

The Impact of the 2011 Municipal Elections on Political Realignment in South Africa

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KEYWORDS Municipal Elections. The Electorate. Political Parties. Small Parties. Political Support. Political Realignment. Two-Party System

ABSTRACT The African National Congress has dominated the South African politics since 1994, when the country emerged from the shackles of apartheid and adopted democracy and a multi-party political system of governance. Between 1994 and 2011 there have been four municipal elections. The ANC has won all of them with a wide margin of over 60% of the total votes cast by the electorate. The remaining votes have always been shared among, and by, over 100 opposition political parties. However, the 2011 municipal elections heralded a new era of multiparty politics in South Africa. For the first time in the history of municipal elections, one opposition party, namely the Democratic Alliance, exerted itself firmly as the second most popular party in South Africa. This has raised mixed feelings: first, hopes for a two-party democratic system in South Africa; and, second, questions about the future of small parties in the country. This paper argues that while the ANC retains its political dominance in the country, political patronage and its credentials of liberation struggle have begun giving way to issues of accountability, good governance and efficiency in service delivery. This has opened up a new political landscape and space for other political parties such as the Democratic Alliance to compete with the ANC competitively based on sound policies both in governance and service delivery. This trend was evident in the increase in the of DA supporters and voters in the 2011 municipal elections, mainly due to the party's aggressive election campaign, in which it emphasized its good track record in governance, transparency and service delivery in the Western Cape.

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 municipal elections remind us that governance cannot take place without political parties. Political parties cannot govern without good policies and for political parties to govern they need to sell their policies to the public. The electorate vote for political parties that present good policies during the election campaign, when they present their CVs to the public in the form of manifestos, which outline and detail how they plan to deal with pressing issues and to address the needs of the people once elected into power. In May 2011, posters advertising parties' policies, theme and logos were posted on street poles, buildings and on cars, to attract votes and support. Parties cannot come to power without political support and votes. Once in power, their core functions include governance and service delivery. To understand these functions and their significance in the context of South African politics, invocation of the political ideas of political thinkers such as Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter is necessary.

In his essay, *Politics as a Vocation*, Max Weber (1972: 113) writes that the emergence of modern industrialization societies facilitated the spread of suffrage, which, in turn, necessitated

the establishment of political parties as the apparatus of political associations. This arrived with new demands for political leadership to provide political direction. Political direction is provided and guided by ideologies. Identity of political parties and the principles and values they stand for lie in ideologies. Today one finds a variety of political parties with different ideologies. For example, conservative parties are normally called "right wing", since they emphasize preserving established traditions, and cultures as their rallying point in governance. Liberal parties are commonly known as centrist parties, in that they are flexible in their leanings. They advocate change wherever necessary, but maintain the *status quo*. Leftist parties are reformist parties, mostly leaning on socialist or Marxist ideologies. They emphasize the inequalities between the haves and the have-nots and seek radical reforms as solutions. People vote for political parties whose ideologies resonate with their needs.

Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1976) seeks to highlight the impact and complexities of party politics in modern democracies. Unlike Weber, Schumpeter understands democracy as "a political method that is an institutional arrangement for arriv-

ing at political (legislative and administrative) decisions by vesting in certain individuals the power to decide on all matters as a consequence of their successful pursuit of the people's vote" (see Schumpeter 1976: 269) (see also Held 1987:165). Thus, for Schumpeter, "democratic life is the struggle between rival political leaders, arrayed in parties, for the mandate to rule". He sees the role of citizens in democracy as that of choosing and authorizing governments to act on their behalf (Held 1987:165). In other words, democracy for him means "the ability of citizens to replace one government by another" (Held 1987:165). Schumpeter's interpretation of this argument has three positive interpretations. The first one is that democracy is the means whereby the citizens are able to replace and change incompetent governments. The second one is that democracy is a means of keeping in check the threat of tyranny. The last one is that democracy is a mechanism which allows the legislation of the broad desires of ordinary people, while leaving actual public policy to well-qualified and experienced individuals. In short, the essence of democracy is the people (Held 1987: 166). It is in this context that one begins to understand the gist of elections.

During the 2011 local government elections, voters and the general populace were bombarded with messages from political parties, urging them to vote. Such messages were transmitted through the media – both print and electronic, television, radio, rallies, door-to-door campaigns and posters. Roads in cities, suburbs, townships and rural areas were turned into theatres, where political parties displayed their posters advertising and asserting their goals, objectives and plans for governance and service delivery. In the main, these plans reflected the values that the political parties stand for, encapsulated in the posters and party manifestos. Some posters carried pictures of party leaders, reminding voters of the names of the parties. This was crucial since personalities matter in elections. Posters were used as instruments for defaming other political parties in the scramble for political support. Manifestos were 'catechisms' of policies presented to the electorate by political parties.

Central to the 2011 local government election campaign were topical issues pertinent to all South Africans ranging from (i) service delivery, especially in housing and provision of basic needs, such as running water, electricity and

sanitation; (ii) unemployment, which in 2011 stands at 25%; (iii) crime, which has reached alarming levels since the advent of democracy due to poor policing and low prosecution levels; and (iv) corruption, which has spiralled out of control since 1994 and has taken its toll on service delivery. These ills are blamed not only on the lack of commitment by politicians, but also on lack of good policies by political parties to bring about change. Despite these challenges, the 2011 local government election campaign showed that political parties were more concerned, not necessarily with service delivery and accountability, but with their own survival in the country, where new and old political parties over-crowded the political space.

In any election, the messages and values that parties transmit during political campaign commercials are crucial for understanding the prevailing values and the pressing issues in their communities. They contribute to an understanding of a nation's culture. The nucleus of modern democracy lies not only in the elections and the accountability of the elected officials but also in the language and messages which political parties display in the posters in streets of the cities, townships and rural areas. It can be argued that the vibrancy of modern democracy lies in advertisements. Political parties select their elections campaign themes based on pressing issues and current events, not on the values and the ideals of the party. This is reflected in the messages, advertisements and pictures they display in the streets.

Elections define responsibilities of political leaders and citizens. Citizens or voters become the means to obtain political office by political leaders. Politicians have responsibilities to ensure accountability and maintain good relations with the electorate. Schumpeter proposes three ways to harness the relationship between the voters and political leadership. First, he proposes that the voters outside of parliament must respect the division of labour between themselves and the politicians they elect. Second, that they must not lose confidence too easily between elections and they must understand that, once they have elected an individual, political action is his business). Third, he proposes that not only should electors refrain from trying to instruct their representative about what he should do, but they should also refrain from any attempt to influence his judgement: "the prac-

tice of bombarding them with letters and telegrams for instance – ought to come under the same ban!” (Schumpeter 1976: 295; Held 1987: 175).

At the centre of elections is the ideal of representative democracy and “democracy is most likely to be effective when leaders are able to set the terms of public policy, unimpeded by back-seat driving” (Held 1987: 175). To minimise the erosion of representative democracy, Held proposes the following conditions:

- ♦ the calibre of politicians must be high;
- ♦ competition between rival leaders (and parties) must take place within a relatively restricted range of political questions, bounded by consensus on the overall direction of national policy, on what constitutes a reasonable parliamentary programme and on general constitutional matters;
- ♦ a well-trained independent bureaucracy, of ‘good-standing and tradition’, must exist to aid politicians with all aspects of policy formulation and administration;
- ♦ there must be ‘democratic self-control’, that is, broad agreement about the undesirability of, for instance, voters and politicians confusing their respective roles, excessive criticism of governments on all issue, and unpredictable and violent behaviour;
- ♦ there must be a culture of tolerating differences of opinion (Held 1987: 176).

These conditions do not guarantee a perfect democracy, since democracy is likely to break down when interests and ideologies are held so steadfastly that people are not prepared to compromise. Such a situation usually signals the end of democratic politics (Schumpeter 1976: 296; Held 1987: 176).

It is clear from the above account that the primary role of the public in a democracy is choosing a political party or a candidate that can best serve their interests. Political parties provide candidates who do not only mobilize support, but also represent their brands during elections. A brand is normally identified by certain characteristics and values, which both the candidate and the party stand for. These may be in the form of policies, values, histories or slogans, to mention but four. The Freedom Charter, for instance, is one of the most recognised brands of the ANC, though other political par-

ties also claim it, since it was adopted in a multi-party setting in 1955. Most South African political parties present their brands through their manifestos and constitutions. Adverts in the media, both print and electronic, as well as speeches at rallies, depict the brands of political parties, which constitute core themes and policy directions of political parties, of which 121 took part in the 2011 municipal elections. Some of these were the African National Congress (ANC); the Democratic Alliance (DA); the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP); the Congress of the People (COPE); the National Freedom Party (NFP); the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP); the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP); the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC); the United Democratic Movement (UDM); the Freedom Front Plus (VF+); Independents and others. They all presented their manifestos and action plans to the electorate. How these messages influenced the decisions of the electorate, depended on the resources and the means available to individual parties. Whether advertisements in the media and on posters had any impact on the voters’ decisions during the elections is another debate altogether, since issues such as historical factors, political identity, gender and political patronage play major roles in the decisions of the voters or electorates. The fundamental question, though, is: what kind of messages, policies and values did political parties promulgate during their 2011 political campaigns?

COURTING THE ELECTORATE IN THE 2011 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The first municipal election after the abolition of apartheid took place in 1995-96 as stipulated in the *Interim Constitution of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993*. This election paved the transition from apartheid to a democratic dispensation. It also facilitated the preparations and demarcation of new local authorities to be completed in readiness for the 2000 municipal elections which marked the end of the interim period for transition from the old apartheid dispensation to the new dispensation of democracy in South Africa. From 1995-6 to 2011 there have been four municipal elections in South Africa; the first one in 1995/6, then in 2000, then in 2006 and this year, 2011. During the apartheid era there were over 1800 local governments in South Afri-

ca. These were integrated into 284 municipalities in 2000 and later on integrated into 278 local authorities, in 2011. These include eight municipalities, namely Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane Metros in Gauteng; eThekweni Metro (Durban) in KwaZulu-Natal; Buffalo City Metro (East London) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) in the Eastern Cape; the Cape Town Metro in the Western Cape; and Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein) in the Free State. Only five provinces out of nine have metropolitan municipalities; three in Gauteng; two in the Eastern Cape; one in KwaZulu-Natal; one in the Free State; and one in the Western Cape. Apart from these metropolitan municipalities, there are 44 district councils, which co-ordinate the management of groups of rural local councils that are not part of large metros (*Municipalities in South Africa* 2011). The district municipalities were created mainly to realign local government projects with the goals of reconstruction and development programmes, to avoid duplication or contradiction with the other two types of municipalities', namely metros and local municipalities. In short, there are three types of municipalities in South Africa, namely the eight metropolitan municipalities, which operate in the major cities, 44 district municipalities, which amalgamate several local municipalities in scarcely populated areas, and 226 local authorities, which operate in small cities and rural areas. The municipal elections revolve on winning control of these municipalities.

The large number of political parties contesting the 2011 elections meant that each one of them had to work hard to attract voters to win seats or control these municipalities. Each political party unveiled its manifesto, which outlined policies and action plans. These included parties' wish lists on governance, service delivery and improvement of the living standards of the people. Unveiling of manifestos is a standard norm in any democratic elections, since such programmes give an indication of the policies, values, norms and directions of the party. Such unveiling is not limited only to political parties. Bodies that run elections do the same. In the run-up to the 2011 municipal elections, for instance, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) 'set the ball rolling' and unveiled its manifesto, goals, objectives and themes for the 2011 election, before political parties did. Among its goals was a voter-registration drive targeting

young voters ahead of the 2011 municipal elections. Voter registration took place on 5 and 6 February. The IEC launched its national campaign for the 2011 municipal elections in Midrand, Gauteng, where its chairperson, Dr Brigalia Bam, unveiled the 2011 municipal elections campaign logo, entitled "Love your South Africa" (Parker 2011). This was adopted as a reminder to all South African voters of their obligation to vote for the party of their choice, so as to have a say in how the country is governed. It also adopted a youthful advertising campaign in an attempt to reach young people. Some of the IEC posters featured variations of its logo, such as "*I smaak my dorp*", "*Loxion [location] is lekker*" and "*Love your hood*" (Parker 2011). These campaign logos were also written in chocolate biscuits, cereal grains or scrawled across cityscapes, mainly to target the youth who turned 18 years old, which is the legal voting age in South Africa.

Ultimately the IEC registered 23.6 million voters for the 2011 municipal elections (South Africa 2011). The onus was on political parties to scramble for votes from these registered voters. The success of the IEC campaign in registering voters lay in the fact that it managed to register over 1.5-million new voters in just two days. The number of registered voters, totalling 23.6 million in 2011, was slightly higher than the 21 million people who registered for elections in 2006. The number of voting stations also increased from 19 726 to 20 868 (South Africa 2011). Of all 121 political parties that registered for the 2011 municipal elections, only the ANC fielded candidates and contested seats in all 278 municipalities. The IEC report states that 53 596 candidates were nominated as ward or proportional candidates, or stood as independent ward candidates. This was a great success, considering the fact that, during the entire national elections in 2009, it registered three million new voters. The majority of these voters were between the age of 18 and 35. The large number of new voters registered in the 2011 municipal elections demonstrates that the local government elections are more highly contested than the national elections, since every vote in municipal elections count. More importantly, there was a 6% increase in the number of voting stations in the 2011 municipal elections compared to the 2006 municipal elections, due to the increase in the number of voters. The number of wards also

increased, from 895 to 4,277. There were a total of 10 055 seats available in 4,277 municipal wards and district councils. In KwaZulu-Natal alone, 10 390 candidates registered for election, making it the province with the highest numbers of candidates. The Northern Cape had the lowest number of registered candidates, at 1,600. Gauteng Province, which boasts three metropolitan municipalities, had 9,054 candidates. The Western Cape, the province in which the ANC and the DA contested fiercely for the control of municipalities, had 6,958 registered candidates. The report states that the ward and proportional ballot papers containing the most candidates' names and parties were in the Cape Town Metro, where 33 parties and candidates contested proportional and ward elections (IEC 2011)

The number of voting stations also increased by 6%, to 20,868. The statistics released by the IEC showed the increase in the numbers of political parties contesting the elections in South Africa. In 1994, for instance, only 26 political parties contested elections. In 2011 the number increased to 153, even though only 121 took part in the elections (IEC 2011). In 2011 more than 200 000 voter-registration officials were trained for the election (IEC 2011). Between 2010 and 2011 the IEC's operating budget was in excess of R1-billion (IEC 2011). This budget was slightly higher than that of previous elections, due to the rising costs of running an election, namely high costs of technology used in elections, training of officials, educational materials, civil programmes and payment of electoral staff. The budget enabled the IEC to do its work professionally, efficiently and effectively, creating the environment for peaceful election processes.

During the 2011 elections, the IEC introduced three types of ballot papers. First, voters were given white ballot papers to vote for ward candidates. The candidate with the highest number of votes was declared the winner. Most candidates stood under the banner of their political parties, 748 candidates stood as independents. Second, voters were given yellow ballot papers to vote for political parties. The proportion of votes given to each party determined the allocation of a second seat for each ward; 8554 councillors were elected in 234 metropolitan and local councils. Some wards were exempted by the IEC from holding elections. Third, the IEC created green ballot papers, for voters living outside the

eight metros mentioned above on which to vote for parties that would delegate members to fill 40% of the seats on the 44 district councils, in proportion to their share of the total number of votes. The rest of the district council seats were filled by delegates named by the local councils. This suggests that, while the ward system ensured the election or re-election of an effective individual, the proportional votes were applied to ensure that the overall representation of parties in each council was in line with the overall number of votes received by each party on the ward and proportional lists.

Political parties followed the example of the IEC. They unveiled their manifestos, logos and themes. These themes were captured not only in the policy plans and ideologies of political parties, but also reflected the goals and action plans to be implemented after they had won the elections. Some of the themes written on posters were:

The ANC: *"Together we can build better communities; "ANC a home for all;" "Working together we can do more"*

The DA: *"We Deliver for All"*

The NFP: *"Your choice, your vote, your future"*

The IPF: *"Kungawe"* (meaning "It's up to you")

The FF+: *"No service, No Tax"*

The ACDP: *"We can fix it"*.

The ANC as the biggest political party, had displayed different messages on its posters, which concentrated on one theme: community building. These posters were decorated with the colours and emblems of the political parties. Themes on posters were also accompanied by pictures of political leaders, such as Jacob Zuma for the ANC, Chief Buthelezi for the IFP, Zanele KaMagwaza-Msibi for the NFP, Mosioa Lekota for COPE, reminding the voters who custodians of these parties were.

Metaphorically, the themes were very rich in their meanings, but whether the electorate understood the messages and the meanings of these themes was a different story. The message of the ANC was simple and straight-forward: "let us built our communities". Similarly, the DA's message was simple: "we deliver for all". However, the IFP's and the ACDP's themes had rich, hidden meanings. For instance, the IFP's message implored the voters to think carefully about who they vote for during the elec-

tions, considering their experience of poor service delivery under the ANC administrations in the municipalities of KwaZulu-Natal: hence its theme “*Kungawe*”, meaning “it’s all up to you”. The ACDP’s messages talked about the state of duress of local government in South Africa and appealed to the electorate to vote for the ACDP to correct the problems. The Freedom Front Plus theme centred on a slogan “No services, No Tax”. This campaign slogan was inspired by the new consumer law, which parliament passed and became law on 1 April 2011. The law primarily aims at protecting consumers from bad service from services providers. During the unveiling of its manifesto in Bloemfontein, Free State, the FF+ leader, Pieter Mulder, criticised the ANC for bad service and cited an example of 800 municipal sewer systems that were investigated for what he called “Blue Drop Status” (*The City Press* 12 May 2011). Out of 800 municipal sewers only 32 municipalities made the grade. According to Mulder, of those 32, only four were from rural communities. It was in this context that the FF+ framed its election theme, since the Consumer Protection Act gave consumers the right not to pay, or pay less, for services or goods not properly delivered. Mulder was quoted by *the City Press* as saying “we want to push this principle that if I pay taxes I must get services. Why must I pay if I don’t get something back” (*The City Press* 12 May 2011).

To reach out to a wider audience of voters, political parties enlisted the services of celebrities, especially musicians, who were responsible for composing campaign songs. The ANC used musicians such as Chomee, Arthur Mafokate, Chicco Thwala, Winnie Khumalo and Professor, for their 2011 local government elections promotional music album (Ndlovu 2011). This was an emulation of the tactic that the US President Barack Obama employed during his election campaign in 2008. He recruited into his campaign celebrities such as Beyonce Knowles and Alicia Keys, to mention but two, to back his Democrats’ campaign. However, some party leaders disapproved of this type of branding and marketing, arguing that such involvement is dangerous, since celebrities were expected to be neutral and apolitical (Ndlovu 2011). Pieter Mulder, the leader of FF+, for instance, argued that their supporters got very upset and defensive when they saw political parties doing that. Aimee Franklin, the DA’s youth leader director, dis-

agreed with Mulder, arguing that celebrities were useful tools for marketing political parties’ messages and campaigns, since they bring an exciting edge to elections (Ndlovu 2011); however, such involvement could close doors for their careers. Such sentiments were shared by one of the best-known artists, Simphiwe Dana, the award-winning soul singer, who suggested that artists should not endorse political parties, but be impartial. If a party did well, they should compliment it and not to be afraid to criticise it if it failed to live up to some expectations (Ndlovu 2011).

The issue of campaigning cannot be separated from the issue of funding. It is thus important to look at who funded political parties during the 2011 municipal elections.

FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2011 POLLS

This issue remains an enigma, since political parties treat it with secrecy. What is known is that political parties hold auctions to sell some of the parties’ memorabilia to raise funds for campaigns and their political operations. The leather jacket that President Jacob Zuma wore during the 2009 political campaign, for instance, was sold for R400 000 at an ANC fundraiser (Thamm 2011) and fetched more money than the signed original copy of the Freedom Charter (Thamm 2011). This tells us more about the populism of Jacob Zuma. During the 2011 municipal elections the ANC raised R3 million at its auction in Midrand (Thamm 2011). Many political parties did the same, but most of them did not reveal the amounts of money they raised for the campaign.

While secret funding of political parties remains a thorny issue in South Africa, parties receive funds from individual donors, openly. Good examples of such people include billionaire businessman Patrice Motsepe and the Gupta family. Motsepe gave millions of rands openly to the ANC on many occasions. Similarly, in the 2011 elections, the Gupta family gave the UDM R100 000 (Thamm 2011). However, many donors of opposition parties do not make their donations public, for fear of the wrath of the ANC and of being excluded from tenders. Such secrecy has opened up a climate of corruption and rampant nepotism, which contradicts the precepts of democracy of openness and transparency.

Certainly, municipal election campaigns are expensive exercises. They involve the printing and hanging of posters on street poles, the messages and faces on the t-shirts and the pamphlets which they distribute to the public, the securing of campaign venues and rallies, and the need for national representatives to travel across the country. Lack of resources could be a handicap for poor parties, since the IEC does not allocate funds for municipal elections, although it does administer the Representative Political Parties Fund (RPPF) for national elections. It allows political parties to use proportional money received from the fund for broad categories of political activity related to general campaigning.

Information on party funding is very sketchy, since many political parties do not reveal their financiers. Newspaper reports show that the funding of the 2011 elections amounted to only R77 million. The biggest share of this money came from the ANC. Estimates show that in a municipal election campaign expenses could exceed R60 million if any political party is to make an impact on the electorate. Many small parties cannot afford to raise such amounts of money; hence their poor results.

Evidence also shows proliferation of unregulated funding of political parties in South Africa, despite laws on transparency being in place. According to Thamm (2011), during the 1999 national election, unregulated, secret funding of parties outstripped transparent public funding by four to one.

In spite of astronomical costs of political campaigns, the IEC's report on the cost of organizing elections shows a decrease in the cost of organizing elections between 1994 and 2011. In 1994 it cost the IEC almost R963 million (SAPA News24 6 May 2011; IEC 2011) to run the national elections. In 2011 it cost the IEC R1.2 billion to run the elections. This, according to the IEC, was much cheaper when calculated in the light of inflation over the past 17 years. According to the IEC deputy chief electoral officer, Norman du Plessis, in 1994 the IEC spent heavily on paying volunteers, electoral officials and on hiring consultants (SAPA News24 6 May 2011; IEC 2011). In 2011 the IEC relied on the skills and knowledge of its staff members. Volunteer workers were only paid daily allowances for food and transport, not wages. The decrease in the cost of technology, such as computers, as well as the

decrease in the cost of administrative goods, such as ballot boxes and seals, due to competition in the market, also contributed to the low cost of running the elections (IEC 2011). The report further states that "on average, over a five-year cycle, the IEC's budget was between R4 billion and R5 billion. This included national and local elections and two registration weekends for each election" (IEC 2011).

TAKING STOCK OF THE 2011 MUNICIPAL POLLS

Even though 121 political parties took part in the 2011 municipal elections, many did not do well. Only five political parties made an impact. These were the ANC, the DA, the IFP, the NFP and COPE. With the exception of the new parties, the NFP and COPE, the previous elections were also dominated by the ANC, the DA and the IFP. This is so, in spite of the increase in the number of voters since the 2000 elections. In 2000 fewer than 18 million people registered to vote in the election and the turnout was only 48% (South Africa 2011). The ANC won the lion's share of the votes. In 2006, fewer than 20 million people registered for the local government elections and the turnout was 48.4% (South Africa 2011). The ANC won the 'lion's share' of votes. In 2011 elections, 23.65 million people registered to vote and the turnout was 57.6% (South Africa 2011). Similarly, the ANC emerged as the dominant party in spite of its shortcomings in service delivery and in the rise of interest of South Africans in municipal elections, due to the crucial roles that local government plays in communities in governance and service delivery.

A critical look at the results of the past three municipal elections shows a decline in support for some political parties and an increase in support for others. In 2011, the ANC won 62% (61.95%) of the national vote, followed by the DA, with 23.94% (SAPA News24 20 May 2011), amounting to 5 633 seats for the ANC and 1 555 seats for the DA. The ANC won and took control of 198 local councils, including seven metros and the DA took control of 18 councils, including the Cape Town Metro (SAPA News24 20 May 2011). In the 2006 municipal election the ANC took control of 200 local authorities. These shrunk to 198 in 2011, reflecting a drop in the ANC's national support, from 66% in 2006 to

62% in 2011. The ANC increased its support in KwaZulu-Natal, from 47% to 56% (SAPA News24 20 May 2011).

The DA, however, has increased its support base. In the 1994 national elections, the DA's total national support, under its leader, Tony Leon, was a mere 1.7%. Its support increased by 17% in the 2006 municipal elections; and then to 23% in the 2011 municipal election. The ANC won 64.8% of the votes in 2006 and the IFP won 7.6%. In 2000, the ANC won 59% of the local vote, the DA 22% and the IFP 9% (SAPA News24 21 May 2011).

Of all political parties, it was the IFP that suffered serious political haemorrhage. During the 2011 municipal elections, the IFP won 4% (3.57%) of the national vote and took control of five municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (Tolsi 2011). Before the 2011 elections, the IFP controlled 32 municipalities in the county, but lost its KwaZulu-Natal municipalities to the ANC, partly because the State President, Jacob Zuma, comes from that province and partly because of the split in the IFP and the formation of the NFP, led by former IFP chairperson, Zanele KaMagwaza-Msibi. The NFP won 2.5% of the total national votes and took control of two municipalities formerly held by the IFP (Tolsi 2011). The IFP's support fell in KwaZulu-Natal by 21%, from 38% in 2006 to 17% in 2011. In contrast, the ANC's support in KwaZulu-Natal increased from 47% in 2006 to 56% in 2011. The newly-formed NFP garnered 11% of the vote in its first election (Tolsi 2011). In a turn of events, the ANC formed a coalition with the NFP to govern in a number of Zululand municipalities, leaving the IFP out in the cold. In total, the ANC garnered 4.2 million votes, as opposed to the IFP's 1.2 million votes and the NFP's 780 813 votes (SAPA News24 20 May 2011).

In terms of seats, the IEC announced that the two parties (the IFP and the NFP) secured 352 and 224 seats nationally, while the Congress of the People won 236 seats nationally. Independent candidates won 140 seats at various municipalities, the UDM 65 seats and the ACDP 40 seats. The IEC result can be summarized as follows: the ANC won 63.65% of the total vote, the DA 23%, the IFP 4%, NFP 2.58% and COPE received 2.33% (SAPA News24 21 May 2011). The UDM won 0.74% and the FF+ 0.48%.

In its assessment of the election, the IEC stated that there were ties in nine municipalities,

where smaller parties formed alliances with bigger parties to form municipal councils. It stated that 1.89% of all votes cast were spoilt votes (*Mail and Guardian* online 22 May 2011). This number was lower compared to the 2.27% of votes spoilt in the 2006 elections. The IEC stated that there were 63 objections raised by political parties and all complaints were resolved. All political parties accepted the outcome of these elections, suggesting that the 2011 municipal elections were free and fair (SAPA News24 6 May 2011).

POLITICAL SUPPORT AND REALIGNMENT IN THE PROVINCES

The total number of votes won by political parties nationally reflects the trends and changes of local politics, both at provincial level and municipal level. Such trends warrant an evaluation of political shifts that took place in the political geography of South Africa in some provinces. As pointed out earlier, KwaZulu-Natal became 'fertile' ground for the ANC's political support. Two factors explain this: first because it is the home province of the State President; and second because of the split in the IFP and the formation of the NFP. Consequently the ANC now controls the majority of municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, with 56% of the total provincial votes, as opposed to the IFP's 20%, the NFP's 12% and the DA's 9%. The ANC has therefore increased its support from 2.4 million votes in 2006 to 4.2 million in the 2011 municipal elections.

Although the ANC dominates in the other seven provinces, with the exception of the Western Cape, its support base has declined by 5% or more in most provinces. Such losses have led to the argument that "if the ANC's KwaZulu-Natal results were omitted from the equation, the percentage of municipalities where the party shed votes goes up to 79%" (*Mail and Guardian* 22 May 2011) and that "if the same equation was applied to the DA's results, its results would show a growth of 89% in municipalities (excluding KwaZulu-Natal) and a drop in support in only 11% of municipalities" (*Mail and Guardian* 22 May 2011). This suggests that the ANC has dropped some of its supports, and that the DA has gained some support.

The decline in political support for the ANC was particularly evident in the Eastern Cape, the

Northern Cape and the Western Cape. According to IEC reports, in the Northern Cape, ANC support stands at 64%, the DA's at 22%, followed by COPE at 12%. Similarly, the ANC lost 8.3% of its voters in the Eastern Cape, compared to 2006. It shed much of its support in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro by 15.2 percentage points, to 52%. This decline was one of the ANC's 10 worst in the country. Other declines occurred in municipalities in the Western Cape and Northern Cape. Ironically, the ANC's eleventh biggest percentage drop was in former president Thabo Mbeki's hometown, Idutywa, where its votes dropped from 83.9% in 2006 to 70.2% in 2011.

The DA, on the other hand, increased its support in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. In the Western Cape its support in 2006 was at 78%. In the 2011 election its support grew by 17.8%. Apart from the Western Cape, the DA improved its performance in other provinces such as the Northern Cape, by 8.25%, North West Province, by 7.46%; the Free State, by 6.84% and in Gauteng by 6.65%. The IEC results show that the DA won ward seats in predominantly black areas such as Emakhazeni (Belfast) in Mpumalanga; Missionvale township and Joe Slovo settlement in Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth); and wards in Ekurhuleni and Tshwane, both in Gauteng. Its leader, Helen Zille, announced that her party took 133 wards from the ANC and lost five wards to the ANC. The only municipality in which both the ANC and DA lost support was Prince Albert in the Western Cape, where the new Karoo Gemeenskapsparty won (*The City Press* 12 May 2011). In the Eastern Cape, in general, the DA's support grew by up to 14% in the 2011 municipal elections. The ANC still remains a dominant party in the Eastern Cape, with 73% of total provincial votes, with COPE at 4% and the UDM at 4% (*The City Press* 12 May 2011).

The ANC maintained its dominance in the Free State, with 70% of the total provincial votes, ahead of the DA at 22%, and COPE at 4% (*SAPA Mail and Guardian* 20 May 2011). The ANC won and took control of the newly established Mangaung Metro (Bloemfontein). It received 266 723 votes, winning 65 seats out of a total of 97 seats (*SAPA News24* 20 May 2011). This translates into 67.01% of the 396,540 votes cast. The DA came second, with 27.52% and won 26 seats. COPE came third, with 12,723 votes, winning

three seats. The rest of the political parties secured the balance of seats through the proportional representation vote. Mangaung had 89 seats in the council in the 2006 elections. These seats increased to 97 after it became a metro. In 2006 the ANC won 65 seats, with 73% of the total votes. In 2011 its votes fell to 67%. The DA increased its seats from 15 in 2006 to 26 in 2011, representing a rise from 16.85% in 2006 to 26.8% in 2011 (*SAPA News24* 20 May 2011).

The ANC maintained its dominance in the North West, where it won 75% of the total votes. It was followed by the DA, with 16.14%. Overall, the ANC received 1.8-million votes provincially, whereas the DA won 395 648 (IEC 2011). COPE came third, with 70 231 votes, or 2.87%, and the ACDP, won 24 505 votes or 1% of provincial votes. According to the IEC, the DA increased its support in Rustenburg and won 42,785 votes translating into 20.38% of the votes. This was a huge increase compared to the 15.69% which the DA won in 2006. The ANC obtained 153,039 votes which accounted for 72.89%. COPE won 5 857 votes in Rustenburg winning 1 seat in the municipality (IEC 2011). The independent candidates won 2 seat, with 5,397 votes, or 1.69%. Overall, the ANC won 55 seats and the DA 15 seats, giving these two parties a total of 76 seats in the municipality. The ANC won control of the Ventersdorp municipality, the home town of the late Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging leader, Eugene Terre'Blanche. It won 26,221 votes, or 81.22%; the DA won 4 492 votes or 13.91%; COPE won 1 053 votes or 3.26% and the ACDP won 43 votes or 0.13% (*SAPA News* 24 21 May 2011).

It is clear that the ANC's political support has shrunk by 5% or more, in provinces such as the Free State, Northern Cape and Western Cape. However, its support remains high in provinces such as Mpumalanga, at 79%, and in Limpopo, at 82% (*SAPA News24* 21 May 2011). The question is what then is the future and role of the smaller parties?

THE FUTURE OF THE SMALL PARTIES

The goal of every political party is to win an election, or seats in the parliament or municipality. What happens if the party fails to win seats in parliament or in a ward? Should such parties disband? In 2011, most of the 121 parties failed to win even a single ward seat. What is the relevance of the parties in a democracy? Does their

existence serve the cause of democracy? In 2009, for instance, 26 parties contested the elections. Only 15 secured seats in the national Parliament.

Interestingly, many of these political parties share certain values, such as the Christian Democratic Alliance, the Christian Front, the Christian Movement, the African Christian Democratic Party and the United Christian Democratic Party. Why can they not integrate or form coalitions to win more seats in parliament or wards? Take for instance, the ACDP and the UCDP; they won three and two seats, respectively, in the 2009 elections, but they work separately in parliament. The same can be said about the PAC, AZAPO and SOPA, who share the common ideology of Pan-Africanism and blackness and land policies, yet they do not work together.

Chapter 2, Section 19 (a), of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, declares that individuals have the right to form political parties. This has resulted in the formation of 153 parties, though only 121 participated in the 2011 municipal elections. While five parties, namely the ANC, the DA, the IFP, the NPF and COPE, share more than 85% of the total votes, the rest share the remaining 15%. The same happened in 2009, when these parties (except the NPF) shared over 85% of the total votes. In Cape Town only six out of 20 parties won seats. What does the future hold for these parties, since the legitimacy of any party lies in its ability to garner enough votes to earn a seat in parliament or in local councils? Does their existence cloud and waste the political space and devalue the significance of a multiparty system?

A *Mail and Guardian* journalist asked the leaders of smaller parties about their futures and the seemingly emerging two-party system in South Africa. Their responses were defensive and punctuated with excuses. Lyndal Shope-Mafole, acting general secretary of COPE, for instance, believes that “the smaller parties and coalition governments are the future of democracy since they keep big parties in check” (Rawoot 2011). She cites examples in Europe, where smaller parties still occupy the political space. She dismisses the idea of a two-party system, because of the diversity of South African communities (Rawoot 2011). Thandi Nontenja, national treasurer of the UDM blamed the media, especially the SABC, for ignoring small parties and focusing on the campaigns of the DA and the ANC. She accused the media of creating the

election battle between these parties (Rawoot 2011). Such bias harmed the chances of smaller parties of making any impact on the elections. The FF plus spokesperson, Jaco Mulder, also believes that smaller parties have roles to play (Rawoot 2011). He dismisses the idea of a two-party system and reason that smaller parties play crucial roles in coalitions, where there is no clear winner. He conceded that FF+ was hurt during the elections. Nontenja lamented that her party, the UDM, had tried to encourage smaller parties to unite and form a stronger opposition in 2011, as voters became fewer, but such calls yielded nothing (Rawoot 2011). ACDP MP Jo-Ann Downs labelled the idea of a two-party system as an absolute disaster (Rawoot 2011).

On average, all smaller parties won less than 1% of the total votes in the 2011 municipal elections. The UDM for instance, won 0.7% of the total national votes or 13 seats. Its votes were slightly higher in 2006, at 1.3%. The FF+ won 0.5% in 2011, or nine seats; yet in 2006 its votes were slightly higher, at 1% with 252 253 votes. The PAC won 0.5% or 12 seats, in 2011. In 2006 its votes accounted for 1.3% of the total national votes. The ACDP won 0.6% of votes, or four seats in 2011. In 2006 it won 1.1% of the total votes. Finally, the UCDP, which was founded by the president of the former Bophuthatswana homeland, Lucas Mangope, won 0.2% of votes in 2011 and 0.7% of the vote in 2006 (SAPA News24 19 May 2011). Such a steep decline of votes among smaller parties has led to wider views and opinions that South Africa is heading towards a two-party system. One such person is the DA's parliamentary leader, Athol Trollip. Trollip predicted the demise of the smaller parties in 2011, and predicted that the future political contest in South Africa would be between the ANC the DA, with COPE a distance third. Could this be true?

IS THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM SOUTH AFRICA'S FUTURE SYSTEM?

The perception that South Africa is moving towards a two-party system is not without merit. It is based on the number of votes that the ANC and the DA received during the 2011 elections. As pointed out earlier, the ANC received 8.4-million votes, while the DA received 3.2-million votes. Although the difference was 5.2 million votes, the general feeling among many South

Africans was that the country is moving towards a two-party system. Two factors explain this: the first is based on the changes of political allegiances in the urban areas, where the DA policies are beginning to receive attention by the black middle class. The second one is based on the urban-rural factor, in that most South Africans in rural areas are unquestioningly loyal to the ANC, whereas “the trendsetting, educated and relatively prosperous black African urban elite, are for the first time, beginning to show doubts about the ANC policies” (Saunderson-Meyer 2011).

Coupled with this was the DA victory in the Cape Town Metro, where the party won 61% of the votes and won the Metro with a majority vote for the first time. This success shows that the party has potential to expand its influence to other provinces. Its success was way beyond the 43% that the DA won in the Cape Town Metro in 2006, when it gained power through coalition with smaller parties. The proponents of a two-way party system cite the loss of support by the ANC. In the 2009 national elections the ANC won more than 11.5-million votes, accounting for 66% of the total national vote. Yet in just two years, between 2009 and 2011, the ANC has dropped to 8.4-million votes or 62%. Such a drop accompanied by the DA’s increase in support which grew by an extra quarter of a million votes and its share by eight percentage points, suggests that the South African political landscape and geography is slowly changing and streamlining along the ideologies and policies of these two parties. When COPE was formed in 2008, many South Africans thought that the ANC would split into two. However, during the 2009 election COPE, gained only 7% of the total national vote and fared even worse in the 2011 municipal elections, by getting only 2% of the total national votes. This has created the political space for political battle between the ANC and the DA for growth and recruitment of supporters.

Some ANC leaders still believe that the DA is a minor party and have doubts about its future. One of these leaders is Gwede Mantashe, the ANC’s general secretary, who blamed the ANC youth league leader, Julius Malema, for the ANC’s loss of votes. He stressed that Malema’s statement that ‘whites are criminals’ is not ANC policy and that such comments cost the party votes from minority groupings. He claimed

that people were “switched off by racist comments” (Rossouw 2011)

Other leaders who underrate the DA include Zwelinzima Vavi, Cosatu’s general secretary. Vavi believes that the ANC’s voters did not cross to the DA, but that the DA gleaned votes from COPE and other small parties (Marrian 2011). He did acknowledge, however, that the result of the 2011 municipal elections signal a new pattern, where many smaller parties would have no influence in future elections. According to Vavi, the ANC support declined because some of its supporters abstained from voting in protest against poor service delivery, but they did not cross the floor to the DA (Marrian 2011). The impression that the DA had eaten into the ANC’s support base was flawed, according to Vavi. He believes that no political party with 60% of the national votes should panic about its future.

Vavi’s views may carry some truth, in that the ANC dominance in the county’s politics may continue into the future due to the ANC’s formidable systemic advantages, especially in national and provincial elections, with a proportional vote system that blunts local voter accountability in favour of the party bosses. This is not the case with the DA, whose support base has reached saturation point among the minority groups, despite making inroads in attracting 5% political support in the black African community (Marrian 2011). In the end, the two-party system may happen and is possible, but the ANC will remain the dominant party.

CONCLUSION

Three things emerged very clearly from the preceding discussion: first, the dominance of the ANC and the emergence of the DA as political forces in South African politics; second, the uncertainty of the future of the small opposition parties, and third an affirmation that elections are emotional issues. They are not only about electing leaders or about democracy, but are also about governance and development, encapsulated in the form of service delivery. The significance of elections in modern democracies, is not only about electing individuals who would be accountable to the electorate or transparent in dealing with state resources, but also lie in the survival of the careers of politicians and political parties. In the modern world, politics is not a vocation, it is a career. Politicians earn a

living by representing people in parliament and wards. The failure of a politician to win a seat in parliament means a loss of financial rewards.

Members of parliament and councillors receive remuneration and determine their own salaries, subject to legislated upper limits. According to the remuneration packages of political representatives, as of 2011, part-time councillors earn a total package, including car allowance, medical and pension benefits of R158 928 a year in a council serving a community of fewer than 50 000 people and R530 339 for the part-time mayor of a large town. The maximum packages for full-time councillors (mayors or members of a mayoral or executive committee) range from R397 321 a year in a small town to R964 255 for metropolitan municipalities such as Johannesburg, eThekweni or Cape Town. The power to determine whether or not a municipality should be run by an executive mayor, supported by a mayoral committee, or by an executive committee headed by an elected mayor, lies in the hand of the provincial government. Municipal councils have the power to appoint municipal managers and chief financial officers. However, these are not members of the council. Municipal councils also appoint audit committees, as well as tender committees, from the elected members.

It is on these grounds that people should be vigilant and jealously guard their democratic right to vote. It is crucial that people participate in the democratic process by voting for their representative to serve and represent their interests. This is imperative, since local government is not only the level of democracy at which the government interacts with the citizens, but it is also the level of service delivery. It is in this context that Nelson Mandela former president of South Africa, reminded humanity that "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others". And "those in power should ensure that those who are not yet free economicallyare freed". This is the essence of service delivery and a means to sustaining democracy, and democracy as a means for sustaining service delivery.

People also need to keep their government in check and remove it when it fails to perform its duties. As Thomas Jefferson asserted, "every government degenerates when trusted to the leaders of the people alone. The people themselves are the only safe repositories". The impli-

cation here is that citizens are the most powerful agents of democracy. This is why political parties during the election fought for their votes in campaigns. Politicians have crucial roles to play in the established structures of local government to ensure and safeguard good governance and service delivery. Active citizenship therefore demands active contribution in engaging with political representatives for the cause of accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. This is where the street and the ward committees become indispensable.

South Africa can only become a prosperous, equitable and socially inclusive country if local government keeps in touch with the needs of its constituencies. Political leaders need to ensure that a social distance does not develop between them and the people they represent. Furthermore, municipalities need to work closely with provincial and national structures in order to achieve not only a common vision of improved infrastructural development, but also increased employment and basic services for all. Therefore, the monitoring and the evaluation of community projects, as well as accountability of political representatives, are keys for successful co-ordination. In this way, both the administration and councillors can be held to account for the delivery of services to communities.

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