election**synopsis**

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Focus on Electoral **choice** and party **campaigns**

This issue of election**synopsis** addresses a contradiction which much commentary seems to assume lies at the heart of South African politics. On the one hand, we have a plethora of political parties. This is a product, not just of the opportunity provided by the national list proportional representation system, but also of the celebrated diversity of our population in terms of race, culture, language, class and so on. On the other hand, it is equally said that, in these post-apartheid, post-Cold War years, our parties are actually offering us all much of the same thing: a rather similar centrist mix of 'caring capitalism', (even if, as if we cannot wholly abandon 'the struggle years' of the past, the 'c' word has gone out of political fashion).

If this contradiction is real, then a further implication is that in South Africa today voters are being offered something of a 'choiceless choice': You pays your money, and you get the same thing whatever you choose! Yet it is equally clear that South African voters don't actually see the present election in this way. The previous issue of election**synopsis** carried a remarkable array of views as to why people vote as they do, and why they choose to identify with the different parties. Even if it is true (and the parties would contest this) that the ANC and DA are offering much the same package to the voters, there is ample evidence that the voters see the parties as representing very different options. So how are we to pick our way through this difficult territory of recognising *simultaneous similarity and difference* amongst our political parties? The articles in this issue provide some clues.

Bob Jones provides us with a valuable overview of the smorgasboard of parties which is being presented to the voters, with helpful comparative reference to party choice which was available in 1994 and 1999. Overall, there are 21 parties competing in the national election, whilst 33 parties are fielding candidates in the nine provinces. "South African voters will have more parties than ever before to choose from" notes **Jones**, yet he doubts that this greater choice will translate into wider representation. The field is of course dominated by what he terms the 'grand slam' parties, those ten parties which are putting up candidates nationally and in all nine provinces (most of which have done this previously). Yet a feature of the present election is precisely the appearance of a variety of single issue and province specific parties which represent specific and local interests. **Jones** suggests that these also-rans will almost certainly remain marginal, yet they give voters an undeniable chance to voice their opinions and concerns, and in so doing, enrich our democracy.

Many of the smaller parties are built around particular individuals. Yet in a proportional representation system, the voter cannot vote directly for individuals, only for parties which list their candidates in order. In her article, **Janet Cherry** examines how the party lists are constructed. She discounts the suggestion that voters do not examine the party policies critically in making their choice. However, she notes that if the majority of voters (who are not actually members of political parties) can play no part in the selection of candidates, they they have to judge the party they intend voting for on the basis of its candidates lists. Who is chosen to stand, how they are chosen, and what the overall list seems to represent provides the voter with major clues as to the nature of the party they are considering. Within this context, she examines the selection process pursued by the ANC and the other political parties, noting how they have to strive to balance grass roots party candidate preferences with the need to present the right type of overall candidate profile to the electorate. Whilst she notes the good news that in today's South Africa, all parties claim to be non-racial and to be representative of a broad spectrum of society, the composition of their candidate lists can reveal a lot about their underlying identity.

If in constructing their party lists, party managers feel the need to obtain political balance – fielding the 'right' number of women, Indians , or what-have-you – they are equally aware of the need to strike the appropriate note in their manifestos: they need to say enough to attract, not too much too offend. **Jonathan Faull** reflects upon this dilemma in his examination of the

origins of party manifestos, what they mean, who they address and what purpose they serve. The basic problem for the manifesto writer, he observes, is that manifestos have to speak to diverse constituencies that fall under each party umbrella. They therefore serve as 'catch-alls', tying into party campaigns potentially conflicting constituencies which bicker about policy. In so doing, they create a generalised framework within which campaigns operate.

The irony is that few people actually get to read the party manifestos, especially in a country such as South Africa where many people are functionally illiterate and few parties can afford to publish their manifestos in eleven official languages. Parties are therefore dependent upon the media, and the chattering classes at large, to help them convey to the people what they are saying in their manifestos. **Yul Derek Davids** not only provides us with brief overviews of the manifestos of the larger parties in the current election, but notes how comparison reveals that the problems they are dealing with are very close to the major concerns which people register in opinion polls. The parties' manifestos therefore tend to relate very closely to the people's own agenda on pressing issues such as unemployment, HIV-AIDS, poverty, crime and security and so on. "There is very little difference between what the public want and what the major political parties have to offer".

If the parties are not seriously differentiated ideologically or on policy grounds, voters are unlikely to base their choice of party on their manifestos. **Collette Hertzenberg** goes further by suggesting that the present style of politics in South Africa, which tends to limit constructive debate, renders the problem of why people vote as they do even more problematic. Hence it is that she returns to the issue of identity. South African voters, she argues, align themselves with particular parties largely on grounds of group identity, because of the still strong link between race and resources. If voters perceive that benefits from policy outcomes are dependent on group identities, they will choose a party that best represents their group identity. Even so, voting patterns are not fixed, for voter perceptions of how well parties serve their interests in practice change over time. However, the ability of parties to capture votes from their competitors depends heavily upon whether they are seen as inclusive or exclusive in terms of race and interest.

So much of the analysis we have presented during this debate around identity and voting seems to imply that voting preferences are static, unlikely to be shifted in the present era. Yet don't tell that to the politicians, who at this time, day and night, are addressing campaign meetings and meeting the people. This, they will tell you, is the stuff of politics, this is how they engage with the people they aspire to represent. **Thabo Rapoo** concludes this issue of election**synopsis** by reviewing how our politicians and parties are running their campaigns. With its re-election guaranteed, he argues, the ANC might have been expected to sit back on its haunches, and to go on the defensive. In contrast, it was first out of the starting blocks with a highly aggressive campaign that left the opposition parties scrambling after it. Latterly, however, they have begun to overcome their disadvantage and to respond to the ANC differently and innovatively, so that now, it would seem, we have a *real* election campaign on our hands. The ANC will win the election handsomely of course, but Rapoo observes that it will have to work harder than it might have expected if it is going to secure the size of victory that has regularly been predicted in the opinion polls.

Overall, the articles in this issue of election**synopsis** push us well beyond any view that South African politics is static. April 14th is unlikely to record any major shifts in the make up of our political representation, but that will not mean that are politics are unchanging, nor that parties can take their constituencies for granted.

Spoilt for Choice?

Bob Jones, Analyst at large

Jones offers a comprehensive overview of the plethora of parties which are contesting the 2004 elections at national and provincial level. However, despite their burgeoning numbers, he argues that it is doubtful whether this will result in a broadening of representation at either national or provincial level, or an undermining of the monopoly of the major players. However, these parties do represent an expansion of the competitive sphere of democratic politics in SA.

South African voters will have more parties than ever before to choose from in the 2004 elections – 37 in all will be standing for the National Assembly and nine Provincial Legislatures. However, it is unlikely that this greater choice will translate into wider representation. If the past is any guide, many of these hopefuls will walk away empty-handed; of the 27 parties

standing in 1994, just eight won seats, although, in 1999, 13 out of 26 parties achieved some electoral success. So, what exactly are the choices open to voters on 14 April?

THE NATIONAL CONTEST

Twenty-one parties will contest the National Assembly election, up from 16 in 1999, and two more than in 1994. Of the seven parties in Parliament since 1994, the ANC will attempt, doubtless successfully, to maintain its dominance; the ACDP and DA will be aiming to build on the gains they made in 1999, while the IFP, NNP, PAC and VF/FF will battle to halt, or even reverse, the decline in support they suffered in 1999.

These seven will be joined on the ballot paper by four parties that first entered the Assembly in 1999 – AZAPO, the Minority Front (MF), the UCDP and the UDM. They will be trying, at the very least, to keep the seats they won then, and hoping to increase their presence.

Ten parties will be campaigning to secure their first seats in Parliament, though the leading lights of some of them are no strangers to it: Cassie Aucamp, who won his seat in 1999 for the AEB, will now be leading Nasionale Aksie (NA), while Patricia de Lille, formerly with the PAC, is heading the newly formed Independent Democrats (ID). Nor is Peter Marais, former NNP Western Cape MEC and Mayor of Cape Town, and now leader of the New Labour Party, exactly a political novice.

Two other contenders have fought before – Keep it Straight and Simple, in 1994, and The Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA), in 1999. The Organisation Party, United Front, Christian Democratic Party, Peace and Justice Congress and The Employment Movement of South Africa complete the list.

In 1994, seven parties (36.8% of those standing) won seats in the Assembly; in 1999, 13 parties (81.25% of those standing) did so. With more parties contesting the 2004 election, and an apparently rising trend in the proportion of competing parties that win seats, what chance of yet another increase in the number of parties gaining representation? Not much. Only a mug would even consider betting on it.

THE PROVINCIAL CONTESTS

There are also more choices for voters in the nine Provincial Legislature elections: overall, 33 parties will field candidates, compared with 23 in 1994 and 25 in 1999.

Four of the 21 parties contesting the National Assembly elections (KISS, The Organisation Party, The Employment Movement of South Africa and the United Front) are not fighting the provincial elections. Of the other 17, ten (the ACDP, ANC, AZAPO, DA, ID, NNP, PAC, UCDP, UDM and VF/FF+) are going for the "grand slam" – putting up candidates in each provincial poll. The IFP is standing in eight provinces (compared with all nine in 1994 and 1999); it has a deal with a local party in the other – Limpopo.

The remaining six parties have set their sights lower: NA is contesting six provinces, SOPA is fighting in four, the Christian Democratic Party and the Peace and Justice Congress are each challenging in two, while the final two (the MF and the New Labour Party) are confining themselves to just one province each.

Sixteen parties are concentrating exclusively on the provincial polls, six more than in 1999, and double the 1994 figure. Of these, two are fighting in two provinces each, while 14 are each standing in one province only. These single-province parties are to be found on the ballot papers in six provinces – one in the Free State, one in Mpumalanga, two in Limpopo, three in Gauteng, three in KwaZulu-Natal, and four in the Western Cape.

Voters in the provincial elections seeking alternatives to the high-flying members of the "grand-slam club", or the only slightly less ambitious IFP, have a range of choices, depending on the province:

- For some, the options are limited – The Cape People's Congress is the only alternative in the **Northern Cape**, while, in the **North West**, that burden falls to yet another National Assembly contestant, NA.

- Three provinces each offer two alternatives – in the **Eastern Cape** they are NA and SOPA; the **Free State** has NA and the Dikwankwetla Party of South Africa (now a single-province party but an Assembly wannabe in 1994) while, in **Mpumalanga**, there is SOPA again, plus another single-province party, the Sindawonye Progressive Party, which also fought there in 1999.

- The ballot paper in **Limpopo** contains 13 parties. In addition to the high flyers, voters can choose from NA and two single-province parties, the Ximoko Party (another 1994 aspirant to the Assembly) and the Alliance for Democracy and Prosperity (ADP). The last has an electoral pact with the IFP, which is not standing in the province but whose supporters will vote for the ADP in the provincial

contest. In return, ADP supporters will vote for the IFP in the National Assembly election. At least, that is how it is supposed to work.

- Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal offer a wider choice, with 18 names on their ballot papers. In **Gauteng**, the big 11 are being challenged by four parties that are also vying for National Assembly seats – the Christian Democratic Party, NA, the Peace and Justice Congress and SOPA – and three single-province parties, the Black People's Convention, the Economic Freedom Movement and the Pro-Death Penalty Party. In **KwaZulu-Natal**, the alternatives are the Christian Democratic Party, the MF and SOPA, all contesting the National Assembly elections, the Peace and Development Party, and three single-province parties, the Independent African Movement, the Izwi Lethu Party and Royal Loyal Progress.

- The **Western Cape** voter will have the greatest choice, with 20 names on the ballot. Of the nine parties with medium-to-low aspirations, three – NA, the New Labour Party, and the Peace and Justice Congress – also have National Assembly hopes. The Peace and Development Party and The Cape People's Congress, respectively, are putting in an appearance in a second provincial poll, while the remaining four – the African Muslim Party, the Moderate Independent Party, The Green Party of South Africa and the Universal Party – are single-province parties.

In the 1999 elections, eight of the provinces saw an increase in the number of parties represented in their legislatures (in Limpopo, a doubling, from three to six, while Mpumalanga and the North West each experienced a jump from three to five). The number of parties represented in the KwaZulu Legislature remained the same, but there was a turnover, with the UDM replacing the PAC in the chamber.

However, despite the increase in parties standing, the 2004 elections may not lead to a further widening of representation in the provinces. Nor are they likely to break the monopoly hold of National Assembly parties: in 1994, every Provincial Legislature seat bar one (secured by the MF in KwaZulu-Natal) was won by one of the seven parties winning seats in the national Parliament, and, in 1999, 11 of the parties gaining representation in the National Assembly cornered all the provincial seats.

In the 1994 provincial elections in Limpopo, seven of the ten parties standing (70%) failed to pick up a seat between them, collectively amassing five per cent of the vote. In the Free State in 1999, nine of the 13 competing parties (also 70%) only managed to garner 10% of the vote, leaving the other four to carry off the glittering electoral prizes. Which province, this time round, will host the most also-rans and earn Arnold's sobriquet of "the home of lost causes"?

But are the also-rans in this, or any other province, or in the National Assembly election for that matter, to be glibly written off as adherents of "forsaken beliefs", bearers of "unpopular names", or as appealing to "impossible loyalties"? After all, the same could be said of some of the more successful parties.

The also-rans may have decidedly slim chances of success. Many of them may be doomed to remain on the margins of electoral politics for a considerable time, if not forever. But, anywhere they put themselves forward for election, they give voters a vital, indispensable and undeniable chance to voice their opinions and concerns. In the building of democracy in South Africa, in deepening it and widening it and making it more inclusive, "they also serve who only stand…".

TABLE1: PARTIES STANDING FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES: 2004

Party	Initials	National Assembly	PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES								
			EC	FS	G	KZN	L	M	NW	NC	WC
Africa Muslim Party	AMP										X
African Christian Democratic Party	ACDP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
African National Congress	ANC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alliance for Democracy and Prosperity	ADP						X				
Azanian People's Organisation	AZAPO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black People's Convention	BPC				X						
Christian Democratic Party	CDP	X			X	X					
Democratic Alliance	DA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dikwankwetla Party of South Africa	DPSA			X							
Economic Freedom Movement	EFM				X						
Independent African Movement	IAM					X					
Independent Democrats	ID	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inkatha Freedom Party	IFP	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Izwi Lethu Party	ILP					X					
Keep It Straight and Simple	KISS	X									
Minority Front	MF	X				X					
Moderate Independent Party											X
Nasionale Aksie	NA	X	X	X	X		X		X		X
New Labour Party		X									X
New National Party	NNP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pan Africanist Congress of Azania	PAC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peace and Development Party	PDP					X					X
Peace and Justice Congress	PJC	X			X						X
Pro-Death Penalty Party					X						
Royal Loyal Progress	RLP					X					
Sindawonye Progressive Party	SPP							X			
The Cape People's Congress	CPC									X	X
The Employment Movement of South Africa	EMSA	X									
The Green Party of South Africa	GP										X
The Organisation Party	TOP	X									
The Socialist Party of Azania	SOPA	X	X		X	X		X			
United Christian Democratic Party	UCDP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Democratic Movement	UDM	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Front	UF	X									
Universal Party	UP										X
Vreiheidsfront / Freedom Front Plus	VF/FF+	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ximoko Party	XP						X				
Number of parties standing		**21**	**13**	**13**	**18**	**18**	**13**	**13**	**12**	**12**	**20**

A cell with an X indicates that a party is standing for election to that particular legislative body. Thus, the ANC is contesting the National Assembly election and all nine Provincial Legislature elections, while the Ximoko Party is contesting only the Provincial Legislature election in Limpopo Province.

Elections 2004: the party lists and issues of identity

Janet Cherry, Senior Research Specialist, Democracy and Governance Programme, HSRC

Cherry explores the technical process, and critically interrogates procedures, involved in developing lists of party candidates who will represent the electorate for the next five years. In the context of South Africa's electoral system (see Synopsis 1), scrutiny of this process is essential, as it is the only point at which citizens – ideally – can influence the representivity of the party of which they are members, and for which they may vote. She also considers the extent to which parties remain locked into historical, racial, ethnic, regional, religious, ideological and cultural identities. Although most parties claim to be non-racial, there are exceptions, and even those who defend this claim, have representatives who are questionable in other respects. Few issue-based parties exist in a society which continues to be pre-occupied with identity.

With an electoral system based on proportional representation and party lists, who gets onto the list is of primary importance to the voter. For if you cannot vote for an individual to represent you in your community or district, then you have to vote for a list of people who are meant to represent you in some other way. Ideally, of course, voters would choose parties on the basis of their policies rather than personalities; and people for their principles and opinions rather than for their race, sex or religion.

Recent research indicates that voters are not the fools that political parties sometimes take them for, and that they do select parties for their policies rather than on more superficial grounds. Yet, this being South Africa, we cannot entirely discount the issue of identity in the electoral process. And so we need to ask: who do parties claim to represent? And what do their lists of candidates show us about who they are hoping to attract to vote for them on 14 April? For the fact remains that the majority of voters can play no part in the selection of candidates, and so have perforce to judge the party they intend voting for on the basis of its candidates list.

ELECTION LISTS: THE PROCESS (FROM THE IEC'S SIDE)

Registered parties were required to submit their lists of candidates for election by the cut-off date of 27 February. Eleven parties were registered to contest the national election, and 35 to contest provincial elections. No process is prescribed whereby parties must nominate and finalise their candidate's list – and this in itself means that voters do not always know how the list of names they vote for came to be as it is.

Between 12 and 15 March, the list of candidates was available for inspection, and any objections had to be made to the IEC by 15 March. By 18 March the Commission notified the objector and the registered party of its decision on the objection, and there was room for either party to appeal the decision of the Commission by 23 March. The Electoral Court was obliged to decide an appeal and notify the parties to the appeal of their decision by 26 March. By 29 March the final list of registered parties and their candidates had to be prepared by the Chief Electoral Officer, and by 5 April each candidate will be issued with a certificate confirming his/her status as a candidate in the election of 14 April (Electoral Commission: Election Timetable, 2004).

There are two important restrictions on who may be placed on party lists. The Department of Public Service and Administration recently issued a circular warning that civil servants may not be on candidates lists (*Cape Times* 1/3/04). Secondly, candidates of political parties whose names are not on the voters' roll will be disqualified and their names will be removed from the party lists (*Daily Dispatch* 12/02/04).

ELECTION LISTS: THE PROCESS (FROM THE PARTIES' SIDE)

Because South Africa's electoral system is based on the principle of proportional representation, the process by which candidates are selected by parties to stand for election is of crucial importance. In an electoral system where voters cannot choose the candidate to represent them in their own constituency, the role of party members in selecting candidates becomes even more significant. This is the only place – or process – where 'ordinary citizens' can choose who will represent them in government.

Given the importance of the process, it is important to ask the following questions: How democratic is this process? How much participation is there by 'ordinary members' of the various political parties contesting the elections? Is there any substance to the rumours that certain parties centralize decision making on the electoral lists, and even override the decisions of their branches or regional structures? That the president of the ANC, for example, has the power to 'rearrange' the list, and discard 'unreliable or corrupt' members?

On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that decentralization has its disadvantages too: some ANC branches are reported to be not following procedure – either the requisite meeting is not held, or the meeting is held but does not have the requisite quorum of members – in which case the executive (or even just a small group of members) takes a decision about which names to put forward to the regional 'list' conferences; and from there the names are forwarded to the national list committee. So if we are relying on ordinary party members to play a role in selecting electoral representatives, how democratic is each party in its practice – in particular, in its process of constructing electoral lists?

The ANC, being the governing party and the largest party in terms of membership, as well as being professedly committed to democratic process, has of course been the most scrutinized in terms of the process of constructing its lists of candidates. And there is no doubt that the process, while being nominally democratic in its 'branch to region to national' process, leaves much to be desired in terms of the process of constituting the final lists. Ordinary branch members may feel that they have participated democratically in putting forward their list of favoured candidates, only to find that the regional 'list conference' has removed their choices, or moved them to different positions lower down on the list. Of course, it is not possible to come up with consolidated national and provincial lists without some process of bargaining and compromise, and in a huge national organization, not every branch's wishes can be accommodated. It is also inevitable that within the governing party, there will be intense competition and lobbying around the places that individuals fill on the lists. In addition, the overriding political imperatives of having a certain number of women candidates, and a good 'racial mix', as well as other political imperatives such as accommodating leaders from other parts of the Tripartite Alliance, have to be taken into account by the ANC. Yet the process of constructing the lists at provincial and national level can be criticized for not being transparent within the organization, let alone for those who are not active members of branches.

Another criticism that has been leveled at the ANC in relation to the election list process is its refusal to release the names of its candidates for premier in each province. The provincial lists do not necessarily reflect the candidate for premier in first place on the list. The ANC argued that it was not obliged to, because unlike in a constituency based system, the premier does not play a significant role in the election campaign; moreover, provinces are not run by individuals. In its firm insistence on its right to have premiers appointed by the President, the ANC has been seen as trying to 'safeguard against a backlash' if unpopular candidates for premier are selected; if the candidate is announced in advance, it may have a negative impact on voter turnout. Political scientist Tom Lodge has argued that too much is happening at the centre; and that 'in the interests of accountability it is important that voters know who they are voting for…the decision means that either there is conflict within the provinces or that they suspect some of the candidates might be unpopular. Surely in provinces such as NW and Limpopo where new premieres will be coming in, the voters have a right to know who those will be. Constitutionally the ANC is not obliged to do that but custom and expectation dictates that people should know' (*Mail and Guardian* Feb 27 – March 4, 2004).

Another difficult issue for the ANC is how to decide who should be retained in the provinces, and who redeployed from provinces to parliament. In some cases, such as with the provincial premiers who are not eligible to serve another term, the decision is a relatively easy one. But for others it has been controversial. Yet, because the process is not a transparent one, it is not always possible for those outside the party to gauge the basis on which such decisions are made.

Yet, while it is easy to criticize the ANC for being undemocratic and overcentralized, it should be remembered that many of the smaller parties contesting the elections are even more hierarchical in their practice, in effect run by a decision-making elite. Moreover, many of the other parties are so small and have so few candidates likely to make it into provincial or national legislatures, that it matters little who is on the lists in which positions, beyond the party leader who is in some cases the only person likely to be elected. In between such parties and the governing party are parties such as the DP, the NNP and the UDM, whose levels of internal democracy vary considerably.

RACE, GENDER AND OTHER 'IDENTITY CARDS' PLAYED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF LISTS

Firstly, on the 'race card', it is of course politically incorrect to play this card overtly in South Africa today. All the major parties claim to be 'non-racial' and to be representative of a broad spectrum of South African society. Yet the makeup of their candidates lists can reveal – at a superficial level, it must be conceded – the real extent of their transformation.

The real question, of course, is whether there will be any significant shift away from the ANC, which commands the overwhelming majority of votes from the African majority. The ANC is seemingly unconcerned about racial identity in the makeup of its lists, preferring to emphasise the commendable fact that it has once again ensured that a third of its candidates are women. Its election lists have been described as 'predictable' with most current cabinet members placed high up on the list, as well as those provincial premiers who are no longer eligible to stand for another term as premier (Sabelo Ndlangisa, *Sunday Times*, 29/02/04).

The ANC seems no longer to be concerned about its racial identity; secure in its support from the African majority, and with a history of non-racialism which has meant credible leaders from all race groups are represented on its list, it does not feel the need to play the 'race card' in appealing to voters. However, internal ANC discussion documents have highlighted the need to bring disaffected activists from 'minority groups' into their fold. The ANC's strategy documents stress that their membership drives are targeted at minorities '('ie White, Khoisan (Coloured) and Indian communities)'; however, they are equally concerned with retaining the votes of the organised working class; and with revitalising the Youth League and attracting the new generation of youth to participate politically – at the very least, to register and vote in the election. Rural communities (in danger in some cases of being 'lost' to the UDM; and critically important in the case of the struggle for control of KZN with the IFP) as well as 'The Intelligentsia' are also targeted in the ANC's recruitment campaign. (ANC Nelson Mandela Region, Eastern Cape Province: 'Building the ANC – Strategy 2003-4). It remains to be seen whether the ANC is successful in trying to woo Indian voters – and other racial minorities – or whether it will emphasise the 'African renaissance' card rather than sticking to its principled non-racialism of previous years.

Parties that were based in the 'old apartheid divide' are making a concerted attempt to have more 'black' candidates – black in the old Black Consciousness meaning of the word, which includes coloureds and Indians as part of the (formerly) oppressed. That many of these 'black' candidates are the old regime's collaborators or may be considered to be 'puppets' by the majority of ANC supporters, is seemingly of no consequence to them (although it may be, to the more discerning voter): superficially, the parties are seen to have a racially diverse list. And their rivals do not hesitate to use the 'race card' against them, despite the fact that they have much of the same constituency. The DA, for example, despite the fact that it has a greater number of black candidates than in previous elections, has been attacked by NNP leader Van Schalkwyk as using 'swartgevaar' tactics – a term that can only be considered derogatory in our non-racial democracy. Van Schalkwyk was responding to DA Western Cape leader Theuns Botha's explanation that they were putting up for election a large number of white parliamentary candidates in order to 'retain expertise' (Sabelo Ndlangisa, *Sunday Times*, 29/02/04). The DA has made much of the racial mix of its candidates list, claiming to be truly representative of the white, coloured and Indian minorities in South Africa (drawing on HSRC research to do so!); and the NNP similarly claims to have a broad support base across all racial groups – yet the fact remains that there are few African leaders of credibility in either of the 'old white' parties, the DA or NNP.

Patricia de Lille's Independent Democrats also claims to be the only truly non-racial party. Despite De Lille's background in black-consciousness trade unions and the Africanist PAC, she claims that the ID has done what other opposition parties have failed to do, in organising 'across the racial divide' (Eric Naki, *Daily Dispatch* 05/02/04). However, while the ID's candidates list does reflect a racial mix, there are still relatively few Africans on the list, and fewer still with political credibility or status. It remains to be seen whether those of the oppressed African majority who are dissatisfied with the ANC's moderation will abandon their loyalty to the ANC or PAC and throw their lot in with de Lille's brand of radical populism.

The UDM attempted the same strategy in the last election, with some success: and although it too, has tried to portray itself as a non-racial party, with an election list consisting of new faces (*SATV* 3, 8/3/04) - it has become increasingly based in the former homelands of the Eastern Cape, representing disaffected rural African voters. Without the clout of Roelf Meyer, who resigned from active politics in 2003, it is unlikely to gain many new votes from other constituencies.

There are still exceptions to the 'non-racial' or 'racial mix/rainbow nation' approaches: one such is the Minority Front, which maintains a solid although small base among Indian voters. Amichand Rajbansi must be one of the great survivors of the Apartheid era, retaining his seat in Parliament since the days when the Tricameral Parliament was introduced in 1983. Another party with a list primarily of Indian candidates, contesting the elections in KwaZulu Natal only, is the Peace and Justice Congress. Other parties such as the Vreiheidsfront Plus and the Nasionale Aksie have put up lists of Afrikaner candidates; yet while this is clearly the constituency that they target, they are generally careful – as is the Minority Front – not to campaign on the basis of racial or ethnic exclusivity.

Are there other 'identity-based' constituencies which smaller parties can appeal to, in the hope of winning over sections of the electorate who are dissatisfied with the performance of the ANC? The New Labour Party is, unfortunately, not representing the 'left labour' position of COSATU, but is appealing to the old Labour Party's conservative coloured constituency, as in the days of the Tricameral Parliament – similar indeed to the Minority Front.

Ethnic identity is as 'non-pc' as race in South African elections. While this is to be welcomed, one question which remains to be answered is: who will capture the vote of disgruntled traditional leaders? In the last election it was the UDM and the IFP; but this is no longer so clear. There are other small 'ethnic parties' which are based only in particular provinces – the Ximoko Party which is contesting the elections in Limpopo only, the Sindawonye Progressive Party which is based only in Mpumalanga, and the Dikwankwetla Party which is based in the Free State. In KZN, with the ANC and IFP hotly competing for power, there is little chance that small parties in the region such as the Royal Loyal Progress party, the Independent African Movement or the Izwilethu Party will gain much support.

The contestation of provincial elections by small parties with regional constituencies is to be welcomed, as a healthy aspect of political competition and the democratization of politics at provincial level. Generally, however, tiny parties based on racial or ethnic identity or tied to particular homeland politics no longer have a place in SA; even to perform adequately in provincial elections, it seems that their base or platform must be broader than one of ethnic exclusivity.

On the religious identity ticket, there are a number of parties attempting to capture the conservative Christian vote. The ACDP, the UCDP and the CDP are contesting elections in all provinces, but their lack of credible leadership makes it unlikely that they will woo a substantial amount of votes away from the established 'centre' parties of the DA or NNP. The African Muslim Party is clearly appealing to religious identity in the Western Cape.

Other parties to the left competing for the African vote include the PAC, SOPA, AZAPO and the Black Peoples Convention. All these parties have lists dominated by African candidates, and their policies are some combination of Africanist or Black Consciousness and socialist ideologies. SOPA (the Socialist Party of Azania), an 'African socialist' party, is campaigning on the basis of a challenge to the present government's low-cost housing programme, and for the promotion of an "indigenous education system" that would respect African languages (*Daily Dispatch* 09/02/04). Yet despite dissatisfaction from the left – and among the poor – about the ANC's delivery of promises of jobs, land and poverty reduction – it is unlikely that voters will put their faith in these parties as offering viable alternatives to the ANC.

Other 'issue based' parties such as the Economic Freedom Movement, the Employment Movement, the Pro-Death Penalty Party and the Green Party, which are contesting elections only in particular provinces, do not appeal to a particular identity-based constituency. Neither do those parties with vague names and policies – the Keep It Straight and Simple Party, the Organisation Party, the Universal Party, the Peace and Development Party, the Alliance for Democracy and Prosperity Party, or the United Front.

THE XENOPHOBIA CARD?

One last observation in relation to national identity – it is interesting that no parties have (thus far, at least) chosen to campaign on a ticket of exclusion of 'outsiders' – as 'South Africa vs the rest' card of xenophobia and national identity. Given the high rate of unemployment and the emergence of nasty xenophobia in some communities, it is curious – though encouraging – that parties in SA do not campaign in this way, as do right-wing parties such as Le Pen's party in France.

One slightly disturbing exception is the DA's recent reaction to the government's plans to loosen up visa requirements for immigrants from other developing countries, as well as the Constitutional Court ruling that obliges the government to extend social grants to non-citizens. DA spokesman Douglas Gibson turned the cabinet's decision on visa exemption into an election issue by arguing that Home Affairs Minister Buthelezi (leader of the IFP, the DA's election ally) has tried to solve the shortage of certain categories of skilled professional by liberalizing immigration laws so as to encourage the immigration of those people 'with something to offer'. The ANC, on the other hand, he argued, "has chosen to offer universal visa exemptions to countries with which it has close historical ties….." and combined with the Constitution Court decision, "This opens up the serious prospect of millions of people flooding into South Africa to compete for jobs and social grants… What is in it for South Africa? The ANC seems to be putting ideological and party-political considerations ahead of South Africa's best interests." He concluded that "Minister Buthelezi has been acting in the best interests of the country. The ANC, by contrast, acts only in the interests of the ANC." (Sapa/*EP Herald*, 10/03/04)

Whether such statements succeed in discouraging people from voting for the ANC, or whether the issue of immigration laws is taken up by other parties, remains to be seen.

What is a **manifesto** and what does it **mean**?

Jonathan Faull, Political Information and Monitoring Service, South Africa (PIMS – SA) IDASA

Are manifestos appropriate means of communicating with the South African electorate? What is the significance of the geographical, physical sites of manifesto launches, and the strategically placed and targeted campaign posters? Are they significant in and of themselves, or are other agents necessary for the communication of party policies? **Faull** *explores these issues.*

The most famous of all manifestos is probably the 1848 document prepared by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels for an organisation of German émigrés and English sympathisers: "The Manifesto of the Communist Party".

But what is a manifesto? The word, derived from Italian, has been in use since 1644 to describe public declarations that set out past actions and future plans. In modern times manifestos have been issued by bodies of little consequence at the time of their drafting and have tended not to summarise past actions, but rather focus on explanations of future activity. Manifestos serve not only to raise political consciousness, but to infuse the groups that issue them with political identity in an attempt to garner support from sympathetic constituencies. In the 1848 Communist Manifesto, the authors explain that "It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of communism with a manifesto of the party itself."

In other words, a manifesto is designed to allow a party to speak, in its own words, about what it believes and what it intends to achieve. Ideally, the document should be a concrete and public statement of intent which indicates to the voter the value of the party concerned.

Perhaps because of the possible association with the Communist Manifesto, some South African political parties have rather used terms such as "party platform" – the values, principles and programmes on which a party stands. But, in part due to the progressive inclinations of the struggle for liberation in this country, the term 'manifesto' has fixed itself in the vocabulary of our democratic electoral discourse. All South African parties have produced and published manifestos in the run-up to elections.

Often the text itself is rather tardy and dry, listing a litany of bullet-pointed policy alternatives and government failures, in the case of opposition parties, or celebrations of successes and carefully understated promises for the future, for the ruling party.

Words are carefully selected to ring as powerfully as possible, but within the benign constraints of the document itself. Manifestos have to speak to the diverse constituencies that fall under each party umbrella. They have to serve as "catch-alls", tying into the campaign diverse, potentially conflicting, constituent groups, who often bicker about the detail of policy. For example, the ANC's manifesto should aim to tie in the votes of trade-union members, communists, the urban and rural poor, and the leafy suburbanites of the emergent middle class. Similarly the DA's manifesto needs to appeal to the "liberal" moneyed classes of Constantia and Houghton without compromising the DA's ability to speak to their support among the working and under-classes of the Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal.

In order not to offend any constituents through such a public document, and so early in the throes of the campaign, parties often hold back their more aggressive messages for the campaign trail where parties can style their bytes for smaller localised audiences that expect to hear specific issues couched in the political culture of their particular context.

Despite the proliferation of party manifestos, major questions remain concerning the appropriateness of these documents in a country such as ours. In South Africa a large proportion of the electorate, and the general population, are functionally illiterate. This precludes them from reading manifestos. The prohibitive cost of printing and distributing what are relatively large documents means that parties do not in fact distribute many manifestos to the voting public. Cost also circumscribes the ability of parties to issue manifestos in all 11 languages of South Africa, marginalising large linguistic communities from consumption of the text. Those voters intent on accessing party manifestos have either physically to visit their closest party offices during office hours – an obvious disadvantage to constituents who lack

transport or live in rural areas - or download the documents off the internet – a privilege afforded only to the wealthy. Even after a manifesto is acquired, language and literacy can impede the comprehension of the message.

According to the IEC, just over 20 million South Africans have registered on the voters roll for the impending general election. It is safe to assume that only a tiny proportion of these voters will have accessed and digested one or more party manifesto.

What purpose do party manifestos actually serve in the context of a party election strategy in South Africa, and what role do they play in politicising and informing the voting public? In 2000, Ralph Nader, then on his way to upsetting the US Presidential apple-cart, observed that in an election, "In essence you don't run for President directly, you ask the media to run you for President". To paraphrase Nader, party manifestos primarily ask the media to run their parties for office.

Manifesto documents do not fit the general profile of modern election-speak, but create a generalized political framework within which campaigns operate. The political press corps and ranks of NGO and academic researchers perform the role of speculating as to what the policies mean within the context of our political milieu, they track each party's development relative to previous election manifestos, and thoroughly deconstruct the text for the clues of its genesis and speculate as to its vote-winning potential.

In the discourse of South Africa's developing electoral culture, a manifesto is not a document in and of itself: a statement of intent, values, achievements and goals. Concurrent to the text, is the "manifesto launch", which has become the cornerstone event marking the entry of each party into the formal electioneering project. Manifesto launches are tailored explicitly for the media, and by proxy, the media consuming, voting public.

The party faithful – and the faithful alone – are bussed into, ideally, overly-crowded halls and stadiums where they are treated to carefully stage-managed renditions of packaged "policies" and "values", and complimentary projections and illusions of grandeur. Music blares, balloons and banners festoon every available façade, and t-shirts adorn the mass of jiving voters. Manifesto launches have developed into thoroughly choreographed events, tailored to maximise the manifesto "message" which is dissected into appropriate sound-bites for the launch speeches. Just as very few voters get to read one or more party manifesto, very few get to directly experience the glitz of a manifesto launch. Yet an experienced political hack may attend scores in a career, communicating, in turn, impressions and opinions to thousands of voters through print, radio and television media.

Complementary to the razzmatazz of a manifesto launch are the sites of the events themselves which are often purposely selected to act as a foil to the party message. This year the ANC launched their manifesto to much revelry at the Harry Gwala Stadium in Pietermaritzburg. The media did not miss a beat, reading significant political capital and intent into the geography of the launch. The Independent papers reported that "The choice of the capital of coastal KwaZulu-Natal province, the Zulu heartland and base of the ANC's main rival, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), for [the] rally was deliberate… the party's main focus will be on winning KwaZulu-Natal, the only province it does not control".

Similarly when the DA launched its manifesto the party explicitly outlined the significance of the location to the press. Russell Crystal, the DA's deputy executive director described the political symbolism and motivation for the choice of location: "We go to where the voters are. We are countering the perception that any area is an ANC stronghold. By the end of the campaign, we will have reinforced the image that there is nowhere he, Tony [Leon], can't go".

Poster campaigns and mail-drops usually speak to specific bytes gleaned from manifesto texts in an effort to reinforce key issues and communicate them to the voters. Posters, and other complimentary texts, cannot operate in a discourse vacuum, and rely on manifestos, speeches and campaigning to infuse their messages with meaning. The DA is especially adept at issuing specific posters for specific voting groups that speak directly to the localized issues of the community. The DA's poster campaign in the Western Cape for example, focuses disproportionately on attacking the NNP's credentials. Elsewhere in the country, the over-riding object of the DA "message" is the ruling party. The ANC, on the other hand, issues generalized posters for campaigns across the country.   Many of the smaller parties battle to fund poster campaigns and the content of the poster message is severely limited.

Election manifestos have become integral to the lexicon of South African elections culture. Literacy, location, language and class all act as barriers to the consumption of the documents for the vast majority of South African voters. The impact of manifestos, and their purported aim to conscientise and educate voters so that they can make an informed decision come voting day, is thus questionable. While manifestos compliment many other facets of the political election drive and frame a discourse within which each party's campaign rolls out, their primary role is to act as a prompt for journalists and analysts who mediate the core messages to the voting public. Unlike the Communist Manifesto, one may not find it necessary to remember a century from now the objectives and ideologies articulated through the 2004 party manifestos.

The people's **agenda** vs **election manifestos** of the political parties

Yul Derek Davids, Manager: Public Opinion Service, IDASA

*Davids suggests that the 2004 election will be the first since 1994 in which real socio-economic issues are prioritized on the voters' agendas. These are presented in an overview of the results of Idasa's 2002 Afrobarometer Survey. Do manifestos mirror the concerns of the electorate? Having established that those of five political parties do, **Davids** summarises their manifestos, highlighting their similarities.*

INTRODUCTION

The political conditions preceding the 1994 elections as well as the period leading to the adoption of the democratic Constitution in 1996 were characterized by strife, animosity, violence and struggle. The majority of South Africans were denied political rights and excluded from participating in the Legislature and the Executive. The inequalities generated by this system were intense, and led to gross human rights violations. These conditions of exclusion triggered organized resistance in various forms, including armed struggle with the state enforcing its discriminatory policies through a sustained state of emergency, arrests, torture and killings. It is against this backdrop that the focus during the transitional years was mainly on uniting a racially divided South African nation. For example the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was specifically formed to expose the truth and to contribute to the healing of the nation.

During the 1999 elections the issues were still the same with political parties, particularly with the ANC stressing the importance of consolidating our democracy continuing with the rebuilding process and delivery of services to the many disadvantage groups. The 1999 elections were thus essentially about entrenching a constitutional democratic culture.

As South Africa's third democratic election approaches, the focus is much more on delivery of socio-economic goods. In particular, previously disadvantaged groups are of the opinion that their rights and freedoms have increased since 1994. However, they still feel that they are economically way behind their white counterparts. There is thus a cry for real socio-economic improvement in the lives of the marginalized sectors of our society. What specifically do people want to improve their lives?

THE PEOPLE'S AGENDA

On 14 April 2004 South Africa will be holding its third national and provincial democratic elections. As the election campaign heads into its final period, voters will increasingly look to what they consider the key problems of the day as a way to help them decide which political party they will support. Since 1994 Idasa has conducted national representative surveys that assess citizens' attitudes towards, and participation in, democratic governance and the economy. Our last Afrobarometer survey was conducted and released in late 2002. This national representative survey covered 600 randomly selected sites across the country and a total of 2,400 South Africans were interviewed. One of the survey questions that we have consistently asked people is "What are the most important problems facing this country that government ought to address?" The survey has found that the key issues mentioned by more than 10 percent of the respondents are unemployment / jobs (84 percent), crime (35 percent), poverty (28 percent), AIDS / HIV (26 percent), housing (22 percent), education (15 percent) and health care (10 percent). Although not mentioned by more than 10 percent of the respondents we do see the rise of two potentially important problems in two areas. For the first time people cited social problems of orphans and street children (3 percent) as a concern (which is probably related to increasing public concern over AIDS, poverty and unemployment). We also found that that 9 percent cited food as a key national problem, up from just 1 percent in 1999.

When we compare the 2002 survey results with our previous surveys we found that public concern over jobs has risen by 8 percentage points from 76 percent in 2000 to 84 percent. It has consistently featured as the most often cited national problem since 1994 and reflects a national consensus. Public emphasis on crime has fallen from an average of 60 percent (from 1997 through to 2000) to 35 percent (2002). It still however remains a fundamental

issue since it began to rise from 6 percent in 1994 to 60 percent in August 2000. Concern over poverty has more than doubled in two years from 11 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2002 and thus become the third most cited problem within a very short period. Food shortages are a closely related issue that has jumped from 1 percent in 1999 to 9 percent in 2002. AIDS has now taken over as the fourth most important problem at 26 percent, up from 13 percent in August 2000. Concern over housing continues to fluctuate but remains an important issue that government should address. Beginning at 46 percent in 1994, it peaked at 54 percent in 1995, and dropped to 22 percent in 2002. Concern over education was at its highest in 1994 with 34 percent of the respondents saying it is a problem that government ought to address. Between 1995 and 1999 it remained fairly stable, ranging between 20 percent and 28 percent, dropping to 15 percent in 2002. Health care continues to be a problem and is cited by 10 percent of the respondents. It is important to note that corruption as a most important problem is increasing. Corruption was first mentioned in 1995 by 2 percent and then climbed to 6 percent in 1997, and now 13 percent (2002). A seesaw tendency is present in perceptions on management of the economy. While mentioned by 21 percent in 1994, concerns over the general economy fell to 10 percent in 1995 and 8 percent in 1997 but increased to 18 percent in 1998 as the country's monetary problems mounted. It fell again to 9 percent in August 2000 and is now down to 7 percent (2002). Concern with access to "wages, incomes and salaries" is at the same level of 7 percent as in August 2000.   As with the last survey in 2000, only 1 percent considered land as a priority problem. This is noteworthy, given the backdrop of the Zimbabwe crisis and a few highly publicized land invasions in South Africa. Only 3 percent indicated electricity as an important problem in 2002 down slightly from 5 percent in 2000.

PUBLIC APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS

The key issue of the performance of any democratic government is the degree to which they respond to the needs of the people. Public opinion is not only an important aspect of democracy it can also provide a valuable feedback mechanism to government. To determine how well government is performing the Afrobarometer asked people "How well would you say government is handling" a range of policy areas.   Government received quite positive evaluations in some areas, for example the distribution of welfare payments (73 percent), addressing the educational needs of all South Africans (61 percent), and delivering basic services such as water and electricity (60 percent).   However, when it comes to the problems most often identified by the voters, government received quite poor marks. While 84 percent identified unemployment as the most important problem facing the country, just 9 percent said the government is handling it "fairly" or "very well." While 35 percent mention crime and security as problematic, just 23 percent give government positive marks.

HOW DO MANIFESTOS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES RELATE TO THE PEOPLE'S AGENDA?

We have now considered the views of the South African people on the most important problems that government should address. We have also looked at public opinion on how well government is handling these problems. But what are the views of the political parties on the most important problems in South Africa? How do the political parties gauge the public agenda and what do they put forward to address the concerns of the people?   For the purpose of this contribution, the focus will be on the parties that have obtained more than 5 seats in the National Assembly after the 1999 elections namely, the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), New National Party (NNP) and United Democratic Movement (UDM). A review of the election manifestos of these political parties reveal that the problems cited by them are the same as those reported by the people. All of the political parties mentioned unemployment, crime and security, poverty, HIV/AIDS, corruption, education, health care, basic services such water and electricity to improve living conditions, housing and land.   It is therefore not difficult to see that all the parties are in agreement on what constitutes the major challenges for South Africa. While a blanket review of the election manifestos does provide us with a picture as to what political parties think the most important problems are that government should address, it does not sufficiently explain how each party aims to tackle the concerns of the people. We will need to do a detailed analysis of each party's election manifesto. For example how are the ACDP going to address the concerns of the people and how different is it from the ANC or DA?

At the core of the **ACDP** election manifesto is the belief that South Africa must be a nation in submission to God. The party stands for Christian principles, freedom of religion, a free market economy, family values, community empowerment and human rights in a federal system. The party has thus formulated strong policies around abortion, active euthanasia, homosexuality and sexual exploitation. To further entrench Christian values the ACDP is committed to protect freedom of religion in schools and is opposed to religious programmes in schools that promote abortion, licentious sex and deviant lifestyles. The ACDP is also concerned with the high levels of crime and corruption. They propose a zero-tolerance anti-crime strategy with stiffer sentences that will get at the perpetrator and protect the victim. The Biblical worldview guides almost all the policies of the ACDP and this is a very important characteristic that distinguishes it from all the major political parties.

The **ANC** manifesto relies heavily on its past success but at the same time stresses that it can and will do more, better. The election manifesto spells out the progress that the ANC has made in terms of the provision of social services such as social grants, access to better education and health services; managing the economy that includes increased economic growth as to create employment; fight against crime and corruption due to the transformation of the police, prosecution, the intelligence services and the justice system. The ANC is also bold enough to say that it has performed extremely well. It has learned from its experience and believes that it can and will do better. While it has created 2 million jobs it feel it need to, and indeed will, create more job opportunities. Its specific aim is to increase investment, strengthen the fight against AIDS/HIV and root out corruption and crime. But central to its manifesto is the pride displayed at its achievements over the last 10 years and an overwhelming confidence of a re-election.

The manifesto of the **DA** is based on the belief that each individual in South Africa is precious and deserves much better. It argues that the ANC has failed to deliver on its promises of 1994 and 1999 and the people of South Africa are suffering as a result. It therefore pledges to create real jobs by increasing GDP to at least 6 percent. It will increase the number of police officers to fight crime, provide free anti-retroviral drugs to each person living with AIDS, revive nation building, introduce a basic income grant of R110 per month for everyone person living in poverty without access to another grant, improve quality of education, address the housing problem and will speed up the privatization of the economy. The DA argues that independent organizations such as the police and SABC are headed by ANC loyalists. This, according to the DA places our young constitutional order under threat by undermining the principals and practice of democracy.

The **IFP** also believes that South Africa can and must do better. For South Africa to do better we need a democratic alternative that can win the war against HIV/AIDS, unemployment, crime, poverty and corruption, and prevent the consolidation of a one-party state. The economic proposals of the IFP are aimed at accelerating economic growth to create more jobs that will in turn reduce the levels of poverty and crime. The IFP wants to reduce crime by creating a modern criminal justice and law enforcement system to ensure that people are safe in their communities. They see HIV/AIDS as the most serious threat facing our country and are proposing a multi-pronged strategy with a Non-Stop Political Will to pursue it. Perhaps the most unique feature of the IFP is the determination to continue to champion federalism and decentralization of power between the three spheres of government: national, provincial and local.

The **NNP** election manifesto is promising its voters good education, health services, job opportunities and safety. The only way they can deliver on their promises is through an agreement with the ANC. This agreement entitles them to have a say in the government's decision-making process but at the same time will retain their identity and promote their own policy. The NNP does not see itself as an opposition party but rather a partner to the ANC and the partnership provides a multi-party government. It is evident that they are riding on the backs of the ANC and hope to secure political survival through this partnership.

The **UDM** election manifesto indicates that it is ready to govern the country or to hold the ruling party accountable to the citizens of South Africa. The UDM sees jobs, education, health, security, HIV/AIDS and property ownership as key issues to be addressed. Jobs will be created through stimulating economic growth and breeding investor confidence. The UDM also pledges to engage in infrastructure delivery and to promote small business development. High on the agenda of the UDM is the issue of floor-crossing and it argues that this law gives the right to a politician to nullify the votes of thousands of people.

WHAT IS NEW? HOW DO POLITICAL PARTIES DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER?

There is very little difference between what the public want and what the major political parties have to offer. In fact all political parties speak directly to the needs of the people with an exception of one or two issues. If the major political parties get together and talk about the concerns of the people they will realize that the issues they are raising are not different from one another. They are all focusing on the same issues, but trying to address the concerns of the people in their own peculiar way. The ANC is making use of its past achievements to remind the people that significant changes were made since 1994 that positively impacted upon their lives. It is therefore again appealing to the people to stand with it so that it can speed up change and fight poverty to create a better life for all. The DA on the other hand is promoting its self as the only party representing all sectors of the South African population and that they will work to improve the lives of all the people. The IFP believes that real change will only take place if we have a serious democratic alternative that can deliver. That is why they feel development is the key to social delivery so the lives of people will be better. The UDM is another party that wants to see improvements in the lives

of the people and is suggesting that the people need a better plan for the future. The NNP also believe that the people deserve a fair share. The ACDP would like to see local government being more effective so as to serve the people better.

While there are definitely issues specifically unique to each political party, I have tried not to focus on them. The main purpose was to highlight the fact that most of the parties are promising to address the same major problems: unemployment, crime, poverty, HIV/AIDS, housing, education, health care, services such as electricity and water. The big question is whether they are just making empty promises or whether they can actually deliver.

Party support in South Africa's third democratic election: set in stone or up for grabs?

Collette Herzenberg, Governance Researcher, PIMS-SA, IDASA

Continuing to explore the issue of identity which dominated election **synopsis 2, Hartzenberg** *interrogates the hypothesis that elections are a racial census. She explores additional salient variables such as class and its historical coincidence with race; as well as post-1994 redistributive policies which benefit particular groups, which may explain how and why the voting dice fall. Can political parties break the mould?*

Before a democratic election takes place, political observers spend time speculating on the levels of electoral support for each party and the final outcome. Although such contemplation is part and parcel of the excitement of democratic politics, it does not necessarily shed light on the complexities that affect public opinion and voting intentions in a country.

When democracy was secured by the 1994 elections, South Africa was considered to be a highly divided society where political identities would be determined and dominated by inflexible and incompatible racial/ethnic identities, that would cement enduring cleavages. The 1994 election was described as an 'ethnic' or 'racial census' which suggested voters would continue to affirm their ethnic or racial identity through voting. Voting would be primarily informed by identities and become an expression of allegiance to particular groups. This raised the concern that South Africa would struggle to establish a viable multi-party democracy where people's voting choices are informed by policy and individual interests rather than group identities such as race.

THE RACIAL CENSUS ARGUMENT: HOW RELEVANT IS IT?

It is true that ethnic and racial identities are politically salient and explicit in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet, the 'racial census' approach is not supported by recent findings. Surveys show us that South Africans are not overly preoccupied with affirming their racial identity through a political party at election time: fewer than 5% of Africans viewed the ANC as an exclusive party for only Africans. In the same way, whites viewed the NNP and the DA as inclusive parties that represent all South Africans [Afrobarometer: a national opinion poll survey: 1994 and 1999].

POLICY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RACES?

What then explains the continuing racial polarization of party politics in South Africa? The answer may lie with racial groups holding vastly different policy preferences. But surveys do not indicate major divergences of opinion across racial groups about which political issues are important. Most South Africans agree about the key challenges facing the country such as job creation and a reduction in crime [Opinion 99, Idasa]. In April 1999, almost 80% cited jobs whilst 65% said crime or security were key problems.

One then might expect parties' policies to be the divisive factor. Yet, at first glance the majority of parties do not substantially diverge on salient political and economic issues. The two largest parties, the ANC and DA, have adopted an economic framework which asserts that the principal strategy for poverty alleviation is the promotion of economic growth and expansion of employment through accelerated investment. According to party manifestos the ANC and NNP are closer than ever, and the DA has developed policies to address issues like Black Economic Empowerment. The smaller opposition parties,

such as Inkatha Freedom Party, African Christian Democratic Party, Freedom Front and Pan African Congress, offer limited appeal since they represent particular segments of voters. The electorate is not confronted with a choice between contrasting ideological positions amongst the major parties. Manifestos essentially call for the same things in the 2004 elections: the strengthening of the formal economy through increased investment, improved delivery to the people in the form of jobs, and a widening of the social security net.

There may be differences on how to realise various policies and there may also be distributional issues attached, yet by comparing policy alone, it is often unclear to analysts and voters alike how each party's policies will differ and fair in reality. For the much of South Africa's population who do not have easy access to topical policy-based discussions [for reasons of electronic or media inaccessibility and illiteracy] teasing out the detailed differences between two parties' policy is not an easy task.

The lack of substantive debate and consensus around policy options also creates confusion as to where policy answers lie in terms of realising an improved material existence. Uncertainty about the future effects of policies on their lives makes voters less likely to base electoral decisions on policy documents alone. This is compounded by the emerging style of parliamentary politics which often limits constructive public debate over policy options. Recently in his 2004 State of the Nation Address, President Mbeki asserted that the policy terrain in South Africa, arising out of our first ten years of democracy, is now settled, and that the future poses challenges of delivery, as opposed to substantive policy re-formulation, despite the fact that current policies regarding poverty and unemployment may well require a reassessment.

Further, the tenuous relationship between the tripartite alliance partners [ANC, COSATU and the SACP] has brought little clarity and consensus on solutions for critical challenges facing South Africa. For example, whilst government and its partners agree that job creation is essential for socio-political stability, they disagree on the extent of the problem and how to solve it. For these reasons, voters are forced to rely less on policy debates and more on additional information cues when making electoral decisions.

CONNECTING IDENTITY AND POLICY

A party's credentials will take on significance to the voter in terms of whose interests they represent. Afrobarometer shows us that although people tend to see their own parties as inclusive for all South Africans, they tend to view other parties as non-inclusive or exclusive in terms of their race and interests. While a majority of black South Africans may view the ANC as an inclusive party representing all South Africans, the same voter does not necessarily view other parties such as the NNP and DA as inclusive of him or his interests. Recent survey findings in 2003 from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation [IJR] show that the majority of people believe the second greatest division in South Africa today is the division between different political parties.

The IJR survey also found that the greatest division was perceived as that between poor and middle income/ wealthy South Africa. Recent statistics from the 2003 SAHRC report, the GCIS Ten Year Review and the Taylor Report, indicate uneven delivery and an increasingly entrenched poverty gap along racial lines. This overlap between class, race and political party may account for the continuing racial polarization of party politics as these factors continue to inform voters simultaneously. If voters perceive that benefits from policy outcomes are dependent on group identities they will choose a party that best represents their group identity.

The historical link between race and resources continues to resonate in national discussions around policy and redistribution. Whilst such discussions are justifiable and necessary in post-apartheid South Africa they may continue to have effects on voter perceptions. Beliefs that group prospects and individual prospects correlate, are re-enforced by the transformative legislative framework and redistributive policies that benefit particular groups such as black economic empowerment, employment equity and land redistribution, all of which send out racial cues to voters. These cues then act as useful directives by helping voters to link their interests with electoral options.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR POLITICAL PARTIES?

If we accept the 'racial census' argument that an expression of one's racial identity drives the voter, parties must then alter the ways people identify themselves in order to win votes. This could prove impossible if people vote according to fixed identities such as race and ethnicity. If voters are required to make a rational choice between policy options, then parties simply have to compete on a policy level and the party with the best policies will win.

However, if voters are still uncertain about policy outcomes, regard group identities as having an impact on their individual prospects, and see other parties as unrepresentative of their interests, political parties will have to work harder to persuade the electorate that their beliefs are unjustified.

Subtle shifts in campaigning strategies for the 2004 election imply that political parties are becoming increasingly aware of the complexities that instruct South African voters. In their quest to challenge politically contested segments of the electorate, the major parties have started to accentuate inclusive racial rhetoric and policy based tactics. This indicates a move away from the style and tone of past electoral campaigns and everyday parliamentary politics, which have often been characterized by racial undertones, with parties utilising racial references for political purposes, all of which serve to inform voters of the negative connotations of group identity in politics. The past failure of political parties to de-racialise the party political arena has served to compound the link between group identity and individual interests, and convinced voters that they have few electoral choices amongst parties.

The major parties are not only consolidating their core constituencies and strongholds, but are gearing up to contest certain geographical areas that remain politically contested. The ANC's 2004 election campaign was launched in Kwa-Zulu Natal [KZN], a province that is not a traditional stronghold. While it is clear why the IFP as a regionally based party launched their campaign in KZN, the impetus for the ANC doing so, lies in its desire to widen its support by extending its appeal to non-traditional ANC voters in certain provinces. The ANC has a lead in the province according to the polls [KZN: ANC 21%; IFP 10%; DA 4% - Afrobarometer]. Yet the lead is small and a victory is under threat by a possible coalition government between the IFP and DA, which may attract sufficient votes to take the majority in the province.

In the Western Cape the ANC also has a lead but it is substantially bigger at 32%, with the DA at 9% and NNP at 10%. However, the political dynamics in this province are such that the ANC will most likely continue with their relationship with the NNP, thus ensuring joint votes that could ensure a numerical majority over the DA opposition.

THE DISILLUSIONED VOTER

Apart from challenging a potentially stagnant voting pattern, political parties also have the formidable task of capturing the support of the disillusioned voter. There is an increase in the number of voters who declare to pollsters that they 'would not vote' [17%] if elections were held tomorrow, or simply refuse to reveal any preferences in parties [Afrobarometer 2003].

Interestingly, this decline may substantiate the point that race and ethnicity do not over-determine people's voting behavior. According to a 2002/3 Afrobarometer survey, although the ANC continues to be the dominant party its support has declined from 56% to 42% of a nationally representative sample saying that they would vote for the ANC "if a national election were held tomorrow." This possible decline in support amongst ANC voters would not be likely if they were only driven by their racial identity.

The decline in party support may point to a normalising political terrain. It could also highlight a sense of disillusionment fueled by a number of factors. Increasing pessimism about economic conditions and HIV/AIDS in South Africa may affect how people align themselves politically in the future. Concerns over the delivery of social services such as health, water, housing and education, as well as the issue of sustainable land redistribution, may begin to eclipse the huge and real improvements made over the last ten years.

The decline also suggests that because South Africans tend to view other parties as non-inclusive or exclusive in terms of race, they are unlikely to move their vote elsewhere. This may account for the increase in issue-based social movements and a rise in predicted voting abstentions. Yet, the decline in support and rise in possible swing voting may have a healthy spin off for democracy. It creates a degree of uncertainty about the final electoral outcome in several provinces, and makes both the governing party and opposition parties more responsive to public opinion.

The 2004 election will help us to understand new shifts in party support. There are a significant and growing number of voters from all race groups that have started to introduce a welcome element of uncertainty into electoral politics. However, political parties face difficult challenges if they want to compete for an increase their share of the electorate's support in the 2004 election.

Motivating voters to participate in and make electoral choices based on their interests largely depends on the way parties construct their campaigns and articulate their policies. It is therefore crucial that critical, extensive and productive policy debates, relative to social and economic exclusion, remain robust and at the centre of public discourse during the formal election period.

Likewise, the electoral success of political parties depends on their ability to change the way in which voters perceive their racial exclusivity. As South Africans go to the polls in 2004, a decade after the first democratic elections, they should be allowed to weigh up the packages of policies on offer and choose the best package to suit their needs without concern for group identities.

Election 2004: party campaign strategies and tactics

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*Conventional wisdom suggests that the ANC is assured of a comfortable, if not overwhelming, victory at the polls. Tracking parties' campaign strategies to date, **Rapoo** argues that this is not necessarily the case, unless it works particularly hard to garner votes in this election. According to **Rapoo**, the campaign kicked off with the ANC setting the rules, and opposition parties being forced to follow them, particularly in provinces of heated contestation such as KZN and the Western Cape. However, the DA, for one, has pulled some unexpected rabbits out of its hat, which have challenged the ANC's apparent complacency.*

Going entirely by the recent opinion polls in South Africa, the African National Congress can be expected to return to power relatively comfortably, both at national level and at least in seven of the nine provinces. Only in the two provinces of Western Cape and KZN, where the ANC is in coalition governments with the NNP and IFP respectively, is the going expected to get a lot tougher. This is the scenario that appears to define the campaign strategies and tactics of the major political parties for the coming general elections.

Given the position of advantage the ANC enjoys as an incumbent, as well as its apparent electoral dominance over the opposition, it would be logical to expect that the party would have adopted a laid-back, or even defensive, strategy while leaving it up to its opponents to do much of the running in order to dislodge it from its perch. After all, opinion surveys over the past three years or so have consistently predicted that the party is poised to retain its large majority at national level as well as in several provinces such as Free State, North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. However, it appears that the ANC has decided to adopt a much more aggressive campaigning strategy in its quest for re-election. It has adopted a two-pronged strategy: going on the early offensive against its opponents, while also adopting an unexpectedly down-to-earth but nonetheless assertive strategy that sees prominent party leaders, including the president, engaging in door-to-door close encounters with potential voters, both in its traditional strongholds and non-traditional constituencies. The opposition have largely adapted to this and, in some cases, adopted similar tactics to counter the ANC. It is argued here that, initially the opposition appeared to play the game the way the ANC wanted, especially in the early part of the campaigning. However, some of them have quickly adapted to the ANC's strategy and tactics, and are beginning to push the party onto the defensive.

TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE OPPOSITION?

When the ANC formally launched its political manifesto and electoral campaign programme at the Harry Gwala Stadium in Pietermaritzburg on the 11th January this year, it left nothing to the imagination regarding its intentions and the nature of its electoral strategy. Firstly, the launch was held in KwaZulu-Natal – traditionally, and still, regarded as one of the two 'opposition' provinces in South Africa. Given the worsening relations between the ANC and its coalition partner for the past ten years, the IFP, this was seen by many commentators, the media in general and the IFP itself in particular, as an aggressive and politically provocative tactic. Secondly, the venue of the launch – the Harry Gwala stadium – could not have been a more apt choice in terms of the political symbolism of the ANC's electoral campaign for this year's general elections. Named after the self-confessed Stalinist and most powerful ANC leader in the Natal Midland before his death in 1995, the stadium invoked the spectre of the political confrontations of the early 1990s between the ANC and the IFP in the province, which the man himself seemed to revel in so much.

It was clear that the ANC's strategy was to take the fight to the doorstep of the opposition, right from the start. However, this needs to be placed against the backdrop of a political atmosphere already fouled by the 'floor crossing' legislation of 2002 that saw the cooperative relationship between the ANC and IFP, already under severe strain, stretched to the limit of hostility, and the subsequent driving of the IFP into the arms of the DA – the ANC's sworn enemy. The ANC, for its part, saw the partnership between these two opposition parties as an act of deliberate provocation on the part of the IFP. Also, the DA-NNP alliance in opposition and the coalition government of Western Cape to keep the ANC out had unravelled in 2001/02, driving the NNP into the arms of the ANC – its former sworn enemy. Inevitably the DA saw this as an act of betrayal by the NNP.

The ANC electoral campaign launch in KwaZulu-Natal and subsequent statements suggesting that the party was preparing to take over control of KwaZulu-Natal and govern it single-handedly seemed to underline the party's belligerent electoral strategy. At the same time the ANC appeared to signal its intention to contest the Western Cape provincial elections with the aim of obtaining a clear majority. This suggested that the party was exploring the prospects of governing the province on its own for the first time since 1994. This is despite the current coalition pact with the NNP to rule the Western Cape province. At face value, this suggests an indifferent if not ambivalent attitude towards political partnerships on the part of the ANC. Thus, the battle lines for the 2004 electoral campaign were drawn.

However, the belligerence of the ANC towards the IFP and its DA partner in KZN, the seeming lack of clear commitment to its coalition pact with the NNP in the Western Cape, and the desire to take control of 'opposition provinces' on its own, is part of a greater electoral strategy which avoids pre-election pacts, especially when this places the ANC in a position where it might appear beholden to other political parties in the eyes of its more militant supporters. It is not a secret that some of the more militant members of the ANC and its tripartite alliance, especially at provincial and regional levels, are not in favour of such coalitions and pacts, seeing these as obstacles in the way of 'transformation'. For instance, some of the statements already coming out of the ANC during this election campaign have suggested that the province of KwaZulu-Natal was not yet 'liberated', and that 'transformation' would not be possible in the province as long as it was still being governed in coalition with the IFP. Such sentiments have also been expressed in relation to the Western Cape province.

The responses of the opposition parties to the ANC's offensive were initially defensive and reactive. For instance, within weeks after the ANC launched its national manifesto in KZN, some of the major opposition parties reacted by launching their campaigns – in late January and February – in some cases within days of each other. Some of them, most notably the IFP and the UDM, reacted by also launching their campaigns in KZN, following the ruling party's example. The DA launched its national manifesto in Western Cape, clearly following a trend initiated by the ANC – of launching the electoral campaigns in the hotly contested 'opposition' provinces. This clearly showed the opposition parties largely reacting to the ruling party's moves, thus appearing to play the game by the rules as set by the ruling party in what are regarded as opposition stomping grounds.

CAMPAIGN TACTICS BY THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

The ANC not only launched its election campaign earlier than all the other political parties at national level. It was also the first party to launch its election campaign in all nine provinces. For instance, on the 18th January, a mere week after launching its national campaign manifesto in KZN, the party launched a series of rallies in the other eight provinces, 'deploying' some of its icons to address these rallies together with regional leaders. The party's election campaign strategy has been characterised by the unleashing of many of the ANC's most prominent, well-known and popular national leaders, travelling the length and breadth of the country to address mass rallies as well as carry out door-to-door political campaigns to meet prospective voters. These included party chairman and defence minister Mosiuoa Lekota, deputy President Jacob Zuma and a string of other cabinet ministers and members of the party's national executive committee (NEC).

However, the inclusion of president Thabo Mbeki in active campaigning, especially in carrying out some of the door-to-door escapades, has been an unexpectedly effective feature of the party's broader election strategy. Known for being a combative back-room operator in pin striped suits and mostly comfortable only with close-quarter exchange of ideas, Mbeki is usually seen as unhappy among the ordinary masses. However, the ANC election strategists appeared to have defied this popular perception and unleashed Mbeki onto the streets to shake hands with ordinary people, kiss babies and face serious questions from ordinary citizens aggrieved by widespread lack of service delivery, unresponsive local councillors and corrupt municipal officials. The party has even sent Mbeki on door-to-door campaigns in some of the most conservative, 'non-traditional' suburbs in Pretoria and the Cape Flats. The media in general appears to suggest that this image of Mbeki as a 'people person' seems to be getting the crowds he meets to warm to him.

It appears though that the ANC will not be allowed by the opposition in general to have it all easy with its election campaign programme. Given its status as the incumbent, its strategists and planners had obviously intended to spend a great deal of campaign time and resources explaining the party's policy and service delivery successes over the past decade of its rule. For instance, in his opening address to the current session of the National Assembly this year, the president set the tone for his party's election campaign programme, by outlining the ANC government's successes and achievements over the past ten years. Also, in their opening addresses to the provincial legislatures, all ANC premiers devoted a great deal of time to outlining the party's achievements at provincial level, and suggesting that more is to come if voters choose to keep the party in power.

Clearly, this put the opposition at a distinct disadvantage. It forced them to attempt to convince potential voters to ignore some of the real, visible and concrete successes accruing from ANC rule over the past ten years, in favour of mere promises from untried and untested policy proposals offered by the opposition parties. The opposition appears to have responded differently and innovatively though.

Most of them have chosen instead to focus on the major failures and flaws of the ANC government, especially policy in areas such as HIV/AIDs; crime; unemployment, corruption and basic service delivery. The DA has been the most innovative in its responses to ANC's electioneering tactics. For instance, together with its election partner, the IFP, the DA has also, on some occasions, taken the election fight to some of the ANC's strong holds, especially Soweto in Gauteng and some areas in Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

The party has also been effective in putting the ANC on the defensive by making repeated references to corruption and widespread misuse of state resources by government officials and some ANC leaders at provincial level, thus detracting from the ANC's obvious attempt to focus attention mainly on its successes. The DA leader even appeared to put his name to the popular demands for the return of the death penalty – a clear election tactic and ploy to portray him as more in touch with popular sentiments than Mbeki. Also, the attempt to pressurise Mbeki into agreeing to a televised debate was clearly not going to succeed but this was probably not the central objective. The central objective may have been to portray Tony Leon in the eyes of the voters as a political leader who is ready and willing to defend his party's policy proposals in public, unlike Mbeki, and therefore as a worthy alternative to Mbeki.

However, the DA's strategy of raising some uncomfortable issues and questions, or even attempting to create doubt in the minds of the general public on a range of issues and decisions recently taken by the government was potentially deadly for the ANC. For instance, the DA raised the issue of whether or not Mbeki was intending to change the constitution in order to serve a third term in office and tried to make this an election issue. It also raised the issue of the procedural legality if not the constitutionality of the government's decision to send a military aircraft loaded with weapons to the unpopular government of former Haitian leader Jean Bertrand Aristide. Whether or not the DA had a legitimate point in raising these issues was probably secondary. The primary objective was to create doubt and uncertainty in the minds of voters, by associating Mbeki with unpopular political leaders such as Aristide or Mugabe who have either changed their country's constitutions to entrench themselves in power or violently oppressed their people. Therefore, invoking the spectre of chaos and disrespect for constitutional law was an important and effective election tactic by the DA and it seems to have unsettled not only the ANC leadership in general, but president Mbeki in particular.

Clearly, the election campaigning process is still unfolding and more political strategies and tactics will be put in place as political parties continue to adapt to the demands of this year's election. One thing remains certain, though: despite its advantages of incumbency, the ANC will have to work harder to secure the overwhelming victory predicted by some opinion polls. That may prove a lot more challenging than it appears at first glance.

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