged that would lose everything if dislodged from power. For the masses who struggled for political rights, often at great cost, political views are intensely held and do not include the tolerance which comes from a legitimate political order. A viable democracy is based upon the view that those who disagree are rivals and not enemies. South African voters and leaders still have a long way to go in this respect.

The ANC recognises that despite its political predominance, it is operating from the base of a weak state that cannot perform even the core function of law and order effectively. Hence its response, at least under Mandela, was to seek inclusivity. This weakness could equally produce a strategy of exclusion of opposition. Stable democracies are usually based on a shared vision of the scope of the political in the context of at least a sense of a common destiny if not of shared nationhood. Genuine democratic attitudes, such as tolerance of diversity and acceptance of alternative views and interests, tend to be most prevalent in wealthy and educated societies and among middle and upper middle socio-economic groups. The poor, while frequently paying lip-service to democratic values, are generally less committed to genuine democracy. Opposition is frequently identified with the creation of obstacles to delivery and the protection of illegitimate special interests. The poor in general are also more susceptible to the lure of ethnic mobilisation although it is the intellectuals and not the underprivileged who actually formulate ethnic strategies.

The cruel reality in South Africa is that a large majority of the population, especially within the African community, is poor and lacking in appropriate education. It is clear, then, that the context for democracy is not favourable nor is the practise of democracy ideal in South Africa. The ANC is too dominant electorally: the opposition parties too weak. South African society, with its massive inequalities, racial and ethnic sensitivities and authoritarian legacies, is hardly an ideal

environment for textbook liberal democracy. However, although South Africa may not have the democracy it deserves, it may well have the democracy that it can sustain.

ENDNOTES

1) The literature on democracy is voluminous. For a useful summary of the key issues, see J. Arthur, *Democracy: Theory and Practice,* (Andover, Hants: International Thomson Publishing Ltd. 1991).

2) Many of the key arguments are contained in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner (eds.) *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

3) The classic statement remains Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

4) See Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), and Thomas Dye and L. Harmon Zeigler, *The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics,* (Monterey: Brooks/ Cole, 1986).

5) Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) and Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man,* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

6) Robert Mattes and Jessica Piombo, Opposition Parties and the Voters in South Africa's 1999 Election, in this collection.

7) Eddy Maloka, 'White' Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in South Africa, in this collection pp. 95-101

8) Most of the key issues are discussed in R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974); C. Pierson, *Marxist Theory and Democratic Politics,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), and J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

9) Quinton Hogg, quoted in Alan Ball and B.Guy Peters, *Modern Politics,* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

10) Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945,* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983); Martin Murray, *The Revolution Deferred: The Painful Birth of Post-Apartheid South Africa,* (London: Verso Press, 1994).

11) Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man,* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

12) Quoted in Jack Spence, *The 1999 South African General Elections, Government and Opposition,* Vol 34, no 4, pp. 458-459.

13) Marco Rimanelli (ed.) *Comparative Democratisation and Peaceful Change in Single-Party-Dominant Countries,* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1999).

14) For a theoretical analysis, see Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Alvin Rabuschka and Kenneth Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Stability,* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972). An application to South Africa is contained in Donald Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

15) David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1995 provides an interesting analysis of the restraints imposed by globalisation.

16) See Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond, and Marc Plattner (eds.) *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies,* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), for an analysis of internal restraints.

Dominant Party Rule, Opposition Parties and Minorities in South Africa

Hermann Giliomee, James Myburgh & Lawrence Schlemmer

South Africa has achieved a certain level of formal democracy in that regular elections are held and the constitution is unaltered. However, the persistence of South Africa's racial voting patterns mean that minorities are marginalised and that, in effect, the ruling party is no longer accountable to the electorate. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) has embarked on a radical project of 'transforming' the state and society. This entails both the elimination of the distinction between party and state, and the attempt to enforce equality of outcomes or 'demographic representivity' on all institutions in both the public and private sphere. The persistence of racial division also enables the ruling party to delegitimise the opposition as 'racist' or 'defenders of white privilege', a strategy which further entrenches racial division.

> *'The effort to override the constitution and destroy the power of the courts to uphold the constitution, flows from the conviction that in racial affairs there is only one correct policy.'[1]*

INTRODUCTION

The ANC was the driving force among the liberation movements that opposed apartheid. Its mission, and the condition for the widespread international support it enjoyed in those years, was its goal of inclusive democracy. As the governing party today it prides itself in being the standard bearer for democracy, and is anxious to continue to project this image among Western opinion-leaders. Thus, it is at pains to respect formal democracy. In today's South Africa, elections are free and fair, the provisions of the constitution are unaltered, the decisions of the courts are upheld and the principles of majority choice are applied to the hilt. In recent years, however, the same international opinion has expressed growing concern about what is called 'illiberal' or 'virtual' democracies that appropriate the rituals of a liberal democracy without its substance.[2]

What that substance is has been more difficult to define. In this paper, six interrelated elements of a substantive democracy are proposed:

- The political system be so structured as to preserve the principle of uncertainty of electoral outcomes, implying that no set of political interests are categorically excluded from bidding for power.
- The vital interests of all political segments are respected and the majority does not ride roughshod over oppositions and minorities on key issues.
- Minorities and oppositions are not denounced for mobilising on issues vital to them.
- Key issues are not placed above public debate.
- There remains a clear and obvious distinction between ruling party and the state.
- Political minorities, although not in power, retain sufficient leverage and participation in political decision-making to avoid becoming alienated from the system.

It will be argued that a liberal democracy is under serious threat in South Africa on all these scores.

1. OPPOSITION AND THE NEED FOR UNCERTAINTY OF ELECTORAL OUTCOMES

James Madison wrote that a republic must not only guard against the tyranny of the rulers over the ruled; it must also protect one part of society from the injustice of the other.

> 'If a majority will be united by a common interest, then the rights of the minority will be insecure.'

Madison argued that it was only an 'uncertainty of condition' – essentially that a minority would be able to win over a section of the majority and turn the tables at the next election – that would induce a majority party to moderate its behaviour in office and protect the interests of all.[3] This also locks the opposition into the system and ensures its loyalty. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted of United States (US) democracy a century-and-a-half ago, all parties were willing to recognise the rights of the majority, 'because they hope to turn those rights to their own advantage at some future time'.[4]

Prior to the election of 1994 some white political leaders expected that once the liberation euphoria had spent itself, the outcome of elections would become uncertain. Voters would hold the ruling party accountable for any lack of delivery, and class interests rather than racial identity would determine voter choice. Subsequently, some commentators have drawn comfort from the fact that the 1999 general election was more peacefully and professionally conducted than its predecessor and that majority voters displayed greater tolerance. Some even claimed that South Africa has 'travelled quite far along the road to democratic consolidation'.[5]

However, the elections of 1994 and 1999 were misleading indicators of the state of South African democracy for there was simply no prospect that the ANC would lose. Indeed, the only question was by what degree it would increase its share of the vote, and whether it would gain a two-thirds majority. The inevitability of the result may well have contributed to the peaceful nature of the poll. Furthermore, the 'racial census' pattern of voting remained largely intact, with the ANC winning over 80% of the black vote.[6] The fact that in a post election poll 76.8% of black ANC voters said that they would still vote for the party even if it failed to fulfil its promises over the

next five years[7] suggests that there is little prospect of a change in government at the next election either. It is certainly not being suggested that African voters are motivated by crude racism, for the appearance of a 'racial census' follows from rather complex processes, which are outlined in section 6 below. Nonetheless, the outcomes have all the effects of racial solidarity in political behaviour.

Consequently, after just two elections it can be said with a fair degree of confidence that the ruling party suffers none of that 'uncertainty of condition' which would lead it to respect the rights of minorities. In consequence, for as long as race remains the salient political divide in South Africa, the white minority is excluded from any share of power. This has prompted several commentators to argue that if the Democratic Party (DP) wanted to challenge the ANC, it would have to become a black-led and predominantly black opposition. But this misses the point noted by Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote:

> 'there are certain communities in which the persons who constitute the minority can never hope to draw over the majority to their side, because they must then give up the very point which is at issue between them.'[8]

Despite the non-racial banner the ANC waved during the liberation struggle it was quick after the 1994 election to call for 'black unity', emphasising that black South Africans retain a 'common interest.' Furthermore, since 1997, the ANC has adopted various racial preference policies that severely prejudice the interests of the white minority and advance the interests of a black elite. It has underplayed the widening income differentials within the black population, and emphasised the continued (relative) wealth of the white population. In 1998, for instance, President Thabo Mbeki informed South Africans that they were 'two nations, the one black and poor and the other white and well off'.[9] More recently, an ANC submission to the Human Rights Commission on *Racism in the Media* blamed white racism for continued black impoverishment. 'Racist ideology has been used' the report argues, 'to justify and promote the further entrenchment of the unacceptable reality'.[10]

This racial consolidation, with only the coloured and Indian voters as a 'swing factor',

goes against Madison's argument that society should be divided up into 'so many parts, interests and classes' that the rights of the minority would never be under threat from the 'interested combinations' of the majority.[11] Because the ANC is guaranteed over 50% of the vote, there are none of the shifting interest-based coalitions on the lines of European democracies. As a consequence the opposition tends to be peripheral to the system.

Under these conditions, constraints on the ANC are very weak. In an October 1996 poll, 48% of black voters agreed that they would 'support and stand by my political party and its leaders even if I disagree with many of its policies'.[12] By October 1997 this percentage had increased to 59%. Among ANC supporters this figure rose to 63%.[13] While the ANC focuses on voter concerns during the course of the election campaign, the top leadership is able to govern as it sees fit once the party's mandate has been renewed.

Further supporting evidence on the limited prospects of major opposition gains at the ballot box is provided in section 6.

2. OPPOSITIONS AND MINORITIES: PROTECTING VITAL INTERESTS: 1990-1999

While the first five years of majority rule saw the inexorable rise of ANC dominance, they also saw the withering away of the previously dominant National Party (NP) and the rise of the DP to the position of Official Opposition. In the 1999 election the DP won 9.56% of the vote, and the (New) NP – that won over 20% in 1994 – was relegated to third position behind the (Zulu-based) Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). How can the NP collapse be explained?

Machievelli drew a distinction between two kinds of government: that of the Turks, and that of the French. Turkey was a highly centralised and hierarchical state with all power and authority concentrated in the ruler. In France, on the other hand, the King was surrounded by powerful nobles who had their own prerogatives and followings. Machievelli wrote that it was much harder to win control over the Turkish Empire, 'but once it has been accomplished, it can be held with ease'. The reason was that in a state such as that of the Turks 'one cannot hope to forward the enterprise by the rebellion of those who are near to the ruler'. Yet once the latter and his family have been overthrown, there is no one left to fear, for 'just as before his victory the conqueror had nothing to hope from them, so afterwards he need not fear them'. In France, on the other hand, it was much easier to invade if you managed to win over discontented barons. Yet having seized control it is much harder to hold it, for the nobles can neither be satisfied nor destroyed and can ally against the victor's rule.[14]

The liberal establishment in South Africa, and more particularly the churches, some business elites, the South African Institute of Race Relations, some newspaper editors and the DP (and its predecessors), resembles France. During the 1980s and early 1990s the ANC was always able to win over useful allies among the English liberal ensemble in the fight against apartheid. However, these same liberal institutions have proved to be some of the ANC's most vehement critics now that the latter has gained power. The ANC has also had difficulty in extending direct control over 'centres of power' in the media and the economy which have traditionally been dominated by the English establishment.

The NP, by contrast, resembles Turkey. The main feature of the political system between 1910 and 1994 was the all-pervasive role of the state. It controlled virtually all facets of society and, by 1990, no distinct white class retained the capacity to organise separately to promote its specific interests. This monolithic and hierarchical front was very difficult to overcome, but once the ANC had done so, it was very easy to consolidate power.

As President – from late 1989 until 1994 – NP leader F.W. de Klerk hoped that his party would continue to play a strategic role in a Government of National Unity (GNU) well beyond a second free election. The assumption, and it is not one that should be easily dismissed, was that a stable, semi-permanent GNU would unleash the energies of all South Africa's peoples better than any other system. But this hope rested on a misconception. It was assumed that the new state could not function without the cooperation of sectors like the white civil servants, the white security forces and the business class, and that these classes would insist on the NP remaining part of the cabinet to protect their interests. This did not happen. These classes were poorly organised as potential power bases, and the ANC quickly

bought off civil servants with severance packages and by guaranteeing pensions. It won business over to a position of neutrality and avoidance of conflict by firmly committing itself to respecting property rights and to a liberal fiscal and monetary policy.[15]

The fortunes of the NP after 1994 were heavily invested in the negotiated transition. This hope was soon dashed. Through a psychological war by proxy, waged through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the ANC destroyed the NP's claim to moral legitimacy as the co-founder of the new system. It was thereby able to consolidate power rapidly and bypass the various checks and balances of the negotiated transition easily. The more the ANC was able to extend its power, the more it seemed, to white voters at least, that the NP had negotiated a surrender rather than an honourable compromise.

There were two reasons why the IFP, based largely on traditional Zulu voters, was able to secure a continuing role where the NP failed. Firstly, IFP supporters exhibited extremely high levels of loyalty to the party and to its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Although the ANC brought the IFP into government, they were unable to steal the party's constituency. The NP, on the other hand, proved unable or unwilling to aggressively defend their supporters' interests within government or mobilise them outside of it.

The main right wing opposition, organised by General Constand Viljoen, all but collapsed between the elections of 1994 and 1999. The ANC secured the cooperation of Viljoen and his followers through introducing two clauses in the constitution. Article 185 envisages the establishment of a Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, while article 235 underwrites the right of self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language heritage. The clauses differ sharply from the Bill of Rights that recognises only individual rights.

The ANC was probably never serious about either of these two clauses. It set up a Volkstaat Council, comprised of Viljoen's followers, to investigate the feasibility of an Afrikaner ethnic state. However, once the ANC felt confident that the security forces were sufficiently trans-

formed to rule out any danger of armed rebellion, it first squeezed the Council financially before disbanding it in 1999. The ANC had managed to emasculate the white separatists at the cost of a mere R15 million! Then, in the early months of 2000, it moved ahead on the establishment of the Commission to protect the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities. However, the draft legislation is a strange document, for it makes no provision for any rights that the proposed Commission is supposed to protect.

The key minority rights issue is the widespread perception among Afrikaans speakers that the ANC is intent on drastically scaling down on Afrikaans – along with the African marginalised languages – as a language of government and administration. Protests from Afrikaans organisations prompted (then) Deputy President Mbeki to announce in March 1999 the establishment of a 'language mechanism' in the President's Office, to investigate any changes in the policy of the public sector with a view to possible violations of language rights before they are introduced. Fifteen months later, there was still no 'language mechanism', despite a decision by the Pan South African Language Board – a statutory body, that several public institutions, including the electricity parastatal, Eskom, and the Department of Public Works – to introduce English-only policies that were unconstitutional.[16]

Meanwhile, the Department of Justice is pressing ahead with an attempt to turn English into the sole language of record in the courts. In May 2000, Judges Buys and Majiedt of the Northern Cape Supreme Court declared a sentence of a lower court unconstitutional. The legal assistant provided by the Department could only understand English while the accused could only understand Afrikaans. The Supreme Court judgement pointed out that Afrikaans was the first language of 72% of the province, against less than two per cent for whom English was the first language.[17]

The ineffectuality of protests of Afrikaans speakers and the white minority in general have surprised many observers. There are several reasons for the muted protests. As in the case of the Chinese of Malaysia, talented members of the white minority make ready use of the escape hatch of emigration. Second, the ANC

does not need to win the vote of the white minority and can treat it with indifference or contempt. Third, those (younger) members of the white minority who have decided to remain in South Africa have an uncertain future in view of new affirmative action legislation. Finding or retaining a job has become a priority. Further, with few exceptions, the press has not criticised the ANC's project of transformation and most Afrikaans newspapers have failed to support minority rights, advising Afrikaners to rely only on individual rights. In South Africa the dictum about the pen being mightier than the sword has been transformed into the pension is mightier than the sword.

All this suggests that the vital occupational and cultural interests of the non-African minorities are under severe threat. In this sense, the new democracy is working mainly for the racially defined majority.

3. TRANSFORMATION AND MINORITIES: ATTACKS ON THE LEGITIMACY OF OPPOSITION

The watershed for South Africa's democracy was the ANC's 50th National Conference in Mafikeng, December 1997. Since there was very little prospect of counter-revolution, the ANC was able to articulate a vision which was unfettered by the need to conciliate minorities. This received its clearest expression via the adoption by the Conference of a document, *Strategy and Tactics*,[18] which presents a Manichean vision of a South African society divided between the 'motive forces of transformation' and the 'forces against change.' The 'main motive forces of change' are the African majority, and the members of the minorities who support the ANC.[19] Opposing transformation are the 'forces which benefited from the system of apartheid,' constituted by the former white rulers and their 'black appendages.' The 'overriding aim' of the white minority, the document argues, is to 'derail or reverse change so as to end up with a system in which the social privileges of apartheid are retained in a somewhat modified form.'[20]

Strategy and Tactics states that on coming to power, the ANC was faced with a situation where 'the majority of public servants, especially at senior level, the captains of industry, and editorial rooms in most of the media shared the perspectives of the former government or its white opposition ... all of them strategically

placed to influence the agenda of transformation in favour of the privileged classes'. This enabled those 'fundamentally opposed to change to mobilise against it' and meant that the 'capacity of the democratic movement was in many respects circumscribed'.[21] The argument was that the 'mainly white opposition parties' were propagating a 'reactionary, dangerous and opportunistic position' which would see them exploiting their role as a loyal opposition to discredit and displace the ANC in power at the next election.[22]

The ideas propagated by the ANC at Mafikeng would subsequently come to dominate South African political discourse. As one commentator wrote at the time: 'The key to understanding the mood and ideas that dominated Mafikeng 1997 lies in "the goal of transformation", a formula which was used in almost every speech.' He noted that 'transformation' was not only a 'term without content' but also 'an indefinable moral end, reminiscent of communism, and one which serves a similar purpose. It justifies the retention of an organisational form espoused most notably by V.I. Lenin – vanguardism. Essentially, present liberty is traded off against the prospects of a future Utopia'.[23]

Although 'transformation' dominated ANC rhetoric after Mafikeng, party leaders refrained from defining the word, preferring to keep it as a vague and desirable moral end. Yet over time two meanings of the word have emerged. In public statements, the ANC leadership have generally referred to transformation, either explicitly or implicitly, in racial terms. In terms of the policy of 'demographic representivity' all institutions in society, at all levels, must be 'transformed' until they reflect the precise racial composition of the society as a whole. The ANC argues that as a product of apartheid and colonialism the existing racial imbalances are immoral. It therefore sees itself as justified in taking all necessary steps, including reintroducing race classification and racial discrimination, to achieve an equality of outcomes. Achieving this end justifies the reintroduction of a whole panoply of racial laws and differential privileges.

Transformation of the personnel structure of both the public and private sectors (in the latter case in companies with more than 50 employees) is a truly radical project. The white minori-

ty in South Africa never anticipated something that would threaten their career prospects so drastically. In major respects the legislation contains qualifications in deference to skills-availability that soften it. Because of the leverage of state contracts, however, the private sector will be at pains to be seen to be implementing its provisions as generously as possible. It appears to be modelled on affirmative action legislation in both the US and Malaysia, yet with the difference that the legislation is being introduced in South Africa in a shrinking job market. Although the constitution outlaws racial discrimination, protection against 'unfair discrimination' is withheld from whites until the correct proportions have been achieved. 'White privilege' is defined as the 'over representation' of whites in the professions and higher reaches of the civil service, economy and the media'.[24] What this overlooks is the fact that representivity bears no relation to levels of educational achievement, vocational skills and experience.

Meanwhile, the other goal of transformation is the extension of party control. One ANC document stated that:

> 'transformation of the state entails, first and foremost, extending the power of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) over all levers of power: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence structures, the judiciary, parastatals, and agencies such as regulatory bodies, the public broadcaster, the central bank and so on.'[25]

There is undoubtedly a confluence between these two definitions in that in order to achieve 'transformation', the ANC argues its need to strengthen its grip on the levers of power. Racial criteria have therefore facilitated – and are viewed as providing legitimacy for – the appointment of ANC members to key positions in the state. Implementing 'representivity' is therefore not only a yardstick for measuring transformation, but also a way of reducing the dominance of institutions by a white minority seen as hostile and opposed to change.

In 1994 the authority of the state and the authority of the majority were united for the first time. As the party that had come to symbolise the anti-apartheid struggle and with a massive democratic mandate, the ANC possessed a formidable moral power. This sapped the will of civil society and suppressed almost all controversy over the ruling party's actions, even as it shifted away from non-racism and liberal democracy. Furthermore, when the ANC began labelling critics as 'racist' or as racially disloyal they largely succeeded in silencing dissent and narrowing the boundaries of debate.

4. PLACING ISSUES ABOVE PUBLIC DEBATE

Alexis De Tocqueville wrote that in a democracy 'the majority possesses a power which is physical and moral at the same time; it acts upon the will as well as upon the actions of men, and it represses not only all contest but all controversy'.[26]

The ANC has largely succeeded in placing 'transformation' outside the boundaries of acceptable political debate. By doing so, it has managed to suppress controversy over the extension of party control, while its push to transform the state is justified, disguised, and facilitated by, racial transformation. Without the abolition of merit as the overriding criteria in state appointments, the ANC would be unable to appoint party members (whenever they wished) to key positions.

By arguing that 'mainly white' institutions are products of apartheid and motivated by racism, the ANC is therefore able to undermine the legitimacy of institutions that provide a check on its power.

Yet why has the ANC embarked on such a radical and exclusionary project? The answer lies more within the party and its Leninist and liberation movement heritage than in electoral dynamics. The fact that there was, following 1994, little prospect of the ANC losing power exaggerated the importance of internal party interests and undermined its accountability to the voters. Furthermore, as the electorate could be taken for granted, the party now elected a leader who was best able to advance their corporate interests; and subsequently, the ANC nomenclature and the elite networks around the party have been the main beneficiaries of affirmative action and black empowerment.

Such policies allow the party leadership to place loyalists in key positions, and at the same time compensate those who have lost out in internal power struggles, through redeployment to comfortable but less strategic posts. Meanwhile, the ANC's shift towards an Africanist discourse has facilitated rapprochement with the IFP, and enabled it to co-opt (through racial

patronage) the emergent black (upper) middle class.

The more it strengthens its hold on the levers of power, so its reasoning goes, the more it should be able to effect transformation. Yet as the white minority loses its power, the ANC has begun reinventing racial oppression and claiming that the white minority is conspiring to hold back black advancement. Since 1997 the ANC has repeatedly made the claim that critics of the government and of affirmative action are motivated by a belief in black inferiority.

This argument received its most extreme formulation in a recent ANC submission to the Human Rights Commission on *Racism in the Media.* The ANC claimed that 'white South African society' continues to believe in racist stereotypes. The statement claimed that criticism of the ANC, and of Mbeki in particular, was motivated by unashamed racism.

> 'Regardless of everything we have done to discourage the propagation of falsehoods about our leadership, the media has proceeded "full steam ahead" to do its best, relying on outright lies, to project the repulsive and terrifying stereotype of the African barbarian.'

The ANC also asserted that black journalists who are critical of the government have 'absorbed into their consciousness the white stereotype of the black savage'.[27] Even if South African history has understandably produced a high degree of racial sensitivity on the part of African elites, the effect of such statements on the courage of newspaper editors to exercise their press freedom could be devastating.

Similar reasoning was employed by the then Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar, in the debate in parliament around the report of the TRC. The 'white political parties', he argued, should be 'grateful' that they were permitted to participate in the new democratic order 'without recriminations', despite the fact that their hands had for decades 'been dripping with the blood and tears of millions of victims'.[28] Within the debate, the ANC drew no distinction between the apartheid government and the liberal opposition, or between those parties then and now. They were all collectively guilty.

The bottom line is that the ANC does not regard opposition parties and opposition voters as having legitimate interests and grievances that can be mobilised, but only racial privileges and racist beliefs. Thus opposition within the existing constitutional framework is regarded as being illegitimate. An ANC document entitled *Accelerating the Pace of Change* states that opposition by the 'forces who benefited from apartheid' to transformation took such forms as: the mobilisation of 'mainly white' civil society; 'sabotage of programmes within the civil service'; the withholding of funds by business for housing projects; 'painting a gloomy picture of the country'; and attempts by 'their political parties' to 'block or delay legislation and policies in parliament'.[29]

Underlying this approach is the ANC's deep belief in its own virtue. *Accelerating the Pace of Change* states boldly that the ANC 'remains the most important moral voice on almost any question facing the country'.[30] The ANC is also the only party able to correctly discern and advance the interests of the black majority. Mbeki has described the ANC as the 'only political instrument that the masses of our people have in their hands'.[31] Although the ANC makes much of the illegitimacy of minority-based opposition, any successful attempt to win over majority black votes would be seen as counter-revolutionary. *Strategy and Tactics* states that if the 'counter-revolutionary' forces succeed in disorganising, weakening and destroying the ANC, then 'the masses of the people [would] be left leaderless and rudderless, and thus open to manipulation against their own interests'.[32]

5. ELIMINATING INTRA-PARTY OPPOSITION AND BLURRING THE PARTY–STATE DIVIDE

The ANC aims not only at delegitimising the white opposition, but also at eliminating any concentrations of power within the party that may challenge the leadership. *Strategy and Tactics* stated that the ANC should 'continuously improve its capacity and skill to wield and transform the instruments of power'. In order to do so, the ANC needed a 'cadre policy ensuring that it plays a leading role in all centres of power.' ANC members should be bound by the doctrine of democratic centralism: the party leadership should 'exercise maximum discipline among its members, and ensure that, after ideas have been exchanged and decisions taken, all its structures and members pursue the same goal'. All ANC members would remain

under the direction of the central party structures 'irrespective of the many and varied sectors in which cadres are deployed'.

The National Conference reaffirmed democratic centralism as a guiding principle and altered the party constitution to place all ANC structures 'including national, provincial and local government caucuses' under the supervision and direction of the National Executive Committee. The National Working Committee (NWC) was given the power to ensure that 'provinces, regions, branches and all other ANC structures such as parliamentary caucuses carry out the decisions of the ANC'.[33] The Conference also passed a resolution on Cadre Policy, mandating the party leadership to: identify 'key centres of power' for deployment; draw up a comprehensive deployment policy and strategy; establish committees at national, provincial and local government level to oversee the deployment process and ensure that party members remained accountable after deployment.[34]

Meanwhile, following Mafikeng, the ANC leadership has also set out to extend party control over the state, thereby blurring the distinction between the two, and effectively emasculating parliament's ability to hold the executive to account.

In well functioning democracies opposition parties rely heavily on an impartial and professional civil service as well as on a clear distinction between ruling party and state. Although the ANC started making party political appointments to the civil service from 1994, following Mafikeng the ANC began extending the scope of these to independent statutory bodies and local government administration. Senior ANC politicians were deployed to head most state institutions including the Reserve Bank, the prosecution service, the government information service, the revenue service, and so on. In terms of the ANC constitution, and the principle of democratic centralism, these appointees would continue to be informed by and accountable to the party leadership.[35]

The means by which the party leadership ensures discipline is precisely by controlling appointments to positions within the party, public service, parastatals and statutory bodies. Deployment Committees have been established at all levels of government, whilst a Cadre Policy and Deployment Strategy provides for

the listing of ANC cadres, their relevant skills, and the positions available for deployment within the state and parastatals.[36]

This centralisation of power has allowed the ANC to effectively close down dissent within the party. Indeed, the main reason why the ANC's alliance partner, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), is still able to challenge government is that its senior office bearers are not appointed by the party leadership, cannot be re-deployed, and are able to mobilise a powerful constituency. However, the policy has effectively marginalised parliament. The ANC caucus in parliament has very little autonomy, it does not appoint its own office bearers, and is obliged to implement the decisions of the party leadership. Following the 1999 election the ANC NWC appointed all speakers of parliament, heads of committees and ANC whips.[37]

In terms of the principle of democratic centralism once the party leadership has issued a directive, ANC members of parliament (MPs) are obliged to defend and implement that decision. They therefore cannot exercise their constitutional obligation to hold the executive to account.

Meanwhile, any constitutional devolution of powers to the second and third tiers of government have been effectively reversed by the fact that the ANC leadership appoints the premiers of each ANC controlled province, and will appoint each executive mayor following the local government elections this year.

The blurring of party and state further entrenches ANC dominance. The massive disparity in election funds between the ruling party and the opposition and party control of the public broadcaster makes it far more difficult for opposition parties to put their message across. By the time the voters turn against the ANC, a 'new class' will have been established in the upper echelons of the state, whose privilege, position and immunity from prosecution are all dependent on the ruling party remaining in power.

The ANC policies of democratic centralism and cadre deployment have created what Hannah Arendt described as a dual authority:[38] Ostensible, authority resides in the constitution, parliament and cabinet, but real authority resides in the party. Real decision making occurs outside of formal constitutional structures such

as parliament and is instead conducted behind the closed doors of party forums.

What is most striking about the ANC's policy of eliminating the distinction between party and state is how little controversy it has provoked and how ineffectual constitutional constraints have proven. Although evidence of a formal ANC policy of extending control over the levers of power only emerged after the 1999 election, the press were generally indifferent to (or supportive of) the appointment of senior ANC politicians to state institutions. Out of a fear of being labelled racist, white guilt, or a sense of racial solidarity, many commentators supported these appointments and accepted the ANC's bland assurances of impartiality at face value.

Hence the ANC has wielded its formidable moral power derived from both racial restitution and the democratic mandate to sap the will of civil society. As De Tocqueville writes:

'Within these barriers (of moral imperialism) an author may write whatever he pleases, but he will repent it if he ever steps beyond them. Not that he is exposed to the terrors of an *auto-de-fe,* but he is tormented by the slights and persecutions of daily obloquy. His political career is closed for ever, since he has offended the only authority which is able to promote his success. He yields at length, oppressed by the daily efforts he has been making, and he subsides into silence, as if he was tormented by remorse for having spoken the truth.'[39]

6. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE PARTY SYSTEM AND MINORITY ALIENATION

One of the most fundamental principles of democracy is that it should attempt to represent everybody, and therefore the principle of majority preference must always be accompanied, as far as possible, by the principle of minority inclusion. This is one of the central dilemmas in all democracies and is always problematic.

It has been indicated previously that many of the general value systems with which lobbies can associate their interests (e.g. 'merit' or the right to full expression of talents, etc.) have to a large extent been usurped, dislodged or reduced in their scope by the principle of racial transformation. Hence lobbies are most effective if they are compatible with a transformatory ethic. Nonetheless, the most salient basis for the moti-

vation and sense of effectiveness of minorities lies in the possibility of opposition gains in elections. This aspect has already been covered in respect of the accountability of the governing party, but it is also relevant to the potential for the alienation and demotivation of minority voters.

There is an assumption among prominent members of the governing party that any claims by the white minority to equal status participation in the society are nullified by the history of apartheid. But this assumption is found not only in the ANC. The prominent sociologist, Heribert Adam, in concert with many other less well-grounded commentators, has also argued that given the sentiments of the African electorate at large, it is remarkable that whites have not been victimised and that the present outcome is fairly benign and a tribute to the reconciliatory spirit of the new political elite. Adam's argument is that it is the 'ANC's "historical role" both to represent and control the poor black majority'. According to this perspective, South Africa's stability and the interests of minorities are threatened more by the potential of dissatisfied masses of poor black voters than by ANC dominance.[40] This argument comes down to the view that the ANC is the best protector the minorities can wish for. It amounts to saying that the loss of political status of whites is a trade-off for their own security.

As evidence, the fact is cited that the government has gone against popular sentiment in formulating its macroeconomic policy, that the extent of affirmative action and state-supported restitution is still remarkably mild, and that the white-dominated private sector has been remarkably well accommodated.

The question arises, however, as to whether ANC protection of capitalist interests has not been necessary for the promotion of the interests of the new black elite. In contrast, the effects of the massive racial manipulation of the labour market will only be tested once all the affirmative action legislation is implemented over time, and it seems inherently unlikely that members of the white minority will feel protected by the ANC in longer term. Some will even argue that, in view of what has happened in Zimbabwe, it will rather be the black poor that will ultimately protect minority interests, not the ANC party elite and the black bourgeoisie.[41]

The main question, however, is whether the ANC-led government has actually 'held-off' popular expectations in order to provide reassurance to minorities. In a national opinion survey in February 2000,[42] the authors posed questions about motivations for party support. In response to an open-ended question on two main reasons for supporting any party in elections, African and white respondents replied as follows:

Table 1: Two main reasons for supporting a political party in elections. National results, February 2000

Reasons	Africans (n1343)	Whites (n418)
Job creation	57%	27%
Crime and corruption	35%	49%
Economic development	22%	33%
Services and facilities	16%	11%
Educational standards	13%	9%
Nation building and unity	12%	16%
Ethnic self determination, rights or protection	11%	12%
Lower taxes	9%	10%
Equality, non-discrimination	9%	7%
Effectiveness of government	5%	10%
Moral standards	4%	11%
Environment	3%	2%
To unite opposition	–	1%
DK	3%	4%

Note: The two answers are summed, hence percentages exceed 100%. Results are provided only for Africans and whites in order to provide the maximum contrast, but the results for 'coloureds' and Indians are available on inspection.

To these findings we may add the results of a similar question in the same survey on why the respondents voted for the party they did in the 1999 elections. (*See Table 2.*)

Review of these results suggests a remarkably similar motivational pattern among Africans and whites. The differences between them are significant and understandable but the differences do not override a basic convergence in terms of motivations. The main conclusion that needs to be highlighted, however, is the lack – in their *spontaneous answers* – of any urgent demand for retribution, redistribution or penalisation of whites among African voters. If Africans are asked in a structured question

Table 2: Most important reasons for supporting a political party in the previous elections. National results, February 2000

Reasons	Africans (n1343)	Whites (n418)
General party appeal: size, popularity approval and identification	20%	13%
Better life for all	19%	6%
Party leadership	10%	10%
Rights and non-discrimination	8%	5%
Exercise power, influence	4%	4%
Services/infrastructure	4%	–
'Freedom'	3%	–
Effective opposition, express disapproval of govt.	3%	18%
Moral values	2%	6%
Peace and reconciliation	1%	1%
Language, culture, ethnic interests	1%	2%
Party helped with ID docs	4%	3%
Other diverse	5%	1%
Did not vote	13%	33%

whether or not they want forced racial redistribution, another answer may be obtained, but when they are allowed to express their voting motivations spontaneously there is little evidence of pent-up demands for redistribution or for the punishment of whites. The suggestion that the ANC is holding back a tide of anger or demand for retribution is a construction of the media and perhaps of political leaders themselves.

Nonetheless, the results do point to one less 'constructive' aspect of current politics, this being the indication from Table 2 that a high proportion of whites appear to be withdrawing from politics (33% as compared with 13% among Africans) – a consequence, perhaps, of the alienation under discussion.

One of the more salient suggestions put forward by observers is that opposition parties (notably the DP) which take a tough stand on issues of governance are fundamentally motivated by either racism or a refusal to accept the assumed inevitabilities of majority rule. For instance, Steven Friedman has recently claimed that whites, other racial minorities and African supporters of the DP see the latter's strenuous opposition as an 'assault on post-apartheid South Africa'.[43]

In so doing he is confirming and perhaps even endorsing limits of political correctness to opposition politics:

> 'The eclipse of the black opposition and the confinement of its white counterpart to a racial ghetto largely of its own making have in this view created a wide consensus on what needs to be done; it is now the task of the ANC to do it ... to "deliver" by centralising government authority and functions.'[44]

Even if not intended, this type of analysis endorses the baleful strategies adopted by the ANC at its 1997 conference.

Yet what does the African electorate really think? In the national survey referred to above, the voters were asked open questions as to why they thought the DP had increased its strength. The results are given in Table 3.

If the overwhelming view of the African electorate was that the DP had adopted racist policies in order to consolidate the white vote, then here was an opportunity to say it. Ironically, rather more white voters thought this than African voters. Only three per cent of African voters offer this explanation (although rather more, 7–8%, among the emerging elite living in white suburbs or holding white collar jobs, who read political comment).

Respondents were also asked for their spontaneous suggestions as to what the current opposition parties should do to attract more support. The results appear in Table 4.

Here again we see that only some six per cent of the African voters, and rather more whites, attach a racial tag to the opposition. Even if the six per cent that suggested more interaction with poor communities and the 12% mentioning campaigning in black areas were added, there is still no majority which could be aligned with the notion of opposition as a racial ghetto.

These results add to the earlier discussion about the principle of electoral uncertainty. While it is necessary to be very circumspect when predicting how voting patterns in the future will develop, the survey results indicate that there will not be a large swing to the opposition by black voters in the near future. Firstly, quite aside from constructions it places on its supporters' motivations in order to make whites nervous and marginalise the opposition, the ANC has correctly assessed the sentiments of its supporters. The slogan it used in the last elections 'A better life for all' was mentioned by nearly 20% of African voters in the results in Table 2, and it even crept into opposition voter terminology. The ANC is more than likely to be able to capture the sentiments of voters for a good few elections yet. Voters are motivated by hope as well as expectations, and the ANC certainly covers the aspect of hope.

There is yet another reason why dramatic shifts seem unlikely to occur. This is the phe-

Table 3: Spontaneous reasons given as to why the DP had improved its performance in the 1999 elections

Reasons	Africans (n1343)	Whites (n418)
Good organisation and communication	22%	34%
Non-discrimination/ non racial platform	17%	8%
Policy proposals: general	11%	22%
Addresses supporters needs	6%	3%
Protest regarding standards of governance	4%	6%
Policies on employment	1%	–
Modern and up to date	1%	1%
Racist or white bias	3%	4%
Don't know/not thought	33%	22%

Table 4: Voter suggestions as to how the opposition parties should attract more African support

Suggestions	Africans (n1343)	Whites (n418)
Less white/less racist	6%	9%
Interact poor communities	6%	3%
Keep promises of delivery/ performance	16%	13%
Canvass black areas	12%	8%
Solutions to problems	7%	7%
Unite opposition parties	4%	17%
Address crime	3%	3%
Stronger opposition	3%	4%
Display expertise	3%	4%
Attention to jobs	2%	2%
Better leadership	1%	1%
Address ethnic concerns	–	1%
Other	1%	1%
Task is hopeless	3%	1%
Don't know, not interested in politics	22%	28%

nomenon of 'bonding' between voters and their party. It is not necessarily more significant among Africans than it is among whites or other minorities, but some signs of this can be seen in the results in Table 2, in which 20% of Africans and 13% of whites say that they supported their party because of generalised identification and approval. All this suggests that it may take a long time for one-party dominance of South African politics to be tempered.

Yet there is one factor, which may lengthen that time even more than this analysis suggests. This is the racial factor. The ANC, whether by design or a happy coincidence of features, has perfected a code in responding to the issue of race. It starts off from the position of non-racism, and it then qualifies this with a commitment to closing racial gaps in order to achieve a legitimate basis for non-racism, and from there it proposes a range of race-based affirmative and empowerment policies to give effect to this. In the latter aspect it is able to assure its African or black supporters that, while non-racial, it is 'on their side'. This image is further reinforced by the symbolism of what Thabo Mbeki has referred to as the African Renaissance and the regular (and justified) references to the pernicious effects of colonialism. Among Africans in particular, the party is seen as a vehicle for the restoration of dignity and self worth. This too is likely to reinforce party loyalty even where 'delivery' is lacking.

What is suggested by all this, therefore, is that the quality of South Africa's democracy, as tested against the ideal of bounded uncertainty, is likely to be rather limited for a long time to come. Furthermore, the fact that rather few black voters are likely to gravitate to the opposition, will incorrectly, but plausibly, also support the ANC's rationalisations for the marginalisation and demotivation of minority voters.

CONCLUSION

It has to be concluded that apartheid, in its collapse, spawned the democracy it deserved. The democratic process in the new South Africa has achieved majority legitimacy but at the cost of minority alienation, and with it a drain of skills and capital that has an adverse impact on investor confidence.

After a review of the effectiveness of democracy in eight nations, Juan Linz concluded that:

'Democracy serves very well to paper over,

to resolve, or to integrate class conflict, even in political systems that are not particularly wealthy. But the problems derived from ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious heterogeneity are different and we have to turn to modifying the majority in ways that are, from a democratic point of view, very dubious.'[45]

Perhaps the advisors to the negotiators of South Africa's new democracy should have given more serious consideration to balancing the numerical principle with more substantial provisions for the incorporation of minority interests than they did.

Because the negotiations occurred within a loose and uneasy consensus that the racial categorisations of apartheid were an illegitimate basis for constitutional provisions, the 'modification' of the majoritarian principle by way of consociational provisions (i.e. the representation and incorporation of ethnic or racial groups as such) was effectively ruled out. Perhaps other ways of building in checks and balances should have been explored by minority negotiators. These, for example, may have included a second chamber approximating to the US Senate, with senators elected within districts defined to give adequate voice or influence to minority interests. It is not necessary to identify races or ethnic groups as such, as for instance it might have been possible to allow for a judicious over-representation of highly heterogeneous urban areas and of regions of atypical composition but low population density (like the Northern Cape).

The inclusion in the senate of institutional representatives (business, labour, civil society organisations and religious institutions) might also have been considered. Such provisions would have had the effect of countering the centralism and the dangers of minority alienation in the present dispensation to some extent, thereby enhancing the countervailing leverage of opposition in general without entrenching racial polarisation.

The possibility of any form of minority over-representation in South Africa immediately raises the legitimate concern that the voters whose poverty justifies the greatest possible political influence – the black majority – would be at a relative disadvantage. At the same time, however, a system that achieves a reasonable balance in the articulation and exercise of inter-

ests would be better positioned to improve investor confidence and economic growth. It cannot simply be assumed without justification that the poor black majority is best served by majoritarian hegemony. Between 1991 and 1996 the household incomes of the poorest 40% of Africans fell in real terms by some 17% while those of the richest 10% rose to almost the same extent. [46]

Substantially because of the impact of the policies debated above on the economy, the new dispensation in South Africa has effective-ly turned out to be the promotion of a new middle class and political elite. If income inequality continues to deepen, the ability of the ANC to govern on its own may eventually be at issue. Perhaps a time will come, therefore, when South Africans will be able to revisit their constitution.

Political scientists and constitutional lawyers would do well to anticipate the challenges that this will present to their disciplines and take the lessons to be learnt in South Africa's current phase very seriously.

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Political Alliances and Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Apartheid South Africa[1]

Adam Habib & Rupert Taylor

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's second democratic election in 1999 sparked a public debate on the necessity for a viable parliamentary opposition. This has recently shifted into higher gear as a result of the decision by the Democratic Party (DP) and New National Party (NNP) to merge prior to the 2004 elections, and to campaign under a single banner as the Democratic Alliance (DA) in the local government elections to be held in November 2000. The African National Congress (ANC), in response, has interpreted this as a ganging up of white parties, and has even suggested that perhaps black parties should think of doing the same.[2] This racial polarisation of the debate is unfortunate for it prevents a measured consideration of what the nature of opposition should best be, for the purpose of consolidating democracy.

Yet such a sober analysis is made necessary by a number of developments since the first democratic election in 1994. First, the structure of the political system was dramatically changed in 1996 when parliament, acting as a Constituent Assembly in terms of the 'interim' constitution of 1994, resolved not to extend transitional power-sharing provisions which had seen the formerly-ruling National Party (NP) participating in government, alongside the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as junior partners of the majority ANC in a Government of National Unity (GNU). While the IFP opted to remain in government and continues to be represented in Mbeki's post-1999 cabinet, the NP (which subsequently renamed itself the NNP) decided to withdraw and thereby undermine the elite pact which had initially shaped South

African democracy. Released from the conditioning effects of these pacting tendencies, opposition parties, and in particular the DP, adopted an increasingly adversarial stance towards the ruling party. The effect of this on the process of democratic consolidation clearly needs to be investigated.

Second, there is a popular perception that the ANC has failed to deliver on its electoral promises. The euphoric honeymoon phase of the South African transition is now coming to an end, resulting in increased tensions among racial groups and between the citizenry and the government. Large sections of the white, coloured, and Indian populations feel alienated as a result of affirmative action and redistribution. Significant sections of the black population believe that reconciliation has gone too far and is occurring at the expense of economic transformation.[3] Furthermore, as a result of intra-party tensions within the 'Tripartite Alliance', which links the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) to the ruling party, the leadership of the ANC is centralising power and bypassing party and state structures in the formulation of policy.[4] These developments suggest that the government's failures of delivery are translating into a weakening of the democratic order itself. However, democratic theory suggests that the existence of a parliamentary opposition will ensure that citizen dissatisfaction is not directed at the system as such, but rather at the governing party. Why is this not the case in South Africa? What does this indicate about the viability of South Africa's existing parliamentary opposition?

These questions are subsets of the three separate research questions. First, is a parliamentary opposition necessary for the consolidation of democracy? Second, are existing opposition parties functioning in a way that increases their viability and facilitates the establishment of a democratic political order? Finally, if this is not the case, what are the obstacles to the emergence of a viable opposition in South Africa?

1. PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Conventional wisdom suggests that parliamentary opposition parties are necessary institutions if political initiatives towards the consolidation of democracy are to succeed.[5] In South Africa, the mainstream media has been at the forefront of popularising this 'wisdom' and stressing the indispensable role of opposition parties in protecting the interests and rights of citizens, monitoring government, and consolidating democracy.[6] Academia has also reinforced this conventional wisdom.[7] Mainstream democratic theorists, from South Africa and elsewhere, insist that both the constitutional right to form a opposition and the reality of a viable electoral alternative must exist for the successful consolidation of democracy. Some analysts even recommended the abandonment of power-sharing institutions and their associated political pacts in the hope that this would facilitate greater opportunities for the emergence of parliamentary opposition politics.[8]

There is much merit in this conventional wisdom. The point that has to be underscored, however, is that the formal existence of political parties does not necessarily mean that they will fulfil the functions usually attributed to them in a democratic polity. Parties must not only exist in a legal or organisational sense, but they must also be mechanisms that enable representation and express the social interests of significant constituencies in society. Most commentaries on the South African situation clearly recognise this and argue that a parliamentary opposition is only 'worth its salt' if it is perceived as a potential alternative in government.[9]

Yet why is a viable parliamentary opposition deemed necessary for democracy? Courtney Jung and Ian Shapiro identify three reasons. First, they maintain that opposition parties are necessary to facilitate a peaceful alternation in government. Parliamentary parties are perceived as institutional sites where 'counter political elites ... (can) organise and inform themselves so as to be able to contest for power'.[10] Should such institutional sites not exist, 'crises for the government are correspondingly more likely to become crises for the democratic regime'.[11] This then underlines their second argument, that a parliamentary opposition ensures that a citizenry's unhappiness with the government is not automatically translated into a delegitimation of the democratic order.

Viable opposition parties provide institutional outlets for critics of the government to express their dissent and keep alive the possibility that they could become the governing elite at some future date. This permits 'the ebb and flow of competitive party politics that democracies require'.[12]

Finally, Jung and Shapiro insist that a viable parliamentary opposition facilitates institutional arrangements that enable the performance of a variety of public interest functions. The coherence of public policy can only be guaranteed if the political environment permits debate and competition over ideas. Parliamentary oppositions have an interest in sustaining such an environment because engaging in debate over political issues and public policy enables them to be perceived by the citizenry as viable alternatives to the ruling party. Opposition parties also have an interest in discrediting the ruling party, and this prompts them to monitor government performance and expose corruption. Thus oppositional institutions which 'have an interest in asking awkward questions, shining light in dark places, and exposing abuses in power' serve as a check on 'governments who have an incentive to camouflage mistakes or controversial decisions that might threaten their popularity'.[13]

Particularly relevant for South Africa, however, is an additional factor. Democratic consolidation in South Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, is dependent on the government's ability to address the widespread poverty and economic inequalities within the society. Yet the new government, (partly because its policy choices are constrained by an unfavourable set of power relations between it, international financial agencies and domestic and foreign capital), has implemented a neo-

liberal economic policy that is unlikely to address these problems.[14]

More people-centred policy outcomes are unlikely to be forthcoming unless this unfavourable set of power relations is challenged. This requires the development of institutional mechanisms, of which a viable parliamentary opposition is one component, that will ensure that citizens' electoral votes are considered as important a variable in determining power relations as are the financial resources of foreign investors and international financial agencies. As long as government is guaranteed that citizens will not vote for any opposition party, they have no incentive to take citizens' interests into account. Should they fear that citizens would vote for an opposition party, they are more likely to deal with this electoral challenge by enhancing delivery and at least attempting to satisfy the interests of the majority.[15]

A viable parliamentary opposition is thus necessary for the consolidation of democracy. Not all analysts share this view. Some political commentators, from both mainstream and radical circles, argue that the lack of a viable parliamentary opposition need not undermine democratic prospects. In their assessments, internal political pluralism within the ruling party and/or corporatist mechanisms are more important or can make up for the lack of a viable parliamentary opposition.[16] These analyses are premised on the hope that the internal structures of the ANC and/or corporatist mechanisms will enable the political leadership to be held accountable, and will allow for the full participation of all social groups and a negotiated resolution of the policy differences between them.

However, this view is both idealistic and decontextualised from an understanding of current political realities. The political leadership of the ANC is perfectly aware of the fact that its policies are not very popular amongst either its own membership or alliance partners. They are thus unlikely to allow representative structures of the party or corporatist mechanisms to be used as platforms to derail their policies.

Evidence abounds in support of this. The government's latest macroeconomic programme, the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, was adopted by the cabinet without any consultation with constituencies in the party or social partners in corporatist institutions. Another example is the ANC National Working Committee's (NWC's) decision in 1999 to appoint regional premiers rather than allow them to be elected through party structures. Even erstwhile supporters of the ANC have recognised that since 1994 there has been a significant centralisation of power at the apex of South Africa's political system.[17] This centralisation of power in both the party and state is not unique to South Africa. Guillermo O'Donnell in his analysis of Latin American democracies has observed a similar phenomenon, and has categorised the political systems in these societies where representative structures are weakened and power is centralised, as delegative democracies.[18]

This shift towards a delegative form of democracy in South Africa suggests that internal party structures and corporatist mechanisms are unlikely to become the instruments that will entrench political pluralism and hold state elites accountable to the citizenry. A viable parliamentary opposition is a necessary precondition for arresting this trend.

2. PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION AND VOTING PATTERNS AFTER 1994

Mainstream opinion suggests that it is impossible to establish a viable parliamentary opposition because of the racialised structure of South African politics. This view holds that the political activities and electoral preferences of South Africans are primarily determined by their 'racial' location in the society. As long as there is no split in the ANC, black citizens will not vote for the parliamentary opposition. Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins, in a recent articulation of this view, maintain that this situation is likely to continue because the post-apartheid regime favours black South Africans. 'Ethnic patronage [exists] in the form of favouritism in bureaucratic appointments and state contracts awarded to business', and this 'produces a state-sponsored (black) middle class whose commitment to the dominant party outweighs that to a neutral state or the need for opposition politics'.[19] Electoral outcomes are thus 'likely to continue to resemble a racial census'.[20]

Two problems exist with this argument. First, Giliomee and Simkins suggest that a parliamentary opposition would only be viable if the mid-

dle class serves as its primary social base. This, in one form, is a rearticulation of the old modernisation thesis that associates democracy and competitive parliamentary politics with the rise of the middle class.[21] There is a substantial body of intellectual work, however, that has demonstrated that the middle class is as prone to support authoritarian regimes as it is to favour democratic ones.[22] Moreover, this argument does not explicitly provide a rationale for why opposition politics has to be located in the middle class. The development of an opposition in both Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the democratic transitions in Latin America in the 1980s occurred with organised workers serving as its primary social base.[23] Granted, the electoral success of these parties was partially dependent on them broadening their support base to incorporate elements of other classes. But any party, whatever its primary social base, is obliged to broaden its appeal to other classes if it aspires to govern. There is thus no logical reason to predicate the establishment of a viable parliamentary opposition on the narrow social base of the black middle class.

Second, Giliomee and Simkins assume that the establishment of a viable parliamentary opposition is impossible because they view South African society from the prism of a racialised politics. 'Race' is treated as an independent variable that explains how the majority of the electorate would vote. However, this assumption needs to be contested, particularly since it takes race as objectively given.[24] The result is that lines of causality are presumed to exist between racial categories and voting patterns by simply demonstrating a strong degree of correlation between the two. But even if one accepts that there is a strong degree of correlation between racial categories and voting patterns, and this is by no means conclusively proven, such correlation cannot be simply interpreted as causation. As is well known, South African society exhibits strong overlaps between racial and class categories. Why then should race be prioritised as the explanatory variable accounting for electoral outcomes? Could it not be class, or perhaps some intricate mix of racial and class categories?[25] This suggests that one should treat with caution the mainstream assumption that electoral support is rigidly defined in racial terms.

This is not simply a normative judgement. In February 1998 the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) released its first Public Opinion Service (POS) Report which suggested that the South African electorate might not be as rigid and stagnant as is conventionally assumed. Arguing that the mainstream assumption 'is partly based on the fact that most surveys only focus on voting intentions',[26] the POS report distinguished between this and partisan identification, and investigated both in three surveys conducted in 1994, 1995, and 1997. Subsequently, as part of a consortium with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Markinor (Pty) Ltd, Idasa continued its investigations in a series of opinion polls for the 1999 general elections. The overall results of the seven surveys, reflected in Table 1, indicate that the proportion of the electorate that strongly identifies with a party fell from 88% in 1994 to 43% in October/November 1998, and then climbed to 55% in April 1999. The number of independents increased from 12% in 1994 to 58% in October/November 1998, but then fell back to 45% in April 1999. As of April 1999, 35% of African voters, 76% of white voters, 63% of coloured voters and 83% of Indian voters saw themselves as independents. These figures were markedly down on those registered six months earlier, particularly in the case of African voters, when some 50% saw themselves as independent.[27] (*See Table 1.*)

The results also indicated (*Table 2*) that the proportion of the electorate that strongly identified with the ANC decreased from 58% in 1994 to 34% in October/November 1998, but then climbed to 44% in April 1999. The NNP's support in the corresponding period decreased from 15% to 3%. On the other hand, the decline in the figures for voting intentions was less dramatic. As Table 3 indicates, the proportion of the electorate that intended to vote for the ANC was down from 61% in September/October 1994 to 60% in April 1999. When the calculations were restricted to only registered voters, the ANC's electoral support increased to 65%. Voting intentions for the NNP in the corresponding period was down from 16% to 7%, while that of the DP increased from 1 to 7%. Overall, these calculations were largely in line with the national election results of 1999 when the ANC received 66.36% of the vote, while

Table 1: Party identification[28]

	Sept-Oct 1994	Sept-Oct 1995	June-July 1997	Sept 1998	Oct-Nov 1998	Feb-March 1999	April 1999
Yes	88	58	58	45	43	50	55
No	12	37	37	53	55	46	41
Don't Know	4	4	3	3	3	3	

Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za.

the DP, which replaced the NNP as the official opposition, received 9.55%. The only party whose support base was significantly underestimated by the Opinion 1999 surveys was the IFP, which received 8.59% of the national vote.[29]

What is the significance of the discrepancies between the electorate's partisan identifications and voting intentions? The significant reduction in partisan identification with the ANC and NNP between 1994 and 1999 suggests that these parties electoral support is not as rigidly defined as was previously assumed. Support for the ANC among Africans declined from 75% in 1994 to 45% in October/November 1998, and then subsequently climbed to 58% by April 1999.[31] The NNP's support among whites decreased even more dramatically, from 48% in 1994 to 5% in April 1999.[32] The largest shift in voting patterns in both the African and white communities was towards the independent category with some 35% of Africans and 76% of

whites declaring themselves independent by April 1999.[33] This fact, together with the mild drop in voting intentions for the ANC between 1994 and 1999, suggests that even though the electorate might identify less with the ANC, it currently sees no serious alternative to the ruling party.

Thus, as Idasa's Public Opinion Service report concludes, the stability in voting intentions is likely to continue in the short term, but the increase in the numbers of 'leaners' and 'independents' creates the potential for significant electoral shifts in the future.[34]

Why have the parliamentary opposition parties not been able to capitalise on this situation? Mainstream opinion suggests they are unable to do so because the electorate's partisan identification is rigidly defined in racial terms. But the data from these surveys suggests that this is not the case. In fact, the data indicates that there is a great potential for opposition parties to win over significant sections of the electorate. Why,

Table 2: Party identification over time[30]

	Sept-Oct 1994 %	Sept-Nov 1995 %	June-July 1997 %	Sept 1998 %	Oct-Nov 1998 %	Feb-March 1999 %	April 1999 %
ANC	58	37	40	35	34	40	44
NNP	15	9	6	3	3	3	3
IFP	5	5	4	2	2	2	2
FF	2	1	1	<1	<1	<1	1
DP	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
PAC	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
UDM	NA	NA	1*	1	1	1	1
Other	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Won't Say/ Confidential	3	2	2	<1	<1	1	<1
Independent	12	42	42	56	58	50	45

*Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za. * 1997 UDM figures refer to the combination of the scores for its predecessor National Consultative Forum and the Process for a New Movement.*

Table 3: Voting intention

	Sept-Oct 1994 %	May-June 1995 %	Nov 1995 %	May-June 1996 %	Nov 1996 %	May-June 1997 %	Nov 1998 %	Mar 1998 %	July 1998 %	Sept 1998 %	Oct-Nov 1998 %	Feb-Mar 1999 %	April 1999 %
ANC	61	64	64	63	61	62	58	54	57	51	54	59	60
NNP	16	15	14	13	13	15	12	10	9	10	9	8	7
DP	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	5	6	7	5	6	7
IFP	5	2	3	5	6	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	3
PAC	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	1
UDM	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	5	5	2	3	2	2
FF	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
FA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
UCDP	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	>1	1	<1	1
ACDP	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1	1
Azapo	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
CP	<1	2	1	1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0
Other	<1	1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1
Don't know	12	10	8	11	11	12	12	16	14	21	19	17	15

Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za.

then, has this not happened? The simple answer is that the electorate does not see current opposition parties as representing their interests.

There are two reasons for this. First, the major opposition parties, because of their historical legacy and current positioning, are seen as articulating the interests of particular racial and ethnic groups. Instead of these parties weaving a programme that attracts the support of diverse communities, they have developed strategies that appeal to narrow sections of the electorate. The IFP, for instance, has projected itself as the defender and representative of the Zulu people. By so doing, it reduced its appeal for non-Zulu independents. The NNP and Democratic Party (DP), historically seen as serving the interests of Afrikaner and English whites respectively, developed electoral strategies that targeted white, coloured and Indian sections of the electorate. Again, by doing so, they denied themselves the opportunity to appeal to African voters who constitute, by far, the largest segment of the independent voter category. The failure to develop a viable parliamentary opposition, then, is not as is commonly perceived, the fault of an electorate voting in racial terms, but rather is the responsibility of a parliamentary opposition leadership that is hamstrung by its inability to think outside of a racial prism.

Second, the existing parliamentary opposition parties remain unviable because they do not offer policies that would enable them to attract a significant electoral constituency. The policy choices that are currently offered by the parliamentary opposition only appeal to sections of the white, coloured and Indian communities. Yet, as was indicated earlier, a parliamentary opposition would only be viable if it is able to weave a policy programme capable of attracting the support of a diverse set of constituencies, and in particular the growing community of independent African voters. To do this, an opposition would have to offer a set of socio-economic policies that would attract the support of the lower middle class, working class, poor and unemployed of all racial groups. This would entail advocating a socio-economic programme similar to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) advanced by the ANC prior to its ascension to office. It would require offering a substantive policy choice to the electorate on macroeconomic policy. Yet, to date, there has been a large degree of consensus among parties in parliament on macroeconomic policy. The result is that there

is no incentive for the growing section of the electorate that feels unrepresented to vote for any of the existing parliamentary opposition parties.

The existing opposition parties, then, by locating themselves in minority racial groups and by not offering substantive policy choice in terms of macroeconomic policy, undermine their own viability. The fluidity and shifts in electoral support that were registered in the opinion and electoral polls in 1998 and 1999 will not fundamentally alter this situation. These indicate that the DP was the primary beneficiary of the NNP's demise. They also suggest that some of the electoral loss of the ANC was picked up by the United Democratic Movement (UDM).[35] Yet neither the UDM nor the newly established DA is likely to dramatically enhance the electoral prospects of the parliamentary opposition. The essential reason is that the DA, given the history of its constituent components and leadership, is likely to continue to fish in the shallow voting pool of minority racial groups. While the UDM was established in 1997 – by Roelf Meyer (a rebel from the NP) and Bantu Holomisa (who had been expelled from the ANC) – to break the racial divide, it was, and still is, prone to criticisms of not offering any coherent policy alternatives. The organisation was of course an amalgamation of two very different political traditions; pragmatic Nationalists, and disaffected ANC elements. This political alliance, however, seems to have broken down with the result that the UDM's support base has been continually eroding since 1999.[36]

In sum, then, the establishment of a viable opposition is not as impossible as is conventionally assumed. However, it is unlikely to be realised from the remnants of the existing opposition parties because these continue to locate themselves in minority racial groups, and do not offer substantive policy choices that would enable them to attract the growing category of independent voters.

A substantial chunk of these independent voters are, for the foreseeable future, either likely to vote for the ANC or opt out of the political system. This situation will deteriorate unless a political force develops that is capable of serving as an electoral pole that can attract disenchanted citizens and thereby establish a competitive democratic order.

3. THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE AND THE FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

How can such a political force be developed? A parliamentary opposition in South Africa would only be viable if its primary social base is the organised African working class. This does not mean that it has to only represent the interests of organised workers. Like social democratic parties in Western Europe in earlier decades and the current Partido dos Trabalhadores in Brazil, such a party must articulate a set of policies that advances the cause of not only the organised working class, but also of the unemployed, the lower middle class, and the rural poor.

There is a prevailing mainstream opinion that the interests of organised workers are diametrically opposed to those of the unemployed. This view, used cynically by business to weaken support for labour legislation, suggests that the high level of unemployment is the result of a rigid labour market and the high cost of labour. Its solution is to weaken labour legislation in the hope that the deregulation and lowered wages costs would prompt business – in particular small and medium enterprises – to expand their workforces. The stumbling block is organised workers who in the form of Cosatu and other bodies, are opposed to the weakening of labour legislation.[37] This view also neatly dovetails with one in the labour movement which suggests that the unions should eschew any political ambitions, and evolve into economistic institutions that simply represent and advance the interests of their direct membership.[38] Once again, the underlying assumption is that the unions should represent organised workers and leave other social institutions to take care of the unorganised and unemployed.

There is some evidence to support this proposal. The stratification and differentiation of the African workforce has continued unabated since the late 1970s.[39] But the emergence of specific interests within the African workforce need not automatically lead to the disaggregation of a common interest. It is an irony that the commentators who most often suggest that the conflict between capital and labour need not be zero-sum are the ones who are at the forefront of suggesting that the differentiation within the working class has to lead to a zero-sum outcome. This need not be the case. Indeed, recognition of the differentiation within the work-

force may facilitate the development of a political programme that marries both the specific and common interests of different segments of the African working class. Such a programme would be most easily developed by a political party whose success depends on the evolution of such an orientation. And, as has occurred so often before, such a party can be established by, and have, an alliance with a union movement with the political maturity to recognise the need for a relative autonomy of that party.

But why should the success of a parliamentary opposition in South Africa be singularly dependent on the support of the organised African working class? Simply because this is the only constituency with the will to serve as such an opposition. Minority racial groups cannot serve as that social constituency because they do not have the electoral numbers that would allow for an opposition to be perceived as an electoral threat. Moreover, locating parliamentary opposition in minority racial groups, as is currently occurring, will needlessly polarise society in racial terms and thereby undermine the consolidation of democracy. Neither are the new African elite, and managerial and professional middle classes a serious contender for the role of opposition, if only because they are well taken care of by the ANC. They are the primary beneficiaries of the ANC's current approaches to affirmative action and black economic empowerment which have realised 'a dramatic growth in the income, wealth and asset base of a tiny group of black businessmen ...'[40]

Furthermore, the organised African working class is the only constituency with capacity to serve as a social base for opposition. It is the most organised sector within the African population. It has, through different union federations, a significant amount of infrastructural and financial resources at its disposal. Moreover, as indicated earlier, Africans constitute the largest block within the independent voter category. The earlier Opinion '99 surveys indicated that these voters were increasingly dissatisfied with the government's performance.[41] Although the ANC's campaign enabled the party to claw back some lost ground in the months prior to the elections, the surveys indicate that the ANC can no longer take the African voter for granted. Also, although most surveys do not detail the class

location of respondents, it is fair to assume that a significant proportion of the independent and dissatisfied African voters are from the working class, lower middle class, and the unemployed categories.

Why, then, have these sectors of the electorate not become a social motor for the emergence of a parliamentary opposition? As indicated earlier, the existing parliamentary opposition parties do not have the political will to offer a home to poorer South Africans. The PAC, which does have such an orientation, is shackled by its racist image and is publicly perceived as being too disorganised to serve as a viable opposition.[42] The only other political force with the will to represent this sector, and the capacity to serve as a viable parliamentary opposition, is Cosatu and the SACP, both of which are excluded from doing so by their strategic alliance with the ANC. The Tripartite Alliance has thus become the principal obstacle to the emergence of a viable opposition and the establishment of truly competitive politics in South Africa.

The Tripartite Alliance, although only formalised in the early 1990s, dates back to the establishment of Cosatu in December 1985, having been preceded by an alliance between the ANC, SACP and SACTU that dates back to the 1950s.[43] In any case, the emergence of Cosatu witnessed the amalgamation of two traditions of unionism that emerged in the post-1973 era, a community unionism aligned to the ANC that was typical of the 1950s, and a shop floor unionism that stressed the importance of unions retaining their independence from the national liberation movement.[44] The compromise struck in Cosatu was that the federation would participate in the political struggle on terms favourable to the working class. In effect this meant that Cosatu entered into a strategic alliance with the ANC, ultimately replacing SACTU as the union component of the Congress alliance.

The Tripartite Alliance had two fundamental objectives. First, it was intended to maximise opposition against the apartheid regime. Second, it was to ensure that a working class bias prevailed in the policies of the national liberation movement. In terms of its first objective it was spectacularly successful. The Tripartite Alliance ensured that when the political structures of the popular movement were forced on

the defensive in the 1987–88 wave of repression, the union movement, and in particular Cosatu, took up the cudgels of resistance. Cosatu thereby forced the state to a realisation that instability would not simply disappear with bannings and repression. This in no small measure contributed to the latter's decisions to unban black political organisations, release their leaders, and enter into negotiations about a democratic dispensation.[45]

In terms of its second objective, the Tripartite Alliance was singularly unsuccessful. Instead of influencing the programmes of the ANC, the opposite in fact occurred. Since the late 1980s, Cosatu, whilst retaining its radical rhetoric, has consistently moderated its policies. For a short period prior to and after the 1994 elections, Cosatu influence seems to have prevailed within the ANC, in particular because of the latter's adoption of the developmentalist RDP. But soon after the ANC's ascension to power, it became apparent that the RDP existed only in name. If there were any doubts about this assessment, they were soon put to rest when the ANC adopted a new macroeconomic programme in June 1996 (GEAR), whose policies bore striking resemblance to those called for by the NNP and the business community.[46] The government's adoption of GEAR provoked serious discontent and created enormous strains. Cosatu and the SACP openly opposed GEAR and were publicly chastised by both Mandela and Mbeki.[47] These public spats swung the spotlight on the Tripartite Alliance and provoked a debate on its future.

In response to the almost cynical predictions of a split by mainstream commentators, alliance leaders and activists have retreated into a laager mentality vowing to strengthen their ties. However, a measured and distanced review of the alliance is long overdue, especially for Cosatu and the SACP, for its raison d'être has clearly expired.[48] The apartheid regime was defeated and a new non-racial democratic political system has been established. Moreover, the Tripartite Alliance has not enabled Cosatu and the SACP to imprint a developmentalist political economy on the post-apartheid ANC government. They should therefore now consider establishing an independent political force capable of advancing such a goal.

The realisation of a more people-centred political economy is dependent in the current

context on the emergence of a viable opposition. As long as this does not exist, the ANC government can take the electorate's votes for granted, and need not take their concerns as seriously as it does those of foreign investors and the business community. Given the fact that no other opposition party is capable of fulfilling this role, the responsibility therefore falls on the shoulders of Cosatu and the SACP. A contradiction has thus emerged between the goals of Cosatu and the SACP and their strategic orientation. Or, to put it another way, continued participation in the alliance leads not to a struggle for the 'heart and soul of the ANC',[49] but rather to a hostage scenario where Cosatu and the SACP ultimately have to abandon their social democratic commitments.

There is of course a body of progressive scholars who would vigorously contest this conclusion. In a recent exchange, Roger Southall and Geoffrey Wood accused Rupert Taylor and myself of advancing 'artificial, dangerous and premature ...'[50] recommendations, and defended the Tripartite Alliance on the grounds that it enabled Cosatu to influence government policy and was supported by a majority of the federation's members. A detailed response to Southall and Wood's critique is provided elsewhere.[51] However, it would be useful here to at least reiterate two points. First, the post-apartheid labour-friendly legislative framework can no longer serve as evidence of Cosatu's influence over government policy because it is being reviewed and is likely to be watered down. Indeed, cabinet ministers' recent adversarial polemics against the union federations, and government's increasingly stringent stance against public sector unions in wage negotiations, is evidence of Cosatu's waning influence on the ANC.[52] Second, Cosatu members' support of the Tripartite Alliance is based on the erroneous belief that the RDP constitutes the core of ANC economic policy, and takes ANC rhetoric at face-value.[53] Moreover, the same survey referred to by Southall and Wood also indicates that 70% of respondents would vote for an alternative party in the event of the ANC failing to deliver.[54] There is thus a significant amount of support within Cosatu for abandoning the alliance in the event of the ANC ignoring the interests of workers and the poor. But even if this weren't the case, progressive scholars

should not fetishise the majority viewpoint. The fact that a majority of Cosatu members believe the Tripartite Alliance is beneficial for their interests does not make it so. Majorities have been known to be wrong.

In contrast, the analysis here indicates that the alliance is undermining the attempts of both Cosatu and the SACP to achieve their goals and should be replaced with a nonracial, social-democratic electoral alternative capable of taking on the ANC.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of a dominant party system in South Africa, and the relations of power in the global and national arenas, has ensured that citizens' preferences are sacrificed in the interests of appeasing foreign investors and the domestic business community. This has manifested itself in the ANC's abandonment of the RDP and its adoption of a neoliberal economic strategy. The likely outcome of such policy choices is increasing economic inequality and poverty and an undermining of democracy. The solution is the establishment of institutional mechanisms that will enable citizens' preferences to be taken seriously in the corridors of political power. This paper has argued that one such institutional mechanism must be a viable parliamentary opposition, which is necessary for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.

The paper has demonstrated that existing parliamentary opposition parties are unlikely to develop into viable challenges to the dominant party. This is not the result of the racialised structure of South African politics. On the contrary, recent surveys show that South Africa's electorate is open to voting for parties other than the ANC, yet their reluctance to do so stems from an accurate assessment that these parties are continuing to serve the interests of minority racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, these parties are not seen to offer substantial policy choices that can attract a sizeable section of the African electorate.

The best prospects for the emergence of a viable opposition therefore lies in the ranks of Cosatu and the SACP. Cosatu and the SACP have a large reservoir of popular support, and their commitment to a social democratic political economy ensures that they will articulate policies that can potentially attract a significant sector of the South African electorate. In addi-

tion, Cosatu is the only independent source outside the business community which has the organisational muscle and financial resources required for the establishment of a viable opposition. The major obstacle to Cosatu and the SACP playing this oppositional role is their membership of the Tripartite Alliance, and they have to come to terms with the fact that the best opportunity to realise a social democratic political economy lies in the establishment of an opposition that will force the state to take the interests of working, unemployed, and poor citizens as seriously as it does those of foreign investors and the business community.

What is the likely future of the alliance? Two possibilities are available. On the one hand is the leadership and activist layer of Cosatu and the SACP, many of whom wear multiple hats and move easily within the alliance. Committed to a social democratic political economy, this group places its hope in the fact that a struggle can still be waged for the heart and soul of the ANC.[55] On the other hand is a newly ascendant and recently converted layer of leadership who argue that the ANC's role is one of deracialising the market economy so that the African bourgeoisie and managerial and professional middle classes can have their place in the sun. For this layer, an alliance with the IFP is more important and strategic than one with Cosatu and the SACP.[56]

For the short term, however, both Cosatu and the SACP are safe. Should they not want a break in the alliance, their struggle credentials' will see them through the hurdles of the first few years of this new millennium. But it will come at the cost of sacrificing their goal. Already the ANC leadership in the form of Mandela and Mbeki has made it clear that Cosatu and the SACP need to be more compliant if they want to remain in the alliance. The ANC leadership is likely to intensify such demands, especially after the local government elections in November 2000.

Even if Cosatu and the SACP accede to them, it will not enable them to survive permanently in the alliance. The most probable scenario for the medium- to long-term is the replacement of the Tripartite Alliance with an ANC-IFP coalition.

The medium term future of Cosatu and the SACP lies in the arena of parliamentary opposition politics. The viability of such a politics is

dependent on how long the Tripartite Alliance survives. Should Cosatu and the SACP continue in the alliance for longer than a few years, their legitimacy could be eroded because of their compliance to the ANC. Moreover, their capacity could be weakened as layers of committed and skilled activists peel away from them to investigate other political alternatives. In the case of Cosatu, there is even the possibility that the ANC might succeed in converting it to a narrow economic union federation. Should the break happen in the next few years, however, we may then have the first real possibility opening up for the development of a viable opposition politics. Such a development would represent South Africa's best chance for the realisation of a social democratic political economy and the consolidation of democracy.

ENDNOTES

1) An earlier version of this argument was published with Rupert Taylor as, Parliamentary Opposition and Democratic Consolidation in South Africa, *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 26, No. 79 (1999), pp. 109-115.
2) Sbu Ndebele, leader of the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal, made this call on hearing of the merger between the DP and NNP.
3) See Joel Barkan, Steven Friedman, Claude Kabemba, Chris Landsberg, Khehla Shubane, Sector Assessment: USAID/South Africa Democracy and Governance Program, report prepared for Macro International and USAID/South Africa by the Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, South Africa, Feb. 1998, p. 10.
4) See Adam Habib, South Africa – The Rainbow Nation and Prospects for Consolidating Democracy, *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1997), pp. 15-37; Roger Southall, The Centralisation and Fragmentation of South

Africa's Dominant Party System, *African Affairs*, No. 97 (1998), pp. 443-469; and Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (eds), *The Awkward Embrace: One Party Domination and Democracy*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1999).

5) See Robert Dahl (ed), *Political Opposition in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (New York: Praeger, 1967); Barrington Moore, Jr, *Liberal Prospects Under Soviet Socialism: A Comparative Historical Perspective* (New York: Averell Harriman Institute, 1989); Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oaklahoma Press, 1991); and Ian Shapiro, Three Ways to be a Democrat, *Political Theory*, 22 (Feb. 1994).

6) See *Mail & Guardian*, 28 February–4 March 1999, and 28 May–3 June 1999.

7) See Giliomee and Simkins, *The Awkward Embrace*; and Adam Habib and Rupert Taylor, Parliamentary Opposition and Democratic Consolidation in South Africa.

8) See Courtney Jung and Ian Shapiro, South Africa's Negotiated Transition: Democracy, Opposition and the New Constitutional Order, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1995), pp. 269-308.

9) Howard Barrell, The Race for the Real Second Place, *Mail & Guardian*, 28 February-4 March 1999.

10) Ibid, p. 272.

11) Ibid.

12) Ibid.

13) Ibid, p. 273.

14) See Habib and Padayachee, pp. 253-55.

15) Adam Habib, South Africa Needs New Left Opposition, *Mail & Guardian*, 12-18 June 1998.

16) See Heribert Adam, Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, Kogila Moodley, *Comrades in Business: Post-Liberation Politics in South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers Ltd, 1997); Joel Barkan et al, Sector Assessment: USAID/South Africa Democracy and Governance Programme, Feb. 1998; Steven Friedman, ANC is Long Term Guardian of Democracy, *Business Day*, 23 March 1998; and

Edward Webster and Glenn Adler, Toward a Class Compromise in South Africa's 'Double Transition': Bargained Liberalisation and the Consolidation of Democracy, *Politics & Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1999), pp. 347-385.

17) See Southall, The Centralisation and Fragmentation of South Africa's Dominant Party System.

18) Guillermo O'Donnell, On the State, Democratisation, and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Some Glances at Some Post-Communist Societies, *World Development*, Vol. 21, No. 8 (1993), pp. 1355-1369; and Guillermo O'Donnell, Delegative Democracy, *Journal of Democracy*, No. 5 (1994), pp. 55-69.

19) Giliomee and Simkins, *The Awkward Embrace*, p. 346.

20) Ibid.

21) The classic work in this regard is Barrington Moore, Jr, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

22) See, for instance, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); and Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernisation and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

23) Note, for example, the rise of social democratic parties in Western Europe and the emergence of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party) in Brazil.

24) For similar criticisms of this assumption in the mainstream social sciences, see Rupert Taylor and Mark Orkin, The Racialisation of Social Scientific Research in South Africa, *South African Sociological Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (1995), pp. 43-59.

25) See my study with Sanusha Naidu of the 'coloured' and 'Indian' vote in the 1999 elections demonstrates that class variables played as crucial a role as racial ones in electoral outcomes. The 'coloured' and 'Indian' middle and upper middle classes were prone to vote for the ANC, while those on the lower end of the economic hierarchy supported the minority opposi-

tion parties. See Adam Habib and Sanusha Naidu, Election '99: Was There a 'Coloured' and 'Indian' Vote, *Politikon*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 189-199.

26) Robert Mattes, Cherrel Africa and Sean Jacobs, POS Reports: The Evolution of Party Support since 1994, No. 1 (February 1998), p. 3.

27) Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, Party Support and Voting Intention (1V), Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za, p. 7.

28) The question asked in 1994: 'Regardless of how you voted on Election Day (in April) was there one particular political party which you felt especially close to?' The question asked in subsequent surveys: 'Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular political party/ies?'

29) This underestimation of the IFP's electoral support is largely a result of the reluctance of voters in KwaZulu-Natal's rural areas to declare their political allegiances, especially in the run-up to an election. For a detailed set of the 1999 election results, see the Independent Electoral Commissions web page: www.elections.org.za.

30) The question: 'If there were elections tomorrow, which political party or organisation would you vote for?' Also, note that the symbol <1 means the proportion is between 0.1 and 0.4%.

31) Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, Party Support and Voting Intention (1V), p. 9.

32) Ibid.

33) Ibid, p. 7.

34) Robert Mattes, Helen Taylor and Cherrel Africa, Party Support and Voting Intention (11), Press Release, 8 December 1998, in http://www.idasa.org.za, p. 5.

35) Markinor, Media Release, 8 September 1998.

36) Roelf Meyer, the co-founder of the UDM and one of the most respected ex-Nat leaders in the black community, left the party to join the Rhema Church in 1999. Since his departure the UDM has experienced a spate of defections to both the ANC and DP.

37) See South Africa Foundation, Growth for All: An Economic Strategy for South Africa, (1996).

38) See Geoff Schreiner, Restructuring the Labour Movement After Apartheid, *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1994), p. 48.

39) See Owen Crankshaw, On the Doorstep of Management, *South African Sociological Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (1993).

40) Bill Freund and Vishnu Padayachee, Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Key Patterns Emerge, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16 May 1998, p. 1175.

41) In September 1998, a majority of Africans expected the economy would not improve in the next 12 months. The Opinion '99 surveys indicated that the proportion of African South Africans who expected the economy to improve in the next 12 months dropped from 53% in 1997 to 41% by September 1998. See 'Opinion '99 Economic Evaluations', Press Release, 12 November 1998, in http://www.idasa.org.za, p.3.

42) Robert Mattes, Cherrel Africa and Sean Jacobs, POS Reports: The Evolution of Party Support since 1994, p. 3.

43) Steven Friedman, *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions 1970-1984*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 26-33.

44) Martin Murray, *The Revolution Deferred: The Painful Birth of Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 143 - 146.

45) For a detailed assessment of Cosatu's impact on the democratic transition, see Glen Adler and Eddie Webster, Challenging Transition Theory: The Labour Movement, Radical Reform, and Transition to Democracy in South Africa, *Politics & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (I 995), pp. 75-106.

46) Adam Habib and Vishnu Padayachee, Economic Policy and Power Relations in South Africa's Transition to Democracy, pp. 248-252.

47) The public showdown took place at the SACP's National Congress in 1998.

48) For a counter view, see Hein Marais, *South Africa- Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transformation*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1998), pp. 250-253, 262-268; and Roger Southall and Geoffrey Wood, Cosatu, the ANC and the

Election: Whither the Alliance?, *Transformation*, No. 38, (1999), pp. 68-81.

49) Hein Marais, *South Africa - Limits to Change*, p. 263.

50) Roger Southall and Geoffrey Wood, Cosatu, the ANC and the Election: Whither the Alliance?, p. 80.

51) Adam Habib and Rupert Taylor, Daring to Question the Tripartite Alliance: A Response to Southall and Wood, *Transformation*, No. 40, (1999), pp. 112-20. For their reply, see Roger Southall and Geoff Wood, Taking the Alliance Seriously: Replying to Habib and Taylor, *Transformation*, No. 40, (1999), pp. 121-125.

52) Adam Habib and Rupert Taylor, Daring to Question the Tripartite Alliance, p. 114.

53) Ibid, pp. 116-117.

54) See Table 4 in Christine Psoulis, Cosatu Members: Attitudes Towards the 1999 Elections, *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (1999), p. 29.

55) This view is most coherently reflected in SACP, Let Us Not Lose Sight of Our Strategic Priorities, Secretariat discussion document, October 1996.

56) Peter Mokaba first publicly mooted this idea in the run-up to the ANC's national conference in December 1997. Thabo Mbeki is also known to be partial to this view.

Democracy, Power and Patronage: Debate and Opposition within the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance since 1994

Dale McKinley

It is the African National Congress (ANC) that has now become the standard-bearer of liberal democracy in South Africa. Since coming to power in 1994 with the help of its partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), in the 'Tripartite Alliance', the ANC has followed the liberal democratic formula of institutionalising the combination of individual rights and capitalist market economics. Now integrated with the global offensive of internationalised corporate and finance capital, liberal democracy has taken on the mantle of a necessary and natural political product of an equally necessary and natural economic order. However, the ANC's embrace of what is a very minimalist conception of democracy has, since 1994, given rise to serious ideological opposition and class confrontation within its own ranks and those of its alliance partners.

While the intervening years have seen the ebb and flow of such debate, the leadership of the ANC – headed by President Thabo Mbeki – alongside many of their SACP and Cosatu colleagues, have proved capable of containing and suppressing dissent. Those who have openly expressed their opposition have been subject to discipline and steadily marginalised from the respective centres of decision making and power. What has made these developments all the more dangerous for organisational democracy and political principle has been the leadership's insistence that democratic debate and opposition within the ANC and the Alliance is as healthy as ever.

The apparent unity of the ANC and the Alliance has been fashioned through a combi-
nation of outright political intimidation, ideological mysticism and the co-option of ANC dissidents and Cosatu and SACP leaders into government. In the process, critical questioning of the substance behind political rhetoric and policy formulation is being suppressed, and the right to challenge the new political and economic orthodoxies denied.

1. WHAT KIND OF DEMOCRACY HAS BEEN WON?

> 'The device by which content is replaced by form and ideas by phrases has produced a host of declamatory priests whose last offshoots had of course to lead to democracy.' – *Karl Marx*[1]

Although the idea and practice of democracy has gone through numerous reformulations since the days of Marx and Engels, it would appear that most of its contemporary intellectual and political cheerleaders are as priestly as ever. No more so than the proponents of the now dominant creed, liberal democracy. In South Africa, the leading members of this triumphal order come from a wide cross-section of political parties, institutions of corporate and finance capital and civil society, including the largest and most powerful political player of all, the ANC.

Claims of opposition parties such as the Democratic Party (DP) notwithstanding, it is the ANC that has now become the standard-bearer of liberal democracy in South Africa. Since coming to power in 1994, the ANC has dutifully followed the liberal democratic formula of institutionalising – through a constitutional dispensation – a combination of individ-

ual rights and capitalist market economics. Just as in the past, when the 'liberal state sought to overcome (the) partisanship of predecessors to achieve neutrality by virtue of the generality of its purposes', so too has the ANC sought to make itself appear as though 'it serves all and comes from all'.[2] Indeed, the ANC has effectively utilised the legitimating argument of liberal democracy, that 'its link to society is held to be that it operates at the level of the general interest'.[3] Now combined with the more recent global offensive of internationalised corporate and finance capital ('neo-liberalism'), liberal democracy has taken on the mantle of a necessary and natural political product of an equally necessary and natural economic order. Under such a scenario, democracy itself becomes synonymous with the capitalist 'free market' and everything else is merely about degrees and emphases.[4]

It is this kind of minimalist conception and practice of democracy, that the ANC has now embraced, even if somewhat awkwardly. This has happened despite the ANC's long history of association with more radical notions of mass participatory and non-capitalist democracy, such as those espoused by the SACP and Cosatu, its partners in the Tripartite Alliance.[5] It is this choice by the ANC that has provided the starting point for much of the opposition and debate that has taken place in the Tripartite Alliance since 1994.

For three decades the dominant theoretical thrust of the ANC's liberation struggle was centred around the necessity for the revolutionary seizure of power. Whether applied to the smashing of apartheid and the attainment of majority rule (ANC), or presented as a springboard for a transition to socialism (SACP), the revolutionary seizure of power was presented as a necessary pre-condition for movement towards a fully democratic society. SACP theoretician Joe Slovo had put it this way:

> 'Thus there is a distinction between the creation of the new state form and the building of a new socialist economic formation. The former is made possible by a revolutionary seizure of power; the latter, through the exercise of that political power by a class whose interests are unconditionally served by a socialist order.'[6]

Historically, many liberal and neo-Marxist academics, as well as numerous alliance intellectu-

als, conceptualised arguments for a seizure of power in narrowly statist terms. As a result, the (autonomous) state is given the status of the struggle 'throne', leaving revolutionary (purposive) struggle cast in terms of a fight for a specific form (structure) of power rather than its foundation. Unfortunately for many in the SACP and Cosatu, the ANC leadership adopted such an approach, both theoretically and practically, once it had become clear that a deal could be made with its former enemies.

From this perspective, political democratisation was achieved through capturing control of the state in the elections of 1994 at the conscious expense of a corresponding transformation of the economic sphere. This 'historic compromise' (as it was widely called at the time) flew directly in the face of the dominant viewpoint that had held sway for so long amongst the ANC's alliance partners – that there is nothing implicitly statist in any struggle for revolutionary change, but that there must be a fundamental attack on the entrenched economic and political interests of capital (in whatever form) in order for there to be meaningful liberation. As the ANC's *Strategy and Tactics* document had put this quite clearly:

> 'It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even a shadow of liberation.'[7]

However, in contrast, the cumulative effect of the strategic and tactical programme of the ANC (both inside and outside government) since 1994 has been to embrace a truncated democracy that has gradually demobilised and disempowered the very constituency capable of leading and carrying through a more complete democratic revolution – that class of South Africa's workers and poor who have provided the party its democratic mandate. As Patrick Bond has correctly proposed, this has engendered an 'elite transition' where democratic processes become increasingly circumscribed as the preserve of political and economic power-holders, and the boundaries of opposition and debate (particularly within the alliance) progressively narrowed.[8]

From a peculiarly romanticised attachment to classic guerrilla warfare, to a rhetorically heavy

notion of insurrectionary people's power, to social and political contracts with capital, the strategic thrust of the ANC's struggle for national liberation, consummated in the post-1994 period, has consistently underestimated and seriously undermined the potential and actual struggle of the people themselves. Because of this, processes such as democratisation have taken on a narrow petit-bourgeois, nationalist and predominantly political meaning and context. This perspective is thus left with no other option than to see socio-economic change as secondary to the necessarily parallel struggle for political change. In other words, it privileges the capitalist status quo.[9] Indeed, as Neville Alexander has cogently argued, such a liberal, free-market approach is unlikely to satisfy the material needs of the oppressed and impoverished majorities in places like South Africa, 'even though the gains in political space and in (individual) freedoms and rights are by no means unimportant'.[10] South Africa's experience since 1994 bears this out. But not surprisingly, the ANC's pursuit of an elite-led, liberal democratic and deracialised capitalism has precipitated serious ideological opposition, class confrontation, and more general political debate and dissent within its own ranks and those of its alliance partners.

2. SETTING THE BOUNDARIES

Along with the more radical sections of the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu accepted the 'historic compromise' that had emerged from negotiations. However, indications of political and organisational restlessness within the alliance spurred a cautious approach. Such signs included the 1993 call by the National Union of Mineworkers to break the alliance after the 1994 elections, and the highly publicised 'disciplining' of an ANC/SACP stalwart, Harry Gwala, for condemning the compromises made and public utterances by Cosatu's leadership reminding the ANC that it would 'not be told what to do'.[11] Similarly, in reaction to early indications that the ANC leadership was developing an intolerance for divergent perspectives from within its ranks, long-time ANC cultural activist, Mike van Graan, voiced what many others in the alliance felt when he publicly declared that:

> 'Those of us who fought alongside you against apartheid thought that now we will

have the space to create, to sing, to laugh, to criticise. We were wrong. We now realise that space can never be assumed; it must be fought for. Of course, some of us will yield to the temptations you offer, many will conform to the new status quo (already self-censorship and fear of criticising the ANC is rife), some will go into exile and a few will say "Nyet".'[12]

As insurance against such concerns about the ANC's trajectory, SACP and Cosatu initiated the drawing up of a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Ostensibly, the RDP was designed to secure a political and programmatic commitment by the ANC government to meeting the basic social and economic needs of workers and the poor. After numerous intra-alliance workshops and meetings with 'civil society', the RDP emerged publicly in early 1994. It was hailed by the alliance leadership as the new 'people's programme' and rapidly achieved the status of an electoral manifesto on which the ANC subsequently rode to victory.[13]

It was not surprising then, that after the overwhelming ANC victory at the polls a lengthy period of alliance harmony set in. And yet, while all seemed quiet on the public front, a hugely important and instructive internal ANC document had been drawn up by then ANC Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, in preparation for the ANC's 49th National Conference (December 1994). Entitled *From Resistance to Reconstruction: Tasks of the ANC in the New Epoch of the Democratic Transformation – Unmandated Reflections,* the lengthy document provides a comprehensive look into the views of the future leader of the ANC and the country, on the character of political opposition and the content of democratic debate (both within and outside the alliance).[14] Under the heading 'Strategic Objectives of the Opposition' Mbeki had this to say:

> 'Some of these objectives that these forces will pursue will be: To destroy the ANC from within (and) to create contradictions and conflict between the ANC and other formations in the democratic movement. The offensive against the ANC will concentrate on a number of issues, among others: Splitting the organisation and fomenting an internal struggle on the basis that the ANC is made up of three component parts (in

government, in parliament and at the grass-roots) – the ANC in government will be portrayed as having betrayed the interests of the masses, the ANC in parliament which will present itself as the 'revolutionary watchdog' over the treacherous ANC in the executive, and the ANC outside government which will be projected as the true representative of the soul of the movement with a historic task to be the "revolution watchdogs"; Splitting the ANC around the issue of leadership, with various comrades within the movement being set up against one another on the basis that they represent different competing tendencies within the movement ...'

Mbeki goes on to argue that such opposition forces will attempt to break the alliance by:

'Encouraging the SACP to publicly project itself as the "left conscience" which would fight for the loyalty of the ANC in the cause of the working people, against an ANC leadership which is inclined to over-compromise with the forces of bourgeois reformism; Inciting the SACP to use its independent structures as a Party to carry out such a campaign while also encouraging the members of the SACP within the ANC to form themselves into an organised faction to pursue the same objective; Encouraging the constitution of an ultra-left political formation which would, itself, challenge the policies and revolutionary credentials of the SACP, to force the latter to intensify its offensive to "rectify the line" within the ANC; Encouraging Cosatu and its affiliates to project the pursuit of political and socio-economic objectives different from those that the ANC has set itself as a governing party; Encouraging Cosatu to exploit the fact of the democratic transition and the place of the ANC in government to interpret this to mean that the ANC has an obligation to "its electorate", namely the African working class, to support it in all its demands or face denunciation as a traitor; On these bases, to encourage the launching of a major and sustained mass campaign, which, while addressing various legitimate worker demands would, at the same time, pose the spectre of ungovernability; And otherwise, encouraging the unions to be suspicious of the intentions of the "ANC in

government" on the basis that the latter is likely to act in a manner intended to appease the domestic and international business world and multilateral financial institutions.'

Given such a conspiratorial approach to important questions of political opposition and debate, it is not surprising that Mbeki would argue that 'it is vital that we secure the unity of the ANC, the Tripartite Alliance and broad democratic movement around a common strategic and tactical approach'. Similarly, it becomes clearer why Mbeki should view those within the alliance, that might hold and express opposing ideological perspectives as potential enemies of the new state (and ANC) and thus argue that:

'*It would also help to contain those forces among our ranks which, having draped themselves in the cloak of radicalism, objectively act to discredit and weaken the government. We must understand that the new democracy cannot allow for hostile surveillance of the democratic process and the participants in this process.* Change also demands that the ANC and the democratic movement as a whole should be able to shed some of its "members" regardless of how this might be exploited by our opponents to discredit the movement.' [My emphasis.]

If such a document had been made accessible to the broad membership of the alliance partners, it would no doubt have created a substantial wave of vigorous and potentially hostile debate and commentary. Mbeki's dangerous tendency to prejudge potential organisational opposition and dissenting political viewpoints within the alliance as inherently negative and undermining of the 'movement' would have, at the very least, received a corrective roasting from within the SACP and Cosatu. Similarly, a wider exposure of Mbeki's explicit arguments for narrowing the boundaries of intra-alliance debate on key political and economic issues might have had the effect of creating a more tolerant and sustained atmosphere of expressive freedom (both within the alliance and broader society). Unfortunately, the document remained the privileged possession of a select group of ANC leaders. When several of the scenarios it dealt with began to actually take place in later years, not as the result of conspiratorial prodding but

in response to many of the policies adopted by the ANC leadership, its arguments as to how to deal with them were readily employed by that same leadership.

While it is impossible to gauge the extent to which Mbeki's 'unmandated reflections' influenced the character and content of the ANC's 49th National Conference, the two main outcomes were consistent with his perspectives and push for power. Not only did the Congress succeed in unifying the alliance behind strategic pledges to fulfill the promises of the RDP, but it also signaled the ascendance of Mbeki to the apex of power within the ANC (and by association, the alliance). Potential rivals, such as former ANC Secretary General, Cyril Ramaphosa and the long-time ANC intellectual, Pallo Jordan, were pushed aside in the leadership stakes, although both retained their base of popularity with the membership. There was little debate, and certainly no open opposition from within the ranks of the alliance, although one radical academic with ties to the ANC was brave enough to warn that '(ANC) policy making is being made in spite of and outside the context of the RDP (which) is potentially subject to a process of marginalisation'.[15] For the next year-and-a-half, alliance partners put most of their organisational energies and intellectual efforts into tackling the new challenges of taking over a contested state apparatus and grappling with the necessities of legislative reform. Outside of these governmental demands, alliance politics revolved predominately around tactically distinct, but strategically reinforcing pronouncements of fealty to the RDP. For example, the SACP's 9th Congress (6–8 April 1995) emerged with a *Strategic Perspectives* document that was dominated by references to 'implementing' and 'hegemonising' the RDP,[16] and an SACP discussion document emanating from the first post-election Alliance Summit held in September 1995, called for 'an effective ANC-led political centre to ensure effective implementation of the RDP'[17] (a call that was to be repeated several times over the next few years).

The RDP euphoria and the provincial/local government elections of November 1995, which the ANC won comfortably in most parts of the country, undoubtedly provided extra political glue for a generally united alliance during the first two years of post-apartheid

South Africa. Nonetheless, there were worrying signs of intolerance for political opposition and freedom of expression from within the ANC's own ranks, as well as from its left alliance allies. There were also clear signals that the ANC leadership was fast moving away from agreed-upon alliance positions that had been arrived at through vibrant and open democratic debate and ideological contestation. If the SACP and Cosatu had paid close attention to the short-lived, but symbolically important, *National Growth and Development Strategy* document issued by the ANC government in early 1996 (a document whose main thrust was to ride roughshod over the RDP's basic principles), they might have been able to foresee the turbulent times that lay just around the corner.

3. MOVING INTO ANOTHER GEAR
Ironically, it was just prior to the 75th Anniversary of the SACP in July 1996, that the ANC government unveiled publicly its new macroeconomic policy entitled, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. If previous ANC economic road signs had pointed in the direction of moving away from the RDP's more radical redistributive orientation, GEAR served to provide confirmation of the shift to a liberal capitalist, growth-first framework. Much like the political economy underlying the convergence of liberal democracy and capitalism, GEAR forthrightly committed the ANC government (and all the SACP and Cosatu politicians and bureaucrats in it) to a strict monetarist regime, market-led growth strategies and a South African version of trickle-down economics.[18] Finance Minister Trevor Manuel declared that GEAR was 'non-negotiable' and a stream of ANC leaders were quick to argue publicly that the new policy was only intended as the means to implement the RDP. Even the Central Committee of the SACP, most probably swayed by influential members of the Cabinet in its ranks, issued a press statement soon thereafter 'welcoming' GEAR and stating that they 'fully backed the objectives of this strategy'.[19] In a somewhat ironic twist, months prior to the announcement of GEAR, the RDP 'Ministry', led by former Cosatu General Secretary, Jay Naidoo, had been unceremoniously shut down, despite muted protests from the SACP and Cosatu. Naidoo himself, a former socialist militant, was

shunted to the Post and Telecommunications Ministry, eventually being pushed right off the political stage.

However, it was not long before grassroots members of all three alliance partners began to question seriously the process by which GEAR had been adopted and its clear departure from the economic proposals as contained in the RDP. Even so, this debate took place predominately outside of the public realm, being effectively contained for several months within the structures of the 'movement'. Within the ANC, reports began to emerge that there was a concerted attempt by the leadership to crack down on any dissent, particularly within the ranks of parliament.[20] Angry ANC members of parliament (MPs) were quoted as saying that there was now a 'climate of fear' in which 'internal democracy gets crushed' and where 'you don't think about sticking your neck out for fear of getting your head chopped off'.[21] Echoes of Mbeki's earlier perspectives on dealing with dissent and opposition were clearly being heard within the ANC and it was becoming clear that those who stepped out of 'line' would be subject to intense pressure to conform coupled to the threat of political and/or material marginalisation.

While the initially muted character of the GEAR debate was testimony to the political and organisational management strengths of the ANC leadership and other alliance heavyweights, they could only contain what was rapidly becoming a fundamental debate about political choices and economic policy for so long. As one SACP internal critique of GEAR had argued:

> '(we) reject the government's macroeconomic strategy. It is indicative of a rightward shift by the ANC government. As a framework it places capitalist accumulation at the centre of growth and development, as opposed to the prioritisation of basic needs and redistribution in the RDP.'[22]

By late 1996, the debate had burst out into the open. For the first time since the 1994 elections, SACP and Cosatu leaders were publicly criticising their ANC counterparts, spurred on by intense pressure from lower structures and the serious contradictions emerging between ANC political assurances and actual policy implementation. Backing off the earlier endorsement of GEAR, SACP Deputy General

Secretary, Jeremy Cronin (also a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, like several other SACP and Cosatu leaders), began to publicly lambast the ANC for embracing such GEAR 'non-negotiables' as privatisation, sparking media reports that ANC President Mandela had threatened to 'resign' if Cronin was not 'fired' from the ANC's National Executive Committee.[23] The SACP's Central Committee also made a strategic intervention, raising some critical questions about the political direction of the alliance.[24] At about the same time, the ANC released a discussion document, *The State and Social Transformation,* that controversially argued for a 'neutral' state and a more technocratic approach to governance. Cronin, and then SACP Deputy Chairperson Blade Nzimande, vigorously attacked the document, although they were careful to present their response as part of a 'broad and necessary debate'.[25]

For its part, Cosatu had remained relatively silent following the introduction of GEAR, but it was not long before it responded by issuing a lengthy discussion paper entitled, *A Draft Programme for the Alliance*. Clearly directing its critical comments at the process by which the ANC had adopted GEAR, Cosatu stated that the organisations within the alliance had, 'agreed to cooperate, consult and take joint decisions on collective action for the emancipation of our people'.

In a stinging polemic, Cosatu argued that due to the absence of 'proper mandate and consensus the lack of leadership from the democratic movement has begun to lead to disillusionment, depoliticisation and alienation from politics amongst ordinary people'. Going on to argue that the alliance must return to the RDP with concrete measures for implementation (including job creation), it ended with a clear rejection of the ANC's GEAR policy and a reminder to the ANC of the political importance of the alliance:

> 'If the existing macroeconomic framework is unable to accommodate the most basic elements of the Alliance agenda, it would need to be re-worked to bring it in line with the programme adopted by the Alliance.'[26]

Even so, despite the obvious need for debate and opposition around GEAR within the ANC and alliance to go beyond the confines of written documents and into the heart of the respec-

tive organisations, there once again descended a period of political and organisational quiescence. There were certainly ongoing discussions amongst the various levels of alliance leadership as to how best to bridge the gaps that had opened up as a result of the adoption of GEAR. Nonetheless, the most crucial thing to emerge was the ability of the ANC leadership, alongside many of their SACP and Cosatu colleagues, to contain and suppress truly open debate within base organisational structures and to let the mass membership shape its outcome.

The bottom line was that those who attempted to engage in such debate and who openly expressed their opposition were told to 'toe the line', threatened with 'disciplinary measures' or gradually marginalised from the respective centres of decision-making and power.[27] One of the results of this was that base structures of all three alliance organisations were severely weakened, as disillusioned and critically minded cadres left, while others remained silent. For those who were more politically susceptible to the bullying and cajoling, a career in government awaited. What made these developments all the more dangerous for the general health of organisational democracy (not to mention political principle), was that the alliance leadership continued to act as though none of this was the case and that, indeed, democratic debate and opposition within the ANC and alliance was as healthy as ever.

4. THE HEAVY HAND OF ENFORCED UNITY

> 'Love of power is the chief danger of the educator, as of the politician' – *Bertrand Russell*[28]

After three years of holding the political reins of power, the leadership of the ANC and its alliance partners had begun to establish what was to become a familiar pattern to deal with potentially explosive and divisive differences amongst the ranks – hold an alliance summit. Not only were such summits a means to 'talk things through' but could also be tightly controlled by the selected leadership invited to attend. By mid-1997, despite their energetic efforts to dampen the spontaneity and militancy of the debate around GEAR and the increasingly negative responses to its practical effects, the alliance leadership felt the need to convene another summit. Like the previous one (and like those that were to come after), the alliance

leadership engaged in various theoretical debates, the SACP always being the most garrulous, stroked each others egos and gave long speeches about the need for greater unity. President Mandela declared confidently that 'notwithstanding differences, the alliance is united', and Thabo Mbeki adopted a conciliatory tone in telling his colleagues that 'the alliance officials are convinced that we will emerge out of this meeting with greater unity of the alliance and we accept that we have been at fault as the leadership of the alliance at this level'.[29] The summit ended with the ANC giving verbal assurances to the SACP and Cosatu that the RDP was still alive, that 'macroeconomic policy is not cast in stone', and a reminder to their allies that the severe 'constraints' they faced in government would require patience and political maturity.[30]

Leadership summits are one thing, but the coming together of several thousand worker delegates tends to change the script, and this is exactly what happened a few days later at the sixth Cosatu Congress. Obviously feeling the need for the 'line' on GEAR to be clearly understood (and taken to heart), the ANC unleashed Mandela on the assembled delegates. He promptly informed them that although aspects of GEAR were negotiable, Cosatu was being too 'sectoral' in its opposition and that the ANC government could not be held back by one sector of the populace due to their 'self-interest'. In response, Cosatu President John Gomomo, took Mandela to task for being mis-informed about agreements on labour legislation and defiantly called the government's macroeconomic policy 'reverse GEAR'.[31] These harsh exchanges of words were, no doubt, designed to shore up the leaders respective credentials with the constituencies that they were out to please.

For Mandela and the ANC leadership it was international and domestic corporate/finance capital, for Gomomo – the workers who would soon re-elect him. Speaking to the press after the day's proceedings, Cosatu General Secretary, Sam Shilowa, was quick to take up the double-speak word games. On the one hand, he accused unnamed government ministers of 'treating the alliance with contempt' and of policies being 'driven by technocrats, the bureaucracy and ministries', and on the other, he profusely praised the 'strength and rele-

vance' of the alliance.[32] The pattern was taking effect.

The same pattern also began to emerge in relation to the character of the SACP leadership's approach to its relationship with the ANC. While maintaining a socialist-inspired opposition to GEAR (that was not without contestation amongst the SACP's Central Committee),[33] the 'line' remained that such socialist positions were 'consistent' with the 'common commitment' of the ANC and the SACP to an 'ongoing National Democratic Revolution'. Indeed, GEAR and other areas of (what were, in reality) fundamental ideological chasms were presented as 'secondary differences'.[34]

The ANC's 50th National Conference (16–20 December 1997) served to confirm the ANC leadership's mastery of the art of (heavy handed) political management. While allowing for much pre-Congress discussion and debate on its still controversial GEAR policies, the Congress itself was run like a corporate stockholders annual meeting. Taking a cue from the likes of the United States Democratic Party, Congress proceedings were designed to ensure a minimum of ideological and leadership contestation, mixed in with a heavy dose of public shows of unity. However, the real source of the ANC's ability to appear united, derived from the leadership's ability to manage the contradictions between pre-Congress discussions and the practical implementation of ANC (governmental) policy, guided by Congress resolutions. The fact that ideological battles around key issues of ANC economic and political strategy were not reflected in Congress resolutions, only served to confirm the 'success' of the leaderships' political management capabilities.[35] Echoing the (by now) common mantra of the leadership, all ANC cadres were directed to 'build and strengthen the Alliance at all levels, through a coordinated political programme' (which had never existed), and potentially recalcitrant alliance partners were directed to 'accept the obligation to resort to processes internal to the alliance to resolve differences'.[36]

As if on cue, newly elected ANC General Secretary, Kgalema Montlanthe – the former head of the National Union of Mineworkers who had been an outspoken opponent of GEAR – indicated publicly that his main task would be to bridge the gap on macroeconomic policy

between alliance partners.[37] Newly elected ANC President Mbeki, quickly followed him, and in a clearly calculated move to appease dissenters within the ANC and the alliance, confidently asserted that the ANC 'wants members who are critical and not afraid to speak out'.[38] While Mbeki probably did not expect his 'invitation' to be taken up so forcefully, nor so promptly, the quick-fire release of the SACP's discussion documents in preparation for its upcoming 10th Congress indicated that there still existed an intense opposition, among the ranks of the SACP (and Cosatu), to GEAR and the way in which the ANC had dealt with subsequent debate. Covering everything from macroeconomic policy to gender equality, the SACP documents laid out a sustained critique of the character and content of the ANC government's political and economic policies and the ensuing effects on the 'movement's' organisational effectiveness.[39] An emboldened Cronin went further, publicly stating that 'the ANC is its own worst enemy at the moment, with its fear of dissenting voices it needs to listen to the fears and concerns of people. Mugabe epitomises where we could end up (with) swings between demagoguery and managerialism'.[40] Even if the SACP documents and Cronin's public comments had as much to do with political jockeying ahead of an important Congress as with fundamental ideological and policy divergences, they gave some credence to the feeling among many cadres that the outcome of this latest intra-alliance flare-up would be crucial to the future of open/meaningful debate and opposition within the alliance and possibly, the alliance itself.

It did not take long for Mbeki and the ANC leadership to nail their colours to the mast. Within the space of a few days at the end of June 1998, a double-barrelled attack was unleashed in an effort to silence (or, at least quieten down) those who, in the eyes of the ANC, were stepping out of line with their critical and public dissent. Mbeki publicly lashed out at alliance activists who had been campaigning for the release (from a Mozambique gaol) of well-known and outspoken ANC member and government official, Robert McBride, for 'compromising the work of the government' and showing 'disrespect'.[41] ANC leaders were also deployed to the Special Cosatu Congress, where they proceeded to issue veiled threats of

serious trouble if the trade union federation did not change tact in its heavy criticisms of GEAR and government plans for the 'restructuring' of the public sector.[42] And then came the SACP's 10th Congress.

The timing of the SACP Congress was strategically important for both the SACP and ANC (especially in government). Inside the SACP there had been a long-running, but intense, debate about the relative allegiance of communists to the ANC, against the backdrop of GEAR and increasing conflict between the two organisations at the grassroots level. Questions of leadership loyalties and ideological direction were also high on the agenda. The ANC on the other hand was beginning its build-up to the all important 1999 general elections, and was confronted with a rapidly declining currency and was under serious pressure from domestic and international capital to make a categorical commitment to GEAR. The recent surge in public critique of its policies and unmistakeable signs of political restlessness in the alliance only added to the charged atmosphere.

With South Africa, and much of the world watching,[43] first Mandela, and then Mbeki proceeded to launch virulent attacks against the SACP. A finger wagging Mandela told the predominately youthful delegates that neither the government nor the ANC would deviate from GEAR, no matter how much the SACP (or Cosatu) wished it otherwise. He then proceeded to inform the SACP that the character and content of its criticism of GEAR (and by inference, the ANC government) was 'not acceptable'.[44] The implicit message was clear – open dissent and opposition within the alliance would not be tolerated by the ANC leadership.

The next day, Mbeki, speaking in his capacity as ANC President, embarked on an hour-long assault on the political integrity and organisational *raison d'etre* of the SACP.[45] Consistent with past pre-emptive tactics, he prefaced his speech by reminding delegates that there would be those that would interpret what he was about to say as an indication of an imminent split in the alliance, and that they 'will be proved false, *the mere wishes of those whose agendas are opposed to ours*' [my emphasis]. Claiming that the Congress discussion documents inferred 'that the ANC no longer represents the interests of the masses of the people', Mbeki accused the SACP of 'spreading falsifi-

cations, telling lies, claiming easy victories, fake revolutionary posturing' and joining 'defenders of reaction to sustain an offensive against our movement'.

As if those charges were not enough, Mbeki then resorted to proclaiming that the alliance was objectively unquestionable:

> 'The struggle for the genuine emancipation of the masses of our people is not over and will not be over for a long period of time. *This objective reality means that the basis does not exist for the partners in the Alliance fundamentally to redefine the relationship among themselves, including the way they handle their differences and contradictions.*' [My emphasis.]

In essence, Mbeki was commanding the SACP to stop thinking and acting as if it was an independent organisation that had its own political voice and could make its own strategic choices, if it wanted to stay in the alliance. Concluding, he unilaterally declared that the 'death of the ANC, which will not happen, would also mean the death of the rest of the progressive movement in our country'. Simply translated, he was telling the SACP that it was nothing, and could be nothing, without the ANC.

The immediate response by the assembled SACP delegates to the speeches was to join in an unprecedented, albeit muted, rounds of booing and hissing. There was no doubt that a majority felt both shocked and insulted and were ready and willing to consider radical measures as part of a more sustained response. But, such pregnant possibilities for a serious rupture in the alliance were not about to be entertained by the leadership. While Cronin and SACP Central Committee member Thenjiwe Mtintso responded with light jibes, the SACP leadership was quick to publicly state that 'we are more than ever committed to the alliance and to transformation', and that the differences and issues raised could best be addressed 'properly at the senior leadership level'.[46] Echoing the commands of Mbeki, the Congress Declaration stated that the SACP had 'a deep commitment to the alliance, a commitment that is, above all, a strategic imperative'.[47] It was clear that SACP leaders had effectively internalised the 'line' contained in the overtly crude, anti-democratic and authoritarian messages delivered by the two most powerful political figures in South Africa. Just like the elite-led, levelling

approach of neoliberalism, the leaders would take care of the details and everything else would merely be about degrees and emphases. Indeed, the significance of what had transpired went well beyond the confines of the SACP and the alliance, with one South African newspaper correctly posing a fundamental (if self limiting) question: 'If communists can't criticise, who can?'[48]

The effects of these events were confirmed in the months after the Congress. Newly elected SACP General Secretary, Blade Nzimande, quickly returned to the well-worn approach that had been used since 1994 (and before) to deal with fundamental questions of debate and opposition within the ANC and alliance:

> 'It is our belief that a break in the Alliance at this point in time would unleash anti-democratic and reactionary forces ... (it would) be tantamount to handing over our victory back to the apartheid and neo-apartheid forces. It is for this reason that (the SACP) does not believe in the ultra-left approach of thinking that the only way to strengthen socialist and working class forces in our country is for the SACP and Cosatu to break away from the ANC ... (the) relationship between the NDR and socialism ... has always and continues to inform the relationship between the SACP, the ANC and the progressive trade union movement. It is also this relationship which is the foundation of the Alliance itself (because) the ANC itself has long understood and affirmed the working class is the main motive force of the South African revolution, the crux of the problem, as far as the SACP is concerned, is a lack of viable and efficient Alliance structures for effective consultations and discussion on key strategic questions facing the movement.'[49]

In other words, the approach was to defend the alliance at all costs, isolate those in the movement who have other ideas, concentrate decision-making and political management firmly in the hands of the respective alliance leaders and keep pleading for the establishment of 'proper' structures to do more talking. Under such a strategic rubric, it was thus easier for the SACP leadership to blunt continued criticism and opposition within the SACP's own ranks over the alliance and argue that the main problems in the alliance were ones of process and

structure rather than fundamental ideological differences and organisational independence. While there would still be much talk about 'honest' and 'frank' debate and principled opposition within the alliance, it was precisely the most controversial focal area of debate and opposition (i.e. the existence of the alliance itself) that was effectively being proscribed. Indeed, when a provincial leader of Cosatu circulated a discussion document arguing for the alliance to be broken, and for the establishment of a new Workers' Party, he was brought in front of a disciplinary hearing and severely censured.[50] What made such an approach all the more contradictory was the continued expressions by the SACP (and Cosatu) leadership of the need to avoid 'suppressing difference and debate'.[51] The old adage of 'do as we say, not as we do' had been turned on its head. It was now a case of 'do as we do, not as we say'.

5. MANAGING CONTRADICTIONS

> 'Collisions proceeding from the very conditions of bourgeois society must be fought out to the end; they cannot be conjured out of existence.' – *Frederick Engels*[52]

The events of 1998, and their aftermath, consolidated the power of the Mbeki-led ANC leadership within both the ANC and the alliance, a development that spelled danger for a vibrant and participatory 'movement' democracy. As the ANC organisational machinery was revved-up for the 1999 elections, Mbeki was more determined than ever to ensure conformity to his 'line', although, this time, he did not face a great deal of intra-alliance opposition. Both Cosatu and the SACP dutifully marched to the set beat and cranked up their own organisational machines to support the ANC's electoral campaign. With what appeared to be a very short memory and a taste for the absurd, Cosatu leaders unashamedly told their members that the ANC's election Manifesto 'strongly reasserts the RDP as the basis for government policy' and that workers should accept, at face value, the ANC's promises to 'elaborate a detailed programme with its allies'.[53] Going even further, the SACP leadership 'celebrated the Manifesto's reaffirmation of the RDP' and argued that the ANC was now 'emphasising anti-neoliberal perspectives'.[54] Mbeki must have been smiling, knowing full well that any thought of translating the partici-

pation of his erstwhile leftist allies in drawing up the Manifesto (just as they had done with the RDP) into any fundamental change of ANC economic policy was only resident in the realm of dreams.

To bolster what was fast becoming a highly effective strategy and tactics of organisational co-option and ideological amnesia, key leaders in Cosatu and the SACP who had been particularly troublesome, were pulled onto the ANC electoral lists. A few weeks before the elections, Cosatu's Sam Shilowa had been 're-deployed' to become Premier of the Gauteng Province (where the ANC and alliance had been experiencing serious divisions), prompting the former union 'trouble-maker' to publicly proclaim that he would now become Mbeki's 'yes-man'.[55] The SACP's most outspoken leader and intellectual, Jeremy Cronin accepted a position on the ANC national parliamentary list, as did former Cosatu President and 'reverse-GEAR' proponent, John Gomomo. And, SACP National Chairperson, Charles Nqakula, was drafted into Mbeki's Presidential office as the new parliamentary liaison officer. Given the fact that all of these men had, over the past several years, been at the forefront of much of the debate and opposition emanating from the ANC's 'junior' alliance partners, such moves were all the more significant. Each of them knew that he would now have to toe the ANC 'line', a situation that was particularly important in the cases of Cronin and Nqakula since they continued to maintain their positions as SACP office bearers.

The 'unity' of the alliance was taking on a different meaning and one that Mbeki, in particular, must have looked upon with a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Through a combination of outright political intimidation, ideological mysticism and the co-option (or as those in the alliance like to call it, 'redeployment') of key ANC 'trouble-makers' and Cosatu/SACP leaders into his governmental inner-circle, Mbeki had largely succeeded in quashing genuine opposition and controlling the boundaries of debate. In the event, the ANC resoundingly won the (June) 1999 elections, proving, once again, the powerful effect of the 'unity' of the political elite within the alliance. What was made clear (if this had not already been the case for many cadres in the SACP and Cosatu),

was that any substantive threat to the ANC's hold on political power would most probably only come when its mass, left flank departed from the alliance.

Hammering home its post electoral advantage, the ANC government adopted a tough 'new' attitude in public sector wage talks with unions. Refusing to bow to the demands of the unions for an inflation-related increase, ANC Minister (and senior SACP leader) Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi told the public sector workers that they were being 'infantile', even going so far as to quote Lenin to justify the government's stance.[56] Feeling under attack and recognising the need to marshal its forces to present a united front on the public sector wage disputes, Cosatu called another Special Congress during late August. As had always been the case, Cosatu invited both ANC President Mbeki and SACP General Secretary Nzimande, to address the Congress. If the union federation had been expecting a more conciliatory approach from its ANC ally, it received a rude wake-up call when Mbeki sent ANC National Chairperson (and new Minister of Defence), 'Terror' Lekota, as the ANC representative to the Congress with a clear instruction to give the workers the 'line'. Lekota, who had previously been considered a 'radical' and whose candidacy had been supported by Cosatu and the SACP at the ANC Congress, proceeded to tell Cosatu that there was an 'art of managing contradictions' and thus, 'only consensus positions must be fed to the public' (again, echoing Mbeki's earlier, personal 'reflections' on how to deal with internal alliance debate and opposition). Mimicking Mandela's finger wagging antics at the SACP Congress, he sternly warned Cosatu that throwing 'raw opinions' to the public would only 'cause confusion and anarchy' and was 'unacceptable' since this would 'derail the revolution'.[57] Much like what had happened at the 1998 SACP Congress, delegates expressed anger but eventually resolutions were passed simultaneously expressing opposition to the ANC government's position and policies while professing continued loyalty to the alliance.

It thus came as no surprise when, a few weeks later, the ANC government unilaterally implemented its public sector wage offer (in effect, undermining Cosatu's cornerstone principle of collective wage bargaining). All Cosatu

could muster was to 'express the hope that government would reopen negotiations' and pledge to embark on a programme of mass action over several months.[58] As if to rub salt into Cosatu wounds, the ANC previously announced that 'radical' SACP Central Committee member (and former ANC MP), Phillip Dexter, would be taking over the reins of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a move widely seen as a way to keep even further 'tabs' on Cosatu and another SACP leader prone to speak his mind.[59] In the midst of these ANC manoeuvres to further consolidate the ever-narrowing 'management of contradictions', the ANC controlled Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council (GJMC) was busy implementing a neoliberal plan for the city (Igoli2002), that would see most public entities and operations being either privatised or corporatised. While making spurious claims of inter-alliance consultation and genuine negotiations with workers, the GJMC had ridden roughshod over sustained opposition from the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu, a leading Cosatu affiliate) and the SACP's somewhat maverick Johannesburg Central Branch. Knowing full well that the Igoli2002 plan would be the model for all other major urban centres, and thus pose a serious threat to the interests of municipal workers, Samwu President, Petrus Mashishi, publicly accused the Council's ANC leadership of being a 'small elite' that had made an art out of 'telling lies'.[60] None of this deterred the ANC from its unilateral approach to deciding what was debatable in its own structures and within the alliance. When Trevor Ngwane, a popular ANC councillor in Soweto, publicly opposed the Igoli2002 plan (citing the RDP as his major reference point), he was promptly brought in front of an ANC disciplinary hearing and suspended from the organisation for two years. Tellingly, both Cosatu and the SACP leadership remained ominously silent, sticking to their increasingly irrelevant calls for more 'talks' within the alliance on Igoli2002.

If there was one thing that had begun to happen with increasing regularity amongst alliance partners, it was talking. Indeed, every time over the past two to three years that there had been a flare-up of opposition and/or debate around key issues and policies, the ANC had agreed (albeit grudgingly) to Cosatu/SACP requests for an alliance summit. So it was, that yet another summit was held in December, and just like previous ones, consisted of lots of talking around pre-prepared discussion documents and public proclamations of enhanced 'unity' and 'commitments' to the alliance. The agreement – five years after it had initially been proposed – for the setting up of an alliance 'political centre' to better manage inter-alliance relations, was hailed by all three organisations as a means to 'diffuse tension' and ensure that all partners 'can influence government policy'.[61] And yet, not more than a month later, SACP General Secretary Nzimande, publicly warned of a 'lack of open debate' within the alliance, that 'could result in the creation of patronage and the perpetuation of careerism'.[62] It was as if the pronouncements of the summit had already dissipated into the thin air of repetitive alliance rhetoric. He soon followed this with an article in a national newspaper, calling for 'a review of government's economic policy'.[63] This was an appeal that had been made over and over again by the SACP and Cosatu for the past four years, and which the newly set-up alliance political centre was designed precisely to facilitate. Chilean poet and exile, Ariel Dorfman, was right: 'History does repeat itself: first as tragedy and then as farce'.

If this was not sufficient evidence to symbolise the impotency that has now come to characterise the nature of debate and opposition within the alliance, then surely the events of the past several months have provided confirmation. The character and content of Cosatu's recent mass action campaign against job losses, a continuation of its late-1999 skirmish with government over the public sector dispute, has clearly shown that as long as the ANC leadership's embrace of an elite-led, neoliberal democracy is not challenged fundamentally from within, or alternatively outside of, the 'movement', there will be little chance for meaningful debate and opposition in South Africa. The strategy and tactics adopted by Cosatu and the SACP, as well as those within the ANC who do not approve of the present political and economic path, continues to revolve around seeking to win concessions from the leadership of the ANC within a framework that consistently waters-down the demands being made (for example, the bases for job creation, resource redistribution, sociali-

sation of basic services and democratic debate). This approach is ostensibly designed to ensure an acceptable degree of ideological and organisational continuity with the ANC leadership running the country, so as to maintain a 'National Democratic Alliance' that is seen as the only viable political/organisational vehicle to meet the needs of the majority (i.e., the workers and the poor). The reality, however, is that while bringing some very moderate relief to that majority, the most tangible result has been to preserve and advance the personal careers and political futures of leaders across the alliance spectrum. While making radical sounding statements on worker-related and political economy issues, combined with limited mass action designed to extract concessions and remind capital of mass power, the leadership of Cosatu and the SACP have been unwilling to make the connection between the neoliberal democracy pursued by the ANC elites and the parallel organisational and class lessons in relation to the alliance.

The binding message that has held this entire edifice together since 1994 has been the constant propagation of the need for 'unity' within the ANC and alliance. This is counter-posed to the dangers of an independent, workers movement and/or political organisation that will break such 'unity' and thus weaken the 'liberation movement'. The reality, as this essay has tried to reveal, is far different. The kind of unity that ANC elites, led by Mbeki, have fashioned is one that revolves around a mass of radical-sounding rhetoric about 'transformation, a progressive National Democratic Revolution, deepening democracy, a developmental state, workers' interests and the national interest'. All the while, however, the political and organisational space created has been used to progressively narrow the boundaries of debate and opposition to the chosen 'line'. In the process, the cornerstones of any real democracy have been, and continue to be, actively attacked within the ANC and alliance – the critical questioning of the substance behind such rhetoric/policy and mobilisation to challenge and change the political and economic status quo. It is no cliché to say that the struggle will continue.

ENDNOTES

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The Alliance Under Stress: Governing in a Globalising World

Eddie Webster

Organised labour in South Africa is said to face a dilemma in the era of neo-liberal global-isation; it either accepts the economic policy reversal of its ally, the ruling African National Congress (ANC), and faces marginalisation, or else it actively opposes government. However, drawing on historical and contemporary research, this paper suggests that South Africa opens up the possibility of an alternative: that the degree of autonomy acquired by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) during the struggle for democracy enables it to emerge as a 'left pressure group' inside the Tripartite Alliance pushing for redis-tributive policies. However, such a path requires a high degree of political tolerance by government; a tolerance that the post-colonial experience in Africa suggests is unlikely. The paper concludes that if labour were to be mar-ginalised it would therefore put at risk both the consolidation of democracy and economic reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

There is a widespread view that South Africa is unique, that its apartheid past means that it can-not be compared with any other country. This notion of South African exceptionalism has led to an intellectual and political parochialism that restricts our understanding of both the speci-ficity and the commonality of South Africa's democratisation process in the era of globalisa-tion. The commonality resides in our experi-ence of a labour-backed government coming to power and implementing neo-liberal economic and social policies that are at variance with labour's historic goals. The specificity resides

in the peculiarities of South Africa's colonial history: a national liberation struggle taking place in an African country with a high level of industrialisation. In this respect it is unlike other African countries in that it has led to the emergence of a large and independent trade union movement. This restricts the options fac-ing the new government making the subordina-tion of labour less likely.

The paper draws on these two sets of experi-ences: countries that have elected social demo-cratic governments and now find themselves in conflict with the labour movements which elected them; and union–party relationships in post-colonial Africa, and Zimbabwe in particu-lar. Importantly these comparative experiences are located in the historical context of an ongo-ing debate in South Africa on the relationship between organised labour and the ruling ANC.

The analysis is divided into three parts. First, three different political traditions within the labour movement which structure the differing perspectives on its relationship to the national liberation struggle are identified. The strategic compromise that emerged in the 1980s is then examined and the strains in the alliance in the 1990s described. Second, other countries which are experiencing tensions in the relationship between government and labour are identified, and attempts are made to explain the variation in responses. The results of two surveys are reproduced which suggest that in spite of ten-sions, the Tripartite Alliance between the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Cosatu is likely to continue. Third, it is suggested that the persistence of the alliance can best be explained if South Africa is located

in a broader African context and the bonds created by the national liberation movement identified. However, the fragile nature of democracy makes the institutionalised opposition of labour difficult. The paper concludes by suggesting the possibility of labour pressing from the left within the alliance and nudging the government toward redistributive policies.

1. UNIONS AND POLITICS: THREE POLITICAL TRADITIONS

It is possible to identify three different political traditions within the South African labour movement which have historically shaped the different perspectives on its relationship with the national liberation struggle. The first, and most powerful, is the national democratic political tradition.

During the 1950s the ANC, in alliance with the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), established its leadership among the oppressed classes. This was achieved through mobilising the oppressed – across class lines – around the demands of the Freedom Charter. Sactu's participation in the Congress Alliance facilitated the rapid growth of trade unions in certain regions.[1] However, it also brought Sactu into direct conflict with the apartheid state and the organisation felt the full force of repression in the 1960s. By 1964 it had ceased public activities in South Africa and departed for exile.

In the late 1970s this 'national democratic' tradition re-emerged in the labour movement with the advent of general unions, particularly in the shape of the South African Allied Workers Union (Saawu), which followed in the tradition of Sactu. Such 'community unions' argued that the workers' struggle in factories and townships was indivisible, and that unions had an obligation to take up community issues. In contrast, it was 'economism' and 'workerism' for unions to restrict activities to factory struggles.

This 'national democratic tradition' involved a view that South Africa could not be understood in simple class terms. Social reality was based upon a 'colonialism of a special type' necessitating national democratic rather than class struggle as the appropriate strategic response. This meant a multi-class alliance under the leadership of the ANC, drawing all the sectors of the oppressed black masses and sympathetic whites, aiming to establish a 'national democracy'.

Supporters of this view differed over whether it was necessary to pass through a national democratic stage before a socialist stage (the two-stage notion of revolution), or whether the national and class struggle could take place coterminously. Most now argue the second position, stressing that the struggle for national liberation is part of the struggle for socialism.

However, during the 1970s an alternative political tradition developed in the union movement. The 'shop-floor' unions that first emerged in 1973 eschewed political action outside production. They believed it was important to avoid the path taken by Sactu in the 1960s. Rejecting the 'community unions' as 'populist', the shop-floor unions developed a cautious policy towards involvement in broader political struggles. These unions (particularly those which were to affiliate to the Federation of South African Trade Unions, which was formed in 1979) emphasised instead the building of democratic shop-floor structures around the principle of worker control, accountability and the mandating of worker representatives. This they saw as the basis for developing a working-class leadership in the factories. These unions argued that this strategy involved the best means of survival in the face of state repression, and of building strong industrial unions democratically controlled by workers. Some within this political tradition supported the creation of a mass-based working-class party as an alternative to the SACP.

The picture of unions and politics in South Africa has often been incomplete through neglect of a third political tradition, that of black consciousness. Its origins lie partly in the Africanist ideology articulated by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which broke away from the ANC in 1959 principally because of the latter's 'multi-racial' definition of the nation, (although the American black power movement was also highly influential in forging this political tradition in South Africa). Black consciousness has similarities to the national democratic position, in that it holds that racial oppression is a manifestation of national oppression. However, its emphasis on racial structures and identities virtually excludes class relations from its analysis. This has often given rise to voluntaristic and roman-

tic forms of organisation and mobilisation. Nonetheless, by the late 1970s a class analysis had been introduced into the black consciousness discourse, whereby class was defined in racial terms. Associated loosely with the National African Council of Trade Unions (Nactu), a broadly Africanist grouping, the black consciousness tradition was distinguished from other traditions by its emphasis on 'black leadership' of trade unions and its opposition to 'non-racialism' in favour of a policy of 'anti-racism'. In practice, this meant opposition to white intellectual leadership in the trade union movement. This led to this position's withdrawal and exclusion from the unity talks, which culminated in the December 1985 formation of Cosatu.

Unions entered into joint action with student and civic organisations in the 1984 November Transvaal stay away. This was made possible both by the overlapping membership of these organisations and the irresistible pressure from union members demanding action in the face of rising rents, transport costs, Bantu Education and the repressive local government system. According to Jay Naidoo, general secretary of Cosatu, the November 1984 stay away:

> 'symbolised in a real way the first political intervention by organised labour on such a large scale since the militant actions of workers in the 1950s. It further laid the basis for a developing alliance between students, youth and the worker-parents and gave the political leadership of workers the confidence to assert the leading role of the working class in the broader struggle of our people.'[2]

Trade unions' growing willingness to take solidarity action with one another began with the stoppage over the death in detention of union organiser Neil Aggett. This – together with joint actions with community groups in the aftermath of the stay away – culminated in the December 1985 launch of Cosatu.

The new federation brought together unions from all three political traditions described above: the well organised industrial unions drawn from the shop floor tradition; the general unions drawn from the national democratic tradition; and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), having recently broken from the black consciousness tradition.

Cosatu now faced the difficult task of blending these diverse political traditions into a working class political project. This challenge was captured by Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of NUM, in his opening speech to the inaugural congress of the federation. Cosatu, he said, would take an active role in the national politics in alliance with other progressive organisations, but such an alliance would be on terms favourable to the working class.

2. A STRATEGIC COMPROMISE

Responding to the euphoric mood, a Cosatu delegation visited Lusaka in February 1986 to speak to the ANC. A joint communique was issued in which the independence of Cosatu was acknowledged while the federation committed itself to the struggle for a non-racial South Africa under the leadership of the ANC. However, this clear identification with the national democratic tradition brought the legacy of division in the labour movement to the surface again.

Critics within the shop-floor tradition believed that the Cosatu leadership had acted without a proper mandate in visiting Lusaka and should have made it clearer that the federation would struggle 'independently under its own leadership' within the broad alliance. By implying that Cosatu was 'operating under the leadership of the ANC', critics argued, a spirit of hostility might be developed towards alternative political traditions. Furthermore, they feared some unions might feel that it was no longer necessary to obtain proper mandates resulting in actions such as a failed 'stay away' called by Cosatu for 14 July 1986.

Some within the shop-floor tradition went further and argued that the national democratic tradition stood in absolute contradiction to working-class politics. Organisational style and political content were such that any involvement of the working class in such politics must lead to the surrendering of trade union independence and with it the abandonment of working-class politics. Alliance politics, which stressed the 'people' over the working class, failed to prepare workers for socialism. Unions which became embroiled in populist campaigns would lose their organisational independence because they would be unable to control 'people's' organisations of national democracy.

While these tactical, strategic and theoretical differences persisted inside Cosatu, they began

to narrow in the first half of 1987 as the federation wove together 'a strategic compromise'.[3] One example of this was the political resolution adopted by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) at its May 1987 foundation congress. Rather than challenging symbols of the national democratic tradition, Numsa endorsed the Freedom Charter as 'a good foundation stone on which to start building our working-class programme' – thus attempting to imprint on the Freedom Charter the strategy of the shop-floor tradition.

Even though different meanings were being attached to the Freedom Charter, Cosatu adopted the charter as 'a guiding document which reflected the views and aspirations of the majority of the oppressed and exploited in our struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation'. However, this NUM-sponsored resolution also noted that Cosatu saw these struggles as 'complementary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation'.[4]

There is, on this argument, no conflict between the struggles for national liberation and socialism. In adopting this approach, the dominant position in Cosatu was rejecting any chronological two-stage theory of change in favour of a view that the struggle for national liberation was part of the struggle for socialism.

The political differences that divided Cosatu in its first 18 months of existence narrowed and in some cases were buried in the face of the state onslaught during 1987 and 1988.

The necessity for unity forced a tactical and strategic compromise, but it had not removed the differences underlying the competing political traditions. Implicit in this broad-front conception was the view that class contradictions are secondary to the national democratic struggle.[5]

In 1989 the reformist F. W. de Klerk replaced P. W. Botha as President of South Africa, and signalled his intention to reform apartheid. In February 1990 he announced the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and SACP, and freed Nelson Mandela.

Over the next 12 months the ANC, Cosatu and the SACP forged a formal alliance that cautiously began to distance itself from the armed struggle and insurrectionist elements in its ranks.

Five interventions by Cosatu during this period helped shape the democratic transition and the nature of the alliance:

• The combination of mass action with negotiation helped break the deadlocks at important moments.
• Its involvement in economic policy-making generated new institutions, such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) and research into new industrial policies.
• It contributed to the new constitution, including the right to strike.
• It was a central political actor, mobilising support for the ANC during the 1994 election.
• It initiated and advocated the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).
• The RDP was an accord which was viewed by labour as tying a newly elected ANC government to a labour-driven development programme.

In its final formulation, the RDP envisioned as a first priority 'beginning to meet the basic needs of people: jobs, land, housing, water, electricity, telecommunications, transport, a clean and healthy environment, nutrition, health care and welfare'.[6]

Nonetheless, the class contradictions mentioned earlier began to come to the fore as the newly unbanned ANC leadership came under a set of local and international pressures to change its economic thinking. From the 1950s, the ANC had been publicly committed to a state-interventionist redistributive strategy, as articulated in its central policy document – the Freedom Charter's commitment to nationalisation. This policy was publicly reconfirmed by Nelson Mandela on his release from prison in February 1990. If, however, Mandela had entered prison at a time when nationalisation was an article of faith, he was released into a world where monetarism and its obsession with inflation and the reduction in state expenditure had become the new orthodoxy. From 1990, there were a series of economic policy reversals through which the ANC leadership came to adopt positions increasingly consistent with the neo-liberal orthodoxy. By late 1993, the ANC had made a number of concessions on macroeconomic policy which were to culminate in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy.[7] GEAR aimed to achieve growth through fiscal deficit reduction, gradual

relaxation of exchange controls, reduction in tariffs, tax reductions to encourage the private sector (and especially foreign direct) investment, and privatisation.

When GEAR was released, the alliance partners were angered both by the content (which they now saw for the first time) and because the government asserted that it was 'non-negotiable'. Cosatu General Secretary Sam Shilowa publically criticised GEAR and indicated that these policies could never have emerged from the ANC before the 1994 elections. Subsequently, agreement could not be reached inside Cosatu on how to deal with GEAR: some felt that the policy should be given a chance and the government should not be attacked during a crisis; others wanted openly to oppose the policy. The issue threatened to be divisive both within and between the alliance partners and, in the words of leading alliance figures, the 'people walked away from it'.[8] Thus, with painful irony, what began as an accord to bind an ANC government to a left development programme ended up ensnaring both Cosatu and the SACP in a neo-liberal–inspired macroeconomic policy.

The failure of GEAR to perform anywhere close to its own expectations for growth and job creation led to growing tension between the ANC and Cosatu. In 1998 both President Mandela and Deputy President Mbeki used high profile speeches to Cosatu's central committee and the SACP's congress to rebuke both organisations for questioning the government's economic policy. Mandela accused trade unions of being 'selfish' and 'sectoral', bent on protecting their interests at the expense of the nation.[9] Compared to the mass of unemployed living below subsistence, workers organised in trade unions were being regarded in certain circles of government as a privileged labour aristocracy.

As the implementation of the new economic policy has begun to impact on Cosatu members, union leaders have become increasingly vocal in their criticisms of government economic policy. For the first time Cosatu affiliates have publically discussed an alternative to the ANC to lead the alliance. At Numsa's annual congress in August 2000, a resolution was tabled for the SACP to replace the ANC as leader of the alliance. After considerable debate the congress rejected this resolution and committed

itself to 'the strategic relevance of the ANC-led alliance in the current context of the national democratic revolution'.[10] At the same time the South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) resolved at its congress 'that the process of beginning a discussion on an alternative to the alliance should begin'.[11] Increasingly, the alliance seems to be no more than an electoral machine that comes to life at election time. Since the adoption of GEAR by the ruling party Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the SACP, remarked at the Samwu congress, 'there has been a reluctance within the alliance to meet'.[12]

3. COALITIONS UNDER STRESS IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

The ANC is not alone in experiencing tensions in its relationship with labour: similar strains have been placed on labour-based governing parties throughout the world in the era of globalisation. Despite this seemingly universal trend toward a 'loosening' of party–labour alliances there exists, 'considerable variation across cases with respect to both the extent and the nature of change'.[13] In fact, there exist substantial differences across cases with respect to the ways in which both party and union leaders have responded to the challenge of neo-liberalism (*see Table 1*). Levitsky and Way argue that, initially, labour backed governments elicit significant cooperation from labour in economic reform, despite the high costs such policies entail for unions. Labour acquiesces initially,

Table 1

	Labour Cooperation	*Labour Defection*
Party Commitment	*Relative Maintenance* Australia, Norway, Sweden	
Party Neglect	*Marginalisation* Argentina, Mexico, New Zealand	*Divorce* France, Poland, Spain

Reference: Levitsky and Way, Between a Shock and a Hard Place: The Dynamics of labour-led Adjustment in Poland and Argentina, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley,1996, p6.

they suggest, because of social linkages – the shared identities and personal ties built during the years of cooperation and shared hardship. But these are not always sufficient to sustain labour–government cooperation over the long haul.

As Table 1 illustrates, in some cases party and union leaders have continued to prioritise the maintenance of the alliance. Although consultation and cooperation continue in Norway and Sweden, the union–party cooperation in Australia ended in 1996 when the Labour Party was defeated. In other cases – which the authors categorise as 'marginalisation' – unions have largely continued to support the party, but their party allies have not invested as heavily in the alliance. The result is that union influence in countries such as Mexico, Argentina and New Zealand, has been substantially eroded. In a third set of cases – which they label 'divorce' – the level of commitment of both party and union leaders has declined significantly. As a result, in countries such as Poland, France and Spain, these alliances have largely collapsed under the strain of neo-liberal adjustment.[14](*See Table 1.*)

The authors focus on three variables to explain the different outcomes. First, competing unions make defection more likely, as unions that must compete for membership find it costly to support measures which threaten the living standards of members. A second factor is the strength of the governing party: if it is likely to remain in power, union leaders may decide that cooperation with neo-liberal policies is preferable to political isolation. But if it fares badly in elections, the coalition becomes more problematic. The third variable is labour autonomy from the state. The more dependent unions are on material and political resources, the more likely they are to remain in the governing coalition.[15] In Poland, for example, the party-labour alliance was vulnerable because of a weak governing party, labour competition, and high union autonomy. The result was 'divorce'. In Argentina, a near monopoly on labour organisation and high union dependence on state and party resources produced the opposite result – marginalisation inside the alliance.

The implications of these responses for the nature of union–party relations in South Africa would seem to be as follows. First, the strong linkages between activists and the solidarity

developed between the ANC and Cosatu during the anti-apartheid struggle ensured that close cooperation continued in the first few years of the new government. Both the ANC and Cosatu seemed committed to the alliance continuing in a cooperative manner. The ANC had embraced the RDP in its election campaign and began to pass labour-friendly legislation. The relationship seemed to fit the top left quadrant, along with similar examples of partnerships between organised labour and labour backed governments in the Nordic countries and Australia.

However, second, the introduction of GEAR created sharp conflict and for a period during 1996 it looked as if Cosatu would emerge as a strong opponent within the alliance. This is captured best in the top right quadrant. However, as described above, Cosatu and the SACP were to withdraw from public criticism, and Cosatu's influence over social and economic policy has declined, suggesting that the relationship could best be placed in the bottom left quadrant.

Much of the media debate has focused rather superficially around the question of whether the strains in the alliance will lead to Cosatu's withdrawal. 'Divorce', captured in the bottom left quadrant, is after all the outcome of the conflict that broke out with organised labour when social democratic governments in Spain and France introduced neo-liberal economic policies in the 1980s! This seems unlikely in the South African case. The reasons are complex but it is useful to begin such an explanation by reflecting what Cosatu members at workplace level expect of the new government.

With this question in mind, a nation-wide research project (entitled *Taking Democracy Seriously*) was embarked upon in 1994. The results of the first phase of the study – conducted two months before the first democratic elections among 643 Cosatu members in workplaces in Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal – were published in 1995.[16] In 1998 the same research team conducted the second phase of the study among 646 Cosatu members in the same workplaces.

What is striking about the two data sets are the similarities in the results. As Table 2 indicates, in both 1994 and 1998, the vast majority of the respondents supported the alliance between the ANC, Cosatu and the SACP. The only significant difference in responses

Table 2: Support for alliance in 1994 and 1999 elections

Party	1998	1994
ANC/SACP/Cosatu Alliance	74%	75%
Azapo	0.2 %	1%
DP	0.5%	1%
IFP	0.9%	0%
NP	4%	5%
PAC	0.6%	1%
UDM	3%	–

Total = 646
Missing = 5%
Have not yet decided = 4.5%
Will not vote = 11%

Source: Taking Democracy Seriously data, 1994 and 1998

between the two surveys is the support in the 1998 survey for the United Democratic Movement (UDM) (3%) – largely a breakaway party from the ANC, and the increase in the number of respondents who were undecided (4.1%) or did not intend to vote (11%).

When respondents were asked what they would do if the government did not deliver on its promises, most respondents opted for pressure on the government such as lobbying former unionists sent to parliament or mass action (*see Table 3*). Only a third opted for forming an alternative party that would provide benefits for workers. The one significant difference – the drop in support for mass action from 72% in 1994 to 53% in 1998 – is predictable.

The mobilising power of labour under apartheid, especially via successful 'stay aways' (or general strikes), was derived in part from its association with race.[17] The transition to democracy is beginning to sever this association. The removal of political apartheid has broken the link between the state and racial despotism in the workplace. Importantly, the opportunities for black advancement have opened up career trajectories that were unthinkable under apartheid. The increasing significance of occupational and income divisions among black workers means that it no longer makes sense to conceptualise black workers as a homogeneous group.

Of course this does not mean that labour will

no longer mobilise. But what it does suggest is that mobilisation against a government that has been democratically elected with which labour is in alliance takes on a very different meaning than 'a clash with the illegitimate apartheid state'.[18] The complex tension between supporting government and continuing to struggle for better wages and working conditions is captured in this comment by a shop steward in May 1994:

'We must go back to the drawing board and come up with a new strategy. We cannot use the very same strategy we were using against De Klerk's government. That strategy was aimed at pushing the company and the government at the same time. Now we have in place our own government there, so we must come up with a strategy that will not give our government a problem, but will only give the company problems. Strikes will give the government a problem, because we will be shaking our economy, both nationally and internationally. Not to say that we are not going to strike any more – we will strike when it is necessary, but we are going to have to minimise those actions, because we must support this government.'[19]

In 1994 expectations were high and respondents were asked to identify these expectations (*see Table 4*). In 1998 they were asked to assess whether delivery had taken place. The responses broadly reflect the government's perfor-

Table 3: What action if government fails to deliver

Action	1994	1998
Put pressure on former unionists sent to parliament	66%	70%
Vote for another party in the next election	40%	37%
Form an alternative party that will provide these benefits to workers	29%	33%
Participate in ongoing mass action to force the government to deliver on its promises	72%	53%
Workers will do nothing	4%	0.5%

Source: Taking Democracy Seriously Data: 1994 and 1998.

Table 4: Expectations of Cosatu members in 1994 and assessment of delivery in 1998

Issue	1994 expectations		1998 assessments of delivery
Service	**1994** Yes	**1998** Yes	**1998** No
Better housing	91%	55%	39.2%
Higher wages	79%	41%	49%
Access to land	81%	52%	35%
Clean water	82%	81%	9%
Electricity	85%	81%	11%
Telephones	72%	76%	16%
Better public transport	79%	54%	32%
Enough nutritional food	77%	53%	33%
Better health	87%	63%	26%
Access to education	90%	62%	29%
Safety (cleaner and healthier environment)	86%	64%	25%

Source: Taking Democracy Seriously data, 1994 and 1998.

mance – successful delivery in water, electricity and telephones, and less successful delivery in working environment and wages, health, education, housing, transport, food, and access to land.

The question raised by these survey results, and the shift in government policy, is why does the alliance persist? The variables introduced by Levitsky and Way are a useful starting point. The first variable is whether competing unions exist to the left of the federation. Cosatu is both the largest trade union federation and the one most committed to a socialist agenda. Unions dissatisfied with the leadership of Cosatu cannot therefore defect to competitors to the left of Cosatu: there are no significant competing left unions outside of Cosatu. Instead what has happened on a number of occasions over the past few years is that when criticisms of the alliance have emerged inside the organisation, it has led to open confrontation. The dispute at Volkswagen in January 2000 is the clearest example of this phenomenon.[20] Workers at Volkswagen were asked to sacrifice hard won gains in order to secure an overseas contract. This divided the workforce, with the union leadership supporting the intensification of work arguing that 'the agreement was not perfect but in a capitalist environment

it was the best we could do to ensure creation of jobs in a sea of unemployment in the area'.[21] This pragmatic approach was rejected by an older generation of workers, known as Indlu Yeengwevu (the house of elders), who felt that their militant tradition was under threat and that the leadership – with the support of the ANC in the region – was capitulating to the employers. The dispute led to a three-week strike ending in the dismissal of the dissident group from Volkswagen and from the union, Numsa.

The second variable is the strength of the governing party. In the case of the ANC it won an overwhelming majority in 1994 and increased its returns in 1999. It is likely to remain in power over the next decade. Union leaders are therefore likely to continue to want to cooperate with the government in the hope of influencing it, rather than opting for the political wilderness.

The third variable is labour autonomy from the party and the state. Here Cosatu is in a relatively strong position as during the 1980s and early 1990s it developed its own political culture. At the core of this were the shop stewards, elected by shop floor workers, usually through secret ballot, and directly accountable to their constituents. They operated on the basis of strict mandates from the membership and were subject to recall. Their independence from employers and the state was a central part of this culture, underpinned by financial independence through stop order deductions. Furthermore, elected worker representatives dominated the regional and central executives of these unions, including the president and national office bearers, who were constitutionally required to be full-time shop floor workers. This autonomy was asserted inside the alliance where Cosatu saw itself as an independent and equal partner. Indeed during the late 1980s it emerged as *de facto* leader of the anti-apartheid movement inside South Africa. However, the transition to democracy has weakened this political culture.[22] First, Cosatu has lost significant layers of leadership to government, political office and the corporate sector. Often labelled the 'brain drain', this has seriously diminished the pool of skilled and experienced leaders developed over years of struggle. Secondly, and relatedly, there has been a marked decline in the quality of service provided to members and an erosion of the role of

mandates and report-backs. Thirdly, a growing gap has developed between leadership and the base. Fourthly, the unbanning of the ANC has enabled the ANC to assert its hegemony over the alliance. Instead of Cosatu and the SACP drawing the ANC into a left project, through the transition the ANC has increasingly been drawn into a neo-liberal project, thus marginalising both Cosatu and the SACP's redistributive programmes. This hegemony has increased massively with the ANC's assumption of state power: it has access to vast resources and capabilities provided by a modern state bureaucracy.

While Levitsky and Way provide a useful framework for understanding the relationship between organised labour and labour-linked governments, these examples are all drawn from countries that have a democratic tradition. In this respect, South Africa is different and bears comparison with other anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

4. UNION–PARTY RELATIONSHIPS IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

The literature on party–union relations after independence in post-colonial Africa suggests that unions face a dilemma; the political leaders believe trade unions should address themselves to the problems of creating new national societies, while also arguing that the national governments will determine what form the industrial relations system must assume. This dilemma is captured by two leading scholars on African industrial relations:

'Since the trade union played a prominent role in the independence movement, African governments therefore expect unions to play a dualistic role, first, that of aiding with overall development, and second, the representation of the job interests of the rank and file members. The argument for this reversal of the primary role of unions to be developmental rather than representational is based on the government belief that trade unions only represent a tiny fraction of the labour force in any of the developing countries'.[23]

In spite of these pressures from government on unions to subordinate themselves and to act as 'transmission belts', organised workers retain 'certain strengths that continue to animate them'.[24] Indeed the caricatured picture of party ascendancy and union clients is too simpleminded to explain the variety of union–party relationships in post-colonial Africa.

The range of post-colonial union–party relationships has been captured by Cohen. These relationships include those of party control but they also encompass relationships of partnership or a degree of union independence and also open opposition. As he acknowledges, these relationships are in a constant state of flux and should be regarded 'more accurately as ideal types which present the basic range of alternative union–party relationships'.[25]

Table 5 fits the evolution of union–party relationships in Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980 the trade union movement was weak and divided into five federations, none of which had close links with the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Zanu). Both the com-

Table 5: Union/Party relations in Africa

Type of Relationship	Integration	Partnership	Independent - allied to opposition	Independent non-aligned
Description of Relationship	Union integrated into governing party	Some degree of union autonomy but close cooperation	At times unions in in conflict with government	Government tolerance union autonomy
Function of union	Increase productivity	Union concerned with welfare issues and consulted on development	Challenge government – alternative foci of power	Union concerned with collective bargaining

Source : Robin Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria: 1945-1971 (London: Heineman, 1974) p254-255.

peting Zimbabwe African People's Union (Zapu) and Zanu (yet particularly the latter) had de-emphasised the role of workers in the liberation struggle, stressing instead the guerrilla struggle in the rural areas.

The wave of strikes immediately after independence pointed to the weakness of the trade union movement and the inadequacy of existing labour legislation. The government responded to the weaknesses of the union movement by encouraging workers' committees, with the aim of improving communication and productivity between employers and employees. These worker committees, however, rapidly came to supplement weak trade unions.[26]

Yet the problem facing the government was more complex. Although Zanu had won the electoral support of the majority of workers, the full-time officials in control of the unions were mostly supporters of the opposition. The government believed that the role of the union movement was to support the government. Under the slogan of 'one country, one federation', they set up the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). As Musarurwa (1990) argues,[27] the creation of the ZCTU was the outcome of manipulation by the minister of labour and key associates. Albert Mugabe, the President's brother, was elected general-secretary and most other key posts went to Zanu-PF supporters.

The first four years of the ZCTU was plagued by corruption, embezzlement, maladministration, nepotism and authoritarianism. The corruption of the office-bearers was eventually to lead to their downfall and a new executive was elected.

This marked the end of the period in which the government intervened openly in ZCTU affairs – the period which could be described as 'integration' in Cohen's table.

ZCTU became more independent during the period 1985–88, but it did not fully escape the corruption and poor organisation of the period of 'integration'. In 1988, however, a new leadership emerged which was more sensitive to the mood of the rank-and-file and verbal opposition to the government increased. In October 1989 a successor secretary-general of ZCTU was detained as part of a clampdown on opposition in Zimbabwe.[28] As Musarurwa argued, 'The government is obviously unhappy that the ZCTU whose creation it sponsored, is now

emerging as the most articulate organised critic of the government'.

Conflict intensified in the 1990s as the government accelerated its own version of neo-liberalism via Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs).[29] Opposition to Mugabe's growing authoritarianism led to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 and ZCTU's alliance with it. The union movement had clearly moved into the third category of Cohen's table (Table 5), independent and allied to the opposition. In the course of 2000, the conflict turned into open opposition, with the MDC in alliance with the ZCTU, winning a near majority of elected seats in the general election. Indeed the unions had become a challenge to government and an alternative focus of power.[30]

What emerged in the 1980s in Zimbabwe is a form of state corporatism where unions played a subordinate role, almost but not quite integrated into the state. Zanu argued unconvincingly that, as a Marxist-Leninist party, they represented the interests of the workers. From this perspective, the role of a Marxist-Leninist party in an economically backward country, was to build a national democracy; to increase national control over foreign capital through an alliance between the emerging black capitalist class, the middle strata and the workers. In terms of the national democratic model of transition, the struggle was to create the conditions for the transition to socialism. As party ideologue Herbert Ushewokunze expressed it:

> 'Tremendous care should be taken ... not to confuse our efforts to create the conditions for the transition to socialism with socialism itself.'[31]

Clearly there are similarities between the approach adopted by Zanu towards the transition in Zimbabwe and that of the national democratic tradition of the ANC that was identified above. Under this conception of transition, the function of the trade unions becomes largely supportive of the government in power: to increase productivity and discipline the workers. However, as was noted, in South Africa a strategic compromise emerged in the 1980s where the autonomy of the union movement was accepted within the broader democratic movement. The level of industrialisation, as well as the size of the labour movement, clearly makes South Africa a special case in Southern

Africa. Above all, the triumph of neo-liberal policies has undermined the capacity of new democracies to build a national capitalist class.

The rights won by labour during the transition makes the 'integration' of the trade union movement into the party less likely in South Africa. But it does not rule it out: what it does suggest is that the struggle between those who would like to 'integrate' the union movement into the party more closely, and those who wish to maintain its autonomy is likely to continue in the years to come. But the South African case opens up the possibility of an independent trade union movement representing the interests of its members. The possibility of this option will be addressed in the conclusion below.

CONCLUSION

Labour, in the era of neo-liberal globalisation, finds itself in a dilemma when its ally is in government: either they accept the economic policy reversal by their ally, cooperate and face marginalisation, or else they actively oppose 'their' government. Active opposition increases the likelihood of the policies failing and a government coming to power that is less friendly towards labour. Levitsky and Way describe the dilemma as a 'hostage situation' – virtually a no-win situation.[32]

According to this latter scenario Cosatu could face increasing marginalisation as the ANC continues to implement its neo-liberal economic and social policies. However, the federation's degree of autonomy does open up the possibility of an alternative; that Cosatu emerges as a 'left pressure group' inside the alliance, pushing for redistributive policies. Such a possibility would require a high degree of political tolerance by government; a tolerance that the post-colonial experience in Africa suggests is unlikely.

Unlike the established democracies discussed above, post-colonial African countries are engaged in the complex task of nation-building and economic reconstruction . As a result, a very distinct culture of 'us and them' develops, whereby people are accepted as 'one of us' – a comrade – on the basis of their commitment to national liberation.[33] Those who oppose solidarity become 'the enemy' or even 'counter-revolutionaries'. In other words, the margins of tolerance are much lower in such situations as democracy has not yet been consolidated. The result – as the Zimbabwean case illustrates – is not institutionalised opposition, but open and violent confrontation, with a union-aligned opposition becoming the focus of an organised challenge to the state.

South Africa, it has been suggested, has a more powerful and autonomous union movement. This opens up the possibility of political exchanges in the form of social pacts between Cosatu and the ANC. What unions can offer the government, and what they can demand in return for cooperating in the management of the nation's response to globalisation, is a matter for negotiation. It has been argued elsewhere that South Africa opens up the possibility of 'bargained liberalisation', where the economy is opened to international competition but agreements are reached between the main actors in civil society.[34] Whether such an option emerges will depend whether all the parties in the alliance are willing to recognise the stalemate and make compromises that shift from their current positions.

During the present phase in the consolidation of democracy in South Africa, labour is at risk of becoming marginalised while remaining a force that can play a spoiling role. The conclusions of this paper are equivocal in judging the outcome.

If labour were to be marginalised, however, it would put at risk both the consolidation of democracy and economic reconstruction. In this sense , the outcome of the debates on the nature and future of the alliance that are taking place inside the alliance are more significant for the future of democracy in South Africa than those taking place in parliament.

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'White' Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in South Africa

Eddy Maloka

This paper interrogates the debate about democratic consolidation in South Africa with particular reference to the role of 'white' opposition parties. It is informed, first, by a view that considers the dominant parliamentary opposition in South Africa to be representing white minority interests; secondly, by a view that sees the South African transition as a simultaneous transition from both authoritarian rule and settler colonialism; thirdly, by the argument that 'the criteria by which the "consolidation" of democracy is to be assessed are inherently judgemental'; and finally, by David Beetham's comprehensive definition that 'a democracy can best be said to be consolidated when we have good reason to believe that it is capable of withstanding pressures or shocks without abandoning the electoral process or the political freedoms on which it depends, including those of dissent and opposition'. The argument is that the dominant parliamentary opposition to the ruling African National Congress (ANC) is rooted in traditional, white electoral politics, and is, in essence, a political expression of the tendency in African post-settler transitions for whites to see themselves an undifferentiated and endangered interest group.

INTRODUCTION

The South African debate on 'democratic consolidation' has raised the question of the need for a viable parliamentary opposition to the ANC as a necessary condition.[1] However, as Eghosa Osaghae has argued, the problem with existing literature is its failure to address the fact that the South African transition was that democratisation was simultaneous with the process of decolonisation.[2] Consequently, while comparisons are often made with other transitions elsewhere, little is being done to examine the implications of the decolonisation dimension of the South African case. Nor, indeed, is the African debate on democratisation being adequately considered.[3]

This paper is an attempt to interrogate the debate on democratic consolidation in South Africa with particular reference to the role of 'white' opposition parties. The paper is informed, first, by the view that the major opposition political parties represent the interests of the white minority; secondly, by Osaghae's notion of the dual character of the South African transition; thirdly, by Christopher Clapham's and John Wiseman's argument that 'the criteria by which the "consolidation" of democracy is to be assessed are inherently judgemental';[4] and finally, by David Beetham's comprehensive definition that 'a democracy can best be said to be consolidated when we have good reason to believe that it is capable of withstanding pressures or shocks without abandoning the electoral process or the political freedoms on which it depends, including those of dissent and opposition'.[5]

More fundamental, however, is that, as Clapham and Wiseman argue, 'in assessing the prospects for the consolidation of democracy in Africa, it is necessary to take an unromantic and pragmatic view as to what type of system might be consolidated, how widespread a phenomenon this might be, and the degree of 'permanence' which consolidation might imply'.[6]

1. DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

The democratic consolidation phase is the most difficult part of the transition process, especially when, as in the case of South Africa, this also involves ridding the country of the legacy of settler colonialism. There are a number of dimensions that condition the consolidation of democracy. First, there is the mode of the transition itself. The dynamics of the transition impact on the pace, duration and direction of the consolidation phase, whether the transition resulted in continuity or rupture with the past, or whether the new political elite is drawn from the previous regime or the opposition, are all among factors that may stagnate, reverse or accelerate the consolidation phase. The nature of the previous regime is equally a factor, and this, additionally, depends on the length of the preceding dictatorship and the level of its impact on the political institutions of the country. How intra- and inter-party relations are managed during the transition is also important, especially with regard to competition among parties, a competition that may result in alliances, coalitions and, not infrequently, civil war. Similarly, the relationship between civil society and political parties has implications for the consolidation phase, not least because political parties themselves can be a vehicle for delegitimising and stalling or accelerating the new democracy. Political parties can also act as agents for reconciliation or divisions within society. Furthermore, in the case of transitions from settler colonialism, as in South Africa, 'race' plays a dominant role in mediating the impact of these variables on the mode of transition.

Second, the probabilities of successful consolidation are invariably linked to the country's level of economic development. The existence of abject poverty, massive shortages in basic social necessities, and unemployment, among others, are all among factors that will not only hamper democratisation but will also contribute to social and economic instability. This factor becomes even more complicated under conditions of decolonisation as historically oppressed communities expect the post-colonial regime to 'deliver' and address their plight, while on the other hand, the historically privileged white minority live in fear of changes that may affect their social position.

Third, the country's political culture and the level of development of civil society are major facilitating factors: a democracy is most likely to be consolidated if democratic principles are actively supported by the country's 'national psyche'.

Fourth, the role of civil society, important as it is, will need to be supported by constitutional and institutional arrangements supporting the democracy. In South Africa, political institutions had to be deracialised and reoriented to serve not just a settler minority, but all sectors of society.

Finally, a democratic state will be difficult to sustain if surrounded by hostile, authoritarian neighbours.

Given the above, it is clear that political parties and, inevitably, elections are important vehicles for democratic consolidation, even if it is necessary to go beyond minimalist interpretations which regard their existence as the defining (sufficient) condition of democratisation. In particular, it will be argued here that it is the failure to manage inter-party relations that constitutes one of the principal factors stalling democratisation in Africa today.

2. DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Africa experienced a democratisation wave from 1989, but this has since suffered setbacks in a number of countries. Some transitions took place via multiparty elections (e.g. Zambia); others via 'conferences' of all stakeholders such as in Benin; some were 'co-opted' transitions that returned the incumbent to power with little change (e.g. Ivory Coast); while others were cases of 'guided democratisation' such as in Ghana. There was initially optimism in the wake of the first 'founding' elections, but the situation began to change with later such elections that took place around 1994, as well as with problems attendant upon post-democratisation 'second' elections in such countries as Zambia. Furthermore, by 1997, coups were back on Africa's political landscape, from Gambia and Sierra Leone to Burundi, Congo and, subsequently, Ivory Coast.

What makes democratic consolidation so difficult in some African countries is not only the weakness of the state and the difficult economic conditions, but also the fusion of the state and party and the failure of the political elite to manage intra- and inter-party relations as well

as relations between the state and society. South Africa's was among the later 'founding' elections, the contest in 1994 providing the basis for subsequent consolidation. However, as argued already, the South African transition was not simply about the eradication of authoritarian rule, but also constituted an anti-colonial, liberation struggle for the black majority. In this sense, the transition was more than just democratisation, for it also entailed nation building, the deracialisation of the state and economy, and a redistribution and reallocation of resources as well as the eradication of the legacy of apartheid in all spheres of society. It is scarcely surprising, given this context, that the form and content of political parties has been shaped by South Africa's past. As a result, the principal opposition to the ANC as the ruling party is posed by parties that essentially represent white minority interests. Consequently, the current political landscape in South Africa cannot be fully understood without knowing where those parties came from.

The South Africa white community has an established electoral tradition that dates back from even before 1910, the year when the country was created out of the two Boer republics (Transvaal and the Orange Free State) and the two British colonies (Cape Colony and Natal). Over 20 'white' elections and referenda took place between 1910 and 1990, characterised by vigorous contestation between competing political parties.[7]

The development of South Africa's white electoral politics did not follow the trends in Europe (where parties largely developed along class lines). Instead, four issues dominated white electoral politics which followed from the country's status as a settler colony. First, there was the 'Anglo-Boer' conflict that dates back to the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806; a conflict that resulted in two wars and a protracted struggle over questions of language (Afrikaans vs. English) and culture. The outcome was that the political parties were largely divided between those that were aligned to the English interest (the South African Party [SAP], the United Party [1933-39], Unionist Party, the Progressive Federal Party [PFP] and its predecessor Progressive Party, the New Republic Party and the Democratic Party [DP]) and those 'belonging' to the Afrikaners (the National Party [NP], Afrikaner Party and the Conservative Party). Up to the 1961 elections the base of the NP was almost exclusively Afrikaner. By the 1966 elections, however,

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Parties and Opposition in South Africa, 1910-1989

Government	*Principal Opposition*
South African Party 1910-1920 + Unionist Party 1910	National Party (founded 1914)
South African Party + Unionists 1920-24	National Party Labour Party
National Party + Labour Party 1924-29	South African Party
National Party 1929-33	South African Party
United Party ('fusion' of National Party and South African Party over the gold crisis) 1933-48	'Purified' National Party
National Party 1948-94	United Party 1948-77 Progressive Federal Party 1977-89 New Republic Party 1977-87 Conservative Party 1987-94 Democratic Party 1989-94.
African National Congress + National Party + Inkatha Freedom Party 1994-96	Democratic Party

more and more of the English began to cast their vote for the NP as it began to successfully project itself as the party representing white interests in conditions of increasing isolation and insecurity.

The second issue was the 'status' question; that is, South Africa's relationship with the British Empire. Naturally, the Afrikaner parties were not only anti-British, but also republican in outlook, as opposed to the English who considered themselves part of the Empire. This issue was resolved when (following victory in a referendum) the NP declared South Africa a republic and withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1961.

The third issue dominating white politics was 'security'. This gained major prominence in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, subsequently gaining massive impetus in the wake of the liberation of Mozambique and Angola in the mid-1970s and Zimbabwe in 1980, a process that was accompanied by the intensification of black popular uprising domestically.

Fundamental to all these issues was the colonial question, or, as some put it, 'race'. This issue not only haunted the white minority and made the enjoyment of its privileges a bitter pill to swallow, but also exacerbated the English–Afrikaner divide. The English parties, influenced as they were by a tradition of (attenuated) liberalism emanating from the old Cape Colony, preferred a 'milder' form of colonial oppression as opposed to their Afrikaner counterparts, who opted for apartheid. With the NP's ascent to power, the English parties gradually lost ground and found themselves increasingly marginalised as an opposition. In 1958, this resulted in a minority breakaway from the United Party by a liberal faction (the Progressives) which sought to come to terms with the fact that the black majority could not be excluded from power forever by advocating the (re-) introduction of a qualified franchise for blacks.

Not surprisingly, and unlike in the West, the state of the economy never featured as a major electoral issue, except in isolated moments such as during the 1930s depression (when the original NP opted to bury the hatchet with the SAP by 'fusing' to form the United Party). The survival of white settler colonialism was invariably regarded as much more important. However, by the early 1980s many ordinary whites were coming to accept the inevitability

of the demise of apartheid. It is in this context that the 'consociational' or 'power-sharing' debate emerged among white intellectuals.[8]

Consociationalism was an option advocated by liberals concentrated within the ranks of the PFP (which merged with other organisations to form the DP in 1989) and among a certain strata of Afrikaner intellectuals. As David Welsh put it:

'the core of the (consociational) argument ... was that "simple" or "unfettered" majority rule was likely to have an undemocratic outcome in as divided a society as South Africa.'

It was contended, with much comparative data, that for divided societies to sustain democratic forms of government, the 'winner-takes-all' principle would have to be abandoned in favour of a more consensual mode of government from which minorities (however constituted) did not feel permanently excluded.[9] Similarly, in 1987 Hermann Giliomee argued for a 'third way' option that was to be informed by the principles of 'bicommunalism', or a recognition of 'group rights and group representation', because, according to this perspective, South African politics comprised "two power blocs": one based on the ethno-nationalism of the Africans, and the other on the larger white community.[10] Lawrence Schlemmer elaborated on this by arguing that 'bi-communalism' involves an acceptance on both sides of the inescapable reality of the opposing force. The deep entrenchment of the opposing power bloc requires resolution akin to an international settlement, probably taking the form of an agreement to share power, a 'pact', hammered out in negotiations.[11] Yet Michael Connors appears to have had a point: consociationalism was not a model for moderating political conflict of a plural society at all, but a manner of suppressing it, displacing it, and turning it inward.

In this sense the question of the viability of consociationalism's capacity to stabilise conflict was ill conceived. In accepting the existence of immutable ethnic segments, consociationalism was part of a larger discourse perpetuating the constructs of ethnicity that had been wrought by settler colonialism in South Africa.[12] Indeed, the beginning of the transition in 1990 imposed new challenge on white parties and their intellectual think-tank. The NP, as part of a painstaking process of redefining

itself, abandoned its power-sharing route, and accepted the inevitability of democratic rule. However, the outcome of the transition made provision for some form of federalism that made it possible for the NP to control the Western Cape province; a Government of National Unity that accommodated the NP at the executive level of the new government (an arrangement that lasted until 1996); and a proportional representation electoral system that guaranteed representation in parliament even to small parties.

Furthermore, as the NP redefined itself as 'New' (NNP), its former parliamentary opposition, the DP, also came to terms with the changing conditions, not least because almost all issues around which it built its opposition to the NP were resolved and some even implemented in the new dispensation.

While the NP grappled with its 'new' image, the DP repositioned itself by opting for a route that led to the abandonment of its liberal ideology and to project itself as a representative of white minority interests. After a dismal performance in the 1994 elections, the DP opted in the 1999 elections for an aggressive, 'Fight Back' strategy that saw it displace the NP as the official opposition and winning – for the first time since the days of the SAP – a significant segment of the Afrikaner vote. Yet the crisis for white political parties is far from over. Not only did the ANC win almost two-thirds of the seats in parliament, but demographic projections suggest that the percentage of the white electorate as part of the total will drop by some three per cent to about six per cent by the next election.

On the intellectual front, as the 'power-sharing' option collapsed, a new, 'dominant party' debate emerged among the same group of white intellectuals,[13] especially as the ANC's election campaigned centred around winning an 'overwhelming victory'. A dominant party system involves:
- an electoral dominance by one party for an uninterrupted and protracted period
- the dominance by this party in the formation of government
- the dominance by this party in the determination of public policy and agenda.

As Steven Friedman argues, the challenge then became to prevent the ANC from monopolising the government agenda and political arena in this all-embracing sense.[14] In this context, continues Friedman:

> 'opposition parties are presented with options ... they do need to ensure that they represent constituencies whose cooperation the governing party needs. Racial cleavages in South Africa may constrain some democratic options by dooming some parties to permanent minority status, but they guarantee that significant constituencies will remain outside the governing party's orbit. If they are effectively captured and retained by minority parties, the governing party may need to cooperate with those parties ... the NP's failure to be seen as a credible gatekeeper to key minority constituencies has sharply constrained its options: to remain effective, opposition parties will need to consolidate their support among key minority constituencies.'[15]

This is exactly what the DP did in the 1999 general elections: it positioned itself as an effective mouthpiece and custodian of white minority interests. Meanwhile, the dominant party thesis informed the NP's 1999 election around themes such as 'Mugabe has a Two-Third [Majority]!' Indeed, the 'white' opposition's strategy now involves preventing the ANC from exercising its dominance in the formation of government and the determination of public policy and agenda. These they do by, among others:
- utilising some provinces and local authorities as their power-base
- exercising oversight functions of parliament and statutory watch-dogs
- making direct and indirect use of some non-governmental organisations and policy centres as well as institutions of learning to run 'certificate' courses on matters of policy or to provide consultancy to government departments in drafting legislation and white papers
- using their power over some media houses to influence public perceptions of and attitudes towards government, and subject certain key members of government to a barrage of criticism.

Whilst these activities are legitimate, their principal theme is precisely that the ANC is using its dominance to short-circuit the constitution and to entrench its power regardless of the rights of minorities.[16]

Nor did these parties hesitate to stall the

democratisation phase. These attempts included dismissing the Independent Electoral Commission as a lackey of the ANC, and taking it to court on a number of issues. After the 1999 elections, these parties even engaged the services of an accounting firm to inspect and verify the election results.

While all these attempts did indeed fail, the DP made a call for a summit of opposition parties to map out strategies for developing a joint front against the ANC, and this process culminated in the recent merger of the DP and the NP to form a new party, the Democratic Alliance (DA).

Arguably, this new formation brings to an end the fragmentation of 'white' opposition. It is clear, therefore, that the existence of a viable parliamentary opposition may be an important factor for the consolidation of South Africa's new democracy. However, it is equally important that the type of such an opposition be interrogated.

For any parliamentary opposition in South Africa to accelerate the consolidation of the new democracy, it must also address the dual character of the country's transition – it must help rid the country of the legacies of authoritarian rule and apartheid. Yet this is what the white opposition parties are, in effect, failing to do – by resisting efforts to overcome the effects of South Africa's colonial and racially unequal past.

CONCLUSION

'White' opposition parties are a threat to the consolidation of democracy in South Africa because of their continued reliance on 'race' as a base. Their power is, however, minimised by their relative numerical insignificance in parliament, even though they have avenues which they utilise to constrain the ANC's use of its dominant position. Their failure to break into the African electorate is one factor that will continue to act as a check on their political strength.

The ANC, for its part, has demonstrated that it can be a vehicle for reconciliation and democratic consolidation, thanks, for example, to such processes undertaken by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the organisation's strong adherence to non-racialism. Unlike the 'white' parties, the ANC relies less on race and ethnicity and puts more emphasis upon on its liberation struggle heritage. The challenge to South Africa is that it must transform sufficiently comprehensively over the coming decades to avoid the fate of contemporary Zimbabwe, where 20 years of independence have not managed to remove 'race' from the centre of the political landscape.

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Opposition in the New South African Parliament

Lia Nijzink

In order to explore the possibilities for parliamentary opposition in South Africa's new democracy, this paper first of all classifies the country in terms of presidential/parliamentary and electoral systems in order to assess the institutional context. It subsequently looks at the role of parties in parliament and argues that in the absence of the probability of an alternation of governing parties in the years to come, opposition parties should adjust their strategies to include other important parliamentary functions. Finally, after examining aspects of the function of parliament, the paper disputes the view that the domination of the African National Congress (ANC) allows no meaningful scope for opposition in the new South African parliament.

1. PARLIAMENTARISM AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

There is widespread consensus among specialists about the need for inclusivity and power sharing as important characteristics for institutional arrangements in Africa's emerging democracies. It is therefore often argued that the winner-takes-all electoral systems do not suit the specific requirements of Africa's democratic experiments as they hold out the danger of furthering ethnic and regional divisions.[1] For this reason, an electoral system based on proportional representation (PR) is widely regarded as the best choice in Africa. However, analysts are less outspoken and are certainly less united about the other key institutional choice that African countries face – that is, whether they should opt for parliamentary as opposed to presidential systems of government,

even though this may have considerable consequences for serving to prevent conflict and to promote political stability. It is clear, however, that the pure Westminster model of a fusion of executive and legislative powers is decreasing in popularity.

The Westminster model can be minimally defined as the unity of the legislature and executive secured by a disciplined political party or as the combination of legislative and executive power in the hands of the governing party. It is said to have the following advantages:

- It is conducive to retrospective voting thus ensuring clear accountability.
- It encourages strong parties, thus providing the electorate with an effective way to control their rulers.
- It limits the political power of interest groups, thus preventing 'iron triangles' or log-rolling to occur in policy making.
- It increases decisiveness in policy making.[2]

In other words, the Westminster model provides a clear degree of democratic accountability because it provides the electorate with a single mechanism – i.e. disciplined political parties – to control their rulers. Such a degree of accountability is impossible when powers are shared between different institutions or in multi-party governments. However, the accountability advantage is dependent on voters being presented with a clear choice between two alternatives. This means that the system in its pure form cannot cope with ethnic and racial divisions nor accommodate cultural pluralism. The Westminster system generates clear winners and losers. However, when politics is based on ethnic or racial identities, the winners

will always be winners and the losers will always lose, because it is not as easy to transcend race as it is to overcome divisions of class. Thus, the system reinforces pre-existing tensions between regions or ethnic groups because these tend to support different competing parties or blocs.

It follows that the Westminster system is not only unsuitable as a constitutional model for South Africa, but that it is far from helpful as a model for the style of opposition politics in this racially divided country. Given the absence of two main parties or blocs, or more importantly the absence of a credible alternative government, the biggest advantage of the Westminster system – clear accountability – is lost. In other words, if an opposition keeps defining its role in terms of presenting an alternative government, it does nothing to enhance accountability and it is in danger of ignoring alternative strategies of how to do so. Such a style of opposition betrays a stubbornness in holding on to Westminster notions of democratic accountability from which the new institutional framework has clearly moved away.

What were the institutional choices that South Africa made for its new democracy? And what impact do they have on the scope for opposition? Despite the apparent unsuitability of the Westminster model, the opposite model of a clear separation of powers has never been a serious alternative.[3] Nevertheless, the notion of a separation of powers and thus the distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems, sheds some light on the complex nature of the relation between the legislature and the executive, and this in turn has an important impact on opposition politics.

Presidential systems are characterised by a separation of executive and legislative powers with regard to origin, membership and the terms of office, while in parliamentary systems those powers are more or less fused. This can best be illustrated by placing the two systems on a continuum, illustrated by the figure below:

US	Western Europe	UK
Separations of Powers		Fusion of Powers

On one pole are found systems, such as the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom (UK), in which the executive emerges from or is selected by the legislature, the members of the executive are members of the legislature and the executive can be forced to resign by the legislature: that is, it requires the confidence of the legislature.

On the other pole are systems like the presidential one of the United States (US) in which the executive has a separate mandate: that is, it is elected by the people, there is no overlap in membership between the executive and the legislature and the executive has a fixed term of office (i.e., it cannot be forced to resign).

It is important to note that most parliamentary systems in Western Europe can be placed towards the fusion side of the scale. However, powers are normally less fused than at Westminster due to the existence of minority or coalition governments or because the overlap in membership of the executive and the legislature is less complete. In addition to the presidential-parliamentary contrast between fusion and separation of powers, there is a further important difference between Westminster's executive dominance and the continental European pattern of executive-legislative balance.

> 'This may be called an informal separation of powers or a constitutional dualism accepting the independence of legislature and executive.'[4]

Therefore, non-Westminster parliamentary systems tend to be positioned towards the middle of the scale rather than towards the end. The same is true for the South African case.

South Africa's system is in essence a parliamentary system because the president does not have a separate electoral mandate: the executive emerges from the legislature. Furthermore, the executive, including the president, can be forced to resign by the legislature. However, although most members of the cabinet are members of parliament (MPs), the president when elected ceases to be a member of the legislature and may select a maximum of two ministers from outside parliament. Additionally, the fact that not all ministers are members of the majority party renders the fusion of powers less complete than in the Westminster system. Consequently, it would be expected that the South African legislature would be less dominated by the executive than its British counterpart.

There are other system characteristics – most notably the electoral system – that point to the fact that South Africa has moved away from the

Westminster majoritarian model. The national list system, with PR, in which the whole country is one constituency and in which there is virtually no threshold for party representation, is one of the most proportional in the world and ensures the appearance of an array of smaller parties in the legislature. In addition, the system of party lists debars MPs from taking a particular geographical constituency as his or her focus of representation.

With this electoral system in place, parties play a very strong role in South Africa's parliamentary system. Voters vote for parties instead of individual candidates. Thus, each candidate relies on his or her party for a place on the list and in parliament. The party leadership can therefore impose strong discipline upon and command strong loyalty from its members, and party hierarchy is extremely powerful. Consequently, each representative is strongly inclined to support the party's mandate and reluctant to question party positions in public, or in the case of government MPs, openly scrutinise executive decisions.

Some have argued that adopting a constituency-based system would counterbalance the control of parties in parliament. MPs elected by specific geographical constituencies are said to be more inclined to independent behaviour. However, experience in established constituency-based systems such as the UK, let alone in neighbouring Zimbabwe, suggests otherwise. There too, strong party control is a dominant feature of parliamentary life. It suggests that whether to have a party list or constituency-based system is not such a crucial question as is the size of the ruling party's parliamentary majority. In a system where the gap in seats between the largest and second largest party is relatively small, government MPs are more inclined to follow party mandates so as not to endanger their party's majority. It follows that when the majority of the governing party is huge, MPs would in theory have more room for dissent or criticism. Given the African National Congress' (ANC's) large majority, therefore, there would seem to be ample potential for scrutiny by government MPs – even though in practice, opposition parties can be demonstrated to have used scrutiny procedures such as questions and interpellations on a considerably more frequent basis than ANC MPs.

Be that as is may, the South African combi-

Number of seats in the National Assembly per party

	1994	1999
African National Congress	252	266
Democratic Party	7	38
Inkatha Freedom Party	43	34
New National Party	82	28
United Democratic Movement	–	14
African Christian Democratic Party	2	6
Pan Africanist Congress	5	3
Freedom Front	9	3
Freedom Alliance	–	2
Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging	–	1
Azanian People's Organisation	–	1
Minority Front	–	1

nation of parliamentarianism and PR does provide the opposition with the institutional context to play a meaningful role in the democratic system. Firstly, it ensures that an array of political interests find representation in parliament.

Five new parties entered parliament as a result of the 1999 elections. However, to argue that this fragmentation has necessarily weakened the opposition ignores the fact that in a situation of an overwhelming majority for the governing party, the value of the opposition lies in representing a diversity of interests rather than presenting a credible alternative government.

Secondly, the chosen institutional framework leaves room for effective strategies of opposition. The relative distance between legislature and executive ensures that the ANC in government does not dominate its party in parliament to the same extent as the governing party in Westminster. It gives ANC members considerable leeway to accommodate opposition views, most notably in meetings of parliamentary committees. It thus provides opposition parties with good opportunities to articulate the interests they represent and influence policy making accordingly. In addition, the existence of a coalition government (ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP]) provides more confrontational avenues for parliamentary opposition. Since the unity of legislature and executive is – at least in theory – mitigated by the presence of the IFP in government, the opposition could use any differences between the governing parties to its advantage.

All in all, there seems to be considerable

institutional scope for opposition in South Africa's parliamentary system. In fact, when South Africa's parliamentary system is compared with other parliaments in the Southern African region,[5] the South African framework seems most conducive to developing an influential parliamentary opposition. However, any well-established opposition party will have to find a fine balance between being vocal and being influential, between cooperation and confrontation.

2. PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT

Historically, parliaments have been studied from a liberal perspective defining them as 'law-making bodies in a spiral of decline'.[6] Ever since Montesquieu introduced the theory of the separation of powers, law-making has been regarded as the principal task of legislatures. As a consequence, a legacy of what has been named 'the two body image'[7] is still prominent in current legislative studies. Legislatures are mainly studied with regard to their impact on policy making by the executive. The emphasis remains on the relation of one institution to the other. Recent studies using a rational choice or neo-institutional approach have provided a remedy of some sort by emphasising the behaviour, preferences and attitudes of individual MPs and drawing attention to the role parliamentary committees play in the functioning of a modern day parliament. Such insights are crucial if the way in which parties nowadays dominate the functioning of most parliaments in the world is to be fully understood. Only if a comprehensive framework from which to analyse parliaments as complex networks of relations between various parliamentary actors is employed can the role of parties in parliament be adequately comprehended.

There is a second liberal legacy in legislative studies that hinders a full understanding of parties in parliament: the persisting notion that ever since parties entered the parliamentary arena, legislatures are in decline. The golden age of parliament was the 19th century, when independent members deliberated free of vested regional or party interests and the demands of the mass of voters. With the growth of organised parties and the introduction of mass franchise, power shifted away from parliament and its importance diminished. The persistence of

this Western European notion of decline clearly shows in the never ending lamentations about the negative effects of party discipline on parliaments all around the world. Parties seem to be widely regarded as obstacles blocking legislatures from performing their democratic functions rather than as facilitators of parliamentary performance. They are the main focus of electoral studies but still remain under-researched when it comes to the field of parliamentary research.

How then is it possible to look beyond the liberal perspective and gain more insight into the role of parties in parliament? Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that parliaments are not mono-functional institutions. They perform a number of functions in a modern democracy, some of which are especially important in the context of a consolidating democracy like the South African one. Studying the Brazilian case between 1964 and 1965, Packenham emphasised the importance of a multi-functional approach in legislative studies and argued that legitimation, recruitment, socialisation and training are as crucial as the decisional or influence function of legislatures.[8] Given the relative dominance of the executive in initiating legislation and the lack of parliamentary resources in the form of researchers and committee staff, this seems equally true for most parliaments in consolidating democracies, including South Africa. If anything, the South African parliament contributes to the new democratic system by enhancing representation and legitimacy rather than exerting power in terms of law-making. This has important consequences for the way we think about the role of parliamentary opposition in South Africa.

While the first democratic parliament elected in 1994 spent most of its time putting in place a new constitutional and legislative framework to replace the old apartheid laws, the situation seems to have 'normalised' after the election of the second parliament in 1999. In other words, the opportunity for the opposition to influence the law-making process has diminished simply because the role of parliament changed. Now that the phase of democratic consolidation has begun, the main challenge is therefore to shift parliament's focus from law-making to accountability.

However, in contrast with the more established democracies in the West, the notion of

accountability does not seem firmly embedded in South African parliamentary politics. Firstly, because of the existence of the constitutional court and the independent so called 'Chapter Nine' (of the constitution) institutions, there are alternative ways to hold government accountable. Parliament is not the only forum of oversight over the executive. Although the constitutional watchdogs like the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector are accountable to the National Assembly (section 181.5 of the Constitution), they provide a distinct alternative for individuals and groups to express their grievances, give voice to their interests and challenge government policy. Importantly, the Constitutional Court and Chapter Nine institutions are also open to opposition parties, and they may make use of these alternative extra-parliamentary routes to hold government accountable. However, doing so, they run the risk of being accused of politicising what is in essence a legal way to safeguard constitutional rights. The court case over aspects of voter registration in the run up to the 1999 elections is a case in point. The democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP) took the government to court accusing it of promoting disenfranchisement, but it has been argued by some that these parties were in practice using the court case to seek party political gains, endangering the independence of the IEC in the process.[9] The example serves to show that when parliamentary opposition is not the sole instrument for holding the government accountable, the alternative constitutional fora which are provided should be handled with great care. After all, parliament, being a national political arena, is more suitable for party political debate than a court case can ever be.

The specific situation with regard to provincial government is the second reason why opposition parties seem to experience difficulties in developing clear strategies to hold government accountable. This is especially true for the NNP. The Western Cape, being the stronghold of the NNP, is the only province in the country governed only by opposition parties. (The ANC is formally the junior partner to the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal.) While the DP seems to have been rather comfortable with combining its position of the Official Opposition with its shared government position in the province, the NNP has been less successful in determining its strategy. During the 1999 election campaign, the NNP was in two minds. On the one hand, the party emphasised the need for opposition to the ANC. On the other, it campaigned on its record of incumbent provincial government. During the government formation process that followed the election, the party sent out an equally mixed message, with some NNP politicians arguing for an ANC/NNP coalition.[10] While this may have been a byproduct of the more general disarray in which the party found itself, it will be interesting to see how the coalition experience in the Western Cape will impact on strategies of the two coalition partners for the next elections. Now that they have merged into the Democratic Alliance (DA), the municipal elections in 2000 might very well prove to be crucial for the opposition's fortunes. In any case, the intricacies of the system of provincial government and the link between the political situation in the province and the national position of the parties seems to limit the extent to which the notion of accountability is firmly embedded in opposition politics. It seems to make it more difficult for opposition parties like the NNP, the DP and now the new DA to successfully convince the voters that they can succeed in holding government accountable.

3. PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

King has devised a typology of different modes of executive-legislative relations, which has subsequently been refined by the present author and Andeweg. This typology identifies a non-party mode in which members of government interact with members of parliament and which conforms to the 'old' image of two bodies engaged in constitutional checks and balances. Parliament functions as an institution *vis-à-vis* government. Secondly, an inter-party mode has been identified in which the main line of conflict runs not between institutions but between parties. Ministers and MPs from one party interact with ministers and MPs (or if it is an opposition party only MPs) from another party. Parliament serves as a political arena in which the ideological struggle between political parties is fought out. Finally, there is a cross-party mode, in which ministers and MPs combine to interact on the basis of cross-party interests.

The interactions ignore the institutional boundaries between parliament and government, but this time the struggle is not between parties but between social interests intersecting party boundaries. Parliament serves as a marketplace where social interests are traded in fierce competition.

In a comparative study of 18 Western European legislatures, Andeweg and Nijzink have tried to find evidence of the existence of these modes by looking at the institutional norms and practices structuring those parliaments. In general, the inter-party mode seems to have replaced the non-party mode, which can be regarded as the dominant pattern of interaction in the time prior to the development of modern political parties. However, with regard to the extent to which parliaments control their own agenda, the frequency and success rate of private member bills and the frequency of parliamentary inquiries, Andeweg and Nijzink still found signs of the non-party mode in all 18 parliaments under study. The dominance of the inter-party mode is further limited by evidence of the cross-party mode in patterns of ministerial recruitment, the existence of specialised parliamentary committees and cross-party caucuses as well as the degree of specialisation among MPs.[11]

Although it is far beyond the scope of this paper to apply King's framework and its institutional indicators to the South African case, there does not seem to be any reason why the same overall pattern could not emerge in a detailed analysis of the South African parliamentary procedures and structures. Different patterns of interactions between ministers and parliamentarians clearly co-exist in Western European parliaments. To approach the study of South African legislative structures and procedures from this perspective of coexistence might therefore help rethink the notions of accountability and opposition in South African parliamentary politics.

For now, however, the paper will limit itself to a discussion of two institutional elements closely associated with parliament's task of holding the government accountable, parliamentary questioning and the parliamentary committee system, and assess the extent to which the inter-party mode dominates these structures.

Section 55 of the Constitution states that the National Assembly must provide for mechanisms:
- to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it and
- to maintain oversight of the exercise of national executive authority, including the implementation of legislation and any organ of state.

The implementation of this constitutional provision includes, among other things, several forms of parliamentary questioning and a system of parliamentary committees.

Some of the committees of the National Assembly, most notably the committees on Justice, Education and Constitutional Affairs have carved out an important role for themselves in the policy-making process. Although more often than not they deliberate with the department's legal drafters rather than the Minister present (something which raises serious questions around executive-legislative relations in the drafting stage), portfolio committees have certainly been influential in law making. But have they also performed well in terms of oversight?

The 26 permanent specialised portfolio committees of the National Assembly have been provided with extensive oversight powers. Apart from dealing with legislation, a committee must maintain oversight of the exercise within its portfolio of national executive authority, including the implementation of legislation, and, according to rule 52 of the Standing Orders, 'monitor, investigate, enquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant, of the government department or departments falling within the category of affairs assigned to the committee'.

Moreover, for the purposes of performing its oversight function, a portfolio committee may summon any person to appear before it to give evidence. These powers are also enshrined, unusually, in the Constitution itself. According to section 56, a committee of the National Assembly may:
- summon any person to appear before it to give evidence on oath or affirmation, or to produce documents
- require any person or institution to report to it

- compel any person or institution to comply with a summons or requirement in terms of paragraph (a) or (b)
- receive petitions, representations or submissions from any interested persons or institutions.

However, an internal Report on Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability, recently prepared for Parliament by specialists in Constitutional Law, identified several problems committees have in using their extensive powers.[12] Firstly, there is a logistical problem with an overload of reports, and late distribution of reports as well as too little time to prepare responses. Given the current lack of committee and individual resources for MPs, many reports are simply being ignored rather than used to hold government accountable. Some committee members apparently rely on the more infrequent briefings with the department rather than available written reports to raise matters that are of clear importance.

Secondly, there is a problem with regard to the wide range of bodies that are accountable to parliament. The report recommends establishing a separate parliamentary committee to deal with the constitutional institutions parliament should oversee. With regard to the other committees, the proposed solution is streamlining the procedure on receipt of reports. However, it is clear that logistics is just one element of the problem. The lack of staff, expertise and resources is another that needs to be addressed if the committees are to perform their oversight tasks effectively.

Finally, there is the more political matter of attitudes. Even if all the resource and logistical problems would be solved, committees would only be transformed into instruments of oversight if committee chairs are not afraid to occasionally antagonise the minister; if the opposition is not set on turning every committee meeting into a mini-plenum; if committees would succeed in focusing on policy implementation and if members regard their committees as efficient parliamentary units established to develop expertise and manage information rather than extensions of the party political divide. As for legislation, the author has observed that committees work in a spirit of relaxed party competition, but can they do so when it comes to oversight? It would certainly be less conducive to effective parliamentary oversight if the inter-party mode would always dominate in committee meetings.

Parliamentarians and especially opposition MPs are faced with the challenge of striking a delicate balance between being vocal and being influential. Parliamentary committee meetings are at least in theory highly suitable for effective oversight. Parliamentary questioning, on the other hand, is clearly more geared towards the articulation of partisan views. After all, question time is a highly public event, providing an excellent opportunity to engage in party political competition. In other words, during question time, parliament is clearly in an inter-party mode.

Apart from the oral questions, presented at a fixed question time on a regular basis, typical forms of parliamentary questioning are interpellations, aimed at opening a specific form of mini-debate, and less important written questions which are not answered nor debated in parliamentary sittings. An extensive comparative research project concentrating on parliaments in Western Europe[13] found that there is a constant process of evolution in the precise terms of the various forms of questioning, and that the detailed institutional set-up of parliamentary questioning significantly influences the way in which the process can serve as an instrument of accountability. Rules with regard to the number of questioners are a good example.

Normally, written and oral questions are an individual right. Many parliaments permit one, and only one, MP to put a question. In some parliaments, it is possible for more than one MP, not necessarily from the same party, to submit a joint question. Obviously, such a joint effort could enhance pressure on the government, especially when a government MP and an opposition MP join forces.

In some countries, a joining of forces is required with regard to interpellations. In Finland, for example, the minimum number of questioners in the case of an interpellation is 20 MPs. In Germany, five per cent of MPs or one party group is the minimum required for an interpellation. Such a regulation, however, tends to emphasise party political differences rather than enhance the oversight potential of an interpellation debate.

In South Africa, the Standing Orders do not specify a minimum number of questioners nor

are there any provisions dealing with joint questions, but the example serves to illustrate the importance of a more detailed analysis of the specific questioning procedures, in terms of formal rules as well as practice. At present, questions and interpellations are utilised widely by opposition parties and seem to constitute the more popular means of disputing ANC policy. Most of the socio-economic questions, for example, are posed by opposition parties rather than ANC members. Only 17% of socio-economic questions asked between 1994 and 1999 were asked by ANC members. Research by Idasa's Political Information and Monitoring Service (PIMS) also shows the total number of questions asked by each of the four main parties between 1994 and 1998:

NNP = 2739
DP   = 1679
IFP   =   687
ANC =   588

There are several possible explanations for the relative rarity of ANC questioning, despite its large majority. Firstly, the ANC seems to regard parliament as primarily a venue for passing laws initiated by the government and for facilitating policy implementation by the executive. Secondly, the ANC as an organisation and former struggle movement does not have a strong history of individualised and independent behaviour. A third and more important factor is probably the inexperience of many MPs with the workings of parliament, although it might be expected that this factor would have diminished over time.

In practice, the ANC has come to acknowledge that opposition parties have dominated question time. After the 1999 elections, when the DP replaced the NNP as the largest opposition party, the ANC warned its members that the effective use of question time might have contributed to the DP's electoral success. The DP, being well-versed in media management, led the ANC to expect an even more strategic use of question time by the opposition. Consequently, the latter urged its members to be proactive – instead of leaving it to the Whips Office or the party researchers to compile questions – and make question time a showcase for the ANC. The DP, on the other hand, accused the President of neglecting parliament, complained about his lack of attendance and proposed that a specific President's Question Time

be introduced. Against this background, a decision was made to revamp questioning procedures. Interpellations, widely regarded as dull and unexciting, have subsequently been abolished and new rules for question time have been introduced. The first-come-first-serve basis for tabling questions has been replaced by a proportional allocation, and there are new arrangements regarding the attendance of ministers, including the President, who will answer questions four times a year.

So far, the changes seem to have increased the liveliness of debate in the National Assembly. Whether, they have also increased the scope for opposition in parliament remains to be seen. It largely depends on the balance the opposition might be able to find between being vocal and being influential.

For now, the effectiveness of the opposition in terms of oversight or questioning should not be overestimated. Normally, opposition parties can help perform the parliamentary function of oversight. Yet, the opposition structure in the current parliament hardly seems to be sufficiently powerful to do so, in part because the opposition parties that entered parliament after the 1999 elections are still in a learning curve and still developing their oppositional skills. In addition, the small size of most opposition parties manifestly hinders their oversight activities, especially where they fail to prioritise and target specific issues. The Pan African Congress (PAC) MP Patricia de Lille is the obvious exception here. She seems constantly effective in putting issues on the political agenda and challenging the ANC. As such she comes close to the old ideal of the independent MP and shows that effective opposition does not solely lie in numbers.

The DP is equally vocal and seems to be as effective in putting issues on the political agenda. However, the DP seems to focus on issues that are less important for the majority of voters. Furthermore, by choosing a confrontational style, it is in danger of alienating the ANC while doing little to enhance accountability. It also seems rather unwise in a situation in which there is no clear prospect of winning control of government and the potential growth of the party is limited by the country's electoral demography. If anything, it has resulted in a competition between the DP and the NNP for the position of 'white opposition' in the coun-

try. The recent merger of the two parties can therefore be regarded as a culmination of party political competition rather than a strengthening of the opposition. It is hard to see how the new DA is anything other than a strategic move by the DP to win the electoral struggle over a minority of the electorate. It certainly is not a move based on ideology and principles. Be that as it may, the new alliance will most probably not adopt the strategy of constructive opposition which the NNP used to promote but continue the confrontational route chosen by the DP. Consequently, the DA's chances of effectively making a difference in terms of government policies appear limited. Even so, a conclusion that there is no scope for opposition in the new South African parliament appears far too negative.

CONCLUSION

During its negotiated transition towards democracy, South Africa opted for parliamentarism and a system of PR. From a comparative perspective this seems to have been a wise choice. Not only does it avoid the very real danger majoritarianism poses of reinforcing pre-existing tensions between regions or ethnic groups, but the chosen system is also better suited than the presidential systems of South Africa's neighbours for giving the opposition a chance to carve out a meaningful role in the new democratic dispensation.

Nonetheless, the opposition role should not be primarily defined in terms of presenting a credible alternative government. Such a strategy betrays a stubbornness in holding to Westminster-style notions of democratic accountability from which the new institutional framework has clearly moved away. The constitution has created powerful parliamentary committees as well as additional fora for holding the government accountable, thus providing intra-parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary opportunities for parties of opposition. These arrangements require from the opposition a constructive commitment to the new democratic order.

Given the existing institutional framework, the opposition has an important role to play in terms of legitimation, mobilising support for the system, and in terms of tension release and interest articulation. Opposition parties also have a role to play in keeping the government alert, making sure that the issues they raise cannot be easily dismissed by the ANC in government and parliament. It follows that opposition parties should not concentrate solely on their impact on legislation and policy making. Rather, now that the first phase of democratisation is over and the main legislative and constitutional instruments are in place, the opposition should focus its energies on strategies to enhance transparency and interest representation. Parliamentary questioning is one of the ways to do so, but the committee system also provides scope for an influential opposition, as does the option of introducing private member bills.

A further polarisation along racial lines will certainly hinder the effectiveness of all these parliamentary activities. It may win NNP voters for the DP, even to the extent of incorporating or eliminating the NNP altogether, yet it also risks creating the notion of a white opposition versus a black government.

Such a division along racial lines will not only negate the gains that were made with the democratic transition. It will also tempt the ANC into using its overwhelming majority to dominate parliamentary politics, thus reducing the role of parliament in South Africa's new democracy.

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The Potential Constituency of the DA: What Dowries do the DP and the NNP Bring to the Marriage?

Hennie Kotzé

The fusion of South Africa's two largest opposition parties, the Democratic Party (DP) and the New National Party (NNP) into the Democratic Alliance (DA) has been a marriage born out of the desire for a more dynamic parliamentary opposition rather than ideological conviction. The union brings together two parties which are not only divergent in their philosophies but also in their styles of opposition. This analysis deals with the potential for growth that the DA has in the short- to medium-term, focusing specifically on their capacity for developing shared values. The article argues that while the DA is likely to become the preferred home for the majority of whites, coloured and Asian voters, its scope for support among blacks will be severely limited if the DA takes over the DP's strategy of adversarial opposition.

INTRODUCTION

Elections legitimise power. In a narrow sense this means that the government of the day is legitimate in the eyes of those who have voted. More broadly speaking, however, it means that the population also accepts the regime – the state and the political community. In South Africa's 1994 election – the first inclusively competitive election – the concept of a 'political party opposition' within the arena of a democratic system was established for the first time. The second election of June 1999 reinforced the concept of opposition parties and their role in South African politics, a development which has subsequently been underlined by the announcement by the two largest such parties – the DP and the NNP – in June 2000

that they were joining together as the Democratic Alliance (DA). For the moment, these two parties will remain as separate entities and the DA will remain a coalition, as the constitution requires that members of parliament (MPs) who change political parties resign. However, the present intention is that the DA will fight the next election as a single party. The DA has therefore emerged as the largest opposition challenger to the African National Congress (ANC). This article examines its potential for growth in the short- to medium-term.

South Africa's transition to democracy enhanced the standing of opposition in two major ways. Firstly, opposition was legitimised by the country's first (1994) democratic constitution. The latter stated that there should be representative government, embracing multi-party democracy, regular elections, universal suffrage, a common voters' roll, and in general, proportional representation (PR). Politically, the effect was to legitimise as parties the liberation movements which had been banned by the apartheid regime, whilst conversely, similarly legitimising the role of those non-struggle parties which had participated in the previously undemocratically structured parliament. Secondly, democratic elections also create the opportunity for parties to send a message to the voters that criticism and sharp differences should be accepted as part of the political process.[1] Although such a celebration of diversity constitutes a standard dimension of liberal democracy, its reality remains contested in many new democracies, particularly so in a system such as South Africa's which has not only emerged from an oppressive regime but

where social and economic cleavages are pervasive. Thus whereas the first condition clearly stipulates the institutional character of opposition, the second refers more to the socio-economic character of the opposition.

It is a combination of these conditions that determines the fortunes of the DP and NNP. On the one hand, the institutional outcome of the electoral system – namely that of a party list system of PR – allowed them a far greater representation in parliament than they would have had under a relative majority or absolute majority system. On the other hand, the socio-economic conditions, and particularly the political culture in South Africa, predestine them to remain in perpetual opposition, for the only chance of new entities such as the newly established DA to break the dominance of the now ruling ANC will be if a split in the latter's Tripartite Alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) should materialise. In the short- to medium-term (including the next general elections, which are expected in 2004) it seems that the number of dissatisfied supporters of the ANC is too small for the opposition to make inroads into the support of the governing party.

In order to analyse the potential constituency of the DA and the possibility of it becoming a real threat to the ANC, this article will: firstly, provide a brief overview of the history and policies of the DP and NNP; secondly, analyse their present support base; thirdly, consider the prospects for its enlargement; and finally, discuss the socio-economic conditions that shape the growth potential for all and any opposition in South Africa.

1. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POLICIES OF THE NNP AND DP[2]

After the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, whereby Britain granted effective autonomy to the settler minority, white politics was dominated by three themes: race relations, constitutional issues, and the nature of the South African nation. It was, however, only after the Second World War that racial policies became the all pervasive trademark of South African politics. Prior to that, South Africa's constitutional status and the shape it would take were the main political issues that preoccupied the established political parties.

1.1 The New National Party

The National Party (NP) is firmly rooted in the history of the 20th century. Since its establishment in 1914, it has boasted many ideological adaptations, alliances, breakaways and even a name change, only becoming the 'New' NP in 1998. (*See Figure 1 for the party family tree.*) Traditionally the NP was an all-white party, acting as the architect of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism. When the party announced its intention to scrap the notion of racial minority protection as a basic pillar of its policy framework in the early 1990s, it brought about its end as a party for 'whites only'. Although its parliamentary representation, which was almost wholly white, did not reflect its support base after the 1994 election it had a fairly representative constituency in its 20% share of the vote. It was estimated that its almost four million voters consisted of: 49% whites; 30% coloureds; 14% blacks; and 7% Asians.[3]

Today, the NNP has claimed that it has transformed itself by admitting the wrongs of the past and 'revolutionising' its membership requirements. After 1994, it claimed that it was redefining South African politics by bringing 'together a majority of all South Africans in a dynamic political movement based on proven core values and Christian-democratic norms and standards'.[4] As the post-1994 era unfolded, however, it rapidly became obvious that 40 years in government had rendered the NNP incapable of serving as junior partner to the ANC in the post-transition Government of National Unity. It also became evident that the party was losing its appeal to many of its supporters.

The succession to its leadership of Marthinus van Schalkwyk after the resignation of former President F.W. de Klerk in August 1997, also proved decisive. The party had to market a package combining a new and comparatively inexperienced leader with its new brand of politics to the party faithful. A steady decline in its ratings since the Van Schalkwyk accession suggests that it failed in doing so. (*See Figure 3.*) This forced the NNP to explore the idea of a 'united opposition party', but this did not materialise, and in the 1999 election the party slumped to fourth place, losing 13% of its support in the period between the two elections. Compared to the 3.9 million votes it garnered

in 1994, it polled only 1.098 million or 6.87% of the votes in 1999. All in all, it appears that it failed to tailor its programme to its racially mixed support base, and in particular, whereas its policy of 'constructive cooperation' with the government may have made sense to its coloured voters, it proved particularly unpopular with its white supporters, who had left in droves for the more robustly oppositionist DP.

1.2 The Democratic Party

In contrast to the NNP, the DP is a much younger party, which was launched in April 1989. However, the party's roots go back to the Progressive Party (PP) founded in 1959 which for many years had Helen Suzman as its sole representative in parliament. Subsequently, the DP was an amalgamation of the successor to the (PP), the Progressive Federal Party (led by Dr Zach de Beer), the Independent Party (led by Dr Dennis Worrall), the National Democratic Movement (led by Wynand Malan), and a so-called 'fourth force' of disillusioned Afrikaners. This amalgamation united the entire white parliamentary opposition to the left of the National Party. (*See figure 2 for the DP 'family tree'.*) Moreover, it highlighted potentially strong support for liberal values in South African politics even though the DP only managed to draw 20% of white support in the 1989 (racially restricted) general election.

The DP was initially jointly led by De Beer, Worrall and Malan before De Beer became the sole leader in October 1990. An important aim of the party was to form a bridge between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groups, this was to be achieved by means of negotiation. It was also committed to 'engagement politics', meaning it was prepared to talk to everyone, from right wing Afrikaners to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). In practice, however, its weak representation in parliament limited its opportunities to act as a political broker. One of the DP's basic dilemmas – as was the case with all white dominated liberal parties before it – was that it could not deploy its potential multiracial support base to the power centre. Had it decided to attack the fundamental legitimacy of white control, it would have run the risk of eroding its support among those it needed to function effectively in parliamentary politics.

Many of the DP's initial problems and low support levels resulted from the NP's dramatic policy shift in February 1990. During the early 1990s the party was characterised by internal differences. Ironically, Tony Leon (who was to be elected leader after the party's disastrous showing in the 1994 elections when it received less than two per cent of the vote), proposed in April 1992 that the DP disband and merge with the NP. Tensions then came to a head and a number of MPs defected to the ANC. Nonetheless, despite these tensions, the DP continued to use its position as a party of the centre to play the role of facilitator, as it had so expertly done in the run-up to and during the multiparty negotiation process which paved the way to the democratic transition. Furthermore, although it had just seven representatives in parliament, it capitalised on its past experience of being in opposition, and established a widely-held perception of its being much more effective than the NP.

The DP retains an overwhelmingly white middle-class support base, which forced it to concentrate on issues close to the heart of these voters during the 1999 election campaign. In contrast to NP supporters, who indicated in a poll conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) that fighting crime (40%) and job creation (30%) were their main priorities, DP supporters indicated that fighting crime (67%) should be their main priority. Only 14% opted for job creation.[5] This pattern also reflects the differences in the racial and class basis of the two parties. The DP's objective was to show that the party would keep on fighting against the ANC-led government. Their adoption of a 'Fight Back' campaign, criticised by the ANC as racist,[6] proved especially popular with white and Asian voters, many of whom deserted the NNP with its more 'constructive' approach because they found the aggressive opposition style of the DP particularly appealing.

The opinion polls, which predicted the steady decline of the NNP, correctly forecasted the rise of the DP to the position of official Opposition after the 1999 election, when it polled 9.55% of the vote. (*See Figure 3.*)

The DP and NNP have no shared historical roots, neither did they up till the 1990s share common ground ideologically. A deeper understanding of their very different values allows a better understanding of the type of constituency that may support the DA.

1.3 Contrasting philosophies

During the period of transition and after the 1994 elections it was quite obvious that the philosophical approaches of the DP and the NNP differed on key aspects. Each had a distinctive vision, which gave direction to their policy programmes regarding political change in South Africa. The DP's vision could be described as liberal, while the NNP's could be typified as technocratic.

The core of liberalism is anchored in the definition of democracy in terms of the principle of procedural justice. With such an approach the yardstick for democracy is the way in which decisions are taken according to stipulated rules and procedures rather than the content of the decision. A second point of departure is to regard the individual as the primary political unit. The assumption is that rights, freedom and responsibilities are accorded to individuals. Democratic citizenship, in its broadest sense, is seen as an individual capacity. The presupposition is that individuals autonomously decide what is in their best interest. Consequently, party preference is seen as based on interest and not on relationships such as race, language, class, religion, etc.

Majority government is not regarded as a threat from the viewpoint of a classical liberal approach. Firstly, the majority is regarded as only a random and temporary assembly of individuals. The assumption is that such an assembly will break up as soon as other political parties aggregate the interests of these individuals more effectively on new issues. In short, majorities are formed around issues. Secondly, majorities in control of the government can be restricted in the arbitrary use of power if the necessary checks and balances exist in the political system.

With the individual as the important political unit, it is obvious that a nation is regarded as a collection of individuals. Freedom of association is central to the liberal dynamics of nation-building and civil society should be an autonomous component of the state. The individual again forms the basic unit in the liberal approach to socio-economic development. It is accepted that economic development in a system of free entrepreneurship, coupled with correct policy, will stimulate economic growth. Capitalist growth creates inequalities but liberal thinkers are confident that the trickle down effect will cancel out this negative aspect in the long-term.

In contrast, although the technocratic approach shares the liberal idea of procedural justice, it sees the community as the primary unit in politics. It is assumed that the individuals do not make decisions in an autonomous manner but rather as part of some community. The presupposition is that an individual's party support is linked to interests but that these interests are linked and intertwined with a broader social identity. This identity is connected to language, religion, race and other cultural markers. Contemporary social issues are interpreted and filtered through this net of social relationships. For the technocrats, democracy thus entails the maintenance of constitutional rules and procedures which guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals, yet which also ensures that communities are protected. Against this background they reject majority government and insist on constitutional rules that guarantee power-sharing and minority protection.

Technocrats see the nation as consisting of different cultural communities, which together form a multi-cultural identity. The nation-building process, according to this approach, is based on proactive state action in the form of constitutional rules, which create social space for cultural communities to build their identities.

The technocrats also pledged allegiance to free entrepreneurship and capitalist economic practices. They acknowledge the inequalities resulting from capitalist growth, however, they believe that the creation of wealth will in the longer-term cancel out these inequalities. Inequalities should be endured and protests based on this should be curtailed with state action.

1.4 Values

Political development in South Africa reflects dramatically different patterns of socialisation. This pattern can be described as the 'socialisation of isolation', because the codification of racial discrimination under apartheid led to the creation of virtually watertight divisions between socially constructed categories of people in the country. These groups all experienced political and social life quite differently. A general assumption in a case like this is that peo-

Table 1: Social values index by party support

Orientation	ANC	DP	NNP
Very liberal	0.4	1.0	0.2
Liberal	2.3	8.1	1.0
Neither liberal nor conservative	9.6	25.3	8.0
Conservative	21.9	29.8	26.1
Very conservative	65.9	35.9	64.8

N= 2935

Table 2: Social values index by population group (%)

Orientation	Black	White	Coloured	Asian
Very liberal	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.0
Liberal	2.1	3.0	0.2	1.4
Neither liberal nor conservative	10.2	12.3	4.0	6.2
Conservative	20.0	31.0	19.2	24.2
Very conservative	67.5	53.0	64.8	68.1

N= 2935

ple's values are also influenced by their respective social and political environments. Although the cornerstone of this compartmentalisation policy, the Population Registration Act, was scrapped in the late 1980s, the implications of these racial categories continue to permeate the fabric of everyday life in South Africa.

These variant patterns of socialisation are reflected in the values which differentiate the supporters of political parties. Of particular relevance to the concerns of this paper is the set of value orientations which may be termed 'social liberalism', encouraging us to ask: firstly, what is the level of social liberalism among supporters of South Africa's major parties? And, secondly, is there a discernible pattern which distinguishes the historically designated race groups? One finding which emerges is that while, as has been seen, there are significant differences between the DP and the NNP philosophically, there seems to be a smaller gap between the value patterns of their supporters.

The South African section of the World Values Survey conducted in 1995, contains strong indications that South Africans generally seem to be conservative regarding social issues. The following issues were combined in a 'social values' index to gauge the reaction of respondents: 'Homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, suicide and euthanasia'.[7] The classification represents a continuum from very liberal to very conservative.

When the attitudes of respondents supporting the ANC, DP and NNP are compared, not much difference emerges. (*See Table 1*.) However, DP supporters come over as slightly more liberal while the ANC and NNP supporters are equally conservative.

When the different historical group designations are compared, it is clear that the coloured

and Asian people are somewhat more conservative than blacks and whites. (*See Table 2.*) Taking into account that about 16% indicated that they were either liberal or leaning towards liberalism, it is interesting to note that approximately 50% of whites indicated that they had voted for the DP in the 1999 election (Markinor post election survey). A similar trend was noticeable among coloured (17%) and Asian (38%) voters. They voted for the DP notwithstanding their conservative values. The attraction of liberal social values can thus be excluded as a possible explanation for the increase in DP support.

The above pattern suggests firstly, that all South Africans are relatively conservative and, secondly, as expected, DP supporters are somewhat more liberal. It does not, however, give an indication as to why the many conservative voters who levered DP support up to almost 10% in the 1999 elections became 'converted liberals' within such a short space of time. In the next section the present and potential support base of the DP and NNP will be explored in an effort to shed more light on where the DP supporters came from.

2. PRESENT AND POTENTIAL CONSTITUENCIES OF THE DP AND NNP

One of the more interesting debates in the analysis of electoral politics in South Africa centres around the relationship between race and voting behaviour.[8] This focuses in the main on the concept of 'partisan identification', which in turn allows investigation of voting intention to analyse the present and potential constituencies of the DP and NNP.

In a recent survey by Markdata (February 2000), before the marriage between the DP and the NNP took place, respondents were asked to

Table 3: Party support (first choice) by party and by population groups (Markdata: Feb 2000)

Political Party	Per cent Support	Black support	White support	Coloured support	Asian support
ANC/SACP	57.8	70.9	4.0	37.4	18.9
PAC	0.7	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
NNP	5.2	1.6	15.8	17.2	19.3
DP	8.0	1.1	42.8	14.9	20.7
IFP	4.9	6.2	1.6	0.5	1.8
FF	0.5	0.1	3.4	0.0	0.0
CP	0.5	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0
ACDP	0.9	0.3	2.6	3.3	1.0
UDM	1.0	1.2	0.5	0.4	0.0
AZAPO	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.3	2.7
Would not vote	6.8	6.6	9.1	6.1	5.4
Uncertain	6.0	5.8	5.4	7.9	6.6
Don't know	2.5	2.1	2.4	3.6	11.6
Refuse	3.9	2.5	7.7	8.5	12.0
Row Total	99.4	76.0	8.9	2.9	7.7
System Missing	0.6				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

N= 2666

indicate: 'If there were an election tomorrow, which party would you support?' This way their 'first choice' party was established. Their second choice was also asked for. Table 3 reflects the first choices for the parties.

No surprising new trends were revealed in February 2000, although as might be expected, the support for all parties had dropped somewhat since the election. (The margin of error of the survey was 3%). Moreover, a substantial percentage (nearly 20%) either 'did not know', 'refused' or 'would not vote'. (*See Table 3.*) To establish how many NNP supporters indicated that the DP is their second choice and vice versa, a cross tabulation was done between first and second choice parties for the four largest parties. (*See Table 4.*)

From Table 4 it is clear that the supporters of the DP and NNP have much in common, with about a third of both parties' faithfuls being

prepared to 'switch' to the other party as their most favoured alternative. Again, similar proportions (12%) of the DP and the NNP are prepared to opt for the ANC as their second choice. In contrast, very few supporters of either the ANC or the IFP are prepared to consider switching to the DP and NNP: only 10% of ANC supporters would consider the parties who now comprise the DA as a second choice. This compares with a similar 10% of ANC supporters who would vote for the PAC as a second choice, and 5% for the United Democratic Movement (UDM). (Meanwhile, over 50% of UDM supporters indicated the ANC as their second choice). It seems that 20% of ANC and 12% of IFP supporters would rather abstain from voting than vote for other parties, a much higher proportion than the numbers of NNP and DP supporters in this category. Indeed, no less than 58% of IFP supporters indicated that their

Table 4: Second choice of voters of four largest parties (%) (Markdata: Feb 2000)

1st Party	ANC	DP	IFP	NNP	Not vote	Uncertain	KN/refuse
ANC	33.4	6.7	2.8	4.3	20.5	6.5	5.8
DP	12.5	19.1	3.5	30.2	6.0	9.0	9.6
IFP	12.2	2.1	58.4	2.8	12.5	2.3	7.5
NNP	12.9	37.3	2.8	26.2	3.4	5.5	4.4

N= 2666

Table 5: Big four party support by Living Standard Measure (LSM) index (%)

Party	Low-LSM	Medium-LSM	High-LSM
ANC	30.8	54.1	15.1
DP	6.0	14.9	79.1
NNP	13.8	25.3	60.9
IFP	29.6	57.9	15.1

N= 2666

first choice was also their second choice. This figure for the ANC was 33%, whereas only 19% and 26% of the DP and NNP supporters respectively indicated that they had such strong loyalties that they would not even consider a second choice.

The pattern of 'second choices' indicates that there is a much stronger loyalty among the voters of the ANC and IFP than among those of the DP and NNP. It would be very hard for the DA to lure voters away from these two parties. However, what is not shown in Table 4 is the large proportion (close to 40%) of Freedom Front voters that nominated the DP as their second choice with less than one per cent opting for the NNP. This quite clearly confirms that the DP has an attraction for voters from the white right wing.

It was argued above that the NNP deliberately repositioned itself with a policy of 'constructive engagement' to attract more black voters. In contrast, the campaign of the DP, according to some analysts, was geared towards those people in white, coloured and Asian communities.[9] It will clearly be important for the DA to change this approach if it wants to increase support beyond a simple combination of present NNP, and DP supporters to make inroads into the black community. This was recognised by Leon when he stated at the launch of the DA that:

> 'If we do not reach out to a new constituency which has not traditionally been associated with opposition politics, then this would have been an exercise of temporary duration. It is going to basically succeed if we go and engage the main front of South African politics'.[10]

From Table 3, which gives the percentages of the different population groups in the Markdata February 2000 survey that support the ANC, DP and NNP respectively, the small percentage

of black support for the DP and NNP is noticeable. Quite clearly these parties will have to convince black voters that the newly established DA can be a vehicle for their interests too. Already they have been accused by the ANC spokesperson Smuts Ngonyama of forming the alliance as a 'last-ditch effort to perpetuate minority rule'. He added that 'the alliance would bring about racial polarisation' and characterised them as an 'alliance of hate, which is unprincipled'.[11]

In total 8.8% of black voters indicated that as a second choice they would be interested in voting for the DP (5.2%) and NNP (3.6%). This is the potential black constituency that the DA should explore – that is, if the assumption holds that voters who have expressed an interest in the separate entities will automatically also consider as a second choice a combination of these two parties.

At present the DP draws its support mainly from those groups in the higher income groups, while support for the NNP is much more evenly spread among the different classes. Table 5 gives an indication of this spread by using a Living Standard Measure (LSM) index.[12]

If the LSM profile of the second choice supporters of the DA partners is explored – and one should remember that this percentage is very small, for instance only 11% of ANC supporters would consider supporting either the DP or NNP as a second choice – a somewhat different pattern emerges. (*See Table 6.*) Among the blacks that have indicated support for the DA partners as second choice, the medium-LSM group forms the most likely converts to the DA while among the coloureds and Asians it is the high-LSM groups that are the most likely to be converted.

It is quite clear that with the small amount of black support evident in the second choice category, the DA will find it extremely hard to attract a large number of black supporters.

3. PERCEPTIONS OF OPPOSITION POLITICS

Liberals and technocrats have different philosophical approaches to politics, as was previously explained. Notwithstanding these differences, the DP managed to make significant inroads into the conservative support base of the NNP (mainly among whites) following the 1994 elections. Liberal values, albeit very underplayed by the DP in its post-election

Table 6: LSM-profile of second choice support by population group

| Party | Low-LSM | | | Medium-LSM | | | High-LSM | | |
	Black	Coloured	Asian	Black	Coloured	Asian	Black	Coloured	Asian
DP	26.0	4.1	1.0	51.6	40.4	12.3	7.9	57.4	78.9
NNP	36.2	2.3	0.0	66.1	45.5	21.1	12.2	50.4	86.6

N= 2666

social policy pronouncements, did not deter NNP supporters from leaving the DP in large numbers. However, this does not imply that they were all drawn by the 'robust' opposition style adopted by the DP, for this appears to repel various potential supporters simultaneously as it attracts others. This may become crucial for the newly formed DA. The different attitudes that voters have towards the role of opposition will therefore be explored in this section.

In a survey conducted in 1997 by Markinor, a number of items regarding opposition politics were included. After a factor analysis[13] was done on 21 items the first factor with an Eigen value of 3.94 and explaining 16.63% of the variance was used to form an 'Opposition Index'. The following items were included:

- 'Opposition parties may not criticise the government'
- 'We can trust the government to make the best decisions'
- 'All this country needs is one political party to govern the country'
- 'Only supporters of the government may occupy positions/posts in the civil service'
- 'The government must act strongly against political parties who question government policy'.

Cross tabulating the Opposition Index with the respondents from the four largest parties when the survey was conducted and the four population groups an interesting pattern emerged. (*See Tables 7 and 8.*)

In Table 7 the majority (90.9%) of the DP supporters are also pro-opposition. In comparison, the figure for the NNP in this category is 78.8%. IFP supporters also favour a relatively strong role for opposition with a majority (58.8%). However, the ANC supporters who are favourably disposed to opposition, are less then half of the respondents (48.7%). Moreover, the ANC has also the largest group opposed to opposition (24.1%).

Table 8 clearly shows important differences between the population groups. It is clear that whites (89.2% 'strongly supportive' or 'tend to be supportive') and Asians (78%) are the most vigorously in favour of opposition. There are also not many respondents in these groups who are against opposition.

A pre-election survey conducted in Kwa-Zulu-Natal by Markinor for the Institute for Multiparty Democracy during the first half of 1999 revealed a similar pattern. Two dramatically different views of the function of an opposition were recorded. White and Asian voters were of the opinion that opposition parties should play the critical role of watchdog, preventing the government from acting 'wrongly". Black respondents, on the other hand, held the opinion that opposition parties should assist the government to govern better. Although the opposition should criticise the government, it should strive towards agreement, enabling a greater contribution to the country's development – clearly a preference for 'consensus

Table 7: Opposition Index by voting intention (%)

Direction	ANC	NNP	IFP	DP
Strongly against opposition	1.6	0.8	1.1	0.0
Tend to be against	22.5	8.0	13.1	4.3
Neither against nor supportive of	27.1	12.4	30.1	4.9
Tend to be supportive	38.3	40.5	32.8	26.0
Strongly supportive of opposition	10.4	38.3	26.0	64.9

N=3540

Table 8: Opposition Index by population group (%)

Direction	Black	White	Coloured	Asian
Strongly against opposition	1.6	0.1	1.3	0.0
Tend to be against	21.1	3.5	12.5	6.4
Neither against nor supportive of	7.3	27.8	12.9	14.9
Tend to be supportive	38.1	31.4	46.7	49.1
Strongly supportive of opposition	11.4	57.8	26.6	29.6

N=3540

opposition' rather than 'confrontational opposition'. [14]

More than 75% of white and 65% of Asian respondents were of the opinion that the opposition is there to 'check' on the government, while only 50% of black respondents shared this view. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that opposition parties are a negative factor in politics, 62% of white respondents and 54% of Asian respondents disagreed, while only 25% of black respondents disagreed. It is also interesting to note that a large majority of black respondents thought that it was not 'acceptable for non-struggle parties to criticise government". It seems that a fair number of blacks thus regard the role of opposition parties as negative and an obstacle to development.

This pattern may help to explain why:
• such a large number of whites have switched parties to support the DP
• despite the liberal social policies of the DP, conservative white voters are attracted by the aggressive style of opposition politics
• ANC supporters, in particular, have such an aversion to the DP.

However, this pattern of support for 'opposition' does not bode well for a grouping such as the DA. It may quite easily find itself in a no-win situation. If it adopts an aggressive style, it may attract more supporters from the minorities but then may have little attraction for black voters. On the other hand, if it goes the other way, it moves into uncertain waters. It will certainly shed some of its newly won supporters, yet it will have no guarantee that black voters will switch parties to join it.

The following speculative explanations can be offered with regards to these perception patterns about 'opposition':
• An interesting aspect of the black approach to politics is the belief that the individual is part of the whole, and should be in harmony with the accepted values and principles of the group.
• The 'consensus' approach to politics is important to the black populace.
• Many black voters feel that political opposition is an indication of division.

Care must be taken in any attempt to generalise, but it seems that a number of black voters have difficulty in accepting the concept of opposition politics as conceptualised in Western liberal democracies. In a recent interview, for instance, Dr Malegapura Makgoba made an interesting remark illustrating this aspect when he described how South Africans should handle contentious issues: 'I wish the Opposition could learn this. You don't criticise an African leader in public. Approach (him) through a private discussion first'.[15]

The above patterns illustrating attitudes towards 'opposition' adds credence to the DP's 'fight back' campaign which succeeded in mobilising a large number of uncertain voters among the whites and Asians. It was clearly successful in exploiting the frustration with the political process among those voters. It may also explain why white and Asian voters left the NNP with its more 'constructive' approach in such large numbers for the aggressive opposition of the DP. However, whether this style will be an asset for the DA is debatable.

CONCLUSION

The marriage of the DP and the NNP has brought together not only two different philosophies but also two different styles of opposition politics. Whether the opposition glue will be strong enough to hold the marriage together will depend to a great extent on how these approaches and styles can be integrated. As in all functional marriages there will have to be give and take. It is very possible that the DA will become the political home of the majority

of the whites, coloureds and Asians. However, the above analysis shows that there is limited scope for growth beyond these minorities if they do not scale down what many of their potentially larger constituency regarded as negative opposition politics. Indeed, the DA could easily become marginalised as it may come up against a demographic ceiling for growth if it cannot attract voters beyond its presently mainly white power base. The major challenge will therefore be to strike a balance between 'con-

sensus opposition' and 'confrontational opposition". If this cannot be done effectively, South Africa faces becoming confirmed as a dominant party state, with a number of smaller parties competing in regular, popular elections yet never able to attract majority support.

The DA may represent a consummation devoutly to be wished for for the vitality of South Africa's democracy. But the present indications are that it is unlikely to be as productive a union as its partners hope.
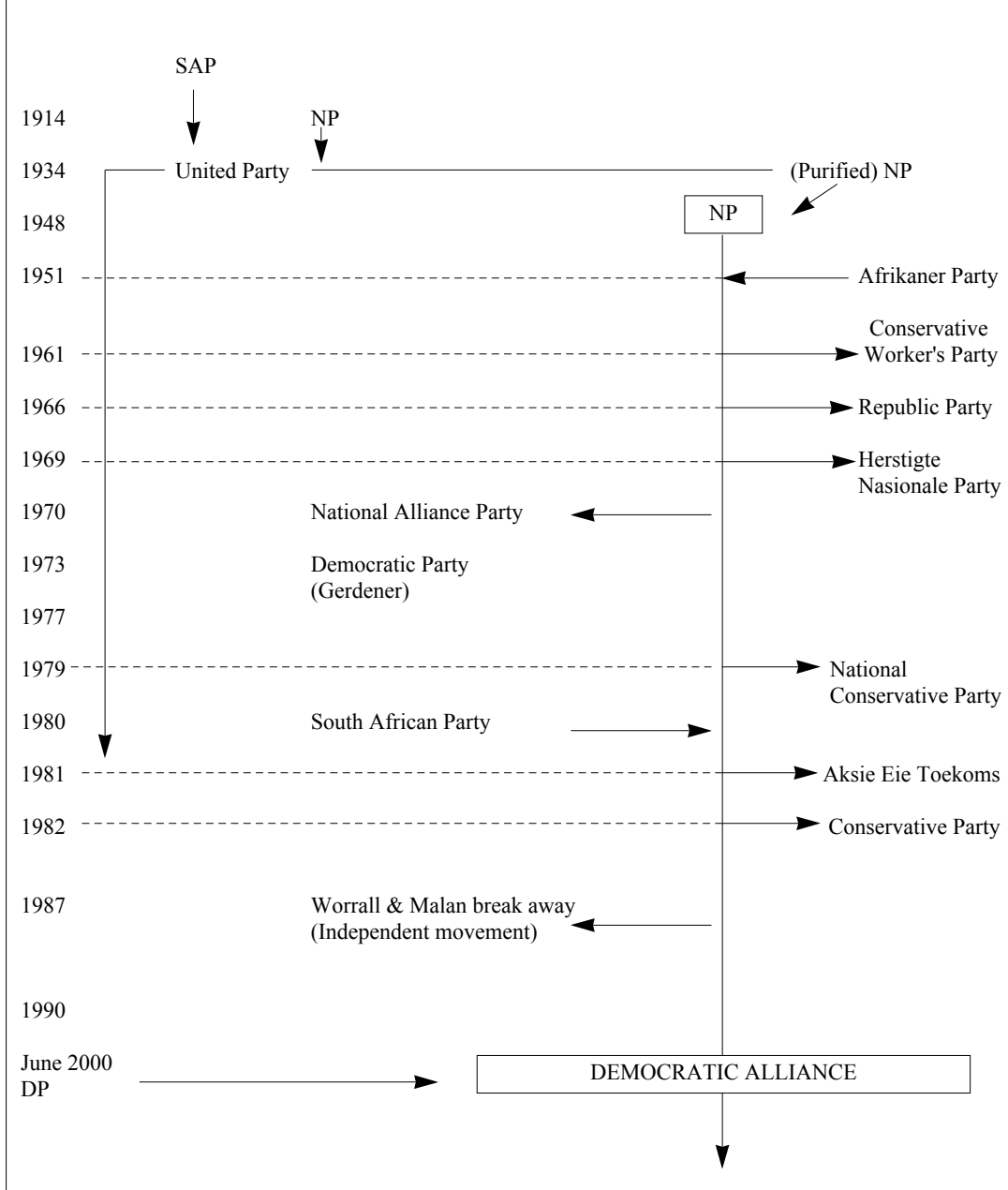
Figure 1: Family Tree of the NP (Democratic Alliance)

SAP

1914

NP

1934   United Party   (Purified) NP

1948 | NP |

1951 - ←   Afrikaner Party

Conservative
1961 - →   Worker's Party

1966 - →   Republic Party

1969 - →   Herstigte
Nasionale Party

1970   National Alliance Party   ←

1973   Democratic Party
(Gerdener)

1977

1979 - →   National
Conservative Party

1980   South African Party   →

1981 - →   Aksie Eie Toekoms

1982 - →   Conservative Party

1987   Worrall & Malan break away
(Independent movement)   ←

1990

June 2000
DP   → | DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE |

Figure 2: Family Tree of the Democratic Party (Democratic Alliance)

United Party

1959 ----------------- → Progressive Party

1974 ----------------- → Reform Party

1975 -----------------

1977 --------- UP disbands ------------------------------

DP (Gerdener)
NRP

Progressive Reform
Party

Progressive Federal Party

1987 ------ → Independent Movement ← -------

NDM   Independent Party

1988   NP ← - - NRP disbands - - - →

1989 ------------------- | DEMOCRATIC PARTY |

                                                    NP

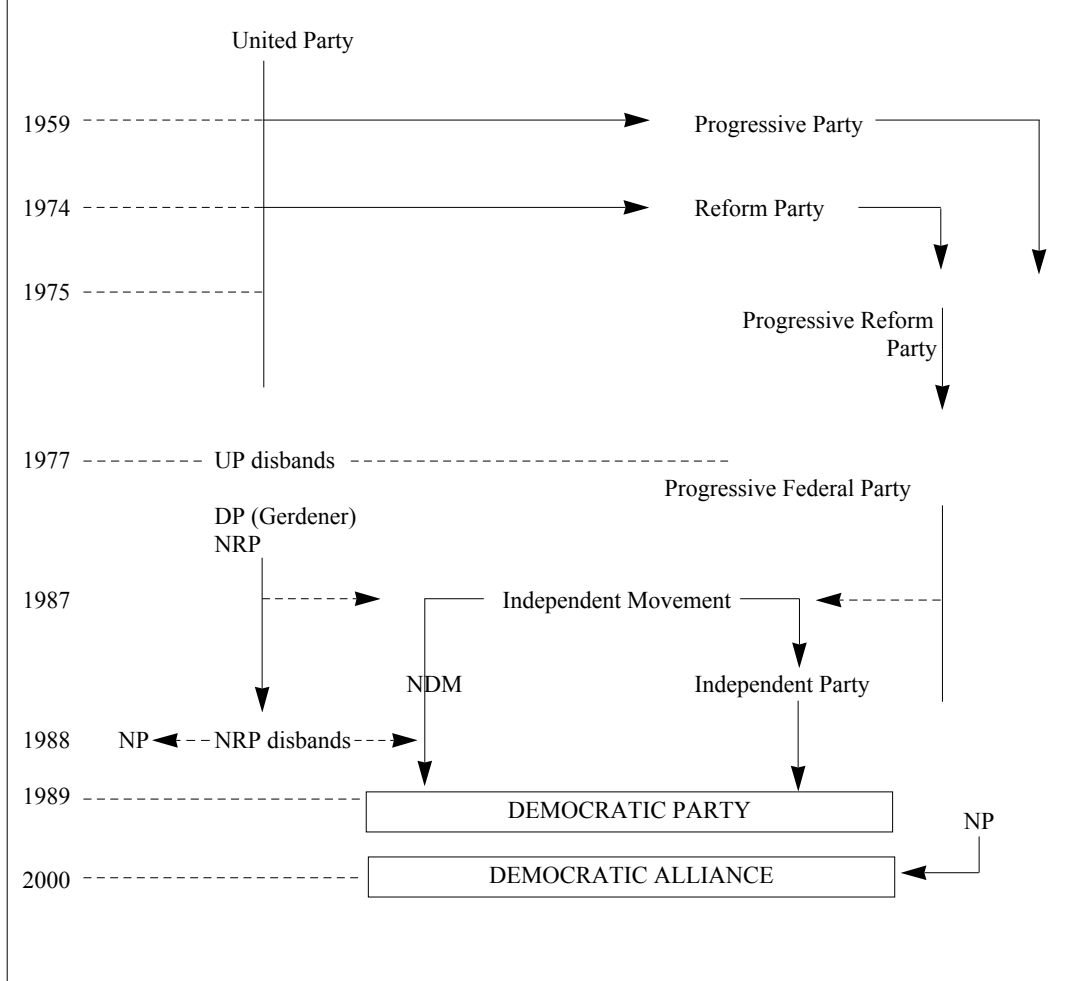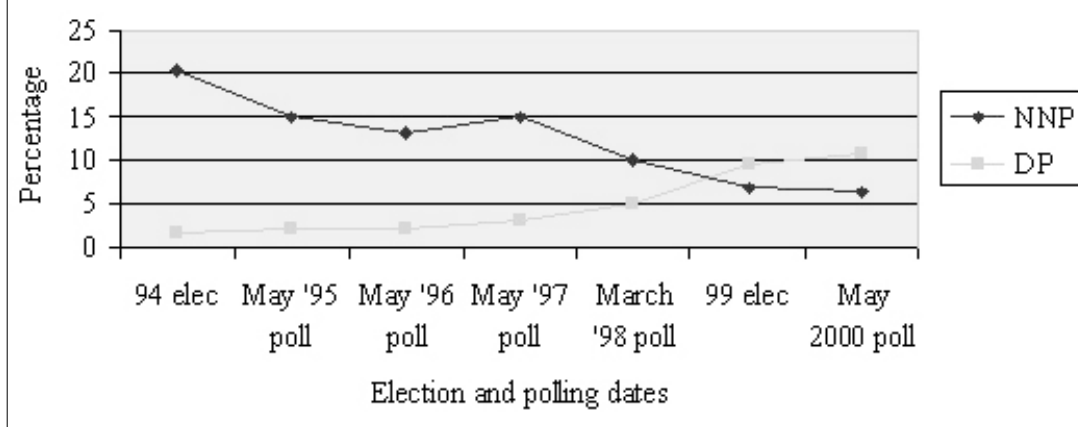2000 ------------------- | DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE | ←

Figure 3: Percentage support for the NNP and DP, 1994–2000 (Markinor Data)

ENDNOTES

1) See for instance the seven conditions or factors that Robert A. Dahl, *Political Opposition in Western Democracies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966) p.348 identifies that account for differences in the patterns of opposition. These conditions can quite easily be reduced to two main categories namely, 'institutional' and 'socio-economic' factors as is done in this article.

2) This section and section three draw heavily on Hennie Kotzé and Anneke Greyling, *Political Organisations in South Africa, A-Z,* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1994) and Hennie Kotzé, The New National Party in the 1999 election: end of the road or a new beginning?, *Politikon*, Vol.26 No.2 (1999) pp.167-178.

3) Andrew Reynolds (ed), *Election 1994 – South Africa: The campaigns, results and future prospects* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), p192.

4) Cited in Kotzé, The New National Party, p168.

5) HSRC, Priorities differ markedly according to party support, Media Release, 5 May 1999.

6) Susan Booysen, Election 1999 and Scenarios for Opposition Politics in South Africa, *Politikon*, Vol.26 No.2 (2) (1999) p. 53. See also David Welsh, The Democratic Party, in Andrew Reynolds (ed), *Election 1999: South Africa From Mandela to Mbeki* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999) for an overview of the DP campaign.

7) See Hennie Kotzé, Political Change and Shifts in South African Value Orientations, 1990-1995: An Empirical Analysis, in Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski (ed), *Values and Radical Social Change: Comparing Polish and South African Experience*, (Warsaw: Polish Academy of Science, 1998) pp.46-48 for a full report on the methodology of the survey.

8) For a discussion of the different viewpoints see among others, Robert Mattes, Helen Taylor and Cherrel Africa, Judgement and Choice in the 1999 Election, *Politikon*, Vol.26 No.2 (1999) pp.235-248; Helen Taylor and Theo Hoeane, Interpreting the South African Election of June 1999, *Politikon*, Vol.26 No.2 (1999),P.133-144; and Pierre Du Toit, The South African Voter and the Racial Census, circa 1994, *Politeia*, March (1999).

9) Tom Lodge, *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's Second Popular Election*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999) pp.82-84 and pp.129-131 and David Welsh, The Democratic Party, cited in Andrew Reynolds, pp.97-99.

10) *Cape Argus*, 26 June 2000.

11) *Cape Times*, 26 June 2000.

12) The index is constructed by asking among other things, the following: (1) Which of the following items, in working order, does your household have?: fridge or freezer; polisher or vacuum cleaner; TV; hi-fi; microwave oven; washing machine. (2) Do you have the following in you home?: electricity; hot running water; domestic servant; at least one car; flush toilet; TV. (3) Do you personally: Do shopping at supermarkets? (4) Do you personally?: Have any insurance policies? Telephone or cell phone? Use any financial services such as a bank account, ATM card or credit card? Have an account or credit card at a retail store? Buy dishwashing liquid?

13) Extraction method: Principle component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. The items were in Likert format with answers ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. The index has a 0.6850 Alpha reliability coefficient.

14) See www.impd.org.za.

15) Interview with Malegapuru Makgoba, President of the Medical Research Council, *Focus*, June 2000, p.12.

A Question of Interest: Women as Opposition

Louise Vincent

This paper looks at the question of opposition politics from the standpoint of women. The paper argues that there are two distinct types of representative democratic contexts, and that a different form of representation and partici-pation is appropriate to each of the contexts. The first type of representative democracy is one where interests are thought to conflict*. The second is one where it is assumed interests are held in* common*. Where interests conflict, the appropriate form of representation is mirror representation – the parties whose interests are thought to conflict should be represented in the democratic institution in proportion to their numbers in the population. Moreover the appropriate form of participation in such a context is adversarial – the parties ought to be prepared to defend their differing interests robustly. Where the fundamental interests of different representatives are thought to be com-mon, a threshold[1] of sufficient numbers of those whose interests significantly conflict is sufficient for the purposes of democracy to be served and the appropriate form of participa-tion is cooperative rather than adversarial. The paper argues that on some issues at least, the interests of men and women conflict. Women who participate in democratic political struc-tures should therefore be prepared to be adver-sarial when it comes to defending their inter-ests and the goal should be one of representa-tion for men and women in proportion to their number in the population.*

INTRODUCTION

In his paper, 'Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems', Roger Southall has mapped out a number of questions with which the debate on political opposition is concerned: questions about the 'role, functions, legitimacy and capacity of political opposition'.[2] Among the issues with which opposition in South Africa is struggling, Southall lists questions of how best to oppose, whether to work singly or in combination, in informal alliance or formal coalition and whether to proceed in a manner that may be construed as 'constructive' or 'robust'. Many of these questions can usefully be asked from the standpoint of women. Do women constitute a kind of opposition that is seeking to articulate its interests and influence the policy agenda? If so, what form should the articulation of their interests take? Should women form their own political party or do women constitute an 'interest group'? Will broad alliances of women across party political lines be successful and to what end? And the particular focus of the present paper, if women have interests, how 'constructive' or 'robust' should their participation in defence of those interests be?

For social liberals, women's enfranchisement effectively resolved the issue of 'women and political representation'. In contrast, many feminists have argued that women have a dis-tinct identity and set of interests and have sug-gested that female representatives should repre-sent women rather than opinions in general. This view goes hand-in-hand with support for the formation of women's or feminist parties, ministries for women's affairs, quotas, a change in the political culture and the working conditions of politics so that it will attract more women, consciousness-raising collectives and

women's groups outside the official decision-making bodies.[3] The idea that women may have interests which are in conflict with men in their party is a view specifically contested by many in the African National Congress (ANC). In interviews conducted in 1999 by ANC Deputy Secretary-General, Thenjiwe Mtintso, she found that most of the ANC women and men she talked to suggested that women's interests were adequately represented in parliament by the ANC and that what was in the ANC's interests was also in women's interests. They argued that the ANC represents 'the poorest of the poor, the most marginalised and the most oppressed' and therefore by logical implication, women.[4] It is this view which the present paper seeks to debate. The paper argues that where women wish to defend their interests, their style of participation ought, on some issues at least, to take the adversarial form associated with opposition in the British model and to eschew notions of 'cooperative governance'.

1. CONFLICTING VERSUS COMMON INTERESTS

In Aristotle's *Ethics* he tells us that the Greeks regarded a kind of solidarity, which they called 'friendship,' as the necessary basis of state. Features of this friendship included equality, consensus, face-to-face contact, and common interest.[5] In a book entitled *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, Jane Mansbridge employs Aristotle's idea of friendship as marking the distinction between two types of democratic participation. The first, adversary democracy – the one we are most familiar with in liberal democracies – is decision-making that is appropriate to situations where interests conflict. The second – which is more akin to what Aristotle had in mind – Mansbridge calls 'unitary'[6] democracy which is decision-making in situations where it is assumed interests are held in common.[7]

Based on this distinction, Mansbridge suggests that when democrats defend unequal power they are assuming that the situation is one of common interests. Arguments for equal power, on the other hand, usually assume conflicting interests. She concludes that we value equal power not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of protecting interests equally. When interests do not conflict, equal power is not necessary for self-protection. If everyone

has the same interests the more powerful will protect the interests of the less powerful automatically. '[M]embers of a group should spend their scarce resources on making power more equal,' she argues, 'only when equal power is most needed – when interests most conflict'.[8]

Knowing whether the situation is one of conflicting or common interests thus has implications for the form of representation and participation of members of democratic structures that is deemed appropriate. In a unitary democratic context, members are chosen for their 'good judgment' and there is no need to be mindful of numbers or formal powers. They:

> 'should be drawn, in whatever proportions make a good working board, from any segment of the community whose experience can contribute to solving common problems. These citizens can be purely advisors without any formal power. They need only sufficient informal power to foster equal respect for them and their communities, and to develop in them an understanding of their interests and a sense of responsibility for others.'[9]

However, in contexts of primarily conflicting interests, Mansbridge makes the point that members must act more like 'gladiators', protecting the interests of their constituencies. In such a context, members would be chosen for their accountability (to their particular constituency, say, women) and gladiatorial capacity; they would represent the segments of the community whose interests most conflict, in numbers proportional to the numbers of their constituents. They should have an equal vote and, to the fullest extent possible when interests most conflict, equal power.[10]

Extrapolating from Mansbridge's insight, the form that women's participation should take in representative politics turns on the question of interests. If male and female members of parliament (MPs) are regarded as having common interests, female representatives should in this context act, when it came to 'women's issues', as 'experts', providing information on, and contributing the insights of, women in the same way as members do in Mansbridge's unitary democracies. In such a scenario, threshold representation would be sufficient, not only to guide decision-making and ensure that the views of a particular segment of the population are contributed, but also to provide for two fur-

ther fruits of participation, namely fostering respect on the part of others for the segment of the community in question (for example, women) and positively developing the political acumen of the participant herself. On the other hand, if it is the case that female participants have interests that conflict with their male counterparts, including those men in the same political party, then their participation should take a quite different form. Rather than simply advising and articulating, they must be gladiators, archly defending the separate, distinct and identifiable interests of other women. This need not be their exclusive role but when it comes to articulating and defending women's interests their participation should take this form. Further, they would need, in order to do this effectively, not just a threshold of sufficient numbers but an equal vote and equal power and their numbers would need to be in proportion to their percentage of the population.

Seen in the light of Mansbridge's insight, the key question becomes one of deciding whether or not women can be said to have a set of interests in common with one another and in conflict with those of men. Another way of describing the distinction which Mansbridge proposes is suggested by the contrast between 'constructive' and 'adversarial' opposition. South African women have long been called upon – like other sources of potential opposition to the dominant (largely male) political elite – to be patriotic in their opposition; not to upset the apple cart; not to go too far in their critique; not to raise too vociferously the 'divisive' issue of women's interests. At best this can be interpreted as a defence of unequal power by democrats who are assuming that men and women do not have conflicting interests. Those who would have women take a more adversarial stance and who will settle for nothing less than equal numbers of men and women in structures of political power must be assuming that while women may have some interests in common with men, they also have some interests in common with one another which conflict with men's interests. The defence of the latter view rests on the question of what is meant by 'interests' and what, if anything, can be said to be 'in women's interests'.

2. WHAT ARE INTERESTS?
The origin of the term 'interest' is related to the

rise of the nation-state, the capitalist system of production and the emergence of new social classes who demanded to participate in the definition of what was considered to be in the 'public interest' or 'common good' – the monopoly over which had previously been in the hands of an elite few. Classical liberalism, the political theory that grew out of this social transformation, stressed the primacy of the individual's interests and the need for combining these interests by means of the authority of the state.[11] We can thus discern two dimensions in the meaning of the term 'interest'. One is the demand for participation in and control over society's public affairs. Secondly, the result of this participation is that the content of those substantive values that politics puts into effect will be more closely related to various groups' needs, interests or demands. Another way of putting this distinction between the two different aspects of the term 'interest' is to say that it is about both agency and the results of agency.[12]

Interests do not emerge randomly. They arise from people's lived experiences; they are historically and socially defined. Interests about basic processes of social life are divided systematically between different groups of people insofar as people's living conditions are systematically different.[13] However, what Jònasdòttir[14] has referred to as the 'factory' of politics is also an important initiator and shaper of views, ideas and interests. In the ideal image of representative democracy, citizens have a continuum of needs, socially and politically articulated wishes or preferences, and finally politically linked (aggregated) demands on the political system. However, the idea of politics as a process of mediating these articulated preferences and demands is highly questionable. The political process is itself an important manufacturer of issues. This means that the fact that women vote in elections as much as men do is not sufficient. Their active presence and positions within the 'factory' of politics should be what counts as representation. In other words, it is important to retain both the participation dimension of the concept of interest and the dimension which relates to the actual content of various interests.

3. DO WOMEN HAVE INTERESTS?
While the many differences between women are now clearly acknowledged, there is a wealth

of empirical data which supports the distinction between men's and women's interests or issues in politics. In wide-ranging studies, gender has been found to be a central differentiating variable in political behaviour.[15] In sum, women tend, to a greater degree than men, and in different ways, to initiate, pursue and support issues that have to do with control over, responsibility for, and care of, people, and other natural resources.[16] Gender differentiated interests are those that pertain to women and men's participation in different activities, working with different things, having different responsibilities, being involved with other people in different ways. What they are subjectively interested in, what their views are, and how they participate in other social matters originates in these differentiated practices and can in this sense be said to be objectively determined.

As Goetz notes, while women's interests like men's vary according to their circumstances and identities of class, race, ethnicity, occupation, life-cycle stage, and so on, the fact that most women tend to be constrained in their life choice to a range of reproductive functions in the private sphere, and marginal positions in public arenas of the economy and politics, suggests that gender affects the way other social cleavages are experienced and hence generates specific interests.[17]

It is in terms of the specificity of women's experience and hence the emergence of some common interests that the argument for greater women's representation in legislatures is often advanced. As South African gender activist Colleen Lowe-Morna puts it, '[w]omen are best placed to articulate their own needs and concerns' and '[t]he specific needs of women in areas such as health, education and economic activity are more likely to be put on the agenda by women than by men'.[18] This is borne out by a report commissioned by the Parliamentary Speaker Frene Ginwala on 'What the South African parliament has done to improve the quality of life and status of women in South Africa' released on 8 March 1996 which observed that 'issues affecting women continue to be taken up mainly by women MPs'.[19] While the actual content of women's interests is thus historically contingent, the appropriate form for the articulation and representation of interests remains constant: it entails the need for women to participate in determining the agenda of poli-

tics, to be present in and influential over the processes where decisions are made.

Some feminists[20] have argued that feminist theory must make a clean break with the assumptions of the interest group framework. This view argues that the basis of interest theory is the rationally choosing, profit maximising individual (male) agent and that this provides a partial view which in particular does not incorporate many of women's most important values such as child nurturing which cannot easily be seen in terms of instrumental interests and individual gain. Where what is in one's interest is understood as that which provides the opportunity to participate in and control the choices that affect one's life, there are many intense human experiences where the concept of interest is not relevant. For example, strictly speaking, pregnancy and childbirth cannot be said to be in a mother's interest. It entails considerable diminution of choice and control over her life, is a risk to her health, is financially costly, time consuming and so on. Yet it remains a value for which women are happy to exchange their self-interest.

Rather than trying to stretch the theory of interests to view such nurturing activities as self-interested, it is more useful to say that what promotes women's interests in this context is to safeguard and maximise choice over whether or not women participate in such activities and under what conditions. This does not entail abandonment of the category of interests but rather lays the emphasis on the agency aspect of the interest couplet: it is to argue that the question of women's presence in structures of power and decision-making is central. Moreover, if we read this conclusion in conjunction with Jane Mansbridge's argument, it implies more than a mere presence. It implies also a presence in sufficient numbers and with sufficient power to have influence over agenda-setting and that the style of women's participation on those issues where they have interests that conflict with those of men should be the gladiatorial style that Mansbridge identifies as appropriate in such contexts. While women's numbers in a variety of political institutions from legislatures to trade unions have increased significantly in South Africa, these further requirements, firstly, for women to be represented in numbers roughly proportional to the number of women in the population, secondly,

for female representatives to have real power and influence and thirdly, for an adversarial style of participation in defence of women's interests to be regarded as legitimate, have on the whole not been met.

3.1 Numbers and quotas

The number of women in South Africa's national legislature compares very favourably with other national legislatures around the world. In June 1999, 120 out of South Africa's 400 MPs were women (30% compared to a world average of 13% of women in lower houses or parliament.[21] South Africa is placed eighth in the world in terms of percentage of women MPs in national legislatures.[22] In all provincial legislatures and in the national parliament, the majority of women present are from the ruling ANC.[23] This is largely due to employment of the party list electoral system along with the ANC's policy of a one-third quota of women on its national and provincial electoral lists. However, other political parties in the legislature have not followed the ruling party's lead in adopting a women's quota[24] and even the ANC's quota does not meet the requirement for women's presence in representative structures to mirror their actual numbers in the population. Moreover, women's central role in lobbying for legislation such as the 1998 passing of the Domestic Violence, Maintenance and Recognition of Customary Marriages Acts notwithstanding, the level of participation on the part of the ANC's quota of women has not been in proportion to their numbers. According to the 1996 report to the Speaker, '[o]f the few who do ask questions, the women MPs in the opposition and minority parties have recorded more questions as individuals than the women MPs in the majority party'.[25] The same report found that women's participation in vote debates had declined compared with 1994. Further, while the ANC's quota ensures that many women enter parliament, the list system has proved to be something of a two-edged sword when it comes to which women enter parliament and their degree of independence, power and influence once they are there.

3.2 Power and influence

The party list electoral system places control over which women enter parliament in the hands of the party hierarchy. It ensures that 'all

politicians must remain popular with (mostly male) party bosses to survive'.[26] It is the latter who select which women are promoted within party structures, who determine the party's representatives on committees and who allocate speaking time in the house. The list system ensures women's quiescence because allegiance is owed to the political party which placed one high on its list rather than to the voter. The absence of close links between an MP and a specific constituency to which the MP is responsible means that women cannot claim to have a power base independent of the male dominated party hierarchy. In this system, women gain power only through access to men: '[c]onnections are the name of the game. And men are the game, they control the game'.[27] This goes some way to explaining why South Africa's female parliamentarians have not on the whole succeeded in conceiving of themselves or acting as a gender interest group. Women across party political lines privately report that women's issues are more often than not treated within party caucuses 'with a degree of patronising indulgence'.[28]

In addition, a range of structural factors in parliament itself have been identified as limiting female parliamentarian's ability to focus effectively on women as a constituency, even when they wanted to do so. Many women who enter parliament do not have the training, skills or confidence to play an influential, agenda-setting role. In a study commissioned by the European Union Programme for Reconstruction and Development in South Africa,[29] the lack of skills of some women MPs was identified as a major problem. Women further report that the formality, legalism and officiousness of parliament is experienced as intimidating (and sometimes ridiculous) and that it 'deflected attention from the real issues that MPs wanted to grapple with'.[30] Lack of resources such as computers, information, secretarial back-up and access to research further undermine women's ability to defend their interests. It stands to reason that those who wish to adopt non-traditional stances which question the status quo need these forms of resources in greater measure than those who are simply repeating or reinforcing dominant views. Yet allocation of resources in parliament tends to be skewed in favour of the already empowered.

Networks of power, role models and mentors

who are prepared to guide newcomers are among the most important resources that tend to be differentially available to men and women. Those with first-hand experience of parliament report that women MPs rarely personally mentor other women in parliament.[31] This problem appears to be a secondary effect of the overall lack of value attached to 'women's issues' and the political culture of the country. Drude Dahlerup, for example, in her studies of women MPs in Scandinavia found that women politicians worked to recruit other women.[32] While Dahlerup imputed the shift in perceptions of women politicians to the growth in the numbers of women in Scandinavian political life, this has so far not been borne out by the South African experience where despite high numbers, participation specifically in defence of women's interests is muted or absent. A dimension of South African women MP's vulnerability in the post-1994 period (which is no doubt less acute in the Scandinavian case) is the fact that many are major breadwinners for their families and in a party political context where defence of women's interests is regarded as politically illegitimate, divisive or irrelevant, gender activism is seen as a high-risk activity.

3.3 Style of participation

A wide body of research shows that women's participation in political organisations and processes has a conditional character.[33] It is accepted as long as they do not express themselves in gendered terms or act to protect gender-based interests. Women in South Africa's first democratic parliament have remarked on the way in which many were afraid to be identified with gender activism, in a context where female politicians with a feminist orientation were 'sometimes referred to by men, to much laughter in party caucuses, as "that lot who went to Beijing"'.[34] Women were also reportedly wary of 'going on about it' [women's issues] lest party leadership should become 'irritated'. Far from adopting a gladiatorial stance in the protection of women's interests, 'survival instincts triumph. Women back off'.[35] The overall impression of the majority of South Africa's female MPs participation in parliament, is an unwillingness to be overtly identified with the promotion of women's issues thanks to the perception that this would result

in marginalisation from the mainstream of politics where power and influence is located. Paradoxically, then, women can have access to power, as long as they do not indicate a preference for using it to promote women's interests in an adversarial manner.

An aspect of this political culture in which the expression of women's issues is regarded as irrelevant or divisive or of secondary importance to 'national priorities' is what may be termed the 'constructive criticism' injunction. Many women have bought into the notion of 'constructive criticism' and 'loyalty' which has become the dominant party's line on the form which opposition should take. In their 1998 needs assessment of women MPs and members of the provincial legislature (MPLs), Bardill and Marks found that party loyalty could prevent women from speaking up when they would be seen as disagreeing with male members of their party.[36] This appears to be an approach which particularly characterises the participation of black women. According to one first-hand account, there remain some things that black women just 'cannot do, say or support'. While black women offer support in private for an agenda which aggressively pursues women's interests, 'when the going gets tough, the black women get going. They remain silent. Sometimes, rejecting the very issues they privately supported .... The white, Indian and coloured women are left exposed, as if it is they alone who are pursuing the agenda'.[37]

4. HOW CAN WOMEN ACT IN WOMEN'S INTERESTS?

For increased numbers of women in representative structures to have any point it is necessary that at least some of the time these women act in women's interests, that is, participate in a way that influences agendas to reflect those of their interests that are different to, or in conflict with, men's interests. While there is evidence of some success in this regard in Scandinavian countries, in Africa research has shown that women MPs have consistently failed to place women's issues on national agendas.[38] For women to transform their presence in politics into an ability to set agendas and influence the outcome of political processes in such a way that their particular interests at any given moment are served, requires that women should have knowledge of, and an ability to articulate

what is in their interests. Moreover, they need to do so in a way that is powerful and influential and this is possible only if interests are expressed collectively rather than individually. Yet, riven by differences of class, ethnicity, sexual preference and so on, the idea of a united sisterhood of women is now roundly discredited. Does this mean that there is no possibility of women's interests being aggregated and defended?

While sisterhood is perhaps too utopian a vision, there are other possibilities for collective action ranging from solidarity to limited alliances on specific issues of commonality. Women are of course free to form women's parties but, to date, these have not been very successful.[39] To expect women to vote for a women's party is to assume that for women their gender is their only or most important identity. This is not the case. Like everyone else women have many facets to their identity and like most other people will tend to vote for someone who will represent them in an overall sense. In the absence of women's parties, women must rely on their general representatives who are women to defend their interests. However, in order for this to be possible, the obstacles to effective, interest representing participation must be overcome. The link between women MPs and a broader women's movement in civil society is central to this on at least four counts:

4.1 An independent power base

Firstly such a link would provide women with an alternative power base to those within parliament that are dominated by men and within which women's issues are marginalised. It is only by being rooted in such a movement that women MPs are likely to have the power to challenge a political culture in which women's issues are regarded as politically inexpedient to raise. It is only once women are able to demonstrate the power of a support base that backs them specifically as women and that calls them to account for their role as women in parliament that they are likely to begin to defend women's interests in a gladiatorial manner. This is particularly important in a non-constituency based electoral system which denies women the opportunity to build a support base independent of their party and where lines of accountability of individual MPs are blurred.

4.2 Knowledge of women's concerns

As has been pointed out, the specific content of women's interests is historically contingent. Only rootedness in a women's movement of genuinely widespread support and authority can act as an insurance policy against women MPs developing narrow vested interests which they come to protect to the exclusion of women's interests more generally. It is only through regular contact with and participation in organisations of women that the particular women in parliament can legitimately claim to have knowledge of what different kinds of women want.

4.3 Fostering of a gender analysis and consciousness

Numbers mean little if women fail to use their position to defend women's interests. But to do so requires that women should develop a consciousness of what their interests are and of the ways in which those interests are threatened by existing social relations. As the ANC's Thenjiwe Mtintso points out:

> '[w]omen who enter the sphere of parliament should also be gender activists and have an understanding of the workings of patriarchy, overt and covert, if they are to make an impact. If they do not commit themselves to gender transformation in all its diversity, they are likely to be either marginalised or focus only on practical gender interests or even be absorbed into the patriarchal agenda.'[40]

When interests are not articulated and/or vigorously defended, it does not necessarily mean that they do not exist. In order to make sense of why this is so it is necessary to employ the controversial concept of 'real' interests. If interests are objectively determined in the way that has been suggested above, it is possible to argue that women may not automatically be aware of how their interests differ from those of men. In Steven Lukes' authoritative statement of this position, they, 'may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests'. In such a case, their interests are seen to be what they 'would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice'.[41] Following William Connolly, Lukes suggests that knowledge of one's interests is related to the existence of both choice and autonomy. ('Policy x is more in A's interest than policy y, if A were to experience

the results of both x and y, and choose x as the result he would rather have for himself'.)[42] For many women, as is well documented, greater awareness of, and ability to exercise choices and the development of personal autonomy are first achieved through their involvement in women-centred organisations.

4.4 Making the personal political

Finally, it needs to be understood that the fight to defend women's interests takes place not only in the public sphere but also in the private, intimate relationships that are such a central feature of our lives. For many women, the presence of a supportive spouse and the availability of material or other resources to take care of their children are absolutely essential ingredients in providing them with the relative autonomy and freedom of movement and thought that they need to take up the cudgels in defence of women's interests. Many feminists suggest that women's opposition, because of the way in which the most important of women's interest-constituting life experiences originate, must take a very far reaching form to incorporate 'all the various areas and contexts of social life, even within intimate relationships'.[43] It is through their involvement in women's organisations where experiences are shared and compared rather than individualised that women have most often been able to make explicit the link between their private lives and their public selves.

On these four counts (and no doubt many others), female representatives are more likely to be able to articulate, aggregate and defend women's interests, where necessary in a vigorous and adversarial manner, if they are rooted in women's organisations in civil society. There is a good deal of empirical evidence to support this point. Where there have been advances in securing greater autonomy and choice for women in South Africa post-1994, the role of civil society organisations in tandem with individual women MPs has been identified as pivotal. For example, asked to identify the groups and individuals that had been most influential in the development of a pregnancy termination bill, respondents in a 1998 study referred to Abe Nkomo, then chair of the Portfolio Committee on Health, the ANC caucus, ANC women, then Minister of Health Nkosozana Zuma, the Reproductive Rights Alliance, the Abortion Reform Action Group, the Women's Health Project, Deputy Minister of Justice Manto Tshabala Msimang, Mavivi Manzini, Deputy Speaker Baleka Kgotsitsile, Arnold Stofile, Speaker Frene Ginwala, Pregs Govender, Chair of the Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women and others.[44] Those women MPs who have played a high profile role as gender activists in parliament have strong links with civil society and women's organisations outside parliament. As Chair of the National Women's Coalition, Frene Ginwala lobbied to have women placed on the electoral lists of all parties and to persuade women to make themselves available. Closely tied to women's organisations, Ginwala has been central to the development of the ANC's gender sensitive approach. With the help of non-governmental organisations Pregs Govender pioneered the Women's Budget. Baleka Mbete-Kgositsile was secretary-general of the ANC Women's League between 1991 and 1993. Veteran Democratic Party MP Dene Smuts 'found a home in the cross-party and rainbow National Women's Coalition to which she gave her whole-hearted support .... Her work in the Coalition provided the impetus for Smuts to push for greater female representation in the Democratic Party'.[45] Asked what advice she would give to a new woman MP, the IFP's Ruth Rabinowitz who has spoken of her disillusionment and sense of disempowerment in parliament suggested women should maintain networks with women from all walks of life.[46] Similarly, the IFP's Suzanne Vos's experience in parliament led her to conclude that 'women's lobbies have to be strengthened. They need to give these women diversified support and constituencies because once women leaders can produce their own visible, articulate, constituencies they have power'.[47]

Unfortunately, this requirement has been markedly absent in South Africa, for much of the post-1994 period when civil society organisations and formations have floundered rather than flourished. Far from developing impetus for a strengthening of ties between women MPs and women's movements and organisations, many women report how their work as legislators has actually removed them from their former organisations:

'The workload is heavy. You have to do constituency work. You have to attend

meetings at all hours. You have no time to socialise. People don't know what you are doing and the organisations feel you have abandoned them. They then isolate you'.[48] According to PAC MP Patricia De Lille, 'women in parliament have failed other women by not keeping up the networks with organisations outside, like the Women's National Coalition. Women need to build their caucuses, strategise more and use the information and resources available from non-governmental organisations'.[49]

The ANC Women's League for its part has been afflicted with internal divisions and financial disarray since its 1993 conference[50] and to date has not had the legitimacy or organisational strength to fulfil its ambition of 'being at the centre of gender emancipation'.[51]

CONCLUSION

Aside from all their differences, women do have interests that are sometimes different to those of men, of whatever political persuasion. This makes it necessary from time to time for them to represent themselves in politics as women. However, if the specific content of women's interests, desires and demands is historically determined and therefore knowable only by empirical investigation then it is only through deep links with a variety of women's organisations and formations that women MPs can hope to represent and defend more than their own individual interests.

If connections are 'the name of the game' then women need to be connected. But rather than attempting to win influence through their connectivity to a male dominated institutional hierarchy, women need to seek their connections in alternative spheres, to be connected to other women and women's organisations which can provide them with the resources, personnel, moral and emotional support that they require to take the risk of acting as an interest group for women.

Unless South African women build and contribute to multiple organisations in every locality that reflects their lives, interests and concerns, the much-trumpeted increase in the number of women in the national legislature will be of little worth.

ENDNOTES

1) Threshold representation is contrasted with 'mirror representation'. It is the idea that there should be sufficient representatives for a group's ideas to be represented in politics but not necessarily representative in exactly the same proportion as that group forms in society. In other words, the representative structure should not necessarily be a mirror of society (Voet, 1998, p.102).

2) Roger Southall, Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems, 2000, p.1.

3) Rian Voet, *Feminism and Citizenship* (London: Sage, 1998), p.104.

4) Thenjiwe Mtintso, Women in Politics: a Conceptual Framework, in Commission on Gender Equality, *Redefining Politics: South African Women and Democracy* (Johannesburg: Commission on Gender Equality, 1999), p.36.

5) Cited in Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. viii.

6) It should be noted that neither the 'unitary' model of democracy, which assumes underlying common interests, nor the 'adversary' model, which assumes underlying conflict, banishes or excludes conflict in the political process itself. As Mansbridge points out: '[u]nitary democracy ... is far from conflict-free. Indeed, the unitary model of democracy may produce more overt and angry conflict than adversary democracy, because it is a political problem that has an underlying correct solution, and it often pays to argue things through until everyone concerned accepts this solution as correct. If there is no solution that serves everyone's interest, more debate will not usually produce agreement, and it is often better to cut short a potentially bitter debate with a vote. A pure unitary democracy is likely to be passionate – full of love and hate – while a pure adversary democracy is designed to be emotion-free – an impersonal mechanism for handling disembodied conflicting interests' (ibid, p.xi).

7) Ibid, p.ix.

8) Ibid.

9) Ibid, p.ix-x.

10) Ibid, p.x.

11) Anna Jónasdóttir, *Why Women Are Oppressed* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p.152.

12) Ibid, p.155.

13) Ibid.

14) Ibid.

15) Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and Rose Laub-Coser, *Cross-national Studies of Women and Elites* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981); William Lafferty, Sex and Political Participation: An Exploratory Analysis of the Female Culture, *European Journal of Political Research*, 8, p.323-47; Lester Milbrath, *Political Participation* (Chicago Illinois: Rand McNally, 1977); Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

16) Thomas Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality* (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 1984); Anna Jónasdóttir, *Why Women are Oppressed*.

17) Cited in Debbie Budlender et al, *Participation of Women in the Legislative Process* (Cape Town: European Union Parliamentary Support Programme, 1999), p.19. Three qualifications must be made: first, men who engage in these practices can develop a 'female' consciousness; second, women's activities change over time and therefore so do their interests; third, the fact that women have interests which conflict with those of men does not mean that they have no interests in common with men.

18) Colleen Lowe-Morna, Overview, in *Redefining Politics. South African Women and Democracy* (Johannesburg: Commission on Gender Equality, 1999), p.14.

19) Cited in Lowe-Morna, p.23.

20) See for example, I. Diamond and N. Hartsock, Beyond Interests in Politics, *American Political Science Review* 75, 3, 1981; J. S. Jaquette, *Women in Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1974).

21) Budlender et al, p.32.

22) Bob Jones and Julie Ballington, *National and Provincial Election Results* (Auckland Park: Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA), 1999), p.46.

23) Katharine McKenzie (ed.), *PIMS 2000 Guide to Politics in the Provinces* (Cape Town: IDASA, 2000), pp.30-31. (Of 442 members of the nine provincial legislatures 117 are women (26%).

24) Former NNP MP, Pauline Cupido for example reports having been 'booed' when she suggested to the party executive that it reserve every fifth place on its 1999 electoral lists for women (Interview with Haffajee cited in Budlender et al, p.34).

25) Cited in Lowe-Morna, p.23.

26) Suzanne Vos, Women in Parliament: A Personal Perspective, in *Redefining Politics* (Johannesburg: Commission on Gender Equality, 1999), p.108.

27) Ibid, p.109.

28) Ibid.

29) Adrian et al, 1996, cited in Budlender et al, p.15.

30) Budlender et al, p.28 citing a report prepared for parliament in 1995 by Serote, January-Bardill, Liebenberg and Nolte.

31) See for example, Suzanne Vos, 'Women in Parliament'.

32) Cited in Joni Lovenduski, and A. Karam, Women in Parliament: Making a Difference, in Lovenduski and Karam, *Women in Parliament. Beyond Numbers* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 1998), p.2.

33) See for example, H. F. Gosnell, *Democracy: The Threshold of Freedom* (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1948); K. Honeycutt, Clara Zetkin: A Socialist Approach to the Problem of Women's Oppression, *Feminism Studies* 2, 131-44; MBM Change Agents and Ruby Marks Associates, *Needs Analysis of Women MPs and MPLs* (1998); Jónasdóttir, *Why Women are Oppressed*.

34) Vos, p.108.

35) Ibid., p.109.

36) Cited in Budlender et al, p.37.

37) Vos, p.110.

38) Shireen Hassim, From Presence to Power: Women's Citizenship in a New Democracy, *Agenda* No.40 (1999), p.13.

39) Voet, p.101.

40) Mtintso, p.45.

41) Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974), p.34.

42) Cited in Lukes, p.34.

43) Jònasdòttir, p.173.

44) Cited in Lowe-Morna, p.28.

45) Smuts interview by Ferial Haffajee in Commission on Gender Equality *Redefining Politics*, (Johannesburg: Commission on Gender Equality, 1999), p.101.

46) Rabinowitz interview by Ferial Haffajee (1999), p.99.

47) Ibid., p.111.

48) Gauteng MPL Loretta Jacobus cited in Budlender et al, p.24.

49) De Lille interview with Ferial Haffajee cited in Budlender et al, p.63.

50) 'Report on ANC Women's League', African National Congress 50th National Conference, Mafikeng, 16 December 1997.

51) African National Congress 1999 Annual Report: ANC Women's League.

Cynicism at the Grassroots? Political Opposition in Kwazakele Township, Port Elizabeth

Janet Cherry

The experience of political participation since the advent of democracy in South Africa is examined from the perspective of the urban African community of Kwazakele in the Eastern Cape. Through this detailed case study it is argued that democracy is healthy in that although there is little support for political parties other than the African National Congress (ANC), other forms of opposition are taking place within the Tripartite Alliance. In conclusion, it is argued that a false dichotomy has been posed between political and civil society.

INTRODUCTION

The dismal performance of opposition parties in elections has been a major feature of comment since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. For instance, in the province of the Eastern Cape, where the ruling ANC has historically commanded overwhelming support among the majority of the population, no opposition party has been able to put up a convincing display in the successive elections.[1] This does not mean, however, that there is no opposition to the ANC's policies or to its style of governance. This can be demonstrated by reference to developments in the townships of Port Elizabeth, which provide a particularly good medium for an attempt to elucidate the nature of opposition, both internal and external, to the current government. This is not just because of the strength of support for the ANC in the province. It owes also to the relative stability and homogeneity of the local African population, and the strength of a tradition of left-wing, activist political participation in civil society,

in particular in trade unions and grassroots civic organisations. If a militant opposition from the 'left' is anticipated as the ANC moves further to the 'right' in its economic policy, and thereby fails to meet the expectations of its urban working-class constituency, it is from within such townships that such an opposition can be expected to emerge. At the same time, if highly politicised township dwellers wish to register their dissatisfaction with the ruling party through electoral means, it is here that significant changes in voting patterns and party allegiances would be expected.

1. THE EXPERIENCE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID AND RESISTANCE

The consolidation of power in one-party dominant states in Africa has been ascribed, among other things, to the fragility of the state and the consequent elimination of opposition by the former liberation movement in power. This is made possible by the loyalty of citizens to the liberation movement and its leadership, which manipulates ethnic loyalties in order to create a system of patronage to reinforce its dominance. This patronage system and the loyalty of citizens are also linked to the lack of a pluralist political culture and a lack of experience among the electorate as regards multi-party electoral democracy. Thus it has been argued by Hermann Giliomee and others that the 'very high loyalty levels' among ANC voters means that 'the constraints on the ANC are very weak'.[2] These assumptions about the consolidation of power by a single party need to be tested against the real experience of political participation of African people. In this study,

the experience of political participation of urban South Africans is examined through an attempt to explore how 'ordinary residents' of the typical urban working-class residential area of Kwazakele understand democracy. Through this process of asking people about their experiences of democracy, some of the above assumptions and arguments can be challenged.

It can be argued convincingly that in the 1980s, the politics of hegemony in townships[3] such as Kwazakele left little room for tolerance of opposition to the liberation movement. Pluralism and multi-party competition were not part of the discourse of popular power. However, this discourse of liberation co-existed with an older tradition of participation in limited electoral systems. Some of the urban African residents of Port Elizabeth in the early decades of the 20th century had both property rights and a qualified franchise. However, they lost both of these during the apartheid years, when the residents of the freehold settlement of Korsten were forcibly moved to the township of Kwazakele when it was established (1956–58). In addition, many of the residents of the older township of New Brighton had participated in advisory board elections in the 1930s and 1940s. These advisory boards – designed to give urban Africans a limited say in the administration of their segregated residential areas – held elections which were vigorously contested in Port Elizabeth by members of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Subsequently, during the 1980s, this discourse of electoral participation was temporarily abandoned – but not forgotten – in favour of a strategy of total boycott of elections to the segregated black local authorities (BLAs). The boycott and additional forms of mobilisation that resulted in the destruction of these illegitimate forms of local government also co-existed with a form of direct, although limited, democratic participation as practiced in the grassroots structures of popular power. Thus residents of Kwazakele referred with pride to their experience of building structures of 'direct democracy.' As one resident said, 'No-one can come and teach us how to build democratic structures now, we know that very well.'[4]

The advent of multi-party democracy in 1994 was embraced wholeheartedly by the vast majority of residents of Kwazakele, who celebrated the first democratic election as their own victory. Far from being ignorant about democracy, a survey of Kwazakele residents conducted after the election in 1994 showed a remarkably high level of political sophistication.[5] They had few problems understanding the proportional representation list system, and few problems understanding the voting for different levels of government, national and provincial. The overwhelming majority voted for the ANC, as expected, but this was not due to ignorance of other alternatives, nor was it due to any form of coercion. Rather, as was expected in a 'liberation election', people voted for the liberation movement that was seen to have achieved its goal of attaining democratic rights for all South African citizens.

This enthusiasm for democratic processes was repeated in the first democratic elections for local councils in October 1995.[6] Again, very high levels of participation in local government elections in Kwazakele indicated that the levels of political awareness and the appreciation of newly won democracy had not yet begun to fade. Competition for places on the party list for the local elections was hotly contested within the ANC, and the tensions around the process resulted in some individuals standing as 'independent' candidates. In one ward, the independent candidate received a substantial amount of support (33%) standing against an official ANC candidate. The ANC candidate was seen as someone who was not 'from the area' and residents from a particular part of this ward put forward instead a candidate who they perceived would represent their interests more effectively. At the same time, expectations of 'delivery' from the newly elected councillors were high, and Kwazakele voters were not to accept unquestioningly the inevitable failures by some councillors – as will be seen below.

In addition to contestation of political issues at local and national government level through elections, residents of urban townships continue to be involved in 'political civil society'. This non-electoral form of political opposition is seen by some to be especially important in an environment where there is weak party political opposition. Thus Southall observes that civil society has a crucial role to play in counter-balancing government. On the one hand, the 'vibrancy and weight' of civil society organisations needs to be 'revived'. On the other, the ANC and its alliance partners, including the

South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco), need to build 'internal democratic processes ... to bond it to its popular support base.'[7] It is difficult to assess the precise extent to which these processes occurred in the 1994–1999 period. However, an attempt can be made in regard to Kwazakele, looking at both local and national elections and at events in between whereby residents tried to participate in decision making and to hold their elected representatives accountable in various ways.

2. OPPOSITION FROM CIVIL SOCIETY: 'MARCHING AGAINST OURSELVES' AND THE ROLE OF SANCO

At the heart of popular mobilisation at local government level in the 1980s were 'the civics', a network of township-based organisations which campaigned around local conditions and services. In addition to boycotting elections to the BLAs, they employed strategies such as sit-ins at the BLA offices, rent boycotts, and campaigns of non-payment of service charges. These civic organisations are generally considered to constitute the core of 'political civil society' in South Africa, and since 1992 have been organised under the Sanco umbrella. Far from having been reinvigorated by the advent of democracy since 1994, many local civic organisations appear to have declined; while Sanco, the national body, is in deep crisis. It is also clear from a recent survey of residents of Kwazakele that they do not see their *political* salvation as coming from this quarter. While the local branches of Sanco are active in Kwazakele, such bodies are seen as performing important, yet very immediate functions. While there are local structures in which residents participate – such as street committees in many areas of the township – these deal primarily with parochial concerns such as anti-social behaviour, domestic squabbles, petty crime and the like. Consequently, these structures are not perceived by residents as being in competition with, or in conflict with, the ANC. However, the leadership of Sanco had a somewhat grander vision of their role in the new South Africa. It was in the period of transition, between 1990 and 1994, when the ANC was legalised and began to establish mass-based branches in the townships, that competition between the two organisations became intense.

While Sanco had played an important role in the transitional politics of the pre-1994 period – in particular in applying pressure for non-racial municipalities with a single tax base – its decline began with the advent of representative democracy in South Africa. Almost exactly one year after the election of a representative government, tensions between the ANC and Sanco came to a head in Port Elizabeth (widely referred to as PE). On 20 July 1995, Sanco organised a march into the city centre to protest against the service charges levied by the ANC-dominated transitional local council (TLC). The TLC, having successfully negotiated the installation of electricity and a dramatic improvement in municipal service delivery in Kwazakele, was now expecting residents to pay for such services. After many years of making demands of an unresponsive local council, receiving few services and refusing to pay rents to an illegitimate body, residents found it hard to abandon the 'culture of non-payment'. Nceba Faku, ANC chairman of the TLC, was 'booed and heckled' by a crowd reported to be between 400 and 1000 Sanco members.[8] The march took place after a lengthy process of meetings to find a solution to the problem of payment for services in PE.

This march was significant for a number of reasons. First, it indicated a healthy tension between state and civil society at local level, and showed that civil society, specifically in the form of civic organisation, still had a degree of autonomy as well as the organisational capacity to mobilise protest action. Sanco recognised the danger of being subsumed under the state's umbrella, as has sometimes happened after a liberation election where hegemonic political parties have controlled the state. Even in South Africa, some other previously independent organs of civil society – such as youth and women's associations – were absorbed into the ANC party machinery. Sanco PE, moreover, seemed intent on proving that it was not a 'toothless watchdog of the community': executive member Mike Tofile stated that:

> 'We are not dummies or puppets manipulated by Mr Faku. That must be clear to the residents. We are still their watchdogs even during this transitional period'.[9]

Second, the march did not receive a great deal of support, despite the strong tradition of mass mobilisation in the city, and the success of previous marches that had attracted tens of thou-

sands of township residents. It may be imagined that with street and area committees still being in place in townships such as Kwazakele, thousands of residents might have been mobilised around a common concern at relatively short notice, yet this did not occur. This can be interpreted in various ways, as indicating the 'demobilisation' of civic organisations, the 'depoliticisation' of civil society, or simply the 'normalisation' of politics. Third, the ANC came out strongly against the march, despite previous assertions by ANC leadership of the importance of the role of civil society, the need to maintain mass organisation, and acceptance of the idea that the ANC could 'march against itself'. These assertions had been made by ANC leadership in recognition of the need for 'the people' to maintain pressure on the new government for 'delivery' – the implied self-criticism being that the ANC had the potential to become a new elite, unresponsive to the needs of the poor.[10] Yet, when it came to the crunch, the ANC in Port Elizabeth appealed to Sanco to call off the march as being 'against the spirit of the Masakhane campaign' which appealed to township residents to pay for services. Moreover, members of the Kwazakele branch of the ANC went around the townships the night before the march, calling on residents not to participate, and appealing to them to be loyal to the ANC.[11]

The criticism of the march by the ANC indicated a growing reluctance, after a year in power, to allow such open dissent to be displayed by another organisation, albeit one of its allies. Sanco, although it proclaimed itself to be representing the interests of all residents and not just those loyal to the ANC, has a very close relationship with the ANC historically. Hence it had agreed that it would not put up candidates for the November local government elections, but that it would support ANC candidates. Simultaneously, however, it had insisted that it would continue to play the role of 'watchdog' at local level, ensuring that the newly elected local governments fulfil their promises.

At the same time, the ANC's criticism of the march indicated a reluctance to tolerate dissent from any organisation not playing the party political game; in other words, the beginning of a deliberate 'decompression' of politicised civil society. Indeed, it would seem that while the

ANC may be willing to tolerate opposition expressed within the parliamentary framework, or from other political parties within the realms of 'formal', liberal politics, it is not prepared to countenance dissent from the more radical informal political spectrum. While ANC leaders see a role for civil society organisations, this is viewed as non-oppositional: in other words, that only certain types of civil society mobilisation are seen as acceptable, and mobilisation is only acceptable if done in partnership with the ANC. Indeed, there has been little in the way of civic mobilisation in PE since 1995, even on the limited scale described above. However, this does not mean that residents of urban townships like Kwazakele are unquestioningly accepting of the 'ANC line'.

3. HOLDING ELECTED LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES ACCOUNTABLE

Residents are very aware of the responsibilities of different levels of government, and while they are cautiously supportive of the ANC at national government level, they are often very critical of those who are meant to 'deliver' at municipal level. Contestation at local government level has taken various forms, from spontaneous angry protests, to voicing dissatisfaction within ANC branch structures with councillors, to putting up 'independent' candidates in opposition to the agreed-upon ANC candidates.

Kwazakele residents have not been reticent to show their dissatisfaction with elected representatives who are considered to have performed poorly. As regards local councillors, residents are outspoken about who is considered to have 'performed' adequately, performance being measured in terms of desirable improvements to the particular ward for which the councillor was elected. The second local elections have yet to take place in late 2000 (the delimitation of wards has just been completed). But there has been extensive discussion within ANC branches and more localised structures, and it is clear that some councillors are not going to be unthinkingly replaced on the party lists. While there is certainly the usually political competition within the ANC elite – which too can result in a shuffling of positions on the list – it is clear that in Kwazakele the ordinary voters can make their dissatisfaction heard within the ANC. This dissatisfaction has

resulted in the national leadership 'waking up' to the realisation that they may be in danger of losing their mass support base if something is not done to ensure that local representatives are accountable. Thus at the ANC's National General Council, held in PE during July 2000, it became clear that councillors who were not accountable to their constituencies were going to be removed by the party hierarchy from their positions and replaced. Despite this acknowledgement by the ANC of the failures of some of its councillors, Sanco PE has now decided to contest the local government elections as an independent body.[12]

In certain cases, residents have taken direct action to ensure a response in situations that are deemed to be urgent. One example of such action was the case of a dangerous intersection at the bottom of Njoli Road, where motor vehicle accidents frequently occurred. When a car ploughed into a shack and killed a young girl, the enraged residents surrounded the local councillor and demanded to see the mayor. The ANC local branch secretary commented that: 'people were very angry, and did not even want to speak to the councillor. Later they came to the constituency office, and apologised.' This type of mass action (in this case it was spontaneous, but in others it has been more organised) is not frowned upon by the ANC locally. Thus the ANC branch secretary noted that:

> 'ANC members and supporters should demonstrate; it is democracy in practice. People should make their voice heard, so that their grievances are attended to. These are the challenges that keep the ANC alive; we as the ANC need to respond to such issues.'[13]

4. ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY FIVE YEARS DOWN THE LINE: THE 1999 GENERAL ELECTION IN KWAZAKELE

Now that a second general election has been held, and five years of ANC rule completed, it is a good time to assess the consolidation of democracy in South Africa at local level.

Another survey of residents of Kwazakele was conducted in June 1999, in the month after the second democratic election.[14] The survey tried to assess levels of political participation of residents of Kwazakele, by comparing participation in structures of representative democracy (elections) with participation in structures of direct/participatory democracy (civic structures). At the same time, it tried to assess whether structures of 'political civil society' are still active in Kwazakele, especially those structures which allow for direct participation by ordinary residents, such as street committees. Lastly, it attempted to assess whether residents' expectations of democratic government have been met over the past five years, and how residents whose expectations have not been met, respond to the system of representative democracy. Is it with apathy, with vigorous participation in political parties and electoral processes, or is it in extra-parliamentary opposition or 'politicised civil society', or some combination of these?

The last aim is of particular relevance to the question of opposition politics: if expectations have not been met, do ordinary people see the solution as lying in electoral choices, or in other forms of political action?

However, before the results of the 1999 survey in Kwazakele are examined, a few preliminary points need to be made. First, fears that participation in the election would be significantly reduced – either because of voter apathy due to government failure to meet expectations, or because of the logistics problem of establishing a voters' roll – proved to be unfounded. The survey found, as corroborated by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) results, a very high percentage of the population did vote in the election. Ten per cent of the survey respondents did not vote, while 90% did; of the 10%, half did not vote because of choice, being consciously apolitical; the other half because of problems with identity documents or registration on the voters' roll. Only eight per cent of the survey respondents reported problems with the voting process, and the only difficulties they experienced in voting were those caused by inadequate IEC logistics – polling stations opening late, long queues, an absence of ink or ballot papers, etc. There was again no confusion about the method of voting, or about the ballot for the provincial and national legislatures being separate. Indeed, all but one of the Kwazakele voters surveyed confirmed that they deliberately voted for the same party at both provincial and national level. The exception was one voter who split her vote, voting for ANC at national level and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) at provincial

level, to 'give the UDM a chance' at provincial government.

4.1 Voting preferences and party opposition
Around 97% of the electorate in Kwazakele voted for the ANC, according to calculations made on the basis of IEC election results. The survey results reflected the IEC results for the various Kwazakele polling stations, and showed that there is small support for the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), UDM and the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) which are the 'real contenders' for support among African voters. The IEC results for Kwazakele polling stations show that between 92% and 97% of voters supported the ANC; between 2% and 4% the UDM; between 1% and 2% the PAC; and less than 1% Azapo, except for two voting stations where Azapo support was concentrated and which showed a support level of between 2% and 3%. This pattern reflects the politics of the 1980s, where Africanist-cum-socialist Azapo support became strongly territorially based during conflict between that organisation and the United Democratic Front (UDF – the internal surrogate of the ANC). Other parties, in particular the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the New National Party (NNP), the Democratic Party (DP) and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), received no more than a handful of votes; less than 1% of the vote in total.

As these results indicate, the traditionally 'white' parties that are trying to gain support in the black community – the DP and NNP – have made no headway at all in Kwazakele. This is borne out by the answer that most of those surveyed gave to the question of what political parties are active in the area; all said some combination of ANC, PAC, Azapo and UDM; other parties were not mentioned or known about. The ANC's hegemony is really uncontested; and what is more interesting is that this support has remained unchanged since 1994, as almost all those who voted for the ANC in 1994 continued to vote for the ANC in 1999, despite varying opinions about the performance of the government. Indeed, only two survey respondents changed their vote from support for the ANC in 1994; one to the UDM, and one to the PAC.

In fact, political loyalties in Kwazakele have remained largely unchanged since the 1980s. In this respect, the survey merely confirmed what is widely known in PE and in the Eastern Cape more generally: that the ANC continues to have overwhelming support among African voters. It is therefore interesting to understand why the few voters who switched their loyalty away from the ANC, chose the UDM, a rather vague populist party, rather than the more left-wing alternatives, Azapo or the PAC.

One possible answer lies in the ties of loyalty and intolerance based in the politics of hegemony of the liberation struggle. Thus Bantu Holomisa, the UDM's leader – who is perceived as having been part of the ANC's liberation struggle despite his background as the former military leader of the Transkei homeland – emerged as the principal alternative, rather than the PAC or Azapo – both of which have longer 'struggle credentials' in Kwazakele, and certainly more left-wing policies. The bitter enmity between Azapo and UDF in the 1980s is likely to remain in older voters' memories, and will prevent any large-scale defection from the ANC to Azapo.

5. WHAT DO 'ORDINARY PEOPLE' SAY?
The 1999 survey showed that 'ordinary people', despite their electoral preference for the ANC, are not naïve about electoral processes, nor are they uncritical of the ANC's policies. Asked whether the government had met their expectations since the first election, nearly two-thirds of residents answered in the affirmative. Yet many of those qualified their answer by expressing disappointment in the lack of job creation and the high level of unemployment. Thus when asked 'If the government does not meet your expectations, what can you do about it?' the responses indicated clearly an acceptance of multi-party parliamentary democracy as the primary means for changing a government that is unresponsive to the needs of the urban working class. There was a marked decline in the percentage of the population who looked to various forms of popular mobilisation or mass action as a means of putting direct pressure on the government. Indeed, only one person responded with a (somewhat humourous) reference to the days of mass mobilisation:

    'Well I think we'll just have to toyi-toyi again to get things done ... On a serious note I'm not sure what I'll do.'

A few residents looked to more creative indi-

vidual solutions to failures of delivery: pressure through contacting the local radio station, or contacting government departments or public representatives. One respondent saw the possibility of taking collective action, although he or she was not sure what form this would take:

'I would get together with other people who are also disappointed and maybe we would come up with something to do.'

About a third of respondents felt that there was nothing they could do to ensure that the government met their expectations, or simply did not know what to do. Another group felt a deep sense of cynicism of politicians and party politics, and said they would not vote again:

'I will become despondent and lose interest in politics therefore I won't vote again in the coming election in 2004 should the ANC not deliver.'

In contrast to this were those who expressed a deep loyalty to the current government, and were committed to waiting patiently for the government to fulfil its mandate. Yet another group, amounting to about one-sixth of the respondents, said they would vote for another party:

'Though I don't think that the ANC government will not meet my expectations, but if ever it does [not meet my expectations] I think I will join another political party like for instance the UDM or DP who knows?'

'I cannot do anything that will make them perform but I won't give them my vote again, that is I will just vote for another political party like the UDM or NNP.'

'I will definitely change my vote and withdraw my support for the organisation because what is the use of supporting them if they do not deliver to us the people who voted for them?'

Those who already supported the PAC or Azapo retained their belief that they would be able to replace the ANC through electoral means: 'I will ensure my party comes to power in the next election by voting for the PAC'; 'I will intensify the movement (PAC) and ensure that by the year 2004, PAC wins the election.' Interestingly, those parties that had followed an even more radical revolutionary strategy than the ANC, have embraced parliamentary democracy in the same way as the latter. None of the PAC supporters mentioned the possibility of seizure of state power, or of using mass mobili-

sation or armed struggle to challenge the state. The sole (Azapo supporting) revolutionary rather eclectically combined his belief in revolutionary change with a commitment to electoral change:

'What can I do – nothing! But seriously, I am confident that revolutionary change will take place eventually and the liberal ANC will be overthrown by Azapo. So I will do what I have done recently, that is I will vote for Azapo again, and ensure that we win this time.'

The legitimacy of the state is thus universally accepted, and opposition takes on forms that are accepted as being primarily within the framework of parliamentary democracy. It must be remembered, however, that very few residents of Kwazakele voted for other parties in the 1994 and 1999 elections, and while some threatened to use their vote by voting for other parties, others found it very hard to imagine supporting, or voting for, anyone other than the ANC. This did not mean uncritical support; sometimes they expressed themselves with remarkable political sophistication when explaining their understanding of the need for patience and the reasons for the lack of delivery:

'I will give them another chance because if they do not deliver they will be obviously trying their best but due to certain factors they cannot reach their goals, so I will just be patient and wait. I am confident things will change.'

'I will give them another five years as I will be unreasonable to expect them to deliver in the short time they have governed.'

'I will not worry because our democracy is still at an early stage and also we cannot expect anything in this short time.'

In addition, there were those who said they would not vote for a different party, but would work within ANC structures to try and make the governing party more responsive to their needs.

This might involve replacing 'list' representatives through ANC party conferences, or lobbying ANC leadership, or raising problems at ANC branch meetings:

'I would vote for a new government but under the ANC, and within ANC structures raise problems I encounter.'

'I would criticise ANC structures, cam-

paign for change in government structures, maybe join other political parties.'

People felt strongly about their democratic right to participate and articulate their dissatisfaction to government, even suggesting means by which the government could be held accountable or obtain feedback from the electorate between elections:

'I voted for the government, so I'm going to see that my demands and expectations are met – it's my democratic right.'

'It (the government) can call meetings in all areas and people must discuss what they want to be done ... It must on the other hand supply us with a questionnaire about what we want to be done with the problems we face. I can then voice out my views.'

Another saw local government with its elected councillors as being more responsive to residents' needs:

'Through local government elections, councillors will make sure that my complaints are communicated to the government. I will not change my vote to another party.'

The understanding that local government is both responsible for service delivery, and is more accessible, is borne out in the residents' preparedness to voice scathing criticisms of councillors who do not 'perform', and to express these criticisms in ANC fora so that the councillors do not retain their seats. In some cases, as detailed above, ANC-supporting residents have even marched and protested against their own councillors.

The threat of 'voting for another party' in future elections, combined with the belief that they can influence the ANC through its own structures, is perceived as sufficient in terms of holding the government accountable to the electorate. However, as noted, the overwhelming majority of voters in Kwazakele voted for the ANC in 1994 and again in 1999. It can be argued that this was not due to a lack of awareness of the shortcomings of the ANC, but rather an astute assessment of the greater shortcomings of the existing opposition parties.

6. INTERNAL OPPOSITION

At the time of their formation in 1991, the ANC branches in Kwazakele were some of the largest in the country in terms of membership. While active membership of ANC branches has declined, as has membership of civic organisa-

tions, it is clear from the survey that most residents of Kwazakele still consider themselves to be ANC members. Even though few pay subscriptions regularly, and thus would not figure on a list of paid-up membership, the majority still attend branch meetings and take an active interest in local politics. Yet despite the high level of support for the ANC – and the high level of political participation and awareness by residents – the ANC branch structures have not really succeeded in mobilising residents around 'grassroots' or developmental concerns. They have tended to mobilise (very effectively) around elections, and also around high-profile campaigns, in particular the campaigns against crime and the abuse of women and children. These campaigns have seen a high level of citizen participation. Thus despite the commitment of both civic organisations and the ANC to 'people-driven' or participatory development, it would seem that for most people there is still the expectation of a democratically elected state that it is primarily responsible for socio-economic 'delivery'.

In Kwazakele, as elsewhere in ANC-supporting townships around South Africa, the ANC was referred to as 'the Movement' while 'the Party' referred to only one party, the SACP. After 1990, the ANC transformed itself from a broad-based liberation movement into a conventional political party for the purposes of elections. At the same time, it strove to maintain certain 'movement' characteristics, notably its broad, multi-class base; its ability to mobilise widely around certain issues; and its hegemony in particular communities at 'grassroots' level. These characteristics are both favourable towards democracy (in the sense that they encourage the involvement of 'ordinary people' and create space for internal debate and opposition) and unfavourable for democracy (in that they still hold to the old notion of hegemonic politics, with no space for opposition outside the movement). There have also recently been contradictory indications of a movement towards tighter, more centralised party organisation within the ANC. On the one hand, this is a response to the perceived corruption and ambition that has come along with liberal democracy and conventional party politics. It represents an attempt by the ANC leadership to assert tighter control over public representatives, to ensure their accountability at least to

the party that put them in positions of public responsibility. On the other hand, this can also be seen as a non-democratic tendency to turn the ANC from a movement-type of structure that can accommodate diversity and internal opposition, to a 'democratic centralist' type of party structure that demands discipline and crushes dissent. This tendency is reinforced by the 'autocratic ethos' developed by the ANC in exile. Saul[15] thus notes the importance of internal democratic processes within the Tripartite Alliance both to counter this ethos and to 'bond it to its popular support base'. Yet simultaneously with this move towards greater 'democratic centralism', the ANC leadership recognise the need, at least verbally, to 'entrench and deepen democracy' in South Africa.

This tension is nicely illustrated by the contestation of the local elections within the ANC in Kwazakele, where suspicions about those from exile were countered by the putting forward of independent candidates. Although the ANC candidates did win the majority of votes in the particular ward, the exercise was a significant one in indicating the ability of people to mobilise in opposition to the ANC 'line'. Furthermore, as already noted, there are indications that Sanco will put up independent candidates in the forthcoming local government elections, which will put further pressure on the ANC to retain contact with its grassroots supporters.

Alongside the SACP, the third wing of the Tripartite Alliance is the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), whose members have even greater experience of participating in democratic organisational structures. Recent surveys of ordinary members of Cosatu-affiliated unions showed a continuing commitment among the organised working class to democratic practices, including holding elected leadership accountable.[16] Yet there is little evidence among residents of Kwazakele that this has been an important influence on their political practices. Where it is likely to have had impact, is in relation to the debate around socio-economic policy.

That means in particular the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) – the manifesto with which the ANC ascended into power in 1994 and which was inclined towards social-democratic and redistributive objectives – and the neo-liberal Growth, Equity and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy which subsequently replaced it.

The SACP and Cosatu retain their commitment to the Tripartite Alliance, yet as the ANC has been seen to abandon its commitment to socio-economic transformation in the form of the RDP, this has inevitably come under strain. Many of Cosatu's affiliates have moved onto the defensive, as integration into the global economy has resulted in thousands of job losses in manufacturing. However, it can be argued that Sanco should be the more assertive representative of civil society in mobilising for radical change in the alliance, as structural conditions would seem more favourable for interventions – whether in support of development policies initiated by the state, or in opposition to policies which negatively impact on the lives of the poor – by organisations of township residents.

Once again, ordinary people are not excluded from this debate. The RDP was widely popularised at the time of the 1994 election, and its vision was embraced by most ANC supporters. While some development goals were met in Kwazakele in the 1994–99 period, residents do not see this transformation process as being complete. Some are optimistic that the RDP process will continue; others are somewhat sceptical, particularly in the light of the adoption of the macroeconomic policy. The 'GEAR–RDP debate' was aired vigorously within branch structures, at the Sunday afternoon branch general meetings. A high percentage of the residents of Kwazakele surveyed said that they did attend general meetings on occasion. Even those who are not politically well informed or educated enough to understand economic policy seem to have some understanding of the issues. Yet, as shown in the residents' quotes above, dissatisfaction is unlikely to be channelled into militant mass action. Most ANC supporters show a remarkably sophisticated awareness of the constraints facing the government in terms of socio-economic delivery, and are not convinced – probably correctly – that any other party would be able to perform better than the ANC in this regard.

CONCLUSION

There are two possible conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis of political participa-

tion in Kwazakele. One is that as the 'normalisation' of politics occurs, and people become demobilised, they accept the separation of political from civil society. 'Politics' becomes equated with representative democracy, exercised through regular elections of public representatives. In political life, ordinary citizens have a limited though important role; and this is desirable both for them and for the government. Street and area committees fulfill essentially non-political roles in civil society, while ANC branches become vehicles for communication of party policy or electioneering.

The second, preferred, conclusion is that it is increasingly difficult to draw a distinction between political and civil society. This distinction in Western political theory does not neatly apply to a community such as Kwazakele. Representative and direct forms of democracy are not mutually exclusive, and can be combined in various ways. The continued existence of structures of civil society such as street committees demonstrates the need felt by people to have some direct access to decision making over 'every aspect of their lives': to participate in the sense familiar to the 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau . Such structures have no real power over 'big issues' such as job creation or macroeconomic policy; and it is right that they do not. Residents of Kwazakele showed an understanding of this, in their acceptance of the time it would take to implement development policies that would

eradicate poverty and unemployment. They also showed an understanding of the need for tolerance and acceptance of a plurality of political parties in government.

It may be that a 'false dichotomy' has been posed in South Africa between 'formal' politics of political parties and election campaigns, as in Western European liberal democracies, and the 'informal' politics of civil society. While general levels of political participation have declined, 'ordinary people' – in particular the African urban working class who make up a significant proportion of the ANC's constituency – continue to participate enthusiastically in electoral politics, at both local and national level. Despite the overwhelming loyalty to the ANC, there are strong signs that democracy is healthy in urban townships such as Kwazakele. Its health is manifest in a variety of forms of opposition to the ANC. This opposition takes place within the ANC branches, within structures of civil society, and to a lesser extent, in the threat of support for opposition parties. Despite the weakness of the opposition parties, residents of townships such as Kwazakele 'reserve the right' to vote for an alternative political party, and express tolerance for the existence of other parties.

In addition, they are not afraid to challenge their elected representatives and hold them accountable, whether through their local branch meetings, or through mobilising direct action to make their feelings clear.

ENDNOTES

1) The ANC took 84.4% and 73.8% of the votes in the elections for the Eastern Cape legislature in the elections of 1994 and 1999 respectively. The next best performance was provided by the National Party with 9.8% of the vote in 1994, and by the new United Democratic Movement (UDM) with 13.6% in 1999. For a discussion of the fragility of the UDM's success, see Roger Southall, The Struggle for a Place Called Home: the ANC versus the UDM in the Eastern Cape, *Politikon* , Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999), pp.155-166.

2) Hermann Giliomee, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer, Dominant Party Rule, Opposition Parties and Minorities in South Africa, in this volume.

3) 'Township' is a term used to describe the urban residential areas designated for Africans under apartheid rule. Separately administered during the apartheid era, they are now integrated into the local municipalities, but are still referred to as townships or locations.

4) This quote comes from a survey of residents of Kwazakele in 1993 as part of the writer's research for the Albert Einstein Institute 'Civics and Civil Society' project, recently published Glen Adler and Jonny Steinberg (eds.), *From Comrades to Citizens,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

5) The second survey of Kwazakele residents was conducted by the writer in May 1994, in the month following the first democratic election.

6) A third survey of Kwazakele residents was conducted in November 1995, after the first democratic local government election.

7) Roger Southall, Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems, in this volume.

8) *Eastern Province Herald,* 21 and 22 July 1995.

9) *Evening Post,* 18 July 1995.

10) See, for example, the ANC *Strategy and Tactics* document of 1997 on the role of civil society, and Ben Turok's article, What role for civil society organisations in transformation?, in the ANC journal *Umrabulo* No 7, 1999.

11) *Eastern Province Herald,* 21 and 22 July 1995.

12) *Evening Post,* 18 July 2000.

13) Interview with Monwabisi Gomomo, Secretary of ANC Kwazakele 1 branch, 28 October 1999.

14) The 1999 survey was of a random sample of 100 residents of Kwazakele, selected by using a random-number table and identifying households by finding coordinates on a street map of the township. Interviewers were instructed that respondents should be over the age of 25, and should be half male, half female, to reflect the overall demographic composition of the township.

15) In Southall, op.cit., p. 14.

16) The first such survey was conducted in 1994, with the results published in David Ginsburg, Eddie Webster et al., *Taking Democracy Seriously: Worker Expectations and Parliamentary Democracy in South Africa,* (Durban: Indicator Press, 1995). A more recent survey in 1998 showed substantial continuity in the internal democratic practices of trade unions affiliated to Cosatu. However, there is a marked decline in the preparedness of workers to use militant forms of action to ensure that the government delivers on its promises.

The Electoral System and Opposition Parties in South Africa

David Pottie

Prior to 1994, debate about the electoral system in a post-apartheid South African frequently centered on the notion of how best to achieve ethnic and racial accommodation through elections. The adoption of a system of proportional representation was eventually regarded as one means of encouraging political parties to build cross-racial and national appeal. Despite African National Congress (ANC) dominance in South Africa's first two democratic elections, the adoption of proportional representation (PR) also appears to have contributed to numerous and diverse opposition parties. But there are additional signs that opposition politics may be equally characterised by a growing racial polarisation despite the arguments that favour PR as the best means to encourage 'moderation' and parties with national appeal.

INTRODUCTION

The transition to democracy in South Africa since 1990 offers a valuable opportunity to study processes of democratisation in a context in which political institutions were relatively well established (despite their racially exclusionary nature under apartheid), civil society was strong, and local technical and legal capacity was highly developed. Institutional and political system design was neither imported nor entirely top-down, but shaped by local actors carrying different ideological histories and different political cultures. The design of new political institutions was a matter of intensive debate during the early 1990s about the trade-offs between priorities of different parties, in which democratic demands and expectations from below mitigated against

minimalist, formal interpretations, and pressed hard for substantive democracy. For example, the ANC argued that the revolutionary project of 'transformation' could be pursued within the framework of a social-democratic constitutional state. The extent to which institutions could at the same time act as both stabilising instruments and as vehicles for state-led radical change is therefore a central (though not exclusive) consideration in the consolidation of democracy in South Africa.[1]

In South Africa, the effective transfer of political authority from the apartheid regime to a popular government was crucially tied to discussions about the mechanisms that would ensure the sustainability of democracy in the longer term. Partly this was a response to the realisation of right-wing parties that demands for separate institutions of representation and veto powers for minority groupings would not succeed.

In part, though, it was also the realisation by the ANC that the long-term legitimacy of the democratic government among whites, as well as perceptions of local and international investors, would lie in a demonstrated commitment that majority rule would not 'descend' into the 'African pattern' of one party rule and uncurbed presidential power. Much of the literature on electoral systems in South Africa has thus focused on the search for an institutional response to the ethnic and racial divisions of apartheid.[2] In this sense, elections remain a 'racial census'. But this literature is also motivated by a search for building inclusion and 'moderation' across the racial and geographic divides (and, conveniently, moving the ideo-

logical spectrum of politics to the center in the process).

The theme of accountability has also dominated discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of the South African electoral system. Typically, the argument for reform favours the introduction of an element of constituency representation as the means to improve individual accountability and link members of parliament (MPs) to voters. Ebrahim Patel of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), for example, has supported the possibility of a combination of PR and a mechanism that provides for broad constituencies, as in the German case.[3] A secondary argument is that the introduction of constituency MPs will improve the performance of parliamentarians in the house when their re-election depends on a personal profile.

Another element of the discussion turns on the nature of the emerging party system in South Africa, with the simultaneous proliferation of many parties even as the ANC maintains a nearly two-thirds share of popular support among the electorate. For opposition parties, therefore, electoral system reform would seem to advance two agendas. The first centres on the theme of accountability, whereas the second serves party self-interest since some opposition parties may well have calculated that their representation in parliament would increase with the introduction of some form of constituency representation. This paper explores these dynamics while raising other issues which impact upon the performance of opposition parties, such as finance and the consolidation of the party system since 1994.

1. MULTIPARTY ELECTORAL POLITICS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

It is a mistake to treat South Africa as regionally unique in having to confront the politics of electoral system choice. Although civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a ban on political parties and suspension of the constitution in Swaziland have meant that elections have not taken place in those particular countries since the very early years of independence, the majority of countries in Southern Africa have staged multiparty elections relatively recently. However, many of these contests have failed to establish or consolidate political civility. For instance, Angola held elections in 1992,

but plunged back into a brutal civil war shortly afterwards when the key loser, Jonas Savimbi, leader of the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita), refused to accept the result. Similarly, the losing opposition parties challenged the outcome of elections held in Lesotho in 1998, this resulting in extended civil unrest and the arrival of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) peacekeeping force to restore order. A multiparty body known as the Interim Political Authority is now negotiating a new electoral system which, according to post-conflict agreement, should be implemented by the government. Zimbabwe also engaged in a hotly debated constitutional negotiation process in the run-up to its elections in 2000. All of these countries have faced serious challenges in securing an electoral system with sufficient legitimacy to moderate competing demands of highly antagonistic interests.

Electoral system choice is therefore not without risks. South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique therefore stand apart from their neighbours in that their choice of electoral sys-

Table 1: Electoral systems in the SADC region

Angola	List PR
Botswana	FPTP
Lesotho	FPTP
Mauritius	Block Vote
Mozambique	List PR
Namibia	List PR
Seychelles	Parallel-FPTP
South Africa	List PR
Swaziland	FPTP
Tanzania and Zanzibar	FPTP
Zambia	FPTP
Zimbabwe	FPTP

List PR – List proportional representation
Block Vote – a plurality-majority system with multi-member districts in which electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. Counting is identical to FPTP with the candidates with the highest vote totals winning the seats.
FPTP – First-past-the-post
Parallel-FPTP – A semi-proportional system in which PR is used in conjunction with a plurality-majority system but where, unlike a mixed-member proportional system, the PR seats do not compensate any disproportionality arising from the elections to the plurality-majority seats.[4]

tem has succeeded in stemming conflict where others have thus far failed.

Nonetheless, experience with multiparty elections continues to grow in SADC. Five SADC countries held elections in 1999: South Africa, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia. Zimbabwe followed in mid-2000, and elections were scheduled in Mauritius and Tanzania for later in the year. Table 1 summarises the diversity of electoral systems in SADC.

Despite this range of electoral systems many of these elections have resulted in one party dominance. Electoral systems clearly can play a role in such outcomes. For example, in the case of Botswana, without any history of formal one-partyism, their FPTP electoral system has nevertheless consistently returned majorities to the same party.[5] And yet Mozambique, with PR, has come to closely resemble a traditional two-party system with the opposition party, the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo – through an electoral coalition with other smaller parties) pushing the ruling party, the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo), in a very tight legislative race in 1999. Renamo's leadership of an opposition coalition improved its acquisition of seats since it was able to amass the votes for other opposition parties that were unlikely to reach the five per cent threshold of the vote had they stood for election on their own. Other countries (e.g. South Africa and Namibia) in the region using PR have thus far tended to produce a pattern of one party dominance albeit providing considerable potential for reward for smaller parties.

2. DEBATE ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Horowitz argues that much of the electoral system literature is concerned with the impact of various electoral systems on the number of political parties, the proportionality of seats to votes, the strength of party organisation and the relationship (or lack) between representatives and constituents.[6] In this regard he does not so much dismiss the Duverger hypothesis that PR favours multipartyism as to argue that there are more important factors to consider in the study of electoral systems in divided societies. He also takes exception to this sort of electoral system literature and makes a much stronger case for the importance of the choice of electoral system, arguing that:

> 'The electoral system is by far the most powerful lever of constitutional engineering for accommodation and harmony in severely divided societies, as indeed it is a powerful tool for many other purposes.'[7]

Writing prior to the 1994, Horowitz observed that most people tended to think the Anglo-American plurality system was suitable and only gave casual consideration to the advantages of PR for addressing ethnic and racial inclusivity. Thus, for Horowitz, the adoption of PR in South Africa offered the best chance for various segments and interests in South Africa – notably for him, largely defined in ethnic and racial terms – to define and represent themselves in the electoral system. In this way the electoral system would produce party proliferation, enhancing multiparty politics and thereby reducing white fears of black majority rule. In turn, such an electoral system would generate the need to form multiparty coalitions in a post-apartheid parliament.

Yet for Horowitz the formation of coalitions was a necessary but insufficient condition for the promotion of 'intergroup accommodation'.[8] Stronger incentives were therefore required if South Africa was to find an electoral path to ethnic accommodation. Among the options he explored, Horowitz advocated the alternative vote (AV) as the best means of generating intergroup accommodation. With the AV system, the second and subsequent preferences of a voter whose first preference is not one of the top candidates are reallocated until a candidate attains a majority. Therefore, many elections will turn on second and third preferences, thereby rewarding parties that negotiate for second and third preferences in a bid to pool sufficient votes to reach the majority threshold. The prize, in South Africa's divided society, is ethnic accommodation and governments committed to compromise based not on artificial rewards but real participation by minorities and interparty cohesion.

Reynolds concurs with this aspect of Horowitz's analysis, and identifies six general normative goals in the selection of an electoral system: representativeness, accessibility, providing incentives for conciliatory behaviour, accountability, encouraging cross-cutting parties and stability of government.[9] Reynolds reviews arguments that question the practicality of Horowitz's advocacy of AV and recognises

that broad-based party lists and PR build inclusive parties in a plural society.[10] Nevertheless he does argue that ultimately, an ideal electoral system to take advantage of the opportunities posed by cross-cutting cleavages would be to introduce some kind of preference voting.

An additional argument for the importance of electoral system choice is the reduction of uncertainty. According to Sisk:

> 'Choosing an electoral system for postapartheid (sic) South Africa was a critically important task for South Africa's parties, precisely because speculation on how they would possibly fare under various electoral systems was rife with uncertainty, and the outcome was unpredictable.'

Sisk argues that the ANC rejected the first-part-the-post (FPTP) electoral system because it was concerned about the potential problems of constituency delimitation and gerrymandering given the racially inspired past of South Africa. He argues that all of the centrist parties 'chose' PR because it provided the advantage that no votes are 'wasted' and it maximises the opportunity for minority parties to obtain parliamentary representation by providing a direct votes-to-seats ratio.[11] This analysis suggests a more freely structured arena of choice than likely existed for any of the political actors in the pre-1994 political environment in South Africa.

3. NEGOTIATING THE CHOICE OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM

In South Africa, the effective handing over of political authority from the apartheid regime to a popular government was crucially tied to discussions about the mechanisms that would ensure the sustainability of democracy in the longer term. However, the context of negotiations was much more than a series of rationally structured bargains. As Marais describes it, 'A fitful, convoluted, and often impenetrable process of "talks about talks", "protocol meetings" and finally, negotiations was unleashed'.[12] The negotiations ultimately led to the creation of a framework for a form of transitional government that would obtain for five years. The outcome was a strong institutional focus in multiparty negotiations. Rules and procedures clearly did matter. The main product of this compromise – the Government of National Unity (GNU) – reflected how far the ANC had come on the road to transforming itself into a

legal entity prepared to work within the structures of state power. The GNU was a forced party coalition based on electoral results in which cabinet seats would be divided in proportion to support. Ultimately, the ANC, the National Party (NP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) were the three partners in the GNU.[13] Another essential element of the GNU was a sunset clause that would protect the security forces and civil servants from a wholesale purge when the ANC assumed political office. The ANC therefore acknowledged a balance of power in which the NP retained control of the state apparatus and security forces until the elections, and thereafter, the basic personnel of those structures would remain unchanged. The choice of which electoral system would produce the GNU was itself another matter of debate.

Initially the ANC favoured a constituency-based system and did not endorse PR because it feared that it would necessitate government coalitions by over-representing minority interests. Friedman observes that everyone assumed that the ANC favoured a constituency-based electoral system on the basis that its wide electoral support would win as the other parties split across the left and right of the political spectrum.[14] For Friedman, the ANC adopted PR at least in part as a compromise with the other political parties who favoured it. Mattes argues that when the ANC endorsed PR in October 1990, it was partially on the basis of opinion poll data that showed they would not be hurt politically by doing so.[15] Sisk concurs with this 'choice-based' assessment of political behaviour.[16] It can also be argued that the decades-long ideological commitment of the ANC to non-racialism encouraged it to select PR rather than a constituency-based system. After all, drawing small, non-racial constituencies for a plurality system would have been practically impossible against the background of apartheid geography – and the ANC was extremely concerned that racial and ethnic politics should be undermined as far as possible without authoritarian regulations or limits on party organisation. In 1992, the ANC proposed a National Assembly elected on the basis of PR with a second chamber (the Senate) representative of the regions of the country.

For the NP and other smaller parties, the PR system was preferred as the best means to

ensure maximum representation in the new assembly. In 1990 the President's Council Committee on Constitutional Affairs tabled a report that favoured PR.[17] In 1991, the NP proposed a PR system for the National Assembly with the possibility of including some constituency representation. From 1990 onwards, smaller parties likewise came to favour PR, with for instance the Democratic Party (DP) proposing a range of electoral system alternatives, each drawing on variations of PR.[18] The DP also favoured some mechanism of vote pooling similar to Horowitz's advocacy of AV. At its 1991 National Congress, the DP proposed a 400-member National Assembly elected on the basis of 100 three-member constituencies and an additional 100 from national party lists.[19] This proposal endures today. Similarly, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) announced its preference for the list PR system, arguing that it would mitigate against racially defined constituencies.[20] Furthermore, the PAC advocated a national assembly with 265 seats and an additional 40 seats to be assigned to constitutional experts appointed by the parties in proportion to their share of the vote.

Against this background, some argued that PR would exacerbate the fragmentation of interests by encouraging the proliferation of small parties which potentially mobilised around regional or ethnic (and potentially divisive) bases of support. Others argued that PR would inhibit accountability, transparency (if premised on a closed party list system) and the role of individual candidates (and by implication the operation of voter preference for an individual rather than a party as a whole). The parties could have, but did not choose to, build a system of constituency representation into the PR system.[21] Meanwhile, the central list system gave all parties the ability to control the nomination of candidates and ensure their loyalty in parliament. In the end, the negotiations opted for a system of PR with the nation forming a single electoral district for the newly composed National Assembly. As Faure points out, the eventual adoption of a list system which uses both national and regional lists conforms to elements of proposals for multi-member electoral districts, albeit very large ones since the nine provinces comprise the districts for 200 names on the party lists.[22]

An additional concern of the NP during the

pre-1994 era was that majority rule would produce a dominant party state with the ANC at the helm. This possibility was often cited by the NP as a motivation for the protection of minority rights. However, as Giliomee and Simkins argue, there was no real uncertainty about the outcome of the 1994 election.[23] Essentially, even though polls predicted consistently that the ANC would win by a margin of 40%, the white vote (presumably for the NP) was guaranteed representation in the cabinet and one post of deputy president. The lack of democratic certainty guaranteed success.

Aside from the NP's general attempt to gain electoral support by raising fears about the prospects of an ANC majority government, more specific concerns were also raised. Foremost among these was that a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly for the ANC would enable it to change sections of the interim Constitution without consulting other parties.[24] Such an outcome could threaten the previous years' efforts to build a balance of power through a negotiated settlement. In the end such fears were unrealised, though only just, as the ANC's 62.5% share of the seats fell short of that mark. As Reynolds notes, even President Mandela expressed relief that the ANC had not reached the two-thirds majority mark because 'the government of national unity [GNU] should in no way be an "empty shell" for opposition parties'.[25] The 1999 elections, which formally ended the power-sharing arrangement of the GNU, revealed that fears of a two-thirds ANC majority continued to be present among white voters, although again the final result found the ANC just (one seat) short of the mark.[26] Horowitz observes (writing in 1991), that such concerns are not so ill-founded because since 1967 power had never passed from one elected government to another in Africa, and there were few cases prior to that.[27] Where strong opposition parties had formed, elected governments tended to turn themselves into one party regimes. Thus even though the NP's message was both self-serving and conveniently ignored during its own 40 year history in government, the history of African politics did provide some potential concerns about the future prospects of opposition parties in South Africa.

The new National Assembly elected in 1994 consisted of 400 members elected in terms of

the system of PR set out in Schedule 2 of the 1993 interim Constitution. Candidates for the seats were selected from party lists, with 200 MPs elected on the basis of regional lists submitted by the parties (thereby bringing regional representation to parliament). The other 200 seats were allocated to candidates from the national party lists. Provincial legislatures were also elected on the basis of PR. Elections for both national and provincial legislatures were held concurrently with separate ballot papers for each election.

Following the 1994 elections, the entire National Assembly and Senate comprised a Constitutional Assembly tasked with the writing or a new constitution to replace the 1993 interim Constitution. Sisk argues that the most unifying demand of the major political actors of the liberation struggle was the call for a constituent assembly elected on the basis of party list PR.[28] The constituent assembly would then be responsible for the negotiation and drafting of a final constitution. Within the committee structure designed to divide the work of the overall Constitutional Assembly, a committee of the constitutional assembly was tasked with addressing the structure of government and the electoral system. Aside from debates about the separation of powers between national and provincial government, discussion in the theme committee also turned on the issue of the future electoral system for South Africa. For example, committee members had to decide on the size of the parliament, whether or not to retain PR and what, if any, element of constituency representation should exist at the national and provincial level. According to the interim Constitution, sitting members were prohibited from 'crossing the floor' owing to the system of list PR.[29] Most party representatives in the Constitutional Assembly agreed that members should only to be able to cross the floor and join another party if they received a new mandate through a by-election (by-elections are only permissible at local level).[30]

The prohibition on floor-crossing was agreed to by the Constitutional Assembly and the new Constitution reads:

'A person loses membership of a legislature to which this Schedule applies if that person ceases to be a member of the party which nominated that person as a member of the legislature.'[31]

However, the Constitution also enables parliament to pass legislation, 'within a reasonable period after the new Constitution took effect' to enable a member of the legislature to remain after leaving the party that originally nominated him or her.

During hearings on the certification of the draft for the 1996 Constitution, the Constitutional Court ruled that retention of the 'anti-defection' clause in a way contravened the constitutional principles established in the interim Constitution of 1993.[32] The interim Constitution established 34 principles which were designed to structure the writing of the final Constitution. Two of these principles were most relevant to the choice of electoral system. First, principle VIIII provided for representative government, multiparty democracy, regular elections, universal suffrage, a common voters' roll and, in general, PR.[33] Second, principle XIV called for the provision of participation of minority parties in the legislative process.[34] The Constitutional Court ruled that the anti-defection clause could be reconciled with these requirement for a democratic system of government since it meets the expectation of voters who gave their support to a particular party and expect to see their votes translated into seats for that party on the basis of PR. Lodge favours this arrangement, for the time being, given past experience in many newly independent African countries. He argues:

'the embargo on floor crossing, a corollary of the list system as well as the subject of a provision in the Constitution, is probably politically beneficial at this stage, in that it most likely functions to protect opposition parties more than the governing party. In one-party dominant systems in which alternation of government is unlikely, the major incentive for crossing the floor will be to win higher political office. Massive floor-crossing led to the creation of *de facto* one-party states in several African countries in the 1960s, well before the formal demise of their liberal constitutions.'[35]

In this regard at least, the South African electoral system appears to respond to the concern for devising an electoral system that promotes coalitions and multiparty representation of diverse interests.[36] The prohibition on floor crossing may therefore be justified on the basis of enhancing the development of more effective

opposition political parties. The PR electoral system employed in 1994 was retained in the 1996 Constitution, which states that the electoral system shall result 'in general in proportional representation.'[37]

In the debates around the South African transition, the focus was not only on the representation of majority and minority interests but in giving effective voice to those interests. A fundamental premise of the negotiations was that the future South Africa must have constitutional guarantees for the protection and promotion of participation in human rights, women's rights, language rights, etc. On this count the electoral system too was to play a role, as Asmal wrote:

'An electoral system for South Africa should develop national thinking, instill the practice of anti-racist behaviour and the acquisition of genuinely shared patriotic consciousness. To encourage these basic values, an electoral system must encourage cohesiveness rather than parochialism, [centripetal] rather than fissiparous tendencies, unity over narrowness in behaviour.'[38]

This is quite a tall, and prescriptive, order for an electoral system (reminiscent of the desire of Horowitz, and others, to design an electoral system that forces politicians to appeal to interests that cross the ethnic and racial divides of South Africa), smacking of an attempt to engineer outcomes and behaviour through institutional design.

Another consequence of the acceptance of the PR list system was the room it offered women's organisations to take the demand for the inclusion of women into the new democracy. However, PR alone was insufficient to achieve this form of inclusivity. Within the ANC, the Women's League spearheaded a demand for a quota of women on all party lists. After considerable debate and resistance, a 30% quota was accepted for provincial and national electoral lists, although the demand for a quota in the ANC's internal structures was defeated. The outcome was the election of a relatively high number of women in both the first and second democratic elections. At the local level the electoral system is mixed with ward and list PR elections for all metropolitan and some local councils. The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 reformed the local government electoral framework and called for political parties to

ensure that 50% of the candidates on their lists are women and that men and women are evenly distributed on the lists.[39]

Ballington highlights the impact of electoral systems for women's representation. She argues there are costs for women's representation in the use of constituency-based electoral systems. She writes:

'The experience of Commonwealth countries supports the thesis that proportional representation electoral systems are the most favourable for electing women to parliaments ... Those Commonwealth countries that use constituency-based electoral systems have an average 11.1% women. Those that use proportional systems have nearly twice the number of women legislators at 21.3%. Furthermore, the three Commonwealth countries with the highest number of women – Mozambique, South Africa and New Zealand – use PR electoral systems, two of which use party lists. In SADC, the average of those countries using List PR is 25%, which is in stark contrast to those countries with a constituency-based electoral system where the average representation of women is 11.7%. Despite the commitment of all SADC countries to 30% representation of women by 2005, those countries which have a proportional electoral system, together with political parties' commitment to gender equality, are closer to realising this ideal than those countries with constituency-based systems.'[40]

The principal instrument used to improve the representation of women is the implementation of quota systems. As Ballington argues, quotas guarantee women's representation and compensate for barriers that prevent women from obtaining seats and in this way women may acquire a 'critical mass' to enable them to influence policies and legislation.[41] It is largely as a result of the ANC's voluntary commitment to 30% women's representation on its party lists that South Africa, with 29.6% of its MPs being women, now ranks in the top ten countries in the world for women in parliament.[42] However, legislated or reserved seats for women may also exert little pressure on political parties to increase the number of women within its party ranks, or to promote women to leadership positions with the party and government and women who achieve office through the quota

system may be regarded by the other elected MPs as second rank MP or tokens. Nevertheless, the most effective means of improving women's representation through electoral system choice is the party adopted quota of 30–40% representation of women in a list PR electoral system.

The introduction of PR also promised to better equate voter preference and effective representation. Such a goal must be judged not only against established democracies but against the immediate background of elections (such as they were) in apartheid era South Africa. Whites had long enjoyed the vote, but prior to 1994 most South Africans had only experienced elections conducted in the ethnic homelands imposed upon blacks under the government's programme of 'separate development', or for the race-based tricameral legislature (which from 1983 provided separate Chambers in parliament for Indians and coloureds as well as for whites). Even these elections were highly limited because the majority of South Africans rejected these forms of government. Morris and Zulu demonstrate that the number of voters who turned out for these polls was generally low.[43] For example, they find that voter participation in the Transkei dropped by 40% between 1963 and 1976, Bophuthatswana experienced a decline of 60 per cent between 1972 and 1977 and Lebowa had a 23% drop between 1973 and 1978. In KwaZulu's first election in 1978, only 37% of the registered voters (fewer than 50% of the eligible population registered to vote) participated. Moreover, they also claim that the homeland electoral process was subject to police interference, vote rigging and intimidation.[44]

The 1994 election therefore stood as a crucial, and bold, test for the legitimacy of the new electoral system and the principles of free and fair elections as the basis of political power. The long-running contestation over the terms of the transition, the ongoing political violence, and fears of possible military or right-wing attempts to disrupt the electoral process all posed uncertainties about the success of the democratic transition.

4. OPPOSITION POLITICS AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Reynolds argues that the choice of electoral system is a general principle of constitutional

design, and in particular, one that can dramatically enhance inclusivity, political stability and ethnic accommodation if carefully chosen.[45] He notes that list PR systems are the most frequently used electoral system in the world, with most allocating seats on the basis of some regional division of districts. Does this mean that inclusivity, accountability and accommodation of minority interests are all equally served by the choice of list PR? Lodge is less convinced by this advantage of PR, arguing that:

> 'though list proportional representation ensures a spectrum of political diversity in parliament, as well as incentives for participation by ethnic and regional parties, it does nothing to encourage cross-racial party membership and support.'[46]

Friedman argues that while current ANC political dominance does not necessarily delegitimise the opposition, the main opponents of the ANC do suffer from a legitimacy problem owing to the country's racial history.[47] Thus while one set of values might be served by the choice of electoral system, other values, reflecting a different political agenda and interests may fare less well.

The question arises, therefore, whether reform of the present electoral system would provide for a 'more effective' opposition. And what would constitute such effectiveness? Buntman argues that while the GNU was probably a necessary choice for the immediate post-apartheid period given the relative stalemate of the balance of forces in South African society throughout the negotiations era, 'there is a significant danger in the cooperation across party and partisan lines, namely that the country will not develop an understanding of a loyal and vibrant opposition as part and parcel of the meaning of democracy'.[48] Buntman argues that the New National Party (NNP) has been unable to escape a corrupt past, the DP has a strong record of opposition but lacks mass appeal, the PAC lacks practical proposals to match its strong rhetorical appeal and the IFP must grow beyond the shadow of its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Aside from historical baggage and current appeal as measures of political effectiveness of opposition parties in contemporary South Africa, the number of represented political parties is a striking feature of the post-apartheid

legislature. For Lijphart, 'The most important difference among democratic party systems is that between two-party and multi-party systems.'[49] For example, in a parliamentary government a two-party system makes a one party majority cabinet possible, whereas in a presidential system two results are possible: either the president will enjoy a majority support from the legislature or he or she will be faced by a hostile legislature. An additional distinction is the relative size of parties and how to account for many smaller parties. As discussed below, South Africa has experienced a growth in the number of represented political parties and is in a consolidation process with unknown outcomes. One means of reducing the number of represented political parties is to introduce or raise an existing threshold of the popular vote required to attain an elected seat. The only threshold in South Africa is the natural threshold – determined by the relationship between Assembly size (400) and district magnitude (one). Thus parties gaining approximately 0.25% of the popular vote will likely win a seat while some parties winning even less may gain a seat on the basis of the Droop quota. This low threshold is very promising for new parties seeking to gain access to elected office.

Nevertheless, observers continue to propose modifications of the electoral system. Faure and Venter, for example, have written a detailed proposal for electoral reform.[50] They essentially agree with DP proposals for the introduction of a mixed-member, proportional system with single member constituencies. For them, the current system was an appropriate, but transitional choice for South Africa, and the future electoral system 'requires a higher degree of accountability by representatives, channels for the electorate to express a more sophisticated range of needs and choices' as well as improved responsiveness by MPs and a sense of ownership by the electorate.

They propose, in compliance with the constitutional provision of proportionality, a system as follows:

• 200 of the 400 seats in the National Assembly be allocated on the basis of single member constituencies
• 200 be allocated on the basis of a closed party list system
• two ballots be used, one for constituencies and one for PR

• the Droop quota be retained for the allocation of seats from the list elections
• seats in the constituencies be allocated by plurality.

They maintain that this system would have several advantages, *inter alia*: voters would be able to split their votes between parties, proportionality would be guaranteed by the use only of votes cast for the national party lists to determine the proportion of overall party support; and citizens would secure a direct representative through the constituency vote. They also argue that MPs elected from constituencies should be able to retain their seats if they cross the floor to join another party and should have a free mandate to vote their conscience on sensitive moral issues. With this system the authors feel that their foremost criticism of the current system – lack of accountability – would, among other advantages, be redressed.

Public opinion data indicates that whereas South Africans had very high levels of party identification in 1994 when 88% indicated that they identified with a party, by 1997 this figure had fallen to 58% with firm independents comprising one quarter of the electorate.[51] While the survey points out that partisan identification and voting intention are different from actual voting, the change in public opinion does indicate a greater level of identification with independents than might otherwise be expected in a PR electoral system. Such indicators may prove to bolster the prospects for new and existing opposition parties hoping to make inroads in ANC partisan support.

In a different survey undertaken in 1996 by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), 31% of respondents reported having contact with their MP (based on the National Assembly's adoption of an informal system of 'assigning' MPs elected on the basis of PR to 'constituencies' as a means of trying to enhance the relationship between legislators and voters) and 38% felt that MPs did a good job of keeping in touch with the people.[52] Depending on one's perspectives these figures indicate either good or poor experiences by the public of the accountability of their MPs in the first years of South African multiparty democracy. Yet whatever the case, the responses clearly indicate that public perceptions of accountability remain an unsettled element of democratic consolidation. Writing prior to the 1994 elections, Mattes

argued that a 'new electoral system should investigate ways to create more freedom for candidates to forward their own ideas and stand on their own accomplishments and integrity, and be less bound by rigid party doctrine.'[53] He also noted, however, that the typical means of achieving this goal, linking representatives to geographical constituencies, would possibly entrench the demographic and territorial categories of apartheid.

The belief that electoral system design can engineer normative political behaviour continues to feature in discussions about the South African electoral system almost four years after the passage of the 1996 Constitution. For example, in October 1999 opposition parties called for the introduction of defined constituencies in order to improve the performance and accountability of MPs. At a public forum organised by Idasa, the Leader of the DP, Tony Leon, insisted that 'under the current system of proportional representation, based on closed party lists, elected representatives are accountable to party bosses instead of to the electorate.'[54] For Leon, the current PR list system privileges the power of the party over the preferences of individual voters. He continued:

> 'the system has also promoted a parliament of pliant MPs, the majority of whom do little more than fill quorums and provide government with a voting majority.'

As an alternative, Leon proposed reducing the National Assembly to 300 members elected on the basis of a combination of multi-member constituencies and PR. NNP leader Marthinus van Schalkvyk concurred, arguing that the addition of geographical constituency-based representation would improve the relationship between the citizenry and government. However, in contrast, ANC MP Johnny de Lange defended the current system as the best means of ensuring diversity in parliament and argued that any moves to introduce constituency-based representation would undermine that diversity.[55]

Despite this debate, the electoral system issue played little, if any role in the 1999 election campaigns of those parties which are most closely associated with a reform agenda. The DP manifesto promoted the idea that there are too many MPs and MPLs, and called for a one-third reduction in the number of public representatives to achieve a 'leaner, more efficient

national and provincial parliamentary system' yet it does not mention electoral system reform specifically.[56] In contrast, the NNP manifesto took up the themes of inclusiveness and minority rights, and called for consideration of 'a new electoral system combining the proportional list system and a constituency-based system to bring government closer to its people and thereby forcing public representatives to be more accountable to voters.'[57] Similarly, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) reiterated the theme of improved accountability and called for 'a balanced electoral system that will ensure greater accountability and representivity'[58] and also called for constitutional reform to allow MPs to cross the floor and change their party affiliation. However, despite these statements, the issue of electoral reform was in practice not widely promoted nor did public opinion polls indicate that voters considered it to be important.

Apart from the implications of the present electoral system for accountability and representativeness, it has been blamed by some for producing a low quality of debate in parliament. However, Barrell argues that the disappointing state of affairs has less to do with the quality of MPs elected than with 'unimaginative procedural rules'.[59] He cites both the weekly session of interpellations (mini debates held on Wednesday afternoons) and questions as potential opportunities for robust discussions that instead have become stilted exchanges of statistics and information. As an alternative, he suggests that regular question periods with follow-up questions would enliven parliament. In addition, more attendance by the President and the cabinet would reassure MPs and the South African public that there is real, and visible, executive accountability to parliament.

Meanwhile, another factor that limits the profile of personal performances in parliament is the party-basis of national and provincial elections.[60] This system makes it difficult for independent candidates to secure election. In contrast, it is often argued that a mixture of constituency and PR at the local level would make independent candidates more electable. Nevertheless, the prospects for opposition parties improve if viable subnational government at provincial level is maintained.[61] The possibility of access to power at provincial level is certainly important for the DP, IFP and NP at

present, and gives them continued access to public life and political legitimacy as parties.

Less attention has been given to the fact that the sphere of local government has undergone dramatic changes in South Africa over the course of the last ten years. In this respect the electoral system at the local level is far more complex than at national or provincial level since it blends forms of representation. Local government elections are held on the basis of mixed member proportional system (MMP). For the 2000 elections, South Africans will vote for representatives in metropolitan, local and district councils depending on where they live. As noted above, in most cases voters will cast one ballot on the basis of FPTP elections and one for PR. For example, voters in metropolitan areas will have a vote for the ward councillor and a PR vote for the council at large. Voters in local councils with more than seven councillors will have both those ballots as well as a PR vote for their district council. In both metropolitan and local councils, members will be elected on the basis of a 50–50 split between FPTP and PR elections. The use of FPTP elections will also enable smaller parties and independent candidates to contest the elections meaningfully. But women do not fare so well in MMP elections since they mostly get elected on the party lists rather than in the constituencies. The forthcoming local elections could, therefore, prove to have long-run constitutional and political implications.

5. POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE 1999 ELECTIONS

The following breakdown illustrates the extent of party participation in the 1999 elections:

- 26 parties contested the 1999 elections
- 15 parties contested the National Assembly and provincial assemblies
- one party contested the National Assembly only
- 10 parties contested for provincial assembly seats only (each of these contested in one province only)
- 13 parties won seats in the National Assembly
- 12 of those same parties won seats in provincial assemblies
- none of the parties contesting provincial assemblies only won any seats.

In the 1994 elections seven parties won seats in the National Assembly. In the 1999 elections,

those same seven parties won seats again, and six additional parties gained entry. These results are suggestive of low barriers to entry for new political parties, and given the electoral system, a fair chance at winning a seat in parliament. The 1999 results also suggest that parties stand a better chance of winning seats on the national ballot, even if they come from a largely regional or ethnic base of support, rather than challenging only for provincial power. Because there is no threshold for representation in parliament, parties with just a very small electoral base of support were able to win seats.

Some of the new parties have added controversial figures to the National Assembly. Former Rugby Union boss Louis Luyt (who played a prominent role in promoting the former regime internationally) and his Federal Alliance are now in parliament, as is KwaZulu-Natal-based Amichand Rajbansi, now leader of the Minority Front (but previously leader of the Indian House of Delegates under the ill-fated tricameral constitution launched by P.W. Botha's party in 1983.) Furthermore, two former homeland leaders have returned to the scene to form provincial oppositions. In North West, former Bophuthatswana leader Lucas Mangope and his United Christian Democratic Party came second, whereas in the Eastern Cape, the UDM – led by former Transkei military strongman Bantu Holomisa – performed strongly enough to secure recognition as the official opposition.

In contrast, the worst performance amongst the smaller parties in the 1999 elections was delivered by the PAC, a historical rival of the ANC.[62] With just 0.7% of the popular vote, the PAC was reduced to three seats in the National Assembly. Meanwhile, the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo), contesting its first national election, fared even worse with less than 0.2% of the vote, though even this was enough to capture one seat in parliament. On the basis of these election results, the Africanist option, for now at least, appears dead. Table 2 (*over page*) indicates the National Assembly election results for 1999 (and 1994).

Not only has the South African electoral system thus far enhanced the representation of smaller parties, but the party list system has also augmented the representation of women in South Africa. For example, as noted above, the

Table 2: National Assembly election results, 1999 and 1994

Party	Vote (% of national total) 1994 result in italics	Seats 1994 allocation in italics
African Christian Democratic Party	1.43	6
	0.45	*2*
African National Congress	66.35	266
	62.65	*252*
Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging	0.29	1
Azanian People's Organisation	0.17	1
Democratic Party	9.56	38
	1.73	*7*
Federal Alliance	0.54	2
Inkatha Freedom Party	8.58	34
	10.54	*43*
Minority Front	0.30	1
	0.07	
New National Party	6.87	28
	20.39	*82*
Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania	0.71	3
	1.25	*5*
United Christian Democratic Party	0.78	3
United Democratic Movement	3.42	14
Vryheidsfront/Freedom Front	0.80	3
	2.17	*9*
Total	**100**	**400**

Table adapted from Andrew Reynolds, ed. Election '94: The Campaign, Results and Future Prospects*, (London: James Currey, 1994) and Electoral Institute of Southern Africa,* National and Provincial Election Results, South African Elections*, June 1999 (Johannesburg: EISA, 1999).*

ANC reserved 30% of its national list for women, placed women in electable positions and now has 96 women out of its 266 MPs. Of the smaller parties, the UDM is the only party other than the ANC to specify the gender of candidates on the national list. Moreover, the fact that so many smaller parties won a few seats typically decreases the prospects of electing more women since with only a few seats to spread around most parties are likely to appoint men from their lists. The significant margin of victory for the ANC, while perhaps negative in terms of building a strong opposition, actually improved the prospects for women candidates.

6. PARTY FUNDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Financial support for political parties is another crucial determinant of building successful opposition politics in South Africa.[63] The 1996 Constitution recognised that political parties require funding in order to effectively participate in the electoral system. The Constitution reads:

'To enhance multi-party democracy, national legislation must provide for the funding of political parties participating in national and provincial legislatures on an equitable and proportional basis.'[64]

As a result, legislation was enacted to provide funding for political parties from a state-administered fund on the following terms:

- Only represented political parties may receive funds.
- Funding is weighted in favour of elected representation by each political party.
- Parties must account for the funds and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in turn reports to parliament.[65]

The allocations from the fund are to be made and paid out to each of the political parties concerned on the basis of proportionality and equity. Some 90% of the fund is allocated in proportion to the number of seats held by each party in the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures jointly. The remaining 10% of the fund is allocated, firstly, among the provin-

Table 3: Public funding of represented political parties – 1999 elections[66]

Party	Allocation
ANC	R30 608 560
NNP	R10 145 260
IFP	R5 694 850
FF	R1 993 330
DP	R1 759 600
PAC	R1 125 190
ACDP	R953 470
Minority Front	R719 740

ces in proportion to the number of members in each province and, secondly, is divided equally among the participating parties in the legislature of each province. The allocations are paid in four equal installments, each within three months of the previous payment.

In 1999 a total amount of R53 million was allocated to the represented parties from public funds, as indicated in Table 3.

Newly formed political parties objected to the fact that no new funding was to be extended to them. On 23 March 1999 several of these parties voiced their objections at a press conference outside Johannesburg. The 33 represented parties gave the government a two-day ultimatum to redress what they perceived is a basic inequity in South Africa's new democracy, else face the wrath of the parties and their supporters. The parties called for the implementation of a public funding system to all political parties. They were unsuccessful in their campaign and failed to make an impact on the election campaign.

It is noteworthy that despite the absence of public funding, six previously non-represented political parties gained seats in parliament and will now qualify for a share of public funding. Of course, all political parties also rely on private sources of funding. There are no rules governing donations to parties in South Africa and no regulations that require disclosure of either domestic or foreign donations.[67] For example, in the run-up to the 1999 elections the ANC received $10 million from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates respectively after Nelson Mandela solicited funds while he was on official state visits.[68] Non-government parties obviously lack such opportunities but there was no significant effort to bring attention to these fundraising activities or to draft regulations

enforcing disclosure. The fact that opposition parties lack the financial and administrative resources of the party in government does little to distinguish South Africa from other countries.

7. POLARISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES?

Perhaps of greater concern for academics and advocates of achieving ethnic and intergroup accommodation via the electoral system, is that the prospects for opposition party support appear to remain locked into their predominantly regional and/or ethnic bases of support. Consider, for example, the following assessment of opposition politics after the 1999 elections:

The IFP continues to draw the bulk of its support from Zulu speakers in KwaZulu-Natal and has not secured any measure of broad-based support outside of the province. The NNP now has proportionally more support from its coloured supporters than from its historically white support base, many of whom have now transferred their allegiance to the DP. Shuffling the cards within the same support base will not help any of the opposition parties. Unless they can make credible inroads into the constituency, they are destined indefinitely to remain minority opposition parties.[69]

Well, yes and no. Opposition parties will pursue other strategies within the existing electoral system to improve their share of popular support. For example, in June 2000 the DP and NNP announced a formal alliance to be called the Democratic Alliance (DA). This venture may prove to consolidate opposition support in ways that further polarise South African politics in racial terms. Alternatively, this pooling of resources and electoral support may provide the base upon which the new party makes inroads into ANC support.

Whatever the outcome, the tactic builds on the party defections which preceded the 1999 elections and which have continued since that time as candidates and parties jockey for electoral advantage. Previously the DP announced it would work with Mangope's UCDP (October 1999).[70]

While such moves may do little to achieve inroads into ANC support in the medium term, they can improve the resources at the disposal of the DP as well as amalgamate an otherwise fractured opposition vote during the 2000 local

government elections, even with the present electoral system intact.

Schlemmer is less optimistic about the prospects for opposition parties in South Africa, arguing that the future of electoral democracy in South Africa lies with a one-party dominant system (led by the ANC at present) or at least with an 'africanist' party-dominant system.[71] For Schlemmer, a 'cross-racial' coalition is most unlikely and minority groups are thus advised to adopt political strategies that do not assume electoral growth. Party politics in 2000 may confirm this general thrust, with Azapo emerging from its 15th annual conference with a call for solidarity with the ANC. Despite ongoing tensions between the ANC and the IFP, the two parties continue to work together in government. By contrast, relations between the ANC and the DP have been characterised by public sparring between the two party leaders, with overt racial tones. However, the PAC continues to stand apart from the ANC and other potential allies in an africanist national front.

CONCLUSION

For the ANC's Pallo Jordan, 'democracy, non-racialism and non-sexism do not mean that every five years Tony Leon [leader of the DP] and his African domestic worker can stand on the same queue in Houghton to vote.'[72] It may be assumed that such a vision also falls short of Schlemmer's 'cross-racial coalition.' Instead, Jordan envisages a South Africa where that domestic worker's daughter has a fair chance of competing equally with Tony Leon's son for a place at university, to become a doctor or to move in next door. For Jordan, democratic and economic development presents the only defensible course for building pluralism in South Africa.

Jordan speaks to the general issue raised at the outset of this paper that while the institutional and regulatory aspects of elections do matter, they are not enough to secure a complete political and economic transformation in South Africa. On the basis of this brief survey of the emerging party system in South Africa and the politics of electoral system choice, a number of general conclusions can be advanced:

- *One party dominance:* The ANC has enjoyed repeated electoral success in its conversion

from mass movement to political party. For the moment there are few viable, national alternatives to the ANC.
- *Women in parliament:* The number of women in parliament is enabled by the ANC's quota system on its party lists. No opposition parties have adopted this mechanism and play a minimal role in advancing the number of women represented in legislatures.
- *Weak opposition:* With many smaller parties competing for the opposition vote there has been a substantial fragmentation of the vote. The new alliance between the DP and the NNP will, in the short turn at least, consolidate opposition on the basis of a minority base (potentially combining the white and coloured support base of the two parties). It is unclear if the signs of racial polarisation in electoral politics will undermine other elements of the South African political transition or even if it will endure.
- *Electoral system reform:* Proposals for electoral system reform from opposition parties are premised on claims for improved accountability, MP's performance in parliament and strengthened links between voters and their elected representatives. Local government provides the best test case for this system but it has yet to be thoroughly examined as an option at national or provincial level.
- *Funding democratisation:* The absence of legislation requiring disclosure of private contributions to parties or to extend funding to build capacity among non-represented political parties suggests a weak commitment from all political parties to public accountability. None of the represented political parties has called for disclosure of funding sources, nor have any linked party finance to the electoral system reform debate as a means of enhancing the capacity of opposition parties to better represent the interests of the electorate.

Of course these are only tentative conclusions about the emerging party and electoral system in South Africa. While the second elections strongly correlate with the procedural requirements for democratic consolidation, this paper is cognisant that the successful consolidation of a multiparty electoral competition is only one feature of democratic development. Indeed, the shifting fortunes of social forums and other

community-based consultative bodies present evidence of a significant demobilisation of civil society since 1994. Further research might indicate the extent to which opposition parties, or the ANC, are able to keep these interests within the fold. While outside the main focus of this paper, it must be noted that the institutionalisation of popular opinion through political parties, through its very success, can also serve to undermine the popular interests on whose behalf political parties claim to represent. Electoral system reform in favour of constituency representation may do little to redress this aspect of South African political life. Despite this important proviso, this paper has also argued that South Africa has generated significant institutional and integrative measures to aggregate interests through the electoral and party system.

On these procedural grounds then, South Africa is on its way to successful democratic consolidation. But several crucial challenges remain. Firstly, while South Africa's elections and the emerging party system appear to have successfully avoided the worst case scenario of racial and ethnic mobilisation, race continues to be a factor in South African party politics. The new DA relies on a core of white support even as it is likely to seek to capitalise on the significant coloured and Afrikaans-speaking NNP support from the Western Cape province. Its long-term strategy must surely turn to building inroads into ANC support if it ever hopes to rise above the current level of 15–20% of popular support. Secondly, reconciling this record with the challenges of development and popular power will remain an ongoing challenge. Thirdly, the DP has staked out the terrain of liberal values as the basis of its self-described attempt to build robust and principled opposition in South Africa. It has therefore managed to build a profile around the values of accountability, transparency and opportunity. With respect to the electoral system itself, the DP and other opposition parties have, for the meantime, sought to stake out the terrain of electoral system reform in the name of improving democratic accountability and by implication, the quality of democratic life. It remains to be seen if this vision will be rewarded at the ballot box.

ENDNOTES

1) Sisk concurs that wider issues of institutional design, political values and mobilisation strategies play a role in addition to the electoral system itself: 'While the electoral system is an important aspect of convergence arising out of institutional choices, the entire political system as a whole establishes a set of rules that will provide incentives for minorities' views to make a difference in the context of majority rule.' Timothy D. Sisk, *Democratisation in South Africa: The Elusive Social Contract*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 271.

2) Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) and Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Democratisation in Southern Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

3) Sisk, p. 170.

4) For a full description of electoral systems and case studies of their application see: International IDEA, *Handbook of Electoral System Design*, (Stockholm: IDEA, 1997).

5) While the main opposition party's share of the vote in Botswana increased over the course of the 1990s, a split in the party dashed the hopes of either faction making substantial inroads into the Botswana Democratic Party which has never secured less than 67% of the elected seats in the National Assembly or less than 54% of the votes cast (its share in the 1994 elections). Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries, *Botswana Elections Observer Mission Report*, (Johannesburg: Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, 1999), p. 3.

6) Horowitz, p. 163.

7) Ibid.

8) Ibid., p. 177.

9) Reynolds, p. 92.

10) Ibid., p. 104.

11) Sisk, p. 168-199.

12) Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transformation*, (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), p.83.

13) The NP withdrew from the GNU following the adoption of the 1996 Constitution. The IFP remained up to and beyond the 1999 elections.

14) Quoted in Sisk, p. 188.

15) Robert B. Mattes, The Myths of Majoritarianism: Understanding Democracy in a New South Africa, *Idasa Occasional Paper*, No. 43, February 1992, p.7.

16) Sisk, p. 190.

17) Murray Faure, The Electoral Systems Issue in South African Politics, *Occasional Paper*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, South Africa, 1999, p. 3.

18) Sisk, p. 183.

19) Faure, p. 3-6.

20) Sisk, p. 186.

21) The only element of constituency representation is the provision for a 'regional to national' component of the party list for the National Assembly. Of the 400 possible names for the latter, 200 are on a national list and the other 200 are on a regional list. The regional list is allocated across the nine provinces and draws names suggested by the party branches and officials in those provinces.

22) Faure, p. 6.

23) Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins, The Dominant Party Regimes of South Africa, Mexico, Taiwan and Malaysia: A Comparative Assessment, in Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins, (eds), *The Awkward Embrace: One Party Domination and Democracy* , (Cape Town: Tafelberg Press, 1999), p. 9.

24) Section 62(1) of the interim Constitution states that bills amending the Constitution require a two-thirds majority of all members of both the National Assembly and the Senate. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993.

25) Reynolds, p. 182.

26) Consider for example, a New National Party campaign poster from the 1999 election campaign which read, 'Mugabe has two-thirds', warning South Africa not to go the route of Zimbabwe and its powerful (overly so, for some) Presidency.

27) Horowitz, p. 239.

28) Sisk, p. 169.

29) Sec. 43 and Sec. 143 respectively, prohib-

ited members of the national and provincial assemblies from crossing the floor. Constitution (1993).

30) *Constitutional Talk*, Official Newsletter of the Constitutional Assembly, Working Draft Edition, p. 18.

31) Republic of South Africa, Constitution (1996), Sec. 23 A (1).

32) Constitutional Court of South Africa, Certification of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Case CCT, 23/96

33) Constitution (1993), Scedule 4.

34) Ibid.

35) Tom Lodge, Which Criteria are most Important in Choosing an Electoral System for Post-1999 South Africa? Paper presented to Electoral Systems Roundtable, Electoral Institute of South Africa, 14-15 August 1998, Cape Town, South Africa, p. 5.

36) Lijphart argues that the influence of the electoral system on the effective number of elective parties is especially weak. However he does find a stronger link between the electoral system and the number of effective parties in parliament. This latter finding may be more important for the purposes of building a party system that can produce alternation in government. Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945–1990,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 142.

37) Constitution (1996), Sec. 46(1)(d).

38) Quoted in Sisk, p. 270. Reynolds describes Asmal as the prime mover behind the ANC decision to adopt PR. Reynolds, p. 184.

39) Municipal Structures Act, No 117 of 1998, Schedule 2, Sec. 17 (5).

40) Julie Ballington, Electoral Systems, Electoral Processes and Gender Equality, Paper presented to Regional Election Management Training Programme for Commonwealth Countries, Mauritius, 9 May 2000.

41) Ibid.

42) See Athaliah Molokomme, Building Inclusiveness in SADC's Democratic Systems: The Case of Women's Representation in Leadership Positions, Paper presented to Southern Africa Elections Forum, Windhoek, Namibia, 11-14 June 2000, p. 3.

43) Paulus Zulu and Mike Morris, First Experiences of Democratic Elections, in Lawrence Schlemmer and Ian Hirschfeld, (eds). *Founding Democracy and the New South African Voter*, (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1994), p. 168.

44) Ibid., p. 169.

45) Reynolds, p. 91.

46) Lodge.

47) Steven Friedman, Party Dominance, Opposition and Civil Society in South Africa, in Giliomee and Simkins, eds., p. 109-110.

48) Fran Buntman, South Africa's First Democratic Elections and their Political Context, in John Mukum Mbaku and Julius O. Ihonvbere, (eds)., *Multiparty Democracy and Political Change: Constraints to Democratisation in Africa*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 265.

49) Lijphart, p.67.

50) Murray Faure and Albert Venter, Electoral Systems and Accountability: A Proposal for Electoral Reform in South Africa, Paper presented to Workshop on Democracy and Electoral Administration, University of Stellenbosch, 24-25 March, 2000.

51) IDASA, Public Opinion Service Report, No. 1, February 1998.

52) IDASA, Public Opinion Service Report, No. 1, February 1996.

53) Mattes, p. 5.

54) *Business Day*, (Johannesburg) 22 October, 1999.

55) Katharine Mckenzie, Voting Distorted in UK, says MP, Idasa, *Provincial Whip*, 11 November 1999.

56) Democratic Party, Fight Back for a Better Future: The Democratic Party's Plan for South Africa, 1999, p. 12.

57) New National Party, Let's Get South Africa Working, 1999, p. 14.

58) United Democratic Movement, The Better Future Plan, 1999, p. 28.

59) *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 7-13 January, 2000.

60) *The Financial Mail* (Johannesburg)l, 10 March 2000.

61) Friedman concurs, p. 113.

62) The PAC was formed in 1959 following

growing discontent within the Congress Alliance. The PAC thus represented an Africanist branch of the liberation movement.

63) For an overview see: Roger Southall and Geoffrey Wood, Political Party Funding in Southern Africa, in Peter Burnell and Alan Ware, (eds), *Funding Democratisation*, (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1988).

64) Constitution (1996), Section 236.

65) Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act, Act No. 103 of 1997.

66) Notice 2920 of 1998, *Government Gazette*, 3 December 1998.

67) By contrast the ANC has drafted a Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians which requires all members of the National Assembly to declare publicly all their financial interests.

68) *The Sunday Times*, (Johannesburg) 24 May 1999.

69) Human Rights Committee, Post-Election Focus 1999: A Detailed Guide to the 1999 Election Results, (Johannesburg: Human Rights Committee, 1999), p. 35

70) The opposition parties frequently vote in unison against the government. For example, in the debate on the proposed Open Democracy Bill that regulates the individual's constitutional right to access to information, the DP, NNP, FF, UCDP and ACDP made a show of unity by scheduling a joint press conference to present their concerns with the Bill. *The Sowetan*, (Johannesburg), 19 January 2000.

71) Lawrence Schlemmer, The Future of Political Pluralism in South Africa, in Giliomee and Simkins, p. 300.

72) Pallo Jordan, The National Question in Post-1994 South Africa: A discussion paper in preparation for the ANC's 50th National Conference, 1997, p. 14.

73) According to DP, and new DA leader, Tony Leon, the new party will not make its 'cause the insular protection of minority rights and interests.' Instead, the DA aims 'to build an opposition that becomes an alternative government that forces the ANC below 50% of the vote.' *The Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg) , 9 July 2000.

The Politics of Adaptation and Equivocation: Race, Class and Opposition in 20th Century South Africa

Paul Maylam

This paper is concerned centrally with the ways in which extra-parliamentary opposition movements in 20th century South Africa (pre-1990) tried to resolve the tensions and dilemmas, theoretical and political, emanating from the race-class conundrum. There were two main dimensions to the problem: first, what should be the prime target of opposition – racial oppression or class exploitation? Second, what would be the most effective means of opposition – racial mobilisation or class struggle? Movements that opted for a race-based strategy, directed at racial oppression, achieved some short-term gains, but were ultimately compelled to modify their approach and make concessions to class analysis. Similarly organisations geared towards class struggle could never escape the realities of racial division and oppression, and were forced to compromise their principles and strategies. Throughout its history the African National Congress (ANC) avoided taking firm stances one way or the other. It mastered the politics of equivocation and compromise, operating as a 'broad church', accommodating a variety of political tendencies. This was both a strength and a weakness, enabling the organisation to enjoy wide support but also creating the potential for internal division – a danger still faced by the Tripartite Alliance today.

INTRODUCTION

Can the history of opposition in 20th century South Africa throw any light on the current situation of political parties and organisations, or on possible changing political alignments? Surely not? After all, extra-parliamentary opposition to white supremacist regimes was obviously a very different ball-game to opposition in the post-apartheid era. The strategic issues and debates that preoccupied those at the forefront of the liberation struggle do not seem to have much salience now. Moreover the fast-changing global context has drastically altered the terms on which the post-apartheid order has been constructed, apparently rendering obsolete some of the earlier visions of what that society might look like. So a search for continuities between the pre-1990 decades and the post-apartheid era might seem futile. Furthermore, there are the common pitfalls that go with any endeavour to draw upon the past to illuminate the present. There is, for instance, the 'history-as-bondage syndrome' – the idea that the present is bound by the past, that the possibilities for change in the future are severely constrained by the legacies of the past. This can easily taper into 'history-as-excuse'. There is, too, the danger of 'history-as-teleology' – the course of events unfolding inexorably towards an outcome predetermined by history itself.

Notwithstanding these pitfalls – which beset any attempt to link the past and present – there is one theme that runs through the history of extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa for most of the 20th century, and that has carried over into the politics of the post-apartheid era. That theme centres on the contradictions, dilemmas and uncertainties that arose from the tension, theoretical and political, between race and class. These might now seem to be two rather tired categories, the preoccupation of a particular intellectual generation,[1] but they

remain salient and central in any analysis of South African politics. The race-class tension afflicted opposition in South Africa, particularly from about 1920. The issues of the time are well-known: should racial oppression or class exploitation be the prime target for opposition? What would bring the most effective form of opposition and offer the best prospect for liberation: racial mobilisation or class struggle? These questions in some cases induced hardline posturing around one pole or the other, but more often they gave rise to vacillation, inconsistency, and equivocation. Moreover, movements and organisations with particular tendencies – towards either a class-based or a race-based politics – became compelled to adapt, accommodate and compromise. This process of adaptation forms the main subject of this essay, which will examine various extra-parliamentary opposition movements or bodies: the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) which re-formed itself as the South African Communist Party (SACP) after it was banned by the government in 1950; the Africanists, the early African National Congress Youth League (CYL), and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC); the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM); and the African National Congress (ANC). Each of these engaged in political and ideological manoeuvring to find a way round the race-class dilemma. It was the ANC that proved most adept in transcending, bridging (perhaps evading?) the tension between the two tendencies.

1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEFT

The history of the CPSA and SACP over a period of almost 80 years, from its inception to the present, is characterised by constant vacillation and compromise, underlining the enormous difficulty in pursuing a 'pure' class politics in a racially oppressive society divided along colour lines. The CPSA was founded in 1921 with the firm aim of building non-racial working-class solidarity, but it immediately came up against the reality of a racially divided working-class. The party placed itself in an awkward position by supporting the 1922 white miners' strike which had strong racist overtones ('Workers of the World Unite and Fight for White South Africa' was one slogan). In the mid-1920s the party shifted its focus to black labour organisation, as it continued to debate whether black or

white labour could form the most likely working-class vanguard.[2] Then, in 1928 the CPSA adopted the 'Native Republic' thesis, prioritising the national democratic revolution ahead of the struggle for socialism, only to change direction again when the apparent collapse of capitalism seemed to revive the short-term prospects of socialism. So, during the great depression the CPSA tried to organise workers across the colour line, but came up against the reluctance of white workers to participate in interracial working-class action. For a while, during the mid-1930s, the view that white labour had revolutionary potential – reasserted within the party by members like Solly Sachs and Bill Andrews – again received serious consideration. But white workers continued to reject interracial cooperation, unwilling to sacrifice their relatively privileged position as a labour aristocracy.[3]

Although some internal debate continued, the CPSA was from the 1930s increasingly forced to follow directives from Moscow. In the early 1940s the prospects for black labour organisation and action in South Africa were good, as the country experienced both war-time industrial growth and a skilled labour shortage brought on by the enlistment of many white workers for military service. But the CPSA's ability to mobilise black workers at this time was compromised by Moscow's insistence that the party do nothing to endanger the allied war effort which was so vital to the survival of the Soviet Union.

The history of the CPSA from 1921 till its formal dissolution in 1950 suggests that the potential for pursuing a genuine non-racial working-class struggle was extremely limited, given the realities of the South African racial order. The way out of this predicament seemed to be to defer the quest for socialism by subordinating it to the struggle for national liberation. This had been the essential thinking behind the 'Native Republic' thesis, and it would continue to inform the strategy and policy of the party when it reconstituted itself as the SACP after 1953. It was an approach that required not only adaptation – compromising fundamental principles – but also alliance with organisations that would normally be dismissed as bourgeois and reformist.

The pragmatists gained the upper hand in the underground SACP during the early 1950s. A

huge theoretical gulf separated the ultra-nationalist, anti-communist Africanists, who were prominent in the CYL from the mid-1940s, from communists committed to the class struggle. Yet by the early 1950s there was something of a rapprochement between the two tendencies. A section of the SACP, based mainly in the Transvaal, favoured closer relations with the African nationalist movement. This necessitated a theoretical compromise – manifested in the 'Colonialism of a Special Type' (CST) thesis and the associated two-stage strategy which prioritised the national democratic revolution and deferred the struggle for socialism to a later stage. This was a compromise. It was an attempt to resolve the theoretical race-class dilemma, and to build a rapport with former Youth Leaguers, like Mandela and Sisulu, who were gaining influence within the ANC. It was also premised on the assumption that the working-class would take control of the national struggle, given that the black middle-class, stunted by racial oppression, was so small.[4]

Through the rest of the century the SACP maintained its politics of alliance and compromise. It continued to work closely with the ANC, and indeed, some say that it exercised undue influence over the latter.[5] Whatever, SACP theorists made a crucial input into the strategic planning of the alliance, continuing to stress the primacy of the national democratic struggle. Overlapping membership at the top echelons of the two organisations became more evident. Before the 1990s, ideological tensions within the alliance were kept in check by the shared objective of overthrowing the apartheid regime. In the post-apartheid era these tensions have been less easily contained.

A few years ago Joe Slovo claimed that the Communist Party had been 'the undisputed pioneers of genuine non-racial political organisation' in South Africa, as well as 'pioneers of a vision of non-racial democracy', having demanded majority rule as far back as 1929, long before the ANC was to make such a demand.[6] It may well be that the party can be credited with such a foresighted vision. However the claim does not stand up to an examination of the practical realities that constantly constrained and undermined non-racial political action. The party's commitment to non-racialism never won it any mass support, and its membership level always remained relatively low. It did not put out a message that carried mass appeal, and it was too inclined to indulge in abstract theorising. The party was further constrained by directives from Moscow. But most of all it could not successfully bridge or transcend the theoretical and practical dimensions of the race-class divide. Non-racial working-class struggle never got off the ground: it was well-nigh impossible in the South African context. This failure forced a reassessment of principles and strategy, leading to departures from the party of members who maintained their faith in a commitment to non-racialism as an article of faith. Constant reassessment, in turn, resulted in vacillation. As Allison Drew has put it, 'aside from its long-term emphasis on trade union work, the Party has hardly been characterised by continuity of policy or methods, which have swung back and forth in response to the zigzags of international communist politics and domestic political pressures'.[7] To gain any political leverage the party ultimately had to piggy-back on to the nationalist movement, and to accept the ideological compromises that this involved.

Other movements which have attempted to pursue a non-racial, class-oriented politics in South Africa have generally been confined to the sidelines, much more so than the Communist Party. This has been the case particularly with Trotskyist organisations, whose marginalisation was exacerbated by their own internal conflicts and factionalism. The first Trotskyist organisation to be established in South Africa was the Lenin Club, founded in Cape Town in 1933, but soon to divide into factions the following year. The thrust of the Trotskyist position at this time was to reject the CPSA's 'Native Republic' thesis on the grounds that it subordinated the class struggle to the national struggle and excluded the possibility of united, non-racial, working-class action.[8]

The Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), founded in 1943, has often been referred to as a Trotskyist organisation, but in fact it was not so. The NEUM maintained a firm commitment to the principle of non-racialism, rejecting the notion of race as an artificial construct. In practice, though, its membership was largely coloured. It also insisted on the principle of non-collaboration – non-participation in any government-created structure or institution. This was a recipe for inaction.

Furthermore, while the NEUM stressed the role of the working-class, the movement itself largely comprised members of the coloured elite. It never involved itself in working-class organisation; and its Ten-Point Programme prioritised liberal democratic demands over any kind of socialist agenda.[9]

2. THE AFRICANISTS AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ORGANISATIONS

A 'purist politics', premised on the principle of non-racialism and/or class analysis, seems to have made little headway for much of the 20th century. What, then, can be said about the record of movements that mobilised explicitly on racial lines, building racial solidarity, rejecting both interracial cooperation and the politics of class? Three organisations/movements require consideration here: the CYL, PAC and BCM. It will be argued that these political tendencies which rested on race-based analysis and racial mobilisation did, indeed, have a significant appeal at certain moments. However, the impact tended to be short term, and a racialised oppositional politics proved to be difficult to sustain. Just as the Communist Party adapted its class strategy to accommodate the realities of racial oppression, so did these movements have to adjust their race-based approach to account for class oppression.

Anton Lembede was the key figure behind the early CYL – established by youthful activists to challenge their elders in the ANC in 1944 – and its first leader. He ardently championed an Africanist ideology. This rested on the assumption that all Africans – defined to exclude those whose ancestors originated from outside Africa, especially Europeans and Asians – comprised a single nationality. Pride in this shared nationality would engender African unity and solidarity, essential prerequisites for effective mass organisation and action. Lembede accordingly rejected the politics of non-racialism and multi-racialism, both of which would dilute racial solidarity and undermine Africans' capacity for concerted, militant political action. He similarly dismissed Marxism, first because its class analysis divided rather than united Africans; second, because it was an alien ideology imported from outside Africa; and third, because its chief exponents in South Africa were white.[10]

Lembede died in 1947, at the age of 33. His impact and legacy was considerable. He came to the fore at a time when the ANC itself was in the doldrums, and both he and fellow Youth Leaguers injected a new energy and militancy into the nationalist movement. This gained expression in campaigns of passive resistance against the imposition of apartheid by the National Party government in the 1950s. However, Lembede's 'pure', uncompromising brand of African nationalism would not be sustained. Lembede's successor as leader of the CYL, A.P. Mda, was less intransigent in his nationalism and more open to socialist thought. He argued that socialism should be a goal of the nationalist movement; and he saw that the growing African working-class would have to be a primary constituency for mobilisation.[11]

Moreover in the late 1940s there was a thaw in the cool relationship between the CYL and the communists. When J.B. Marks, a Communist Party member, was elected president of the Transvaal ANC in 1950 he was supported by the CYL, largely because he was adopting a more militant political stance. Mandela also softened his initially hostile attitude towards communists, realising there was scope for cooperation and an exchange of ideas between the two tendencies.[12] However, this apparent rapprochement did not remove all tension between the Africanists, the ANC, and the communists. Africanists continued to resent the seemingly dominant role of whites in the SACP, and suspected that these whites were beginning to dominate the ANC. Africanists were also critical of the Freedom Charter, particularly because it failed to state explicitly that conquered and confiscated land would be restored to the people.[13] Such discontents prompted the Africanist breakaway from the ANC and the founding of the PAC in 1959.

The PAC has generally been characterised as a fiercely Africanist, nationalist organisation that was hostile to foreign influences, both to alien ideologies and to people deemed to be outsiders. This, though, is too simple a characterisation. Although Robert Sobukwe, the first PAC leader, recognised African nationalism as being the instrument and engine of liberation, he saw Africanism only as a means to an end, for in his thinking the future, liberated South Africa would be a non-racial society. Indeed his views on race were progressive. He believed that there was only one race, the human race,

and thus rejected the multiracialism of the Congress Alliance as a kind of democratic apartheid. Moreover Sobukwe was open to socialist thought, stating, at the launch of the PAC, his preference for a socialist economy.[14] Sobukwe set a tone, and in the years that followed the banning of the PAC in 1960 the organisation's hostility to foreign ideologies steadily diminished. From 1964 the PAC looked more and more towards China. This was mainly for material support, but Maoism increasingly crept into PAC rhetoric.[15] As Karis and Gerhart have noted, 'socialist ideas and Marxism-Leninism with a Maoist gloss won growing acceptance, given the PAC's opposition to the Soviet-supported ANC-Communist Party alliance, and China's support for the PAC, especially during its early years in exile'.[16]

It would be a mistake to attach too much significance to the PAC's apparent ideological shift from a resolute nationalism towards a vaguely formulated socialism. After all, through much of its history the PAC lacked ideological coherence. The internal quarrels and factionalism that bedevilled the organisation militated against any clear formulation of policy. However, the history of the Africanist tradition in South Africa does underline how the race-class conundrum consistently impinged upon extra-parliamentary opposition politics. The 'pure' Africanist nationalism of Lembede could not be sustained. The message had appeal and exerted some influence in opposition circles. But the countervailing tendency of class analysis and socialism was too strong to be spurned, especially as the PAC's main support base lay among impoverished, marginalised communities. Once again we see how the race-class tension necessitated ideological adaptation and manoeuvring.

There are obvious parallels – and differences – between the history of Africanism and the BCM in South Africa. Both stressed the importance of psychological liberation as the prerequisite for building racial solidarity and unity, which in turn was deemed to be essential for effective political organisation and action. Moreover, the BCM, like the Africanists, would discover that a political and ideological approach built purely upon a presumed racial identity and consciousness would prove difficult to sustain.

During the years of Steve Biko's leadership, from 1969 to 1977, the BCM concentrated its energy on racial mobilisation, striving for black unity. It defined blackness not according to any biological notion of race, but in terms of the common oppression experienced to a greater or lesser extent by all people of colour. However, the aim of this racial mobilisation was to achieve the short-term goal of building a united opposition, for the BCM did not envisage race or colour having the same kind of significance after liberation.

Biko, like Lembede before him, rejected class analysis. He criticised those whites who 'by dragging all sorts of red herrings across our paths ... tell us that the situation is a class struggle'.[17] The BCM believed that racial oppression was a more pervasive and destructive force, and a more immediate concern, than the economic exploitation of black people. Fostering class consciousness could undermine the endeavour to build racial solidarity and assertiveness. Indeed, Biko and the BCM paid more attention to cultural matters than to economic issues, and the movement formulated only a vague economic policy derived from an idealised notion of precolonial African communalism. Furthermore, the BCM's lack of interest in class mobilisation was manifested in the failure of its trade union wing, the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU), to make any headway. BAWU largely ignored bread-and-butter worker issues, and was hardly involved at all in the growing strike activity of the early 1970s.[18]

After the government banned Black Consciousness (BC) organisations in 1977, the movement reconstituted itself with the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) in 1978. At much the same time the single-minded emphasis on race was coming to be questioned within the BCM. A grouping within the movement argued that the goal of psychological empowerment through racial assertiveness had largely been achieved, gaining concrete expression in the 1976 uprising. Marxism should therefore be no longer shunned but rather incorporated into BC thinking. So Azapo's manifesto contained new elements: the assimilation of class analysis, with a stress on the role of the black working-class; a central place for the trade union movement; and the vision of a socialist future for South Africa. More and more the BCM's historic emphasis

on race came to be infused with socialist rhetoric. Blacks were described as 'a race of workers'; and South Africa's system of oppression and exploitation was redefined as 'racial capitalism'.[19]

This coalescence of BC ideology and class analysis gained further momentum with the founding of the National Forum in June 1983. This was a loose alliance of BC bodies, headed by Azapo, and radical socialist organisations, with the Cape Action League at the forefront. The Forum issued its 'Azanian Manifesto', in which socialist principles were more apparent than any strong BC influence. The black working class was recognised as the driving force of the struggle; and a 'socialist Azania' was envisaged, 'where the interests of the workers shall be paramount through worker control of the means of production, distribution and exchange'.[20]

However, the struggle would still have to be pursued on the basis of racial mobilisation and solidarity, entailing the continued exclusion of whites from participation.

The National Forum represented a merging of radical nationalist and socialist groupings. It stressed socialist principles and objectives, while continuing to recognise the salience of race as a potentially unifying agency in the pursuit of the struggle. The Forum can be seen as another attempt to bridge the political and ideological race-class divide through a process of compromise, accommodation and adaptation. Even so, the Forum was still characterised by ideological rigidity, rejecting any alliance with those who did not adhere fully to its socialist principles and renouncing any negotiation or compromise with the ruling regime. The Forum thus tended to be exclusivist, failing to build a broad following and alienating some potential supporters who might have provided funds and other resources.

Indeed, the Forum's impact was very limited, in contrast to that of its competitor, the United Democratic Front (UDF), which adhered to the principles of the Freedom Charter (which had been drawn up by the ANC and allied congress organisations in 1956).[21] And Azapo came to be increasingly sidelined politically during the 1980s when the ANC/UDF were clearly in the forefront. How, then, had the latter political tendency managed to resolve the race-class dilemma?

3. THE CONGRESS TRADITION

Throughout its history the ANC has studiously avoided adopting rigid ideological stances that were either race-based or class-oriented. Before the 1950s the ANC drew its main support from the African elite, whose interests the organisation was inclined to represent. It largely steered clear of working-class struggles. Moreover, while in practice the ANC remained an exclusively African organisation at this time, it generally eschewed racial mobilisation as a political strategy, notwithstanding the Africanism of the CYL in the 1940s.

From the 1950s the ANC increasingly operated as a 'broad church', building alliances, accommodating different political tendencies, and refraining from a rigid racial exclusivism. The Congress Alliance of the 1950s reflected the ANC's multi-racialism of the time. The Freedom Charter was sufficiently vague and idealistic, and open to such varied interpretations, that it could satisfy (and dissatisfy) different ideological groupings. There was growing cooperation between the ANC and SACP; and the latter's two-stage theory was the kind of compromise that served the ANC's desire to be an inclusive organisation that would not drive away supporters by defining itself too rigidly.

The ANC became more and more preoccupied with promoting activism and furthering effective resistance than with maintaining ideological rectitude. As Anthony Marx has put it,

> 'The Charterists defined the nation to include all South Africans who did or could be convinced to oppose apartheid, united by direct experience of oppression, pervasive images, and symbols, in what Weber generalised as a 'specific sentiment of solidarity'. Rather than aim toward changing ideas about being black, the Charterists tried to mobilise active resistance. Strategy replaced ideology as the main concern.'[22]

This approach was reflected in decisions taken at the ANC's Morogoro Conference in 1969, when it was resolved that non-Africans could become members of the ANC (but could not sit on its national executive). At the same time the ANC reaffirmed both its commitment to the Freedom Charter, and its prioritisation of the national liberation struggle.[23] However, in accommodating different ideological tendencies and a racially diverse membership, the

ANC made itself vulnerable to internal discord and factionalism. Yet as Luli Callinicos has recently argued, the leadership style of Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC from 1967 to 1990, did much to paper over the cracks within the ANC. Tambo was able to balance different tendencies with some skill. Tambo himself was a Christian, but he had great respect for communists. He accepted the SACP's stress on class, but always placed emphasis on the national struggle. His own ideological position was not clearly defined or articulated, and indeed, it has been suggested that it was precisely his tendency to fudge issues that enabled him to hold the ANC together.[24]

This inclusivity also characterised the politics of the UDF in the 1980s. The UDF strove for a broad, united opposition, rather than for ideological coherence. Its emphasis was on mass mobilisation and action. To this end it built a multi-class alliance. While the working class played a key role in many of its affiliated bodies, the UDF encouraged sympathetic business people to lend their support, and its own leadership was largely middle-class. As a consequence, the UDF had to avoid class rhetoric and the formulating of a clear-cut economic policy as this would have alienated one or other of its constituencies. The movement sustained its fragile unity around the common struggle against apartheid.[25]

4. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PAST FOR THE PRESENT

What conclusions can be drawn from this broad overview? First, those movements that espoused an ideology based on race and resorted to racial mobilisation achieved some short-term success but could not sustain their momentum over a longer period. Both the CYL and the BCM emerged in similar contexts, at times when extra-parliamentary opposition was either moribund (1930s and early 1940s) or heavily suppressed (mid-1960s). Each managed to revitalise opposition, injecting new energy, bringing in some fresh ideas, and helping to stimulate a more militant mood. However, Africanist ideology was never able to win wide support within the ANC, especially during the 1950s when there was a growing rapprochement with the SACP. And the PAC, the eventual embodiment of Africanism, made little headway, largely because of its own internal divi-

sions and organisational failings. The BCM also faded in the post-Biko era as organisations like Azapo were pushed to the sidelines. The Africanists and the BCM came to realise that a purist race-based ideology that ignored or rejected class considerations would have limited appeal. So both tried eventually to weave socialist rhetoric into their ideology, but still failed to mobilise significant working-class support. Indeed, this was the great failure of these movements – their inability to harness class analysis to the strategy of racial mobilisation so as to draw mass popular support.

The history of opposition before 1990 suggests, though, that the pursuit of a class-oriented politics also had its pitfalls. This is well illustrated in the history of the CPSA/SACP. The CPSA had soon been forced to abandon its commitment to non-racial working-class unity in the face of racial divisions within the working class, and to accept that class struggle could not take precedence in a society where racial oppression was the most urgent political issue. From the time it adopted the 'Native Republic' thesis in 1928, the party thus compromised on its political goals, but continued to abjure racial mobilisation as a political strategy. For much of its history the party was confounded by the race-class dilemma, resulting in vacillation and inconsistency. The party failed to generate significant popular support, and achieved influence only by entering alliances or engaging in a more covert politics.

The divergent imperatives of race and class could give rise to hard-line posturing around one pole or the other (the early CYL and BCM around race, for instance) but more often led to fudging or political accommodation. It was the ANC who, more than other groupings, mastered the politics of adaptation, equivocation, and compromise. This was both a strength and a weakness for the organisation. On the one hand, the ANC's 'broad church' style enabled it to expand its support base, as it could accommodate varying political tendencies within its ranks. On the other hand, this style created the potential for internal dissension and division. Divisions there have been, for instance over the Freedom Charter, armed struggle, the role of whites, economic policy, among other things, but for the most part these have been transcended, contained or suppressed.

For much of the 20th century one unifying

factor was the shared hatred of racial domination. Surely, therefore, in the post-apartheid era the internal divisions could be expected to become more real and pronounced, with the race-class tension rising to the surface? So far it seems as though the ANC has managed to hold the different tendencies together by continuing its political balancing act. As Howard Barrell has put it:

> 'To the extent that Mbeki has engaged with his party, it has been to tinker, manage, balance its various factions and, occasionally, to harangue ... One result of this ... is that the party continues to be most things to most people: capitalist to some, socialist-inclined to others; Africanist to some, a paragon of non-racial virtue to others.'[26]

Thus the ANC's secretary general, Kgalema Motlanthe, was recently able to make a vigorous anti-capitalist statement that was thoroughly out of tune with the party's own economic policy.[27]

Many of the old debates, divisions and ambivalence associated with the race-class tension have continued into the 1990s and beyond, albeit in a different post-apartheid, post–Cold War, global economic context. But the politics of race still seems to outweigh the politics of class. The persistence of racism in post-apartheid South Africa excites more media attention and arouses more anger, official and popular, than the maldistribution of wealth and continuing, worsening poverty. In political discourse the much-used but ill-defined concept of 'transformation' generally means changing the top personnel rather than transforming the structures of society. Similarly the term 'black empowerment' more often seems to mean middle-class advancement rather than upliftment of the deprived.

CONCLUSION

So what are the implications of all this for the present? The central argument of this paper has been that the countervailing imperatives of race and class afflicted opposition politics for much of the 20th century. The legacy of this affliction has not disappeared in the post-apartheid era. The ANC has maintained its accommodationist political style in an attempt to contain these imperatives and the divisions that arise from them. This is not to say that the present political dispensation is bound by the past (history-as-bondage), but rather to stress that there are significant continuities between the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. I agree wholeheartedly with Roger Southall's sentiment: 'that the way forward for democracy and opposition in South Africa lies in transition to an issue-oriented and ideologically based politics in which racial and ethnic affinities play a backstage role'.[28] But I remain doubtful about the prospects of this transition occurring in the short term. The key issues of social and economic policy which should produce an 'ideologically based politics' seem at present to be debated mainly within the governing Tripartite Alliance. But the ANC's 'broad church' style prevents these issues coming too much to the fore. It is as though the ANC has in effect co-opted its potentially most challenging opponents, the SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). Indeed, the main opposition parties – the Democratic Party (DP), the New National Party (NNP), and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – are in closer agreement with the ANC on its neo-liberal economic policy than are the SACP and Cosatu.

An issue-based politics – and a politics in which there would be a greater correspondence between parties and class interests – would require a drastic political realignment (for instance, ANC + DP + NNP + IFP vs SACP + Cosatu + PAC). One does not have to be a soothsayer to say that this is not going to happen.

ENDNOTES

1) See, for instance, Aletta Norval's comment that 'The race-class debate between liberals and neo-Marxists ... seems antiquated from the point of view of theoretical developments in the 1980s and 1990s associated with the rubrics of post-structuralism, deconstruction and post-coloniality'. Aletta J. Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 59.

2) Allison Drew, Events were breaking above their heads: Socialism in South Africa, 1921-1950, *Social Dynamics,* Vol.17, No.1 (1991), p.57.

3) Ibid., pp. 59-60.

4) David Everatt, Alliance Politics of a Special Type: The Roots of the ANC/SACP Alliance, 1950-1954, *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol.18, No.1 (1992), pp. 20-7, 32-9; Thomas K. Ranuga, *The New South Africa and the Socialist Vision*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1996), p. 42.

5) See, for instance, Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid* (London: James Currey, 1992).

6) Joe Slovo, Beyond the stereotype: the SACP in the past, present and future, in Ian Liebenberg, Fiona Lortan, Bobby Nel, Gert Van der Westhuizen (eds.), *The Long March,* (Pretoria: Haum, 1994).

7) Drew, *Socialism in South Africa,* pp. 51-2.

8) Robert Fine & Dennis Davis, *Beyond Apartheid,* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1990), p. 62.

9) Ibid., pp. 68-73. See also Bill Nasson, The Unity Movement Tradition: Its Legacy in Historical Consciousness, in Joshua Brown, Patrick Manning, Karin Shapiro, Jon Wiener (eds.), *History from South Africa,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 147-9.

10) Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 51-67, and Robert R. Edgar and Luyanda ka Msumza (eds.), *Freedom in our Lifetime,* (Athens: Ohio University Press), 1996, pp. 21-9.

11) Gerhart, *Black Power,* pp. 130-2.

12) Ranuga, *The New South Africa,* p. 42.

13) Ibid., p. 47; Gerhart, *Black Power,* p. 165.

14) Ranuga, *The New South Africa,* pp. 79-84.

15) Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945,* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 309-10; Tom Lodge, The Pan Africanist Congress, 1959-1990, in Liebenberg et al (eds.), *The Long March,* p. 118.

16) T. Karis and G. Gerhart (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge:* vol. 5: Nadir and Resistance, 1964-79, (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1997), p. 294.

17) David Hirschmann, The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, *Journal of Modern African Studies,* Vol. 28, No.1 (1990), p. 7.

18) Anthony W. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 42-8, 58.

19) Ibid., pp. 74,87; Hirschmann, *Black Consciousness Movement,* pp. 11-13.

20) Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* p. 278.

21) Ibid., pp. 117-20, 129; Neville Alexander, The National Forum, in Liebenberg et al (eds.), *The Long March,* pp. 199-204.

22) Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* pp. 238-9.

23) Ranuga, *The New South Africa,* pp. 57-9.

24) Luli Callinicos, Oliver Tambo and the Politics of Class, Race and Ethnicity in the African National Congress of South Africa, *African Sociological Review,* Vol.3, No.1 (1999), pp. 143-8.

25) Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* pp. 14-15, 120-7; Keith Gottschalk, United Democratic Front, 1983-1991: rise, impact and consequences, in Liebenberg et al (eds.), *The Long March,* pp. 190-2.

26) Howard Barrell, Year of lost chances for Mbeki, *Mail and Guardian,* 2-8 June 2000, p. 4.

27) At a May Day rally Motlanthe called on union members to 'intensely hate capitalism and engage in a struggle against it'. *Mail and Guardian,* 12-18 May 2000.

28) Roger Southall, Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems (paper presented at conference on 'Opposition in South Africa's New Democracy', June 2000), p. 15.

Race, Democracy and Opposition in South African Politics: As Other a Way as Possible

Gerhard Maré

Race, as racism and as racialism, has unsurprisingly continued to plague South African political life. At the same time a commitment to non-racialism has been given little content. In the absence of a clear policy directed towards such a desirable state of affairs, accusations of racism and pervasive race thinking stand in the way of full democracy and effective opposition. In addition, it allows the way for race populism in political mobilisation.

There is the familiar tale of a peasant who is stopped by a traveller in a large car and asked the way to the capital. 'Well,' she replies, after pondering the matter for a while, 'if I were you, I wouldn't start from here.'[1]

'How do you think we should approach the topic of race in this country (the United States)? Clearly in some other way – in as other a way as possible – because if ever there was an example of something not working, this is surely it.'[2]

1. DEMOCRACY

How do we begin to address the central issues of contemporary South African society (and do we agree on what these are)? How do we assess what implications these have for democracy and opposition, once we have agreed upon them – especially in a society such as South Africa, which is confronted by widespread poverty, massive inequality and unemployment, and what can broadly be described as 'multi-culturalism' (or issues of social identity, centrally that of 'race')? This writer believes that we do have to start with democracy, for that is, after all, what the struggle in South Africa was about: the establishment of a non-racial and non-sexist democracy, through a 'national democratic revolution'.

The theorists Ernesto Laclau and Ronald Aronson, both of whom have commented on democracy in South Africa, are useful referents in this context. Laclau argues for the central importance of democracy in providing direction to social change in any society. He also introduces the issue of social identity and allows us, specifically through his protégée Aletta Norval, to introduce 'race' into this discussion.

In comments during a discussion on the possibility of the achievement of socialism in South Africa, Laclau argued:

'The democratic revolution is more fundamental, it is a larger programme than socialism, which is one of its moments. I see an arch of democratic revolution that starts 200 years ago with the French Revolution and expands, pushing the principles of equality and democracy into wider and wider social relations. Socialism was the attempt to expand the principle of equality to the economic sphere – which is why I call it an internal moment of the wider democratic revolution. With the new social movements of our time, we see the principle of equality spread to other areas of society – to the relations between sexes, between races, between people with different sexual orientations and so on.'[3]

Laclau argues that socialism can no longer be thought of as the sole prerogative of the working class, nor can democracy. Society is much more complex than the progressive simplification into two fundamental social categories and

groups of social agents expected by some marxists. Within this complexity it can no longer be just for the working class and an intelligentsia or state-socialist bureaucracy to speak on behalf of 'society' and of 'progress'. Instead we should recognise a multitude of subject positions such as ethnic groups, women, religious groups and so on, each with their own, at times incompatible, demands and calls on social rights and for participation.

The problem that Laclau addresses elsewhere is what is to hold these 'subject positions' together?[4] What is to be the new universal that does not suffer the same fate or carry the same dangerous tendencies as previous mobilising and justificatory 'meta-narratives' such as a 'civilising function', 'modernisation', 'the historical duty of the working class' (and of those who assumed the role of speaking for the working class!), and anti-communism? 'Democracy' is a strong contender as a universal, to provide hegemony for particular struggles, a 'sense of belonging to a community larger than each of the particular groups in question'. Without such an organising principle extreme particularism becomes the 'universal', or a 'self-apartheid' exists, and the potential for 'paralysing political effects' increases. The role for democracy exists, paradoxically, only because it is never fully achievable. As Laclau claims:

> 'If democracy is possible, it is because the universal has no necessary body and no necessary content; different groups, instead compete among themselves to temporarily give their particularisms a function of universal representation. ... It is this final failure of society to constitute itself as society – which is the same as the failure of constituting difference as difference – which makes the distance between the universal and the particular unbridgeable and, as a result, burdens concrete social agents with that impossible task which makes democratic interaction achievable.'[5]

While abstract, the value of this approach lies in the inclusion of spheres other than the political. They are integrated (but also allowed to exist separately)[6] through a wider concept of democracy than that allowed by the privileging of either the market or the working class as exclusive driving agents of social change, and certainly wider than parliamentary politics. As Laclau puts it, 'these (new) antagonisms (in

contemporary societies) do not come together in a social entity called class'.[7] While these antagonisms are not resolved through parliamentary politics, such formal processes are essential for the existence of democracy. It is as symbol of the centrality of democratic political processes, as guardian of fair allocation of resources, as restraint on the powerful, as interrogator of what might otherwise be hidden processes, that parliamentary politics and a legitimate state play a central role. Such a state also ensures that the 'rules of the game' of democracy, even in minimal form, are reproduced to enable competition amongst groups.[8] The task of defending such a wider notion of democracy – for instance one attached to versions of socialism – is even more difficult than the constitutional guarantee of elections, as it relates to a pervasive ethos of the elements of democracy, and not just to the electoral process that so easily sheds the disabled, the poor, illiterate, the unorganised, rural and so on.

A similar expanded position on democracy, also starting with questions around and a commitment to a project called socialism, is taken by Ron Aronson, who is an American political philosopher.[9] He argues that the basic elements within what is sometimes derogatorily described as 'bourgeois liberal democracy', are the essential minimum which has to be established and safeguarded within any democratic society. However, in addition, the struggle should be for what he calls democratic socialism, deliberately undefined (for reasons in large part due to the collapse of 'communist' projects in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but also because this is a project that has to involve people at all levels and in a multitude of situations). He chooses this approach for the stress it places on democracy as an essential element in any project of social transformation, and on socialism for 'the very fact that no one [any longer] knows exactly what it means', demanding that it 'be debated, created, described and explored, in theory and practice'.[10] It is not possible to speak for socialism unproblematically.

There are different ways in which this wider project of democratisation can be sabotaged. There are direct exclusions from participation, such as that engineered by apartheid, with its fragmented citizenship, justified through 'separate development', its gross misallocation of

resources, and abuse of power; or through the crude suspension of democratic rights (coups, dictatorship, military rule, and so on). Or there can be indirect exclusions or limitations: such as through illiteracy, poverty, some of the effects of globalisation, economic restructuring, but also through social discrimination and essentialisms, such as sexism, 'traditional' practices and values, and racism/racialism. This last mentioned aspect of contemporary South African society is the main concern here.

A point of entry is provided by Aletta Norval's study of apartheid[11] and its implications for a post-apartheid South Africa.[12] She writes that social identities are located, not in any essentialism but in the distinction of 'us' from an 'other' or from 'others'.[13] Such an approach rejects primordialism or economistic arguments for the class determination of ethnicity, the social identity she deals with. This argument could also be extended to discount the perception of racism and race thinking as having no existence, except as the ideological reflection or in the service of class power. These boundaries of distinction, located within historical moments, are, therefore, of great importance in understanding ethnic (and racial) identities. What would subvert the rigid and socially extensive boundaries of apartheid would be an insistence on 'non-racialism', allowing the political space within which the particular struggles within the democratic universal could take place:

> '... the discourse of non-racialism has the potential of acting as ... a new imaginary in which the valourisation of closure and purity of identity characteristic of apartheid can be countered without simply supplanting it with a new homogenising unity. This is so for two reasons. The notion of non-racialism, first, contains *at least potentially* a questioning of purity as the basis of identification ... It stresses not the givenness and naturalness of forms of identification, but their openness and fluidity ... Second, non-racialism also provides a horizon of identification which moves beyond divisions, *towards* a universalising discourse on unity.'[14] [Emphases added.]

As with Laclau's argument on the non-attainability of democracy, so too non-racialism, if the first notion is taken seriously, 'will not be able to transform itself into a discourse of homogeneity ... a vision of universality'. As such, Norval concludes that insofar 'as non-racialism is engaged with continually, as a finite political project, it offers a space of identification in which we can live in the tension between the universal and the particular. This is the space proper to a radically democratic and plural post-apartheid South Africa'.[15] A stirring call, and apparently in line with the 'unbreakable thread' within the struggle against apartheid,[16] and, therefore, apparently eminently achievable, located as it is in the constitution as well.

The constitution that was inaugurated in 1996 established a liberal democracy, with equality of citizenship, an enormous achievement after centuries of colonialism, segregation and apartheid. It affirms in the preamble 'that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity', and states as a founding provision the value of 'non-racialism and non-sexism'. In the Bill of Rights it is written that neither the state nor any person may 'unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly' on grounds such as race, colour, gender, sex, 'unless it is established that the discrimination is fair'. In addition, freedom of expression is curtailed expressly in the case of 'advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm'.

However, the practical realisation of the ANC's decades-long commitment to non-racialism – also now a goal of the new society as contained in the constitution – cannot be achieved through statement or claim. It needs coherent, concerted and coordinated policy and practice. This is where the writer has previously argued that both the inadequacy of the notion of non-racialism in the history of struggle (as articulated by activists and contained in theory) and in present political practice, deny the probability of such a project as that proposed by Norval.[17] The failure of such a deliberately executed project in the past, contradictory practices and discourses, and the effective peripheralisation into the obviousness (the common sense) of largely rhetorical claims, still stands in the way of addressing the issue now. It effectively maintains the boundaries of apartheid, but now as mirror image, with the appearance of the opposite, of satisfactory resolution. In addition, even in the field of apartheid's ethnic policy it

could be argued that the apparent defusing of the most important ethnic mobilisations (those of Afrikaners and some Zulu) is more a question of buying off a leadership than the result of deliberate policies.

2. NON-RACIALISM: NOT STRONG ENOUGH

So what is 'in as other a way as possible'? Sometimes it is necessary to restate the obvious, to remind ourselves that the past lives on in more than the simplistic ways in which it is usually utilised and reconstructed. Sometimes a reminder of where we wished to be is also necessary to deal with the present and where we are now heading. Memory is shaped by power, and the present is never without manipulation of the past. Yet those memories are what we are. The obvious, then.

South Africa was a racist, but also a racialist society. That distinction is important to the argument. Addressing racism is not to address the basis on which racism rests, namely racialism. And racialisation is not the same as racism. When I use the term *race* it will be to refer to the outcome of what Miles describes as the process of 'signification'.[18] It involves two selections: first, 'of biological or somatic characteristics in general as a means of classification and categorisation'; and, second, selecting specific bodily characteristics 'as signifying a supposed difference between human beings'. A third attribution could be added, that of attaching specific cultural traits or abilities or inabilities to the races previously signified. Appiah's notion of *racialism* then applies: namely racialism is a term for the belief and acceptance:

> hat there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into small sets of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race ...'[19]

Within this perspective, *non-racialism* should mean the rejection of racialism, of the existence of races as socially meaningful categories, and not just *non-racism* or *multi-racialism* as it is actually used just about all the time.[20] It is in the form of racialism that *race thinking* operates most extensively. *Racialisation* arises out of the prior existence of racialism, as the process of interpreting events, actions, motivations, and so on, in common sense race terms,

even if these are not appropriate to the situation. For example, blaming media coverage of corruption involving people who happen to have black skins as being due to subliminal racism; immediately attributing the failure to secure a job to affirmative action policies; attributing driving behaviour to the colour of the driver.

Racialisation is often the first refuge, not unexpectedly in a society such as South Africa's, in order to address the need for making sense of everyday experiences. *Racism* is racialisation of people and attributing negative and/or inferior qualities to people, creating an extreme hierarchy of values of 'us' and of the 'other'. *Racial domination/discrimination* and the like would then refer to practices, policies or systems that employ notions of racially distinct groups to explain or justify those practices.

It should be clear from this brief clarification that racialism (and even racism) does not refer to something that any particular set of people is incapable of. In other words, the practices that flow from racism may well relate directly to power imbalances in society, but this does not exclude the powerless from holding notions that could be called racist (such as in the case of xenophobia, or as exhibited in the dehumanisation of the other in cases of 'ethnic cleansing'). Powerlessness could well be an explanatory factor in certain cases of racism, even if it is much more difficult for the less powerful to act on racist ideas.

Numerous examples can be given of the lack of content given to non-racialism during the apartheid years, and even more of the racialisation of the struggle against white oppression, and not just of the obviousness of racist (or racialist) domination itself. This is the case whether we refer to the 'thesis of colonialism of a special type' (which *inter alia* advocated liberation of black people from colonialism and its effects prior to the establishment of a non-racial society), debates on 'the national question', or on 'the national democratic revolution'. The overall effect, however, as advocated by then African National Congress (ANC) President Oliver Tambo directly, was the mobilisation of black nationalism, a 'black consciousness', against the 'dominance of all white class-fractions'.[21] In this (understandable) perspective, non-racialism was at best multi-racialism, or

the acceptance of races as the fundamental building blocks of society, the four spokes of the wheel of an existing and of a new society. Non-racialism, or the active denial of the existence of objective categories called 'races', was mostly very far from perceptions of the nature of society during the struggle against apartheid, and is now equally far from being achieved. As Appiah writes, 'its (the notion of race) absence simply threatens to leave too vast a discursive void'.[22] An everyday life without the simplifying (and, therefore, comfortable) common sense of the existence of races is beyond easy grasp, and therein lies the power, the reality, of race. How much will we not have to shed, and to explain in alternative ways, if we reject the seeming obviousness of the existence of races and the tremendous 'explanatory' power that that implies! On the other hand, the acceptance of racialism, even while addressing some of the gross manifestations in racism (or, rather, in racist practices), leaves democracy in permanent potential crisis. This would, of course, be the case with all essentialist and rigid notions of social identity, whether religious, ethnic or whatever.

That is why, when the struggle against apartheid was said to have been consistently informed by notions of non-racialism, the race card is still so available to politicians, and why people still largely make racialised choices. This is so for at least three reasons: the first is the obvious relationship between race and class, even though the growth of a black capitalist and of a middle class is one of the most significant deliberate social processes in contemporary South Africa.

The second reason is the predominance of race thinking by *all* citizens, located as all were within the common sense ideological universe of apartheid;[23] and the third is the undoubted extensive continuation of elements of racist thinking and practice, reflecting and reflecting back on racialism.

The terms within which the struggle over power takes place in South Africa, the terms of debate in society, the political 'shaping' of identity, have to be taken seriously in order to advance democracy in all areas. In South Africa the levelling of society is being unquestioningly presented in race terms, removing much of the focus on the increasing inequalities, such as on the consumerism that continues to distinguish

the elite, now including new racialised role models, that co-exists with calls for poverty alleviation.[24] The notion of two 'race' wealth-nations alluded to by President Mbeki, the presentation of black economic empowerment as alleviating poverty, all give the picture that the race wrongs of the past are being acknowledged, and implies that the class wrongs are being addressed simultaneously. It is here that, for example, left criticisms of the government's economic policy, Hein Marais' discussion of the limits to change, and Patrick Bond's arguments around 'elite transition', become relevant in claiming the right to opposition in the democratisation of the economy.[25] Within a racialised political discourse it becomes possible for the economically and socially disadvantaged within race categories to be ignored, whether deliberately or not. In effect, racialisation of the political arena and public discourse affects the wider democratisation of society. It tends to close off demands and debate, and not only on economic policy.

3. RACE AND RACIALISED OPPOSITION
There are other instances where racialisation plays a role in democratic practice; there major aspects can be considered here. First, and most obvious, is the racialised opposition, speaking for racialised or cultural minorities, such as through the (Afrikaner) Freedom Front (FF), but also the ('Indian') Minority Front (MF), and those speaking for racialised groups, as has been the case with 'coloured politics' in the Western and Northern Cape. Second, there is racialisation of opposition, both formal and informal; and, third, racialisation of politics, deliberately or through the interpretations given to such moves by supporters.

First, then, there are the parties that deliberately continued with the fragmentation that characterised politics under apartheid, aiming for support from racialised constituencies and offering to protect their specific 'rights', from separation to simply representing difference. These parties fared badly during the 1999 elections, losing considerable numbers of voters from those attracted during the 1994 vote. The FF of General Constand Viljoen lost six of its nine seats in parliament, and the Afrikaner Eenheidsbeweging (AEB) returned only a single Member of Parliament. Furthermore, despite attempts at a wider appeal and much

money, Louis Luyt's Federal Alliance secured just two seats.

The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), a direct continuation of the bantustan-based Inkatha movement and still overwhelmingly supported by isiZulu-speakers located in KwaZulu-Natal, seems to be a spent force within the electoral process. Its effect is to be felt largely in its odd 'coalition' with the ANC at national and provincial levels, its continued participation in the government, and the ability to disrupt local level political activity in that province through on-going conflict with the ANC. Cultural politics continue through mobilisation of the amakhosi (the chiefs), such as around municipal demarcation. But here too the lines between ANC and IFP are blurred. Indeed, the problem for the IFP (as well as the Pan-Africanist Congress – PAC) is that the ANC has long absorbed whatever they have had to offer as distinguishing features: African nationalism and race politics; seeing the development of a black (read African) bourgeoisie as a central brick in the wall of liberation;[26] foreign investment as the solution to growth and to the unemployment crisis; acceptance of Zulu nationhood under a king, to mention just a few.

Probably the most telling moment of very public crude racist politics since 1994 was when, before the 1999 elections, the editor of the IFP-owned newspaper *Ilanga*, Amos Maphumulo, accused whites and Indians of exploiting black South Africans in the land of their birth, which ironically lost the IFP support from conservative Indian South Africans. The strongest condemnation was, however, reserved for Indians, with Maphumulo wishing for 'a blessed woman who would give birth to Idi Amin' to solve the problem. Of course, everyone in the political establishment distanced themselves from his statements, and he apologised. What was less expected was the confirmation by a range of people, including prominent clergy, of the general prevalence of such sentiments, and the warning that they should be addressed.[27]

The PAC, which enjoys only a minimal parliamentary presence, has featured in public not for racialised politics but for its innovative highlighting of issues (such as corruption, social welfare and medical support for HIV/Aids sufferers) that are usually swept under the carpet by larger parties or dealt with in less imaginative ways. The MF, on the other hand, led by Amichand Rajbansi, has taken refuge with the ANC in one of several unprincipled moves in national politics since 1994. No wonder that the MF came in for criticism from people who were caught off guard when the party they voted for against the ANC should gleefully join it, and be as joyfully accepted into the latter's very broad church! As with the IFP, the reception for the MF has exceeded the bounds of necessity. Both these moves by the ANC reflected, in the only interpretation possible, race thinking as overriding political principles.

For the present, the organised politics of racialised fragmentation should decline in importance, at least as measured through slowly changing support for the largest parties in the formal political process. Reynolds has commented that 'one of the positive signs of democratisation in South Africa is that the largest parties are slowly becoming more ethnically integrated and inclusive at the voter level'.[28] It is ironic, then, that the other factors of the frequent and widespread racialisation of society should show little sign of abating. On the contrary, it seems to be on the increase, and in many spheres such as sport, education, industrial relations, and the recording of data at every level of society. The wider support (reflecting the 'demographics of society') comes not from a steadily non-racialising society, but from deliberately racialised political campaigning and appeals – multiracialism, in effect. For instance, countless bureaucratic forms or documents (and not just those asked for by Employment Equity and Affirmative Action redress requirements) demand 'race', or euphemisms for race, to be indicated. Each of these confirm difference, rather than question or allow flexibility in social identification.

Second, there is the racialisation of existing parties in order to discredit them through labelling. It is probably accurate, within the conceptualisation of racialism suggested above, that such race thinking is a pervasive presence in South Africa, and that, therefore, our actions are frequently informed by such an organising principle of our cognitive universe. In this case it is more accurate to speak of mental pre-cognition, or a cognitive schema, with racialism embedded in language itself, structured into our ways of thinking of the world. An ideology of

racialism, as story of what exists, what is desirable and what is possible, permeates the society.[29] Hence, it is probably accurate to racialise, with a degree of relevance, many actions within the social, political and economic spheres of society in the sense of attributing a relevant motive of racialism (and maybe even racism) to such actions, suggestions, criticisms. However, deliberate and continuous racialisation precludes the possibility of non-racialism, as it is based, in the first instance, on racialism. Furthermore, it certainly serves to silence opposition rather than to advance the cause of non-racialism, especially as such cause remains under-developed and certainly under- or even un-theorised.

The problem faced by the official opposition, the Democratic Party (DP), as well as the New National Party (NNP), is that they carry with them a perceived double burden: first of 'whiteness' in terms of support; and, second, of continuity, through previous participation, with the political structures of the apartheid order. In the case of a significant proportion membership and support, that promises to remain an accurate description (which is exactly where lay the efficacy of the thesis of colonialism of a special type), for some time to come. But it begs the question, each time that it is used, what the implications of such labelling are, and what is meant by it. In the case of participation, this shows a racialised selective application in itself, as the comments above on the IFP and the MF indicate. In these latter cases the politicians, and their supporters have simply been exonerated from the sins of past participation in apartheid institutions due to a shared race identity (specific or 'generic', in the language of the new South Africa), whatever their past scurrilous behaviour.

There are a large number of examples of racialised assault on the DP in terms that disallow it any role in effective parliamentary opposition, and even existence within the political terrain.[30] I will mention only two: the accusation of neo-Nazism, and the synonymity of 'liberalism' and 'racism'. One followed publication of a DP document 'The corruption of transformation', which accused the government of crudely racialising affirmative action policies and in addition advancing largely well-off middle class people connected to the ANC.[31] In response, the ANC's Saki Macozoma both

denied social engineering based on race, and accepted responsibility for a 'targeted redress of racial imbalances', with Tony Leon countering that 'it is immoral and impractical to ... (take) steps that will again entrench race as the central determinant of life chances in South Africa'.[32] What is striking is the way in which Macozoma racialised Leon's replies, by citing the DP's 'opposition to a non-racial democracy' – although, to be fair, both parties toned down their accusations as the interchange later developed.

More strident have been the accusations, emanating vigorously, but certainly not exclusively, from KwaZulu-Natal ANC spokesperson Dumisani Makhaye, that the DP is a neo-Nazi party. It was then quickly taken up by 'political science lecturer at the University of Zululand', Jabu Mziliya, and then in quite rapid succession, at least in the KwaZulu-Natal papers, by Makhaye and, more coherently, by *Daily News* editor Kaizer Nyatsumba.[33] Mziliya mentioned the 'neo-Nazi characteristics emerging within the DP', Leon's 'zeal in racial bigotry', 'scapegoating' by the DP in a way employed by Adolf Hitler against the Jews (in Leon's case the scapegoats were said to range from the NNP's Marthinus van Schalkwyk to Amichand Rajbansi to Winnie Madikizela-Mandela). Mziliya also had criticism for 'Indian Muslims', apparently for supporting the DP. Leon replied by calling Mziliya's contribution 'hate-speech, pure and simple'. Makhaye accused the DP of fighting 'a rearguard action to try and preserve the essentials of apartheid', 'true to its racialistic vision' and then asked rhetorically, 'Whether fascism will not arise in South Africa because of the DP or in spite of it is open to debate' (sic). Finally, we may note Makhaye's use, in the provincial legislature, of a 'play' to draw attention to Leon's Jewishness. It is not clear how this fits with accusations of neo-Nazism, except that it appears that the purpose of labelling over-rides any need for logical consistency.

Use of another couplet-label is similarly relevant. For example, in an interview with Hanlie Retief in *Rapport*, Enoch Sithole, then head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) radio and television news, played the race card against 'white liberals' in the media alleging that Govin Reddy (an 'Indian'), being

'closer to white than to black', was their choice as SABC group executive as he had 'longer hair' than an African candidate! Tony Yengeni, ANC chief whip, employed similarly crude labelling: 'Tony Leon's brand of right-wing liberalism is a clever way of protecting white privilege and racism ...'; 'The new South African racist therefore does not wear an (AWB) uniform ... No, they can come in baggy Italian suits and upper-middle-class English accents'.[34] Readers are also reminded of a heated debate between Human Rights Commission chair Barney Pityana and Professor Dennis Davis in 1996 which, through its very public and relatively long duration, served to make available the 'liberal' label as racist, conservative, and nostalgic for apartheid.

Third, we need to note the mostly unquestioning racialisation of politics by parties which would otherwise claim non-racialism: both the NNP and the ANC, especially in their electoral assault on coloured voters in the Western Cape; all parties in trying to attract Indian South African voters in KwaZulu-Natal; and in some appeals to white voters.[35] This seems to go beyond using such an approach as a deliberate, albeit cynical, tactic, but rather to reflect racialism/race thinking as 'common sense'. A proper study of the 'banal' racialisation of potential supporters, and of all citizens (especially of 'Indian' South Africans), in everyday life, would reveal the absence of any real understanding of 'diversity' with its implied recognition of the fluidity of social identities. What this means is that those racialist social categories remain easily available as political categories for the purposes of mobilisation.

Mbeki racialised class (TV news SABC 3, May 1, 2000) when he observed, 'there are two nations in South Africa, one black and poor, and the other white and relatively well-off'. While this may be true as a rough description, it avoids addressing the government's failure to tackle this issue, and certainly avoids the increasing gap within South Africa between the black rich and the poor, as well as the growing immiseration of the poor. What it silences for the listener and the reader is complexity, process, and class dynamics. What it confirms is race populism.

Laclau argued some years ago that the 'class character of an ideology is given by its form and not by its content'. The form of an ideology consists of 'the principle of articulation of its constituent interpellations'.[36] So nationalism, for example, is not simply a bourgeois mobilising strategy, but has to be analysed within the full articulation with other elements, such as class and gender. Laclau utilises the notion of populism as being located in the 'people/power bloc contradiction', an approach subsequently adapted by John Saul for the African context. Saul argues that the blocs, in colonial situations, are presented within a 'center-periphery contradiction', within which mobilisations as nation or as ethnic group are possible, deliberately denying the validity of class interests and divisions.[37]

In South Africa, it could be argued, the daily reality of apartheid as well as the rather more descriptive than analytical 'theory' of 'colonialism of a special type' ('internal colonialism'), and the more nationalistic version of the 'national democratic revolution', have internalised (to the social formation) and inextricably racialised the contradictions noted by Laclau and Saul. The failure to give content to a commitment to non-racialism, especially within the 'race-class' debate, has left the deliberate employment of racialised mobilisation during the years of struggle available to politicians.[38] This means that a race populism remains a real possibility in contemporary South Africa, even a probability as one response to growing resentment at the inability to fulfil demands for redress and social development.

A democratic society has to tread the fine line between 'diversity' (diversification) and 'difference' (differentiation).[39] In South Africa we have, to date, been much more successful in reinforcing difference than in creating a flexibility of identification, including those of shared values and commitments. We have formally acknowledged diversity but peripheralised it as policy, and certainly never given it the public conceptual clarity to distinguish it from difference, with the latter confirming parallel communities (of race, ethnicity, religion and so on). The way to a society, within which democracy provides the always-unattainable, yet nonetheless cohesion-providing, universal, remains dangerously elusive unless non-racialism is properly addressed. If, however, we are to remain a multi-racial society, then we have to find ways of regulating race relations, away

from the extremes of apartheid, the previous policy based on such a representation. As Steve Fenton notes:

> 'The demise of the sociological idea of 'race relations' has been slow but certain. As a phrase in popular discourse it retains a meaning as signifying the better or worse state – the presence or absence of ill-feeling – of relations between people perceived as different. But it founders on the analytic ambiguity of the term 'race' implying as it does people who are inescapably different and between whom relations are essentially problematic.'[40]

That remains the on-going legacy of racialism. That legacy (still) largely informs politics in South Africa as we enter the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION: RACIALISED POPULISM?

Racism stands in the way of democracy, because it denies the equality of citizens, and demeans fellow human beings. I would go further, though, and argue that racialism also makes democracy impossible, unless in an increasingly regulated society, for it works with notions that society is composed of fundamental biological building blocks, with attendant characteristics of unique cultures and even abilities. This is not to argue that non-racialism will ever be achieved, but that, as in the case of the unattainable democracy, it should be a deliberate societal goal. Laclau, in his perception of what is necessary to counter the dangerous universals of the past, argues for fluidity in society. He finds that fluidity in the notion of democracy, which both he and Aronson extend beyond parliamentary politics to the economy (or democratic socialism). Racialism, as Norval proposes, prevents that fluidity. Worse, it allows populist mobilisation around apparently 'clear cut social identities', describing 'the world in a coherent way'.[41] Such simplifying identity need not be offered only by populism, but also by religion, for example. Laclau warned against the assertion of difference by various groups (referring specifically to ethnic and cultural groups) as the 'route to self-apartheid'.[42] The more 'coherent' (within its own internal logic of primordialism or biology) the group identity is that is being defined, the easier it is to find 'traitors' to the cause. There are many studies of how this is accomplished,

ranging from Afrikaner and Zulu, to Hutu and Serb ethnicities and nationalism, not to have to labour this point. The coherence offered by common sense thinking on 'shared human experience' does not question 'the alleged toughness of the boundary that has been drawn between ourselves and others'. What is required is an approach that 'may prompt us to doubt that boundary's natural preordained character'.[43]

The heavy hand of the past obviously, lives on. It would be truly a miracle if it did not. What is of concern then to social scientists and those concerned with democracy in South Africa are the deliberate and unquestioning, and not the unintended, continuities with social identities of the past, and the failure to devise policies that move beyond structural adaptation to address racialism and not remain with just ad hoc concern with racism.

The class/race debate lives on, even though it is hardly addressed as such since 1994. A starting point might be the statement by Mbeki that South Africa consists of 'two nations', the one poor and black, and the other rich and nearly all white. What was he saying, other than the obvious, and against what background could (or maybe even should) this statement be read? Within such a simplifying racialised world that ignores class and other differences (such as of gender), only the word of the strong will be heard. Rather than addressing the inequalities of society, class will speak on behalf of race. Steven Friedman pointed out recently that 'tackling poverty is too important to be left to smart politicians and managers who, without a strong democracy are likely to hear only whatever the best organised groups among apartheid's victims want them to hear. Poverty will gain the attention it deserves only when our democracy is deep enough to hear the poor'.[44]

I would suggest that the context of the continued racialisation of South African society cannot but be the continuation provided by the explicit or implicit utilisation of the notion of 'colonialism of a special type', with its clear, and hence unproblematic, divide into white settlers and the black indigenous population. The race epithet in the two nations classification is, therefore, descriptively, quite correct, but analytically static and inadequate to the demands of understanding the dynamics of a South

African society that has to place itself within rampant international capitalism, and growing internal divisions between rich and poor, also black rich and all poor. Within this perspective, the continued enrichment of the black middle class and bourgeoisie does not serve as a contradiction to the two-nations theory, as black people, of whatever class position, have already been homogeneously defined as 'the poor'.[45]

The project of race populism has continued. Hein Marais has noted that with the fading of the 'unifying impetus of anti-apartheid struggle..., a new "language" of unity and deference was needed, one that resonated among the different layers and interest groups that constitute the ANC's constituencies. ... (Mbeki's) revival and updating of the African nationalist discourse of the late 1940s and early 1950s ring loudly in a racist and unequal society'.[46] Such a 'language' stands in the way of oppositional politics (as it does in a wider democratic and critical context), as well as obstructing an analysis necessary for the reconstruction of the dynamics of South African society.

ENDNOTES

1) Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.26.

2) US comedian Fran Lebowitz in an interview, published in *Vanity Fair*, October 1997.

3) Ernesto Laclau Socialism Goes Off the Beaten Track, in *Work in Progress*, 90 (1993), p.34.

4) Ernesto Laclau, Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity, in Edwin N Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister (eds.), *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power* (Chicago, Ill. and London: University of Chicago Press. 1996), p.49.

5) Laclau, Universalism, pp.58-59.

6) See also Jo Beall's, Valuing Difference and Working with Diversity, in Jo Beall (ed.), *A City for All: Valuing Difference and Working with Diversity* (London: Zed Press).

7) Laclau, Socialism Goes Off the Beaten Track, p.36.

8) See, for example, Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy, translated by Roger Griffin* (London: Polity Press, 1987), pp.24-26.

9) Ronald Aronson, Is Socialism on the Agenda? a Letter to the South African Left, *Transformation*, 14 (19910, pp.1-23.

10) Aronson's 'letter' warns against the possible legacies of the ANC's and internal movements' necessary political practices under apartheid repression: 'in-group loyalty and coherence', suspicion of dissent, both internally and publicly expressed, and decision-making by leadership, with the inviting prospect of continuing as 'cadre organisations with a passive mass base of support'.

11) Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London: Verso, 1996).

12) Aletta Norval, 'Thinking Identities: against a Theory of Identity', in Edwin N. Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister (eds.), *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power* (Chicago, Ill. and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

13) There is no Zuluness without an awareness of those who are not Zulu. See Gerhard Maré, *Brothers Born of Warrior Blood* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1992), p.20.

14) Norval, Thinking Identities, p.68.

15) Norval, Thinking Identities, pp.68-69.

16) Julie Frederikse, *The Unbreakable Thread: non-racialism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1990).

17) Gerhard Maré, Race thinking and thinking about race, paper presented to conference on New African Perspectives: Africa, Australia and the wider world, Perth. 1999.

18) Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.69-73. And see Stuart Hall's .The Work of Representation, in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).

19) Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p.13.

20) Of course, it could validly be argued that non-racialism is impossible for as long as past and present discrimination based on racialised policies holds. However, if we do not examine alternative ways of addressing inequality and/or if we do not simultaneously find the deliberate means of subverting race thinking, then non-racialism *remains* a rhetorical device.

21) Van Diepen, *The National Question*, p.9. Also see Tambo quoted in Luli Callinicos, Oliver Tambo and the politics of class, race and ethnicity in the African National Congress of South Africa, *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1999), pp.130-151.

22) Kwame Anthony Appiah , The Conservation of 'Race', in *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1989), pp.37-60.

23) See, recently, Deborah Posel, Race, 'common sense' and a new form of state: racial classification in apartheid South Africa, paper presented to conference on New African Perspectives: Africa, Australia and the wider world, Perth, 1999.

24) The call by Constitutional Court judge Arthur Chaskalson for the implementation of the constitutional commitment to rights such as those to housing, confronts square-

ly not only the allocation of state funds, but also the processes of decision-making and questions about control of power (*Sunday Independent*, 21 May 2000).

25) Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change* (London: Zed Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998); Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: from Apartheid to Neo-liberalism in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press; Scottsville: University of Natal Press).

26) It cannot but remind of Buthelezi's 'wall of black nationalism' appeal, within which he squarely placed the bricks of achievements of black business in the KwaZulu bantustan.

27) Gerhard Maré, The Inkatha Freedom Party, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *Election '99 South Africa: from Mandela to Mbeki* (Cape Town: David Philip; London: James Currey; New York: St Martin's Press, 1999). Out of this incident rose the 'Indian-African conference' held to address 'race relations' in the province, in 2000.

28) Andrew Reynolds, The Results, in his edited *Election '99 South Africa: from Mandela to Mbeki*, p.181.

29) See Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980), p.18. Also Patrick Wright, *On Living in Old Country: the National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985).

30) The June 2000 decision of the NNP and the DP to amalgamate into the Democratic Alliance drew virulent race-based accusations, especially from the ANC and MF.

31) *Financial Mail*, 26 February 1999.

32) Of course this debate is not confined to issues of race. For a more thoughtful contribution on the difficulties of any process of redress than that which is usually the case in South Africa, Anne Phillips

Engendering Democracy (London: Polity, 1991).

33) *Daily News*, 23 July 1999; 26 July 1999; 25 August 1999, respectively.

34) *Rapport*, 23 May 1999. Yengeni, The rightward shift of the liberals, in *Mail & Guardian*, 30 April-6 May 1999.

35) See, for example, Tom Lodge, The African National Congress, in Andrew Reynolds (ed.), *Election '99 South Africa: from Mandela to Mbeki*, pp.77, 81.

36) Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism Fascism Populism* (London: New Left Books, 1977), pp.159, 160.

37) John Saul , The Dialectic of Class and Tribe, in his *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p.401.

38) For a discussion of the 'national question' see, for example, Maria van Diepen (ed.), *The National Question in South Africa* (London: Zed, 1988), where we find a clear acknowledgement of the two race blocs of colonialism of a special type – see Van Diepen's introduction, p.9.

39) See Beall, Valuing Difference.

40) Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.ix.

41) Ernesto Laclau, Socialism's Identity Crisis, *Work in Progress*, 91 (1993), p.36.

42) Laclau, Universalism, p.35.

43) Zygmunt Bauman, Thinking sociologically, in Anthony Giddens (ed.), *Sociology: Introductory Readings* (London: Polity, 1997), p.18.

44) Steven Friedman, SA's Poor lack effective voice, in *Mail & Guardian*, 2 June 2000.

45) See *Sunday Independent* (4 June 2000), in which David Attwell argues very much the same point.

46) *Sunday Independent*, 4 June 2000.

Reflections on the Politics of Minorities, Race and Opposition in Contemporary South Africa

Ivor Sarakinsky

This discussion on the politics of minorities, race and opposition suggests that there is a fault-line that cuts through attempts to construct a South African nationalism in the post-transition period. Minorities are not defined in terms of race. Instead culture, tradition, religion and language are used to identify different groups in the society who all have equal status. This conflicts with the conception of minorities in the realm of politics where electorally determined smaller parties do not have the same status as the majority party. More importantly, democratic minorities are excluded from participating in the governing of the country thereby preventing minority interests from impacting upon national policy. It is possible – using conceptual ideas present in Hegel's political philosophy and the theory of rational choice – to reconcile the politics of 'cultural' and 'political' minorities. This means that opposition in the context of South Africa should not take an adversarial form. Instead, both the majority and minority parties can benefit by adopting a cooperative rather than a conflictual mode of political conduct.

> *'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like an Alp on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language.'*
>
> *Karl Marx*

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer fashionable to introduce a discussion of matters political with a citation from Marx. However, there is wisdom in his writings that is relevant to societies that have experienced the process of change from an authoritarian regime to a democratic polity. In his Introduction to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte,* Marx alerts us to the emergence of radical and innovative approaches to the reorganisation of social life while the old system is both decaying and being transcended. Yet, Marx goes on to show, despairingly, that just as societies are on the brink of transforming themselves, they hanker after old habits and resuscitate them with a fervour that obstructs true change. It is almost as if Marx is saying that when societies transform themselves, they generate new ideas on how things should be but retreat at the last minute from being truly revolutionary, perhaps out of fear of the unknown, and instead embrace the past and its familiarity. In an important respect, this is what has happened in South Africa in the post-transitional period. It is precisely on the manner in which parties conduct themselves that a return to old modes of political action is evident. To bring about democracy, parties had to change the way they interacted with each other, realising that no matter how strong or weak

they were, they depended on each other. This resulted in a form of political conduct that was multi-dimensional; it was both conflictual and cooperative. Now that the transition is almost over, conflict predominates and it appears as though the parties now take each other and their mutual achievements for granted. As a result, politics in South Africa now is more about combating opponents and less about accommodating those with different interests and values.

1. THE FAULT LINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONALISM

This change in political culture, from interdependence to realpolitik, also exposes a fault line in the organisation of political life in South Africa. At the level of culture, religion and ethnicity South Africans are, in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's felicitous phrase, the 'Rainbow Nation'. They are a single social organism with diverse components that are equal in status. Any community, no matter how small, has the right to practice its culture, traditions and religion as a member of the South African nation. At this level, the idea of the interdependence of diverse identities and values has survived the transition and is reinforced in a recently unveiled new national Coat-of-Arms with the motto written in an extinct San language meaning 'people who are different join together'. Moreover, the new national symbol consolidates themes in the final Constitution and its Bill of Rights that make it possible for individuals to protect and preserve their traditional ways of life within the ambit of the plural and diverse South African nation. In respect of 'cultural' (for want of a better term) diversity, South Africa's constitution goes beyond classical constitutions such as the United States of America's as it protects minorities that are not the product of a democratic process. In this regard, South Africa's new dispensation is similar to Canada's.[1]

But this definition of the South African nation precludes race as culture, tradition, religion and language transcend the old criteria of skin colour and physical appearance. This does not mean that race is not a factor in the fabric of the South African nation. As life opportunities in the old system were distributed on the basis of statutory racial categories, so do the patterns of advantage and disadvantage continue in the new. For this reason, race is best understood within the realm of politics as citizens support parties who they believe will best redress past inequalities or protect them from punitive action based on their past advantage. At the same time, voters make choices based on ethical as well as utilitarian criteria, thereby supporting or opposing parties that defend or object to the principle of distributive justice. In an important sense, political allegiance in South Africa is determined by the legacy of the past and the concomitant hope of betterment or the fear of redistribution. For this reason, race is an integral part of political discourse in South Africa in that party interests and voter choices are connected to past categories and their consequences. Clearly, race in this sense can be used and abused: it is just to use race as a criteria for redressing past injustice;[2] it is not just to accuse opponents of being racists in order to deflect criticism;[3] and it is disingenuous to hint at fears that some races might have in order to muster support.[4]

In a significant way, the politicisation of race illuminates another level of life in South Africa – the realm of the political. Alas, at this level, the value of interdependence, painfully constructed during the years of transition, has been jettisoned in favour of competition and the belief that by stressing the differences between groups and parties is the only successful way to win and hold popular support. In the realm of politics, conflict and insularity have replaced cooperation and interdependence as the dominant values with the implication that, unlike in the spheres of culture, religion, language, ethnicity and tradition, size counts and it counts absolutely. Parties that hold a simple majority have the power to speak on behalf of the 'Rainbow Nation'. Moreover, such parties also constitute the government and govern on behalf of all even though they only have a mandate to do so from many, not the whole. If the principle of 'those who are different join together' is applied in the realm of politics, then minorities would not be relegated to the sidelines, to being an opposition, but they would be an integral part of the nation's body politic, participating in government and ensuring minority representation at the most important executive level. Instead of government being the majority party, it would be a complex union of political forces, opinion and interests. If this were to happen, then there would be no fault line running

through South Africa's attempt to articulate a new nationalism. The tension, then, that characterises South African national life might be stated thus: 'We are all equal and interdependent, except in the "kingdom of politics"'.

2. MINORITIES AND DEMOCRACY

Immediately, the schism between the two dimensions of South African nationalism – the cultural and political respectively – conflict with the very meaning of democracy. At its most basic meaning, democracy is about testing the will of citizens who select candidates who represent their interests in public institutions.[5] As a result of this basic decision-rule, parties, after an election, cannot be equal. However, this does not mean that there is a clash with the principle of democracy if smaller parties were, in accordance with a set rule rather than a majority party's discretion, to be included in government. In this regard, there is a major shift from the 1994 negotiated interim Constitution (Sections 84, 88, 89, 95)[6] where minorities, determined by the democratic process, had a constitutional right to be represented proportionally in the executive, to the 1996 final Constitution where such parties may be invited into a coalition at the discretion of the majority party (Section 91).[7] In an important sense, this change in the ratification of the final Constitution marked a shift in expectation and a desire for an adversarial, as opposed to cooperative, mode of political conduct. However, theoretically, it is possible to demonstrate that a cooperative and inclusive political system based on statutory coalitions – irrespective of the size of the parties – is not incompatible with democracy. More importantly, it will also be shown that such a mode of conduct is not only in the best interests of the South African nation, it is also in the best individual interests of the cooperating parties.

The problem of either justifying the exclusion from or inclusion of minority parties in government within the parameters of democracy is not-so-incontrovertible in the annals of political theory. The most powerful critic of representative democracy, G.W.F. Hegel, developed his attack and alternative just after the birth of modern representative democratic systems in the early part of the 19th century. Essentially, Hegel argued that representative democracy, premised on the principle of majoritarianism, culminates in a government that represents a faction of the nation, not the whole of the nation. As minorities are excluded from being part of the government, the dominant faction rules on their behalf even though it has neither their support nor their consent. As a result of this, the government violates the organic complexity of the national fabric and is therefore doomed to endless cycles of violence. This critique of representative democracy informs Hegel's understanding of the Jacobin 'Terror' where all forms of diversity were eliminated in post-revolutionary France.[8]

In criticising representative democracy in this way, Hegel is alerting us to the danger of Rousseau's political philosophy based on the idea of a 'general will'.[9] How is such a 'Will' established, and on what basis might individual or political parties claim to embody such a will? For Hegel, government is not about an absolute national consensus, but about objectifying diversity at the constitutional and institutional levels of the state so that an issue-based consensus can be forged. For him, all classes have statutory rights to representation in the state through delegates and can participate in discussing and deciding matters of national importance. This approach to representation institutionalises diversity in a static, statutory way without violating the principle of democracy. The important point here is that different interests are brought together statutorily on the bases of cooperation and conflict in a way whereby no group is excluded from being part of the government. Delegates are mandated by classes to represent their interests at the heart of the state and they deliberate amongst each other on pressing issues and, through reasoned argument and clashes of interest, formulate policy that reflects the interests of the nation as a whole.

This 'corporatist' theory of democratic inclusion cannot be defended in modern society where the value and practice of elections with representatives being accountable to their electors is entrenched in contemporary democratic culture. However, the idea of statutorily including diverse parties into a government representative of the nation as a whole does not challenge accepted democratic values so long as such inclusion is based upon the principle of proportionality. Moreover, minority parties cannot have entrenched veto powers over the

majority as is the case in consociational constitutional theory[10] as this obstructs the core principle of modern democracy. This does not mean that minority parties are powerless in the government as will be shown shortly. Thus, political parties are incorporated into the government in terms of a constitutional right rather than at the discretion of a majority party on the level of support that they receive from the electorate. Crucial to this conception of democracy is the acceptance of the importance of elections as a mechanism for periodically testing the will of the people. However, it goes further than conventional constitutional theory that argues for the protection of losers – minorities – in an ongoing and regulated political contest.[11] In this alternative model, political minorities are not relegated to the sidelines of the political system attempting to play a critical, oppositional role. Instead, they are part of the government and thereby have the ability to influence decisions at the executive and departmental levels. This makes it possible for the government to reflect the complexity of the nation that it governs. This is precisely the model of democracy that was set out in the 1994 interim Constitution that made a Government of National Unity (GNU) possible for two years after the first fully democratic election in South Africa. More importantly, such a model of democracy mirrored the 'cultural' conception of the South African nation in that it entrenched the principle of an organic unity of diversity in the realm of politics.

In 1996, the GNU collapsed when the formerly ruling National Party (NP) chose to withdraw and pursue a more adversarial approach in an attempt to bolster its support base. At the same time, the final Constitution, ratified in 1996, abolished the clauses allowing for statutory multi-party representation in government. In this context, it is fair to ask the question: 'Why defend or even discuss political ideas that have been sublated in practice?' The first response is that the final Constitution allows the majority party to invite parties to govern with it. Thus, a coalition government is possible on the basis of political pragmatism. However, such a coalition ought to be based on statutory right if the principle of 'unity in cultural diversity' is to become compatible with political diversity as a means of defining and objectifying a South African nation. Secondly,

and more importantly, the parties that negotiated the interim and final Constitutions appear not to have fully grasped the value of the cooperative government as set out in the former. If this is made explicit, then a defence of the principle of joint rule might lead to a rethink of the role of opposition in South Africa.

The Prisoner's Dilemma as a model of political behaviour in South Africa

	PLAYER X	
	Cooperate	Defect
Cooperate (PLAYER Y)	(3;3)	(-5;5)
Defect (PLAYER Y)	(5;-5)	(1;1)

The best way to illustrate this principle is through a discussion of the Prisoners' Dilemma (PD) (as set out in the diagram above), an heuristic device designed to illustrate the possible collective outcomes of numerous actors' individual, strategic choices.[12] No single actor determines the outcome of an interaction with others, and the outcome is the combined effect of all the choices. Instead of discussing this device in detail, a few simple points need to be made. First, we assume that actors are rational in the sense that they make choices to maximise their self-interest. The model does not assume altruism, but accepts that actors will make strategic choices, based on available rather than perfect information, to get the most they can out of a given situation. Second, the PD identifies specific conditions under which it is advantageous for the actors to act egoistically or selfishly. Essentially, it is better to defect on another's cooperation in a one-off interaction where the parties will not meet again. Now, what the PD shows in this situation is that when both parties act rationally, they simultaneously try to defect on the other's cooperation. This leads to the worst possible outcome in terms of the parties' attempts to maximise their utility. This kind of situation is referred to as a 'zero-sum' or 'mini-max/maxi-min' interaction. What the

one gains the other loses, while the one party's best outcome is the other party's worst and vice versa. The key point to come out of this is that adversarial conflict – strategic choices aimed at conquering opponents – more often than not, leads to unintended outcomes where both parties are worse off than before. In adversarial contexts, conflict is zero-sum in that the parties see no room for compromise and each thinks that it can gain an advantage at the other's expense.

The third issue that emerges from this discussion of the PD is of crucial importance to the defence of cooperative government as already set out. The PD identifies the specific conditions under which cooperation is the best possible strategy for each self-interested actor as well as the community that they together constitute. Cooperation here means that actors will be better off individually and collectively if they rationally (in terms of self-interest) decide to cooperate with each other. The condition under which this claim holds is a situation where actors repeatedly interact with each other and neither knows when their interactions will end.[13] Now, this cooperation is not based on spontaneous consensus. It is a special kind of conflict called 'mixed-motive' conflict.[14] In terms of their repeated interactions, actors are aware of their mutual interdependence even though they do not necessarily like or agree with each other. The key issue here is that parties cooperate within the parameters of conflict and bargain down or negotiate their differences so that they systematically obtain most of what they want over an extended period of time. The individual and collective cumulative effect of cooperation in this context results in each actor being significantly better off than if they had adopted an adversarial, zero-sum strategy. The theory is clear on this: both parties secure more out of cooperation. This conclusion is demonstrated in computer simulations, historical examples, instances of genetic evolution and mathematical analysis by Robert Axelrod in his path-breaking study of the individual and collective benefits of cooperation.[15]

From this identification of different types of conflict, a number of points need to be made that impact directly on the argument of this paper, which is that minority and majority parties will be better off through cooperation rather than adversarial conflict. First, political

action that is multi-dimensional based on interdependence, conflict as well as cooperation, will be mutually advantageous in contrast to zero-sum conflict where both actors tend to bring about their worst outcome. Second, in ongoing interactions, members of parties build relations with each other based on trust. As people get to know each other, they institute conventions that stabilise their mutual expectations of each other and this reinforces cooperation.[16] If actors know that concessions will be reciprocated, then more concessions will be made making mutual benefit possible in the short-, medium- and long-term. The longer the interaction, the more trust that is built between actors and this results in even more intense cooperation for mutual benefit.[17] The establishment of conventions in this context are extremely important in that informal rules gradually become entrenched whereby actors engage each other in socially accepted ways based on mutual recognition and respect.[18] On this foundation, actors from very different political parties are able to reach compromises and consensus on pertinent issues in ways that have little relation to the size of their party or the amount of support that they have. So long as there is mutual recognition and trust, actors will make empathetic rather than adversarial choices based on personal relationships.

The main point of this theoretical digression is to show that a multi-party government is possible and defensible at a number of levels. First, all the parties, irrespective of size, will be better off. Second, the government will reflect the diversity of political interests that make up the nation. Third, this inclusivity will contribute enormously to the objectification of a South African nation. Fourth, citizens will be better off as the benefits of multi-party deliberation and compromise at the highest decision-making levels culminates in sound policy. Instead of political minorities being excluded from government where their impact as an opposition is minimal, they could maximise their interests by being part of decision making. On the other hand, the majority party would also benefit, from potential improvements in policy as well as political stability flowing from inclusivity, legitimacy and consent. This is especially important as minorities, who tend to be from the higher income brackets, will be less likely to conceal their income to avoid tax if they feel

that they are a meaningful part of the nation. Now, if the benefits of cooperation can be so clearly demonstrated, the question needs to be asked: 'Why don't all the political parties in South Africa follow this strategy?'

3. OPPOSITION BEHAVIOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA

Before answering this question, it remains to demonstrate how South Africans and their political parties marked a major break with the zero-sum politics characteristic of the years of apartheid only to return to this form of political conduct, without the use of violence, in more recent times. In coming to the realisation that neither side would be able to force the other to submit, the main political parties embarked upon a process of learning how to both cooperate and be in conflict with one another at the same time. Without this shift to 'mixed-motive' conflict, the miracle of the democratic transition would not have taken place. Between 1989 and 1993, there were outbreaks of both conflict and cooperation that culminated in the establishment of conventions and mutual trust which were then sedimented during the negotiation process. Without such relations between key personalities, the negotiated resolution to the country's conflict would have taken so much longer if it happened at all.[19] During this negotiation phase, smaller parties – based on the credibility of their leaders – were able to influence aspects of the constitutional agreement in ways incommensurate with their size and actual political power. This was possible as a culture of cooperation entrenched itself among the participating parties and then continued after the first democratic election for two years until minority parties chose to return to a zero-sum, adversarial style of political action.

There are many reasons why minority parties chose to end their cooperative stance and pursue an adversarial, zero-sum strategy in relation to the majority party. It is worth noting that such decisions were not without opponents within the smaller parties who correctly perceived the advantages of cooperative rule.[20] Nonetheless, smaller parties believed that they were losing their political identity in that there was no clear separation between them and the majority party as members of the government. On the other hand, minority parties clearly perceived their interests to lie in presenting a hostile response to the party in power in order to win over as many discontented voters as possible. This strategy increasingly appears to revolve around playing on minority fears in order to draw voters into a unified Westminster-style opposition force that vigilantly and tenaciously watches the majority party and attacks its performance as government at every opportunity. These objectives are justified by the smaller parties in terms of the importance of 'opposition' in keeping democracy alive. This means that the smaller parties claim to have a responsibility to keep a tight check on the power of the majority party to prevent abuses of power. At the same time, it is claimed that democracy can only survive if voters have numerous parties from which to choose in expressing their political preferences.

This defence of a return to a zero-sum politics is based on certain assumptions that are not as certain as they might initially appear. First, it may be correct that voters require parties with clear identities if they are to express their preferences. However, 'mixed-motive' conflict does not imply in any sense that cooperating parties dilute or lose their identity. What it states quite strongly is that parties mobilise support on the basis of clear policy manifestos that reflect values and interests. On this foundation, they contest elections to test their support and establish the will of citizens. This is based on adversarial conflict in the sense that it is a contest to win more support than other competing parties. However, this contest should still be framed by the realisation of mutual interdependence. In competing for votes, parties cannot and should not gratuitously attack and criticise their opponents. Instead of conducting negative campaigns, parties need to present the citizenry with positive statements of their policies and intentions so that voters can make rational, informed decisions about their preferences. This is what a vibrant democracy is about. Hostile, negative campaigns threaten and devalue the rationality of democracy as they appeal to the fears and baser instincts of people.

Also, a muscular opposition is not necessarily the best guarantor of democracy in South Africa. If anything, the more vocal the opposition, the less impact it has in shaping policy outcomes. This is illustrated in the way the majority party has used its power to prevent the official opposition from chairing key portfolio committees in the House of Assembly.

Moreover, democracy does not depend on the size and strength of the opposition in South Africa. Instead, following Aristotle, democracy depends on the habituation of constitutional rule.[21] When citizens live out the values of the constitution – a document that embodies the aspirations of the nation as a whole – then democracy will become secure.[22] In this regard, the institutions of the Public Protector; Human Rights Commission; Commission for the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities; Commission for Gender Equality; Auditor General; and Electoral Commission as set out in Chapter Nine of the final Constitution are of far more import. It is the capacity of these institutions, coupled to the judiciary, upon which the future of South Africa's democracy depends. Political minorities, instead of pursuing an adversarial, oppositional role can play a crucial role in governing and contributing to the habituation of the constitution by constructively engaging the majority party. A key variable in democratic consolidation, according to Valenzeula, is the responsible conduct of political parties who do not act to intensify conflict when the ground rules of the political system have not yet grown strong roots.[23] Thus, a hostile opposition in South Africa not only results in it losing influence, it also threatens the survival of democracy by polarising into hostile camps the communities that comprise the South African nation .

CONCLUSION

Opposition parties in South Africa have as much a responsibility as the majority party to contribute to national reconciliation. By pursuing an adversarial strategy, the opposition parties benefit by garnering support based on a fear of the majority which, in the context of South Africa's past, has racial connotations. However, this short-term benefit of increased support is counter-balanced by the medium- and long-term cost of alienating and antagonising future potential supporters.

The fact of the matter is that no political party in South Africa can survive without winning over large numbers of black voters. By attacking the majority party now, the opposition is not just challenging its performance as a government, it is also bringing into question the symbolism of the majority party as a major force that brought about liberation. Even if voters question the performance of the majority party, they are not likely in the foreseeable future to switch allegiance to an opposition that is similar in racial makeup to the previous era's political establishment.

To win over such voters in the future means acting now to establish credibility based on a constructive and effective contribution to the formation of a South African nation. This can only be achieved through minority parties cooperating with the majority party for their mutual benefit.

ENDNOTES

1) W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship : A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995); W. Kymlicka (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

2) C. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).

3) This is a tactic sometimes used in parliamentary and public discourse by the majority party to discredit the views of speakers who hold different views from or who criticise certain decisions and actions taken by the government.

4) This is illustrated in recent attempts by some opposition parties to suggest that the government's silence on the seizure of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe might cause the same to happen in South Africa.

5) J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, Democracy* (London: Unwin, 1987).

6) South Africa's Interim Constitution at: http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/legislation/1993/constitutO.html

7) South Africa's final Constitution at: http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/constitution/saconst.html

8) G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

9) J.J. Rousseau, The Social Contract, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Dent, 1973).

10) See A. Lijphardt, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977).

11) S. Holmes, 1988. Pre-commitment and the Paradox of Democracy, A. Przeworski and R. Slagstad (eds.) *Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 195-240.

12) R. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990); T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 1970.

13) R. Hardin, *Collective Action* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

14) T. Schelling , *The Strategy of Conflict.*

15) R. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation.*

16) R. Axelrod, An Evolutionary Approach to Norms, *American Political Science Review,* vol. 80 no. 4, (1986), pp. 1095-1111.

17) R. Hardin, *Collective Action.*

18) A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

19) See S. Friedman (ed.), *The Long Journey* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993); S. Friedman and D. Atkinson (eds.) *The Small Miracle* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1994).

20) In the National Party, Roelf Meyer, a key negotiator of the interim Constitution, was against the decision to withdraw while at least one Democratic Party member of parliament resigned from the party over its turn to adversarial politics.

21) Aristotle, *The Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

22) D. Rustow, Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model, *Comparative Politics* vol. 2 no. 3, (1970), pp. 337-363.

23) S. Valenzuela, Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notions, Process and Facilitating Conditions, S. Mainwaring, G. O'Donnell, and S. Valenzuela (eds.) *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 57-104.

Conclusion: Emergent Perspectives on Opposition in South Africa

Roger Southall

INTRODUCTION

The introduction to this collection raised a series of questions around the project of political opposition in South Africa in light of the challenges posed by consolidating democracy, given the emergence of the African National Congress (ANC) as a 'dominant party'. In many ways, the different contributors may be interpreted as having grappled with the issue of how South Africa's new democracy is coping with the twin dilemmas of representation and accountability. Who and what groups of citizens are to be represented and how? How should representation be translated into behaviour that simultaneously extends political participation by all South Africa's people without threatening the very existence of still fragile democratic structures? How is the government to be rendered accountable to the people if the ANC is not sufficiently responsive to the demands of various 'racial' or other minorities, who feel excluded or alienated by the new political arrangements, or to major constituencies within its own ranks who feel adversely affected by the policies it is pursuing? These questions are all so central to the vitality, quality and functioning of South African democracy that it is scarcely surprising that the concept of opposition has been interpreted extremely generously. Well established concepts such as 'constitutional' and 'responsible' opposition still hold up well and relevantly, even if there is contestation about what those terms mean in the South African context. But opposition as behaviour has been portrayed as extensive, operative within the ruling party and throughout wider society as well as between the government itself and the political parties which define themselves as 'in opposition'.

1. OPPOSITION AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Beyond that, opposition has been promoted as a product of both structure and agency. At the most basic level, the particular shape of, and constraints upon, the parliamentary opposition have been projected as in significant part an outcome of the party list proportional representation (PR) electoral system – itself a key mechanism of the transition agreement that brought South Africa to democracy. The result, according to most popular wisdom, is that PR has provided for the ANC's electoral hegemony and the fragmentation of contending political parties because of the demographic weight of Africans as a large majority of the electorate. David Pottie has not disagreed, suggesting indeed that efforts by opposition parties to overcome fragmentation, as most notably expressed by the formation of the Democratic Alliance (DA), may further racial polarisation and 'ethnic' representation. Importantly, however, he stresses that while electoral arrangements may 'engineer' normative political behaviour (hence rendering the pursuit of electoral reform productive if existing arrangements are found to be lacking democratically), the present electoral system has done much to institutionalise the party system (and hence opposition) and to aggregate interests. Lia Nijzink concurs. Whilst the new electoral system and parliament should not be interpreted as providing for alternative government, they have provided significant opportunities for interest articulation and for the legitimation of

opposition as such, and for the democratic system more generally.

2. THE GENDER ELEMENT

These themes have been taken up by Louise Vincent, who has injected an important gender element which deserves to make an impact upon the conceptualisation of opposition more generally. Her conceptualisation of 'women as opposition' presents an immediate challenge to the conventional attempt to portray opposition in party-based, liberal-democratic terms. Where male and female members of the polity have interests in common, they can act collectively (along party and ideological lines). But where the interests of female citizens and male citizens conflict, even if the latter are within the same political party, then the former should become 'gladiatorial', unconstrained by patriarchially weighted party disciplines. However, while discussing in her contribution how the electoral system and the ANC's adoption of a one-third quota of women on its party lists has provided for major advances in women's representation, her study depicts how party (particularly ANC) disciplines and patriarchal attitudes among (again, especially ANC) members of parliament (MPs) have inhibited the gladitorialism she sees as vital to promoting women's interests in parliament. Given such major political constraints, the adequate and urgent representation of women's interests requires that women's political representatives need to be directly supported by women's networks from outside the forums concerned. Proportional representation of women within political parties, of both government and of opposition, is simply not enough.

3. NON-RACIALISM

The inadequacy of structures to guarantee realisation of the explicit goals of South African democracy is taken up by Gerry Maré. Most notably, the aims of non-racialism (the ANC's decades long objective) cannot be realised without coherent, concerted and coordinated policy and practice. Otherwise, given demographics and the legacies of the past, apartheid is likely to reappear, but this time as a mirror-image. The implications for opposition are threefold. First, racialised opposition (speaking for racialised or cultural minorities) simply replicates differences interpreted as racial.

Second, race thinking allows political parties (justly or otherwise) to be labelled as racist and hence delegitimised – a practice which Maré sees the ANC employing with increasing frequency to the particular detriment of the Democratic Party (DP). Third, 'race thinking' encourages parties which claim to be non-racial to target particular 'race groups' – whites or coloureds – in order to increase their share of the vote. Racialist categories remain easily available as political categories for purposes of mobilisation. Maré acknowledges that it would be surprising if the 'heavy hand' of the past did not live on, yet he is concerned by parties' unquestioning utilisation of the identities of the past. Especially in the context of a rampant international capitalism which encourages notions of South Africa as a country of 'two nations' of black and white (despite the rapid growth a black middle class), the 'language' of race stands in the way of a more productive oppositional politics which would contribute to the reconstruction of South African society. Paul Maylam concurs, arguing that the politics of race still seems to outweigh the politics of class, even though the ANC has proved adept at accommodating a very 'broad church'. History should not be conceived as bondage, yet the weight of the past is such that the emergence of a class-based and issue-based politics appears inherently unlikely, at least in the short term.

4. THE DA AND ROBUST OPPOSITION

Maré's and Maylam's pessimism would seem to be largely confirmed by Hennie Kotzé's analysis of the potential constituencies for the DA, which he sees as a marriage of two different philosophies and styles of opposition. Although the New National Party's (NNP's) strategy of 'constructive opposition' may have appealed to its coloured voters, it was viewed negatively by its white support base, which increasingly gravitated to the more 'robust' anti-government stance of the DP. This explains the markedly improved performance of the DP in the general election of 1999, and the absorption of the NNP into the DA on largely the DP's terms. The DA now stands to become the home of the majority of whites, coloureds and Indians, yet Kotzé's analysis of political attitudes amongst different groups suggests that the newly merged combination is unlikely to attract support from beyond these

minorities – among Africans – unless it tones down what this potentially larger constituency sees as the DP's record of 'negative' opposition politics. Yet Tony Leon would claim, very reasonably, to have been a highly successful leader. The DP increased its vote five-fold in the election in 1999, and it seems unlikely that he is going to change a strategy which has both identified his party as a winner and which has collapsed its major rival amongst the opposition. Similarly, Leon would also likely challenge those – like Robert Schrire and Ivor Sarakinsky – who fear that robust opposition is likely to endanger democracy itself, not least because it is likely to encourage racial polarisation. For the DP, constitutional checks and balances upon the ANC are not likely to be enough to render the government accountable, to expose mounting corruption or to halt a slide to future tyranny. Only a robust, fearless and vocal opposition will prevent a re-enactment of what is happening currently in Zimbabwe in South Africa at some point in the future.

5. THE 'DOMINANT PARTY' THESIS

It is this sort of line which is pursued most strongly by Hermann Giliomee, James Myburgh and Lawrence Schlemmer, and paradoxically, by Dale McKinley and Adam Habib with Rupert Taylor. Both sets of scholars come up with what might be termed 'hard' interpretations of the ANC as a dominant party. But whereas the prior trio come up with a conservative version of that thesis, the latter elaborate a radical thesis which suggests markedly different implications for opposition politics.

Giliomee, Myburgh and Schlemmer propose that the ANC is misusing its status as a democratically elected government to extend its total domination over state and society. Given the legacies of the past, there is no real uncertainty of electoral outcome in South Africa, and in any case the ANC is encouraging a racial consolidation of the vote. Because it is being systematically delegitimised as 'racist', the opposition is increasingly unable to protect vital interests, while simultaneously, constitutional defences of minority interests are being weakened. The ANC is using the slogans of 'demographic representivity' and 'affirmative action' to empower a black elite, and it is pursuing the projects of 'transformation' and 'deployment' to capture control of all major institutions in

state and society. Meanwhile it is drawing upon its experience in exile to use a Leninist strategy of democratic centralism to close down internal debate amongst its own ranks, while increasingly inhibiting the political opposition by manipulating the rules of parliament and other arenas in its own favour. The inevitable effect is that opposition voters are being marginalised and becoming demotivated, as the ANC, by implication, marches South Africa along the road to African despotism.

McKinlay hitches a not dissimilar argument to an analysis which sees the ANC as having allied itself with international capital upon the basis of the pacted, liberal-democratic transition arrangements of 1994. This 'historic compromise' has flown in the face of the dominant view which obtained among the mass of supporters of the ANC and its alliance partners that the capture of political power needed to be linked to a fundamental attack on the entrenched economic and political interests of capital, in order for there to be a meaningful liberation. Instead, what has happened is that the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) leadership abandoned the more revolutionary aspects of their parties' programmes from the start. Although the ANC adopted the redistributionist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to mobilise popular support in 1994, this was replaced by the neo-liberal, pro-capitalist Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme once the ANC's hold on power was secure. Spearheaded by Thabo Mbeki even before he became President, this was matched by an increasingly disciplinarian and conspiratorial approach to alliance politics which has increasingly suppressed dissent. Internal democracy has been increasingly crushed, and the alliance is now subject to an enforced unity employed to prevent debate about ideological and strategic alternatives. ANC elites continue to fashion a radical sounding rhetoric of 'transformation', yet the reality is that that is only obscuring the defence of the status quo, and the interests of an emergent African bourgeoisie tied to it.

The answer that Habib and Taylor provide for countering this development is for the SACP and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to break away from the Tripartite Alliance to provide the foundation for a labour-based opposition. They suggest that

the centralisation of power by the ANC, together with its failures of delivery, are translating into a weakening of the democratic order itself. Opposition to these trends is vital for the consolidation of democracy, yet the existing parliamentary opposition parties are unable to perform this function adequately. This is not because voting patterns are determined by ethnicity or race, as so much popular analysis suggests, but rather because the majority of the electorate do not see the existing opposition as defending their interests. The DP and NNP are seen as articulating the interests of whites and coloureds, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) as defending Zulus, and so on. The failure of the existing opposition parties to develop a viable parliamentary opposition is therefore not the fault of the electorate voting in racial terms, but the failure of parties' leadership to offer policies which would enable them to attract a significant electoral constituency.

Habib and Taylor argue that the only way in which a viable parliamentary opposition will come about is if it has its primary social base in the African working class, and which will articulate policies that will advance the cause of the wider segments of the population, such as the unemployed, lower middle class and rural poor, who are currently excluded from power and influence by the government's espousal of neo-liberalism. Hitherto, the interests of these groups have supposedly been served by the Tripartite Alliance, but while this formation was successful in maximising opposition against the apartheid regime, it has proved singularly unsuccessful in placing a bias in favour of the poor and working class at the centre of the government's programme. Assuming that it can take the bulk of the electorate's votes for granted, the ANC now pays greater attention to the whims and wishes of foreign investors and the business community. Yet Habib and Taylor's interpretation of psephological surveys argues that support for the ANC is less rooted than that party believes it to be, and there is a sound basis for believing that there would be sufficiently wide support to sustain the formation of an independent, labour-based opposition. Only when the ANC's electoral domination is challenged will the voices of the poor be heard in the corridors of power in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Both the conservative and radical versions of the ANC as a 'strong' dominant party have much to contribute in illuminating aspects of contemporary South African politics. Most notably, of course, they point to the emergence of worryingly authoritarian tendencies within the ruling party; how this is attempting to narrow the space for open debate within parliament; within the alliance and in society more widely; and how the result is potentially alienating of various important segments of the electorate. Yet there is a strong case for arguing that both interpretations of the 'dominant party state' argument are one-dimensional.

For a start, Eddie Maloka would argue that the 'dominant party thesis' is the latest line of attack by mainly white intellectuals upon the notion of 'majority rule' as a basis for South African democracy. His position would suggest that whereas conservative and liberal intellectuals are primarily concerned to protect the rights of racial minorities, the radicals resent the loss of power they once enjoyed within the liberation movement (a theme which touches upon historic tensions between Africanists and white socialist and communist intellectuals). Yet this interpretation of opposition as defence of minority interests would appear no less unidimensional than the positions and political practices it is attacking.

In contrast, it is argued here that the adoption of a 'weak' version of the dominant party thesis is much more productive and multidimensional than either of the conservative or radical critiques. Such an interpretation takes on board much that both rival commentaries are saying: that the ANC, for historical reasons, enjoys a 'natural' majority among the electorate, that – notably under Mbeki – it has embarked upon a project of centralising power, that it has blurred boundaries between the party and the state, that it is at times employing racial rhetoric which aims at delegitimising opposition, and so on. Nonetheless, this alternative interpretation would argue that while some of the implications of these tendencies for democratic consolidation are worrying, they are balanced by a large number of other factors. These include: acknowledgement that the government's drive to centralise authority flows in part from an understandable desire to impose fiscal discipline upon the provinces and to curb corruption; and recognition of 'rationality' rather than 'race' as the basis for voters' electoral choice

(hence allowing for an erosion of the extent of the ANC's support while doubting that it is likely to deprive it of majority status in the foreseeable future). However, there are two other aspects of this interpretation which are even more important.

First, the 'weak' version of the 'dominant party thesis' would stress that the multi-racial, multi-class nature of the ANC as a 'broad church' determines that it is a site of struggle between a variety of ideological persuasions and political practices. In particular, the ANC is the historical embodiment of twin legacies. On the one hand, its traditions of discipline draw upon the experiences of exile, when the perils of its organisation outside South Africa urged hierarchy and secrecy, both of which were translated into a Leninist-style 'democratic centralism' which was borrowed from its alliance with the SACP and the material support and diplomatic sustenance it obtained from the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the ANC was simultaneously a movement of the people and the leader of an alliance of the organisations of the oppressed, an aspect which found its ultimate expression in the mass struggles inside South Africa in the 1980s which did so much to undermine apartheid. Often inchoate, this tradition was nonetheless centred around a philosophy and practice of participatory democracy which found its foremost expression in the strands of trade unionism which culminated in the formation of Cosatu in 1985. What this approach would argue, therefore, is that these contrasting (yet interlocking, for the rhetoric of authoritarianism is almost unfailingly populist) traditions are at perpetual odds with each other within the ANC, even if one may be dominant at a particular time. For instance, although McKinley scrupulously details the central leaderships' efforts at control, what his perspective does not adequately allow for is examples of effective rebellion from below, as occurred at the most recent Cosatu Congress in September 2000, where President Mbeki was subjected to a major vocal attacks by leading trade unionists because of GEAR and for his controversial position on Aids, and where government ministers were subjected to open demonstrations of dissent.[*]

This fits in with the second aspect of the contemporary situation which neither the conservative nor radical 'strong' versions of the dominant party thesis allow for. This is the fact that they both overstate the capacity of the ANC to impose itself upon society. It might attempt to extend its control, but intention does not imply the ability to restructure society as it would wish. Even under apartheid, South Africa was not totalitarian. Apart from the fact that the then government was seeking to impose diversity rather than allow homogeneity, it simply could not contain the momentum for freedom, of mass protest, from below. A similar situation obtains today. Try as it might, the government is faced with a series of uphill battles to contain crime and violence, curb corruption, control immigration of job-seekers from the rest of Africa, prevent the uncontrolled expansion of squatting and informal settlements, encourage residents of townships to pay taxes in return for services, and so on. Both conservatives and radicals imply that the ANC is much more in control of society than, in practice, it is. Paradoxically, its efforts to curb dissent may be interpreted as much an indication of its weakness as its strength.

6. 'THE ANC'S UNCERTAIN CONTROL'

Such objections to the strong version of the dominant party thesis are recorded by the final two papers in the collection. Significantly, Janet Cherry explicitly argues that assumptions about the consolidation of political power by a single party need to be tested against the real experience of political participation by African people on the ground. Most importantly, for our purposes, her study of political opposition in the African township of Kwazakele in Port Elizabeth demonstrates how a tradition of political intolerance of opposition to the ANC co-exists with a tradition of direct democracy, which, during 1995, saw members of the South African National Civics Organisation – which is formally closely allied to the ANC – protesting against alleged failures of delivery of services by the ANC local council. African voters remain overwhelmingly loyal to the ANC and distrustful of other parties, yet they are far from uncritical of the ANC and are demanding of their local representatives. Despite what she sees as a decline in civic mobilisation, she concludes that democracy is remarkably healthy in Kwazakele and is manifested in a variety of forms of opposition to the ANC: within local branches, within civil society and, albeit to a

much lesser extent, the threat of support for other political parties.

Cherry's suggestion of the ANC's uncertain control is endorsed by Eddie Webster's version of the politics of the Tripartite Alliance, and in particular his comparative take on a labour-backed government in South Africa coming to power in the form of the ANC. He joins the radicals in noting the severe strains which have developed between Cosatu and the government in the wake of the latter's adoption of GEAR. However, rather than arguing that this presages a political rupture of the alliance, he suggests that Cosatu is having instead to come to terms with its increasing marginalisation. The autonomy it used to enjoy as a partner within the alliance has in democratic South Africa been eroded by a drain of leadership and ability to other sectors of society; its own internal traditions of service delivery and accountability of its unions to their members have been eroded; and it has become increasingly subjected to ANC hegemony based on the latter's access to state patronage and bureaucratic power. All this makes the South African case redolent of union–party relationships in the rest of post-colonial Africa, where (although the situation varies) unions have very often been subordinated to government. Nonetheless, Webster insists that Cosatu retains a degree of strength and a set of democratic traditions which indicates that it is likely to retain significant autonomy. This could provide for the breaking of the alliance and the emergence of Cosatu as an independent labour movement (although Webster is shy of saying that it could provide the basis for a political opposition). Yet he also proposes an alternative scenario, that Cosatu could emerge as a 'left pressure group' within the alliance that would push for redistributive policies. This, he

argues, would be based upon a 'bargained liberalisation' whereby the government would make concessions to the unions (and other civil society actors) in exchange for acceptance of its project of opening up the economy to international competition. Alongside the radicals, he proposes that the marginalisation of labour constitutes a major threat to the consolidation of democracy; but where he differs from them is that, along with Schrire and Sarakinsky, he sees too robust an opposition as a threat to democracy as it exists in post-apartheid society. Further, he sees the present situation as fluid enough to allow for a significant degree of internal democracy, however imperfect.

CONCLUSION

It is appropriate that this collection ends on a note of internal debate. What its divergent perspectives indicate is that there is no unanimity among South Africa's academics as to how contemporary South Africa is to be interpreted, or how 'opposition' is to be best conceived or operationalised. Significantly, however, each and every paper embodies a critique of political practice as it exists in South Africa today, and a conviction that the institutionalised expression of political opposition – of alternative views to those that predominate among the country's rulers – is essential to the advancement of democracy. 'Political Opposition' in South Africa does not yet realistically embody the idea of 'alternative government'. However, there are clearly ample grounds for believing that the varied and actual practice of opposition constitutes an aspect of democratic participation in South Africa which no wise government would seek to curb or delegitimate. And if it did, there is reasonable doubt that it would be able to do so.

ENDNOTE

* B*usiness Day*, (Johannesburg), 22 September 2000.