

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

SOUTH AFRICA

KELVIN OKUNDAYE

June 2019

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Election Post Mortem

FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO A CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

On 29 of May 2019, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CFCR) jointly hosted a panel conference discussing the key points of the 2019 South African General Election results. The event was the first in a series of breakfast discussions in 2019.

The event featured prominent experts and a Q&A round with the audience.

Christine Botha, the Centre for Constitutional Rights' Acting Director welcomed the viewers and introduced the critical questions on the future of South African politics that were to be addressed in the panel. By drawing a link to German history, Christiaan Endres, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Project Manager, noted in his welcoming remarks the importance of fostering democracy in order to preserve it, and how events like these contribute to democracy.

The Significance of the Election Outcomes and the New Power Structure

The first speaker of the morning, Dr. Theuns Eloff, Executive Director of the FW de Klerk Foundation, assessed the main results of this year's General Elections. The ANC, though experiencing losses, was still able to put Cyril Ramaphosa in a position to fulfill his mandate of reform. The DA did not capture ANC losses, but rather suffered themselves as many of their Afrikaans voters turned to the FF+ who, they felt, better protected their language and cultural interest. Meanwhile, the electoral rise of the EFF was much smaller than expected. Eloff noted an interesting point, describing the IFP gains as following on from Zulu traditionalism on the land question.

Dr. Eloff then addressed the question of how South Africa can find a way back to be-

come a constitutional democracy. Among other factors of good governance, he mentioned the importance of economic policies that create jobs and benefit the poor. Overall, education, health, and safety levels must be improved. Responsibility lies however also with civil society, businesses and churches to enhance greater national cohesion and recognize the rights of minorities.

On the political side, Eloff depicted President Ramaphosa's power structure as essential factor on the way to a constitutional democracy. While his legitimacy as president has improved from being just an interim president to democratically elected by 55.7 percent of the population, his rule ultimately lies on three power bases: 1) The Luthuli House, in which political opponent Ace Magashule has strong influence, 2) the ANC caucus in Parliament, which seems to support Ramaphosa, and 3) the legal power base anchored in the Constitution, namely the NDPP, the Hawks, the Courts and the Chapter Nine institutions.

Managing these three power bases will be the determining factor in Ramaphosa's legacy as president and thus Eloff suggest three possible ten-year-scenarios for South Africa and their probability: 1) At a 65 percent probability - Ramaphosa is able to consolidate his power base and his reforms will have the intended impact, hence Ramaphosa will be reelected for a second term. South Africa will eventually revert back to a constitutional democracy. 2) Much less probable at 10 percent - The Zuptoids from Luthuli House undermine Ramaphosa's rule, leading to his redeployment. The country will fare much worse, causing the ANC to lose votes and, ultimately, an opposition coalition to take over government after the 2024 elections. 3) At 25 percent - Rama-

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phosa is tolerated by the Zuptoids and stays in office while their corrupt activities continue. South Africa may therefore gradually move away from a constitutional democracy but an opposition coalition might take over by 2029.

Unpacking the Voter Turnout

The next speaker, Senior Project Leader of the IJR's South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB), was Elnari Potgieter. She focused on the conclusions that can be drawn from this year's voter turnout. Commencing with the structure of the electorate, she summarized that of the 35.4 million possible voters, only 26,9 registered to vote - a 75 percent registration rate. Of those, only 17.7 million actually voted, making it 65 percent of registered voters but only 47 percent of the eligible voting population. Potgieter also pointed out the interestingly high number of spoilt votes, which would have made up five seats in the National Assembly if they had been given to a single party. The majority of the electorate is female and is missing young people.

To better understand the statistics, Potgieter then shifted the focus on the question of what affects voting behavior. She identified three major points: 1) The individual capability to vote in terms of resources. 2) The will and motivation to vote, shaped through socialization and knowledge of the democratic system. 3) The trust in the system and its institutions, and hence the political efficacy to make one's vote matter. Potgieter additionally revealed further numbers from the Barometer. 51 percent of respondents do not believe their vote can make a difference, while 25 percent feel no affiliation with any party. The results display a developing disconnection from the voting process, however, two-thirds of those polled still display general support for democracy in saying that the constitution must be upheld. Potgieter believes this to be evidence of a change in the means of political participation, rather than a depoliticalization. Further polls cited say that while social media still plays a minor role, media as a whole is considered a monitoring watchdog tool and the most trusted institution for political in-

formation. Potgieter concluded that the integrity of media is hence indispensable to a constitutional democracy, and to build a forum for a multiplicity of voices.

The Loss of Accountability

The last speaker of the trio, Wayne Duvenage, the Chief Executive Officer of the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA), presented his take on the effects corruption has had on South Africa. The country lost at least 550 billion Rands due to a culture of corruption in which looting has become to status quo in both private and public spheres. The poor are the ones harmed the most when non-delivery of promised services like sanitary infrastructure or educational resources becomes accepted. Duvenage exemplified that because of corrupt looting, building a power station in South Africa is three times more costly as in comparable countries. The government though continues to pay these prices, with parliamentarians willing to "look away". However, Duvenage also believes that the country has not yet hit a point of no return and that the election of Ramaphosa will give new hope to the implementation of anti-corruption strategies. These strategies must contain not only a reduction of Ramaphosa's cabinet but also a change of culture in which transparency is normalized and public services are held accountable. The narrative that "make whistleblowing sexy" must be promoted, and the rule of law be strengthened. Likewise, economic policies should remain Western-friendly in order to generate more jobs and taxpayers and simultaneously reduce taxes. Bail-outs through government institutions must be halted, while a five percent growth rate should be targeted. Duvenage concluded by suggesting that the momentum for this progression will depend on Ramaphosa's leadership and his ability to get the nation behind him on these matters.

An engaged discussion with the audience followed the contributions and included interesting remarks and questions. Issues like the role of social media, minorities in South Africa, the creation of a "None of the Above"-voting ballot spot, and the context of democracy in South Africa were examined under the moderation of Rebecca

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Sibanda from the Centre for Constitutional Rights. Christine Botha then concluded the event by summarizing the key points of the morning, and thanking the audience, partners, delegates and speakers.



Impressum

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.
Europäische und internationale
Zusammenarbeit

Auslandsbüro Südafrika
KAS Liaison Office Kapstadt

36 Long Street, 6th Floor
P.O. Box 5294
Telefon +27(0)21 422 3844
Fax +27(0)21 422 1733
info@kapstadt.kas.de