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THE TUTWA BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA'S POST-ELECTION POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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BACKGROUND

The 2014 general elections are important for a number of reasons. They mark two decades since the first democratic elections took place on April 27th, 1994. Second, it will be the first time that President Jacob Zuma's record is tested at the ballot since he assumed the reins as president in May 2009. Third, and as was the case during the 2009 general elections, the African National Congress (ANC) is facing a new electoral challenge from a breakaway group purporting to represent the far left and young black voters. Nonetheless, it is likely the ANC under President Zuma will be returned with a majority of votes.

South Africa has a party-list proportional representation electoral system. Political parties develop lists of candidates to represent them in the National Assembly (Parliament) and provincial legislatures (provincial sphere of government). Depending on the percentage of national votes and provincial (for representation in provincial legislatures) they gain, their Parliamentary seats are then proportionately allocated. This system clearly gives the majority party in parliament preponderance over the election of the president, passing legislation, and assenting to the executive's policy proposals since the executive is likely to be made up of politicians drawn from the majority party.

The party list component of the electoral system gives power to party bosses to determine who finally makes it to Parliament. Essentially, this process can be used as a tool for patronage, and to reward loyalty. Those given preference are aware that their fortunes are dependent on party bosses and, as a result, are unlikely to be fundamentally opposed to their parties' major policy proposals. Nothing stops them from acting independently, but they are aware of potential consequences. It is a form of discipline that gets reinforced by the party's Parliamentary Chief Whip, whose role is to ensure party discipline and that parliamentarians conduct themselves in accordance with the norms and interests of the party and vote in line with the party position.

Although parliament has been dominated by the ANC since 1994, political rivalries in parliament tend to be quite intense with a considerable degree of polarisation between the governing party and the largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA). The two have hitherto presented divergent approaches to governing South Africa, with the latter positioning itself as an alternative government, hoping to capitalise on the ANC's deficiencies. They draw their support from generally polarised constituencies, which to a significant degree still reflect the tensions and mistrust of the past in the broader South African society.

The ANC benefits a great deal from the sentimental attachment of the black majority to the liberation struggle. It relies on mobilising memory and historical symbolism to keep a firm grip on its black constituency. The DA's lineage can be traced from the white liberal voice opposed to apartheid, but its predominantly white composition and championing of a minimalist programme for political and economic reforms places limits on its electability. It is also struggling to develop a fluent narrative that captures the imagination of the poor and unemployed.

Over time there has been a gradual shift in the appeal, leadership, and ideological character of the DA. It has sought to orient closely to the socio-economic concerns of the black majority, including prioritising equity issues alongside the imperative of economic growth and building a meritocratic order. These shifts have made the DA somewhat attractive to a segment of the black middle class, leaving much of the black majority still sceptical. Furthermore, the DA's support base remains inchoate and fluid. It does not as yet carry significant electoral muscle to the extent that it could torpedo the ANC from power. By and large there remains mistrust between the DA and black voters, and these are largely as a result of perceptions of the DA as a party intent on securing white privilege.

Since the 1999 elections, the DA (then Democratic Party) grew its support impressively. In the 2004 elections it registered 12.4% national support; in 2009 this grew substantially to 16.7%, whereas the ANC's share declined from 69.7% to 65.9% – still a significant majority. The other interesting point for comparison is that of the 2006 and 2011 local government elections. In 2006 the ANC achieved 65.67% in electoral support; in 2011 it experienced a -2.74% decline to 62.93%; whereas the DA grew from 16.32% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2011, a significant share increase of 7.76%. However, the percentage turnout in both polls was substantially different, with the national elections historically attracting between 85% (1994) to 76% (2004) of voters, whereas the 2011 local government elections recorded a 57.6% voter turnout.

Of greater interest in the 2014 general elections is the arrival of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), formed by the former ANC youth leader Julius Malema after he was expelled from the party for ill-discipline. The EFF's rhetoric is seductive for many of those who feel economically marginalised. Since its formation in 2013 it has apparently

attracted an impressive level of support amongst the youth in townships for a start-up political party. It also seems to be enjoying some sympathy support from a tiny fraction of the black middle class. So far it has projected itself impressively in the public, often pulling some large numbers to political gatherings, but if poll numbers are to be believed it may not achieve more than 5% of the vote in the elections. In particular it will struggle in two of the three major provinces, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, although it may surprise in Gauteng. Nonetheless its emergence is telling of the ANC's internal difficulties.

In order to offer a clear assessment of how the positioning of these two opposition parties could affect the ANC in government's general posture, it is necessary to briefly sketch all parties respective policy priorities as set out in their manifestos.

THE THREE MAIN CONTENDERS' MANIFESTOS

The ANC's election manifesto is the most comprehensive, richest in policy proposals, and realistically grounded. This is clearly born of its experience in governing South Africa – the biggest economy on the African continent, with a very complex social structure. Within the ANC there has always been a clear sense of the magnitude of the challenges the country faces, so the party is adept at formulating policy positions. It has proposed many white papers and bills during its past two decades in government.

The ANC's manifesto sets out several key priority areas, particularly: job creation; rural development; education; health; and the fight against crime and corruption. Enhancing the state's capacities, accelerating infrastructure development and industrialisation are at the heart of its intended post-elections economic drive. Particular attention is placed on the youth.

The ANC has never been without detailed policies post-apartheid. Its major weakness has always been efficiencies within the state and the effective implementation of its policy programmes. Essentially, leadership weaknesses and ethical failures have a crippling effect on the ANC.

The DA's philosophical outlook, on the other hand, can be characterised as liberalism with a social conscience.

The party has shifted its tone and texture of policy away from the kind of liberalism that leaves economic outcomes in the hands of self-regulating markets, placing emphasis for progress on individual effort and with no room for the state in the economy including through provision of social safety nets. Now the organising framework of its social and economic thinking is that of striving towards an "Opportunity Society for All". It believes in both the need to redress the disadvantages of the past and to promote economic advancement through meritocracy and economic openness. It explicitly champions equity policies (with time-limits) and social safety nets for the vulnerable, but the cornerstone of its economic policy is economic growth, human capital development, and support for entrepreneurs.

The EFF's programme is more radical than the two other parties. The party is led by young people who have nothing to lose by presenting their political rhetoric in audacious and unrealistic terms. The core pillars of the EFF's thinking include nationalisation without compensation and building an industrial state. The party's overall tone is anti-private sector, and it desires a greater role for the state in the economy, especially in backbone economic activities: banks and mines. Its leaders are inspired by Zimbabwe and Venezuela. Many EFF leaders don't have experience of running state institutions, nor do they understand the workings and constraints of the state. From the various pronouncements by the EFF's top leaders it is clear that they are not aiming to take over power, rather their strategic objective is to limit the numerical preponderance of the ANC and to force coalition governments in some of the critical provinces, notably Gauteng – South Africa's economic hub.

As soon as this party goes to parliament it is likely to suffer similar factional strains that are present in the ANC. It has no innovative organisational machinery beyond simply mobilising for elections. It will struggle to develop constructive and proactive programmes to keep the party alive at the grassroots while also ensuring effectiveness in parliament. If Julius Malema, its charismatic leader, is convicted of tax evasion charges this may also have a destabilising effect on the party.

KEY ELECTORAL BATTLEFIELDS

Exploiting the weaknesses of the ANC in the run up to the 2014 elections, the DA is hoping to increase its support

by a further 7%, minimum, and with the idealistic target of 30%. On the other hand the ANC in 2014 is widely expected to lose between 5 and 7% from its previous share of 66%. So far, there is no reliable polling that gives a sense of how the outcomes could possibly look like after the 7 May 2014 elections. Shifting public sentiments further muddy the waters. The percentage turnout in the forthcoming national elections will be an important consideration. If traditional ANC voters either stay away from the polls or spoil their ballots in large numbers in order to register their protest against the state of affairs within the ANC, that could drive the party's share of the national vote to below 60%, an important psychological milestone.

Factors that are heavily stacked against the ANC are those to do with corruption in the public service, slow delivery of public services, and the perceived aloofness of ANC leaders from the broader communities. The major development that could dent the ANC's support in the elections is the ongoing Nkandla debacle where there is believed to have been major and unaccounted for cost escalations in the security upgrades of President Zuma's private residence. The fact that this R206 million upgrade entailed diversion of funds from programmes meant to improve infrastructure in poor areas is a sore point for many, even amongst traditional ANC supporters. Nonetheless, the ANC is expected to win the elections, but with no more than 60% of the vote.

THE MAIN ACT: POWER PLAYS WITHIN THE ANC

General elections are always an important indicator of the state of health of political parties, especially the governing party. The 2014 General Elections will be the last featuring Zuma as the ANC's presidential candidate. If the ANC scores 60% or above, this would not destabilise the party much. However, if it dips below 60% that could be a game changer in the electoral landscape, particularly if it loses Gauteng or one other province. That would undermine the illusion of its invincibility and strengthen the hands of those agitating for change and organisational renewal.

Zuma, post-elections, will be thinking long and hard about life outside of the state. Weighty questions occupy his mind, particularly the unfinished business of the toxic arms deals and prospects for corruption charges against

him being reinstated. Therefore it is critical for him and his faction to have a safe pair of hands to succeed him.

Accordingly, the rise of Cyril Ramaphosa, currently the Party's Deputy President and, in the tradition of the ANC, expected to take over from Zuma as party chief in December 2017, should be watched closely. It is likely that two years before the party conference, around 2015, a process of lobbying will begin in earnest. This is the time when various factions will emerge to test their strength against that of the incumbent or opposing camps.

How Ramaphosa positions himself in these politics will determine his future. His major weakness is that he lacks a clear and powerful constituency that could champion him successfully. His distinct ideas are also not so clear, which is a safe tactic if he is not to jeopardise his prospects. His biggest strength, though, is that he is generally perceived as being above factional politics, an assumption that may not be true given the role he reportedly played in the removal from government of former President Thabo Mbeki in 2008; and then scuppering of Kgalema Motlanthe's presidential ambitions at the ANC's elective conference in 2012.

Apart from Ramaphosa, other influential political actors during Zuma's first term are likely to make a comeback with some possibly being promoted. Key cabinet ministers in the justice and security cluster in particular, such as Jeff Radebe (Justice), Nathi Mthethwa (Police), Siyabonga Cwele (Intelligence), and Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula (Defence) – mostly hailing from Zuma's province – are likely to be retained or shifted within the cluster. Recent reports in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper about former and/or current (at the time of writing it is not clear which applies) intelligence officials being used by the ANC to vet ANC Parliamentary candidates indicate how critical this cluster is to Zuma's fortunes.

However, the other sensitive cluster, the economic cluster, could experience substantial change. This would be in order to inject some confidence in the economy and bring

in some vigour to its otherwise sluggish work. This may not necessarily entail fundamental shifts in reforming the economy along more market oriented lines – indeed the ANC's pre-elections legislative push goes largely in the direction of increasing the state's role in the economy – but to project a semblance of seriousness in managing the economy. Some restructuring of ministries such as Economic Development and Trade and Industry could be expected, with a new minister introduced in a consolidated department. The youthful minister of public enterprises, Malusi Gigaba – also from Zuma's home province – could be in line for such a role.

There is sensitivity amongst Zuma's team on how South Africa is perceived by foreign investors, but they do not seem to possess the confidence and wherewithal to face down key allies in the tripartite alliance, especially the Communist Party and COSATU. The fact that the latter is almost certain to split after the elections, with the radical unions led by the metalworkers (NUMSA) seemingly set to form their own political party, may create the space for the Zuma administration to implement more market oriented reforms assuming that is what it wants. On the other hand if the ANC performs relatively poorly in the elections, then it may feel compelled to implement more radical economic policies in order to forestall the potential threat from a genuine workers party that could ultimately attract more support than the EFF and would certainly start from a far stronger organizational base.

Apart from the economic cluster there is likely to be more continuity than change in Zuma's second term. A year after elections, energies and focus will shift towards preparation for the ANC's elective conference in 2017.

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