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Introduction

From an aerial viewpoint, post-apartheid South African elections bear an unmistakable racial imprint: Africans vote for one set of parties, whites support a different set of parties, and, with few exceptions, there is no cross-over voting between these groups, which together make up more than 90 percent of the South African population. Such sharp racial contours of voting have earned South African elections the dubious distinction of being "racial censuses:" Voters line up with their racial groups, seemingly without thought to issues, performance, or any of the other politics-as-usual factors that drive elections in other countries. Indeed, elections look so deeply racial that one wonders if politics has anything to do with it at all. What role can persuasion play if voters simply register their social identity when they enter the polling booth?

However, behind the racial imprint lies a puzzle, for racial identities in South Africa are neither pervasive enough nor unique enough to account for South African voting outcomes. African voters – who comprise around three-quarters of the electorate and drive the census – are a highly diverse group; some place primary importance on race, but many more emphasize nonracial identities. Moreover, liberation jubilation aside, Africans have not been uniformly committed to the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Even in 1994, during the very first post-apartheid election campaigns, African voters expressed uncertainty about the ANC. Surveys consistently show a large group of independent Africans, up to 50 percent at some points in the recent past. And many Africans express frustration and weariness with their continued impoverishment in the new South Africa: Political transformation is clearly not enough. They cannot eat liberation. As one South African recently put it: "Freedom turned out to be just a word."[1] South Africans want economic change, yet they remain unsure about the ANC's ability to generate it. At the same time, the ANC has not yet developed a patronage machine to buy the

[1] Vincent Ntswayi, resident of Mvezo in the Eastern Cape. Quoted in Perry, Alex. "South Africa Looks for a Leader." *Time*, April 27, 2009: 41.

votes of disgruntled Africans; clientelism, while it might still develop in South Africa, has not been a significant factor to date.

So if Africans are not blinded by identity, liberation euphoria, or partisanship, and if their votes are not purchased, what keeps them loyal to the ruling party? The answer is simple. The barriers to persuasion rest not in the racial identity of voters but in the successful realization of a political strategy employed by the ruling party to discredit and delegitimize the opposition. Africans stick with the ANC because they do not see the strongest of the current opposition parties – the (New) National Party until 1999 and now the Democratic Alliance – as credible alternatives. Moreover, the opposition's lack of credibility with Africans, and its negligible role in South African elections, are not socially given facts – as is often suggested by South African political observers – but a product of politics past and present. Because of their participation in apartheid-era governments, most African voters (quite reasonably) view the opposition parties as "white," out to protect and further the interests of white voters. In order to attract African votes, opposition parties must transform themselves from "white" to something more inclusive. They have attempted to accomplish such a transformation through electoral campaigns and the racial diversification of their candidate pools. However, the ANC has been able to neutralize such efforts by running skillful campaigns, playing on opposition missteps and weaknesses, and controlling the supply of high-quality African politicians. As hard and as loudly as the opposition claims to have transformed, the ANC claims the opposite. With more resources and more attractive representatives, the ANC has fought and won the battle to define the opposition's image in the electorate. By blocking the opposition from changing its image – by keeping the opposition "white" – the ANC has destroyed its opponents' credibility and preserved its own hold on African voters, even those who do not claim strong partisan attachments or favorable views of the ruling party's performance. Race and identity are therefore red herrings: An exclusive focus on them ignores the hard political work underlying the racial-census outcome in South African elections. What seems organic, a natural expression of a pervasively held social identity, is in fact *politically engineered*, the end result of a negative framing strategy employed by the ruling party to neutralize its competition.

If the origins of the census are political, then political change – not identity change – is the key to its erosion. Divisions within the ruling party that produce a schizophrenic and disorganized political campaign, or – more damaging – elite defections to other parties, could provide the ANC's competitors with the window they need to change their images. They might also pursue image change by winning elections at the local level and developing a reputation for even-handed delivery of services or through alliances with legitimately multiracial parties – all options that the arrival of the new party, Cope (Congress of the People), makes more plausible. And although the current opposition parties seem insignificant, relatively small changes in support could lead to major changes in South African politics. A shift in voting of even 15 to 20

percent of the African vote could push the ANC close to the 50 percent mark, possibly forcing it into a coalition government.[2] Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it would end the ruling party's aura of invincibility.[3] This process of change – inherently political and quite possibly violent – is very different from the one implied by a social identity perspective of South African politics. Because the pathways implied by different theories of origin diverge significantly, understanding the political roots of South Africa's racial census is critical to understanding the country's future.

Viewed from a political light, South Africa has a surprising amount in common with nonracially or ethnically divided countries like Japan and Mexico, where a large party has used its size and position to weaken the opposition and cement its dominance. Like Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) or Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the ANC protects its position through the flow of resources, controlling who gets what, where, and when in a country where a new road or clean water has a huge impact on the quality of voters' lives. Less obviously – and the focus of this book – the ANC also protects its position through the control of information and reputation, the ability to frame election campaigns through a deeper campaign chest and bigger media presence, and a monopoly of African political talent. Using these powerful tools, the ANC has prevented the opposition from evolving, from changing its party label in a way that would make it more credible to the African electorate. The ANC is not the first party to use negative framing strategies to cement its dominance, and it does not use these strategies only on the white opposition: Dominant parties in Israel and El Salvador have used similar techniques, and the ANC has employed them to discredit other competitors, including the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and, more recently, the Congress of the People (Cope). So long as the ruling party remains successful in framing elections and defining the opposition's image, it will maintain its dominance and the racial census will persist. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the racial census in greater detail, outline traditional explanations for it, and then provide an overview of my argument, which forms the rest of the book.

THE RACIAL CENSUS

South Africa has held four sets of post-apartheid national elections (1994, 1999, 2004, and 2009). The African National Congress (ANC) walked away

[2] Assuming Africans are about three-quarters of the electorate and the Democratic Party wins 20% of the vote based on non-African votes (for example, the NP's performance in the 1994 elections), then winning 20% of the African vote would put it at around 35% of the total vote. If other small parties continue to attract small chips of the electorate, this shift in African support could drag the ANC down to close to 50%.

[3] Magaloni (2006) argues that dominant parties cultivate an image of invincibility to deter would-be challengers by winning strong majorities of the vote. Shifts in support away from dominant parties that damage this image can be significant even if they do not result in turnover.

from all with a dominating majority: In 1994, it won 63 percent of the vote; in 1999, 66 percent; in 2004, 70 percent; and in 2009, 66 percent. In South Africa's parliamentary system, these commanding majorities have allowed the party to form governments without partners.[4] The fates of the primary opposition parties have varied. In 1994, the largest opposition party was the National Party (NP), which won around 20 percent of the vote. In 1999, the Democratic Party (DP) superseded the NP – by then called the New National Party or NNP – with about 10 percent of the vote to the NNP's.[5] In 2004, the DP – by then the Democratic Alliance or DA – grew to 12 percent of the national vote, while the NP had slipped down to 2 percent.[6] In 2005, the NNP folded its cards altogether. In 2009, the DA won almost 17 percent of the vote, while newcomer Cope took 7 percent. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has also challenged the ANC, winning between 11 (in 1994) and 7 (in 2004) percent of the vote, almost all in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2009, the IFP's support collapsed to less than 5 percent of the national vote. A panoply of smaller parties compete and win enough votes to capture a seat or two in the 400-person legislature. Of these, the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Pan African Congress (PAC), the Freedom Front (FF), and, most recently, the Independent Democrats (ID) are the most significant. Because only two of the opposition parties – the NP/NNP and the DP/DA – have maintained a national presence in repeated elections, they are parties I speak of when I refer to "the opposition."[7] This is obviously a simplification, but one I hope readers will tolerate until Chapter 8, when I address the experiences of other opposition parties – notably the IFP, the UDM, and Cope – and show that the ruling party has used negative framing strategies against these parties as well.

The ANC and its opposition attract different racial constituencies. Horowitz (1985) coined the term "ethnic census" to describe elections in which ethnicity so strongly predicts voting behavior that the election is simply a "head count"

[4] Clause 88 of the Interim Constitution (1994–1997) stipulated that parties winning twenty or more seats were eligible for a government portfolio. The National Party and the IFP both took advantage of this, and the Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed. The National Party left the GNU in 1997. The current constitution of South Africa does not have the consociational Clause 88. The ANC has sometimes included junior partners in government, but out of choice, not necessity.

[5] The National Party changed its name to the New National Party in 1997 in an explicit effort to divorce itself from its past.

[6] The Democratic Alliance was born in 2000, a coalition of the Democratic Party, the New National Party, and the Federal Alliance formed to contest the 2000 local elections. It survived until 2001, when the New National Party pulled out. The Democratic Party continued under the name Democratic Alliance, or DA.

[7] Until recently (with the birth of Cope), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) was the only "African" party to challenge the ANC on a significant scale. However, it is by and large a regional party, winning all but a handful of its votes in KwaZulu-Natal. It has failed to develop any kind of national presence or organizational infrastructure. And even in KwaZulu-Natal, its strength is ebbing.

or "census" of the size of each group. Multiple parties may represent each group (there may be within-group competition for votes), but there is little to no crossover voting, that is, voters stick to own-group parties. As demonstrated by Tables 1.1–1.3, South Africa provides a nearly perfect example of this kind of election.[8] Along with the IFP, the ANC attracted the vast majority of African votes, while the NP, DP, and a handful of more conservative parties dominated the white electorate. Coloured and Indian voters split their votes across the racial divide, but these voters together only comprise about 10 percent of the electorate and therefore do not detract much from the overall impression of racial polarization.[9] Racialized voting patterns have appeared in every election to date and emerge consistently in mass surveys.[10] There is, therefore, little controversy that "racial census" accurately describes South African elections.[11]

According to standard thinking on ethnicity and democracy, this outcome bodes ill for the long-term health of the country. Lijphart (1977, 1999) argues that democracy is unstable in the face of fixed majorities, as one group is permanently locked out of power, disaffected, and more likely to pursue violent means of influencing the political system. Moreover, parties that feel

[8] The figures in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 are based on the estimates in Reynolds (1994, 1999). While ecological inference problems usually make it hazardous to estimate group-specific behaviors from aggregate data, the homogeneity of behavior in South Africa significantly reduces this problem. The figures in Table 1.3 are based on the September 2004 Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP) of 1,200 individuals (837 Africans, 113 coloureds, 67 Indians, and 183 whites). The CNEP survey followed the election by five months and is based on respondent recall.

[9] Horowitz establishes no specific cut-points for how much crossover voting can occur before an election is no longer a census. We might therefore envision voting as a continuum, with a pure census on one end. In the pure census, there is zero crossover voting. On the other end of the continuum, voters behave without regard to group membership. In between are mixed cases. The closer to the pure census end of the continuum, the more clearly the case falls in the "census" camp. As close to 90% of the South African electorate sticks within racial boundaries when voting, we can think of it as a fairly strong census example.

[10] Survey evidence leaves little doubt about the persistence of racialized voting in the 2009 election. In a Markinor poll of 3,531 likely voters in February and March of 2009 (six weeks prior to the election), 79% of African voters supported the ANC, whereas the DA drew almost all of its support from whites, coloureds, and Indians. See Mataboge, Mmanaledi, Mandy Rossouw, and Matuma Letsoalo, "What the ANC's Victory Means." *Mail and Guardian*, April 17 2009.

[11] A word on racial terminology and groups in South Africa: Per common usage, "Africans" in South Africa are those people who speak one of the Bantu languages (isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga); "white" South Africans are those of European descent; "coloured" South Africans are a people of mixed African, European, and Asian descent; and "Indian" (also sometimes called "Asian") people are those of primarily South Asian ancestry. Coloured people live mostly in the Western and Northern Capes, where they are the majority group. Africans form the majority group in all other provinces and tend to be geographically concentrated by ethnolinguistic group (Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, Zulu in KwaZulu-Natal, Tswana in the North West province, and so on). Whites are dispersed throughout the country. Indians live primarily in KwaZulu-Natal.

TABLE 1.1. *1994 Reported Vote by Race (percent)*

	Africans	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
"White" Parties	4	90	67	50
Democratic Party	0	10	0	0
National Party	4	66	67	50
Other White	0	14	0	0
"African" Parties	91	9	28	42
African National Congress	81	2	28	25
Inkatha Freedom Party	8	7	0	17
Other African	2	0	0	0
Other	5	1	5	8

Table based on data reported in Reynolds (1994).

TABLE 1.2. *1999 Reported Vote by Race (percent)*

	Africans	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
"White" Parties	3	81	40	34
Democratic Party	1	57	6	18
National Party	2	16	34	16
Other White	0	8	0	0
"African" Parties	95	5	60	30
African National Congress	82	5	60	30
Inkatha Freedom Party	11	0	0	0
Other African	2	0	0	0
Other	2	14	0	36

Table based on data reported in Reynolds (1999).

TABLE 1.3. *2004 Reported Vote by Race (percent)*

	Africans	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
"White" Parties	<1	74	20	18
Democratic Party	<1	66	10	18
National Party	0	4	10	0
Other White	0	4	0	0
"African" Parties	86	<1	59	36
African National Congress	81	<1	59	36
Inkatha Freedom Party	4	0	0	0
Other African	1	0	0	0
Other	3	7	12	14
Refused	10	18	11	32

Table based on the Comparative National Election Project (CNEP) survey, conducted in September 2004.

insulated from competition by a captured constituency may behave irresponsibly, enriching themselves at the expense of the public and following policies at odds with the electorate – a worry echoed in the writings of South African political observers Giliomee and Simkins (1999) and Johnson and Schlemmer (1996). Horowitz (1985) speculates that census-style elections lead to a polarizing style of campaigning wherein raising the turnout of fixed constituencies replaces persuasion as the primary goal of parties. Ultimately, he suggests, this increases the chances of election-induced violence. Snyder (2000), echoing Huntington (1968), goes so far as to suggest that poor countries with ethnic divisions resist democratizing until political and social institutions capable of restraining the negative forces unleashed by elections have developed.

South Africa has yet to experience many of these reputed ills. Indeed, the ANC can point to numerous positive achievements during its first three terms of office: the aversion of civil war; the creation of an independent court system; the adoption of a constitution that enshrines civil and political rights; the expansion of basic services and the social safety net to populations grossly neglected by apartheid governments; and responsible fiscal politics and – until recently – an expanding economy (although one that still struggles to provide sufficient employment). At the same time, a thriving opposition is critical to the long-term health of any democracy, an outcome that will elude South Africa so long as party support is so clearly segmented by race.

While few observers of South African politics would dispute the aptness of the racial-census depiction of recent South African elections or its significance to the long-term health of South African democracy, explanations for the census remain elusive. What lies behind the polarization of voting in South Africa? In particular, why have African voters – who are about three-quarters of the electorate and therefore the driving force behind the census – remained loyal to the ANC, refusing even in small numbers to support the opposition?

The answer is surely not that the opposition parties are uninterested in African votes. It is true that South African opposition parties can subsist without the support of Africans. South Africa's electoral system could be described as very permissive proportional representation – there is one national list for the entire 400-seat legislature, making the threshold for representation very low and the upper bound on the number of parties nearly meaningless.[12] South African opposition parties can therefore earn enough votes from minority voters to guarantee themselves representation in the legislature. However, these parties have broader goals than simply warming benches: They want to influence policy and implement their agendas. They would like, someday, to command a majority and form a government. And they know that the sizeable African electorate is key to these goals. Winning even 15 or 20 percent of African votes would significantly alter the balance of power in the country. Hence, both the NP (until 2004) and the DA have had their eye on the African electorate, hoping to persuade at least a minority of these voters to cross over. The persistence

[12] See Cox (1997) and Sartori (1976) for discussions of electoral systems.

of the census fifteen years after the end of apartheid is a measure of the opposition's failure to achieve this objective. What explains this outcome?

IDENTITY VOTING?

The most obvious explanation is that elections in South Africa bear an unmistakable racial imprint because racial identities in South Africa are powerful, pervasive, divisive, and historically grounded in forty-plus years of apartheid and centuries of discrimination and segregation prior to that. Africans reward the ANC for liberating them from oppression and view voting for the party as a way of expressing, even celebrating, their identity and freedom. Given this heady brew of emotion and history, it is not surprising that the ANC captures the vast majority of the African votes.

Indeed, this sort of explanation, which emphasizes identity expression, is the reigning explanation for census style in political science. Building on the ideas of social psychologist Henri Tajfel, Horowitz (1985) locates the microfoundations of census elections in the identity attachments of voters. According to this viewpoint, individuals in divided societies connect their self-worth with that of their group. When the group is doing well, individuals in the group feel affirmed. When the group suffers, individuals experience a loss of personal prestige. In this context, voters see voting not as an act of choice, a careful weighing of options, but as a means of expressing identity, of declaring allegiance with their ethnic group. Identity expression through voting brings psychic benefits, whereas failure to vote with the group confers internally metered penalties. Voters do not use their votes to further self-interest. Indeed, they may actually vote in ways that work *against* their interests. Furthermore, their allegiance to their party, constructed as it is from the raw material of identity, is nonnegotiable. Voters become wedded to parties through an impenetrable species of partisanship, precluding persuasion as a viable campaign strategy. Elections become a mere counting of heads, a census of group size, with parties focusing on mobilizing the faithful rather than wooing converts. Numerous pathologies follow: locked out minorities, complacent and exploitative majorities, violence-ridden election campaigns, and so on. Altering this grim scenario requires nothing less than fundamental shifts in the identity attachments of voters.

While the identity voting perspective is associated most closely with Horowitz, it underlies the views of voting in divided societies promulgated by consociationalists like Arend Lijphart. Lijphart (1977, 1999) worries that voting in divided countries is inevitably rigid, leading to fixed electoral outcomes and the failure of majoritarian democracy. He recommends full-blown consociational solutions or, at the very least, institutions that take voting blocs for granted and incorporate as many players in the government process as possible ("consensual" democracy).[13] Horowitz's identity voting perspective

[13] See also Sisk and Reynolds (1998), Reynolds (2002), and Reilly and Reynolds (1999).

also resonates with a long line of work by American scholars that emphasizes prejudice as the key factor behind the reluctance of white voters to support African American candidates (Kinder and Sears 1981; Terklidsen 1993; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Mendelberg 2001).

The identity voting perspective informs various explanations for the racial census in South Africa. Johnson and Schlemmer (1996) suggest that racial attachments rather than rational policy preferences explain the stark pattern of polarization that emerged in the 1994 election. Friedman (2004, 2005) also advocates an identity voting perspective, suggesting that voters support the parties that can "best provide a vehicle for who they are," not those that reflect their policy preferences (Friedman 2004: 3). In the popular press, the reluctance of the African electorate to desert the ANC – even in the face of lukewarm economic performance, uneven service delivery, allegations of corruption, worsening unemployment, and a catastrophic AIDS policy – provide evidence that a noninstrumental, expressive logic drives South African voting decisions.

In short, according to expressive or identity voting perspective, it is the *identity attachments* of voters – especially African voters – that lies behind the racial census in South Africa. Africans became wedded to the ANC as the vehicle of African liberation, transformation, and representation. Their ties to the party, forged from this potent mixture, are impenetrable to other parties, generating a captured constituency for the ANC. And only through wide-scale identity change will the census pattern begin to erode. Given that identity change is, in most accounts, a slow process that occurs over generations, the identity voting perspective would see little prospect for change in South Africa.

However, while the identity voting perspective offers an intuitive explanation for the census-style outcome, racial identities are neither pervasive enough nor unique enough in South Africa to account for the country's voting patterns. Racial identities figure prominently in South Africa, but many South Africans (including a majority of Africans) privilege other identities more: those based on ethnicity or language, region, religion, and class. Although voting bears a stark racial imprint, patterns of identification in South Africa are blurrier (Mattes 1995).

Moreover, South Africa is home to many diverse political traditions. Although the ANC commands an impressive hold over African votes now, it is just one of many organizations and traditions that have flourished in the country at different periods of time. In the 1950s, the ANC competed with the Pan African Congress (PAC) for the allegiance of African supporters. During the 1970s, when the ANC was in exile and many of its leaders were in prison, the Black Consciousness movement swept through townships and motivated wide-scale political activity. In the 1980s, while ANC leaders negotiated with the National Party over the end of apartheid, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) led the battle on the ground. And throughout all of these years of opposition to

apartheid, many Africans – indeed, the majority of Africans – remained in rural areas, where their political allegiances, through coercion, loyalty, and lack of alternatives, remained tied to traditional leaders. In the closing days of apartheid and during the run-up to the first elections, the ANC emerged as the focal point for these diverse political traditions, but there was nothing pre-ordained about the party's ability to unify them under a single banner. Tensions within the party remained as different factions – with different goals and visions for the new South Africa – competed for favor.[14]

Reflecting these various traditions and organizations, Africans themselves are a politically diverse group. Policy preferences within the African population vary more than policy preferences across racial groups. Holding together this diverse population under a single banner has challenged the ruling party. While most Africans embraced the end of apartheid and the defeat of the National Party, euphoria about the ANC has not been uniform. African voters have wanted more than liberation; not all believed the ANC could deliver on its promises of peace and development; many remained loyal to other political traditions, viewing the party and its claim to the mantle of South African resistance with skepticism. Partisanship for the ANC amongst the African electorate has never been uniformly high: While the great majority of Africans vote for the party, many (in some periods, up to half) do not count themselves as ANC partisans. The ANC consequently had to work hard in its early campaigns to convince its "natural" constituency that it could contain the violence afflicting South Africa and induce social and economic change. In later campaigns, the party had to sell these same voters on its middle-of-the-road economic policies – which had done little to redistribute wealth to the great majority of Africans – and convince them that it had performed well enough to merit another chance in office. In short, the ANC has been engaged in active persuasion vis-à-vis the African electorate since it emerged as the predominant African political force post-apartheid. There was nothing natural or pre-ordained about the party's success in unifying the African constituency, even at the moment of its birth as a mass electoral party. The identity voting perspective, by viewing African support for the ANC as some kind of organic outgrowth of African racial attachments, obscures these diverse political traditions and the contingency of the ANC's hold on African voters.

CLIENTELISM?

If identity considerations do not underlie African support for the ANC, perhaps clientelism does? Clientelistic systems differ from programmatic ones on

[14] For excellent histories of African political movements in South Africa, see Tom Lodge, *Black Politics Since 1945* (New York: Longman, 1983); Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, *All Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1991); Anthony Marx, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). See also Peter Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).