South Africa, 2014: The Iceberg Election*

Callum Petty

The South African election of 2014 was a case of how ‘the political scene is both much the same and considerably transformed’. The election ‘will change nothing, and everything’. The result itself was expected - the incumbent African National Congress (ANC) easily won the election. Yet, this belies intriguing trends reshaping social and political life. It was South Africa’s iceberg election: a result that displayed ANC power yet hid cracks beneath the waterline. The ANC vote held strong even if melting away, as the party moves into uncharted, politically uncertain waters.

It makes sense to analyse the election as part of a greater social and political journey; there are many core and inescapable issues bubbling beneath the surface. Many key themes are beyond a single election and will continue to affect South Africa into the future. Put concisely, high unemployment, poor working conditions and inadequate service delivery have long affected South Africa and will continue to do so. Broadly speaking, these issues fuel the country’s endemic protests. Such themes should be taken into account when analysing the election holistically.

However, we must also remember the details of the election. The botched Agang SA-Democratic Alliance (DA) merger had potential to become a serious challenge in the election. Such an alliance could have convinced many black South Africans to vote DA. The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) mining strike was another key detail concurrent to the election. Although not specifically electoral, it revealed how dissident labour is an increasingly relevant theme.

The party campaigns themselves are rich for analysis. Not only were the core issues widely addressed, like the need for jobs, but also party tactics. The ANC relied on its organisational history to sell itself, while the DA tried to counter such claims of continuity, instead promoting itself as the true party of post-apartheid South Africa. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) were the latest left-wing ANC breakaway to challenge for power, and in this sense it represents growing dissatisfaction of the ANC with its once core support of poor, black South Africans.

The period itself revealed key themes of South African politics that intensified during the election, namely the ANC’s control over state broadcasting and its unfair campaign tactics, in addition to the continuing relevance of direct action even during voting season.

While the ANC comfortably won the election, and the DA consolidated its vote, deeper analysis of the election sheds light on developing social and political issues. These are many, but of very high significance is the ANC’s steadily decreasing urban vote and low rates of registration and electoral engagement. Again, the demons affecting South African society are all too clear to see.

The article ends with a section on dissident labour, particularly focusing on the trade union powerhouse The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). Connected to intensifying work strikes, this organisation looks to set itself up as a workers’ platform soon. Industrial relations are set to polarise and this could split the ANC trade union federation Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The ANC power

---

* My deepest thanks to Professor Jack Spence, OBE, who supervised my research for and advised on the preparation of this paper.


A summary of the election's results – The ANC dominate

The number of registered voters was 5,390,150 out of a voting-age population (VAP) of 25,390,150 (2013 official estimate). Therefore, 31.4% of voters were registered. Here, the number of registered voters was 3,143,035, an apparent 81%. Thus, there is a gap of 3%, between the data. This registration gap is something to bear in mind, for it is part of a broader problem which will be examined in more detail later. The turnout of registered voters was 7.5%, i.e. 51% of the greater VAP.

The ANC won a clear majority, winning all provinces but the Western Cape. The DA is the main opposition, although the strength of this opposition varies from their stronghold in the Western Cape to their third-placed results in North West Province and Limpopo. The EFF is the official opposition in these provinces and also the third party nationally. However, this is not the case in every province, for other parties beat them in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. It should be remembered that other parties have noticeable presences in South Africa politics, despite their poor showings in this election.

Ongoing and longstanding social issues, which broadly affected the election period

The election for the National Assembly and provincial assemblies happened on 7 May, 2014. It was based on a closed-list proportional representation system, with the President chosen by the newly-elected Parliament. This system is quite idiosyncratic although not unique to South Africa, combining both Presidential and Prime Ministerial functions. In practice, given the ANC's clear electoral majority, the Presidency was the ANC's choice. Thus Jacob Zuma, the incumbent, was re-elected.

Firstly, there is the issue of 'jobs, jobs, jobs'. High unemployment has troubled since apartheid. This has been exacerbated by the late-2000s global recession. The unemployment rate was 25.2% in the first quarter of 2014. As well, that many of the existing jobs poorly paid or contracted for a limited duration. Again, this problem is worse for young workers. While there is a large informal sector in the South African economy, which deserves greater attention if township enterprise is to be developed rather than ignored or stereotyped, the wish for life-affirming, well-paid jobs is widespread.

Secondly, there is the issue of service delivery – the supply, provision and maintenance of amenities, like water, electricity and housing. As with jobs, improved service delivery has been high on the agenda since the end of apartheid – the ANC promised in 1994, a 'better life for all'. To a great extent, the ANC has delivered.

Finally, there is the issue of life-affirming, well-paid jobs. The unemployment rate was 25.2% in the first quarter of 2014. This was even worse for young workers: 36.1% of those aged 15-34 were jobless. As well, the wish for life-affirming, well-paid jobs is widespread.
The National Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>11,463,921</td>
<td>62.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>4,091,584</td>
<td>22.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>1,169,259</td>
<td>6.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,704,733</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Provincial Vote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>The Vote (1st, 2nd, 3rd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>ANC (1,528,345 – 70.09%), DA (353,316 – 16.20%), United Democratic Movement (134,280 – 6.16%), EFF 4th-placed with 75,766 votes, 3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>ANC (708,720 – 69.85%), DA (164,672 – 16.23%), EFF (82,674 – 8.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>ANC (2,348,564 – 53.59%), DA (1,349,001 – 30.78%), EFF (415,318 – 10.30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>ANC (2,475,041 – 64.53%), DA (489,430 – 12.76%), Inkatha Freedom Party (416,496 – 10.86%), EFF 5th-placed with 70,823 votes, 1.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>ANC (1,149,348 – 78.60%), EFF (156,982 – 10.78%), DA (94,724 – 6.48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>ANC (1,045,409 – 78.23%), DA (138,990 – 10.40%), EFF (83,589 – 6.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>ANC (733,490 – 67.39%), EFF (143,765 – 13.21%), DA (138,521)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>ANC (272,053 – 64.40%), DA (100,916 - 23.89%), EFF (20,951 – 4.96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>DA (1,259,645 – 59.38%), ANC (697,664 – 32.89%), EFF (44,762 – 2.11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vote in the metropolitan municipalities (metros)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro (Province)</th>
<th>The Vote (1st, 2nd 3rd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ekurhuleni [East Rand] (Gauteng)</td>
<td>ANC (622,192 – 55.07%), DA (328,143 – 29.05%), EFF (119,919 – 29.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannesburg [Johannesburg] (Gauteng)</td>
<td>ANC (821,109 – 52.28%), DA (508,362 – 32.37%), EFF (159,105 – 10.13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshwane [Pretoria] (Gauteng)</td>
<td>ANC (517,741 – 49.31%), DA (354,403 – 33.75%), EFF (120,849 – 11.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo City [East London] (Eastern Cape)</td>
<td>ANC (194,615 – 66.93%), DA (55,628 – 19.13%), EFF (15,956 – 5.49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela Bay [Port Elizabeth] (Eastern Cape)</td>
<td>ANC (212,862 – 48.81%), DA (177,952 – 40.80%), EFF (18,077 – 4.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eThekwini [Durban Metro] (KwaZulu-Natal)</td>
<td>ANC (909,111 – 64.59%), DA (308,078 – 21.89%), Inkatha Freedom Party (52,409 – 3.72%), 5th-placed EFF with 34,337 votes, 2.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manguang [Bloemfontein] (Free State)</td>
<td>ANC (187,553 – 64.44%), DA (60,725 – 20.87%), EFF (24,995 – 8.59%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town [Cape Town] (Western Cape)</td>
<td>DA (872,117 – 61.50%), ANC (441,488 – 31.13%), EFF (35,615 – 2.15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The IEC’s official data can be found at http://www.elections.org.za/resultsnpe2014/default.aspx (last accessed on 22/7/2014).
** Ibid
*** The IEC’s official data can be found at http://www.elections.org.za/content/Elections/National-and-provincial-elections-results/ (last accessed on 22/7/2014).
In 1994-2010, 2.4 million houses were built for the homeless. The number of household electricity connections increased from 36% in 1993 to 82% in 2010.\textsuperscript{12} Sanitation has generally improved. However, the quality and maintenance of services has been questionable at best. Additionally, service provision has struggled to keep up with rapid urbanisation, particularly in the Gauteng and Western Cape metros.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, despite a high absolute provision of services, the ‘expectation-reality gap’ has not successfully closed.\textsuperscript{14}

A final theme that encapsulates both these issues is that of direct action. This is increasingly prevalent as political expression, encompassing frustrations that the jobs and services promised are not being delivered. Illustrating this, the number of protests correlated with the hard(er) times brought on by the recession — between 2008 and November 2011, South Africa had averagely 8.5 significant protests a month.\textsuperscript{15} Direct action is not just social, but power-political also. Merle Lipton particularly emphasises how protest is a battle for resources in a society that’s patience is wearing thin and how direct action is not just an engagement of the masses, but a tool used in intra-elite struggle.\textsuperscript{16} There are aspects of ‘I want that job, I want that patronage to dispense, I want that tender’.\textsuperscript{17} This is accompanied or countered by those suffering by being outside the circles of patronage, in a cycle of unrest which at its core has the basic issues of jobs and quality of life.

Interestingly, foreign policy was not a key theme prior or during the election. While certain international events or relationships, such as South Africa’s involvements with the BRICS, generally got media coverage, these things were not electoral battlegrounds. Domestic issues, as outlined above, were far more prevalent.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 338.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 337.
\textsuperscript{15} Holden, ‘Rumbles and Rifts’, p. 334.
\textsuperscript{16} Merle Lipton (Visiting Research Fellow at King’s College London and ex-Associate Fellow at Chatham House), interview with the author.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

Specific events immediately prior to the election period

Bar the ongoing themes mentioned above, there were two specific events that manifested themselves during the election period. The first was the proposed link-up of Agang SA with the DA in early 2014. This would have put Agang’s leader, well-known anti-apartheid activist Mamphela Ramphele, as the DA’s presidential candidate. This was a brief period in which it seemed like the ANC could be seriously challenged — Ramphele was ‘somebody who had been sympathetic to the ANC but was not ANC and yet had the credentials that the ANC could claim’.\textsuperscript{18} If this merger had attracted wavering members of COSATU, it ‘could have been the embryo of something’.\textsuperscript{19} As it happened, the link-up acrimoniously collapsed — Ramphele pulled out and Agang refused to be incorporated into DA structures.\textsuperscript{20} On its own, Agang did abysmally in the election, receiving just 52,350 votes (0.28%).

Issues of deeper significance were the mining strikes and rumbles from powerful trade unions, particularly the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU). Many mineworkers felt, and continue to feel, exploited by the great mining companies, such as the Lonmin or Anglo American. Since the 2012 Marikana massacre,\textsuperscript{21} increasing tense mining industrial relations have been now more visible and pressing than ever. Earlier in the year, from 23 January to 25 July, AMCU led a strike of 70,000 platinum miners in Rustenburg, demanding a wage increase to R12,500 (approximate £700) a month. It was the longest and most expensive strike in South Africa to date.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Keith Somerville (Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent, and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies), interview with the author.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} ‘The Marikana miners’ strike lasted from 10 August-20 September 2012. On 16 of August, police opened fire on protesters, killing 34 and injuring 78.
\textsuperscript{22} Reuters, 25/6/2014 - http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/25/us-safrica-
It is not just in the mines where dissident labour threatened political insurgency, but in splits in COSATU also. This could mean a fragmentation of a key pillar of ANC support, while producing a political rival that could actually challenge for national power. In December 2013, NUMSA, the largest trade union in South Africa, split from COSATU and refused to campaign for the ANC in the election. Led by Irvin Jim, it now seeks to convince COSATU affiliates to join it, promoting a new left-wing, trade unions-based movement. If the head of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi, re-joins NUMSA in its criticism of the ANC, then this could auger a COSATU split. While this development was too late to affect the election, it is an ongoing, pertinent issue, which will be further examined below.

The election campaigns

The ANC launched their campaign in January, while the DA and the EFF launched theirs in February. The key commonality between all campaigns was a focus on jobs, or ‘work opportunities’, and the promotion of distinctive macroeconomic plans which had jobs and improved living conditions at their cores. All parties had their own election strategies, but the ANC’s and the DA’s were the most developed, and the most interesting considering that they were attempting to counter the other. Summarily, the ANC focused on its struggle credentials and tried to highlight its grand heritage, particularly the manufactured image of Mandela. It tried to eschew President Zuma or the last five years in office. On the other hand, the DA’s strategy was to acknowledge the ANC’s past, to reassure black South Africans of their political orthodoxy, while trying to undermine the current government as squanderers of the ANC’s legacy and in turn promoting the DA as the best party of a modern, inclusive South Africa.

The ANC

The ANC was conscious that focusing on President Zuma would be a strategic weakness. His record the past five years has been mixed, while Zuma’s corruption charges make him an easy target for opponents. Zuma has also been booed in public events on previous occasions, so much so that the ANC had to intricately stage-manage the party’s manifesto launch in Nelspruit to stop this happening. Zuma was booed at ANC rallies in Gauteng, Nelson Mandela Bay and Limpopo during the campaign.

The ANC therefore focused on a trusty selling card – their liberation credentials and their pantheon of political heroes, most notably Mandela. Thus, the ANC manifesto was ‘dedicated to Tata Madiba’, and their election advert repeated Mandela’s promise of 1994 of a ‘better life for all’. The ANC attempted to call forth the loyalty and respect that many have for Mandela and the ANC heritage; it was an image of ‘continuity’ papering over recent cracks in the ANC edifice. To quote their manifesto: ‘Twenty years ago we began a new journey to eradicate the oppressive legacy of colonialism and apartheid … Our journey continues’.

The DA

The DA began its campaign with the debacle of the Agang-SA merger. This took the wind out of their sails, ensuring that the ANC performed best early on. It questioned DA leader Helen Zille’s political nous, while also granting the ANC a cheap race card to exploit. Indeed, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe disparaged Ramphele’s candidacy as ‘rent-a-black, rent-a-leader’.

25 ANC TV advert - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVMWctRP_7s (last accessed on 28/7/2014).
26 ANC manifesto, p. 3.
The DA tried to convince black South Africans that theirs was an inclusive party, not just for whites or the middle classes. Indeed, given this entrenched image, the DA even had to state that it was anti-apartheid, before elaborating with its particular strategy. This acknowledged the ANC’s legacy as the main party of liberation, but then nuanced this by stating that today’s ANC is different from the past ANC. This opposed the ANC’s ‘continuity’ line. As written in the DA manifesto: ‘Under Presidents Mandela and Mbeki, we made important progress towards social justice … it is undeniable that life in a democratic South Africa is better than it was under Apartheid. However, as we approach the 20th anniversary of democracy, the progress we have made is being reversed. Under Jacob Zuma, the ANC has changed.’ Indeed, the DA’s election broadcasts were entitled ‘Ayisafani’ – ‘It’s not the same’ in Nguni.

Another key aspect was the furore surrounding the South African Broadcasting Company’s (SABC) banning of both the DA’s election adverts. The first ‘ayisafani’ advert was banned on 11th April. It was an attack ad, criticising the corruption and mismanagement of the ANC government, accompanied by images of police brutality in Bekkersdal (a township riven by violence and political instability). The SABC said the ad unfairly criticised Zuma and promoted violence against the police service. The DA unsuccessfully challenged this ban, so created a modified version of ‘ayisafani’, which removed the references to police violence and instead had a positive spin. This too was banned by the SABC, exacerbating widespread anger at such ‘censorship’. This was because the DA presenter, star politician Mmusi Maimane, began with ‘So, they tried to silence us…’ However, the SABC capitulated and broadcast the advert on 1 May.

Summarily, the SABC was accused of hindering freedom of speech and fair political discourse, while the DA ultimately benefitted as both of its adverts received hundreds of thousands of views online. The ban created more interest in them, which easily spread via social media. The quality of the adverts was commended too - the adverts helped the DA appear ‘less uncool’.

### The EFF

Following the EFF’s manifesto launch in Tembisa, Gauteng on 22nd February, the EFF ran a national campaign even with comparatively few resources and structures, holding rallies in every province. Their campaign was one based on Malema himself, and a cultivated image of revolutionary struggle against a corrupt and failing government – EFF supporters wore red overalls and berets, with Malema as ‘commander-in-chief’. Their policies were meant to appeal to the poorest Africans in South Africa, increasing wages and social grants, nationalising the ‘commanding heights’ of the economy and expropriating white land without compensation. Just as 20 years ago ‘was the dawn of political freedom … NOW IS THE TIME FOR ECONOMIC FREEDOM!’

Despite Malema saying that he is ‘not racist, just honest’ in his policies (‘If white people want a permanent holiday, they must return the stolen property [land et cetera]’), many commentators feared EFF success. Many see the EFF as racist and fascist, promoting ‘populist politics, à la Zanu-PF in Zimbabwe’.

The EFF, like the DA, suffered a SABC ban of their first electoral advert. This was because it

---

28 Martin Plaut interview.


30 DA TV advert, ‘ANC Ayisafani’ - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6jU2bZxGKI (last accessed on 28/7/2014).


‘incited violence’ due to its promise to ‘destroy e-tolls physically!’ Again like the DA, this ban was unsuccessfully challenged by the EFF, but had the unintentional effect of making the advert viral. In contrast, the second, unbanned advert had far less online views.

A final aspect of the EFF’s campaign was their constant chiding of the ANC, and of Zuma particularly, beyond a mere oppositional stance. Given the history of the ANC’s enfant terrible Julius Malema, a former ANC Youth Leader who went from saying ‘he would kill for Zuma’ to routinely mocking him with his shower-head gesture (a reference to Zuma’s rape trial and past ignorance of how AIDS spreads), this bad blood unsurprisingly made and continues to make relations between the two parties especially sour.

Noteworthy aspects of the campaign period

The ANC-bias of the SABC

The banning of the DA and EFF adverts in April was roundly condemned by academics, journalists and media watchdogs. It revealed the ANC-bias in the SABC, so much so that it was labelled as a ‘key weapon in the ANC’s arsenal’.37 Its leaders, particularly its Chief Operating Officer, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, are close to the ANC, while its questionable output – such the ANC’s insistence on ‘sunshine news’ – undermines its claims to neutrality.

A CityPress article further illustrated the ANC’s control of the SABC. Three senior news executives in the SABC – all insisting on protective anonymity – spoke about various restrictions and blatant political interference. This ranged from being ordered not to broadcast footage of the crowds attending opposition elections rallies, Motsoeneng ordering that ‘violent’ service-delivery protests should not be covered, and a new instruction that denied live coverage to parties that lacked representation in Parliament – a deliberate move to prevent the coverage of the newly-established EFF.39

The ANC’s control of state broadcasting is not a new phenomenon, yet this was undoubtedly demonstrated during the campaigns.

The ANC’s dirty campaign tactics

The ‘dark side’ of the ANC was not limited to infiltrating the SABC. Disparate elements of the ANC acted in violent, unethical and often undeniably illegal ways. This ranged from intimidating and beating up voters and activists to the (mis)use of state resources to bolster the ANC’s campaign.

A 112-page report by the civil society group Community Action for Social Enquiry (CASE) rigorously detailed the ANC’s intimidation and manipulation of voters – although varying in different localities, ‘intimidation and other forms of manipulation are systemic feature of political life in South Africa’, with the ANC as ‘the primary source’.40 Martin Plaut has expanded upon this, listing examples ranging from the ANC's hijacking of the government-run ‘End Hunger’ campaign for party-political benefit, to the ANC directly contravening IEC rules by campaigning on election day.41

The election was pronounced ‘free and fair’ by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), yet this judgement does not take into account

38 Martin Plaut interview.
41 Ibid., p. 91.
42 Ibid., p. 3.
44 Ibid., p. 12.
informal, unrecorded threats of violence, aggressive *toyi-toyiing* or partisan use of government resources. As the CASE report comments: ‘Political coercion [and manipulation] has instead been adapted to the terrain of democratic South Africa, and frequently manifests in the guise of practices that, superficially at least, may appear to be lawful and legitimate.’

**The continuance and relevance of direct action**

The election period also displayed the strength of direct action politics. Both of which directly link to aforementioned social divides and deprivations.

Bekkersdal, of the old West Rand of Gauteng, continues to be a case in point. Still troubled by its protests late last year – although it has been a consistent protest hotspot since 2005 – anti-ANC unrest again erupted in March and on Election Day. The March protest was indeed a serious issue, with running battles between police and protesters. Gun-wielding ANC members had to disperse protesters, yet it was also claimed that the ANC helped instigate the violence.

‘Bekkersdal represents a microcosm of what is happening in our townships … a frustrated community, a cauldron of boiling anger about legitimate grievances and weakened community leadership … herein lays the kernel of the protest challenge in South Africa.’

Direct action continues to be a most relevant undercurrent in South African politics, even in the height of the election season. Indeed, a powerful metaphor of this was the burning of voter registration booths in the township in February.

The other major instance of direct action was the ongoing AMCU-led platinum minerworkers’ strike outlined above, which began in January and only ended in late June. It was the longest and most expensive strike in South African history; the economy shrank by 0.6% in Q1 due to the strike alone. Indeed, it cost the big platinum mining houses approximately $2 billion. Strikers demanded better working conditions and a wage increase to r12,500 (£700) monthly. These are in fact the conditions demanded by the miners of Marikana. The AMCU strike was a huge issue in South African politics, again going beyond the electoral process. It pointed – and continues to point – at deep rifts and highly-charged grievances in South African society.

**Analysis of the election results – the parties**

*A comfortable ANC victory – the ‘brand’ holds firm*

The ANC comfortably won the election. This was unsurprising. They won over 60% of the vote and 8 out of 9 provinces. The closest opposition, the DA, managed just 22%. It is true that the ANC will now be sending 15 less MPs to Parliament and that its majority has been cut in several provincial legislatures. However, it benefitted from the collapse of the Agang SA-DA merger and contained the populist challenge of the EFF. Overall, despite a scandal-stricken president, the ANC’s focus on its organisational history was successful; the election refrain of ‘Vote for the party, not an individual’ paid dividends.

*A noteworthy if ultimately limited consolidation of the D4*

The DA happily claimed that this election was successful. They increased their share of the vote – from 16.66% in 2009 to 22.23% in

---

45 Bruce, *Just singing and dancing?*, p. 96.
50 Ibid.
This is also an increase in the share of the vote from all eligible people of voting age. The DA strengthened their hold over the Western Cape. They also made inroads in the metros of Gauteng and Nelson Mandela Bay; hovering around the 30% mark in the former and achieving 40.8% in the latter. Finally, they won a solid number of black African votes (approximately 760,000), even if this needs improvement if the DA are to become potential national leaders. It must be born in mind that so far the DA’s successes represent a steady increase rather than a seismic shift. It mainly won votes from its competitors, such as COPE, rather than the ANC.

Furthermore, it has a problem attracting enough rural votes – its next task would be to break into the countryside. In 2004, 2009 and 2014, its vote composition has stubbornly remained at a ratio of 1:4 rural/urban.

A third-placed finish for the EFF; yet an uncertain future

As for the EFF, they fared worse than previous major ANC breakaway COPE did in 2009. However, their percentage of the vote was sizeable enough at 6.25%. It is how the EFF’s vote is concentrated that is of interest. The EFF managed to become the opposition in the Limpopo and North West legislatures, while becoming a major competitor in Gauteng. However, it is yet to be seen that the EFF’s ‘personality politics’ will be sustainable. It is dependent on the charismatic leadership of Malema. While Malema faces no internal opposition presently, his erratic style and allegations of tax fraud may derail him and his party in the future. The EFF will need to build more permanent and sophisticated structures if it wishes to build on its success. The EFF also faces the challenge of other leftist ANC breakaways vying for power in the future (this will be elaborated below). Yet, it can be said that the EFF knows how to annoy the ANC and was able to actually convince long-term ANC voters in the election. As such, the EFF is part of the zeitgeist of burgeoning opposition – how ‘any threat to supremacy of [the] ANC will come from within’.

Analysis of the election – key themes

An increasing urban/rural divide?

A major election theme was the ANC’s decreased vote in urbanised areas. This is particularly true of the Gauteng metros and Nelson Mandela Bay. The ANC’s vote has dropped in every metro since 2009, in varying degrees. This trend is increasingly being examined by media commentators and think tanks.

Broadly speaking, the ANC’s falling urban vote is explained by its failure to deliver services. This dovetails with Holden’s analysis mentioned above. As Faul of the ISS explains, ANC-led local governments have struggled to provide in urban areas, whereas in rural areas the national government has adequately provided services. These are basic programmes yet bring a greater perception of life improvement, while Holden’s ‘expectation-reality gap’ is increasingly the standard perception in crowded urban areas. ‘If you live in an Eastern Cape homestead, electricity is a revolutionary occurrence. You change someone’s life … The ANC has been able to deliver more effectively in rural areas than in urban [ones].’ Further analysis, like of that ‘microcosm’ Bekkersdal, confirms this situation. It has a high standard of absolute poverty generally, but it is also its sense of relative poverty (the ‘expectation-reality gap’) that fuels its discontent.
The disparity between ANC urban and rural support is increasingly clear. A key example is Nelson Mandela Bay [Port Elizabeth] in the Eastern Cape. The ANC won 70.1% in the Eastern Cape, but only 48.9% in Nelson Mandela Bay. Such disparity is also clear, albeit to a lesser extent, between the votes of Manguang and the Free State, and also the sizeable local municipality of Polokwane in Limpopo province. Beyond dissatisfaction over the ANC’s service delivery, we must be aware of local political factors. The ANC of the Western Cape is struggling to deal with an increasingly entrenched DA for instance. While in Port Elizabeth, the country’s automotive centre, the principle automotive union and labour organiser – NUMSA – decided not to campaign on behalf of the ANC. Port Elizabeth has been also been a key DA target for some time, with many resources pumped into campaigning there. Given the unusually close result, all of these specific factors must have influenced local politics. This point is worth bearing in mind generally, for while analyses of the election focused on broad topics, we cannot forget local influences in different areas.

**The significance of KwaZulu-Natal to the ANC**

Another important theme is the significance of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) to ANC fortunes. It has remained an ANC stronghold – as it has done under Zuma, whose Zulu origins can be easily sold there. It won 2,474,041 votes here out of its total of 11,463,921. With growing opposition, KZN is becoming ever more vital to the ANC – the growth of the KZN vote has strongly correlated with Zuma’s presidency, and as such, the growth of the KZN has performed as a vital stopgap for the ANC’s slippages nationally. Despite the ANC’s majority of over 60%, it is now at its weakest level since 1994; as Faull states, the rise of the KZN vote has ‘disguised problems elsewhere for the party’. To put it starkly, on average 6% fell from the ANC’s vote in its traditional strongholds of Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West. KZN held firm. Its metro of Durban provides the one example of the ANC’s urban vote holding up.

**Gauteng – an increasingly embattled province**

Furthermore, there has been a drop in ANC votes in Gauteng (the country’s most populous and urbanised province), particularly in its metros of Johannesburg and Tshwane [Pretoria]. The election here bloodied the nose of the ANC – from a 64.04% vote in 2009 to a 53.59% in 2014, with the Johannesburg and Tshwane levels of support both dropping over 10%. Indeed, support in Johannesburg is now less than 50%, while it hovers just above that mark in Tshwane. Not only that, but both the DA and EFF gained much ground at the expense of the ANC. The DA won over 1,400,000 votes there, while the EFF won 415,318 votes out of its grand total of 1,169,259. Eyes will be on the 2016 municipal elections, where Gauteng will be a most important battleground between the parties.

**The small impact yet rising potential of the ‘Born-Free’ cohort**

The ‘Born-Frees’ are the demographic that was born after the end of apartheid, so have only known ANC rule. Just over 600,000 South Africans were born in 1994, with a similar number over the following two years. Not all of them are registered to vote, but they are seen as a growing political force – and by no means stubbornly loyal to the ANC. As Keith Somerville has explained, the ‘Born Frees’ are

---

22. finaltruthfirstlecture2014.ef_.pdf (last accessed on 15/8/2014).
scaring] Zuma. This is because they have not lived through the anti-apartheid struggle and so are less likely to be overawed by the ANC’s struggle credentials. Furthermore, the problems facing this generation are hard indeed. Not only are they struggling to live through the structural legacies of apartheid (and the ANC’s erstwhile attempts to solve them), but joblessness is especially acute. In late 2013, 51% of 15-24 year olds were unemployed. However, despite interest in their development and actions, the Born-Free cohort did not play a pivotal role in this election. They will undoubtedly in future contests, but many of them remain unregistered to vote or uninterested in the electoral process. Both of these points are growing in significance in South Africa. Indeed, the declining pool of voters was a factor in this election – and makes the ANC’s comfortable victory look far less impressive.

Poor registration, declining turnout – disillusionment and lack of interest in the electoral process undermine the strength of the ANC victory

The election result masked the fact that there is a declining pool of voters in South Africa. Out of a VAP of 33 million, only 25 million are registered, and from that turnout was 19 million. So despite a superficially high official recording of 73.5% voting (registered voters), the turnout of the VAP was only 57.1%. Not only does this seriously question the importance of election to political life, but it also reveals that the ANC goliath is not what it seems. Despite a majority of 62% from the votes of those who registered, this translates into only 35% of the VAP voting for the ANC. When compared to previous elections, this indicates a steady decrease in national elections of the vote the ANC actually receives from eligible voters. In 1994, the ANC won a similar percentage of the vote – 63%. However, this was from a much higher proportion of the VAP – 54%. Indeed, if one considered the number of new voters added on to the electoral roll between 2009-2014, the ANC has lost approximately 10.41% of support.

Furthermore, turnout is generally decreasing election-by-election. Troublingly for the ANC, this is increasingly the case in heartland provinces with large rural populations. Rural turnout has decreased from 77.64% in 2004 to 69.88% in 2014, whereas urban turnout has remained solid: from 75.95% in 2004, to the modest increase of 76.28% in 2014. Moreover, urban votes, as mentioned earlier, are increasingly being targeted and channelled by oppositional parties.

There are cracks in the KZN axis also. Votes here are ‘running dry’ for the ANC. The growth of the ANC’s KZN vote exploded under Zuma, yet this groundswell has stymied.

The growth in the ANC vote was an increase of 71.87% in 2009, yet it was just 12.17% in 2014. It is unlikely that the ANC will experience another surge of votes in KZN like it saw on Zuma’s ascendancy, as those who voted for Zuma because of his Zulu origins have already added their numbers to the ANC, while the main competitor from which the ANC poached these votes – the Inkatha Freedom Party – is steadily becoming smaller.

Generally, falling electoral voting figures indicate disinclination with the orthodox political process. This takes us back to the key themes that continue to trouble South Africa: unemployment, deficient service delivery, and connected to all this, direct action. The ANC may be able to count on a large amount of votes, but this is not a simple endorsement of support. Indeed, it seems like ANC hegemony is beginning to wither away. This is not a simple or straightforward prognosis however.

68 Faull, Slicing and Dicing.
70 Faull, Slicing and Dicing.
Electoral attitudes are often complex and entangled. Bekkersdal, despite its many troubles and chronic instability, still voted ANC. This was no simple vote of confidence, but comprises many factors, such as loyalty to the ANC's history from older generations, elements of youth dissatisfaction channelled through voting for other parties, to the faithful votes organised by ANC community leaders through to the silent political apathy as characterised by Schulz-Herzenberg's 'what's the point syndrome'. When deeply examined, the 2014 election gave no clear vindications. Below the surface, it epitomised how 'conflicted and furious' South Africa is under ANC hegemony.

The importance of NUMSA and other trade union-based opposition to come

As previously laid out, the opposition set to come from various trade unions, particularly those who have split from the ANC, is a burgeoning issue. This has been fomenting for some time.

Future development depends on whether the NUMSA builds a broad base to challenge the ANC politically. It will need a 'Lula moment'. By this, it should build itself as a well-supported workers' party, along the lines of former Brazilian President Ignacio Lula da Silva's Partidos dos Trabalhadores. In a recent interview, Irvin Jim spoke of the need of any potential workers’ party to include the middle classes, not only those who are ‘red’, but those who contribute to ‘advancing humanity’. It will remain to be seen whether NUMSA will be able to build a wide coalition with its clear leftist aims, yet it will continue to be a key player into the foreseeable future. Developments of this kind speak of the primacy of recent politics beyond the 2014 election.

The AMCU strike finally ended on 23rd June. The mineworkers did not achieve their original aim of a R12,500 monthly basic wage plus bonuses, but a deal where the lowest paid workers got an increase of R1,000 a month. While a compromised success, it was hailed as a milestone nonetheless: ‘This is the first big action taken by a non-ANC force … in which black people were in the van that led to very real change.”

Such action indicates the likely future political scene in South Africa, with dissident labour increasingly fighting against the status quo. This points to a society not only enraged over South Africa’s endemic inequality, but feeling let down, lacking trust in government, and having nothing to lose. As Jim Nichols, a lawyer representing the victims of the 2012 Marikana massacre, puts it: ‘People are interested in self-worth and dignity. For the workers, going on strike for long is economic suicide. But it’s about saying, ‘Actually, I’m worth something,’ And in South Africa today, that’s an incredibly important statement.’

Despite widespread dissatisfaction, times ahead will not be easy for dissident labour. The ANC alliance may be splitting, but that still means that a sizeable remnant of loyal labour remains with the ANC. An example would be the powerful National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which condemned AMCU’s settlement as a ‘hollow victory whose sham is shrouded by exhaustion and rhetoric’. A successful trade unions-based challenge would need a ‘united front’, which NUMSA has not yet achieved. The ‘NUMSA moment’ may be in the ascendancy, but the ANC will not simply allow a decline. Bitter political brawling will

71 Fakir, Circling the Square.  
characterise the future.

**Conclusion**

The ANC won the election, the DA consolidated their vote and the EFF gained a foothold. Zuma remains President, while Helen Zille and Co. continue a steady, if not game-changing, rise. The EFF may mature, or it may collapse like the UDM or COPE.

Yet, there are changes brewing for the future. Key urban battlegrounds, like Gauteng, are becoming open. These may change hands in the 2016 municipal elections or the next general election. If that happens, ANC power will be dealt a hard blow. The ANC will need to keep hold of its rural heartlands and KZN – it has been its strength here that has disguised slow, insidious decline.

A younger, irreverent demographic coming of age and increasing voter apathy represent more long term threats to ANC power. How such politics will be channelled in the future will be of absolute importance.

The old problems of South African society surfaced in the campaign period, for example, in the unrest of Bekkersdal. High unemployment and poor service delivery remain issues top of the agenda. In the future, the ANC will be able to rely on its struggle heritage less and less and if key grievances are not rectified.

The continuing rise of dissident labour, eroding away the ANC’s trade union support, sets to direct the ANC iceberg into stormier waters. If NUMSA and others form a coherent ‘united front’, the heat will rise on the status quo. Cracks in the ANC edifice could soon develop into irreversible fissures.

Stephen Grootes summarises this election well: ‘If Elections 2014 have been fairly boring, it may be because they’re the last of this type of election. Where it’s the (mostly black) ANC against the (not mostly white but tagged with that anyway) DA. This is probably what you could call the last post-1994 election. Because next time will probably be quite different. And...'

---