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The ANC Polokwane Conference and its Aftermath

Bulumko Nelana

This article analyses the African National Congress (ANC) Polokwane conference and its consequences from a theoretical platform. The ANC is subjected to a vicious cycle induced by the interplay of the base and superstructure, hegemony, inclusion and identity of present day politics. The 1997 Mafikeng conference of the ANC marked the handing over of the leadership baton by the '40s/'50s generation to the '60s/'70s generation. The younger segments of this generation matured in the '70s and were leaders in their own right of the mass movements of the late '70s and early '80s, which were steeped in Black Consciousness (BC), radical trade unionism and civic movements. Consequently, three strands characterised the ANC post-1990: radical (centre-left), modernist (centre-right) and traditionalist (centre). The battle for the soul of the ANC over the decade (1997-2007) was between the radicals and modernists. The differences between these strands were fundamental, tactical and managerial, resulting in SACP and Cosatu feeling excluded. In this period, the economy performed well and there was social progress, but the voices of the many were not listened to in the public discourse and economic progress was uneven. Those who split from the ANC represent the ruling elite that were perceived to have benefited from the defining period. COPE is the self-appointed group of successors of the generation of the '60s. Political splits, if significant, generally slow down transformation and this may not work in the South African context, as there are many pressing demands on government to implement socio-economic reforms. The Polokwane conference of the ANC was a culmination of the political tension between the social base of the ANC government and the ruling elite. However, the Polokwane conference did not critically appraise the underlying causes of the fall of the ruling elite and, as such, may have just replaced one set of representatives with another, without redefining the political mechanism for strengthening hegemony of the ANC's social base and its model of democracy.

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Introduction

This article seeks to analyse the ANC Polokwane conference and its consequences from a theoretical platform. It utilises the recent history of the ANC and lessons from other political parties to draw evidence of the theoretical hypothesis. Finally, lessons, possibilities and risks are identified that the ANC is likely to face in the near future.

Politics - A Consequence of Social Reality

In his work, 'Ideology and superstructure in historical materialism,' Jakubowski[1] states that "consciousness is determined by social being… and… the economic structure forms the 'real base' of social life." Having said this, he further states that, "Man is not simply a piece of nature, he is also a force which re-forms nature." It is not the intention of the author to explore the debates on the deterministic nature of the historical materialist model, as this falls beyond the scope of this article.

However, Jakubowski's[2] work leads us into seeing that political ideas, parties, legal forms, ideology and culture are some of the elements of the superstructure. They reflect the socio-economic reality of a society. In post-colonial societies this relationship is even more interesting because a state is formed or re-formed by social classes that have no economic power, with classes that have this firmly intact. In societies where this reform has been peaceful, this situation is even more pronounced. This presents a challenge to the historical materialist method. Fortunately, it resolves this by contending that, "the state has an inherent tendency towards autonomy, a tendency to alienate itself from the society from which it was born… it begins to concern itself with the economic and cultural interests of the society as a whole… this is a process which continues to be to the advantage of the ruling class."[3] Therefore, the state as objectified by the people who run its institutions has a tendency to continue serving those who have a significant ownership of the economy and are alienated from the social groups that formed it, this being the radical black majority with a strong trade union movement and civic organisations, in the South African context.

Earlier, Gramsci's Prison Notes[4] expanded this point by stating that social classes detach from their parties where their representatives are not recognised by their class as its expression, and this results in a dangerous and possibly violent situation, with charismatic new leadership emerging. Gramsci's point resonates with the alienation but goes beyond to conclude that new leadership emerges amongst the detached social classes to challenge the state. They themselves seek hegemony, initially on behalf of the classes that elect them.

Hegemony

Gramsci[5] talks of political hegemony, a connective and organisational domination of both society and the state, where it has three organs, namely the legislature, judiciary and the executive. He states that intellectuals serve as 'deputies' of the dominant groups to impose social hegemony and political government. It can be surmised that if the hegemonic group's intellectuals lose resonance with the organisational network and connections that glue its functioning, then a new disturbance in the system arises which results in the emergence of either a different dominant group, or an element in the sub-group within the dominant group that seizes control with its own intellectuals. Again, inference can be drawn using the earlier dynamic of the base and superstructure that this is more likely when the dominant group does not control productive forces or the economy. In which case, the hegemony of a social group that does not control the means of production is temporary and fragile. Instead, what eventually will happen is that co-option of the intellectuals and the generations of leadership that emerge from this social group will deplete the social group's dominance, over time.

This possibility raises another, perhaps more radical, question about the necessity of representation. Representation as a political instrument is traced by Althuser[6] to the work of Montesquieu, who argued that, abandoned to themselves, the people are incapable of foresight, thought and judgement. They are incapable of all direct power but are qualified to choose representatives from those they see as successful amongst them. This logic has evolved over time into the modern state system, which simply relies on replacing leadership that is not seen as representative. The fundamental limitation with this logic is that it does not question the underlying causes of the failure to represent, which leads to the reform of the political system. Another dimension to explore is that, as a result of this logic, the people alienate their power to a general pool whose custodianship lies with the elected representatives. Upon alienation, this general pool of power is used to legitimise decisions about distribution of resources and policy choice. Inevitably, the legitimate state then brings order, which protects the interests of the economically dominant class. So the weak hegemony of people who do not own the means of production

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thus, ironically, become powerful when in the hands of the state as a mandate.

However, as shown earlier, that mandate is largely utilised to serve the interests of the economically dominant class, which equally utilises the weak hegemony to depose the elected leadership if it is unable to contain the deprived masses, thus risking a rebellion that endangers its private property and wealth. Furthermore, if through the use of the state the elected representatives threaten the economic interests of this group, they will suffer the same fate. Therefore, hegemony, weak or strong, is a central phenomenon in the change of leadership and politics in general. It is a dynamic function that lends itself to use and abuse by the economically dominant classes or popular groups. Hence, Plato, as cited by Popper,[7] warns that you cannot make a successful revolution if the ruling class is not weakened by internal dissension or defeat in war. He has another warning earlier in the same part of his work where he states that you cannot introduce a political reform without strengthening the opposing forces, so lookout. Therefore, the challenge with utilising political hegemony to reform society, where there is no violent take-over, remains inherently tenuous as the state tries to nudge along the ruling class and contain the people. This tension has got to give at some point and once that point is reached, the system goes into motion until it reaches another point of stability.

Inclusion and Identity

In response to this alienation there is a body of recent political and developmental theories that focus on improving participation in democratic processes and development. In this body politic there is recognition that the electoral process is inadequate as a form of participation. Young[8] talks about two models of democracy, namely aggregative and deliberative. Aggregative democracy aggregates the preferences of citizens in elections and policies. In this model, interest groups influence actions of parties and policymakers before and after an election through the quantity of supporters. This process leads to the formation of coalitions amongst these groups who advance their preferences as the strongest aggregate. Young then argues that these aggregates are not interrogated for the quality of their content, origin or motive. The only measure of preference is how many people support the choice.

In a deliberative democracy choices are made on the basis of the best reasoning. It is underpinned by inclusion, equality, reason and publicity. She then goes on to define inclusion as participation in discussion and decision-making on the basis of political equality, where interests, opinions and perspectives relevant to the problem are expressed. Consequently, Young's analysis introduces the necessity of genuine participation by people who are represented in political, social and economic dialogues and debates. This process, unlike in aggregative democracy, induces in both the bureaucracy of the political party(ies) the necessity of skilling and sharing information with the membership or social base so that decision-making can be based on consensus. In other words, it does not matter how many members subscribe or like your views; they will be debated as a possibility amongst many until those who differ are equally convinced, or you are by their views. It must be said that, when the liberation movement was excluded in the political system, they utilised deliberative democracy because there were no branches to talk of, or mass membership, but rather a network of activists. It seems that this model of democracy resulted in unity as those who had differing political opinions felt that their views were well considered, even if they had lost the debate. Besides, under these conditions, the leadership could not afford to have excluded certain groups, resulting in disgruntlement.

However, when the liberation movement was included massive branches were setup, which meant that quantitative support of decision-making was essential. This process gradually resulted in transactional democracy, as it shall be shown later from comments by leaders of the ANC, and as shown earlier by Young. Thus, if you control the largest number of supporters and you can manipulate their voting, then you can predetermine the result of the decision-making. This manipulation becomes effective if the politician can show that those he/she is manipulating have been excluded socially, politically and/or economically by those who have a different opinion from his/hers. In other words, the supporters, who by the way, if one recalls, have the real power because they delegate their right to participate to the representatives, must not identify with the other group on the basis of being excluded. Identity is defined by Castells[9] as a people's source of meaning and experience. He defines it as a construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attributes that are given priority over other sources of identities, and for every individual there are many identities, which results in contradictions in social action. Identities, Castells continues, are constructed from history, geography, biology, productive and

reproductive institutions, collective memory, personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religion. Individuals and groups process and re-arrange all these according to social determination rooted in social structure and their space/time framework. Thus, from this definition it does seem that a political party will have many identities which form and reform continuously. It can then be argued that political support for an individual or an opinion, if based on aggregative democracy, does not guarantee continuous support from the group. In other words, in aggregative democracy support has to be maintained and protected by material means because ideas, discourse and deliberations are relegated in the democratic model. In here lies the source of patronage. It depends on how much one can offer an aggregative mass of people for one to get support of one's views.

Transactional politics results in further disempowerment of both the representative and the social base. The representative has to have a bottomless well of resources to purchase the support, or lose out to the highest bidder. However, it is known that the bidder is materially weak and proximal to the social base, which then forces him/her to search externally for these resources. This search leads him/her back to the ruling class or the alternative, to state resources. Either way, he/she must then transact with those who control those resources. What do they transact with? The only asset they have is political influence, information and protection. Hence, they become part of the social assets of the ruling class or bureaucracy. Consequently, he/she must always have access to this resource in order to transact. Turning to the represented, they are more disempowered because they now pursue the objectives of the 'handler' of their representative. They are reduced to a position of depending on the politician to define their scope of participation. Their independent thinking capability is suspended as they have to 'follow the line' prescribed by their political benefactor. By this time, the social base has completely forgotten that the power of the representative comes from them.

It must also be added, again borrowing from Castells,[10] that class divide amongst blacks in the era of globalisation has created different living conditions, such that there is hostility among the poor against those that left them out. Using the USA context, Castells states that middle-class blacks strive to get ahead of the reality of the ghetto by, amongst other things, insulating their children from poor black communities by moving to suburbs and integrating them in predominantly white schools, whilst reviving the themes of the past African or American and keeping silent on the plight of the present. This reading resonates with South African reality, as shall be discussed later. However, the point that must be made is that the new identity of the middle-class becomes both a transactional asset and a weakness for the representative. He/she transacts on the promise that he/she will make others like him/her, if only they support his/her views. He/she will share the access to power and resources with the group if they support him/her. But, because it is impossible to share this power with the mass of the people, the representative then requires representatives amongst the people who can maintain his/her influence. This can be regarded as second generation co-option, where the agents of the representative amongst the people live, speak and eat the same as the voting mass. They are more trusted by the people and use this to secure the support for their handler. Ironically, it is at this point that the representative's dependence on the agent makes him/her vulnerable to the agent. The agent then ups his/her stakes for protecting the representative amongst the people. Over time, the agent's own material conditions will improve and be fully absorbed into the ruling elite and not the class. He/she will have to have his own agents and be as vulnerable.

Such is the vicious cycle induced by the interplay of the base and superstructure, hegemony, as well as inclusion and identity, on present day politics. The ANC cannot be immune from these dynamics. Some of the evidence of this lies in the recent history of the ANC.

1997 – 2007: The Build-up

The 1997 Mafikeng conference of the ANC marked the handing over of the leadership baton by the '40s/'50s 'Freedom in our lifetime' generation, or the radical African nationalist generation, as led by Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Albert Luthuli and Oliver Tambo. Equally, it marked the coming of age of the '60s/'70s 'National Democratic Revolution' (NDR) generation, as led by Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani, John Nkandimeng, Ruth Mompati and Joe Slovo. This is the generation that revitalised the South African liberation movement after the post-Rivonia trial clampdown and the political lull that ensued. They rebuilt the ANC and the broader liberation movement inside and outside the country, which culminated in the armed struggle, underground movement, international solidarity, and mass mobilisation as the pillars of the struggle. Equally, they theorised beyond narrow African nationalism into a more

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current version called 'colonialism of a special type,' which defined the unique features of South African oppression that had the oppressor and the oppressed sharing common boundaries, and unified the political, social and economic struggles. They were equally influenced by their times because they managed to define the organic link between the national and class questions. This is the generation that consolidated the tripartite alliance and built its constituent elements. The liberation movement invested in the development of this generation intellectually, academically, militarily and politically so that they could usher-in the democratic state. Their historic mission was achieved and, between 1994 and 2009, they presided over the development of a policy regime and transformation of South Africa that is consistent with the vision of the ANC. Yet, their leadership of the ANC between 1997 and 2007 was both challenging and profound. What is it about this period that made it a defining time?

The younger segments of this generation matured in the '70s and were leaders in their own right of the mass movements of the late '70s and early '80s. These struggles were steeped in BC, radical trade unionism and civic movements. In BC, values of self reliance, and social and political assertiveness of blacks were espoused. Radical trade unionism provided a platform for worker mass mobilisation and taking the struggle to the shop floor. Civic movements too, took the struggle to settlements where democratic participation and building of participatory governance theories were rooted. All these values and traditions moulded a complex national democratic movement. Consequently, three major strands characterised the ANC post-1990: radical (centre-left), modernist (centre–right), and traditionalist (centre) strands. The centre-left strand is inclusive of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). The modernist strand is constituted by former socialists, social democrats and liberals. The traditionalist is largely constituted by the Africanist segment that believes in the 'purity' of the ANC and its roots being the African majority, who are poor and marginalised. At times, this strand is influenced by identities such as regionalism, culture and religion. It must be said, lastly, that the strands' identities are themselves in flux. Consequently, these are not nicely packaged and precise categories; they overlap. The second strand is largely constituted by the older and predominantly exiled leadership, whereas the other two are constituted by the younger segments. The battle for the soul of the ANC over the decade in question was between the radicals and modernists. Mafikeng marked the triumph of the modernist tradition, which is otherwise known as the '96 Class Project.'

The Mafikeng conference took place against the backdrop of a warning by the SACP[11] that the April 1994 breakthrough was major, but the ruling class and its allied social forces have not disappeared, either ideologically or economically. This group, SACP observed, utilises its vast resources to block transformation. These observations are consistent with the earlier warning from Plato and Popper. The resolutions of the Mafikeng conference defined the trajectory that had dawned in the ANC. The ANC[12] resolved that fundamental transformation of the state was the main objective of NDR. This process, it was decided, would entail strengthening the Presidency by revising the role of implementation co-ordination and monitoring the achievement of national policy priorities. Special focus was given to strengthening the Cabinet Secretariat for managing Cabinet business.

Emphasis was also placed on improved financial and human resource management across the bureaucracy, with professionalisation of the bureaucracy through a contracting system. When it came to the traditional leadership system, it was to be transformed into a legitimate and democratic system that is widely respected and unifying. In Local Government, the new leadership was tasked with significantly reducing the number of municipalities and councillors into fewer developmental municipalities and properly remunerated councillors. Furthermore, this renewal programme aimed to fight corruption by establishing well-resourced corruption-fighting institutions. Primarily, the role of the State was defined as making interventions that are aimed at enhancing transformation and development of society.

Social policy was primarily focused on redressing poverty and inequality, and was defined more comprehensively as improving the child support grant, protecting the elderly, social health insurance, medical aid scheme reform, PPPs in health care provision, transforming the social security system, researching the social wage, training and retraining of social workers, improving the culture of learning, and transforming sport.

Turning to economic transformation, the ANC re-affirmed its commitment to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and, as such, to use macro-economic stability policy, namely growth, employment and redistribution (GEAR) to give effect to the latter. This policy package was aimed at creating sustainable growth and job creation. Consequently, there was an emphasis on macro-economic stability as the basis for economic

transformation. The conference, then, committed the ANC and its alliance to constant review of this policy framework.

After five years of implementation, the ANC met again to revise its policy framework in Stellenbosch in 2002.

On social policy it re-affirmed the need for a consolidated comprehensive social security system. The consolidation would include UIF, social grants, national health insurance, social wage, and free basic services. A commitment was made to the expansion of the child support grant and school nutrition programme eligibility. In the instance of a social wage, the conference moved further to commit the ANC into actively campaigning for the Basic Income Grant (BIG). It also went on to introduce the equalisation of the pension age that is linked to retirement age, as well as investigating the introduction of an integrated public sector pension system. Unemployment reduction was another policy priority, where a comprehensive public works programme was linked to urban renewal, national youth service and integrated rural development. This was to be coupled with the implementation of an integrated food security strategy.

The conference further highlighted the need to ensure adequate funding for social security, poverty alleviation and social development. A complementary intervention was the focus on fighting corruption and abuse of the social security system.

Implementation of the national health insurance was highlighted, with an emphasis on equitable access to health care and reduction of inequities between private and public health provision. It was emphasised that the public health system should generate revenue from those who can afford it so that it can improve the system. Coupled with this was the introduction of a state medical aid support for civil servants. The ANC also committed to strengthening primary health care (especially in rural areas), improving management of facilities, fighting communicable and preventable diseases, decentralising some health services to municipalities, as well as integrating traditional health care and military health services to the public health system. Other priorities included child nutrition improvement, campaigning against substance abuse, and the reduction of maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. More emphasis was placed on staffing, skills development and retention.

The resolutions of Polokwane were not too different from these. What, then, were the dynamics that led to the Polokwane 'coup'?

In the second quarter of 1998, SACP[13] highlighted the shortcomings of the democratic order and essentially the beginnings of the 96 Class Project as:

- Misunderstanding our location within global realities;
- GEAR embodies neo-liberal fiscal and monetary policies which are different from the RDP;
- Privatisation of state functions and narrow cost-cutting have replaced the building of a developmental state; and
- A shift from a people-centred and people-driven transformation to the demobilisation of the mass popular movement.

In 2000, SACP[14] noted that there was a lack of consultation, suppression of debates, fudging of difficult strategic choices, and a lack of civility in handling each other in public by the Alliance. Reference was made to GEAR, HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe. In 2001, SACP[15] stated that the key challenges facing the Alliance were the restructuring of state assets and privatisation, as well as the future of the Alliance. In the Alliance Summit of 2002, the partners articulated what they perceived to be their differences. In this discussion, SACP highlighted that the ANC leadership was failing to assert working class leadership of the multi-class movement; a mixed economic model of socialism was the future which must be built now. They were not mobilising an ultra-left opposition to the ANC, but there was a risk that the mismanagement of the Alliance could play into the hands of this group. They went on to say that there is a small rightist tendency in the ANC that seeks to break relations with SACP. Furthermore, SACP observed, there was different understanding of the global conjuncture where the ANC emphasised the objective and progressive dimensions of globalisation, and SACP highlighting its subjective and exploitative elements. Lastly, policy development and management from Alliance into government was weak and inconsistent, meaning that the partners would agree on something and, once it got into government, it was changed into something else.

The ANC responded to this by stating that the underlying causes of differences were that SACP and Cosatu wanted a more radical NDR, the tactical detours of democratic government were seen as strategic shifts, and that SACP and Cosatu believe the task of socialists is building socialism now, in which case this could mean the divergence amongst the alliance has arrived. Cosatu's input in this discussion centred on re-enacting the RDP, exerting influence over the bureaucracy, rebuilding the popular transformative agenda, and

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counter-acting the agenda of capital to direct the transition.[16] It can be concluded that, from this point onwards, the pinnacles of the differences in the Alliance had been reached and, in fact, it was now a sliding slope from this point.

The differences were fundamental, tactical and managerial. SACP and Cosatu were pleading exclusion. There was an increasing alienation of their comrades in government from the leadership base of the Alliance. The representatives were entrenching the hegemony of the global and national ruling class. They, the ruling elite, were not engaging in deliberative democracy and, in instances where they did, the decisions were changed once they went back to government. In the light of all this, a block of the excluded started forming. However, this was the block of the excluded elite challenging their included counterpart, but they represented the generation that was supposed to succeed leadership. The tension that was building up between them and the preceding generation increasingly meant that the choice of a successor was not going to be their choice. Still, it could be asked, how could they have mounted a successful challenge to the included elite? This was possible if there were sufficient social conditions that affected the broad membership of the ANC to justify a challenge to the leadership. Justification, or lack of, can be found in scrutinising the political economy of the period leading up to Polokwane.

The Political Economy of Polokwane

The run-up to the Polokwane conference was marked by a series of protests from different communities. Others complained about belonging to a wrong province and wanting the provincial boundary to be redrawn to move them to the preferred province. Service delivery, unemployment, seasonal wage disputes, support for the then deputy president of the ANC, and many other protests were observed. Yet there was, according to government's fifteen year review,[17] a drop in income poverty and relative income poverty, with the social security assistance programme as the most significant contributor. Access to water, electricity and sanitation had improved drastically. Earlier,[18] the report highlighted that participatory democracy has been deepened through mechanisms such as municipal integrated development planning (IDP) consultations, izimbizos (outreach programmes), ward committees, Thusong service centres (multi-purpose centres), and community development centres. However, according to the report, more needs to be done as the effectiveness of these platforms remains questionable.

Turning to the economy, the report[19] states that, from a recession of the early '90s, the economy has seen 14 successive years of growth. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) jumped from 3 – 5% by 2004. Unemployment dropped from 31.2% in 2003 to 23% in 2007. Public sector debt dropped from 44% of GDP in 1994 to 20% of GDP in 2008. Inflation dropped from 18.9% in 1994 to below 10% until 2008. The South African Reserve Bank had dropped the deficit from $25bn in 1994 to zero, and built gross foreign reserves of $34bn. General government spending has increased in social, protection and economic services. So, what then sparked the dissatisfaction that was symbolised by Polokwane? The report hints at a possible explanation[20] when it highlights a decline in civil-society organisations, trust levels outside the family have remained very low, and a weakness of the government-local public interface. It also notes the pressure on the social fabric created by the tension between building a caring society and rewarding competitive behaviour through the economy. So, the conclusion is that, yes the economy has been performing well and we are socially improving as a country, but our voices are not listened to in the public discourse, and economic progress is uneven. Haggard and Kaufman, in their work entitled, 'The political economy of democratic transitions,'[21] warned that democratic governments face distributive pressures from groups re-entering the political arena and uncertainty about the loyalty of groups associated with the old order. They stated that democracy provides opportunities for competing interests to contest and change policies, but are unlikely to become institutionalised if their economic management strategy lacks widespread support. Thus, democracy does not only depend on economic performance, but also on how distributive outcomes are structured. As is shown, the defining period was marked by weak economic distribution and participation, leading to high levels of feeling excluded. Those who were reaping the benefits of economic competitive behaviour and those running the government developed a separate identity, which alienated them from both the excluded political elite and the social base. The political elite did not support the economic management instruments, as shown by the comments of SACP and Cosatu throughout the defining period. All these factors set the scene for the Polokwane conference. Whereas the excluded political elite used the former ANC Deputy President's political and legal challenges as a Trojan horse to challenge and depose the included,

the social base utilised service delivery protests, attacks on foreign nationals and other forms of protests to undermine the ruling elite.

The Split and Lessons from Other Political Parties

Shortly after the Polokwane conference, South Africa saw the announcement of a split from the ANC. A few months later, the Congress of the People (COPE) was formed. Many responses tried to provide an analysis of this emerging political dynamic. This article adds its voice to these attempts, and only history will judge which of these was correct. Based on the analysis elucidated, some observations can be made:

- Those who split from the ANC represent the ruling elite that were perceived to have benefited from the defining period, have presided over the economic benefitting of the few, and have not built a genuine political participation of their social base.
- COPE represents representatives of the ruling class who could not protect the hegemony of that class under conditions of stability and, thus, they became a liability to the ruling class as the country became increasingly unstable.
- COPE represents the phenomenon of an alienated identity, which resulted in the exclusion of the former ruling elite by their social base and the excluded elite.
- COPE is the self-appointed group of successors of the generation of the '60s, who could proceed in the same trajectory in trying to defend their legacy.
- Finally, COPE represents the 'parting of ways' that was envisaged in the 2002 Alliance Summit, albeit on a smaller scale.

These conclusions are drawn directly from the analysis made earlier. However, it can still be asked whether this consequence of Polokwane holds much promise for the South African political system? According to Carlsson and Lindgren,[22] the Swedish Social Democratic Party was formed in 1889. In 1917/18, this party won the struggle for franchise reform but split due to differences in the reformist and militant forms of struggle that were advanced by radical leftists and centre left reformists. This led to the formation of what is now known as the Swedish Left Party. This development ushered in a period of minority governments in the '20s. Between 1920 and 1932, Sweden had ten different governments, and three of these were social democratic. From the '30s until mid '90s, Social Democrats depended on the on and off collaboration with the Swedish Centre Party, formed out of the Farmers' Union. Recently, in the UK, the Labour Party 're-called' former Prime Minister Blair and installed Brown. The primary reason for this was Blair's bold reforms against Brown's cautious policy reform.[23] Sloam[24] also showed how French and German social democrats lost support and membership to the left for pursuing the third way, which entailed balanced economic prudence and social democratic reforms. These and many other examples show that splits over prudent socio-economic reform and radical reform are common in political parties. In fact, the tensions that were seen in the Alliance in the defining period were consistent with tensions amongst social democratic reformists and radical leftists. Going back to the Swedish split and including lessons from northern Europe, the single most important lesson was the reliance on coalitions for decades to advance reforms. In other words, political splits, if significant, generally slow down transformation. This may not work in the South African context, as there are many pressing demands on government to implement socio-economic reforms.

Conclusion

The Polokwane conference of the ANC was a culmination of the political tension between the social base of the ANC government and the ruling elite. The ruling elite were alienated from that social base because of the pressure from and co-option by the ruling class, which controls the economy. That was realised due to the weak hegemonic influence of the social base vis-à-vis that of the ruling class. Representation as a political method failed the social base, resulting in them seeking different representatives. However, the Polokwane conference did not critically appraise the underlying causes of the fall of the ruling elite and, as such, may have just replaced one set of representatives with another, without redefining the political mechanism for strengthening hegemony of the ANC's social base and its model of democracy. Certainly, there is a need to shift from the aggregative democratic model back to a deliberative model, in which case qualitative rather quantitative influence would limit transactional politics. Equally, the ANC needs to focus on spreading economic benefits to a larger social base and build an economically powerful group. This will build a last countervailing force to the influence of the ruling class. Failure to do so may

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lead to another Polokwane-style hostile take over. Ironically, the continued leadership of the new elite requires not so much more social protection policy reform, but rapid economic development maintaining social security, which will invariably result in the emergence of a broad enterprising class. A positive observation is the possibility of better alliance relations in the new political elite because of a common generational identity. Furthermore, the emergence of COPE could herald the consolidation of coalition politics, and the ANC requires a comprehensive strategy of pursuing its transformation agenda through coalition politics. A failure to act will cost the ANC dearly.

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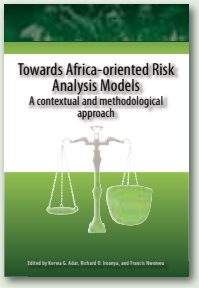

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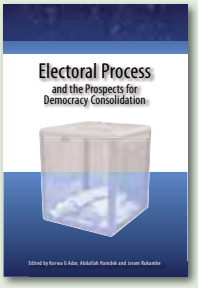

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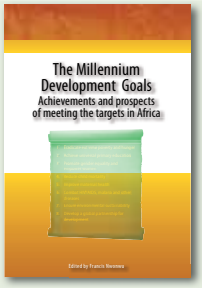

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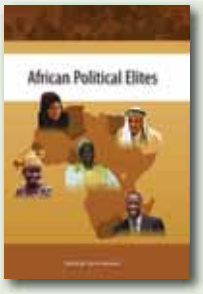

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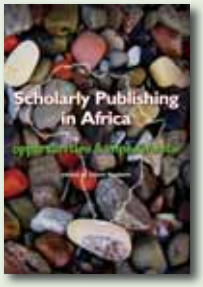

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