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Focus on **political identity** and **policy issues**: more questions than answers?

The range and depth of the complexities and nuances of the arguments presented in this issue, demand that the editorial be short, and allow the individual authors to speak for themselves.

This issue focuses on the central question of electoral behaviour: What influences the political choices of the electorate?

Do voters make purely rational, instrumental, technical and utilitarian decisions, when choosing to vote for a particular party? Or do they vote purely in terms of identification with a specific party, which they feel can best give them a voice to express who they are? Can the election be won on the delivery of tangibles, such as housing and water; or intangibles, such as self-expression? And if voters' choices are identity-based, is this because parties themselves coalesce around particular identities, profiling and mobilising around them, to the extent that voters are offered no choice but to vote in terms of their identity? In other words, have political parties gridlocked the electorate into identity politics, because they represent our society as a chessboard? Or, are parties responding to citizens who choose to vote for identity, and merely representing how people feel? Or, is the importance of identity merely an (incorrect?) perception in the minds of the political elite?

Furthermore, are policy issues and political identities mutually exclusive? Or is there a coincidence between, for example, black voters and their priorities and white voters and their concerns?

Conversely, to what extent are there cross-cutting cleavages between identity and interests? And are these compatible? Why do some Zulus vote for the ANC; others for the IFP and others for different parties? How do alliances accommodate different identities and interests? The history of party alliances at both national and provincial levels, suggests that mixes of issues and identity both cohere and contradict these alliances.

And why are some identities prioritised over others, which are currently subsumed at national and provincial level? Why can parties profile and mobilise support around race, and not around "womanism"?

Are the concerns of different sections of the electorate, in fact, that different? A national consensus seems to have emerged around the most important issues facing the country, including unemployment and job creation; safety and security; and HIV/AIDS. All political parties prioritise these issues, albeit in different ways.

One of the authors believes that some parties are so bankrupt in terms of policy, that they resort to fearmongering by raising the issue of a presidential third term, and the country's degeneration into a one-party state. As Ray Hartley comments in the *Sunday Times*: 21/03, this is not the issue – the problem is a one-policy state.

The historical context in which the 2004 elections are taking place is also pertinent to these debates. Are issues and identities the only variables which inform voters' choices, or are there others, such as the "freedom dividend" attributed to the ANC; or an enthusiasm for public participation; or a sense of civic duty and an attachment to democratic ideals; or an awareness of the importance of opposition politics? Furthermore, what are the consequences of the influence of these concerns on the governments' agenda? For example, some authors argue that that the "liberation dividend" which secures and guarantees majority support for

the ANC, has allowed President Mbeki to focus more on foreign policy than on domestic issues.

Another central issue is that of apparent discrepancies between the electorate's partisan identifications with particular parties; their voting intentions; and their actual voting behaviour. How is this explained?

All these issues, and more, are explored in this edition of election**synopsis**. All will be addressed by the result of the 2004 elections. However, none will be definitively answered. They will remain part of an ongoing debate in South African politics.

Why we vote: the issue of identity

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Evidence from previous elections overwhelmingly suggests that South African politics is identity politics, argues Steven Friedman. This has a number of implications for the voter registration system; the way in which citizens understand civic rights and obligations; and a challenge to the elite concerning the delivery of intangibles.

Two elections seem scheduled for April 14. One will happen in the minds of commentators and the media, the other in the heads of the electorate. One will be about 'issues', the other about identities.

Many of those who shape our debate seem determined to spend the campaign earnestly pronouncing on whether jobs, HIV/AIDS or crime are most likely to influence voters. There is an air of absurdity to this, since it is an open secret that those who most lack jobs, are most likely to lose if anti-retroviral medication is not available to the poor and are most likely to be victims of violent crime, will vote for the governing party – and those who have done best out of the economy these past ten years, who can afford health care and can buy private security are most likely to support the opposition. Clearly, then, it is not 'the issues' which decide how South Africans vote. It is, rather, identity – race, language, religion – which largely shapes electoral choices.

Why, then, this determination by intelligent people to treat the election as though it was an idealised version of a Western European mayoral contest? Because to vote our identities is considered primitive, a sign that we continue to fall short of the North American or Western European democratic norm.

No matter that Europe is replete with parties organised around religion or language or region. Or that racial or regional voting patterns are common in the United States. Or that, in Britain, some regions return Labour candidates, others Tories, for a century, suggesting either that the majority make the same interest calculations every time – or that their ballot has something to do with their identity. People who vote to express their identity are assumed to be irrational, those who do so to endorse an economic policy are, in this view, rational. And, since our commentators want our voters to be rational, they are eager to demonstrate that they have put identity behind them and are ready to join the company of responsible adults who vote their interests.

It is the desire to deny or denigrate identity voting which is the irrational prejudice, not the voting itself.

Yes, identity voting can inhibit government accountability and responsiveness if it guarantees an electoral majority to a party. But it is not only in societies in which identities shape voting behaviour that particular parties seem guaranteed a majority for long periods: Sweden and Japan are two cases in which issues other then identity ensured the electoral dominance of a governing party. And identity voting also offers plusses to a democratic system – by ensuring an enthusiasm for electoral participation which persists even when calculations based solely on interest may deter voters.

Some prejudice against identity voting may be based on a misconception. To say that South Africans vote their identities is not to say that elections are ethnic censuses.[1] This would not explain why Zulu speaking voters are divided between ANC and IFP supporters, why coloured people vote for the NNP, ANC and DA. Nor is it to say that race is the only determinant of voting behaviour, in which case we would be unable to explain the votes cast for the ACDP.

It is, rather, to insist that voter preferences are, in the main, shaped by considerations other than an instrumental choice between competing technical solutions to economic and social problems. It is to insist that preferences are shaped by voters' assessment of which party can best provide a vehicle for who they are. And that, in this context, weighing the programmes and policies of parties plays hardly any role.

Many black voters will support the ANC even if they lack a job because they believe it expresses their demand for dignity and freedom. Other black people will support the IFP whether or not their rural areas have been developed because it is held to protect the tradition which they revere. Many white voters will support the DA even though they know it will not be able to influence government decisions because they believe it says what they feel. And, since these are the primary calculations, to claim that the ballot will be decided by this or that 'issue' is to misunderstand the electorate and the campaign.

To show how the reality that people do not vote primarily on a calculation of their interests can help democracy, we can look at the 1999 election.[2]

The turn-out was high – 89 percent of registered voters despite the fact that some endured substantial discomfort in order to vote – even though the outcome was not in doubt. Participation by racial minorities, who were said to be reluctant to vote because they believed they were powerless in the new order, was no lower than among black voters. Nor was participation higher in provinces where the outcome of the provincial ballot was seen to be in doubt – Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal, and Northern Cape and Gauteng[3]. The highest polls were recorded in Northern Province and Free State, where the results were most lopsided, the lowest in Western Cape.[4]

This confirms that an expectation of affecting the outcome did not determine the decision to vote – indicating that, where identities shape voting decisions, high turn-out can be achieved even when, as in our case, elections results are not in doubt.

As in 1994, voting appeared to instil a sense of *camaraderie* and mutual regard, expressed in some cases in acts of generosity not always evident between elections. And, despite a bad-tempered and occasionally violent campaign, polling day violence was largely absent. Many citizens seem to derive sufficient satisfaction and, at least in some cases, enough of a sense of identification with the society, from voting to induce an unusually high level of 'civic' behaviour.[5]

The limited empirical evidence we have available, therefore, suggests that citizens' voting behaviour is influenced by a democratic commitment and enthusiasm not always evident in new democracies.

This pattern may well continue into the 2004 election: a poll reported last September found 75% of voters expressing an intention to vote[6], one conducted late last year found over 85% of adults wishing to cast a ballot.[7] Since willingness to vote generally increases as polling day nears, these findings show very high propensity to vote. Contrary to the frequent stereotype of an apathetic electorate needing to be 'educated' or induced to exercise their franchise, South African voters remain enthusiastically engaged in elections.

The unusual enthusiasm generated by identity voting has some important implications.

Firstly, it questions our voter registration system, which appears to be depriving significant numbers of people who wish to vote of the opportunity to do so. In 1999, an extrapolation from surveys found that at least 5% of the electorate who wanted to vote could not because they were not registered.[8] This time, one of the polls cited above finds some 23m people intending to vote, significantly more than the 20,7m registered.[9] A system in which adults are automatically registered when their names appear on the population register would be more attuned to ensuring that the right to vote, central to the battle against apartheid, is extended to all.

Second, the levels of participation may show that the degree of citizen commitment to public rights and obligations may be much higher than presumed. It has become common to portray South Africa as an unruly society in which citizens resist meeting their side of the 'social contract' with the democratic state. But a society in which many people are prepared to comply with fairly onerous requirements to claim a civic right, the vote, does not seem inherently ungovernable. While voting may be more attractive to citizens than, say, paying for services, the attitudes generated by identity voting question the claim that South Africans are averse to the rights and obligations of democratic citizenship.

Third, if citizens are not moved to vote primarily by interest calculations, the tasks facing our democracy may be significantly different to those assumed by many in our elite.

The dominant view is an ideology of delivery which holds that citizens can be 'won for democracy' only if the government 'delivers' goods and services to them. If democratic intangibles, such as the right to vigorous representation, must be compromised in the process, this is no loss since 'delivery' is the key to citizen loyalty.

But a society in which most citizens are inclined to participate in democratic politics, at least by voting, in part because they see the vote as an expression of their identity, is one in which material delivery will not , on its own, offer what they seek from democracy.

The primacy of identity creates an opportunity because it ensures an electorate willing to see democracy, at least in part, as a 'deliverer' of intangibles such as self expression rather than as a purely instrumental source of material benefit. If most voters indeed care as much about intangibles - of which identity is only part of a wider value placed on being heard - the challenge lies not in 'delivering' at the expense of political self-expression, but in strengthening democratic participation and solidifying the relationship between legislators and citizens. It also requires that we recognise difference as an asset, not a liability, for only this can enable us to accommodate differing identities in a common political space.

Democratic prospects depend chiefly on the degree to which we pursue the fight against poverty and inequality in ways which broaden and deepen the channels for democratic expression of all our identities - in a manner which recognises that democratic intangibles matter to citizens as much as material improvements.

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[1] The claim that elections in divided societies become 'ethnic censuses' was made by Donald Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa?: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1991

[2] See Steven Friedman 'Who we are: voter participation, rationality and the 1999 election', *Politikon* , Johannesburg, 26(2), 1999

[3] As the results were to show, the Gauteng outcome was never in serious doubt. But it was an overriding assumption among the media that it was in the balance.

[4] Independent Electoral Commission, *1999 Results*.

[5] Understood in the sense used by Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, as an indicator of those attitudes of reciprocity and public education which are, in this view, at the core of a democratic culture.

[6] ACNielsen poll reported in *Business Day* 10/9/03

[7] SABC/ Markinor poll reported in *Business Day* 23/1/04

[8] This calculation is the author's – derived by comparing the proportion of eligible voters who registered to intentions in surveys analysed in Rod Alence and Michael O'Donovan *If South Africa's Second Democratic Election Had Been Held in March 1999: A Simulation of Participation and Party Support Patterns*, mimeo, Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1999 , p. 7. See Friedman 'Who we Are'.

[9] According to the Independent Electoral Commission, 20 674 926 people have registered to vote – www.elections.org.za/news. The SABC/Markinor poll calculated that its findings suggested that 23m people wanted to vote.

Are South Africa's elections a **racial census**?

Adam Habib: Executive Director, Democracy and Governance Programme, HSRC
Sanusha Naidu: Research Specialist, Integrated Rural and Regional Development Programme, HSRC

Habib and *Naidu* ask whether South African citizens choose to vote in terms of identity, or whether political parties give them no choice but to do so. Evidence suggests a discrepancy between the electorate's partisan identifications and their voting intentions.   How can this discrepancy be explained?

South Africa's third democratic election is less than four weeks away. Yet the outcome seems a foregone conclusion with the African National Congress (ANC) already crowned the victors.

Like in 1999, this election seems to be more of a contest between opposition parties vying for the position of official opposition in the national parliament, and for control of the regional governments in KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape. In all three contests, unholy alliances seem to have become the norm for all the political contestants. Much of this is of course informed by a belief that South Africa's citizenry form rigid racial blocs which are impossible to penetrate.

This view is also shared by many analysts and the media who have interpreted SA's electoral outcome as a racial census. This dominant explanation advances that voting patterns in South Africa resembles a prism of racialized politics because racial and ethnic political identities predominate among the citizenry with blacks voting for "black parties" and whites for "white parties". South Africans are thus seen to vote, not on the basis of their interests and opinions, but rather through the prism of ethnic and racial loyalties.

Such an argument, however, while providing some insight into voting behaviour, is problematic for it treats race as an independent, objective variable, without considering that there are strong overlaps between racial and class categories. Moreover this view tends to oversimplify the correlation between racial categories and voting patterns by simply interpreting it as causation. After all, could it not be class or perhaps some intricate mix of race and class that inform voting patterns?

And there is significant empirical evidence for this, mainly from public opinion surveys conducted in the run-up to the '94 and '99 elections. In February 1998 the Institute for Democracy in Southern Africa (IDASA) released its first Public Opinion Service (POS) Report, which suggested that the South African electorate might not be as rigid and stagnant as is conventionally assumed. Arguing that the mainstream assumption 'is partly based on the fact that most surveys only focus on voting intentions', the POS report distinguished between this and partisan identification, and investigated both in three surveys conducted in 1994, 1995, and 1997, which it continued in series of opinion polls for the 1999 general elections. The overall results of the seven surveys, reflected in Table 1, indicated that the proportion of the electorate that strongly identified with a party fell from 88 per cent in 1994 to 43 percent in October/November 1998, and then climbed to 55 per cent in April 1999. The number of independents increased from 12 per cent in 1994 to 58 percent in October/November 1998, but then fell back to 45 per cent in April 1999. As of April 1999, 35 per cent of African voters, 76 per cent of white voters, 63 per cent of coloured voters, and 83 per cent of Indian voters saw themselves as independents. These figures were markedly down on those registered six months earlier, particularly in the case of African voters, when some 50 per cent saw themselves as independent.

TABLE 1: PARTY IDENTIFICATION

	Sept-Oct 1994	Sept-Oct 1995	June-July 1997	Sept 1998	Oct-Nov 1998	Feb-March 1999	April 1999
Yes	88	58	58	45	43	50	55
No	12	37	37	53	55	46	41
Don't Know		4	4	3	3	3	3

Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za

The results also indicated, as is reflected in Table 2, that the proportion of the electorate that strongly identified with the ANC decreased from 58 percent in 1994 to 34 percent in October/November 1998, but then climbed to 44 percent in April 1999. The NNP's support in the corresponding period decreased from 15 percent to 3 percent. On the other hand, the decline in the figures for voting intentions was less dramatic. As Table 3 indicates, the proportion of the electorate that intended to vote for the ANC was down from 61 percent in September/October 1994 to 60 percent in April 1999. When the calculations were restricted to only registered voters, the ANC's electoral support increased to 65 percent. Voting intentions for the NNP in the corresponding period was down from 16 percent to 7 percent, while that of the DP increased from 1 to 7 percent. Overall, these calculations were largely in line with the national election results of 1999 when the ANC received 66.36 percent of the vote, while the DP, which replaced the NNP as the official opposition, received 9.55 percent of electoral support. The only party whose support base was significantly underestimated by the Opinion 1999 surveys was the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which received 8.59 percent of the national vote.

TABLE 2: PARTY IDENTIFICATION OVER TIME

	Sept-Oct 1994 %	Sept-Oct 1995 %	June-July 1997 %	Sept 1998 %	Oct-Nov 1998 %	Feb-March 1999 %	April 1999 %
ANC	58	37	40	35	34	40	44
NNP	15	9	6	3	3	3	3
IFP	5	5	4	2	2	2	2
FF	2	1	1	<1	<1	<1	1
DP	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
PAC	1	2	2	1	1	1	1
UDM	NA	NA	1*	1	1	1	1
Other	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Won't Say / Confidential	3	2	2	<1	<1	1	<1
Independent	12	42	42	56	58	50	45

Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za. * 1997 UDM figures refer to the combination of the scores for the National Consultative Forum (NCF) and the Process for a New Movement (PNM).

How do we explain, and what is the significance of the discrepancies between the electorate's partisan identifications and voting intentions? The significant reduction in partisan identification with the ANC and NNP between 1994 and 1999 suggests that these parties' electoral support is not as rigidly defined as was previously assumed. Support for the ANC among Africans declined from 75 percent in 1994 to 45 percent in October/November 1998, and then subsequently climbed to 58 percent by April 1999. The NNP's support among whites decreased even more dramatically, from 48 percent in 1994 to 5 percent in April 1999. The largest shift in voting patterns in both the African and white communities was towards the independent category with some 35 percent of Africans and 76 percent of whites declaring themselves independent by April 1999. This fact, together with the mild drop in voting intentions for the ANC between 1994 and 1999, suggests that even though the electorate might identify less with the ANC, it currently sees no serious alternative to the ruling party. Thus, as IDASA's Public Opinion Service report concludes, the stability in voting intentions is likely to continue in the short term, but the increase in the numbers of 'leaners' and 'independents' creates the potential for significant electoral shifts in the future.

What these significant shifts in party identification reflect is that a considerable proportion of the electorate is uncomfortable with all political parties, and in particular with the character and nature of formal opposition in South Africa. There are two reasons for this unhappiness with the parliamentary opposition.

First, the major parliamentary opposition parties, because of their historical legacy and current electoral positioning and strategies, are seen as articulating the interests of particular racial and ethnic groups. Instead of these parties weaving an electoral program that attracts the support of diverse communities, they developed electoral strategies and programs that appealed to narrow sections of the electorate. The IFP, for instance, has projected itself as the defender and representative of the Zulu people. By doing so, it reduced its appeal for non-Zulu independents. The NNP and Democratic Party (DP), historically seen as serving the interests of Afrikaner and English whites respectively, developed electoral strategies and programs that targeted White, Coloured, and Indian sections of the electorate. Again, by doing so, they denied themselves the opportunity to appeal to African voters who constitute, by far, the largest chunk of the independent voter category.

Second, the existing parliamentary opposition parties remain unviable because they do not offer policies that would enable them to attract a significant electoral constituency. The policy choices that are currently offered by the parliamentary opposition only appeal to sections of the White, Coloured and Indian communities, especially the working classes within these communities who because of the material vulnerability can be manipulated by resorting to the racial or ethnic card.

TABLE 3: VOTING INTENTION

	Sept-Oct 1994 %	May-June 1995 %	Nov 1995 %	May-June 1996 %	Nov 1996 %	May-June 1997 %	Nov 1997 %	March 1998 %	July 1998 %	Sept 1998 %	Oct-Nov 1998 %	Feb-March 1999 %	April 1999 %
ANC	61	64	64	63	61	62	58	54	57	51	54	59	60
NNP	16	15	14	13	13	15	12	10	9	10	9	8	7
DP	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	5	6	7	5	6	7
IFP	5	2	3	5	6	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	3
PAC	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	1
UDM	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	5	5	2	3	2	2
FF	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
FA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
UCDP	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	>1	1	<1	1
ACDP	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1	1
AZAPO	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
CP	<1	2	1	1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0
OTHER	<1	1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	1
DON'T KNOW	12	10	8	11	11	12	12	16	14	21	19	17	15

Source: Helen Taylor, Robert Mattes & Cherrel Africa, 'Party Support and Voting Intention (1V)', Press Release, 24 May 1999, in http://www.idasa.org.za.

As we approach the 2004 elections, the racial census argument has come to the fore once again. As indicated, opposition parties have also begun to play the racial and ethnic card in the hope of frightening minorities to vote for them. But there is nothing to lead us to believe that the electorate is any less sophisticated now than it was five years ago. The result then: overwhelming victory for the ANC. Is that a good thing? Not necessarily. But the failure of formal opposition and the consequences thereof, should not be laid at the door of South Africa's citizenry, but rather at that of its opposition political elites. For it is they who have become so constrained by race that they are incapable of playing the electoral game as it should be, on the basis of policies and principles.

Motivations behind voting behaviour in South Africa

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Rule presents evidence from the 1999 elections suggesting that South Africans' voting behaviour is almost exclusively determined by race. Yet, paradoxically, when asked what informs their party choice, they strongly deny this. Does this then suggest that there exists a strong coincidence between parties' policies and priorities and racial identity? And will this pattern continue in the 2004 elections?

Voting patterns in this country suggest strongly that race is the primary consideration in the voter's decision about the political party for which he or she is to vote. In the 1999 national assembly elections, the proportions of the electorate who voted for parties perceived to be representing the views of specific race or ethnic categories closely matched the census breakdowns by race and in some cases, language (Table 1).

TABLE 1: POPULATION SHARES BY ETHNICITY (2001) AND VOTES CAST (1999)

Ethnicity 18+	Black Zulu	Black other	Coloured	Indian	White
% 2001	22,9	53,2	9,1	2,9	11,9
Party votes	**IFP**	**ANC**	**Other**	**NNP**	**DP**
% 1999	8,6	66,4	8,7	6,7	9,6

However, when questioned about their motivations for supporting particular parties, voters' responses imply that race plays a minimal role in their voting decisions. After the 1999 election, the HSRC's national sample survey of 2672 adults asked an open-ended question, "If you did vote in the 1999 election, for what reason did you choose the party that you did?" Coding of the responses yielded forty-three distinct reasons, the most frequent (Table 2) being so that there would be a 'better life in South Africa' (17,6%), 'for improvement' (15,0%), 'more jobs' (13,8%), 'trust in' or 'liking' of the party (13,6%) and 'to get a house' (6,6%). A mere 3,3% even mentioned race in motivating their voting behaviour. This took the form of 'party for all blacks' (1,9%), 'give black government a chance' (1,0%) or 'party for whites' (0,4%). Disaggregating these responses by ethnicity reveals substantial divergences in response.

TABLE 2: REASON FOR CHOOSING PARTY FOR WHICH I VOTED IN 1999, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Reason	Black				Black Total	White	Coloured	Indian	TOTAL
	Zulu	Sotho	Xhosa	Other					
Better life in SA	14,0	19,6	14,6	22,9	17,8	8,1	22,7	38,0	17,6
For improvement	11,4	14,6	15,8	19,2	15,3	11,6	19,1	8,1	15,0
More jobs	20,4	18,9	13,6	13,7	16,6	1,0	8,8	2,7	13,8
Trusts/likes party	13,5	8,3	19,1	6,8	12,1	21,3	13,5	21,9	13,6
To get a house	5,5	10,5	9,7	7,1	8,1	0,0	3,7	0,5	6,6
Good promises	5,3	2,1	8,4	2,2	4,5	2,4	6,9	1,2	4,4
Good policies	3,1	2,6	1,5	1,8	2,2	11,2	3,2	0,8	3,3
Race identity	3,2	3,6	2,9	4,7	3,6	2,5	1,8	1,5	3,3
Good opposition	2,8	0,5	0,2	0,9	1,1	17,2	1,6	7,2	3,2
Fought for freedom	1,5	5,0	1,6	6,1	3,5	0,0	0,9	0,7	2,8
Right thing	2,0	0,1	0,5	1,6	1,1	5,0	5,4	3,4	2,0
Other	17,3	14,2	12,1	13,0	14,1	19,7	12,4	14,0	14,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

The quest for material benefits such as jobs is strongest amongst black voters, especially those in the Zulu and Sotho groups. This is unsurprising, given the high levels of unemployment that prevail. Similarly, access to housing is a determinant of voter choice amongst the poorer sectors of the electorate. Less precise concepts, such as a 'better life' and 'improvement' are important reasons across all groups, although to a lesser extent amongst whites and Indians. Interestingly, the 'better life' rationale reflects some internalisation of the ANC's campaign slogan 'a better life for all' and suggests that voting decisions are made on the basis of intentions for the country as articulated by the ruling party. A substantial proportion amongst all races indicated that their party choice related to their level of 'trust' or 'belief' in the party or simply that they 'like' the party. This reasoning was most common amongst Indian and white voters.

Of relevance to politicians who are currently on the campaign trail is that 'good promises' or 'good policies' are used in the case of about one out of twelve voters. The secret is to tailor the promises and policies to suit the particular preferences of the target groups. The importance of having a good or strong opposition party in parliament is the motivation for one in six white voters and one in twelve Indian voters.

Cross-tabulating reasons for voting for a particular party by the party for which voters claim to have voted in 1999 (Table 3) reveals public perceptions of the policy priorities of each party. People who voted for the ANC mainly did so to in order to realise a 'better life' (18,6%), 'improvement' (16,4%) or 'more jobs' (14,4%). A similar reasoning emerged amongst IFP supporters, with jobs (26,3%) being the most prominent single reason. Employment prospects were even more important (54,7%) amongst UDM supporters.

Blanket trust or belief in and affection for a party were the reasons behind party choice amongst 13,6% of voters. It was highest for supporters of the NNP and ACDP (both 22,1%)

and lowest (8,2%) for IFP voters. Only one in ten (10,6%) ANC voters said that this was the reason for voting for the party. The most important reason for voting for the then DP was to ensure a 'good' or 'strong' opposition. The role of this party in opposing ruling party policies is thus clearly etched in the minds of DP supporters. Interestingly, the NNP of 1999 was also perceived by 5% of its supporters to be a strong opposition, a factor that may well have changed since its realignment with the ruling ANC. One out of twenty-five (4%) of ANC supporters gave the party their vote because of its prominent role in the fight for political freedom from the apartheid era. Finally, more than one-third (34,2%) of people who said that they voted for the ACDP, gave the reason for this as being the 'right thing', perhaps reflective of the moral basis of the policies of the party.

TABLE 3: REASON FOR CHOOSING PARTY FOR WHICH I VOTED IN 1999, BY PARTY CHOICE

Reason	ANC	DP	IFP	NNP	UDM	ACDP	ALL
Better life in SA	18,6	14,6	21,3	21,2	0,0	3,3	17,6
For improvement	16,4	11,0	11,0	13,4	0,5	17,7	15,0
More jobs	14,4	3,5	26,3	4,3	54,7	0,0	13,8
Trusts/likes party	10,6	17,4	8,2	22,1	27,2	22,1	13,6
To get a house	8,1	0,0	1,8	1,0	4,8	0,0	6,6
Good promises	4,7	2,0	3,5	4,6	0,0	4,6	4,4
Good policies	2,3	13,6	3,1	3,6	4,9	0,0	3,3
Race identity	4,0	2,1	1,5	3,0	0,0	0,0	3,3
Good opposition	0,8	19,8	0,0	5,0	0,0	0,5	3,2
Fought for freedom	4,0	0,0	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,8
Right thing	1,0	2,1	2,1	6,5	0,0	34,2	2,0
Other	15,1	13,9	21,0	15,3	7,9	17,6	14,4
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Results from the HSRC's most recent South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) in September-October 2003, reveals that in spite of the stated diversity of reasons behind 1999 voting decisions, the racial or ethnic complexion of intended 2004 election support for each of the main parties remains fairly distinct (Table 4). Although not mentioned overtly, racial criteria appear to underlie or play at least a subliminal role in voters' decision-making. Thus, 94% of potential ANC supporters in the 2004 election are black, as are 98% of IFP supporters and 93% of UDM supporters. In contrast, 75% of DA supporters are white. The NNP has a greater mix of supporters, with 42% of potential NNP votes coming from coloured voters, 28% from whites and 20% from blacks. Similarly, the spread of potential support for the ACDP is remarkably even at 40,6% black, 28,1% coloured, 25,0% white and 6,3% Indian.

TABLE 4: RACIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INTENDED SUPPORT FOR EACH PARTY IN THE 2004 ELECTION

	ANC	DA	IFP	NNP	UDM	ACDP	Total
Black	94,4%	7,0%	97,8%	19,9%	92,5%	40,6%	76,8%
White	0,4%	75,5%	1,7%	27,8%	4,0%	25,0%	11,8%
Coloured	4,5%	13,0%	0,1%	41,7%	3,1%	28,1%	8,6%
Indian	0,7%	4,5%	0,4%	10,6%	0,4%	6,3%	2,8%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Political parties and political identities: how relations between the ANC and IFP play themselves in kwaZulu-Natal

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The fluidity of opposition politics, evinced by the constant weaving and unravelling of alliances, predominantly characterises KZN and the Western Cape. However, these relationships are particularly significant in KZN, as they are characterised by a long history of political violence. **Ngwenya** *and* **Ndhlela** *present an overview of these dynamics with specific reference to the IFP and AQNC as central players, and track their relationships at national and provincial level. They examine the mix of issues and identities which serve to cohere and contradict these alliances.*

Quoted in the media in 2003 on the nature of the deteriorating relations between the ANC and the IFP, the Reverend Musa Zondi said: "The continued tense stand-off between the ANC and the IFP in KZN should not be used as a barometer to measure reconciliation between these parties or relations nationally."

Zondi went on to describe relations at the national level as "difficult but manageable", while in KZN as "tense and tenuous". Speaking at the Centre for Public Participation's seminar in 2002, provincial ANC leader Willies Mchunu stressed the importance of the two parties to work together. Mchunu said, "Political cooperation of the two parties is a historical imperative". This is a point echoed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi in his reply to the 2004 State of the Nation address, where he stressed the importance of the ANC and IFP working together for the sake of peace particularly during elections.

The relations between these parties, though central to the peace process in the province previously ravaged by violence, is now characterised by alliance politics formed on either side. This seems to be informed by current political identities of all players involved in this political stage. The period leading to the elections is mainly shaped, at least on a political level, by cooperation pacts and alliances that have played themselves out during the floor-crossing period.

POLITICAL IDENTITIES

South African alliance politics is growing increasingly more interesting in that we see parties that do not necessarily share any ideological commonalities working together to assert themselves as important players. Whatever the political position of any of the opposition parties, there is a resounding support among them for the overall essence of the ANC government's macro-economic policy. The IFP's political ideology is informed by Zulu nationalism and free market economy, hence its strong rural support in KwaZulu-Natal under the jurisdiction of AmaKhosi. It had a common sense notion as a 'liberation movement', with the tacit approval of the ANC until the 1979 London meeting where IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi clashed with the ANC and broke away. This was a major turning point in the history of Inkatha because it lost its ambiguous relationship with the ANC.

This shaped the present relations between the two parties. Between 1983 and the late 1990s relations were characterised by 'political violence,' which killed thousands of people. The post-1994 period marked a decline in headline-grabbing political violence. However, according to the KZN Violence Monitor 2002 report, it has continued in covert forms. The need for peace and stability in line with the principle of reconciliation mainly informs the relations between the ANC and IFP beyond the two past democratic elections.

Since 1994, the ANC increasingly became a majority party in South Africa, but the IFP out-manoeuvred it and won KwaZulu-Natal though failing to achieve an absolute majority, thus resulting in a coalition government. This scenario repeated itself after the 1999 election.

Lionel Mtshali in his inaugural speech as premier said, "Cooperation maximises the value of all positive contributions and avoids any energy being lost in conflicts…" The cooperation agreement between the two parties remains intact for now, with the DA now also part of the equation in the provincial executive, courtesy of its pact with the IFP. A lot has changed since the articulation of these words by Mtshali.

There was the "floor-crossing" fiasco, which caused serious tensions between the ANC and IFP thus threatening the peace process. Fearing it would lose power in KwaZulu-Natal, the IFP insisted that it would not hand over the province unless decreed by voters in an election. The IFP partially ended its coalition pact with the ANC when Mtshali axed two members of the provincial executive, and replaced them with DA members. When the ANC objected, Mtshali threatened to dissolve the provincial legislature and call for new elections. After the intervention of the ANC/IFP national leadership the impasse ended. The axed ANC members were reinstated in new executive roles.

NEW ALLIANCES

The DA attained the status of being the official opposition in the National Assembly after the 1999 elections, and has since then been positioning itself as the leader of opposition politics. It moved from an election strategy similar to the "swart gevaar" of the NP during apartheid days, through its "fight back" campaign. This worked in attaining votes from the minorities who saw the NNP as not strong enough to champion their interests against the dominant ANC. Analysts and critics of the DA have argued that it has offered a home and embraced conservatives and rightists. Ryan Coetzee, DA's director of strategy writing in *ThisDay* of 10 March 2004 refutes such analysis saying, "if we have shifted at all from our liberal roots, it is in the direction of the social democrats, not the conservatives". Toward the end of this second democratic term, the DA has since adopted a strategy that positions itself as a caring party of the poor. It has begun to talk of basic income grant (which ANC decided against at the Stellenbosch Congress), and the provision of antiretroviral drugs to HIV/Aids patients. In this way, it has begun to craft its political identity as a party caring for the interests of the masses who are poor and black.

The DA is known to be hostile towards the ANC and consistently attacks it. Meanwhile the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal has been forced, at the insistence of the IFP, to share the provincial executive seats with its arch political foe, the DA. Mtshali calls the IFP affair with the DA a 'coalition of the willing' as opposed to forced working with the ANC. Dumisani Makhaye wrote an interesting piece in *The Mercury* late in February 2004 about this arrangement, which tells of the deeper frustration and dilemma his party is in. He sees the ANC and IFP as representing the same constituency, and calls on them to "normalise these relations". He goes on to reflect on the status quo saying, "whether the ANC can afford to have special relations in the government, with a party that has virtually become an extension of the DA, which stands opposed to everything the ANC stands for, is debatable."

The outcome of the election on April 14 is widely predicted to be a foregone conclusion of another victory by the ANC. It then explains the focus on the IFP/DA "coalition of the willing" as an attempt to challenge ANC supremacy. It will be interesting to see how the DA balances its position of protection of minorities, which is based on the antithesis of affirmative action, black empowerment and employment equity and the interest of the IFP's constituency that is largely black, rural and poor. The cooperation between the ANC and the NNP delivered the elusive Western Cape province to the former, and has played a key role in KwaZulu-Natal as its salient partner. These alliances/coalitions are underpinned by serious contradictions. We should be reminded that it was the lack of clear political and policy strategy, and the absence of a shared ideological vision and the consequent inability to develop a common commitment to a shared base of values, which underpinned the political controversy that led to the breakaway of the NNP from the DA. If the same thing happens this time around, it will be a blow to Tony Leon who has tirelessly embarked on a clear programme to pull out all the stops to prevent the domination of South African politics by the ANC.

ANC/IFP ISSUES OF CONTENTION

The relations of the two parties have been tested through different thorny issues since the threat by the IFP to boycott the 1994 elections. Among these issues are the powers and functions of traditional leaders, seat of the KZN legislature and the provincial constitution. These issues continue to put relations between the two to the test. During the debate on the seat of the provincial legislature, the ANC, with the support of minority parties in KwaZulu-Natal legislature including DA, forced a resolution making Pietermaritzburg the official legislative seat of the province.

Late last year the leaders of the two parties (Thabo Mbeki and Buthelezi) met to iron out some of these issues. As recently as February 2004, talks about talks between these parties were held to find common ground that has informed the current coalition agreement entered into in 1999. With all of these developments, these leaders' choice is to call it quits or strengthen their rocky relations. We think the ANC leaders see it as untenable to work with the IFP beyond the elections if it holds on to its association with the DA, a point emphasised by Makhaye. Despite such assertions, the ANC/IFP relations in the province should be seen as a barometer of reconciliation between these parties. KwaZulu-Natal has

been the IFP's stronghold and it is where power has been fiercely contested since the 1980's. We predict the outcome of the relations between the two parties to be influenced and shaped by KwaZulu-Natal politics. The national leadership has a strong role in containing the powder keg.

FUTURE PREDICTION

ANC/IFP relations will continue to be complementary and conflictual. The two parties will remain separate while competing for power. Violence as a means of competing for power is not an option. The absence of militia groups, and the transfer of power from the apartheid regime to the democratic government, renders the use of violence less fashionable as democracy matures. If the threat of violence during the elections continues, it would mean that democratic culture and ethos is not entrenched in the hearts of the people of KwaZulu-Natal. The challenge lies with the political leaders to conduct themselves maturely, and communicate agreements between and among their parties, to the public. In a democracy when people refuse to decree one party the winner, only co-operative governance works. Through cooperative governance these parties have laid the foundation for a democratic culture. People have begun to appreciate different political affiliations as a cornerstone of modern life.

Generally the opposition seems to be in disarray and operating as small pockets of parties that lack the ability to meaningfully shape the political landscape. This confirms the 2002 assertion by Ebrahim Fakir that "the contingencies of history demonstrate that voters do not vote for parties that display perpetual tension and disunity, or for parties that fracture largely along the fault lines of race, class and privilege." The left of the ANC, which should largely be occupied by the PAC and Azapo (whose sole voice is now a member of the Cabinet), is in itself a very weak front that seem to be inconsistent with what they stand for.

With all of these political co-operations and alliances, the overall winner of the battle spoils, should there be a lack of increased voter turnout for the opposition, might well be the ANC. This might affirm the view that the real opposition to the ANC lies within itself if not with a vibrant civil society, which will always take government to task on issues of social justice.

Who will **woo** her on 14 April? Targeting the **female electorate**

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Currently, women constitute the majority of registered voters. What significance does this hold for political parties scrambling for votes? Can parties profile and mobilise the electorate around this identity, as they do around that of race? Not at national and provincial levels, argues **Bentley***, as women's identity is subsumed by others which are prioritised. However, "closer to home", at local government level ,where issues which are not exclusive to women, but which are starkly gendered, the identity of women may come into its own as a political drawcard. The 2005 local government elections will tell…*

THE NUMBERS: WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Women comprise just short of 55% of those registered to vote in next month's National and Provincial elections. In some provinces – such as Limpopo, where women comprise 60.51% of those on the voters' role – they constitute a significant majority. Limpopo is followed by the Eastern Cape (with 58.02%) and KwaZulu-Natal where 56.89% of those registered to vote are female. KwaZulu-Natal also has the second highest number of registered voters in the country (after Gauteng), which means courting the female vote in that province may be a high-stakes exercise. There are 1 982 876 more women than men registered to vote in the country as a whole, which represents 9.5% of the total. This shows the ongoing success of campaigns to "get women's vote out" as there are nearly half a million more women than men registered to vote in 2004 than in 1999, when the female electoral majority was just over 1.5 million.

But how significant are these numbers? To what extent are women a segment of the electorate in their own right, rather than members of communities, and members of groups determined on the basis of race, class, culture, language or religion?

In the most obvious sense these numbers are significant in light of the proportional representation system according to which seats are allocated in Parliament. Given that the numbers of seats allocated to provinces in the National Assembly are determined on a (roughly) pro-rata basis in proportion to their overall population numbers, it would follow that parties who make a successful appeal to the female electorate in any of the provinces, but in particular those with high concentrations of women voters *and* the larger overall populations, could secure a significant number of seats.

THE PATRIARCHAL STATE AND WOMEN'S EQUAL POLITICAL RIGHTS

However, the politics of identity in South Africa is a complex brew, based primarily on race, but the ingredients also include class, language, religion and ethnicity, clouding the picture. Furthermore, the traditionally gendered, patriarchal nature of the South African state tends to militate against parties taking the female vote seriously as a separate area for policy and campaigning. Many women, particularly those in areas where traditional male authorities continue to dominate, are regarded as ciphers, subordinate to superior male interests, and so it is primarily the male vote that is canvassed, and it is assumed that the female vote will follow. Jenny Robinson, reflecting on the historically masculine state in South Africa, remarks that the objects of the state's policies and administration were "male heads of households, keeping control over women." The entrenching of the tradition of male authority, and female dependence "is even now potentially a stumbling block to efforts by both feminists and democrats to transform the state, especially at the local level and in the rural areas where traditional leadership is still strong" (Robinson, 1995: 9). This is likely to successfully neutralise the potential independence of the female electorate in areas where they are numerically strong - most importantly those where they constitute significant majorities in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal - but where there is simultaneously an entrenched, and now also legally protected, tradition of hierarchical male authority.

KwaZulu-Natal, which remains a hotbed of political unrest 10 years after the advent of democracy, is characterised by the political standoff between the (Zulu-dominated) IFP and the ANC, both of whom are seeking to wrest power in the province from the other. It is currently held by a narrow majority by the IFP (holding the premiership and 51% of the seats in the provincial legislature). Of the more than 2 400 traditional leaders in South Africa (including 12 kings) the Zulu monarchy is the most prominent. There is a strong tradition of allegiance to the king (which may be somewhat complicated by the 1995 rift between King Goodwill Zwelethini and IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi), but certainly the female electoral majority of more than half a million in the province is unlikely to break with the tradition of either allegiance to the king (and therefore the IFP), or to the ANC in areas where they are dominant. Both parties seem acutely aware that the margin of votes they require to either retain or swing a majority must be sought outside of their traditional power bases, which is reflected in recent clambering by both these parties and the DA to garner the support of the Indian population, which although a minority, is a significant one in that province. Thus it appears that the politics of racial identity continues to outweigh gender as a mobilising aspect of political identity.

PARTY POLICIES AND PARTY STRUCTURES: RACE, CLASS, GENDER AND REPRESENTATION

Party loyalty, which is contributed to by facets of identity other than gender, most importantly race, also significantly offsets the mobilisation of the female vote. Furthermore, the tradition of party loyalty has the effect of fragmenting and neutralising the women's movement across political parties, as the ability to organise around a particular policy, or set of policies, is rendered impossible if this comes into conflict with those of the party.

But it is significant to note, that as ubiquitous as race is as a signifier of political identity, and one that is played upon, to differing degrees, by many political parties, there is no identifiable difference in policy choices across the races in South Africa. Indeed "in contrast to common wisdom, there is no lack of a national consensus with regard to priorities for government action. All South Africans are in general agreement over the key problems facing the country, despite differences of race, wealth, class or gender" (IDASA, 2004: 2-3). In fact, increasingly, social identities are more shaped by class and occupation than by race and ethnicity (IDASA, 2004: 6). What is significant, according to IDASA, are the racial *profiles* of parties in the effect that this has on the electorate. Some recent headlines – "IFP to set up first Chats [Chatsworth] Office" and "DA's Quest for Black Votes" are just 2 random examples – indicate that parties are clearly aware of this and are preparing to use this particular aspect of race and identity to mobilise support, although it makes little impact on their policies.

However the issue of *gender* profiles and the extent to which these may successfully attract votes is less clear. In South Africa, the extent of gender-related policies and structures across the parties varies. The ANC has lead the way since 1994 in including unprecedented numbers of women on their party lists, and it remains the only party with a formal quota in this regard: 30% on the national and provincial

party lists, and 50% on those for local government elections. This has resulted in an almost 30% representation of women in the National Assembly, putting South Africa among the leading democracies in the world on this score. Other parties oppose the use of quotas, such as the DA – they argue that women's social and economic opportunities need to be developed in order for women to be substantively more equally represented on the basis of merit rather than just as "window dressing." Quotas, they argue, allow parties to *appear* to take gender seriously, but actually lets them off the hook of having to do anything substantive to address women's inequality.

More intriguing are the different gender *policy* stances adopted by the different parties and the likely effect of these on the female electorate. Just as no party is openly racially exclusive (although some of the smaller parties are implicitly so), so too no party openly campaigns against the equal rights of women. Indeed, Item 6 of the Electoral Code of Conduct requires parties to give effect to the rights of women. However, an attempt to mobilise the women's vote separately is likely to fail, as it did in 1994 when the Women's Party failed to secure a single seat.

There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, "[w]omen are not a homogeneous constituency" (Hassim, 2003: 93) and so identifying a specific "womanist" agenda and set of policies that cuts across the boundaries of race, class, language, culture and religion to appeal to the majority of women may be impossible for any one given party to achieve. Secondly, related to the first point, is the problem that women voters themselves may not identify issues that are of special or significant interest to them: "No significant differences between men and women on electoral issues or party preferences have been found by any of the electoral surveys, suggesting that the connections between gender inequalities and the position of women are either not recognised or are considered unimportant by women voters in South Africa" (Hassim, 2003: 96).

However, as is noted above, there are also no significant differences that have been identified between the races on electoral issues either, but race is still successfully mobilised as an aspect of identity to motivate voters to vote for parties on the basis of both manipulated perception, and candidate representivity. Could gender also be mobilised in this way? Would it be possible for a particular party to maintain a mainstream agenda and harness the support of the female majority at the same time?

Patricia de Lille's Independent Democrats appear to be likely candidates in this regard – a female party leader, with impeccable credentials of race, political background and moral political conduct, with sensible, coherent policies including a sociological approach to women and child abuse. However the ANC's historically non-racist and non-sexist stance, as well as its unparalleled fronting of women candidates and in the government, clearly makes it the front-runner, and certainly past electoral results bear this out. While the DA remains opposed to quotas, its policies are mainly socio-economic, along with the usual barrage of rhetoric about crime, employment and service delivery, all of which are items that would appear on a "womanist" agenda, but of course not exclusively so. The DA also has some credible female presence in parliament and the party, and so rates well on that score too.

Interestingly, the IFP has an explicit "Women's Issues" policy. This policy emphasises the party's commitment to promoting women's "substantial parity with their male counterparts in each of society's building blocks" (which is not to say their substantial equality!), and it also holds that the "profound diversity of circumstances of South African women which stems from their different cultural backgrounds, heritage, upbringing and economic standing" should not be "levell[ed] down to uniformity." While this policy goes on to make the standard nod in the direction of women's equality in the workplace, and expresses concern for women's plight as far as abuse and lack of education are concerned, heavy emphasis is laid on women's role in the family. The policy concludes by stating its position on women in traditional communities, which is that this "should be understood through a comprehensive approach, rather than from the perspective of a single feature."

MAKING A DATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It seems that the significance of women's electoral majority is muffled by the clamour of the politics of race and other aspects of identity – increasingly importantly class – at the national level, and in all likelihood at provincial level too. The numbers and diversity of circumstances of women across the spectrum of the South African electorate make it extremely unlikely that any one particular party could appeal to women as a matter of primary party policy, rather than through policies on secondary issues such as those on gender violence and service delivery.

However, the current electorate will return to the polls in 2005 to elect their local government representatives. It is here that the potential for wooing female voters more specifically becomes not only possible, but extremely significant. While the government argues that the

legislation on traditional leadership, and the imminent legislation on communal land rights, will benefit rural and traditional communities, and will not infringe on the powers and interests of elected local authorities, local government may prove to be the first line of defence of rural women's rights of access to services, land, and not least equal political representation. There are still significant barriers to the effective articulation of women's interests and voices in local government, but a concerted effort to identify concentrations of female voters in 2005, and accommodate their needs and interests could mitigate some of these challenges, as well as serve as a counterweight to the power of traditional leaders. Perhaps it really is closer to home that women's power ultimately lies.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN EACH PROVINCE

Province	Females	Males	Total	Females as a % of the total
Eastern Cape	1 674 227	1 211 329	2 885 556	58.02%
Free State	721 656	616 474	1 338 130	54.00%
Gauteng	2 506 340	2 445 806	4 952 146	50.61%
KwaZulu-Natal	2 199 975	1 666 935	3 866 910	56.89%
Limpopo	1 228 829	802 043	2 030 872	60.51%
Mpumulanga	874 566	731 042	1 605 608	54.50%
North West	757 292	695 580	1 452 872	52.12%
Northern Cape	273 060	239 411	512 471	53.28%
Western Cape	1 195 895	1 040 244	2 236 139	53.48%
NATIONAL	**11 431 840**	**9 448 864**	**20 880 704**	**54.75%**

(Source: Independent Electoral Commission)
In all provinces (including Gauteng – the only province in which women are not the majority of the population and the electorate) there is a larger proportion of women voters registered than males.

POPULATION BY SEX AND PROVINCE 2001
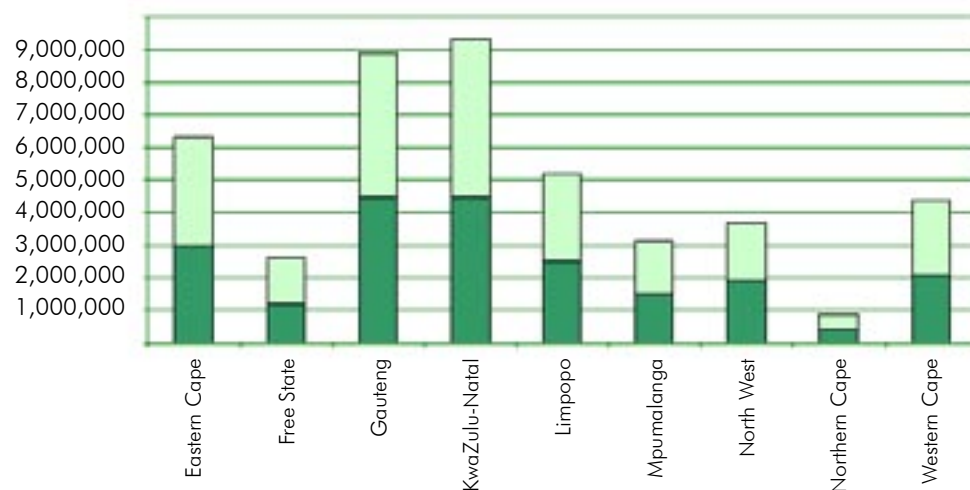
(Source: Stats SA Website – Digital Census Data)
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TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION WHO WERE FEMALE IN 2001 (STATS SA CENSUS IN BRIEF, 2003: 9)

Province	Female Percentage
Eastern Cape	53.8%
Free State	52.1%
Gauteng	49.7%
KwaZulu-Natal	53.2%
Limpopo	54.6%
Mpumalanga	52.1%
North West	50.4%
Northern Cape	51.2%
Western Cape	51.5%
South Africa (Total)	**52.2%**

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Fear versus freedom: minority parties and the ANC

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Edigheji argues that the DA is predicating its election campaign mainly on fear-mongering, rather than on policy issues. Such alarmism seems to be embedded in perceptions of racial identity and difference, including that black people cannot govern democratically. He also argues that minority parties are not opposition parties, insofar as they fail to organize themselves appropriately, and do not present policies which have inclusive appeal and which transcend identity politics.

As we approach the third democratic election, desperation has become evident in South African politics. There are two prime examples that need critical examination. The first, which seems to be the primary preoccupation of the leader of the main minority party, Tony Leon of the Democratic Alliance (DA), relates to whether President Thabo Mbeki will serve a third term or not. This is because of unintended (perhaps intended) consequences of such a message not only to the voters but also because it can undermine international confidence in the country. The second relates to the fear that South Africa is becoming a one party state.

Let us first explore the third term thesis, which has become a campaign issue of Mr. Leon. He has posed the question whether or not President Mbeki will run for a third term. Some analysts have questioned why the president is silent on this issue. Such a query betrays a lack of confidence in the Constitution, which is one of the most progressive in the world. The South African constitution limits the term of the president to two terms. To then expect President Mbeki to say whether or not he will run for a third term betrays a lack of understanding of the constitutional provisions and at worst a political mischief intended to instill fear in the minds of not only the average South African but of people throughout the international community. The third term "debate" is primarily an attempt to gain political capital from a non-issue. Underlining this is a pervasive notion that blacks cannot govern and respect constitutional provisions. This is the real issue.

Would the leader of the DA have asked President Bush if he will run for a third term? Certainly, this is not an issue in American politics. What is at issue are President Bush's policies, including the invasion of Iraq, for which the Democratic Party is taking him to task. In our case, the main minority party focuses more on a campaign of fear rather than on policy differences. As long as this is the case, the ANC will remain the dominant party. Furthermore, in spite of the irritation with public decent by a section of ANC leadership, the Party is known for its robust internal debate. It is unlikely that the ANC and its alliance partners will accept a third term for President Mbeki even if he has such ambition. But there is no indication so far to that effect.

Now to the second issue; that of the one party state. The argument by the DA is basically that unless it secures more votes and becomes stronger, South Africa will become a one party state like most African countries in the post-independence period. This was partly a product of repression of minority parties by African governments, and included the enactment of laws that hampered the free operations of parties other than ruling parties. This was the situation in Malawi, Zambia and most recently Zimbabwe.

Post-1994 South Africa lacks these characteristics and there is no evidence that the government intends to suppress minority parties. If anything, the South Africa Constitution provides for a liberal regime for the formation and operation of political parties, which the government has upheld. Unlike most African states, the Constitution guarantees the rights of people to form and join political parties of their choice. It also provides for an independent Electoral Commission, free from any political interference. The Electoral Law with respect to party formation is one of the most progressive in the world. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the ruling party has abused state resources for its political gains during the last ten years of democracy, unlike in some post-independent African states.

It will serve politicians well to understand the psychology of voters, especially why they vote the way they do. To say that South African voters are immature because identities are one of the major factors that drive them is simply to miss the point. In the April 14 2004 election, identification with the party that led the struggle against the oppression of, and freedom from apartheid for the South African majority, will be one factor that shapes the way black voters and workers are likely to vote, coupled with the ruling ANC's performance. However, this will not translate into the ANC receiving a blank cheque from the voters.

As we have seen in the last ten years, civil society groups and trade unions, especially the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU), that are aligned to the ANC, have been its harshest critics. They have also been the main watchdog against government excesses, and in some cases have led to reversal of government policies including those on HIV-AIDS. In spite of their criticisms, workers and the majority black population will continue to support the ANC. Such support will also be dependent on the ANC government performance in core areas such as job creation. The support of blacks, workers and the poor in general would be partly because the ANC fought side by side with them against apartheid. Minority parties especially the DA does itself no good with its Fight-Back philosophy. To most blacks this means reversing the gains of freedom including those resulting from affirmative action and black economic empowerment. To workers, the fight-back philosophy of the DA means a flexible labour market policy and more privatization and commmercialisation of public enterprises and social services. Any party that advocates a minimalist state and reliance on market forces as the most efficient allocator of resources which are more likely to entrench existing income and wealth inequalities along racial and gender lines, will not endear itself to the majority of voters especially those that have been at the receiving end of apartheid social, economic and political exclusion.

It seems that what some of the minority parties want in our democracy is an entitlement to votes, whether or not they identify with, and speak to, the wishes and aspirations of majority of voters. Fear of a one party state, promoted by minority parties, is not enough to attract voters, and elections will not be won by the 'politics of fear'. The determining factor in the April 14 2004 general election and subsequent ones, will be the ability of parties to espouse policies with which the electorate identifies. For political parties to assume that they are entitled to win votes in spite of their policies and without regard to issues that affect majority voters is to underrate their maturity. This is therefore one assumption that underlines the one party thesis.

The challenge before the minority parties is to organise themselves as alternatives to the ruling party. This will require that they promote policies and causes that benefit the majority of the citizens. The current composition of the DA, especially its white-dominated leadership, as well as its policy stances, makes it ill-suited for the task of providing a real political alternative.

If South Africa descends into one-party statism, it will have more to do with the way minority parties organize themselves and the interests they represent, than the ANC. The urgent task confronting them is of reorganising and recomposing themselves and promoting policies that will impact positively on the majority of South Africans, in order for them to effectively compete against the ANC. As long as minority parties continue to protect minority privileges, they will remain marginal political forces and thereby relegate themselves unwittingly to mere pressure groups.

It is in this respect that I have used the term minority parties. For a party to be termed an opposition, it must envision and organise itself as an alternative governing party. This is currently lacking in South Africa. The smaller parties have not organized and envisioned themselves as alternative governing parties. At best they are pressure groups and do not see themselves as constituting government in the future. It is such a climate that will give rise to a one party state rather than what the ANC does.

Instead of toying with the politics of fear, politicians should focus on real issues and above all appeal to the voters, their identities and interests, and let the votes ultimately decide.

Foreign policy, identity and the 2004 elections

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*The "liberation dividend" has undoubtedly secured another election victory for the ANC, argue **Landsberg, Mackay** and **Moore**. This affords President Mbeki the space to pursue foreign policy issues which are unlikely to impact on the majority of the electorate's loyalty to the party which delivered them from apartheid.*

Foreign policy issues have begun to play a greater role in party manifestos for the upcoming elections and many political parties have included such issues as a salient part of their manifestos.[1] For instance, the Nasionale Aksie (NA) party of Kassie Auckamp stresses a somewhat inward looking orientation, and argues that South Africa has to scale down on foreign policy adventurism and focus on challenges at home. The NA adopts a hard-line attitude towards Zimbabwe and says Pretoria's position discourages foreign direct investment (FDI). Beyond this, in a throwback to the country's past, it adopts a typical 'own affairs' attitude, based on group rights and a pro-Afrikaans posture seeking to protect Afrikaans, Afrikaners and Christianity. The United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) attacks the ruling African National Congress (ANC) for having pursued a misplaced foreign policy based on loyalty to benefactors of the liberation struggle. This foreign policy, says the UCDP, has alienated key foreign players abroad - presumably the western powers. The Party says that South Africa is ridiculed abroad for promoting the rhetoric of an African Renaissance, while cuddling up to despots, and avows that it will pursue a pro-FDI foreign policy. The Democratic Alliance (DA) asserts that its most important foreign policy issue, if it wins the election, will be to restore democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe; it will also adopt a hard-line attitude against tyrants and dictatorships in general. The DA has elevated Zimbabwe to a key election issue. The New National Party (NNP) asserts that, even though it will consolidate its coalition with the ANC, it will continue to differ with the ANC over Zimbabwe policy.

The PAC, in turn, articulates an Africa-oriented foreign policy. Such a pro-continental foreign policy will attempt to get all African states to speak with one voice. It will strive for the reform of the United Nations so as to lessen the influence of the western powers on the Security Council. It will also fight to end what it terms 'neo-colonialism'. The party calls for the cancellation of apartheid debt, and wishes to raise some R45 billion through such debt cancellation. It is not clear how the PAC would engage South Africa's debtors for this cancellation.

One of the reasons why so many parties have included foreign policy issues in their manifestos is that foreign policy over the past ten years has raised so many controversial issues. In addition, Mbeki has been pretty much a 'foreign policy president' over the past five years. Many opposition parties have labelled him an 'absentee president' given his active foreign policy programme and frequent trips abroad. So foreign policy has almost

naturally forced itself onto the election agenda. Moreover, events on our doorstep – in Zimbabwe – have demanded action by our government and this action or lack thereof, has been closely scrutinised by the opposition.

Many opposition parties have latched onto the Mbeki government's 'quiet diplomacy' approach towards Robert Mugabe's government and Pretoria's recent approaches towards Haiti and the now fallen Aristide government. Zimbabwe has not only been the dominant foreign policy issue in this election; it has also become a domestic issue. This is so because it speaks to a number of prominent domestic issues: race, social injustice, power, democracy, the land question and the economy. All of these have a deep resonance for South Africans.

Yet, contrary to what some analysts have predicted, we believe that in spite of Zimbabwe's elevation to such a high plane that it has become a national issue, the upcoming elections will not be determined by the ruling party's actions over Zimbabwe or any other foreign policy issue. Not even the recent rumpus over Mbeki's visit to the struggling Haiti will be enough to have a significant impact on the polls. Years of isolation have turned South Africa into a parochial society and the 2004 election will most certainly be determined by domestic factors such as race, poverty versus economic progress, and the legacy of apartheid and white domination. Foreign policy issues such as the Zimbabwe issue and certain opposition leaders' rejection of foreign peacekeeping missions might matter for their limited constituencies but will scarcely have an impact on broader voting patterns. But it will also be safe to assume that even without the foreign policy issues on the local radar screen, these people would still have voted for their respective parties. The point here is that these parties are unlikely to pick up any significant bloc of votes as a result of these hotly-debated foreign policy issues. While these leaders assume that the Mugabe and Aristide issues will win them votes, the bulk of the voting public are likely to be preoccupied with other issues.

While the non-issue of foreign policy is by and large overshadowed by the more parochial concerns of the majority of South Africa's electorate, the influence of the public on the making of foreign policy, or conversely the centrality of foreign policy issues to the election, is also a function of i) how much the public knows about the issues; ii) the public's perceptions of South Africa's role in the international arena; iii) perceptions of threat, or the lack thereof; iv) and, the demographic features of the electorate.[2] Historically, attentive interest in foreign policy has been the preserve of South African elites, regardless of race. The implication of this is that foreign policy has seldom swayed elections, even prior to democracy. For example, in spite of his ushering South Africa into an unpopular war, World War II, in 1939, what lost Jan Smuts the 1948 election were misgivings surrounding his party's (the United Party) domestic policy towards Blacks, rather than his foreign policy.

Even the ruling party focuses attention on foreign policy, by highlighting in its manifesto some foreign policy achievements over the past five years. The party starts out by arguing that South Africa's domestic progress is inextricably tied up with events abroad. It highlights the fact that both post-1994 governments adopted a problem-solving approach and Pretoria saw itself as a bridge-builder between the global 'North' and 'South'. The manifesto also highlights government achievements in terms of South-South partnerships, such as the relations between South Africa, Brazil and India.

Policy towards Zimbabwe has generated heated debate and the strategy of 'quiet diplomacy' has been at the heart of this. Yet this strategy has not only been applied in Zimbabwe; it has been Mbeki's preferred strategy in Africa. It has also been applied in Nigeria, Swaziland, Comoros, Congo, Burundi, and even Liberia, as Pretoria engaged belligerents behind the scenes as a rule. So quiet diplomacy is the rule rather than the exception. Not surprisingly, the ANC stresses in its manifesto that over the past decade, Pretoria has chosen the path of partnership and equality with African states. Mbeki was instrumental in punting a New Partnership for Africa's Development, an ambitious programme designed to solicit western investment, aid, market access, and assistance in Africa's peace operations in exchange for Africans holding each other accountable politically and economically.

So why do we argue that foreign policy will have far less of a deciding impact on the 2004 elections than many assume? While there is a widely held view that policy issues in general and foreign policy matters in particular will determine the outcome of the election, there has been a tendency to underestimate the significance of what we call 'the politics of liberation and freedom'. For many (black) South Africans, the idea of political freedom, and the restoration of their dignity are ideals that were worth fighting for. In this regard, the advantage for the ANC is that it is associated in the minds of the majority of South Africans as the party that brought them liberation from oppression. The reverse is also true for the opposition, especially the official opposition. It could well be that in spite of the many issues raised by the DA, in the minds of many (black) voters, the party continues to be associated with 'whiteness' and the protection of minority white interests. This, despite the party's determination to remind the electorate of its opposition role in the apartheid parliament.

Thus, race and identity matter just as much as this 'liberation dividend'. As many as 76% of South African voters are black and many of them have supported the party of liberation most of their lives. It may prove difficult for them, so soon after liberation, to take the psychological step of actually changing to an opposition party especially if that opposition party is associated in their minds with promoting or protecting white privilege. Conversely, the ANC, as a result of the 'liberation dividend' is still seen by

the majority of black South Africans as promoting the interests of black people. So race does matter when it comes to voting in South Africa. In the previous Synopsis, we argued that in spite of the fact that the ANC government has been limited on delivery, a majority will return it to office because race and the identity of the liberation party holds a great deal of sway. The point here is not that issues such as HIV/AIDS, the delivery of essential services, and Zimbabwe do not matter in this election; they do. It is that ANC voters trust it because of its historical role and image as liberator. ANC voters, and black voters in the main, appear to have taken the ANC's concept of a 'people's contract' seriously and they will, accordingly, vote for it on the basis of this trust. But as was seen during the last five years, this has not been a blank cheque for the ANC to do as it pleases. Alliance partners such as COSATU have openly criticised several aspects of ANC policy.

We therefore disagree with those who argue that in 2004, salient issues other than race and identity will begin to assume centre stage. We argue that it is not issues like service delivery, or even HIV/AIDS, nor even the third term debate that will determine the elections. While these are the issues out in the public domain and central to the campaigns of many parties, the ANC's image as the deliverer of liberation will have a determining impact.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, there is also the issue of organised and disorganised publics. Those publics or sectors that are able to organise, such as the media, labour, commerce and agriculture, have potentially more of a chance to impact on government's foreign policy choices, but may be preoccupied with other issues at this time. This may be the one arena in which public participation is, actually, an ongoing process, and not an event that occurs once every five years. The broader, unorganised, South African public, meanwhile, is divided, or may hold no significant opinions on issues such as Zimbabwe, Haiti and continental peacekeeping, hence the no-show of these questions as issues that can impact on the election.

Indeed, ten to fifteen years from now issue politics may become more salient; but for now it is factors such as the ANC's stress on 'ten years of freedom' that will be uppermost in the minds of the majority of South Africans, who happen to be black.

The liberation dividend that the ANC has reaped in the last two elections has allowed Mbeki the space to engage in pursuits outside of South Africa. He and his party are certain of being re-issued the electoral mandate with overwhelming support. This may well be a unique period in the party's history, and will undoubtedly dissipate the further we move away from 1994's liberation election. In the interim, this dividend has provided the space for Mbeki to indulge in the pursuance of foreign policy objectives in a way that presidents that follow him will certainly not be able to. Indeed, because the ANC is likely to be returned with an overwhelming victory, he may well interpret this as a mandate to continue with his ambitious foreign policy programme.

So during his last five-year term, Mbeki may become even more, not less, engaged in matters north of the Limpopo and abroad. This will reinforce his image as a foreign policy president. He is likely to be remembered more for his achievements on the rest of the continent and abroad, than those at home. Ultimately, however, come election day, it will be the party's image at home as the party of liberation that will be key in securing victory for the ANC.

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[1] See the manifestos of the NA, UCDP, PAC, DA and ANC.
[2] Deon Geldenhuys, 1984, *What do we think? A survey of white opinion of foreign policy issues,* no 2, South African Institute of International affairs, Johannesburg.

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