The impact of the multi-party system in a democratic South Africa

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Abstract

After the apartheid regime in South Africa, the electoral system was only favouring white people. Black people were not allowed to vote for the government in all spheres of government. On 31 May 1910, the South Africa Act 1909, an act of the British Parliament, established the Union of South Africa. By first-past-the-post voting in single-member electoral districts, the House of Assembly (the lower house of the newly formed Parliament of South Africa) and provincial councils were chosen. Initially, the franchise in these elections was the same as the franchise for the lower houses in the four colonies that formed the Union, so in different provinces, there were different requirements. The vote was restricted by law to white men over the age of 21 in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In Natal, the vote was limited to men over 21 who met requirements in property and literacy; in principle, this could include non-white men, but only very small numbers were able to apply in practice: over 99 percent of the electorate was white in 1910. In the Cape Province, the franchise was also limited to men over 21 who met requirements in property and literacy, and non-white men eligible in large numbers, making up about 15 percent of the 1910 electorate. A large number of poorer white men were also exempt from the Cape and Natal qualifications. Only white men, also from the Cape constituencies, will stand for election to the House of Assembly. In the South Africa Act, the franchise rights of non-white citizens in the Cape (but not in Natal) were enshrined by a clause that they could be diminished only by an act of Parliament passed by a two-thirds majority of the two legislative houses sitting in a joint session. The objective of this article is to show how the electoral system influences the outcomes of the electoral process. Further, the article shows the impact of the multi-party system on the democracy of South Africa and service delivery. The findings of this research paper indicate that there is no relationship between a multi-party system and the safeguarding of democracy. A secondary research methodology was applied to this study. This study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge that addresses the electoral systems in democratic countries.

Keywords: democracy, electoral system, multi-party, politicians, political parties.

Introduction

A multi-party system is a democratic system in which various political parties compete for national elections across the political spectrum, and all have the potential to take control of government positions, separately or apart, multi-party systems in parliamentary systems appear to be more prevalent. Several parties that are accessing power have a fair

opportunity to form a coalition (Barnes and Holman, 2020: 1272). Political parties require targeted areas of support for broad legislative representation, while proportional representation best represents the diversity of views of a community. Proportional structures can involve multi-member districts with more than one representative elected to the same legislative body from a given region, and thus a larger number of viable parties. Of course, the minority must be overruled in a legislative body that is genuinely deliberative; and in an equal democracy, the majority of the citizens, by their representatives, would outvote and triumph over the minority and its representatives. But it follows that there should be no members at all for the minority (Tosun, 2017: 1624). Nothing but habit and old association will reconcile the needless injustice of any human being. Each or any section will be reflected in a genuinely fair democracy, not unfairly, but proportionately. The majority of voters would always have a majority of senators, but a minority of representatives would always have no power. There is a party whose fair and equitable share of power of representation is withheld from them, unlike any just government, because there is an equal government, but, above all, unlike the theory of democracy, which professes equality to be its very root and base (Clark, 2017: 647).

PR aims to overcome the unfairness of majority and plurality voting structures where an "unfair" "seat bonus" is earned by the larger parties and minor parties are disadvantaged and often under-represented and even without any representation. With as little as 35% of the votes, an existing party in UK elections would obtain majority control of the House of Commons. In some Canadian elections, parties have formed majority governments with the help of less than 40 percent of the votes cast. Such results allow a party to form a majority government if turnout levels in the electorate are less than 60 percent. According to Shaw (2016: 154), the Labour Party under Tony Blair, for instance, secured a comfortable parliamentary majority with votes of just 21.6 percent of the total electorate in the 2005 UK election. Such misrepresentation has been criticized as "no longer a question of 'fairness' but of elementary rights of citizens" Intermediate PR systems with a high electoral threshold or other features that minimize proportionality, however, are not inherently any fairer: 46 percent of the votes were lost in the 2002

Turkish general election using an open list system with a 10 percent threshold (Reay, 2008: 640).

Regional parties that win several seats in the city, where they have a large following but have little national support, often benefit from plurality/majoritarian structures, whereas other parties with national support but are not concentrated in particular districts, such as the Greens, win few to no seats. The Bloc Québécois in Canada, for instance, won 52 seats in the 1993 federal election, all in Quebec, at 13.5 percent of the national vote, while the Progressive Conservatives plummeted to two seats, distributed nationwide by 16 percent (Reuter, 2013: 102). Though strong nationally, the Conservative party had very strong regional support in the West, its supporters in the West switched to the Reform Party in this election. Similarly, the Scottish National Party captured 56 seats in the 2015 UK General Election, all in Scotland, with a 4.7 percent share of the national vote, while the Independence Party of the UK, with 12.6 percent, only won a single seat (Ziegfeld, 2016: 05).

The use of multiple-member districts allows the election of a larger range of candidates. The more members per district and the lower the number of votes required for elections, the more representation may be won by smaller parties. In emerging democracies, it has been argued that the participation of minorities in the legislature may be necessary for social cohesion and the stabilization of the democratic process. Critics, on the other hand, argue that this can give a foothold in parliament to extremist parties, often cited as a reason for the Weimar government's fall (Singer and Stephenson, 2009: 481). Very small parties may serve as 'king-makers' with very low thresholds, keeping larger parties to ransom during coalition negotiations. Israel's example is frequently cited, however, as in the modern German Bundestag, these issues can be restricted by imposing higher thresholds for a party to win parliamentary representation (which in turn increases the number of wasted votes). Another critique is that in plurality/majority structures, the ruling parties, sometimes seen as "coalitions" or as "broad churches" will fragment under PR as it becomes possible to elect candidates from smaller groups. Israel, again, and examples include Brazil and Italy (Galasso and Nannicini, 2017: 258). In general, however, research shows that there is only a modest increase in the

number of political parties under PR (although small parties have greater representation). Open list systems and STV, the only popular PR system that needs no political parties, make it possible to nominate independent candidates. In Ireland, on average, each parliament has approximately six independent candidates elected. This can lead to a situation that needs the support of one or more of these independent members to form a Parliamentary majority. In certain situations, these independents have positions that are closely associated with and barely matter to the ruling party. Also, independent members in the cabinet of a minority government were created by the Irish Government after the 2016 election. Therefore, this paper presents a view that this type of electoral system might work well in South Africa to stop politicians from having the sole power to decide for the people (Aspinall, 2014: 548).

Theoretical framework

One of the key objections to Proportional Representation (PR) schemes is that they almost always result in minority governments because of the election of minor parties. PR proponents see coalitions as an asset, pushing parties to negotiate to form a coalition at the middle of the political spectrum and thereby contributing to continuity and stability. Opponents argue that agreement is not feasible for certain policies (Chamberlin and Courant, 1983: 720). Neither can several measures on the left-right continuum be conveniently placed (for example, the environment). During coalition forming, policies are therefore horse-traded, with the result that voters have no way of knowing which policies the government they elect would pursue; voters have less impact on governments. Coalitions often do not generally form at the middle and small parties which have undue power, having a majority coalition only on the condition that a policy or policies preferred by few voters are adopted (Potthoff and Brams, 1998: 150). Most notably, the right of electors to vote out of control for a party in disfavor is curtailed. Argentina, Germany, Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, France, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the Philippines, Tunisia, and Ukraine are examples of countries that have successfully used the multi-party system in their democracies. Usually, no political party has a legislative majority of its own in these countries. Instead, to build power blocks and gain valid mandates, various political parties are

forced to join compromised coalitions (Jackson and McRobie, 2019: 06).

Comparisons of the one-party system and two-party system with other party structures. A structure where only two parties have the opportunity to win an election is referred to as a two-party system. A system where there is a reasonable possibility for only three parties to win an election or form a coalition is often called a "Third-party system" But, in some situations, where there are three parties and all three parties win a significant number of votes, the system is considered a 'Stalled Third-Party System,' but only two have a chance of winning an election. This is generally because the electoral system, such as in Canadian or UK politics, punishes the third party. In the 2010 UK elections, owing to the first-past-the-post electoral system, the Liberal Democrats won 23 percent of the overall vote but won fewer than 10 percent of the seats (He, Haugen, Lee and Sharp, 2016: 311). Despite this, they still had ample seats (and sufficient popular support) to form coalitions with one of the two major parties, or to enter into agreements to win their support. When the Official Opposition and the Liberal Party were the New Democrats, they were relegated to third party status. Each party wins several seats equal to the number of votes it receives, in proportional representation. The electorate is split into several districts in the first-past-the-post, each of which selects one person to fill one seat with a plurality of votes. First-past-the-post is not conducive to a proliferation of parties and is naturally gravitating towards a two-party structure in which only two parties have a real opportunity to elect their candidates to office. On the other hand, proportional representation does not have this propensity and enables the creation of several major parties. But recent coalition governments, such as those in the U.K., rather than multi-party systems, reflect two-party systems. This is regardless of the number of political parties (Chen, Lau, Whitnah, Armbrust and Jackson, 2017: 188). The two-party system allows voters to align themselves into large blocs, often so large that no overarching values can be agreed upon. Some hypotheses suggest that this makes it possible for centrists to take power. On the other side, the parties are highly encouraged to work together to form functioning governments if there are several major parties, each with less than a majority of the vote. This also encourages centrism and, although

discouraging polarization, promotes coalition-building skills.

Proportional representation (PR) characterizes electoral structures in which an electorate's differences are proportionately represented in the elected body. The theory relates specifically to the geographical and theological division of the electorate. For example, each member state has several seats in the European Parliament that is (approximately) proportional to its population (an instance of geographical representation). When voters vote for parties, the same rationale pre values (ideological partition of the electorate) (Carey and Hix, 2011: 384). The specific percentage of the electorate supports a specific political party or group of candidates as their favorite, that party or those candidates will win approximately a number of the seats. The essence of such systems is that not only a plurality, or a bare majority, all votes lead to the result. Many of the most common types of proportional representation include the use of multiple-member electoral districts (also referred to since super-districts), as it is not possible to proportionally fill a single seat. Districts with large numbers of seats appear to have PR systems that reach the highest levels of proportionality. Party-list proportional representation, the Single Transferable Vote (STV), and Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) representation are the most frequently used families of PR voting systems. Political parties identify candidate lists with party list PR and the voters vote for a list (Clark, 2020: 03). On each list, the relative vote decides how many candidates are ultimately elected from each list. Lists may be "closed" or "open"; open lists allow voters to define preferences for individual candidates and to vote for independent candidates. Voting districts may be small (some districts in Chile have as few as three seats) or as wide as a province or a whole country. Different districts are used for the single transferable vote, with voters casting just one vote each but ranking individual candidates in order of choice (by providing back-up preferences) (Farrell, Suiter and Harris, 2017: 294). When candidates are elected or withdrawn during the count, surplus or rejected votes that would otherwise be lost are passed according to preferences to other candidates, creating consensus groups that nominate surviving candidates. STV allows electors to vote across party lines, pick the most favored candidate from a party and vote for

independent candidates, understanding that if the candidate is not elected, if the voter marks back-up preferences, his/her vote would certainly not be wasted. Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP), also known as the Additional Member System (AMS), is a mixed two-tier electoral system that incorporates local non-proportional plurality/majority elections and the PR election of a compensatory state or national party list. Usually, electors have two seats, one for their single-member district and one for the party list (Clark, 2013: 57). The vote on the party list decides the balance of the parties in the representative body. For national lower house elections in 94 nations, some form of proportional representation is used. Party-list PR is the most commonly used, being used in 85 countries. Despite the long advocacy of political scientists, STV has only been used in two countries: Ireland since independence in 1922, and Malta since 1921. In the Australian Senate, STV is still used and can be used for non-partisan elections, such as the Cambridge MA Town Council. Perfect proportionality is seldom reached in these systems due to variables such as voting thresholds and the use of small districts, as well as intimidation techniques such as party splitting. Nevertheless, even better than other schemes, they approximate proportionality. Some jurisdictions use seats to compensate for these variables by leveling (Bohrer Ii and Krutz, 2004: 316).

Research methodology

The research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. In a research paper, the methodology section allows the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. The research design is structured to provide a study with an acceptable context (Kothari, 2004: 05). The choice to be taken about the research method is a very important decision in the research design process since it determines how relevant information can be gathered for a study; however, many interrelated decisions are included in the research design process. The methodology of the study is the direction by which researchers need to perform their research. It shows the route by which these researchers formulate their problem and goal to present their outcome from the data obtained during

the period of analysis (Baker, 2000: 374). The research design and methodology also demonstrates how, in line with the purpose of the analysis, the research result will be obtained at the end. Each method of study, traditional or modern, falls into one of two categories: primary or secondary research. Primary research is when data is collected by methods of self-conducted research, whereas secondary research is when knowledge or data is collected from studies previously conducted. Typically, secondary research is where most research starts. This is because secondary research will provide a researcher with a basis for the understanding of what specific information other researchers have already compiled in the past (Chawla and Sodhi, 2011: 06). This study applied a secondary research method and sources such as newspaper articles, conference resolutions, online news, and government gazette were used.

Results and discussions

Different types of multiparty political structures have been adopted around the world since the start of the third wave of democratization in 1974. Therefore, today, we live in times where more countries vote on their leaders by multiparty elections than ever before and when more people are ruled by rulers of their preference than ever before. However, multiparty politics is no guarantee of growth. It can empower vulnerable groups, increase accountability, mediate conflict and the redistribution of wealth to the poor can also affect already strong elites, marginalize the poor and minorities, and mobilize ethnic and religious groups against each other (Huntington, 1993: 05). The efficient functioning of mature political parties is therefore central to democratization and development. Thus, political parties are indispensable voluntary and informal alliances of society in democratic societies, where people share widely understood beliefs, customs, and attitudes towards their role in politics. They are products of and function within the framework of economic systems and interests that are influenced by the accumulation and distribution of goodwill and capital, including the wealth of society, and are sensitive to them. Political parties, as instruments of organized action, are the formation of a political class in an attempt to regulate government resources and staff to enforce an agenda or a political program (Diamond, 2002: 22). Parties are organized by policymakers in competitive political structures to elections win; parties are

structured in authoritarian regimes to control the attitudes and actions of the population. In both cases, an organizational structure must be formed, money must be raised, cadres hired, officers elected or chosen, and internal governance procedures set up and decided upon. Although they are part of society's informal constitution, once they have political parties gain authority and officially obtain recognition and control of the workers and resources of the state under the jurisdiction and formal 'constitution' of the state. The ruling political party (or alliance of parties), which is given the authority to presume, is the rulers and political officials who have emerged victorious in free and fair elections (Huntington, 2012: 06).

Political parties, however, straddle the space and span connective links between people and governments, as well as between the general public and a multitude of private, market-based, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At least four traditional government structures were also cut across: the electoral, the legislative, the executive, and the administrative. In addition to cutting through government structures, political parties often shape public policies and programs that cut across party politics and government functions, and also the response of the state to transnational public policy issues in which the party in power dominates the implementation of policies informed by its electoral functions. Political parties are, by their very nature, legislative structures that give legitimacy to regimes; provide agendas that reflect social, economic, and political interests; and produce representatives that form the machinery of government (from parliament to the political executive) or the potential of political participation, or a combination of all three, through democratic elections (Papaioannou and Siourounis, 2008: 367). The creation of coalitions of powerful political forces to preserve democracy is often intermediate and creates opportunities for upward social and political mobility. All of these functions have a significant impact on politics and how they are carried out by parties as an indication of whether a specific political structure is institutionalized or fragile. If they gain the majority of seats in parliament, the programs of political parties also inform the policies and programmes of the government. In Africa, not only in political mobilization but also in self-help mobilization, conflict management, and so on, some political

parties have been involved (Rakner, Menocal and Fritz, 2007: 07).

Problems caused by the multi-party electoral system in South Africa.

In South Africa, after the country's first elections, a multi-party government led by the African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994, based on a universal franchise. By the late 1980s, the key protagonists, the ANC and the National Party (NP), were forced into a stalemate by circumstances that made it difficult to enact unilateral strategies for conflict resolution. The transition was a long-drawn-out phase that combined consensus and negotiation with conflict and aggression as the major parties progressively discarded old agendas and switched to positions focused on harmony, pragmatism, and problem-solving (Makinda, 1996: 556). Apartheid has vanished as a legal structure, but it continues to exist as a socio-economic mechanism, a security system, a lifestyle, and a mental legacy. In economic and state systems, white power remains embedded. The end of legislative apartheid, as a system of racial dominance, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the end of apartheid. South Africa's greatest problem is the need to change life for the majority quickly without disrupting the fragile social compact underpinning the current post-apartheid politics. Due to five generally positive factors, the probability of destabilizing conflicts and large-scale violence was considerably lower in December 1994 than at the beginning of the year.

1. The first test has been passed by the current democratic political system: the operation of peaceful elections.

2. Through a Bill of Rights in the Constitution and the development of a powerful Constitutional Court, a human rights system was created.

3. The NP and the ANC have pledged to settle their differences through a national reconciliation policy.

4. Following the polls, the degree of political violence was considerably reduced.

5. The international isolation of South Africa was shattered.

Also, three generally negative variables are at work:

1. Most of the basic causes of violence and conflict are deeply rooted in nature and are structural. Their gradual elimination needs time, resources, and a conducive external environment.

2. Concerning socio-economic reconstruction and the reform and legitimization process of the state apparatus at different levels, there is a huge discrepancy between what is desirable and what is possible.

3. Several constitutional problems with conflict potential remain unresolved, such as autonomy and the relationship between national, regional, and local government powers and their respective powers. The potential for conflict remains substantial. This will foster stability if these conflicts can be dealt with under the Constitution and within the framework of new institutions and the emerging norms of a new political culture (Baylies and Szeftel, 1992: 76).

A multi-party structure prohibits, without question, the leadership of a single party from manipulating a single legislative chamber. The parties may share power according to proportional representation or the first-past-the-post system if the government includes an elected Congress or Parliament. South Africa is by no means special in that the leading nationalist independence movement became the ruling party during its struggle. These parties were able to command considerable political authority and support during the time of the Post-independence age, so that, as the new government, they are assured of a time of political control to embark on a 'nation-building project.' As such, in this sense, systems characterized by the dominant party syndrome have appeared to emerge. Since its emergence in 1912, the ANC has been able to spread its reach and broaden its support base to various groups within society, so that it has many different points along with the philosophy within its ranks. Due to the precariously balanced, this has become more pronounced (Barnes and De Klerk, 2002: 09).

The party's relationship in the tripartite coalition is with both industry and finance, and with COSATU and the SACP. "This balance must be carefully maintained, as the manifesto of the party must be crafted to "bind the votes of the representatives of the labor unions, socialists, the urban and rural poor, and the emerging middle-class leafy suburbanites. Secondly, the ANC's liberation credentials give it

political credibility that is hard to contend with and, even more fundamentally, a spiritual legitimacy (Lemarchand, 1994: 582). This was undeniably confirmed by Nelson Mandela and his cohorts' leadership of liberation; the democratic values that formed the pillar of the mandate of the party; its rejection of violence; and its popular appeal and non-racialism mandate. The party has commanded a sustained political hegemony through the ANC's pivotal role in the protracted struggle.

Conclusion

Taking into account theoretical discussions on the importance of the structure under which the dominant parties operate, it is proposed that the role of the opposition depends on the dominant party and is decided by it. Within the South given the ANC's strong symbolism of emancipation, Africa boasts considerable influence within the scheme. Undoubtedly, the spectrum of opposition politics is narrowed and confined to the ruling party. The multi-party system affects democracy in most countries such as South Africa. The multi-party system does not represent people or candidates from the society that do not belong to political parties. Those that decide to stand for elections as individual candidates do not secure enough votes to occupy seats in the parliament. To have individual candidates as a must in decision-making structures, national, provincial, and local would ensure that the interest of all people is represented. A certain percentage of seats in the governing structures must be allocated to individual candidates.

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