

## 2.1.4. South Africa

### I. General conditions

South Africa has now held three democratic elections (1994, 1999 and 2004) which were conducted under conditions which have been widely deemed by observers as 'free and fair'. This indicates that after the racialised oppressions of apartheid, whereby white minority rule was maintained through the legalized exclusion of blacks from political influence and power, democracy is being consolidated. The present constitution is one of the most widely celebrated rights-based documents in the world, political freedoms are legally entrenched, the media is free and political debate is, on the whole, robust. However, while the overall picture is one of optimism, especially when compared to the authoritarian practices of the past, concerns have been raised in some quarters concerning the impact upon the quality of South Africa's democracy by the extent of the dominance of the political arena by the African National Congress (ANC). Some critics argue that the ANC is using its control over the state to undermine the independence of various constitutional organs establishing to protect and further democracy; to 'deploy' its supporters into high quarters of state, society and the economy; and to reduce the capacity of parliament to render the executive accountable. These concerns are underlined by what many interpret as the ANC's intolerance of criticism, and by the continuing weakness and fragmentation of the parties of opposition (Southall 2001). Nonetheless, while the ANC continues to dominate the electoral and political arena, the foundations of its dominance are arguably being eroded at present by first, declining voter enthusiasm for the party and second, by the alienation of many of the party's supporters by the ANC's adoption of economic policies which, while allowing for the upward mobility of an emergent black business community and black middle class, have presided over a widening gap between rich and poor.

### Political system

Political  
system

Under the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, as approved by parliament sitting as a constituent assembly in 1996, the president is elected from amongst its membership

by the National Assembly, the lower house, following a general election. Once elected, the president ceases to be a member of parliament, although he/she retains the right to address parliament and to answer questions. The president proceeds to appoint ministers and deputy ministers from amongst the members of parliament. Unlike the president, they retain their seats in parliament, and are formally responsible to it. In essence, therefore, the South African system is a parliamentary one, even though, once elected, the president and head of state is no longer an MP.

### **Electoral system**

The constitution adopted in 1996, like its predecessor 'interim' constitution of 1993, in sec. 46 (1d) requires an electoral system which results 'in general, in proportional representation'. All three general elections which have been held during the democratic era (in 1994, 1999 and 2004) have been conducted via a single party list system of proportional representation. Under this system, political parties present lists of candidates (for the National Assembly and for the nine provincial legislatures) to the electorate. Voters, who must have attained the age of 18 and be registered on the electoral roll, use two ballot papers, one for the assembly, and one for the province in which they live. Parties may contest all or only some of these institutions, and consequently, the ballot papers for the individual provinces vary accordingly. Seats are allocated to each party in accordance with its share of the vote, using the 'Droop' quota, with surplus seats resulting from fractional shares of the vote being distributed through the highest remainder method (Lodge 1999: 19). There is no threshold which parties have to obtain, thus ensuring maximum proportionality of representation.

Electoral  
system

Electoral  
thresholds

Although an electoral task team, chaired by Dr Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, which reported in 1992, recommended the introduction of a multi-member constituency system to replace the single list system (while retaining the commitment to proportional representation) in order to enhance the accountability of MPs, the recommendation was not acted upon. However, a mixed electoral system, involving the election of some councillors through party lists and some through constituencies, is now used at local government level.

Group privileges	There are no elements of consociational democracy that benefit any specific group, nor are there electoral thresholds for parliamentary representation. Consequently, this ensures maximum proportionality of representation.
Democratic standards	Since the introduction of democracy in 1994, elections in South Africa have been conducted on a 'free and fair' basis. To be sure, the 1994 elections were held in political conditions which were less than ideal, and the election campaign was characterised by considerable violence, notably in the province of Kwazulu-Natal, where there was a bitter contest between the ANC and the Zulu-ethnic Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Indeed, there is strong evidence that the result in Kwazulu-Natal in 1994 was 'negotiated', that is, that the result of the popular vote as officially recorded was actually the outcome of a political deal whereby the ANC conceded ultimate control of the province to the IFP in order to ensure peace and the latter's acceptance of the result at national level (Southall 1994). However, no such problems have been encountered subsequently.

The elections are administered by an Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), a standing body, which under the constitution is independent of government. Overall, the IEC has proved remarkably efficient, and although there have been some complaints by opposition parties that the IEC is biased in favour of the ruling ANC, none of these has been convincingly upheld.

**Legal regulation of political parties**

Legal basis	Political parties are recognised by the constitution in terms of various of their rights within parliament and the provincial legislatures. For instance, the constitution lays down in sec, 57 (2) that the rules of the National Assembly must provide for 'the participation in the proceedings of the Assembly and its committees of minority parties represented in the Assembly, in a manner consistent with democracy', for 'financial and administrative assistance to each party represented in the Assembly in proportion to its representation, to enable the party and its leader to perform their functions in the Assembly effectively'; and for 'the recognition of the leader of the largest opposition party in the Assembly as the Leader of the Opposition'. However, there is no section of the constitution which spells out the functions and general rights of political parties, nor is there
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any special law pertaining to the status and functioning of political parties.

There are no legal restrictions upon the formation of political parties in South Africa. No special party law exists. The Bill of Rights, chapter 2 of the constitution, lays down in sec. 19 (1) that ‘Every citizen is free to make political choices, which includes the right

Party formation

- to form a political party;
- to participate in the activities of, or recruit members for, a political party; and
- to campaign for a political party or cause.’

Parties have to be registered with the IEC, but can only participate in elections if they lodge minimum funds of (at present) rands (R) 100,000 for the National Assembly and R20,000 for the provincial elections required by the IEC.

There are no regulations concerning the founding of a party, nor relating to the recruitment of candidates for elections, save that candidates for election have to be South African citizens and registered as voters with the IEC. It is thus the IEC that is responsible for registering political parties and party candidates.

Candidacy regulation

In conformity with the stress that the constitution lays on individual freedoms, such as rights of assembly and freedom of association, there is no provision for the banning of political parties. It is conceivable that small extremist parties could be banned in practice if their leaders and members were to be prosecuted for advocating violence or for using ‘hate speech’ or for other breaches of the constitution, but this would provoke a major public outcry if such actions were deemed to be designed to extinguish parties of opposition in the interests of the ruling party. In contrast, various parties were banned by the previous apartheid government, notably the Communist Party of South Africa in 1950 under the Suppression of Communism Act, and the ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960.

Party banning

The South African constitution is based upon the principle of maximum inclusivity, and no social or ethnic groups are unrepresented unless they choose not to participate politically. There is no significant minority which is unrepresented, even though certain minorities (for instance,

Group privileges

the San, the indigenous inhabitants of much of South Africa) may feel marginalised, although this is for historical and social, not legal, reasons.

Proscription of membership of political parties or offices within political parties or other institutions on grounds of race, religion or colour would be illegal under the constitution. In contrast, some political parties, notably the ANC, attempt to over-represent racial minorities in parliament and at various party executive levels in order to implement the practice of 'non-racialism'. The ANC has also demonstrated its commitment to making progress towards gender equality by an internal party regulation whereby at least a third of its party lists is composed of women.

### **Party funding**

Main income  
sources

The current legislative framework governing public party funding in South Africa is based on section 236 of the 1996 constitution, which reads:

'To enhance multiparty democracy, national legislation must provide for the funding of political parties participating in national and provincial legislatures on an equitable and proportional basis.'

The principles embedded in this constitutional provision gave rise to parliament's passage of the Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act 103 of 1997, which established the Represented Political Parties' Fund. This provides for a parliamentary committee to make key decisions about the funding formula for parties, the relevant fund for dispensing finance to political parties being administered by the IEC. The money given to represented parties must be for any purpose compatible with the functioning of a political party, including the fighting of an election (Steytler 2004).

Apart from being in receipt of public funding in terms of the relevant legislation, parties are also at liberty to raise funding from private sources. The latter do not exclude receiving money from outside the country, and it is most certainly the case that, especially for the election of 1994, the ANC in particular, received funding from international sympathisers and governments (Southall/Wood 1998). However, given the insignificance of amounts raised from membership fees, the principal sources of private funding appear to be derived from business. Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate the extent or balance of such funding, as parties are not required

to disclose it. Furthermore, an application to the High Court by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa to compel the four major parties in parliament to disclose the sources of their private funding was rejected in April 2005 as not being required by current legislation, although the judge simultaneously argued that the applicants had made a compelling case for donations to political parties to be regulated in the interests of transparency and accountability.<sup>1</sup> Informed speculation suggested that the parties were supported by their donors, mainly large business firms, which were reluctant to disclose the details of their funding, although one or two such firms have indicated that they prefer to fund both government and opposition parties. Subsequently, the need for closer regulation of party funding has been emphasised by media disclosure of a scandal whereby the ANC received funding of R11 million prior to the 2004 election indirectly from a parastatal oil company, PetroSA, via an intermediary firm which had close connections with leading figures in the party. The legal and political ramifications of this scandal, labelled by the media as ‘Petrogate’, are still in the process of unravelling.

The Public Funding of Represented Political Parties Act, 103 of 1997 Act allows for wide discretion in the use of public funds by political parties. A party may use the funds for:

Legal  
regulation

- The development of political will
- Bringing the party’s influence to bear on the shaping of public opinion,
- Inspiring and furthering political education; and
- Exercising an influence on political trends.
- Prohibited uses are:
  - Paying a salary to persons on the government pay-roll
  - Contravening any legislative code of conduct
  - The promotion of business ventures

<sup>1</sup> High Court of South Africa (Cape of Good Hope Provincial Division) Case No 9828/03. In the case of The Institute for Democracy in South Africa, Judith February and Brett Davidson and the African National Congress, The Democratic Alliance, The Inkatha Freedom Party, and The New National Party. Judgement by J. Griesel delivered on 20 April 2005.

- Any other conduct proscribed by a committee of parliament.

In terms of these regulations, 90 per cent of the money is divided proportionally, based on the number of seats each party holds in the national and provincial legislatures. Ten per cent is the equitable portion that is divided between the nine provincial legislatures, based on the number of seats in each legislature. Each provincial portion is then divided equally among the political parties in each of the provincial legislatures (Steytler 2004: 61).

Parties which do not have political representation complain that they do not have access to public funding, yet appear to have little real grounds for such complaint, as in practice, South Africa has the lowest threshold for getting into parliament of any country in the world. However, opposition parties argue that the funding formula whereby state money is distributed, which is based upon the principle of proportionality, overwhelmingly favours the ruling ANC. In 2005, for instance, the Political Parties Fund stood at R74.1 million, with the ANC being allocated R49.3 million, followed by the DA with R9.3 million and the balance divided among 16 smaller parties.

The ANC's embarrassment resulting from 'Petrogate' may be one reason why a proposal is currently before parliament which will see a significant increase in the amount of public funds provided to political parties annually by at least R310 million. This would see the extra money distributed proportionately between the political parties for the following purposes: R180 million for constituency allowances; R27 million for parliamentary coordinating offices; R12.6 million for security in constituency and coordinating offices; R2.2 million for a parliamentary constituency head office; R64.4 million for support staff and operational costs; R10.6 million for strategic-planning workshops; R3 million for security and drivers for MPs older than 70; R8.5 million for security for women MPs; and R1.9 million for party leadership support. (Although the electoral system does not provide for constituencies, parties allocate informal constituencies to their MPs to maintain contact with the electorate). The proposal has yet to be debated in parliament.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Star*, October 20, 2006.

As indicated above, the extent to which political parties rely upon private funding is not known precisely. However, the indications are that most parties are primarily dependent upon public funding and that private funding is drying up. Dependence on special interests

To obtain public funding, a party has to obtain representation in either parliament or in one of the provincial legislatures. As a recipient of this funding under the Represented Political Parties Fund, the parties are obliged to, inter alia: Government subsidies

- Keep a separate account with a bank in the republic, into which money allocated from the fund must be deposited
- Appoint an official within the party as accounting officer to take responsibility for the money received in this bank account and ensure that the party complies with the requirements of the act
- Provide an income and expenditure statement, showing for what purposes the money has been applied, for annual auditing. The auditor is required to express an opinion as to whether the allocation has been spent for purposes not authorised by the act
- Submit the financial statement and the auditor's report to the Commission annually.

**II. Types of political parties and structure of the party system**

The party system in South Africa today is as inclusive as it is because the democratic constitution is a reaction to the racially discriminatory basis of politics under apartheid. Cleavages

When the Union of South Africa was founded from the four predecessor colonies of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal in 1910, the qualification of voters for the election of members of the House of Assembly was the same as existed in the four colonies previously. In the Orange Free State and Transvaal, Africans, Coloureds and Indians had never enjoyed the franchise. In Natal, a very small number of Indians and Coloureds had the vote based upon property and educational qualifications. In the Cape, where the overwhelming number of Coloureds lived, qualified Coloureds and Africans could register as voters on the common voters roll, although the number of such people who qualified as voters was very small. The South Africa Act of (the British parliament) of 1909, which served as the constitution, provided that no voter registered in the Cape



could be disqualified by reason of his race and colour only, except by a bill passed by a joint sitting of both houses of parliament, and at the third reading agreed to by not less than two-thirds of the total number of both houses. Such a procedure was followed in the mid-1930s, culminating in the removal of African voters from the common roll in 1936, with Cape Africans now being allowed to elect three Europeans to the House of Assembly and all Africans of the union being allowed to elect four Europeans to the Senate (albeit through a very complicated system of indirect voting).

When the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, it did so via a very precarious majority in parliament by virtue of its coalition with the small Afrikaner party. Consequently, in order to strengthen its position, it passed the Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1951. This provided for the removal of Coloured voters from the common voters' roll and for the compilation of a separate register for them with the right to elect four members of the House of Assembly and two to the Senate. This was rejected by the Appeal Court, and was eventually only passed in 1956 after the NP had passed further legislation to increase the size of the Senate, and to pack it with a majority of its supporters. Subsequently, the European 'Native Representatives' were removed from parliament in 1959, leaving Africans entirely disenfranchised. Under the guidance of their political movements, the overwhelming majority of Coloured subsequently boycotted future elections (Sachs 1965: 283-285).

In 1984, a new constitution provided for the establishment of a 'tricameral' parliament composed of the House of Assembly for whites, a House of Representatives for Coloureds, and a House of Delegates for Indians. These houses would deal with 'own affairs' while matters of common interest would be dealt with by a President's Council and Indian and Coloured representation in cabinet. Again, elections for the new parliament were boycotted by the overwhelming majority of Indians and Coloureds, with participating parties popularly labelled as 'collaborators'.

It was in reaction against this background of past exclusion of the majority of the population from the franchise on grounds of race that the makers of the constitutions for the democratic South Africa were so insistent that provision be made for the political system to be wholly inclusive.

A major change in the character of the party system since 1994 has been the absorption of the formerly ruling New National Party (NNP) into the ANC in 2006.

Changes in  
the past five  
years

The passage of the new constitution in 1996 set the scene for the consolidation of the ANC's political dominance. The 'interim' constitution of 1994 had prescribed the right of any political party which obtained 10 per cent of the vote in the founding general election to participate in a coalition 'government of national unity'. Given the results of the 1994 election, this meant that the ANC took office as the majority party with the formerly ruling NP and the IFP as junior partners.

The NP had viewed participation in the government of national unity as a way of embracing national reconciliation while keeping an important foothold on power. However, because it remained simultaneously deeply suspicious of the ANC (notably with regard to its policies concerning social distribution and minority rights), it opted for what it termed a strategy of 'constructive opposition' that sought to balance its continued participation in government against criticisms of specific government actions. The result was inevitably ambiguous, and alienated many of its supporters, who contrasted it with the strategy of 'robust opposition' pursued by the small, but highly energetic and articulate, Democratic Party (DP), led by Tony Leon. For all that it hawked its liberal credentials, the DP's frontal assaults upon government meant that it began to increasingly appeal to white conservatives, a shift which was underlined by the results of the 1999 general election. These saw the ANC increase its share of the vote, and hence representation in parliament, from 62 per cent to just under 67 per cent. The ANC also maintained control of seven of the nine provinces, the exceptions being KwaZulu-Natal, where it entered government as a junior partner to the IFP, and the Western Cape, where it was excluded from power by a link up between the NNP and DP. In contrast, whilst the DP's vote increased from under 2 per cent in 1994 to nearly 10 per cent, that of the NP slumped from just over 20 per cent to just under 10 per cent, thus enabling the DP to assume the mantle of the 'official opposition' (Taylor/Hoeane 1999).

The political gyrations of the next few years were to confirm the weakness of the political opposition, which in the post-1999 parliament was fragmented into some 11 parties (although the IFP continued to straddle the divide

by remaining as a junior partner in the government). Not surprisingly, an aggressive Leon was arguing the need for opposition unity, and was rewarded by the decision of the NNP, along with the minor Freedom Alliance, to coalesce with the DP within a new Democratic Alliance (DA) to fight the November 1999 local elections. (Complete merger was ruled out at this time because of a clause in the constitution that required members of the national and provincial assemblies to resign their seats if they changed political parties). Initially, the DA performed well, taking some 22 per cent of the vote in the local elections (contrasted with the DP's and NNP's combined total of 16 per cent in the general election), and importantly, took control of the city of Cape Town, thereby making the Western Cape province the opposition's key stronghold.

However, the coalescence of the DP and the NNP was never a viable enterprise. It was not just that Leon overshadowed Marthinus van Schalkwyk, who had succeeded former President de Klerk as leader of the NNP prior to the general election, politically and personally. It was rather more that the two parties had very different philosophies, ambitions and party traditions. No love had been lost between them previously, when the DP's critique of the NP government on liberal grounds had been portrayed by the latter as, variously, disloyal to South Africa, undermining of white unity, and indeed as anti-Afrikaner. Nor did the NNP easily take to the task of opposition. Not only had the long experience of the DP in opposition equipped it to play that role far more effectively, but the NNP's long years in government had seen its internal politics revolve around position and patronage rather than principle and ideas. It was not long, therefore, before rumblings were heard on the NNP benches that decisions within the alliance were being taken by a small DP caucus around Leon, and that NNP views were being ignored. Hence it was that the NNP was soon looking for a way out of the trap that it had sprung upon itself.

The opportunity for breaking from the DA was provided by unedifying events in the Western Cape. The DA mayor of Cape Town, Peter Marais of the NNP, a populist Coloured politician determined to build himself a political base independent of the DA, was found to have rigged a local referendum to name two of the town's historic streets after Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. He was dismissed as mayor by Leon, but bounced back after winning a court

case on a technicality, and thereafter launched a crusade to take the NNP out of the DA. In turn, Van Schalkwyk swiftly decided to join Marais in jumping ship, and hopped aboard a life raft now offered to them by the ANC, which for its part, was hugely resentful about its exclusion from provincial and local power in the Western Cape, a province it depicted as still 'unliberated'.

The deal which was now forged between the ANC and the NNP saw the two parties forming a coalition in November 2001 to take control of the Western Cape at provincial level, with the NNP also rejoining the government at national level. At city level, however, the situation was made more complicated by the fact that, because during the 1999 local government elections the NNP and DP had fought together as the DA, NNP municipal councilors who wished to cross the floor to join with the ANC were constrained by the anti-defection clause in the constitution which had been included to maintain the integrity of proportional representation (which uncontrolled floor crossing would undermine) and because of the political instability which floor crossings had caused in a number of African countries following political independence.

When revising the constitution, the Constituent Assembly had qualified the anti-defection clause by a provision that stated that an ordinary act of parliament might be passed to allow members to leave the parties under whose banner they had been elected without losing their seats, rather than such a change having to be effected through much more complicated procedures for amending the constitution. This provided the gap that the ANC now needed. In short order, it proceeded to pass bills (for national and provincial, and for local government levels) which would enable floor crossing, albeit at pre-ordained windows of opportunity, so long as those crossing the floor constituted ten per cent or more of a political party's representation in the given forum. This proposed legislation was challenged in the Constitutional Court by the opposition United Democratic Movement (UDM), which feared a drain of its MPs to the ANC. In the event, when the court ruled on the admissibility of the legislation, the UDM's fears were justified, as it was to immediately lose 10 of its 14 sitting members. Similarly, the DA lost control to NNP-ANC coalitions of over half of the councils over which it had won control in the recent local elections,

including Cape Town, the major plum (Southall/Daniel 2005).

**Table 1**  
Parties by ideology

	Founding date	Present Situation		
		GA, GS, GJ	O	NR
<b>Religious</b>	African Christian Democratic Party (1993)		X	
<b>Rural/landowner</b>				
<b>Liberal</b>	Democratic Alliance (1996)		O	
<b>Conservative</b>				
<b>Labour</b>				
<b>Ethnic/Regional</b>	Freedom Front (1993) Inkatha Freedom Party (1975) Minority Front (1993) United Christian Democratic Party (1999) United Democratic Movement (1997?)	GJ	O O O O	
<b>Nationalist</b>	African National Congress (1912) Azanian People's Organisation (1978) Pan-Africanist Congress (1959)	GS GJ	 O	
<b>Others</b>	Independent Democrats (2003)		O	

Subsequently, the floor-crossing legislation, which systematically disadvantages smaller parties (for whom a single defector may constitute the required ten per cent representation in a given forum) has worked consistently to the advantage of the ANC, which through its potential to offer patronage has attracted notable numbers of defectors from other parties at national level. This has significantly undermined the viability of several minor opposition

parties and has enabled the ANC to expand its majorities at all three levels of government. For instance, in the 2002 municipal floor crossing, which saw the DA lose 417 councillors, the ANC gained 104. In the 2003 floor crossing, the ANC increased its majority to two-thirds at the expense of the UDM in the National Assembly, while gaining control of the Western Cape provincially and increasing its representation by three in KwaZulu-Natal. Then, at local level in 2004, 330 councillors (mainly from the NNP) out of a grand total of 460 defectors, crossed to the ANC (Faull 2006).

ANC political dominance was subsequently to be confirmed by the outcome of the 2004 general election, when it increased its majority to just under 70 per cent of the vote, and now found its way into power in all nine provinces. In contrast, the NNP took only 1.65 per cent of the vote, and opted to dissolve itself into the ANC. All its seven MPs switched to the ANC during the post-2004 general election floor crossing, signalling the final end of the road for the party of apartheid.

The South African party system is distinguished by four historical and ideological blocs (see Southall 2002):

Relevant parties

- The major bloc is the nationalist one. It is dominated by the ANC, which was founded in 1912 as an African nationalist movement. During the 1950s, the ANC moved into strategic alliances with other congress parties (the Indian Congress parties, the Coloured People's Congress, and the (white) Congress of Democrats) before its banning in 1960. In the early 1990s, when it was unbanned, the ANC presented itself as a party espousing 'non-racialism'. However, to this day, it continues to display tension between its commitments to non-racialism and Africanism, its commitment to the 'national democratic revolution' recognising that Africans were the racial group most oppressed under apartheid. Its ideological position is rendered more complicated by its being in a formal relationship with the South African Communist Party (SACP), which in practice operates as a 'left pressure group' within the ANC. It has a number of acknowledged members in parliament, but they were all elected on the ANC party list and sit as ANC MPs. The ANC is a member of the social democratic Socialist International, yet given both its emerging status as a

party of black business and its historical relationship with the SACP, only very ambiguously so.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) split from the ANC in 1959, claiming the domination of the latter by white communists. It has remained strongly Africanist in orientation, despite claiming to be open to all South Africans who identify with being African.

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) emerged out of the Black Conscious Movement of the 1970s and espouses socialist ideology. Again, although formally open to all, it is Africanist in practice.

- The Democratic Alliance (DA) is the formal representative of liberalism in South Africa today, coming from a long line of small predecessor parties which upheld liberal values amongst (the mainly English-speaking) white population and in parliament. The DA is member of the Liberal International.

The Independent Democrats, founded by former PAC politician Patricia De Lille, espouses various liberal causes, yet rests uncertainly in this camp, being a combination of a personal vehicle for De Lille and a political vehicle for Coloureds in the Western Cape (especially) who are disillusioned with both the ANC and DA.

- Four parties returned to parliament in 2004 constitute a varied *ethnic/regional* bloc. By far the most significant is the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which as the Inkatha movement ruled the KwaZulu ethnic homeland from the early 1970s, yet simultaneously claimed to be a national party fighting against apartheid. Its national leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, has continuously straddled this ambiguity. However, support for the IFP, which is overwhelmingly located amongst Zulus in KwaZulu-Natal, is now declining significantly, and in 2005 an internal struggle saw the formation of a breakaway National Democratic Congress.

The Minority Front, represents conservative Indian interests from KwaZulu-Natal, although is little more than the political vehicle of its two MPs.

The United Democratic Christian Party (UCDP), founded by the Lucas Mangope, former president of the

Bophuthatswana ethnic homeland, represents the interests of a conservative segment of Tswana opinion. The word 'Christian' in its title is designed to deflect interest from its apartheid origins.

The Freedom Front, headed by Connie Mulder, represents Afrikaner opinion which was to the right of the NNP.

- The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) is the sole political party in South Africa which campaigns on a religious platform, and espouses conservative causes.

As stated above, the ANC is the dominant party. It enjoys this status principally because of its prestige as the party of national liberation amongst the majority of the population, who are African.

Dominant party

### III. Parties and parliamentary representation

Through a combination of the national list proportional representation electoral system and the prohibition of members of parliament freely crossing to other political parties (except under restricted conditions as laid down by the floor crossing legislation discussed above), members of parliament are, on the whole, subject to the authority of their party leaderships if they wish to secure an electable position on their party lists at the next election. Inevitably, however, the floor crossing legislation has weakened the authority of the leaderships of the smaller parties, and increased the bargaining strength of individual or groups of MPs who threaten to leave their party at the next floor crossing window. Meanwhile, the ANC, in particular, maintains the public façade that all its policies are approved by popular mandate in the appropriate party forums. Expression or publication of controversial opinions not approved by the party will normally result in demands for an apology to the party or disciplinary sanction.

Free mandate

Although the SACP operates as a left-wing pressure group, it does so through the Tripartite Alliance in which, together with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), it is linked to the ANC. Until very recently, its criticisms of the government's economic policies, which it deems to be 'neo-liberal' and failing to address key issues such as poverty and unemployment, have resulted in its being strongly criticised and marginalised by the ANC leadership. However, with Thabo Mbeki restricted to two terms as head of state, a succession

Group discipline



struggle is now raging within the ANC, with the SACP and COSATU having ranged themselves behind Jacob Zuma (deputy president until he was 'relieved of his duties' by the president after he fell under suspicion of involvement in corruption in 2005). This has severely weakened the authority of Mbeki, although at time of writing the crisis within the party remains unresolved.

**Table 2**

National elections results, 1999-2004, by proportion of seats won in the National Assembly

	1994	1999	2004
ADCP	0.45	1.43	1.60
AEB		0.29	
ANC	63.12	66.35	69.69
AZAPO		0.17	0.27
DA <sup>a</sup>	1.75	9.56	12.37
FA		0.54	
FF+	2.19	0.80	0.89
ID			1.73
IFP	10.62	8.58	6.97
MF	0.07	0.30	0.35
NNP	20.55	6.87	1.65
PAC	1.26	0.71	0.73
UCDP		0.78	0.76
UDM		3.42	2.28
Other		0.20	0.75

<sup>a</sup> DA results reported for 1994 and 1999 are the results of the DA's predecessor, the Democratic Party.

ADCP: African Christian Democratic Party, AEB: Afrikaner Eenheids Beweging, ANC: African National Congress, AZAPO: Azanian People's Organisation, DA: Democratic Alliance, FA : Federal Alliance, FF+: Freedom Front Plus, ID: Independent Democrats, IFP: Inkatha Freedom Movement, MF: Minority Front, NNP: New National Party, PAC: Pan Africanist Congress, UCDP: United Christian Democratic Party, UDM: United Democratic Movement.

In all, it is rare for politicians to make comments at odds with the policies of their parties, unless they are preparing to cross the floor. Even then, the reason for crossing is more usually dissatisfaction with party leaders than with the established policies.

#### **IV. Internal organisation and decision-making**

Formal party membership does exist, but in practice parties prove unable to keep accurate membership data. This leads to considerable disputes concerning individuals' membership credentials at times, notably provincial congresses, when voting for party positions and positions on party election lists takes place.

Party  
membership

Party structures tend to reflect the administrative organisation of the country, with parties having national, provincial and local structures, although the ANC – by far the largest party – has regional bodies within its provincial structures. The ANC maintains a formal tradition of 'democratic centralism', with formal decisions by the National Conference being made after discussion percolates upwards. In practice, key decisions are made by the National Working Committee, composed of five national office holders (plus former President Nelson Mandela), 15 members elected by the National Executive Committee, and three ex-officio members. In contrast, most opposition parties, to the extent that they have a serious national structure, tend to follow the model of the DA, which has a federal leadership structure composed of national office bearers together with provincial party leaders. An exception is the IFP, which reflecting its historical domination by Chief Mangosutho Buthelezi, allows the national leader to appoint 25 members of its 100-member National Council.

Internal  
organisation

The larger political parties – ANC, IFP and DA – all have youth and women's structures. However, while the leaderships of the latter typically have representation on their national structures, their influence upon policy-making is marginal, and the women's organisations of the ANC and IFP, in particular, are notorious for being cheerleaders for the national leaderships. In contrast, the youth leagues tend to be more unruly, and at the present time, the ANC Youth League has fallen behind the informal campaign by Jacob Zuma to secure the party and national presidency.

Programmatic work and communication	Party programmes are formally decided by parties' national structures, although in practice such programmes tend to reflect the views of the party leaderships. Political communication in South Africa is conducted principally through the media, party structures and word of mouth. At election times, allocation of television and radio time is done in proportion to their representation in parliament, but politician-to-people contact remains extremely important in a country where a large proportion of the population are functionally illiterate. Media reportage of such meetings is a major source of information for many voters. At election times, posters and leaflets reflect the multi-lingual nature of society.
Power structures	No laws govern the ways in which political parties assemble their candidate lists, although most parties adopt a combination of delegate elections and executive decision-making. For instance, at ANC provincial list conferences prior to elections, delegates vote for names of potential candidates on two lists of nominees submitted by branches for provincial and national legislatures. The resulting lists of candidates are then reviewed by provincial list committees, and then sent forward in an amended state to the National Executive. In addition, a list of national nominations ('national to national') is compiled by a National List Committee from the most popular figures emerging from branch nominations nationwide. Half the ANC's National Assembly representatives come from this list, and the rest from 'provincial to national' lists. ANC rules also require that at least 30 per cent of legislature incumbents should obtain positions on lists high enough to enable them to return to office. Furthermore, the ANC has imposed a quota which requires that 30 per cent of its members in the National Assembly shall be women (Lodge 1999: chapter 4).
Relationship with civil society	The only formal relationship of significance between a political party and a societal organisation is that between the ANC and COSATU, as formalised in the Tripartite Alliance.
Stability of party ideology	The changing political environment in post-cold war, democratic South Africa has encouraged the major political parties to become more pragmatic and less ideological, although the political rhetoric of the ANC, in particular, insists that the party has adapted a consistent ideological line in changing circumstances. In practice, the ANC has made efforts to become a 'catch-all party'; the DA has had to ameliorate its more strident appeals to individualism in an

attempt to attract African voters; and the IFP's attachment to the ethnic interests of Zulu voters has seen its appeal decline. The most ideological party, ironically, is probably the ACDP, which sticks firmly to its fundamentalist, conservative programme.

A major debate rages about the whether South African elections constitute, in effect, a 'racial census', with the major implication being that the ANC captures the overwhelming majority of the majority African electorate, the IFP depends overwhelmingly on a diminishing Zulu clientele, and the DA draws together the support of both liberal and conservative whites, while the minor parties appeal to tiny minorities (for example the FF to conservative Afrikaners). Most analysts today argue the growing impact of class and other forms of differentiation upon voting patterns. Nonetheless, voting patterns continue to betray very significant racial characteristics. However, because race and class continue to coincide, a party like the DA, whose appeal is mostly to whites, tends to draw the bulk of its support from the better off.

Voter-clientele and milieu

## V. General assessment

The indications are that the level of formal political participation in democratic South Africa is declining. In the general election of 2004, the percentage of valid votes cast was 75.5 per cent of a registered electorate of 20,674,926, down from 87.1 per cent of a registered electorate of 18,335,224 in the election of 1999. Although such levels of voter participation remain high compared to those in many established democracies, optimism needs to be qualified by the following indicators (Southall/Daniel 2005):

Major obstacles

- Only 57 per cent (15,833,554) of all estimated potentially eligible voters (27,438,897) cast ballots
- That is, 6.76 million eligible voter had inadvertently or deliberately remained unregistered as voters with the IEC
- 5.06 million registered voters stayed away from the polls.

There are as yet no firm findings as to why 40 per cent of the eligible population failed to participate in the election. However, survey findings such as those of Afrobarometer

indicate massive distrust of politicians.<sup>3</sup> Further speculation suggests that many opposition voters feel overwhelmed by ANC dominance, and think that their votes do not make a difference. In contrast, declining popular support for the ANC appears to be related to perceived 'lack of delivery' by government and extensive reported corruption amongst especially ANC politicians at all levels. The obverse of this is that the ambitious may well view participation in the affairs of the ANC as the principal route to personal wealth.

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<sup>3</sup> Afrobarometer survey, cited in: *Mail & Guardian*, December 13-19, 2002.

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