

# **The ANC and the development of party politics in modern South Africa.**

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## Introduction

Political parties are important agencies in making democracies work. In most advanced democratic polities they supply the main channels for rendering executives accountable and representing public concerns. Studies of democratic consolidation have revived academic interest in the evolution of party systems in developing countries. Stable democracies depend on well-institutionalized party systems in which “rules and regularities in how parties compete are widely observed”<sup>1</sup>. Such systems depend upon the existence of organizations with firm social followings, ideological predictability, good connections with interest groups, and possessing their own corporate identity, independent of the personalities at their helm. In a fully developed party system, parties rather than independent individuals contest elections, the same parties compete in elections nationwide and win the majority of votes (as opposed to regional groups receiving the greater share of votes), and these parties persist from one election to another<sup>2</sup>.

Strong democracies, then, benefit from strong parties. What distinguishes strong parties from weak organizations? Strong parties attract committed and durable support. They are well organized “when there is effective communication concerning party matters across different levels” of the party hierarchy,<sup>3</sup> and, if strength is to be equated with democratic criteria, when communication can occur between units at the same level of party organization. One influential authority suggests that the key indications of party strength are when an organization can survive its charismatic founder, when it has organizational complexity and depth as well as links with functional associations (trade unions, student bodies, etc.), and when its activists identify with the party emotionally and morally rather than merely viewing the party as an instrument to achieve career advancement or other objectives. A good sign of this latter quality is of the party can retain within its full time bureaucracy talented leaders when its officials are in government<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, Stanford University press, Stanford, 1995, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Pradeep Chhibber, *Democracy without Associations*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1971, p. 412.

Competitive democracies require that more than one political organization shares many if not all of these characteristics. In predominant party systems, that is, political environments in which a major party competes for office with much smaller ineffectual groups, once in power over time the main party is likely to lose many of the attributes of strength. Successive overwhelming electoral victories reduce the importance of the party's activists and hence the influence of membership over leaders.<sup>5</sup> Parties that remain in office for lengthy periods often become more subject to factionalism, that is conflict between informal groupings within the party constituted around particular leaders, as the party's capacity to control public appointments and direct state contracting becomes ever more deeply entrenched and hence the power of party notables as patrons more pronounced. Political appointments can blur the boundaries between party and state to such a degree that the party loses its capacity to reflect the preoccupations of citizens. Developments in modern political campaigning, particular in the use of television as a means of reaching voters, helps to diminish the importance of party organization, especially in the case of dominant parties that may enjoy privileged access to public broadcasting. Dominant parties may attempt to resist organizational decay through attempting to maintain internal democratic procedures but parties in government office rarely expand the social scope of policy making and most analysts concur that parties in power become less likely to obey their own governance conventions<sup>6</sup>.

Parties in office, both in pre-dominant party systems or in more competitive contexts, may be more or less vulnerable to these kinds of degeneration, though. Obviously the degree to which political patronage is institutionalized is one important factor in encouraging or retarding the emergence of personal factionalism. Factionalism can also be the product of particular electoral systems, those that allow intra-party candidate preference voting for example<sup>7</sup>. Strong control of the party by its parliamentary and government leaders, as in India from the 1950s, can turn the party into an organization completely preoccupied with the struggle for public positions, and this too can generate a high degree of intra party conflict.<sup>8</sup> The blurring of state party boundaries can be especially dangerous in a context in which the identity of party supporters is especially fixed along lines of social cleavage because the stakes in electoral competition become very high indeed as they do if the main contenders are ideologically very polarized. State party conflation is especially likely when parties perceive their role as that of a hegemonic movement with an epochal transformational mission. Such groups are less likely to recognize the legitimacy of their opponents and to understand rules and procedures as representing principles rather than mere instruments to facilitate their hold on power. Hegemonic parties are absolutist (rather than relativist or secular) in ideological orientation, their mission is to build a more advanced social order and "the party is the highest political value including state, nation,

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<sup>5</sup> Kay Lawson, "Political parties and party competition" in Joel Krieger (ED), *Oxford Companion to the Politics of the World*, second edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 671.

<sup>6</sup> Avery Leiserson, *Parties and Politics: An Institutional and Behavioral Approach*, Alfred KA Knopf, New York, 1958, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> Mainwaring and Scully, *op cit*, p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> Chhibber, *op cit*, pp. 68-76

family or any other social group”<sup>9</sup>. Hegemonic parties often mobilize around powerful collective identities rather than structured organization and affect a plebiscitarian leadership style that emphasizes direct linkages between governors and citizens in place of the conventions of representative democracy<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Leiserson, *op cit*, p. 220.

<sup>10</sup> Mainwaring and Scully, *op cit*, pp. 200.

The emphasis in this brief discussion on the characteristics of one party predominant democracy is prompted by the frequency of references to post 1994 South Africa politics as a dominant party system<sup>11</sup>. In fact, careful and empirically substantial examinations of South Africa's party politics remain exceptional. This paper represents a modest contribution to such a project. It will first focus on the ANC as a governing party, considering the degree to which it has retained its organizational vitality and its committed active membership while in office. We will then explore the inner life of the organization, exploring the significance of what ANC leaders themselves signal as a proliferation of factionalism and intra-party conflict. To what extent does the ANC behave in the manner of a hegemonic party and to what degree does such behavior threaten democratic stability. Finally we will broaden the discussion to focus on the evolving South African party system. Can South Africans make strong claims about the extent to which they have institutionalized competitive party politics?

### The ANC's membership and organization.

In 1991, after barely a year's legal activity, the ANC claimed an organized following of 500,000. Certain recent statements about membership have been considerably more modest. For example, ANC officials told their parliamentary caucus at the beginning of 2002 that ANC membership stood at 89,000, down from 300,000 in mid 2000<sup>12</sup>. Such statements should be interpreted cautiously. In this case, the ANC was referring to paid-up membership recorded in the new lists produced through a process of reconstituting ANC branches. At the beginning of 2001 branches began to be reorganized so that their catchment areas coincided with the new ward boundaries adopted for the December 2000 municipal elections. In theory, this procedure was intended to produce a total of 3,000 branches. New branches often registered much lower followings, especially after the elimination of "ghost" members from their records, that is names added after the indiscriminate sale of membership cards by competing local leadership groups<sup>13</sup>. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, two membership audits were held during 2001 and branches were reformed after an initial investigation discovered that recruiting agents were signing forms *en masse* on behalf of supposed new members. Senior ANC administrators maintained that this was a consequence of rivalry between supporters of the provincial chairman, Zweli Mkize on the one hand, and those of the provincial secretary, S'bu Ndebele, on the other, in the run-up to the provincial party conference. Ndebele, whose power base is in Durban, recently acquired a farm outside Pietermaritzberg, a purchase that was widely interpreted as an effort to begin taking over Mkize's territorial base<sup>14</sup>. In Limpopo, the institution of the new branches uncovered a range of abuses including multiple membership of several branches as a means through which statistics were inflated as well as a tendency for branches to "mushroom" before conferences, a practice that the rule of one branch in each ward is hoped to check<sup>15</sup>. Active ANC membership tends to fluctuate widely between party conferences and government elections. In Gauteng for example, membership dropped by nearly two thirds between 1994 and 1998, from

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<sup>11</sup>See for example: Hermann Giliomee and Charles Simkins (eds), *The Awkward Embrace: One Party Domination and Democracy*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1999; Pierre du Toit, *South Africa's Brittle Peace: The problem of Post-Settlement Violence*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001, 179-181.; Robert Schrire, "The realities of opposition in South Africa" in Roger Southall (ed.), *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, Frank Cass, London, 2001, pp. 135-148.

<sup>12</sup> Drew Forrest, "Slip-sliding away", *Mail and Guardian*, 12 April 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Jaspreet Kindra, "ANC party membership drops sharply", *Mail and Guardian*, 15 March 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Jaspreet Kindra, "ANC membership being audited", *Mail and Guardian*, 23 November 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolph Phala, "Tloga Tloga: Factionalism: A counter-revolutionary tendency", *Umrabulo*, no. 14, April 2002.

120,000 to 45,000 before rising in the course of 1999, an election year. It seems that during 2002, the stimulus of the 51<sup>st</sup> general conference at the end of the year helped to re-animate membership and recruitment: at the conference the ANC's Secretary General, Kgalema Motlanthe, told delegates that membership was up to 416,874.

The ANC does not habitually publish its membership statistics in detail but insights into the organisation's social composition are available from the report the Youth League presented at its 21<sup>st</sup> Congress in 2001. ANCYL members are simultaneously members of the parent organization and as the ANCYL's definition of "youth" includes teenagers from the age of sixteen to thirty five year old adults, it is likely that its following represents a major share of the ANC's active membership. In 2001, the ANCYL had 102,230 names on its newly computerized membership list, down from 119,883 in 1998. Most of these names were of newly recruited members: apparently provincial records of older memberships were incomplete and unreliable and were still undergoing verification. The largest provincial membership was in Limpopo, 16,912, followed by Kwa-Zulu Natal (15,191), Mpumalanga (14,227) and Free State (13,082). Gauteng's membership was 7,806. The records indicated that most Youth Leaguers lived in small towns and rural villages, that 60 per cent had not matriculated or had left school without a matriculation certificate. Sixty per cent of Youth Leaguers were male and very few branches were active outside African neighborhoods except on university campuses. The largest and best organized branches ("branches in good standing") were in rural areas. Branches in the main cities "had either collapsed or were very weak" as had recently formed branches in mineworkers' compounds. Judging from the publicly available statistics on the distribution of ANC branches, the Youth League's composition is an approximate reflection of the larger organization, with Limpopo and the Eastern Cape registering the highest numbers of branches<sup>16</sup>.

What conclusions can be drawn from this sort of information? Keeping in mind its overwhelming electoral popularity, the ANC is a relatively modestly sized organization – since its legalization its active, paid up, membership has fluctuated between around 100,000 and 500,000 – at its peak about half of the membership claimed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) or the trade unionists affiliated to the ANC's ally, the Congress of Sopotu African Trade Unions. Its most committed following is predominantly rural; organizationally the ANC is weakest in big cities, a trait confirmed in its electoral performance: in the 2000 local government elections, for example, voter turn out rates in traditionally ANC predisposed African townships outside Johannesburg and the other man towns were particularly low, affecting the organization more adversely than its opponents. As the ANC's own researchers noted, ANC electoral support is "most solid in poor rural wards"<sup>17</sup>. But while the ANC continues to maintain that it represents "a disciplined force of the left" representative of "the needs and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of South Africans, many of whom are poor", it has financially become increasingly dependent on contributions from big business, especially, though not exclusively from within the emerging sector of black controlled companies<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> African National Congress Youth League, Organisational report to 21<sup>st</sup> National Congress, 1998-2001, pp. 9-110 and 18-19.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Sachs, "By-elections in 2001: a statistical review", *Umrabulo*, no. 14, April 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Shortly after its return from exile, the organization invested in various business ventures to create its own source of income but in 1997 these were reported to have failed. In the 1994 and 1999 elections donations from foreign governments, the ANC's traditional source of funding remained the main source of finance but increasingly the ANC has solicited and received donations from local business. At the 51<sup>st</sup> conference a specially established unit, the "Network Lounge" invited parastatals and private corporations to set up exhibition stands and send representatives to a banquet for a fee of R140,000 each.

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In 1997, the treasurer general suggested in his report at the Mafikeng conference that R2 million would be the standard donation black empowerment groups should expect to be contributing to the ANC. Though certain companies have admitted making very substantial donations to the ANC between elections (Wyndham Hardley, "Companies lift lid on political funding", *Business Day*, 25 October 2002), reports of ANC offices running up very large overdrafts and failing to pay their telephone bills as well as the closure in 1998 of its mass circulation newspaper, *Mayibuye*, suggest that despite holding public office, its finances remain precarious and unpredictable. For detail on South African political party finance see Tom Lodge, "How political parties finance electoral campaigning in Southern Africa", *Journal of African Elections*, 1,1, 2001, pp. 53-60; Roger Southall and Geoffrey Wood, "Political party funding in Southern Africa" in Peter Burnett and Alan Ware (eds.), *Funding Democratization*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998.

One reason why membership is so apparently volatile is that between elections branches often find it difficult to organize interesting activities. A political report presented to the 1998 annual general meeting of one ANC branch in Soweto is illustrative:

“It is now time to deal with the state of organization. We have met hereto examine the ANC. How well it is doing or not doing in so much as protea Glen is a working class township with most of its citizens in COSATU unions. Membership of the ANC has always stagnated between a hundred to two hundred ever since the branch’s launch in 1992. The support for the organization is (waning) however (because) our people are of the feeling having voted for the ANC there is no reason to then still pay the R12.00 for ANC membership. The consequence of this general support (for the ANC) has rendered to some extent the branch executive ineffective in that people attend the AGM where they get elected and soon thereafter disappear, thus creating a leadership vacuum which is increasingly being filled by people who are not astute cadres”<sup>19</sup>.

In 1998 ANC leaders identified lethargic branch organization as a key concern. The ANC’s national executive decided that a “comprehensive programme” should be implemented in which the organization’s structures “should take a more active role in their vicinities... helping people access grants and pensions, and helping communities play active roles in school government and housing programmes”<sup>20</sup>. In September, Kgalema Motlanthe, the ANC’s secretary-general identified the ANC branch in Welverdacht near Zeerust as a model for others to emulate; it supplied leadership in all community matters, for example, taking up delays in pension payments, running an adult basic education programme, and monitoring the disposal of used needles by the local clinic<sup>21</sup>. Motlanthe’s position, together with those of his deputy and the ANC treasurer had just been made full time (and generously paid) posts. Since 1998, the ANC has made several other “deployments” of prominent political leaders from both provincial governments and parliament to its professional bureaucracy at Lutuli House in central Johannesburg, including the staff of an extensive “presidency”. Two years later, Thabo Mbeki himself was said to be spending up to three days every week at the ANC headquarters. Even so, at its national council meeting in Port Elizabeth in July 2000, officials complained of “careerism, opportunism and corruption” among its officials and declared their intention to mount a “cadre development programme”. At the end of that year, Deputy Secretary General Thenjiwe Mthintso admitted that plans for a membership recruitment drive had been stalled because those in control of branches were reluctant to surrender their function as “gatekeepers”. In certain cases, families and friends had assembled local government candidate lists in the name of branches that had become “moribund”<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> African National Congress, Protea Glen Branch, *Political Report by Chairperson Desmond Mahasha*, Annual General Meeting, 21 June 1998, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Jovial Rantao, “ANC becoming top heavy”, *The Star*, 26 June 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Kerry Cullinan, “The ANC’s Mr Perpetual Motion”, *The Star*, 27 November 1998.

<sup>22</sup> *The Star*, 21 November 2000; *Business Day*, 11 December 2000.

In 2001, the process of realigning branches with municipal ward boundaries was hoped to inspire them with a fresh sense of purpose in which they would become “vanguards of the community” and in which the organization would “reassert the centrality of the branch in the structure of the ANC”<sup>23</sup>. In 2002, the revival of branch activism was to be encouraged by the preparations for the ANC’s 51<sup>st</sup> national conference in December. This was preceded by a national policy meeting in September that apparently received over 400 “submissions” from branches and ANC regions and which itself had been anticipated by 97 regional and sub-regional workshops to which branches sent delegates<sup>24</sup>. The 3000 or so branch delegates attending the December conference were expected to pay a R500 registration fee from branch funds, a requirement representing a very considerable commitment from the ANC’s base structures. Annual achievement awards for branches were initiated at the start of 2002<sup>25</sup>.

In January the ANC launched a “Year of the Volunteer” to “recapture the community spirit of *letsame ilima*”. Each month would be accorded a separate theme. In January, for example, ANC branches would concentrate on repairing schools and branches of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) would attempt to retrieve missing books and classroom equipment as well as distributing admission forms. In February the focus would be on safety and security. The following month, ANC members would try and earn money for vulnerable children. In April, health oriented activities would include door to door visits to help households affected by malaria, HIV-AIDS or TB as well as “clean-ups” near taxi ranks and around open air markets. In May volunteers would direct their efforts at “Urban and Rural Community Development”, working on poverty alleviation projects including piped water schemes and assisting at pension pay-out points. ANC headquarters professed itself to be highly satisfied with the response it received the campaign in the first month, though press reporting since then has been generally desultory. Interview based fieldwork is needed to establish whether the ANC succeeded in meeting the very ambitious targets it set itself. In Gauteng, for example, provincial leaders hoped to mobilize (and recruit as members) 50,000 volunteers. Five hundred unemployed people did turn up at Moroka police station, Soweto, with cleaning up equipment at the beginning of February and groups were organized to help police at road blocks or to accompany them on patrols<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> *Umrabelo*, Special national Conference Edition, no. 16, 2002, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Jeff Radebe, “Overview of the Policy Process”, *Umrabelo*, no. 17, October 2002.

<sup>25</sup> *ANC Today*, 2, 2, 11 January 2002, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> David Matsena, “Residents are taking Mbeki’s volunteerism seriously”, *The Star*, 11 February 2002; Mziwakhe Hlangani, “ANC to rally 30,000 police reservists”, *The Star*, 30 January 2001. See also for reports on the progress of the campaign various issues of the ANC’s online newsletter, *ANC Today*.

Fifty years ago, Maurice Duverger drew a distinction between cadre parties and mass based organizations. In his conception, a cadre party was a selective elite group of notables, financiers and technical experts assembled solely for fund-raising and electoral purposes whereas a mass based party makes recruitment “a fundamental activity” for through such a process it seeks to educate its constituency and select its leadership as well as finance its operations<sup>27</sup>. In an African setting Ruth Schachter Morgenthau made a comparable distinction between patron parties that “usually terminated their structure with the adherence of locally influential notables” and mass parties of social integration that sought “cradle to grave” identification from every man, woman and child<sup>28</sup>. The ANC shares affinities with these conceptions of mass parties. To be sure its financial demands on its members (an annual subscription of R12.00) are modest and represent a very small share of its overall funding, as is the case with most modern parties, mass based or otherwise. In theory at least, though, it makes considerable other kinds of demands on its members, not just during elections in which door to door canvassing remains pivotal to campaigning in black townships, but between them as well. Its idealized conception of membership, to cite Duverger again, is of a militant structured community, activists within a mass-based organization, in the words of a Youth League slogan, “every member an organizer, a commissar”. In reality, though, as we have noted, the ANC encounters considerable difficulty in living up to this ideal of branches as “vanguards of change in their communities” and in 2000 Thabo Mbeki was apparently contemplating the possibility of “winding down” the organization between elections and “winding it up again” just before them. This would make for a “much smaller, less bureaucratic party that would make and implement policies faster”<sup>29</sup>. This would represent a very radical shift in function from the ANC’s traditional view of its role as a popular movement undertaking a much wider variety of activist roles than merely electioneering and Mbeki appears to have back-tracked from such proposals, but he remains committed to the view that the ANC should not enroll members indiscriminately: “better fewer, but better”, he noted in September 2002 at the policy conference<sup>30</sup>.

### Internal democracy

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<sup>27</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, Methuen, London, 1954, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964, pp. 336-341.

<sup>29</sup> Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change: the Political Economy of Transition*, Zed Press, London, 2001, p. 253.

<sup>30</sup> *Statement of the President of the African National Congress, Thabo Mbeki, at the ANC Policy Conference*, Kempton Park, 27 September 2002, p. 9.

To what degree does the ANC's membership exercise control over the organization's leaders? An elaborate constitution, last amended in 1997, commits members to "combat any tendency towards disruption and factionalism". However, members have the right to discuss and formulate party policy and offer "constructive criticism" of any other member or of the organization's programmes. Members vote for national and provincial leaders at conferences, held in the case of the national conference every five years and in the case of provinces every three years. Members are represented at such conferences by branch delegates whose numbers are in proportion to the sizes of the branch that send them. At national conferences delegates vote for officials and national executive members through nomination lists adopted at provincial conferences, though in theory additional candidates can be nominated through a show of hands from the floor of the conference. Provincial nominations for national office are drawn from lists prepared by branches before provincial conferences. Elections are secret ballots administered by an independent NGO, the Electoral Institute. National office-holders must have belonged to the ANC for at least five years. The eighty eight members of the National Executive themselves elect a smaller national working committee. Up to thirteen regional executives within each province provide opportunities for horizontal contact between branches: they are elected at least every two years at regional delegate meetings<sup>31</sup>. Holding the organization together is a bureaucracy of full time officials, 400 or so in 1994 but considerably fewer now. Most of these are employed in the headquarters, Lutuli House, in Johannesburg, one of two office blocks the ANC owns in the run-down central business district. In addition the ANC uses its public funding to maintain about two hundred "constituency offices" shared by councillors, MPLs and MPs. The Youth League in 2001 employed a staff of 40. To a very large extent, then, the ANC relies on the voluntary enthusiasm of its members to sustain a presence in local communities: it cannot afford to pay for local activism or employ local organizers.

In its official discourses, the ANC claims to take commitments to internal democracy very seriously. The ANC "itself should be a learning school of democracy". Leadership should be regularly elected at all levels and should operate in a collective fashion. Though the principle of "democratic centralism" bind lower structures to obeying decisions made by higher structures, such decisions should reflect "continuous and ongoing consultations" as well as a culture of open debate". "When there is a need for a change in strategy or policy we expect leadership and elected representatives to consult and get fresh mandates". Despite such principles, though, it was also the case that consultative decision making was hampered by "ineffective" structures: "Our structures are not used to ensure adequate consultation by leadership"<sup>32</sup>.

That ANC leaders in public office have become less inclined to make decisions through consultative procedures should come as no surprise to those who take seriously conventional assumptions about the ways in which the internal politics of parties develop. These suggest that voters in general are less predisposed in favour of radical social reform than activists. Leaders to both secure and retain political office will pursue gradualist programmes and while doing so will seek to restrain their rank and file and limit the scope of democratic procedures within their organizations. Herbert Kitschelt has argued that this tension between an "ideological" activist community and a "pragmatic" electorally oriented leadership is most likely in situations in which parties are "loosely coupled", that is when "parties impose few constraints on the militants' participation in meetings and decision-

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<sup>31</sup>African National Congress, *Constitution*, as adopted at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference, Mafikeng, December 1997.

<sup>32</sup>"Organizational democracy and discipline in the movement", *Umrabulo*, no. 3, July 1997.

making processes”but also when “political authority is not confined to a small group of representatives elected by the militants”. In such organizations, access to middle level positions (such as delegate status at conferences) is relatively open but party conferences have limited authority, and both the party executive and party members in government are insulated from the activist community<sup>33</sup>. During Thabo Mbeki’s leadership of the organization, two major policy issues have generated tensions within the ANC that have tested very severely any professed commitments to a “culture of open debate” within the party between its activists and its leaders. They both supply good cases for testing the salience with respect to the ANC of these generalizations about the internal democracy of political parties.

### Leadership versus the left.

In 1996 government published a policy paper entitled “Growth, Employment and Redistribution”. Discreetly drafted by a team within the Ministry of Finance and only shown to the ANC’s National Executive very shortly before its publication, GEAR continues to represent the most authoritative statement on the state’s approach to macro-economic issues, committing it to restraint in public expenditure, speedy deficit reduction, further liberalization of trade, and, most contentiously, from the point of view of the ANC’s trade union allies, privatization of para-statal corporations. Despite apparent unanimity in the voting for those economic resolutions at the ANC’s 1997 conference that echoed GEAR’s prescriptions, government economic policies have continued engender contention between the ANC, the Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU, the main constituents of the liberation movement “Alliance” . The privatization or commercialisation of public services has become the key issue of dissent despite government commitments to consultations with unions over the implementation of what it terms “restructuring” of the public sector through a “National Framework Accord”. Since 1994, COSATU’s membership has become increasingly drawn from public sector unions sensitive to the job losses that they perceive to be the inevitable accompaniment of any reorganization of public utilities. They also argue that under private ownership services will become more expensive for consumers. The conflict has been sharpened by tougher treatment of rent and rate payment defaulters in townships. A sequence of national strikes in 2001 and 2002 in protest against privatization and related policies, one of them timed to coincide with the United Nations conference on racism in Durban in August 2001, helped to deepen the rift between the government and its critics on the left. Though the disagreement is publicly portrayed as a conflict between “partners” it has a profound effect on internal relationships within the ANC, for most if not all of the SACP’s 50,000 or so members belong to the ANC as do the key trade union officials. For example, in July 2000 after a march through central Johannesburg by the South African Municipal Workers Union in opposition to council asset sell-offs, several ANC councillors who had participated lost their seats. To complicate matters further, SACP members are well represented in government, holding six cabinet positions as well a predominating in at least two provincial administrations.

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<sup>33</sup>Herbert Kitschelt, “The internal politics of parties: the law of curvilinear disparity revisited”, *Political Studies*, volume 37, 1989, pp. 401-402 and 410.

The SACP's privileged status within the ANC as a party within a party has been a source of irritation to non Communist ANC leaders for some years. Before the ANC's 50<sup>th</sup> conference at Mafikeng in December 1997 there was a furore about the SACP's circulation of a list of the nominees it favoured for the ANC's NEC elections and the party's chairman, Charles Nqakula, felt compelled to publish a letter cautioning communists from trying to exercise a corporate influence over ANC affairs<sup>34</sup>. In October 2000, an ANC National Executive statement contained a testy reference to "the practice of Alliance partners, increasingly debating matters central to the transformation of our country in the media, rather than engaging with each other in a comradely manner"<sup>35</sup>. In January 2001, the MEC for Finance in Gauteng, Jabu Moleketi, himself a Communist but also a leading advocate of privatization, criticised the SACP for being "locked in a timewarp and ... tailing behind COSATU"<sup>36</sup>. In September, the SACP's Central Committee was reported to be considering a proposal from its KwaZulu-Natal branches that Minister of Public Enterprises Jeff Radebe should be subjected to disciplinary procedures "for bringing the party into disrepute": Radebe, also a Communist, had made a speech in which he had suggested that the SACP supported the ANC's views of privatisation<sup>37</sup>. At an ANC National Working Committee in September 2001, those present recommended that NWC members with "dual mandates", that is those who also belonged to the SACP, should choose where their loyalties lay. An unnamed SACP central committee member who attended this meeting told journalists afterwards that the Alliance might part ways sooner rather than later, a reflection of the ferocity of the discussion<sup>38</sup>. In fact, before the meeting, former Youth League leader, Peter Mokaba had publicly declared that for all intents and purposes the Alliance was dead: Mokaba together with KwaZulu Natal Housing MEC, Dumisane Makhaye and Nosiviwe Mapise Nqakula, the ANC's Chief Whip in parliament, had led the attack on Communists with "dual mandates" within the NWC.

Mapise Nqakula herself, like her husband, is an SACP member but also a conspicuous participant in President Mbeki's trusted inner circle. In the early 1990s, Peter Mokaba as Youth League president had exercised a decisive influence in marshalling support for Mbeki's candidature as ANC deputy president at the 1993 conference. At odds with the SACP since allegations by leading party members that he had been recruited as a police informer after his arrest as a guerilla in the 1980s<sup>39</sup>, he had by then emerged at the helm of the ANC's "African Nationalist" tendency. ANC "Africanists" have generally associated themselves with a right wing emphasis in the interpretation of the ANC's strategic mission of "national democratic" revolution. Himself a successful proprietor of a string of hair salons, Mokaba maintained that the ANC had always embraced capitalist ethics. In a more thoughtful contribution to the ANC's theoretical journal, *Umrabulo* in May 2001, Mokaba noted various lessons for South Africa of the newly industrialising countries of Asia in which "the legitimacy of the state is based more on ability to effectively deliver to all its interest groups rather than on democracy". In such a state the bureaucracy and the political

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<sup>34</sup>Wally Mbhele, "Communists at centre of Gauteng leadership row", *Mail and Guardian*, 25 July 1997.

<sup>35</sup>ANC NEC Statement, 1 October 2000, "Let us consolidate the revolutionary movement for faster change", *Umrabulo*, 11, June 2001.

<sup>36</sup>Gwede Mantashe, Moleketi's outburst undermines SACP", *Mail and Guardian*, 26 January 2001.

<sup>37</sup>Hkathu Mamaila, "Radebe, alliance to top agenda at SACP indaba", *The Star*, 14 September 2001.

<sup>38</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "ANC might oust left wing officials", *Mail and Guardian*, 21 September 2001.

<sup>39</sup>Gavin Evans, "The two faces of Mokaba", *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2002.

leadership is “essentially fused”, the civil service is not independent<sup>40</sup>. “Africanist” discourses tend to have a strong authoritarian element: an ANC “media coordinator” reproved attacks by black newspaper reporters on government ministers by noting that “African values... include among others, respect for elders in society”. She found it “strange” that African journalists could “stoop so low in being vitriolic against these ministers - unAfrican indeed”<sup>41</sup>. In 2001 Dumisane Makhaye was accused of racist behavior in the KwaZulu legislature because of his habit of holding his nose during speeches by white opposition MPLs and his contemptuous reference to them as “*abelungus*”. This was during a period when he was under attack for living rent free in a state owned villa in the Umhlanga Rocks holiday resort. He is evidently held in high esteem by leadership, though. In March 2002, he appeared as the keynote speaker at the ANC’s Mpumalanga provincial conference, telling the assembled delegates that the party (the ANC) was “fighting the West” to keep the Zimbabwean opposition leader out of the presidency and warning them of a Western conspiracy to weaken governments drawn from former liberation movements. South African and Zimbabwe, he noted, were “inextricably linked”<sup>42</sup> - a phrase that was also used in the ANC online newsletter<sup>43</sup>. Africanist sympathy for ZANU was the subject of an article in the bulletin of the SACP’s Central Committee that suggested that pragmatists and socialists within the ANC would favour a more critical stance to Zimbabwe<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup>Peter Mokaba, “The State and Social Transformation”, *Umrabulo*, no. 10, May 2001, pp. 43-44.

<sup>41</sup>Nomfanelo Kota, “Likening ANC to Nats is abhorrent”, *The Star*, 25 August 2001.

<sup>42</sup>ANC Kwa Zulu Natal, *Speech by Dumisane Makhaye, ANC NEC member, opening the ANC conference of the Mpumalanga Province*, 23 March 2002.

<sup>43</sup>*ANC Today*, 18 March 2002.

<sup>44</sup>Bua Komanasi,

In March 2001 an ANC National Executive discussion focused on “enemies within” the movement, and several NEC members confirmed that there were people within the Alliance seeking to ensure that Thabo Mbeki would serve only one term as ANC president. Only one voice at this meeting registered a note of scepticism: Pallo Jordan apparently suggested that such reports did not represent serious threats, historical precedent suggested that the ANC removed only incompetent or weak presidents<sup>45</sup>. A “bilateral” encounter between ANC and COSATU leaders brought into the public domain these preoccupations. A fifty page “briefing document” that had been circulated to ANC branches following a National Executive session in September 2001. Mbeki drew upon this document to complain about COSATU’s collaboration with international left wing forces. He also accused the federation of harboring “ultra-leftist” and “counterrevolutionary” plans to launch an independent political plans as well as working to unseat him as ANC president. Apparently the meeting ended on a conciliatory note with protestations of trade union loyalty to the ANC as the senior Alliance partner and a subsequent encounter between the two organizations in February was more cordial.

During the interval between the NEC meeting in September and the ANC/COSATU “bilateral”, the briefing document was presented by NEC members to no less than 52 regional conferences to which SACP and COSATU members were invited. The responses to the document at these assemblies seemed to have a sobering effect on both sides. According to Jeremy Cronin, SACP Deputy Secretary General, and a principal target in the NWC assault on dual mandates, “the feedback that came back from the ANC from its own base was diverse, but people said we want the alliance (and) leadership was blamed for the mismanagement of the alliance”<sup>46</sup>. Trade unionists, though, learned that any rupture in the Alliance might test their own support; speeches by trade unionists at the regional meetings suggested that “the lower one moves down the hierarchy the more direct the felt connection with the ANC”<sup>47</sup>. A subsequent NEC resolution called upon ANC members to participate more vigorously in unions so as to “strengthen the alliance”. COSATU was later to complain that this injunction has been used by senior ANC people, including Dumisane Makhaye, to interfere in trade union affairs. Five of COSATU’s affiliates claimed that they had experienced “infiltration” by intelligence operatives<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, “Church of the narrowing mind”, *Mail and Guardian*, 6 December 2002.

<sup>46</sup>Helena Sheehan, Transcript, *Interview with Jeremy Cronin*, Cape Town, 24 July 2002, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup>Transport unionist Jane Barrett quoted in Drew Forrest, “A bond not easily broken”, *Mail and Guardian*, 1 February 2002.

<sup>48</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, “COSATU talks with Mbeki”, *Mail and Guardian*, 13 September 2002.

The respite in open feuding was only temporary. In May, the SACP released a paper that contained the most extensive discussion to date of the prospect of a break with the ANC, though it used extremely qualificatory language. "Would it be appropriate for us", the authors asked, "to take into account the possibility that some time in the future the alliance might disband". Such an action would depend on the likelihood of either an SACP inspired but ANC led transition to socialism or - the so called Cuban option - or, alternatively, an independent SACP socialist movement<sup>49</sup>. Communist Party leaders themselves disagree on the likelihood of each option; in an interview with an Irish activist in January Jeremy Cronin argued that leaving the alliance "would be a renunciation of the possibilities of the situation", noting his own efforts as a parliamentary portfolio committee chairperson to "advance a left project on the front of transport". Despite such arguments, the interview attracted sharp attacks from the ANC hierarchy after the publication of excerpts in the press in July. This was hardly surprising for in his conversation Cronin had referred to the "Zanufication tendencies" within the ANC, citing the organisation's exclusion from "key policy formation", the diminished influence of the National Executive, and his own and the left's marginalization by "the Mbeki leadership". These remarks drew an unprecedented censure from the ANC presidential spokesman, Smuts Ngonyama: Jeremy Cronin was a frustrated individual, unfaithful and guilty of spreading deliberate lies<sup>50</sup>. "The African Revolution does not need a white messiah to succeed", Dumisane Makhaye noted in the *Sowetan*. Subsequently, after advice from fellow SACP central committee members and pressure from the NEC, Cronin issued a public apology<sup>51</sup>. By this time, though, ANC leaders were confronted with a rather more serious challenge to their authority from their ally.

In July the SACP held its 11<sup>th</sup> national conference in Rustenberg. Mbeki was to have delivered the opening address but canceled his appearance at the last moment, according to the ANC presidency because intelligence reports had forecast that he would be hectored and ridiculed. Taking his place, Monsuioa Lekota was halted several times during his (fairly conciliatory) address by delegates singing "*Makuliweu Mbeki akafun sithethathethane*" (Let us fight because Mbeki does not want us to talk). Central Committee elections supplied the focus for delegate displeasure. Despite behind the scenes work by party principals arguing against the removal of cabinet ministers who had held positions on the Committee both Jeff Radebe and the Minister of the President's Office, Essop Pahad, failed to achieve re-election. Langa Sita, the party's national coordinator was also voted off the committee, retribution for his perceived change of stance in favour of the ANC's line of "socialism in another 150 years" since joining parliament. Delegates, especially from the Eastern Cape, had apparently been campaigning for their removal for months and there were strong rank and file sentiments in evidence in support of breaking off relations with the ANC. The conference also discussed, though it rejected, a proposal from the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal to field independent candidates in opposition to the ANC at municipal elections<sup>52</sup>. A resolution to

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<sup>49</sup>Thami Ngidi, "SACP to look at possible split", *Sunday Independent*, 12 May 2002.

<sup>50</sup>Drew Forrest, "What Cronin really said", *Mail and Guardian*, 19 July 2002.

<sup>51</sup>ANC officials insist that Cronin's offended his fellow NEC members not so much for expressing disagreement with current policies but rather for various historical reflections in the interview "that he could not substantiate", for example, "some very unsavoury things about the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe" (Kgalema Motlanthe, quoted in Khathu Mamaila, "Pulling back the power curtain", *The Star*, 9 December 2002).

<sup>52</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "Left begins to weight Plan B", *Mail and Guardian*, 27 September 2002; Charles Phahlane, "Mbeki hit by angry red tide", *The Star*, 25 July 2002; Jaspreet Kindra, "Langa's axing shows SACP's new line", *Mail and Guardian*, 2 August 2002; John Mattison, "Leaders argue against cabinet snub", *Sunday Independent*, 4 August 2002.

**establish a Young Communist League elicited delegate approval, a decision that reflected “a realisation that the party needed to be prepared for any eventuality”<sup>53</sup>.**

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<sup>53</sup>Mazibuko Jara quoted in Makhudu Sefara, “Moves to establish Young Communist League clarified”, *The Star*, 31 July 2002.

A two-day national strike called by COSATU in yet another “mass action” against privatization set the stage for an escalation of hostilities. In opening the ANC policy conference on September 27<sup>th</sup>, Thabo Mbeki used the occasion to issue a fierce tirade against “domestic and foreign left sectarian tendencies”. A faction of ultra leftists was working “to implant itself in our ranks”, seeking to advance its agenda through “abuse of our internal democratic processes”. It falsely presented “the national democratic revolution as “being nothing more than a deceitful manoeuvre to camouflage an anti-working class and pro-capitalist programme”. This “ultra-left”, Mbeki continued, had as its “strategic objective” the transformation “of our continuing national democratic struggle into an offensive for the victory of socialism” despite occupying “the same trench” as anti socialist forces (that is, the ANC’s right wing parliamentary opponents) which they claim are their sworn enemies. The ANC was a national liberation movement, “by definition not a movement whose mission is to fight for the victory of socialism”. That was the task of “our ally”, the SACP. Indeed, if the ANC was a party of socialist change, then there would be no need for the existence today of the Communist Party<sup>54</sup>.

A subsequent assault on the ultra-left by veteran exile Josiah Jele and Jabu Moleketi loyally took its cues from Mbeki though it identified its opponents with more precision, referring to speeches by COSATU leaders in its characterization of “an opposition dressed in red” in fact pursuing a blue agenda with its efforts to transform the ANC into a “proletarian organization to engage in a global struggle against capitalism”. The ANC was not planning large scale privatization as the ultra left claimed. The ultra left was ignoring the lessons of history for had not Lenin’s New Economic Policy in the post revolutionary aftermath in Russia represented a limited accommodation with capitalism<sup>55</sup>. The ANC’s Policy Education Unit went one stage further in its identification of the ultra-left, observing that a significant number of the members of the anti-ANC offensive were foreigners - signifying the importance of this initiative to certain international circles. An anti neo-liberal coalition was embodied by factions with the Communist Party and Cosatu as well as the Anti-Privatization Forum and the local chapter of the debt relief movement, Jubilee 2000. But this group “had arrived at the point in terms of which they must wage a counter revolutionary struggle against the ANC”, campaigning on the same political platform... as the political representatives of colonialism, white minority rule and white capital<sup>56</sup>. Not to be outdone, Dumisane Makhaye penned his own broadside against “left factionalism” achieving the unusual accolade of its full reproduction in the pages of *ANC Today*. A grouping within the SACP and COSATU, Makhaye observed, had reached the conclusion that “the national democratic revolution had run its course...(and) the time had come to build socialism now”. Hence they sought to replace the present ANC leadership, opposed the concept of the SACP as a vanguard party of the working class seeking instead its mobilization as a mass party, sought to deny the ANC influence over the trade unions, promoted factionalism and entryism and attempted to turn the ANC’s traditional

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<sup>54</sup>Thabo Mbeki, “The policies of the ANC must push back the frontiers of poverty”, statement at the opening of the National Policy Conference, 27 September 2002, *Umrabulo*, no. 17 October 2002, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, “Document demonises SACP”, *Mail and Guardian*, 1 November 2002.

<sup>56</sup>See excerpts and summary in *Mail and Guardian*, 11 October 2002.

international allies against it. They also guilty of “manipulating” the democratic processes of the ANC to ensure the election of their candidates, through lobbying delegates at conferences with “executive lists”<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup>Dumisane Makhaye, “Left factionalism and the NDR”, *ANC Today*, 2, 48, 29 November 2002.

Though Mbeki's supporters failed to publish any evidence to substantiate the existence of a coordinated ultra-left conspiracy, the elections of provincial executives in the year preceding the national conference supplied quite reasonable grounds for their belief that left opposition to the government's policies was making ground within the ANC. In the Free State, Mpumalanga and the NorthWest, provincial elections had resulted in the election of left wingers or personalities enjoying left wing support as provincial chairpersons, in the first two of these provinces a clear signal of opposition to unpopular premiers appointed by Mbeki. In 2001, anti Mbeki leaflets circulated among branches in Mpumalanga and the NorthWest<sup>58</sup>. The Mpumalanga document complained of a "shift towards dictatorship" within the ANC and suggested that power had been concentrated in the hands of "Mbeki cronies" at the expense of former Robben Island prisoners and United Democratic Front officials. It also contained a proposed shortlist of six candidates for nomination to the ANC's top six offices<sup>59</sup>. In the NorthWest, premier Popo Molefe was reported to be involved in a plan by a former UDF group to obtain more influence on the NEC for "internal" leaders. Molefe was believed by officials at the ANC headquarters to be involved in the production of a pamphlet that suggested that a debate was needed on whether ANC presidents should serve only one term as well as the uncoupling of the link between the ANC and the state presidency<sup>60</sup>. In the run up to the National Conference, the North West supplied a further signal of its independence when it nominated Blade Nzimande, Jeremy Cronin, and Philip Dexter, SACP leaders all associated in the public eye with the "ultra left". The Limpopo conference witnessed quite a close contest for the chairmanship between Ngoako Ramathlodi and Aaron Motsoaledi. Ramathlodi won but the poll suggested quite deep schisms over issues of principle in the provincial organisation for Motsoaledi as MEC for agriculture had been an astringent critic of corruption within the Limpopo government. An earlier rival of Ramathlodi, one time provincial chair George Mashamba, an SACP "stalwart", succeeded in obtaining Limpopo Youth League backing for his bid to win a seat on the NEC<sup>61</sup>. Zachie Achmat, the leader of the Treatment Action Campaign represented another focus of efforts by the left to secure nominations for sympathetic people on the National Executive: Achmat's name was included in the list submitted by the Muizenberg branch in the Western Cape.

In the Eastern Cape a complicated sequence of events prompted the national leadership to invalidate the elections held at the provincial meeting in October. At the beginning of the conference it was discovered that the five challengers against incumbents for the top positions in the provincial organization lacked the necessary nominations from at least ten branches required for candidature. The contenders included the MP, Mluleki George, who was seeking to supplant the premier, Makhenkesi Stofile, as provincial chairperson. George eventually succeeded in obtaining nominations from the floor but he and other

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<sup>58</sup>For the background to these tensions within the ANC's provincial organizations see Geoffrey Hawker, "Political leadership in the ANC: the South African provinces, 1994-1999", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38, 4, 2000, pp. 631-658.

<sup>59</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "Anti-Mbeki pamphlet surfaces in Mpumalanga", *Mail and Guardian*, 27 July 2001.

<sup>60</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "Anti Thabo plot claimed", *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2002.

<sup>61</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "Zuma zooms up the ratings", *Mail and Guardian*, 1 November 2002.

candidates alleged that they had obtained the needed number of nominations but that these had been mislaid by provincial officials before nominations were sent for auditing by the Electoral Institute. The odds against George's successful election were increased by the conference's organizers' refusal to admit sixty delegates from Lusikisiki in the Transkeien OR Tambo ANC region, George's main power base within the provincial organization. George lost the election with 203 votes compared to Stofile's 398.

Stofile's triumph was shortlived, though. The day after the conference the National Executive nullified all the decisions made at the provincial conference, justifying this action by arguing that too many inquorate branches had sent delegates to the meeting. Stofile would hold office with his old provincial executive until new elections were held three months later, a concession to Stofile that was reached only after "robust" resistance in the National Executive to an earlier suggestion that the provincial organization should be disbanded and placed directly under the authority of Lutuli House. According to one participant, many people at the NEC meeting felt that the headquarters' response to the irregularities in the Eastern Cape was "over the top... there are always these problems at provincial conferences and those who spoke said this was not out of the ordinary"<sup>62</sup>. A task team consisting of a dozen cabinet ministers and other ANC notables (including Dumisani Makhaye) would visit all the provincial branches to ensure that the delegates to represent the province at the national conference were elected properly. This was not the first intervention by national leadership into the affairs of the provincial organisation: a task team was needed to secure peaceful elections in the OR Tambo region, an area that had been affected by rivalries between Stofile and George supporters that had resulted in the formation of two parallel sets of branches during the realignment of local party structures with ward boundaries.

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<sup>62</sup>Ranjeni Munusamy, "How Mbeki brought the unruly premier to heel", *Sunday Times*, 24 November 2002.

Though national leadership probably had good procedural grounds for exerting its authority in the province, as well as well justified anxieties about the quality of its public administration and political leadership, locally many activists interpreted such moves as motivated by ideological considerations: Stofile enjoys support from COSATU and the SACP whereas George is perceived to be more conservative. The investigation of national conference delegates credentials resulted in the reduction by one third of the Eastern Cape's delegation to Stellenbosch, a significant loss for the left in a context in which as one Communist Party member observed: "we (the SACP) and the ANC have a symbiosis here, we are one"<sup>63</sup>. Govan Mbeki's funeral in Port Elizabeth provided a telling instance of the SACP's local popularity. Govan Mbeki was an iconic figure within the Communist Party but the funeral arrangements were firmly controlled by the Mbeki family and no SACP speakers appeared on the programme. This omission was not lost on the mourners who greeted a message from the Chinese Communist Party with an "overwhelming shout of approval" and the song, "Speak, Nzimande, speak", an incident that later prompted allegations that the party had orchestrated a "left conspiracy"<sup>64</sup>. Adding conviction to activist suspicions that an ideologically prompted purge was in progress was the NEC's injunction to Stofile to sack three of his MECs: Phumelo Masualle, Ncumisa Kondlo, and Stone Sizani, the popular chair of the ANC's Nelson Mandela (Port Elizabeth) region, in which the SACP had effectively taken control of the executive after elections in July. Ostensibly this demand arose from concerns about corruption and maladministration: Sizani's department was the focus of well publicized cabinet displeasure earlier in the year. However, in firing Masualle and Kondlo (Sizani resigned voluntarily) Stofile made it quite clear he was acting under pressure, emphasizing at a press conference that "this is not about non-delivery"<sup>65</sup>. Subsequently SACP members confirmed to journalists that Masualle, the SACP chair in the province, and Kondlo had been the principle figures in the efforts to deny cabinet ministers seats on the Communist Party's central committee at its conference in July<sup>66</sup>. Eastern Cape ANC leaders also believe that ANC headquarters was acting in response to a document it had received from Mluleki George in which he described a plan by provincial leaders to vote GEAR opponents onto the national executive<sup>67</sup>.

One way of understanding this conflict is to view it as the inevitable outcome of the tensions between the militant activism that was so indispensable in mobilizing the ANC's "struggle" constituency and a leadership increasingly attuned to the compromises of parliamentary politics, as Kitschelt's model suggests. That the argument is conducted through the formal cadences of the ANC's programmatic language, still heavily dependent on marxist-leninist teleology, makes it no less bitter. The ANC continues to portray itself to be a revolutionary movement, undertaking the construction of "national democracy" - a still unfinished project despite the "qualitative breakthrough" represented by the 1994 elections. Its declared objectives remain a "revolutionary break with the past". In its clearest statement of objectives, adopted in 1997, it refers to "a social order in which the many positive aspects of the market dovetail with the obligations of citizens to one another... neither a clone of an idealistic capitalist order .. Nor an egalitarian utopia of

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<sup>63</sup> John Battersby and Christelle Terreblanche, "The Eastern Cape of ANC storms", *The Star*, 22 November 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Helena Sheehan, "Interview with Jeremy Cronin", Cape Town, 23 January 2002.

<sup>65</sup> Christelle Terreblanche, "Two leftist Eastern Cape ministers axed, praised", *The Star*, 29 November 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Christelle Terreblanche, "Latest E Cape move ANC revenge for SACP ousting in July", *The Star*, 30 November 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Jaspreet Kindra, "Behind the Eastern Cape crackdown", *Mail and Guardian*, 22 November 2002.

mechanical social parity". In the effort to reach such a goal the black working class is a "central force" but the "black middle strata" are also "objectively important motive forces" of whom the ANC is as much a "vanguard" as it remains a focus of loyalty for workers<sup>68</sup>. Black capitalists should also be perceived as motive forces though they require "mobilization to ensure (they) remain patriotic"<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> *Strategy and Tactics of the ANC*, December 1997.

<sup>69</sup> "Tasks of the NDR and the mobilization of motive forces", *Umrabulo*, no. 8, May 2000.

In exile, though, the ANC understood national democracy as representing a rather sharper break with the past than merely the social democratic regulation and Africanization of capitalism. Though Thabo Mbeki today insists that the ANC has never been a socialist organization, the truth is rather less clear cut. National democracy has a particular status in the conceptual lexicon of the international communist movement as a transitional stage in the historical progression to a socialist order, in the words of the SACP's central committee "referring essentially to societies in which there is very little capitalist development and in which the peasantry is the overwhelmingly preponderant class". This is the way in which the ANC used such terminology while in exile, and in 1979 a key internal report of the Politico-Military Strategy Commission (that included Thabo Mbeki in its membership) conceded "that no member of the Commission had any doubts about the ultimate need to continue our revolution towards a socialist order"<sup>70</sup>. More publicly, ANC and SACP intellectuals were quite unabashed in projecting the transitional stage of national democracy as embodying very dramatic shifts in property relationships: in 1985 a commemorative volume on the Freedom Charter published inside South Africa suggested that under the ANC private property would be limited to small scale services and the public sector would embrace the existing preserves of monopoly capital<sup>71</sup>. If not for leaders, at least for followers, this vision probably continues to remain central to their understanding of revolutionary change. Communists certainly justify their participation in the Alliance with reference to the opportunities that may exist "to actively advance "socialist-oriented" policies and perspectives within the national democratic revolution itself". This is a view that is shared by certain figures within Mbeki's circle. Ngoako Ramathlodi, the premier of Limpopo, and an old associate of Mbeki in exile, observed as recently as 2001 that "deepening the national democratic revolution is equal to opening a direct path to socialism", though here Ramathlodi was referring to the redistribution of wealth to the black majority, an action that ANC leaders often equate with black business empowerment<sup>72</sup>.

#### Conflict over HIV-AIDS policy

The second issue that has prompted conflict within the ANC is less easy to interpret with reference to a parliamentarian/electoralist - militant/activist dichotomy. In 1999 the formation by ANC activists of a new pressure group, the Treatment Action Campaign, was prompted by the government's decision, one year earlier, to suspend the prescription of an anti-retroviral drug, AZT, to HIV-AIDS patients on grounds of both its expense and supposed "toxicity". A TAC protest in March 1999 was joined by two ANC parliamentarians, Sister Bernard Ncube and Salie Manie. Unease about the ANC leadership's policies with respect to the AIDS pandemic intensified when President Mbeki first publicised his personal views about the conventional scientific understanding of AIDS aetiology and subsequently assembled an advisory panel that included in its membership several leading dissident scientists who disputed that AIDS was caused by the human immuno-deficiency virus. A weakened immunity system, the president maintained, was merely the outcome of poverty, and was simply accentuated by the prescription of anti-retroviral medication. Orthodox medical explanations of the illness were rationalizations encouraged by international drug companies. The Treatment Action Campaign was

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<sup>70</sup>Quoted in "What is ultra-leftism, what is right wing opportunism?: The two dangers facing the National Democratic Revolution: Response of the SACP Political Bureau to the Moleketi/Jele document", Bua Komanisi, 4, 2, November 2002.

<sup>71</sup>Raymond Suttner and Jeremy Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1986, pp. 178-80.

<sup>72</sup>Ngoake Ramathlodi, "Social emancipation and national liberation", *Umrabulo*, no. 11, June 2001.

funded by these interests and itself was busy “infiltrating the trade union” movement.

The course of this debate has been described in detail elsewhere and will not be recounted here. What merits emphasis in this paper is the degree to which the President’s apparent acceptance of dissident opinions about HIV-AIDS and its treatment became an issue that divided the ANC. As early as April 2000, the deputy leader of the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal, the MEC for Health, Zweli Mkize, published a statement attacking the dissident scientists on Mbeki’s panel and maintaining that the alleged toxicity of anti-retroviral drugs was “another matter that has been misinterpreted”. Subsequently the Treatment Action Campaign would launch a series of law suits to compel the authorities to prescribe Nevirapine, another anti-retroviral medicine, to pregnant women in hospitals. Against a background of successive court judgements ending in a constitutional court victory for the TAC, a discreet rebellion against government policy accumulated support within the ANC. The SACP and COSATU called upon Mbeki to stop raising questions about AIDS in public in September 2000 shortly after he had outlined his view that “a virus cannot cause a syndrome” in parliament. Their voices were joined by anxious commentary at a National Executive Committee meeting that obtained an assurance that the president would henceforward “definitely try to be quiet about the issue”. In a subsequent concession to a growing groundswell of opinion in favour of the use of Nevirapine, including expressions of support for the TAC by MP Pregs Govender as well as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Nelson Mandela, in October 2000 the Health Minister, Manto-Tshabala Msimang authorized limited trial prescriptions of the drug in hospitals in eight provinces. In early 2001, the premier of Gauteng, Mbhazima Shilowa on his own initiative extended this programme to twelve hospitals in his province, drawing a sharp reproof from the minister. Mbeki’s views enjoyed some support within the ANC hierarchy and became orthodoxy among several health MEC’s, most notably in Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape. Mbeki’s most conspicuous disciple in this arena was from Peter Mokaba, who shortly before his death (probably from AIDS) helped to write a paper entitled “Castro Hlongwane, Caravans, Cats, Geese, Foot and Mouth Statistics: HIV-AIDS and the Struggle for Humanity in South Africa”. The paper suggested that AIDS was a mythical illness propagated by an “omnipotent apparatus” that attempted to exploit popular prejudices about African sexuality. It went on to claim that several prominent AIDS victims had in fact been killed by anti-retroviral medication. In March 2002, Mokaba succeeded in persuading the National Executive to sponsor the distribution of this document throughout the movement. This was shortly after Nelson Mandela had made a public call for the free mass prescription of Nevirapine, a statement that drew a sardonic comment from Dumisani Makhaye who observed in his *Sowetan* column that “the most dangerous opportunist is an honest one, and profit seeking can turn national icons into villains”<sup>73</sup>. Subsequently an editorial in *ANC Today* informed its readers that the movement would not be intimidated, terrorized, bludgeoned, manipulated, stampeded or in any other way forced to adopt policies and programmes inimical to the health of our people... that we are poor and black does not mean that we cannot think for ourselves and determine what is good for us, neither does it mean that we are available to be bought, whatever the price<sup>74</sup>.

At this juncture, though, Mbeki’s supporters on the AIDS issue seemed to have overplayed their hand. No AIDS dissident herself, Manto Tshabala Msimang had attempted to bring members of the ANC’s health secretariat to the NEC meeting that discussed the “Castro

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<sup>73</sup> *Sowetan*, 15 March 2002

<sup>74</sup> *ANC Today*, 4 April 2002.

Hlongwane” document but had been prevented from doing so. Resignation threats by the Director General of the Department of Health, Ayanda Ntysabula, a political appointee, Nelson Mandela’s public expression of his views, criticism within the ANC of the Castro Hlongwane paper, the Constitutional Court’s finding in favour of the TAC and lobbying by two key figures in Mbeki’s entourage, Essop Pahad, the Minister within the Presidency and the head of the government’s communication office, Joel Neshitendze, helped to prepare the ground for an NEC meeting and a cabinet decision in mid-April to expand the provision of Nevirapine with the goal of making it widely available at the beginning of 2003.

Mandela had played an especially key role, expressing his unhappiness over the failure of any cabinet ministers to oppose Mbeki’s views and meeting Thabo Mbeki in February in an effort to resolve differences. Through the remainder of the year, Mandela continued to associate himself publicly with TAC activities, appearing at a TAC demonstration wearing one of their T-shirts only days before the ANC’s 51<sup>st</sup> Conference. His voice helped to prompt NEC opposition to dissident views and the government’s policy on anti-retroviral drugs at meetings in March and April, 2002<sup>75</sup>.

### Party and policy

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<sup>75</sup>Belinda Beresford, “What bent Mbeki”, *Mail and Guardian*, 19 April 2002; Jaspreet Kindra, “Miscommunication in cabinet”, *Mail and Guardian*, 3 May 2002; Khaithu Mamaila, “Mandela and Mbeki agree on AIDS”, *The Star*, 19 February 2002.

This sequence of developments represents a fairly unusual example of a successful challenge by rank and file activists to leadership decisions but in this case, AIDS activists within the ANC enjoyed powerful establishment support including legal aid for litigation, and Mbeki's alignment with dissident scientists divided top level ANC leadership and allowed unusual scope for the critical review of government policy within the movement. In general, though the ANC's leadership invests considerable effort in inducing rank and file participation in policy discussions, the agendas for such deliberations are quite carefully controlled. As noted above, the ANC's 51<sup>st</sup> conference was preceded by a policy conference attended by nearly 700 delegates from ANC branches as well as representatives of "Alliance partners" and "progressive NGOs". This meeting generated 62 pages of draft resolutions for discussion at the national conference. Many of these resolutions were hardly contentious, though, their clauses merely restating and urging support for existing government policy. Their substance echoed the content of a 131 page volume of discussion papers that had been circulated to branches in the August issue of *Umrabulo*, most of these, it seems, the work of NEC sub-committees. An untypically open-ended resolution addressed "strategy and tactics and the balance of forces", that is the ANC's own programmatic vision. Here the policy conference plenary session conceded that there "was a need to disaggregate various forms of capital and define the relationship between the democratic movement and private capital", presumably to enable it to extend beyond the already existing inclusion of "the black emergent sector of the capitalist class" within the "motive forces" of National Democratic Revolution. This was exceptional though, for very few of either the discussion papers or the draft resolutions were written in such a way as to suggest a range of options over which there might be disagreement or debate, and many of their concerns related to quite specialized areas of public policy, well beyond the comprehension of branch level activists<sup>76</sup>.

Otherwise the most noteworthy features of the policy resolutions were their guarded support for the use of anti-retroviral medication in a brief five clauses addressing HIV-AIDS, a reference to the need to investigate the effects of land sales to foreigners, various coded endorsements of government macro-economic policies, and, finally, a fairly ambiguous resolution on state asset restructuring - an evident concession to the left. None of the discussion papers nor any of the resolutions invited any debate on what must have been for many ANC branch members one of the most contentious decisions by their leadership, that is, the recent inclusion of the New National Party into the governing coalition, a development that apparently engendered much anxious discussion at an NEC meeting in January. More importantly, the four pages of ANC constitutional and disciplinary issues reviewed by the policy conference did not include two new rules that were going to be proposed in December. One of these would define as a "serious offence... collaboration with a political organization or party... in a manner contrary to the aims, policies and objectives of the ANC", a measure that was clearly directed curtailing ANC rank and file involvement in pressure groups such as the Treatment Action Campaign. Another amendment to the constitution introduced fresh restrictions on the questioning of party policy by individual members, imposing upon them the "individual and collective" obligations to defend policy positions adopted at national conferences.

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<sup>76</sup>Special 51<sup>st</sup> National Conference Edition, *Umrabulo*, no. 16, August 2002; Special Edition, National Policy Conference, *Umrabulo*, no. 17, October 2002.

ANC leaders often claim that their organization represents a “parliament of the people”<sup>77</sup> and, indeed, the supposedly participatory procedure that in 1955 generated the Freedom Charter continues to supply a key reference point in its own claims to democratic traditions. The process of seeking rank and file policy endorsements that culminate in the five yearly adoption of conference resolutions obviously represent a legitimating ritual that has emotional and moral significance to those who participate, both leaders and followers. Neither in 1997 nor in 2002, though, do we find evidence of serious and successful opposition to leadership initiatives by delegates at conferences. Significantly, in his speech for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ANC, Pallo Jordan chose as his theme “toleration and participation in internal and external debates” as a “core value”<sup>78</sup> in his movement’s history, but all the examples he selected as illustrations predated 1994. In an unusually forthright contribution to *Umrabulo*, Gugile Nkwinti conceded that though “as policy the ANC allows for criticism...its leadership tends to be defensive when responding to criticism. One is frightened to criticize for fear of being labeled as a member of this or that group”<sup>79</sup>. When ANC principals refer to the need to locate policy making within the movement what they seem to have in mind is not the strengthening of rank and file influence over policy formulation but rather the establishment of a politically loyal think-tank that can provide specialized advice to the executive and reduce ministerial dependence on civil servants. Despite a resolution adopted at Mafikeng in 1997, the organization has only begun raising funds for such a project. Meanwhile, ironically, the left wing National Institute of Economic Policy, established to provide policy expertise for the Alliance and originally staffed with economists generally sympathetic to the ANC has been allowed to decline with many of its experts leaving for the private sector during 2001.

### Leadership elections.

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<sup>77</sup>“Preparing for 51<sup>st</sup> National Conference: Responsibilities of branches”, *Umrabulo*, no. 16, August 2002, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup>Pallo Jordan, “A tradition of internal debate”, *Mail and Guardian*, 2 November 2002.

<sup>79</sup>Gugile Nkwinti, “A commentary on Through the Eye of needle and the disbanding of constitutional structures”, *Umrabulo*, no. 13, December 2001. See also: Raymond Suttner, “Fuelling the fight for a free nation”, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5 April 2002.

At the 1997 national conference, delegate assertiveness was more evident in elections than with respect to policy decisions. Several of the senior offices were contested despite Mandela's plea in 1996 to his NEC colleagues that the ANC leadership should be chosen through a consensual agreement rather than by election<sup>80</sup>. The position of national chairmanship was the most significant competition with the Eastern Cape, Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal as well as the Youth League nominating Mbeki's ally, Steve Tshwete and the inland provinces supporting the victor, Lekota, generally viewed as the preferred candidate of the left, trade unions and former UDF activists. Left wingers could also derive satisfaction with the victory of Thenjiwe Mthintso in her bid for the Deputy Secretary General's post over the leadership-preferred nominee Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini, Thabo Mbeki's "parliamentary counsellor". The 1997 meeting was also enlivened by Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's efforts to secure a nomination from the floor to contest the Deputy-Presidency, a position that Jacob Zuma was to win unopposed after the failure of a complicated intrigue involving several cabinet ministers to propose Cyril Ramaphosa as an alternative candidate<sup>81</sup>. Earlier in the year a proposal within the Youth League to back Mpumlanga premier Matthews Phosa for the Deputy Presidency incurred top level displeasure. Phosa initially encouraged his youth league supporters to believe that he would accept nomination. Youth League secretary general explained their support for Phosa by suggesting that his election would "counter perceptions that Thabo Mbeki liked to surround himself with friends and that it would also destroy the belief that top positions were reserved for exiles and Xhosas", hardly sentiments calculated to win top level approval of Phosa's candidature<sup>82</sup>. The League later retracted its nomination and two years later Phosa was removed from his premiership, in what was widely understood as a retribution for his initial willingness to defy top leadership predispositions by challenging Zuma. In 1997 the elections and rankings of successful candidates for the National Executive also testified to the popularity of such relatively independent figures as Pallo Jordan, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Tito Mboweni.

The 2002 elections supplied much more limited evidence of democratic predispositions among the branch activists assembled at Stellenbosch. Given the ANC's recent reconciliation with the New National Party, whose representatives were invited to the conference, the choice of venue itself was significant, as "the intellectual cradle of Afrikaner nationalism", a point seemingly underlined by Thabo Mbeki in his opening speech when he referred to the assembled gathering as "the products of the struggle in which Moses Kotane and D F Malan engaged in". For the top five offices only the incumbents attracted nomination, despite earlier rumours that certain groups would support a move by the Chairperson Monsioux Lekota into the Deputy Presidency and that the left was reconsidering its earlier backing of Kgalema Motlanthe as Secretary General. Nor did anyone oppose the nomination of Minister of Housing Sankie Mthembie-Mahanyele as the deputy secretary, to succeed Thenjiwe Mthintso who had declined a second term on grounds of ill health. Six months earlier the Youth League had recommended that the top positions should not be contested and on this occasion its views prevailed.

Any hopeful contenders for eventual succession to Mbeki who might have wanted to position themselves for the competition for the presidency at the 2007 conference may well have been discouraged by the treatment meted out to former "pretenders" to ANC

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<sup>80</sup>Farouk Chothia, "The ANC's big three look like certainties", *Business Day*, 5 December 1997.

<sup>81</sup>Jovial Rantao, "Will Ramaphosa make a comeback to challenge for ANC deputy president", *The Star*, 18 October 1997.

<sup>82</sup>Ramotena Mabote, "Youth League's backing of Phosa could send shivers through the ANC", *The Star*, 4 April 1997.

leadership in 2001. In April 2001, Steve Tshwete announced that he had ordered a police investigation into the alleged circulation of rumours by Matthews Phosa, Cyril Ramaphosa and Tokyo Sexwale that Mbeki had been implicated in the 1992 conspiracy to murder Chris Hani. Tshwete later apologised and withdrew the accusation. Shortly before this episode Jacob Zuma announced that he had no presidential ambitions, prompted apparently by an NEC discussion in March 2001 of a “whispering campaign” against Mbeki<sup>83</sup>. Significantly press reports in mid 2002 that Thabo Mbeki himself favoured Mrs Nkozama Dlamini Zuma as the next president were followed by no such disavowals: clearly the ANC leadership would prefer a process through which a chosen successor is appointed and groomed for office rather than an open contest. At this stage several provinces were contemplating nominating Mrs Zuma as National Chairperson, a proposal that a Youth League official in the NorthWest was determined by “issues of succession after Mbeki stands down at the party conference in 2007”<sup>84</sup>. Apparently, this proposal was dropped because of concerns about removing the most prominent non-Nguni official, Lekota, from the ANC hierarchy<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, “Tshwete apology: no police probe into plot claims”, *Mail and Guardian*, 7 December 2002.

<sup>84</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, “Zuma zooms up the ratings”, *Mail and Guardian*, 1 November 2002; John Battersby, “Dlamini-Zuma - is she our next president?”, *The Star*, 26 October 2002.

<sup>85</sup>Khathu Maimela, “Housing minister tipped for top post in party heirarchy”, *Sunday Independent*, 22 November 2002.

A document adopted by the National Working Committee, "Through the Eye of the Needle" certainly helped to discourage any effort to orchestrate delegate support around the nomination or election of individual for high office. "Electoral processes", it warned, should "not tear the movement apart". "Quiet and secret lobbying opens the movement up to opportunism". Moreover it was "a matter of profound cultural practice within the ANC that individuals do not canvass for themselves"<sup>86</sup>. With such injunctions against "bad revolutionary taste" it was fairly predictable that senior incumbents would retain their positions without challenge at Stellenbosch. Even so, for the sixty elected NEC seats, 103 names appeared on the ballot papers (28 fewer than in 1997) and the inclusion amongst the nominees of several of the communists popularly identified with the "ultra-left" as well as the omission of the health minister, Manto Tshabalala Msimang from two of the provincial lists of nominations were signals of the continuing political independence of branches delegations at provincial meetings. There were no nominations from the floor, though. The omission of Tshabalala Msimang probably reflected the relative strength of the Treatment Action Campaign's influence in the ANC's active membership in the Western Cape<sup>87</sup>. She regained her seat anyway, fifteenth in the poll, with support from the Youth and Women's league, along with 20 of her cabinet colleagues and 3 of their deputies. Top positions in the poll went to Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and politician turned businessman Cyril Ramaphosa, both of whom did well in 1997. Mrs Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma obtained third position, Pallo Jordan, the most popular candidate in 1997 rated tenth. Mathhews Phosa's election by 1 799 delegates after his exclusion from provincial consolidated "lobby list" of 71 candidates was one of the few significant signals of rank and file assertion. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela won sixth place, a significant improvement on her vote in 1997. Her re-election was despite the continuing troubles of the Women's League and may have been prompted by for her recent reconciliation with Mbeki's as well as support for his attacks on the left<sup>88</sup>. The left could claim few victories in the conference poll, though Cronin, Nzimande and Philip Dexter retained their NEC seats. Their rankings in the voting tally were modest (35, 25 and 41), and their re-election was in the wake of expressions of leadership endorsement of their nominations<sup>89</sup>. Delegates hoping for a COSATU leftist presence on the committee were to be disappointed: the only major unionist to stand, Gwede Mantshe, failed to obtain a seat. In 1997 COSATU principals did not accept nominations and in 2002 this policy was maintained.

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<sup>86</sup>National Working Committee, "Through the Eye of the Needle: Choosing the best cadres to lead transformation", *Umrabulo*, no. 11, June 2001.

<sup>87</sup>Andre Koopman, "Western Cape ANC snubs health minister over AIDS", *Sunday Independent*, 25 November 2002.

<sup>88</sup>Noxolo Kweza, "Women's league backs ANC on ultras", *Sowetan*, 25 November 2002.

<sup>89</sup>Apparently, "Mbeki and Motlanthe told other senior ANC members that it would be better to contain the SACP rather than have its members criticise the ANC from outside the party" (Ranjeni Munusamy, "Mbeki keeps leftists in the fold", *Sunday Times*, 22 December 2002).

A conciliatory address by Mbeki at the beginning of the conference may well have tilted delegates against the left and a vote for those party notables perceived to be closest to Mbeki may well have been a vote for party unity. To Thabo Mbeki's chagrin, Eastern Cape delegates circulated both negative and positive lists naming left wing candidates before the voting began. Spontaneous expressions of delegate sentiment suggests that while the more complicated disagreements between Mbeki and his critics may have been lost on branch delegates<sup>90</sup>, the presidency may well have succeeded in persuading the movement's activist rank and file that the "ultra left" were to blame for the disunity that threatened their movement. One anecdote from the conference is illustrative:

"The most electrifying moment came out of the blue, amid all the singing: a lone black woman in purple attire strode purposively onto the stage, chanting a poem that had taken hold of her whole body. She climbed the short flight of stairs like someone ready to walk to the end of the world to tell her story, her body rigid... Chanting about the coming together of bones, she called upon the spirit of Tambo, who had always called for unity. She sang of her people who were long dead, some unmourned who needed that moment in Stellenbosch to render them memorable in our hearts and minds ...she touched something deep and ineffable in all the delegates and they rose to their feet and applauded"<sup>91</sup>.

Meanwhile, in the domain of policy, Kgalema Motlanthe included in his secretary general's report a sharp reproof to any of the ANC allies who hoped that they could "co-determine" policy as "an alliance in government". As he had observed earlier, "the ANC is one organization. It is not an alliance"<sup>92</sup>. A request from trade union and SACP representatives that this aspect of the report should be discussed resulted in a last minute addition at the bottom of the agenda but, inevitably, time ran out before it could receive attention<sup>93</sup>. Meanwhile, Mbeki's warm reference in his presidential speech to South African National Civic Organization as an ally that needed to be drawn back into the fold could be interpreted as a further relegation in the status of the ANC's traditional socialist partners. During preceding months, SANCO's leadership, as with the Youth League and the Women's League, had taken care to position itself on the side of "Lutuli House" in its battle with ultra leftists. Predictably the most lively debate during the proceedings at Stellenbosch centred on the draft resolution that proposed the "black emergent capitalist class" as one of the "motive forces" of transformation. Despite misgivings amongst trade unionists in attendance the motion was in the end adopted unaltered<sup>94</sup>. Probably the most significant policy outcome of the conference was Mbeki's announcement in his opening

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<sup>90</sup>What could they have made of this utterance, for example, by Joel Netshitenzhe: "This ultra leftism results in all manner of voluntaristic adventures, including the advocacy of impossible and dangerous great leaps forward, which reflects a systematic inability to understand the dynamic complexity of objective factors" (Hogarth in *Sunday Times*, 22 December 2002)

<sup>91</sup>Mandla Langa, "Lone woman's chant helps to heal an angry people", *Sunday Times*, 22 December 2002.

<sup>92</sup>Khathu Mamaila, "Pulling back the power curtain", *The Star*, 9 December 2002.

<sup>93</sup>Sechaba Ka'Nkosi, "Mbekiswipe takes allies by surprise", *Sunday Times*, 22 December 2002.

<sup>94</sup>Christelle Terreblanche, "Centre left is right", *The Star*, 19 December 2002.

address of the government's plans for a "global transformation charter" for black economic empowerment. Black business representatives were conspicuous in attendance among the invited guests<sup>95</sup> and both Ramaphosa's and Phosa's election onto the NEC helped to underline the growing political influence of this sector.

Factions and patrons.

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<sup>95</sup>Marienne Merten, "Whose ANC is it anyway?", *Mail and Guardian*, 20 December 2002.

Aside from ideological concerns, the ANC's internal life is complicated by what the leadership insists is a relatively "new phenomenon", what it calls factionalism, or rivalries between the supporters of particular personalities. Though such competition may assume an ideological dimension, its real causes, ANC officials suggest, are a consequence of the extension through the movement of patron-client relations between local or regional personalities and ordinary ANC members. Leadership justified the temporary dissolution of the Limpopo organization in 2001 with reference to factional strife, that is jockeying for party positions and public office by rival personalities and their followers. Headquarters appointed "interim leadership structures" also replaced elected provincial executives in the Free State and Gauteng in 2001 after feuding between different regional executives reached unacceptable levels of intensity. In Gauteng, for example, one errant group was led by Isaac Mahlangu, until 2000 the mayor of Khayalami metropolitan council until his displacement as a consequence of Khayalami's incorporation into the East Rand municipality and his subsequent "redeployment" to the lesser post of chair of the Gauteng Tourism Authority<sup>96</sup>. Competition for municipal office became especially accentuated in the run-up to the municipal elections because of the reduction of the number of councillors resulting from the creation of fewer local authorities. ANC analysts argue that factionalism is "wholly and singularly caused by corruption... the scramble for power, state resources" and a tendency for comrades to regard local structures as "their own fiefdoms"<sup>97</sup>. All elected public offices in South Africa are today quite generously remunerated and in poor communities the stakes involved in winning or losing such positions are consequently very high. In his interview with Helena Sheehan, Jeremy Cronin illustrated this point by citing the example of one of his parliamentary colleagues:

"... there was an older African women from a rural area, an ANC MP. She lives in one of the parliamentary villages. What happens in these circumstances, because she is the one resources person now in her extended family, all the grandchildren get sent to stay with her in the parliamentary village and they get sent to school in and around Cape Town. So its not just her that has tenuously joined the new elite, but it ripples down to the grandchildren, who now have an option of escaping the marginalisation of some ex bantustan area and schooling for at least a few years in Cape Town"<sup>98</sup>.

The death threats directed at Thandi Modise, an MP who had the temerity to challenge Winnie Madikizela Mandela for the leadership of the ANC Women's League during the League's 1997 conference help to confirm the zero sum quality of such leadership contests in the cases of organizations constructed around messianic and authoritarian leadership<sup>99</sup>. Amongst her supporter base, especially strong in the weakly structured branches located in Gauteng's peri-urban squatter camps, Madikizela-Mandela nurtures her popularity with well publicised demonstrations of personal charity, donating blankets and food in the aftermath of fires and other local emergencies.

In the case of municipal politics, the practice of politically preferential tendering that has now become an accepted convention in all ANC controlled local governments helps to raise the stakes still further<sup>100</sup>. In its "Through the Eye of a Needle" document the National Working Committee complained of "companies" that "identify ANC members that they can promote in ANC structures so that they can get contracts", suggesting that such

<sup>96</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "In-fighting in Gauteng ANC", Mail and Guardian, 24 August 2001.

<sup>97</sup>"Breathing life into the Tloga Tloga debate: a response from ANCYL Limpopo", *Umrabulo*, no. 14, April 2002.

<sup>98</sup>Helena Sheehan, "Interview with Jeremy Cronin", Cape Town, 24 January 2002, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup>"Tight-lipped over claims", *The Star*, 15 May 1997.

<sup>100</sup>John Mattison, "Veterans give ANC shock graft warning", *Sunday Independent*, 29 July 2002.

interests could even sponsor the mass “buying of membership cards to set up branches that are only ANC in name”<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup>National Working Committee, “Through the Eye of a Needle? Choosing the best cadres for transformation”, *Umrabulo*, no. 11, June 2001.

Such charges may be overstated. It is also the case that the ANC tends to denigrate as “careerist” local dissent that may be motivated by quite principled opposition to its policies<sup>102</sup>. However, there are identifiable examples of commercial interests attempting to influence the course of internal ANC politics. In the Mpumalanga Parks Board scandal, for instance, one of the groups tendering for a take over of the provincial game reserves made donations ostensibly to support the ANCYL’s elections through one of its provincial officials, James Nkambule, with the aim of consolidating his control over the provincial executive of the League. More generally, the Youth League has developed especially strong connections with the black business community, owning a substantial block of shares in Tokyo Sexwale’s mining consortium. Rendering personal rivalries more complex is the extent to which they can sometimes align competing groups along racial or ethnic faultlines in the party’s social following - between Africans and coloureds in the Western Cape, for instance, a province in which factionalism is believed to be especially entrenched at branch level. In Limpopo province, Ramathlodi’s opponents in building their following in the late 1990s exploited the feeling that Vendas and Shangaans speakers were either inadequately or alternatively disproportionately represented in party structures and public office. The role of patrons in activating support at a branch level was illustrated in 1998 with the emergence of the United Democratic Movement which in its strongholds around Cape Town, Umtata, and Richmond was initially built upon the wholesale defection of certain ANC branches in response to the new allegiances of local notables. Recent housing scandals in Gauteng involving local government councillors and officials using their power to allocate “RDP” dwellings to kinsfolk and friends supply an indication of the kinds of exchange commodities may provide the currency for certain kinds of patronage.

Even so, and despite the ANC’s own contentions about the spread of factionalism within the movement, there are structural limitations to the degree to which patron-client relations can influence South African politics. Patron-client relations are likely to be most prevalent in situations of high degrees of localized inequality in which landlords expect political loyalty from tenants and wage labourers and in which the state has at best a weak local presence. A rough parallel to this sort of relationship may exist between South African rural chiefs and households dependent on access to communal land but in any case few households are wholly dependent on land. In many developing countries in urban areas, patrons play a positive role in “linking lower status individuals to national institutions, by passing rigid bureaucracies”<sup>103</sup>. In the South African context, bureaucracy has unusually

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<sup>102</sup>See for example Dumisane Makhaye’s reference to independent candidates for local council elections “who thought they were more popular than the ANC (and) behaved like a donkey that carried Jesus Christ to Jerusalem and mistook the popularity of Jesus Christ for their own” in his speech to the Mpumalanga ANC Provincial Conference, 23 March 2002. In at least one local council by election, in Do bsonville, Soweto in 2002, an independent former ANC member won a seat after emerging as a principle figure in the local civic organization’s campaign against the suspension of electricity supplies to payment defaulters (Thabo Mohlala, “Voters shun party politics”, *Mail and Guardian*, 24 May 2002).

<sup>103</sup>Anthony Hall, “Patron-client relations: concepts and terms” in Steffen Schmidt, James Scott,

extensive penetration for a developing country: for example, a universal system of pension cover has existed for four decades. In a context in which citizens derive their benefits from the bureaucracy directly the roles that patron “brokers” can play are limited. To judge from the assertive and critical audiences ANC local government candidates confronted in the 2000 elections even in very poor rural areas, the deferential attitudes to elected officials one would expect in a patronage system are exceptional rather than normal<sup>104</sup>.

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Carl Lande and Laura Guasti (eds.), *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientalism*, Berkeley, University of California, 1977, p. 512.

<sup>104</sup>For detail see Tom Lodge, “The South African local government elections of December 2000”, *Politikon*, 28, 1, 2001, pp. 21-46.

ANC leaders hope to discourage the spread of factionalism through invocations of an idealised selfless “new cadre” but those of its policies that strengthen vertical or top down relationships of power within the organization are likely to strengthen its hold rather than weakening it. The establishment of a national deployment committee was meant to ensure that the appointment of senior elected officials such as provincial premiers or mayors would not result in “the emergence of a corrupt mafia-type phenomenon”. In the wake of the bitter internal leadership contest in Gauteng in 1998, ANC constitutional strategists were determined to prevent “no holds barred struggles for ANC leadership on the part of opportunists who were interested only in personal material gain at all costs”<sup>105</sup>. In his report at Stellenbosch in December 2002, Kgalema Motlanthe admitted that the committee had in fact made some very questionable decisions, especially with respect to mayors in major cities, and after NEC members had raised doubts about its integrity, the committee’s operations were halted.

Rank and file receptions of leadership’s exhortations of good behavior are also likely to be somewhat cynical given continuing evidence of high level toleration of corruption: the “rehabilitation” in late 2002 of Tony Yengeni while still facing charges related to the arms contracting scandal is a case in point<sup>106</sup>. Tony Yengeni’s recent career supplies a telling instance of the kind of cronyism that the ANC leadership professes to deplore. His publication during 2001 of a series of full page newspaper advertisements protesting his innocence in receiving a discounted vehicle from one of the arms contract bidders was paid for by his friend, Mcebisi Mlonzi, the CEO of the Zama Resource Corporation, a consortium that had recently won a controlling interest in the former state forestry corporation, after making a R50,000 contribution to the wedding festivities of ANCYL executive member and top civil servant Andile Nkhulu<sup>107</sup>. In local, regional and provincial and even the national settings in which office holders operate the ANC’s principled imperatives to use political power to extend black control of the economy all too easily become conflated with venal rent-seeking as a consequence of the strong social compulsions to reward or repay supporters, friends and kinsfolk.

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<sup>105</sup>Valli Moosa, “Appointment of premiers is fair”, *The Star*, 16 December 2002. See also the recommendations of the *Commission of Enquiry into Certain Allegations against Mr Mathole Motshekga*, Final Report, African National Congress, National Executive Committee, 24 April 1998.

<sup>106</sup>Though he was on trial facing corruption charges, the ANC NEC included Yengeni in two delegations despatched to the Eastern Cape to assist in organizational matters. He also joined an ANC team negotiating the terms of the coalition with the New National Party. Known as an Mbeki loyalist, Yengeni’s political survival (and his nomination for re-election to the NEC by Mpumalanga, Western Cape and the Youth League were consequences of the general perception that he still enjoyed Mbeki’s backing (Jaspreet Kindra, “Yengeni on comeback trail”, *Mail and Guardian*, 22 November 2002; Yaspreet Kindra, “ANC structures back Yengeni”, *Mail and Guardian*, 15 November 2002).

<sup>107</sup>Sam Sole, “Why yap at Yengeni’s heels”, *Mail and Guardian*, 12 July 2002; Mzilikazi wa Afrika, “Yengeni fails to pay for ads”, *Business Day*, 19 May 2002..

### From movement to party.

It remains an orthodoxy within the ANC that the organization is not merely a political party, that it remains a liberation movement. Through this characterization, its spokesmen suggest that it embraces a much broader constituency than social cleavage-based political parties and that it retains an intimate relationship with different kinds of organs of “civil society”<sup>108</sup>. Today its officials even claim that within its following “the fault lines of the past are starting to disappear”, citing as evidence the establishment of new branches in Pretoria’s Afrikaans-speaking suburbs<sup>109</sup>. For certain authorities this diversity means that the ANC must remain a movement of “debate and political discussion”, for others that such debate must be circumscribed by the necessity to “mobilize and organize all the social forces”<sup>110</sup>, that it should be “a broad movement representing a combination of social categories”<sup>111</sup>, including the white “middle strata”. This kind of analytical distinction corresponds to the more general academic usage of such terms as “catch- all” parties. However, the ANC in its self-conception as a liberation movement is not merely referring to its broad social appeal. It also assumes that its role continues to be one of *liberation*, “of Africans in particular and black people in general from political and economic bondage” and that this goal depends upon its own efforts to transform government institutions and to re-organize economic life. Given the likelihood of resistance to such efforts, as the authors of a 1998 discussion paper noted, the “National Liberation Movement” would have to extend its influence “to all levers of power: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence, the judiciary, parastatals, and agencies such as the regulatory bodies, the public broadcaster, the central bank and so on”<sup>112</sup>. Deployments of ANC personnel to senior posts within such agencies were needed to “counter the influence of the former ruling class” that still “predominated in the civil service, in the economic sector, in the media”<sup>113</sup>. In such aspirations, the ANC has a hegemonic or absolutist conception of politics, in which the “mission of the party is to realize a social order revealed to leadership”, in which the “party is the highest value excluding state, nation, family or other social group” and in which “formal government is merely an instrument of achievement”<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Pallo Jordan, “ANC owes debt to history - and to its people”, *The Star*, 8 January 1997.

<sup>109</sup> “ANC winning hearts and minds of Afrikaners”, *The Star*, 19 December 2002.

<sup>110</sup> Gugile Nkwinti, “A commentary on Through the Eye of the Needle and the disbanding of constitutional structures”, *Umrabulo*, no. 13, December 2001.

<sup>111</sup> Ben Turok, “The ANC: torn between two roles”, *Mail and Guardian*, 10 August 2001.

<sup>112</sup> Department of Political Education and Training, “The state, property relations and social transformation”, *Umrabulo*, no. 5, 1998.

<sup>113</sup> “Tasks of the NDR and the mobilization of motive forces”, *Umrabulo*, 8 May 2000.

<sup>114</sup> Avery Leiserson, *Parties and Politics: An Institutional and Behavioural Approach*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1958, p. 220.

In its heroic projections of its national revolutionary mission there is an increasing air of artificiality, though. Though party ideologues like to fulminate against the strength of “counter revolutionary forces in the economy, civil service, media, courts, etc”<sup>115</sup>, such protestations look increasingly far fetched in a context in which, for example, sixty per cent of public service management is black and recently appointed. Did Dumisane Mkhahye’s audience in Nelspruit really believe him when he told them at the provincial ANC meeting that “our enemies have spent sleepless nights plotting our undoing ... now and again the enemy carries out counter offensive attacks against us using the counter revolutionary network it has built especially in this front line province”<sup>116</sup>. Unlike the hegemonic organizations of the African one party states and Eastern European administrations that hosted the exile leaders of Thabo Mbeki’s generation, the ANC has to limit any absolutist inclinations it may have within the boundaries set by liberal democracy. As its own official programme suggests, “any legal and robust (though broadly speaking counter-revolutionary) expression of the real contradictions in society... should be treated as *legitimate* expressions” (my emphasis)<sup>117</sup>. Though ANC leaders resist the suggestion that their organization has become increasingly oriented to the demands of electoralism and parliamentary politics - hence the efforts to encourage community development undertakings by branches - increasingly the behavioral characteristics of such a formation are evident. They are observable, for example, in the predomination within the party’s leadership structures of MP’s and cabinet ministers, in its occupation of the central terrain in the ideological spectrum of South African politics, in its insistence on its prerogative as the elected government to make policy by itself rather than conceding the corporatist claims of its trade union ally, in its efforts to curtail inner organizational democracy, and of course in the increasing tendency for its activist membership to become preoccupied and animated by competition by rival factions for public office. Moreover, in a liberal democracy with a well developed private sector would-be-hegemonic efforts to extend the party’s influence through society can have unexpected results. As Jeremy Cronin has noted, the “deployment” of ANC notables into important positions in business and public institutions has simply caused a “multiplicity of centres of influence and power within the ANC” rather than the extension of a centralised authority. Not all black empowerment groups depend for their prosperity on government business.

What will be the likely effects on its activist following and electoral support of the ANC’s gradual and reluctant transformation from movement to party. Trends since 1994 in election results and opinion polls supply the foundation for the following tentative predictions.

Election results (Table 1) indicate modestly growing proportions of voter support for the ANC both in general and municipal elections. Variations between the two are attributable to much lower turn-outs in local elections. Voter stay-aways in municipal elections affect the ANC’s support disproportionately because African voters, because of their higher degrees of party loyalty or party identification, are more likely to express disapproval of their party’s performance by staying at home on election day rather than switching their support to another party. Turnout in the general elections declined by 3 million, 18 per cent, because of tougher registration requirements and widespread disinclination to vote amongst conservative whites and coloureds (affecting especially the New National and right-

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<sup>115</sup>Dumisani Mkhahye, “The problem is not too little but too much opposition”, *Mayibuye*, October 1997.

<sup>116</sup>Dumisani Mkhahye, Address at the opening of the Mpumalanga Provincial ANC Conference, 23 March 2002.

<sup>117</sup>*Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress, 1997*, p. 18.

wing parties). The actual total of ANC votes in the general elections of 1994 and 1999 declined very slightly, from 2,485,064 to 2,418,257, a fall-off that was probably a consequence of non-registration of African voters in 1999. To date electoral support for the ANC has been relatively stable though a recent opinion poll suggests that African voters have become much more disinclined to vote as well as more undecided. Black respondents who thought they would not vote increased from 3 per cent in a 1994 survey to 14 per cent in 2002 and undecided black voters increased from nil in 1994 to 8 per cent in 2002<sup>118</sup>. The polling of voter intentions (Table 2) suggests that the ANC's overall total in the next election may decline more sharply though this may be offset proportionately by turn-out declines among other groups who had previously voted for other parties. At least with respect to the next election, it seems likely that the ANC's share of the vote will remain roughly similar to its performance in previous general elections.

**Table 1: National Election Results, 1994-2000 (in percentages)**

	1994 General	1995 Local	1999 General	2000 Local
ANC	62.6	58.8	66.4	59.4
NNP	20.4	20	6.9	-22.1
IFP	10.5	8.7	8.6	9.1
DP	1.7	1.5	10.1	22.1*
Others	4.8	12	8	9.4

\*In 2000 the NNP and the DP contested the election as the Democratic Alliance.

Meanwhile the two “historically white” parties that today draw their support principally from the racial minorities, the Democrats and the New National Party, if considered together, while maintaining their share of the vote in local elections, attracted a significantly smaller proportion of the vote in 1999 compared to 1994, a trend that polls of voter intentions suggests is likely to continue.

**Table 2: Voting Intentions, 1994-2000 (in percentages).**

	9/94	5/95	11/95	5/96	11/96	5/97	11/97	3/98	7/98	9/98	10/98	37580
ANC	61	64	64	63	61	62	58	54	57	51	54	42
DP	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	5	6	7	5	5
NNP	16	15	14	13	13	15	12	10	9	10	9	3
IFP	5	2	3	5	6	4	5	5	5	4	5	3

Responses to various polls conducted by IDASA, the Electoral Institute and the SABC to the question: “If there were elections tomorrow, which political party or organization would you vote for?”. Sources: Markinor, Opinion '99 Consortium, Media Release, 22 December 1998; Marianne Merten, “Voter Apathy reaches new low”, *Mail and Guardian*, 13 December 2002.

**Table 3: Party Identification (in percentages)**

	9/94	9/95	6/97	9/98	10/98	37561

<sup>118</sup>Marianne Merten, “Voter apathy reaches new low”, *Mail and Guardian*, 13 December 2002.

ANC	58	37	40	35	34	
DP	1	1	1	1	1	
NNP	16	9	6	3	3	
IFP	5	5	4	2	2	
Other	8	6	7	4	4	
None	12	42	42	56	56	

Responses to question: "Do you think of yourself as close to a particular party?". Sources: various polls tabulated in Robert Mattes, Helen Taylor, Cherrel Afrika, *Party Support and Voting Intention*, Opinion '99, IDASA, Cape Town, 11 January 1999.

Finally, as is evident in Table 3, all parties except for the Democrats have experienced considerable losses in the numbers of supporters that identify with them closely. This has been most obvious in the case of the New National Party, but the weakening of the ANC's base of committed supporters is significant. Even so, its following of deeply partisan adherents still remains very considerable and is likely to remain a very high - even an expanding - percentage of those that vote in its favour in elections. Given the likelihood of ANC voter disaffection continuing to translate into abstention rather than switches of support to competing parties, ANC electoral support will increasingly stem from emotionally committed and relatively uncritical party loyalists.

Until any other party can build a similarly extensive activist presence in African townships all over the country this situation is unlikely to change. The Democratic Party is beginning to undertake such a project and it began to make inroads into the ANC's urban black support in Gauteng and the Free State in the 2000 local elections. Today it claims 250 branches in African neighbourhoods, 150 of them established in 2001<sup>119</sup>. In Gauteng, peri-urban informal settlements have been focus of its efforts to expand its African following, especially in areas in which the ANC is vulnerable because of unpopular municipal or provincial policies<sup>120</sup>. In the Western Cape, the party boasts 25,000 members, mainly African and coloured<sup>121</sup>. It is these sorts of developments that have lent an air of realism to the party's goal of taking 15 per cent of the African vote nationally in 2004<sup>122</sup>. No other party has a comparable national organization or the financial resources to attempt such competition with the ANC. Its main black competitor, the IFP, is a regional ethnically oriented party that customarily has organized around patrimonial leadership in the countryside: in terms of the categories used earlier in this paper, despite its mass membership its style of mobilization resembles that of a cadre or patron party. It has yet to outgrow the authoritarian style of its charismatic founder and continuing leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Outside the Western Cape in which it possesses a strong branch structure in traditionally coloured residential areas, the New National Party has lost much of its activist base. In most vicinities, the ANC retains its character as an all embracing

<sup>119</sup>Jaspreet Kindra, "Black DA leaders admit race discord", *Mail and Guardian*, 16 November 2001.

<sup>120</sup>Lawley Extension 2 is one such vicinity in which in the aftermath of shack demolitions by the provincial administration and an accompanying skirmish between residents and the police that left four people dead, the DP recruited 600 new adherents, led by the local "shacklord", Patrick Kubheka. The ANC claimed that Kubheka forced people to sign application forms en masse, threatening them if they did not (Rapule Tabane, "Residents join DP out of fear, says ANC", *The Star*, 28 February 2000).

<sup>121</sup>John Battersby, "Leon calls for bold leadership", *The Star*, 15 April 2002.

<sup>122</sup>Thama Ngidi, "DP's long term strategy is to woo African vote", *The Star*, 4 March 2000.

formation, the only available focus of local political leadership, aligned with though also distinct from most others kinds of powerful associational life such as trade unions or civic groups. Until the ANC faces genuine competition for the support of undecided African voters from either an Africanised Democratic Party and/or trade union based left opposition, its transition from liberation movement into a modern electoral party will be incomplete.

### Conclusion

To return to the considerations introduced at the beginning of this paper, what does this review of the ANC's recent development tell us about the state of the South African party system? Well institutionalized party systems require organizations with committed and durable support, consistent policies, well structured internal organization led by talented full time officials, good connections with interest groups, and corporate identities that themselves provide the focus of activist loyalty, independently of the personalities that lead them.

Both opinion polls and membership statistics suggest that the ANC has retained a solid core of committed support, though the reported increase of factional conflict in the party's base structures also indicate that for many members, joining the party may be motivated by instrumental concerns, related either to office-seeking or to the exchanges of benefits and loyalties that characterize patron client relations. South African public institutions, though, are still relatively resilient, and for the time being anyway, represent limitations on the party's use of political patronage. The ANC's remaining hegemonic aspirations are curtailed by liberal constitutional restraints that leave considerable space for its competitors, including the possibility of winning office at subordinate levels of government. The ANC retains a small but professional bureaucracy though it continues to depend on volunteer activism during election campaigns. Volatile but over time reasonably consistent membership statistics suggest that the ANC still succeeds in serving as "an instrument of political participation and recruitment"; this is not yet a party that has become bureaucratized or substantially absorbed into government, in the historical pattern of older dominant party or one party regimes in other developing countries<sup>123</sup>. The ANC's activist following contributes to policy making, though in a somewhat ritualized fashion. Restraints on militant activist influence in the policy domain help to explain for the remarkably swift evolution of "programmatic convergence" in the South African political system given the still recent entry into representative politics of a poor and marginalized majority<sup>124</sup>. Executive structures do exercise a degree of independent authority, at times questioning and sometimes succeeding in influencing top-level decision making both in the party and in government. The ANC leadership is elected though party officials have succeeded in circumscribing the choices delegates make when they vote at conferences. In this respect the ANC increasingly assumes the attributes of a parliamentary party. Notwithstanding its deployment of senior politicians as party functionaries the organization is mainly led by public office holders and has largely abandoned the corporatist predispositions of a social movement in power. Indeed, the degree to which government policy has served to divide the historic alliance between nationalists, socialists and labour leaders that the ANC once represented represents a significant exception to the trend in

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<sup>123</sup>Myron Weiner and Joseph La Palombara, "The impact of parties on political development" in Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, p. 415.

<sup>124</sup>For comparisons see Alessandro Pizzorno, "Parties in Pluralism" in Peter Mair (ed.), *The West European Party System*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 61-72.

first generation African liberation or nationalist party governments in which “ruling elites” seek “to draw in all forms of existing associations”<sup>125</sup>. The party has survived one significant leadership transition since its accession to government and is just beginning a second succession procedure; this is not a formation in thrall to charismatic personalities. Amongst rival organizations there are several parties with lengthy histories and fairly well established support bases, though few of them can claim a nation-wide presence or comparably sophisticated internal structure to the ANC's. That the ANC has so far managed to hold back many of the symptoms of organizational decay that characterize dominant parties that face no real electoral challenge nationally is a hopeful signal that a democratic party system may yet become entrenched.

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<sup>125</sup>“Conclusion” in James Coleman and Carl Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1964, p. 667.