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One-Party-Dominance in Changing Societies:

The ANC and INC in Comparative Perspective

by

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> *As the Congress represented every section of Indian society, it was the natural party of governance. Only the Congress could provide stable and effective government.*[2]

This recent statement by Sadiq Ali, the former general secretary (1958-62, 66-67, 68) of the (undivided) Indian National Congress (INC), indicates the political actor's perception of a legitimate claim of the INC to the commanding heights of India's polity, a claim that was based on a (perceived) national consensus on the benefits of one-party-dominance (OPD) which at that time also matched public and academic discourse on party systems in the developing world (for example Huntington 1968: 146-147).

Now that "the end of history" (Fukuyama 1992) has become such a popular proclamation, and everybody – in the name of 'good governance' – is talking about multi-party democracy as a remedy for nascent democracies in developing countries, nobody seems to remind the disastrous results that multi-party democracy has brought about in most of these countries immediately after independence or transition to democracy. OPD has almost become a four-letter word bearing the connotations of creeping authoritarianism and the mental legacies of so many single-party states. But India – despite decades wherein the country was able to combine OPD with almost all features of a liberal democracy - is still a

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[2] Personal Communication; interview conducted at Gandhi Memorial, New Delhi, on December 18, 2000.

vibrant democracy, a record that puts her apart from most of the post-colonial states' world[3].

Just across the Indian ocean - seven years after the end of apartheid was officially launched[4] and two days before South Africa's second democratic general election took place- Firoz Cachalia, the then African National Congress' (ANC) leader of the house in the Gauteng[5] legislature, authored an article in one of the country's leading newspapers stating that

> Some academics and opposition politicians have, for a long time now, been making the argument that SA (South Africa, C. S.) is developing a system of one-party dominance that is dangerous for democracy and that consequently SA needs an effective opposition to protect democracy. (…) I will (…) argue that the ANC's dominance strengthens the prospects of democratic consolidation and is good for both economic growth and in the long term for greater social equality. (…) for most of its history, the ANC has been committed to an inclusive nationalism and its values have been strongly shaped by the enlightenment's universalism. It achieved its position of dominance in liberation politics and in post-apartheid SA through the methods of secular politics. Its dominance is thus the result of successful contestation, not the absence of it.[6]

Cachalia, like Ali, refers to the all-inclusive nature of the ANC in a bid to legitimise a distinct configuration of a party system which is still not entirely conceived of as satisfactorily fulfilling the criteria set forth by the normative ideal of a liberal democracy. Consequently, he hastens to add the competitive nature of the ANC's dominance which is seen by him as a *sine qua non* for successful democratisation.

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[3] Although India's status as a full-fledged democracy is questioned by some scholars, this study is in accord with most of the scholarly literature as regards India's classification as a democracy. For a critical assessment of India's democratic credibility which hinges exactly on the (concentrated) state of the country's party system see Vanhanen (1997).

[4] The watershed speech by former President F. W. de Klerk on 2 February 1990, wherein he announced the unbanning of the liberation movements, their leaders' release from prison viz. their opportunity to return from exile, and, the lifting of restrictions on the media and other domestic organisations, is taken here as the starting point of the negotiations that led to the first general democratic elections of 1994, and, finally, to the end of apartheid. As Mattes puts it: "To understand South Africa's first universal franchise election and its preceding campaign, we must begin not in 1994 or even 1993, but in February 1990 (…) we need to begin in 1990 because how South Africa got to 'here' from 'there' has deeply affected what the campaign and elections of 1994 looked like. In other words, how the elections were conducted and contested cannot be understood without reference to the negotiations that led to those elections." (1994: 1)

[5] Gauteng is one of the nine provinces of contemporary South Africa.

[6] 'ANC Dominance Strengthens SA', *Business Day* (Johannesburg), May 31, 1999. The article has been included to the article section of the ANC's official homepage (http://www.anc.org.za/election/articles/dominance.html).

Scholarly concern about South Africa's political development has increased tremendously in the last decade due to its singularity as the world's only post-apartheid society and as the last remaining 'powerhouse' on an otherwise "hopeless continent".[7] But whether South Africa will follow the path of political decay like so many of its sub-Saharan democratising predecessors, or, whether it will take the lead in what has been called a continent on the brink of an "elusive dawn"[8] is at the heart of a heated debate in the academic world with the nature of the country's party system becoming more and more of a 'bone of contention'.

Both countries share a similar historical outcome as concerns their party systems albeit within very different temporal and spatial contexts. India's system of OPD was electorally terminated in 1977 when for the first time in the country's history the INC [9] was ousted from office and power by the *Janata Party*, a multi-party electoral platform comprising four major opposition parties.[10] South Africa so far had only two general (democratic) elections (1994 and 1999) wherein the ANC won an overwhelming share of the popular vote (62,65% and 66,35% respectively), but which do not allow to make an assessment of the country's party system without some qualifications regarding the dynamic nature of a pattern of party competition still in the making. What are the causal factors that made the emergence of a system of OPD in India after independence possible and make it likely in the South Africa of today? Why was it that a single party in a competitive democratic environment succeeded in winning one election after another amidst processes of massive social change, and, why is it that a single party is still able to do so at the end of the 20th century? What did OPD do to the political and socio-economic development in the world's largest democracy, and, what will be the effects of its working in the world's most amazing democracy? How do the political actors' perception mentioned above match with the academic wisdom of our times?

Taking India as the *locus classicus* of OPD in changing societies[11], the following is an attempt to draw advantage from a diachronic comparison between

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[7] Cover of the Economist, 13 May, 2000.

[8] Cover of the Economist, 24 February, 2001.

[9] After the split of the INC in 1969, the two factions contested elections as separate parties named INC and INC (O) – 'O' for 'Organisation' – with the INC headed by Indira Gandhi as the successful 'heir' of the undivided INC's dominant position. Another split of the INC in 1977 led to the emergence of the INC (I) – 'I' for 'Indira' - , the party led by Indira Gandhi, and the INC (as formally recognised by the Election Commission), which was successively renamed as INC (U) and Indian Congress (Socialist) (ICS). In 1981 he INC (I) was formally relabelled as INC. If not indicated otherwise, INC is used in the following as a common denominator for the undivided party up to 1969, the Indira-led INC up to 1977, the INC (I) and the INC after 1981.

[10] The 'real' end of OPD in India is a highly debated issue in the scholarly discourse on the Indian party system with the years of 1967, 1969, 1975, 1977, 1991 and 1996 all figuring as respective dates of termination in the scholarly literature.

[11] 'Changing societies' is used here as a generic term comprising those countries wherein democratic transition or consolidation still takes place and social change in terms of political and economic development as well as modernisation is the single most important determinant of societal interests as in most of the world's post-colonial states or developing countries.

the Indian party system after independence and the emerging one in South Africa in order to free the political phenomenon of 'OPD' from some of the theoretical and conceptual flaws surrounding it, to examine common thinking about a party systems' emergence and working on the basis of two regional realities, and, finally, to enrich the current scholarly hypothesising about the correlation between the nature of the party system and processes of democratic consolidation and socio-economic development with some empirical backing.

OPD AS A PENDING PHENOMENON OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Despite its ostensibly continued existence and reference in scholarly minds and works, OPD has kept its character as a pending phenomenon of political science. A few attempts to grasp its logic and to fit it into common knowledge of democratic and party theory have been done leaving behind as many assessments of OPD as a (democratic) matter of course as postulates of it as a democratic anomaly, as many delineations of a model of democratic stability as classifications of a transitional phenomenon, as many blessings of its contribution to democratic consolidation and socio-economic development as condemnations of its perversion of democratic practices. Since democratic practice in one-party-dominant systems is still a controversial matter of academic debate manifest in catchy book titles that hint at their scholarly subject as 'Uncommon Democracies' (Pempel 1990) or an 'Awkward Embrace' (of democracy) (Giliomee and Simkins 1999) – to name the only two volumes to date solely devoted to the subject -, an examination of the specific configuration of a party system displayed by OPD could therefore enrich research on democratisation and how democracies function.

But apart from any normative account of OPD's putative weaknesses or strengths, political science has first to tackle its conceptual and analytical clarification. In terms of electoral dominance the definition we get from Pempel (1990: 3-4) is still very useful. According to him there are four crucial dimensions when dealing with party dominance in a competitive environment: To be considered as dominant a party must be (1) dominant in number; but this criterion does count only if the party is (2) electorally dominant for an uninterrupted and prolonged period; it must enjoy (3) a dominant bargaining position always setting the tone when it comes to government formation, and, (4) it must be dominant governmentally determining the public policy agenda.

Additionally, from the angle of electoral dominance, given the point of view taken here that one-party-dominant systems are essentially democracies[12], OPD is

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[12] The clear dissociation from non-democratic regimes is necessary since (democratic) one-party-dominant systems form a distinct analytical category. OPD would not be a puzzling phenomenon of political science if repression or fraud were to be involved in the up-holding of a party's dominance. In that case, it would even be difficult to speak of a 'system' since the dominant party would not be dependent on any kind of interaction with other political forces for it could rely on repression to push through its interests. Scholarly contributions that lump together democratic and non-democratic OPD are to be found in abundant profusion and do not contribute to any further understanding of the few 'true' (democratic) types of OPD. Clearly, the notion of democratic competition in India as well

to some extent a 'fluid' category. Sooner or later (depending on the participation process or on elite behaviour) it gives way to two- or multi-party competition or an authoritarian one-party state. Therefore, it would be extremely difficult to decide after how many consecutive majorities a party system could be labelled as one-party-dominant.[13] But OPD – as already outlined in Pempel's definition - comprises more than just the continued dominance of the electoral process.[14] Duverger's (1959: 308) by now famous formulation that a dominant party is a party that is "identified with an epoch" clearly points in the direction of a necessary incorporation of qualitative aspects regarding the assessment of a party's dominance. However, given that insight, the problem remains that any further judgement of a party's dominance in terms of its qualitative features has to be operationalised and abstracted in such a way that it makes comparisons and generalisations possible. This becomes even more challenging when one is dealing with the level of party system. Apart from the numerical domination of the electoral process and the preponderance over a certain *Zeitgeist*, the interactive aspects of systemic relations have to be taken care of. Conceptual boundaries have to be drawn around the dominant party's relationship to other parties, societal interests, the electorate, state apparatus and changing socio-political conditions.

For this purpose we have to look firstly at the more prominent *lacunae* in common party system theory, especially when dealing with party systems in changing societies, for they give us a first hint at what may be missing factors for the explanation of OPD in changing societies, and then we have to relate them to the empirical context of OPD in India and South Africa.

LACUNAE IN COMMON PARTY SYSTEM RESEARCH AND THEORY

Recent research on party systems in changing societies, especially in those countries that were 'affected' by the "third wave" (Huntington 1991) of democratisation, calls into question some of the more fundamental theoretical knowledge on political parties and party systems that political scientists, entrenched in their western-based empirical referents, were so grown fond of. This is hardly to be wondered at since it would have been presumptuous to expect parties and party systems in changing societies to adjust their shape and role to the

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as South Africa must be used with some qualifications. For a discussion of 'alternation in office' as a distinctive criterion for a political (party) system to be classified as democratic, see Huntington (1991: 263) and Przeworski and Limongi (1997).

[13] Sartori (1976: 196) in what remains to date the most sophisticated typology of party systems sets the criteria for his 'predominant party system' - the 'rough' equivalent to the one-party-dominant system referred to in this study - as three consecutive majorities of a party gaining absolute majority in parliament, but hastens to add that these sheer quantitative criteria look rather arbitrarily.

[14] As Thackrah (2000: 3) in a conceptual redefinition of OPD notes: "Indeed, the 'outdistancing' phenomenon [a party system wherein one party outdistances all the others, C.S.] could potentially occur in all three systems [two-party, polarised and moderate pluralism, C.S.] (…). This suggests that predominance must also be accounted for on a different dimension, namely the existence of *systems* through *time*." (italics mine).

analytical concepts and categories developed along the evolution of their western counterparts. Among the more important challenges to common party system theory are *a)* the inadequacies of some of the theoretical propositions made by the 'social cleavages' approach pioneered by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), as well as the one-dimensionality of those too rigid attempts of institutionalism making law-like generalisations about the relationship between institutions and party systems without considering the respective context (for both critiques see e.g. Mainwaring 1999, Merkel and Sandschneider 1997); *b)* the debate about a necessary pluralising and/or differentiation of the role and function of political parties and party systems with regard to an empirical setting that demands capacities from the political system going far beyond the 'classic' functions ascribed to parties and the party system in western democracies (e.g. McAllister and White 1995, Morlino 1995, Pridham and Lewis 1996, Schmitter 1999); and, *c)* the attempt to broaden and reshape common typologies of party systems on the basis of new insights in their structural functioning by incorporating broad, quantitatively measurable aspects of party systems' institutionalisation as well as detailed, more qualitatively oriented accounts of a party systems' much neglected vertical dimension, its intermediate position between the state and society as manifest in so called linkage studies (e.g. Mainwaring and Scully 1995, Kitschelt 1999). In a context where relevant loyalties and identities have to be produced afresh, conflict and contestation have to be co-ordinated along so far unfamiliar institutional lines, and mobilisation and participation have to be channelled for the first time, the room to manoeuvre for political actors is naturally bigger, the institutional rules of the (democratic) game are not that clear, and the challenges for the representational system are different from those in the established democracies of western provenience.

The closer look on OPD in changing societies, as well as on the distinct contexts – post-independent India and post-apartheid South Africa - this paper deals with, could enhance the understanding of parties and party systems in changing societies on the grounds that it has to handle a political manifestation and environment that have so far belied most of the assumptions made by common party and party system theory, that don't exactly fit most of the prominent classifications of comparative research on party systems, and, that display two exemplary cases of democracy in changing societies: long-term survivals and post-1990 (third wave) surfers.

With regard to the *lacunae* or *desiderata* of party system theory described above the analysis of systems of OPD recommends itself for a very specific reason, namely, the relevance of strictly political factors for the emergence, working and effects of party systems in competitive democracies. In the words of Aran and Barnes (1974: 613):

> We suggest that the dominant party system is a political rather than sociological or psychological model. Because of its structural characteristics and the importance of strategic decisions as well as the impact it has on the competition, the mass public, and the organs of power, the dominant party model provides an alternative way of

understanding the emergence of competitive democracies in multiparty systems.

PROBLEMS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE COMPARISON

Now, why India and South Africa? What can they tell us about the functioning of OPD in changing societies? Is it only India and SA that display OPD as outlined above? Are they really comparable?

Among changing societies, only India has so far succeeded in combining a long period of dominant party rule with liberal democracy (South Africa's emerging system of OPD is still in the making). All other prominent examples of one-party domination in developing countries such as Mexico, Taiwan, Malaysia or Singapore - to name only those that are listed in the only comparative account of the subject to date, Giliomee and Simkins' 'Awkward Embrace' - were either falling short of substantial standards of a liberal democracy as is the case with Taiwan, Mexico and Singapore[15], or displayed a dominance of a complex (and less and less democratic since 1969) ruling coalition which was only loosely allied under the label of an umbrella party as is the case with Malaysia. Since the diverse patterns of interaction in a one-party-dominant system (or, for that matter, in any party system), Sartori's 'mechanics', as well as the developmental capacity and strategic devices of political and party elites naturally differ in a context of free and, at least, partially fair contestation, India's experience with OPD remains as the most fruitful value of comparison for the development of OPD in democratic post-apartheid South Africa.[16] This becomes even clearer if one relates the puzzle of democratisation to the well-known debate about the socio-economic prerequisites of democracy (Lipset 1960). As Merle Lipton notices in a review of Giliomee and Simkins' 'Awkward Embrace': "SA [*South Africa*] is an intriguing example [of a

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[15] Dominant parties in Mexico, Taiwan or Singapore for the most part of their post-independent history were pillars of authoritarian rule. Unlike in 'true' (democratic) one-party-dominant systems, opposition parties faced serious official constraints or harassment, and, the ruling parties exploited the powers of office to maintain political support to the extent that the legal separation of party and state was blurred. Only recently, as a result of these countries' long-term buoying economy, a process of far-reaching democratisation set in and furthered their transformation from 'hegemonic' party systems to one-party-dominant or multi-party systems. Since India displayed a democratic set-up right from its inception as a one-party-dominant system whose success and resilience is blamed for being responsible for its poor developmental record by most observers, it offers a much more convincing point of comparison regarding the consequences of a (democratic) one-party-dominant system on socio-economic development and democratic consolidation in the South African context.

[16] One could ask why not comparing the South African party system to Botswana's political development? Since Botswana is always referred to as exceptional in the sub-Saharan context for it has successfully combined one-party-dominant rule with steady economic growth (and, to some extent, also fits the minimum standards of a liberal democracy), and, at the same time, shares a common regional setting, a comparison between the two neighbours seems rather obvious. But Botswana displays a very different level of societal complexity than South Africa and India and also shows a rather distinct lack of democratic control over the state bureaucracy (Holm 1996).

one-party dominant state, C. S.], both because of its inheritance of bitter racial conflict and because the per capita incomes of the black majority are below the level at which transitions to democracy generally occur. (However, while SA is unusual, it is not unique, and India, an even poorer democracy, would have provided an illuminating comparator.)" (Lipton 2000: 339). Behind this statement, the question arises whether a system of OPD is a possible institutional 'container' for the reconciliation of democracy and a low level of socio-economic development, or – to consider the other side of the medal - , whether a system of (democratic) OPD can only be upheld at the price of "peaceful stagnation", according to Barrington Moore's famous dictum about India's post-independent development. (Moore 1966: 418 f.).

Of course, a diachronic comparison between India and South Africa has to tackle the ostensibly lacking evidence needed to "establish the functional equivalence of different eras and political events" (Peters 1998: 73 f.). Since important context variables that have an impact on the party system's emergence and working naturally differ over a time horizon of half a century (and a spatial distance of continental dimension), no effective control of the context is possible as would have been the case in a (synchronic) *most similar systems design*. Consequently, the modes of evolution and the substance of the two party systems under examination bear only a few similarities. In broad terms, these are the coming to power of the dominant party "in the wake of a nightmare"[17] – colonial rule and apartheid, respectively -, and, the issues of national integration, democratic consolidation and socio-economic development (as the most pressing challenges the nascent democracies were/are facing). But, whereas the 'roads' to a system of OPD as well as the issues it reflects may be different as is the structural and institutional context of the respective regional settings, processes of political actors' adaptation to different contexts and strategies of party competition display functional equivalence. It is a distinct process-orientation that makes a comparison along contextually different lines possible. For example, if we take the process of highlighting a certain cleavage by political actors through certain policy measures, or, the engagement of party elites in clientelist linkage mechanisms as starting point for an analysis of how party systems are shaped 'from above', the nature of the cleavage and the kind of material incentives involved are of secondary relevance, for the time being. It is the 'mechanisms of control' of the dominant party in the respective systems that are of interest.[18]

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[17] This expression stems from R. W. Johnson who was referring to the party systems of South Africa, Mexico, Taiwan and Malaysia at a conference on One-Party Dominance in selected developing countries, Cape Town, 6-9 Nov. 1996, on which the 'Awkward Embrace' (Giliomee and Simkins 1999) is based. Although the end of colonial rule in India came with much more ease than in many other post-colonial states, the historical legacy of colonial oppression and resistance to it constituted the independent country's determining founding myth.

[18] In the same vein, Levite and Tarrow (1983) in their reassessment of Arian and Barnes' (1974) pioneering article on OPD in Italy and Israel describe the latters' comparison as a "[unique effort] in the annals of comparative politics, for they boldly compared what was generally considered a centre-left dominant party, Mapai, with a centre-right one, the

Since these processes are most visible during the heyday of OPD, in the case of India, I will focus only on the period from 1952-67, commonly referred to as the 'Congress system'[19] though reference to later developments of the Indian party system will be made in the last but one paragraph. In the case of South Africa, 1990 is taken as a starting point, for the South African party system is basically a product of the transformation process, and, the 'negotiated revolution' taking place between 1990 and 1994 is crucial for the understanding of the later development of OPD in the country (see footnote 3). Conclusions concerning the South African system of OPD are necessarily limited by the 'fluid' conditions of a party system still in the making.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT: OPD IN INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

The following brief depiction of the main constituents of the post-independence Indian and post-apartheid South African party systems, the dominant party and opposition parties, shall pave the ground for the analysis of how and why the emergence of OPD in both countries took place.

DOMINANT PARTY

The dominant party as the *nucleus* of any system of OPD almost always presides over the creation of the polity and, in the case of India and South Africa, also stems from a year-long struggle as a liberation movement.[20] Consequently, it has a bigger share of popular legitimacy at its disposal than any of its possible contenders and its strategy is determining in constitutional engineering. Whereas in India after partition there was no doubt that only the Congress could be in charge of dominating the political process and party landscape for it was the sole political movement practised in parliamentary politics and able to initiate state- and nation-building, organise participation and mobilise the masses, the ANC had to compete with rival liberation organisations (Pan African Congress - PAC, Black Consciousness Movement - BCM), to build up an organisational network from the

Democrazia Christiana, arguing persuasively that – even in the face of their differences – the two parties had developed similar mechanisms of control." (1983: 295).

[19] The term ‚Congress System', connotative of the main conceptual and analytical features of India's system of OPD, was first introduced to the scholarly community by Rajni Kothari (1961, 1964, 1974). Independently, W. H. Morris-Jones came to similar conclusions about the conceptual and analytical nature of India's system of OPD, and, often used the same terminology as Kothari. See Morris-Jones (1966, 1967). Despite the electoral setback of the INC in the elections of 1967, the trend was reversed in the elections of 1971, 1980 and 1984. Nevertheless, the elections of 1967 marked a change of perception in the electorate towards a stronger issue-orientation and evaluation of the performance of the governing party (Kothari 1975: 102), a change of opposition strategy based on the perception that INC dominance can be undermined, and, the beginning of a disintegration process of the INC that culminated in the split of 1969.

[20] In fact, the INC and ANC are the oldest liberation movements on their respective continents with the INC already founded in 1885 and the ANC in 1912.

fragments of its internal and exile wings, to weave together its different factions and, at the same time, it was confronted with opposition from parties representing the white minority some of them having already long experience in (exclusive) parliamentary politics.

Nevertheless, the ANC was able to gain control of a fairly unified African electorate, to present itself as the primary bargaining partner of the ruling National Party and, in the course of the negotiation process that led to the first democratic elections of 1994, succeeded in ensuring pre-eminence over all other political forces in the country.

Yet, in organisational terms the INC was much better prepared to electoral competition than the ANC visible from the fact that up to 1971 the number of candidates contesting *Lok Sabha* elections for the INC outdistanced the number of candidates of any of the opposition parties by more than 90%[21].

Both parties had gathered a mass following before independence and the end of apartheid respectively. Whereas the INC under Gandhi's stewardship was extremely successful in mobilising India's diverse interest groups and social strata to join the banner of the nationalist movement[22], the ANC – after 30 years in exile and clandestinity – had to bring together in a single structure the adherents of the disparate segments of the liberation movement it was spearheading, symbolically at least.[23] It must be seen as one of the many enigmas surrounding the transition to democracy how quick the ANC eventually succeeded in cementing together such a great range of social groups and ideological positions. It was a tough process comprising the launching of 'rolling mass action', hefty negotiations, and struggle over leadership with the founding of the 'Tripartite Alliance' (1990), the organisational manifestation of the ANC's long-standing partnership with COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and the SACP (South African Communist Party) as the most visible step towards an institutionalisation of the party's broad support base.

Both parties as well secured their political pre-eminence basically through presenting an image of moderation and inclusivity comprising broad-church, non-sectarian politics; through mere survival and longevity providing some sort of a

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[21] Based on figures given in: Government of India (various years). *Statistical Abstract India*. New Delhi: Government of India Press.

[22] Gandhi was much more sceptical when it came to the task of making a shift from nationalist movement to political party immediately after independence had been achieved. On the eve of his assassination he was even arguing for the dissolution of the INC as a political organisation. Were it not for the pragmatic and passionate efforts of Patel and later Nehru to "tame the nationalist movement" (Weiner 1968: 36) and to build-up a viable political organisation, one could speculate whether the INC would have been able to achieve or maintain a dominant position in Indian politics for so many a years.

[23] As Lodge (1999: 2) notes on the liberatory character of the 'democratic breakthrough' in South Africa: "The ANC's victory at the polls was not just the triumph of a political party. Rather it signified the political supremacy of a broader liberatory movement whose constituents included the ANC itself – an organisation which until its legalisation and homecoming 1990 had been constituted by a 15.000-strong exile body largely, though not exclusively, oriented to guerrilla warfare, and which by 1991 had built a branch structure inside South Africa embracing a membership of 500.000."

symbolic capital often going beyond ordinary partisan attachment; and, through their character as a social alliance encompassing as broad a range of social formations as possible (Weiner 1968, Dube 2000).

In terms of electoral dominance, as the table below shows, both parties' performance matches the criteria of OPD in a strict numerical sense. The average difference between the two parties and the respective second largest party is far beyond the margin one normally finds in two- or multi-party systems. The effective number of parties, an index that weighs the relative size of parties, could be misleading for it gives the impression that we are dealing with two-party systems. But, taking into account the number of opposition parties that goes into that index, and, considering opposition fragmentation, the figures hint at the domination of the electoral process by the INC and ANC respectively.

The extreme variation as regards the respective party systems average difference in vote/seat share is a clear indication of the distortions or 'multiplier effect' produced by the Indian FPTP electoral system. In terms of vote share the ANC is definitely more dominant electorally than

Electoral data for India (1952-1967) and South Africa (1994-1999)

	INC/India	ANC/South Africa
Average vote/seat share (%)	44.6/69.2	64.5/64.75
Average difference in vote/seat share (%)	24.65	0.25
Average difference between largest and second largest party in terms of votes/seats (%)	33/63.4	49.5/49.75
Average effective number of parties (votes/seats)*	4.3/1.8	2.2/2.2
Average volatility**	29.6***	35.3****
Average Turnout	52.6	77.5*****

Notes:
* the effective number of parties (Laakso/Taagepera 1979) being sensitive to the relative sizes of parties, is calculated as follows:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i{}^2}$$

with pi as the vote/seat share of the i-party; only parties represented in parliament were counted.
**Pedersen's (1983) index of volatility counts the sum of net votes won/lost of relevant parties from one election to the next
*** only parties with 2% or more of the vote share were counted
**** only parties at least once represented in parliament were counted
***** in the 1999 elections a registration of voters was conducted; the figure was calculated on the basis of % of eligible South Africans voting
Source: Enskat/Mitra/Singh 2001 for India, Engel (1999) for South Africa 1994, Reynolds (1999) for South Africa 1999.

the INC was, even during the heyday of OPD in India. In fact, the INC never won more than 50% of the popular vote throughout its history of electoral dominance; its governmental authority was always based on so called 'manufactured majorities'. Nevertheless, when it comes to the proportion of parliamentary seats each party gained under their respective electoral systems as well as to the average difference between largest and second-largest party in terms of seats, the INC outdistances the ANC by a margin of nearly 5 and 14 percentage points respectively.

Given the high average turnout which, in the case of India, is remarkable in view of its predominantly rural and illiterate electorate, the degree of volatility is relatively low compared to western democracies (it is extremely low considering the fact that between a founding and second election, voters' orientations are often not yet fully developed, and, taking into account that a great deal of 'new' parties in successive elections had just changed their respective names).

But the dominance of a party is also dependent on the state of the opposition parties, how they interact with the dominant party and what role they perform for the pattern of competition prevalent in a system of OPD.

OPPOSITION

Despite opposition parties in a system of OPD having practically no chance to take power, they nevertheless have an essential function guaranteeing the competitiveness of the party system and determining the dominant party's strategy. Except for the Communist and Hindu-Nationalist parties opposition politics in India during the first two decades after independence was essentially a matter of Congress factions no longer comfortable within the framework of the dominant party. In fact, apart from the *Jana Sangh*, the *Hindu Mahasabha* and the Communist Party of India (CPI), most parties had lineages that could have been traced back to the INC.

On the left side of the party spectre there were the Communists and the Socialists. The Communists, initially successful in increasing their vote share after independence, gradually lost momentum after the split of 1964 and remained relatively marginal in Indian politics except for their regional strongholds in West Bengal and Kerala. The electoral career of the Socialists, once a faction within the INC, is characterised by a succession of various mergers and splits often induced by the INC party leadership. Up to the elections of 1971 there were four relevant socialist parties competing with the 'democratic socialism' of the INC. Despite minor electoral successes they were never able to entrench themselves in the Indian party system in the long run.

On the right side of the party spectre, if one applies the categories derived from European party sociology, there were the Hindu Nationalists in form of the *Jana Sangh*, the parliamentary arm of the RSS and predecessor of the BJP, and the *Swatantra* Party, founded in 1956. The *Swatantra*, originally a faction within the INC as well, attempted to countervail left-leaning tendencies within the INC and

gave itself the image of the only 'truly liberal' party in India at that time. It was able to gain support among the INC clientele in the elections of 1962 and 1967, but – after massive losses in 1971 – finally disappeared from Indian party politics. Apart from these main opposition parties which - together with the INC - won 85% of the popular vote on average in the first four elections after independence, there were a *plethora* of regional parties which were of minor relevance for the composition of the *Lok Sabha*, but, nonetheless, had an impact on the national party system through their electoral successes on the regional level.

In South Africa, the situation is different. There, the party system is largely the product of the transformation process. All the established parties of the South African party system as well as the nationally relevant movements and anti-apartheid groups were deeply affected by the political reform process initiated by president De Klerk. Most of the formerly banned parties or movements – like the ANC or PAC - representing the African majority were for the first time confronted with preparing themselves for electoral competition, taking part in the elaboration of a constitution and making themselves available for government responsibility, in sum, they had to think about the future shape of the country and their role within its political system. For the parties of the *ancièn regime*, i.e. the nationally relevant parties representing the white minority apart from the Democratic Party (DP), it meant to learn the ropes of opposition politics. For some time, the National Party (NP) as the prime representative of the apartheid regime had to display an oppositional stand toward the ANC while, at the same time, sitting in cabinet due to the provision of a 'Government of National Unity' (GNU) until the elections of 1999 according to section 88 of the interim constitution. The participation of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) – once entrenched in bitter rivalry to the ANC - in the GNU outlived the provisions of section 88 of the interim constitution. Although there was no need for the ANC as the majority party to share governmental power after the 1999 elections, the IFP retained its three cabinet seats in the newly formed government under Thabo Mbeki. 'White' opposition tried to redefine their image and to concentrate their electoral strength. The NP was renamed shortly before the elections of 1999 (New National Party – NNP) and in 2000 DP and NNP announced that they were joining together as the Democratic Alliance (DA). But the latter attempt was short-lived. Just one year later, the DA split thus reinforcing opposition fragmentation once again. Apart from these three main opposition parties (NNP, DP (DA) and IFP), the United Democratic Front (UDM) – led by former Transkei military chief Bantu Holomisa and the NP's chief negotiator Roelf Meyer - emerged as a fourth party in the last elections winning 14 parliamentary seats with a strong performance in the Eastern Cape province.

Now, taking into account the two countries socio-structural givens and electoral systems, the following conclusions could have been drawn in accordance with theoretical reasoning within common party system theory: Simplified, in the case of India the institutionalist - inspired by 'Duverger's Law' - would argue that due to the electoral system of SMSP/FTPT a two-party system should have emerged, whereas the scholar in the tradition of Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage theory would say that due to the abundant profusion of social cleavages, the party

system is foreordained to extreme fragmentation or even atomisation.[24] In the case of South Africa, the institutionalist would say that due to PR the party system should necessarily be characterised by a proliferation of a *plethora* of political parties, whereas the sociologist would argue that the overarching racial cleavage inevitably leads to a party system structured along the arithmetic of the racial census. Except for the sociologist in the South African case all other scholars' arguments were proven wrong empirically. And, even the sociologist could be accused of not being accurate in his analysis of the South African electorate for there are many more cleavages prevalent in South African society than just race and it is by now part and parcel of scholarly knowledge that South Africa is made up of several different 'societies'.[25]

Now, one could argue that the determinism inherent in these two theoretical approaches has long been overcome and that the structuring effects on the party system of either political institutions or the socio-structural make-up of a society depend heavily on other intervening variables and aspects of the specific regional context. But this would mean to open the door to some form of cultural relativism and singular explanation, something no political scientist would agree with.
Instead, the next paragraph will argue that despite institutionally and structurally so different contexts strategic choices and decisions made by the respective dominant parties' leadership were crucial for the 'achievement' of OPD, and, it will introduce party agency as the 'missing link' necessary to explain the similarity in the historical outcome

THE 'ACHIEVEMENT' OF OPD IN INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

The question of 'how a system of OPD emerged in the two countries' demands a multi-layered answer comprising an intricate mix of institutional, structural and party agentive factors. Clearly, the 'history of struggle' both parties were identified with in no small part contributed to the initial electoral dominance of the INC and ANC. The fact that the memory of this history was coupled with the charismatic leadership of Nehru and Mandela reinforced both parties' electoral appeal even more.[26]

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[24] This is in line with the general scholarly prediction about India's territorial integrity and democratic career at the time sociological interpretations of democratisation gained prominence, see, for example, Harrison (1960: 338).

[25] Additionally, several surveys conducted from the first elections in 1994 onwards show that race is not only no longer the primary source of social identity, but also that its relevance for party identification is less important than presumed (see, for example, data on South Africa collected by the 'Institute for a Democratic South Africa' (IDASA, http://www.idasa.org.za) as part of the 'Afrobarometer' project (http://www.afrobarometer.org), and Mattes et al. (1995, p. 390); Mattes and Piombo (2001).

[26] In this vein, two early quotes by Nehru and Mandela respectively are revealing (they also refer to the two respective parties' movement character, a rhetorical device quite often used to reinsure their claim to legitimacy and governance):

But, even in the formative phase of a party system, the symbolic capital derived from this 'history of struggle' and charismatic leadership is not sufficient to guarantee the dominant party's control over the electorate.

However, the room to manoeuvre for party elites in nascent democracies is bigger and they can have a profound impact on party system formation. Whereas most of the literature implicitly sees party system formation as reflecting society, the following suggests a top-down approach.

That is why systems of OPD are to some extent 'achieved' and not entirely emanating only from society when in fact they were often structured from above. There are basically three factors or processes that were crucial for this 'achievement' of OPD in India and South Africa:

First, the dominant party right from the beginning has to initiate a 'historic project' that determines the national public policy agenda and lays the roots for a long-lasting support base (Pempel 1990: 340 ff.). Some kind of a programmatic appeal which, by telling the mass electorate that the governing party will transform their lives, guarantees a deep identification between the dominant party and a majority in the electorate.

In India this 'historic project' was centred around a national consensus comprising the well-known ingredients of secularism, democratic socialism, mixed economy, non-alignment and nationalism. Apart from the symbolic value attached to this 'national ideology'[27] - partly institutionalised in form of the Directive Principles enshrined in the constitution and the independent planning commission – , two components of this consensus were crucial. On the one hand, the secular ideal of the INC's policy guaranteed the alignment of the Muslim constituency to the

The Congress necessarily has to function as an electoral organisation, but that is not its only or its most important task. It has been our proud privilege to be the soldiers in a mighty national movement which brought freedom to this country. We cannot allow Congress to shrink now into just an electoral organisation (…) Our party organisation must be something more than a party. It must win confidence and respect by patient and self-sacrificing service, and thus live in the hearts of our people.
Nehru in *The Statesman*, New Delhi, 23 January 1954.

The ANC has never been a political party. It was formed as a parliament of the African people. Right from the start, up to now, the ANC is a coalition, if you want, of people of various political affiliations. Some will support free enterprise, others socialism. Some are conservatives, others are liberals. We are united solely by our determination to oppose racial oppression. That is the only thing that unites us. There is no question of ideology as far as the odyssey of the ANC is concerned, because any question approaching ideology would split the organization from top to bottom. Because we have no connection whatsoever except this one, our determination is to dismantle apartheid.
Mandela in *The Washington Post*, Washington, 26 June 1990.

[27] As Kothari (1970: 144) notes: "Harping constantly and in an almost tiresome manner on the themes of democracy, socialism, planning, non-involvement in power-blocs, and related ideas, he [Nehru] created a framework of discourse which laid the semantic and symbolic basis of national unity."

party; on the other hand, politics of social reform, especially the institutionalisation of reservations and quota, secured the support of the socially oppressed, i.e. the untouchables.

Together with the regionally dominant castes that were allied to the INC for other reasons (see below) these groups constituted one third of the Indian electorate, a vote pool that – coupled with the specific conditions of the Indian electoral system – almost always guaranteed electoral majority.

In South Africa, party leadership within the ANC was well aware that the envisaged building of an idealised 'rainbow nation' would not be sufficient to guarantee the symbolic capital necessary to continued monopolisation of the national agenda. That is why shortly after the elections of 1994 the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was launched, a "co-ordinated, centrally planned and interlocking approach to the national upliftment of the formerly disadvantaged" (Schlemmer 1999: 290). Although the subsequent suspension of the RDP (1996) and the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR), basically a neo-liberal and pro-capitalist macro-economic framework, contributed to a decrease in credibility of the governing party in terms of its capacity to 'deliver', and, at the same time, produced tensions within the tripartite alliance, the RDP reassured the dominant party's support base of its good intentions and the ANC has nevertheless remained firmly committed to affirmative action and the social transformation of the society.

Second, party elites have to ensure that the institutional arrangement of the polity works in the favour of the dominant party which means that there are guarantees that the dominant party is in a position to play its organisational advantage and electoral dominance off against opposition parties.

Whereas in India, INC leaders – cognisant of the fact that they would benefit from the Westminster FTPT electoral system as long as opposition remained fragmented and in a cumbersome organisational state – did not consider alternative electoral regimes, they sought provisions for giving Indian federalism a unitary shape in order to alter developments of the party system to their favour whenever necessary as was the case with the imposition of President's rule on the CPI government of Kerala in 1959. But – despite the opportunities of control by the Centre inherent in Indian federalism – the INC under Nehru's leadership opted for some kind of 'co-operative federalism' whereby party leadership intervened whenever factional disputes in the states threatened to go off the rails, but, at the same time, gave the states enough autonomy to manage conflicts on their own without endangering the authority of the central government. This co-operative federalism was further reinforced by the states reorganisation which was accompanied by a gradual regionalisation of the Congress apparatus as well. In the course of this process, the INC succeeded in co-opting regionally dominant castes and village authorities thus broadening its already vast support base.

In South Africa, interestingly enough, the ANC opted for an electoral system that ran counter to its partisan interests, for a first-past-the-post system would have clearly benefited the ANC as the putative majority party. The option for an electoral system of proportional representation, however, can be seen either as an

example of the ANC's goodwill for compromise[28] or ideological commitment to integrate as many societal groups as possible into the political system (see, for example, Sisk 1994: 12, and Pottie 2001: 154), or, as an indication that the ANC – cognisant of the fact that it would yield enough electoral support to overcome the power-sharing requirements of the interim constitution – was, nevertheless, geared towards establishing majority rule (Mattes 1994: 7, Sisk 1995: 190), in other words to turn South Africa into what was once termed by Nelson Mandela as a "normal democracy as the world knows it"[29]. The adoption of PR gained attraction for the ANC for yet another reason: On the one hand, the closed-list variant of PR was adopted which meant that ultimately it is the party leadership which decides who will be nominated as a candidate for contesting elections thus enabling the party to 'punish' rebellious or unpopular MP's. On the other hand, a corollary of the South African electoral system is the prohibition on floor-crossing or anti-defection law, a further encouragement to stay within the dominant party in order to 'share the fruits of power'.[30]

To be clear, electoral systems or federal arrangements do little to explain OPD (Esping-Andersen: 1990: 57), but as institutional incentives they can reinforce OPD if the "politician of the dominant part (…) makes the appropriate decisions…" (Arian and Barnes 1974: 614).

Finally, party leaders and activists of the dominant party must be engaged as entrepreneurs on the electoral market meaning they must actively seek support in the most pragmatic fashion available. This involves both, the positioning of the image of the party in such a way that it yields the greatest electoral appeal, and, the recruitment of leaders with strong local or regional followings.

The ability of the INC to secure 'vote-banks' is well-known. Clientelist linkages pervaded the local and regional party structure and a process of 'vertical mobilisation' (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967) gained momentum. At the same time, INC tactics comprised the depoliticisation of potential cleavages through accommodation like, for example, the abolition of the *zamindari* system or the abovementioned states reorganisation, and, the widest possible variability and pragmatism in terms of its ideological orientation just depending on a swing of the pendulum in public opinion. Thus, changing issue positions allowed the INC to occupy the middle-ground of the ideological spectre and to react selectively to the rise of oppositional forces. To give an example, its *Avadi* resolution of 1955 oriented towards a 'socialistic pattern of society' took away from the socialist parties a good deal of their rationale, and, when the *Swatantra* party tried to mobilise peasants against the INC's land reforms, it easily modified its politics of co-operative farming to defuse the protest.

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[28] Lijphart (1994: 229) even goes further, stating that „The ANC's high-minded stance on PR runs completely counter to the conventional wisdom that political parties act on the basis of their narrow partisan self-interests – putting political scientists who operate on this assumption to shame!"

[29] Quote from ‚FW Briefs Leaders on Plans for Multi-Party Talks', in: *Argus*. 5 November 1991, p. 1.

[30] See Giliomee and Simkins (1999: 16): "Indeed, it [the closed PR list electoral formula] suited the ANC so well that it would have had to invent it if it did not exist."

The situation in South Africa is different. Whereas in India the successful strategy of the INC involved the 'muting' of potential cleavages in order to preserve its image as the catch-all 'party of consensus', a strategy of encouraging the racial consolidation of the vote must be seen as the best (and most rational) option that was and is at offer for the ANC to perpetuate its electoral dominance. Despite multiple potential cleavages other than racial and a growing African middle-class there is still an overwhelming coincidence of race and class that underpins a common perception of a 'Black-White', 'Rich-Poor' dichotomy. The ANC capitalises on this dichotomy that papers over genuine cleavages of the South African society by delineating all of the country's inequalities in racial terms and evoking emotive support for the 'continuing struggle' against the legacies of apartheid. This strategy is made easier by the fact that the NNP and DP are basically pandering to their non-African constituencies, and, the IFP, unable to gain a majority of the vote even among its most obvious pool of supporters, Zulus, has joined Mbeki in declaring that the 'race' divide is also the 'inequality' divide for the sake of sharing power within an ANC-led government.

But the ANC also tries to co-opt local elites by giving them promising positions in the party's candidate lists. This was evident in the Western Cape province before the 1999 elections as the ANC attempted to broaden its support base by appealing to the province's Coloured communities.

One can deduct from the foregoing that against common academic wisdom and party system theory the role that party agentive factors play in the genesis and structuring of the two party systems under examination is clearly a crucial explanatory factor when it comes to the question of how a distinct party system is shaped and much more valuable than any kind of structural or institutional determinism.

In the two cases it was or is basically parties' initiative in terms of political actors and party leaders acting as determinant agents of institutional arrangements and policies as well as entrepreneurs on the electoral market that accounts for a great deal of the formation of a system of OPD.

Neither social cleavage theory, nor institutional determinism leave enough room to manoeuvre for party elites and political actors, or, in other words, give strictly political factors and party agency the explanatory power they deserve within party system theory, at least in the context of changing societies.
The preceding corresponds to the view formulated by Arian and Barnes (1974: 599) in their seminal article on OPD in Italy and Israel:

> (…) in many multiparty systems, parties are the result of historical and social forces and are only partially the conscious creation of political leaders. And in single party systems, only organizational inadequacies set limits on the exercise of power. The dominant party system is one in which politics is king, in which dominance results from strategic political decisions made by the party elite. Politics is not a dependent variable. Political strategy is determining.

MAINTENANCE OF OPD IN INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA: MECHANISMS OF CONTROL AND COMPETITION

The foregoing may account for the emergence or founding of OPD in the respective regional contexts but cannot explain continued dominance and gives only a slight indication of the mechanisms of control and competition at work in a system of OPD.

How and why is the dominant party able to maintain dominance after the euphoria of freedom has worn off, or, in other words, how is it able to countervail the inherent dynamics of OPD once described by Duverger (1954: 312) as follows:

> Domination takes the zest from political life, simultaneously bringing stability. The dominant party wears itself out in office, it loses its vigour, its arteries harden. It would be possible to show that every domination bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction.[31]

There are basically four processes of constant fine-tuning and adaptation to changing social conditions whereby dominant parties attempt to ensure continued dominance and try to determine the further development of the party system.
The following thereby also hints at the qualitative criteria or systemic constituents of a system of OPD that should be part of any classification or typology of OPD in the context of changing societies.

In the Indian case, there is already a prominent interpretative model at hand to account for the internal dynamics of the party system in the two decades following independence. The concept of the 'Congress system' as pioneered by Kothari and Morris-Jones (see footnote 18) neatly grasps the logic of two of the four processes of maintaining dominance elaborated below.

Interaction with Opposition

The first of these processes is the specific interaction with opposition parties taking place in a system of OPD. Opposition parties can either be co-opted or tolerated within certain limits or delegitimised (Levite and Tarrow 1983: 295 ff.). Often, several strategies are employed simultaneously, but all of them serve as strategic device to reinforce dominance and perpetuate vertical party interaction characterised by patterns of (moral) domination rather than competition.

In India, the basic pattern of interaction with opposition was toleration within certain limits or, in the words of Kothari (1964: 1162), opposition parties were

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[31] In the same vein, Morris-Jones described the paradox of post-independent OPD in the Indian context: "(…) to dominate, Congress [Indian National Congress, C. S.] must accommodate; yet accommodation encourages incoherence which destroys the capacity to dominate." (Morris-Jones 1978 (1966): 224). A contradictory point of view is given by Pempel (1990: 16) who argues that OPD is characterised by reinforcing processes of the interrelationship between its causes and consequences creating a "virtuous cycle of dominance" where office achieved through a dominant position is used to ensure further dominance.

allowed to act as 'parties of pressure' on the 'party of consensus' thus exerting a 'latent threat' on the dominant party and, at the same time, making it sensitive to waning popular support. Opposition parties thereby lobbied factions within the dominant party in order to articulate specific interests[32], and, whenever a Congress faction or opposition party came to close to openly opposing the mainstream Congress position, their success or failure served as a barometer which the INC noticed for evidence that it is bending too much in a certain direction.[33] But, when this form of 'internalised opposition' was not at offer for reasons of ideological distance or electoral success of opposition in the states, the INC – apart from what Hardgrave (1980: 150) has described as "undermining the opposition, taking over their programs, conceding basic issues, and co-opting their leadership" – also fell back on direct intervention in terms of exclusion or imposing President's rule on opposition governments whenever necessary.

Delegitimisation of opposition is much more prominent in South African party politics, at least rhetorically. Although co-optation of opposition parties takes place, most visible in the case of the IFP, the ANC's stand towards the opposition is basically one of denying them any credibility to criticise the governing alliance. However, as Friedman (1999: 111) points out, "Harsh rhetoric is not necessarily delegitimisation: to fulfil the latter criterion, ruling party denunciations must question the opposition's loyalty to the democratic order." There have been attacks of this sort on the NP[34] and DP (DA), - even on the IFP before 1994 - but they still occur at the rhetoric level only. But delegitimisation takes places in another, yet related field of political discourse, one that was of no importance during the heyday of OPD in India: Since 1997 the ANC government is increasingly making the claim that media coverage of the government and party, particularly of Mbeki, is still based on racial stereotypes; the effect of such claims on the exercise of press freedom could be devastating.

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[32] See Kothari (1970: 305): „One [of the characteristics of the INC as a full-fledged party system] has been the peculiar communication system of Indian politics by which the position of each of the major opposition parties has been reflected in one or another of the factions within the Congress Party: the socialist faction, the *Swatantra* faction, the *Jan Sangh* faction, and so on."

[33] Apart from the ‚watchdog' role described by Kothari, the Congress system did not deem subordinate parties superfluous for yet another reason. As Burger (1969: 284) notes:

> The most important function that opposition parties play is as 'feeder' organisations to the dominant party. A dominant party is not necessarily an 'open accordion'. It may be that the dominant party can open its ranks to new groups only when they have become politically significant – which means previous to entry. Opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh could be perennial minority parties, serving to socialise, politicise, recruit, organise, integrate and articulate the interests of groups only to see them incorporated into the dominant party.

[34] Attacks on the legitimacy of the NP as the party which introduced and implemented apartheid, come close to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.

To some extent, the ANC has 'internalised' opposition as well by forging its potential left contenders, the SACP and COSATU, into a fragile but yet coherent alliance.

Both, the INC and ANC, justify attempts of delegitimisation by projecting themselves as the embodiment of an all-inclusive nationalism and the only political force capable in bringing about 'transformation'. There is a striking similarity between Nehru's famous dictum that "The Congress is the country and the country is Congress"[35] and its implicit meaning, and, the statement of the ANC's National Executive Council that "As the organisation of the people, it is our responsibility to ensure that [the] masses use the precious democratic rights they won through struggle, to determine their own destiny (...) Once again, only our movement, and no other political formation, is capable of carrying out this national mobilisation.[36]

Selective Mobilisation

The second process of ensuring control over the electorate is selective mobilisation. Selective mobilisation as described by Arian and Barnes (1974: 598) leads the dominant party to 'focus its mobilisational efforts on those segments of society that are going to make fewer demands on government.'

Selective mobilisation involves basically two processes: purchasing support by positive discrimination of or granting resources to certain societal groups, and,

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[35] Quoted in Morris-Jones (1964: 90).

[36] Statement of the National Executive Committee of the ANC on the 87th Anniversary of the African National Congress, January 8 1999. Available under http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/jan8-99.html. Even today, the INC is following a similar line of reasoning as apparent from the Golden Jubilee Resolution of 1997:

> The Indian National Congress, alone of all political parties of our democracy, belongs to all of the country. There is not a village in India, not a mohalla, where there is not a Congress presence. That presence rises and falls --that is the essence of democracy. But the essence of nation-building is that no section of the people must feel that there is not a place for them in the premier political party, the natural party of governance. Other parties represent a region, a class, a creed, a caste, an interest. The Congress alone represents, and is represented in, every region, every class, every creed, every caste --and in every interest which is in the interest of the nation. That is why, whenever the Congress has secured the people's mandate to govern the country, it has never faltered in fulfilling its mandate to the end, and that is also why whenever any other party or group of parties has been entrusted by the people with the duty of governance, they have never failed to falter, falling out among themselves in a matter of months, endangering the unity, the security, the progress and the prosperity of this great nation. The Congress is the glue, the bonding adhesive, that holds the polity of this country together.

Golden Jubilee Resolution passed at the 80th Plenary session of the INC in August 1997 at Calcutta; see *Congress Marches Ahead* (Jan 1996-December 1997), AICC publication (April 1998), p.160.

aggregating a large range of interest in society but giving voice only to certain spokesman of these interests.

Apart from the positive discrimination of the socially disadvantaged and ideological appeal to the minorities already mentioned, the INC initially did concentrate mobilisational efforts at creating a labour aristocracy based on its policy of planned and state-induced industrialisation and advancement of the urban sector. Support was basically purchased by turning unionised workers into a labour elite with better wages, subsidised credit, housing and health care etc. Additionally, the INC successfully secured support from one of the two national umbrella organisations of Indian unions, the Indian Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Although the electoral dividend of this strategy was not overwhelming due to a rather incremental industrialisation, it nevertheless prevented a unified and nationally relevant workers' party from gaining momentum.[37]

But one of the essentials of continued electoral dominance is a "progressive expansion" (Mitra 1996: 706) of the dominant party's social base. In a predominantly agrarian society this requires a concentrated effort at mobilising peasants and dominant agrarian castes. Although the INC was able to represent agrarian interests within its fold, visible from the fact that the share of MP's with a rural background rose from 15% in 1947 to 40% in 1962 (Rosen 1967: 73), it never really succeeded in winning over the agrarian vote by means of selective mobilisation comprising extensive land reform, social programmes and development of the agrarian sector.

Corporatism as strategic device to bind workers to the dominant party and not to intimidate business interests is much more prominent in the South African context given the size of organised labour in the country (one third of formal sector workers). The corporatist arrangement is institutionalised in form of the National Economic and Development and Labour Advisory Council (NEDLAC) and gives the ANC the opportunity to actively pursue selective mobilisation. Union-friendly labour legislation or near monopolies for large white-controlled corporations ensure the support of the economically satisfied. With COSATU as part of the ruling alliance union demands stay within limits. At the same time, a growing African middle-class is advanced through affirmative action in the civil service and through state contracts (Giliomee and Simkins 1999: 345).

The Achilles Heel of the ANC's 'progressive expansion' of its social base are the rural poor and unemployed. Whether the ANC will be able to prevent the rise of an intra-African cleavage (what it tries to do by counting all Africans being part of a the 'majority') will to a great extent depend on the status of 'delivery'.

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[37] Another strategic device of the INC/state's control over union demands was described by Rudolph and Rudolph (1987: 257) as "involuted pluralism" whereby a state-induced multiplication of rival trade unions makes it easier for the state "to manipulate an increasing number of weaker units."

Factionalism and Party Coherence

But selective mobilisation is not enough to ensure the dominant party's aspiration and rationale to "make its support structure coterminous with the entire politically relevant public" (Singh 1981: 27). For that purpose the organisational set-up of the dominant party must allow internal pluralism or factionalism to ensure the representation of societal interests as diverse as the social make-up of the country, but, at the same time, the level of party coherence should not drop below a certain limit. From a systemic perspective factionalism also guarantees the competitiveness of the system and compensates for a lack of alternation in government: Where inter-party competition is weak, there is a need for equivalents that countervail the rise of authoritarian decision-making.

Factionalism within the INC was an art far more than an inevitability. On the one hand, it allowed the INC to absorb, accommodate and react to diverging societal interest. The existence of vertical "faction chains" (Kothari: 1964: 1163) thereby enhanced the INC's capacity to channel and co-ordinate conflicts. Factional struggles on a lower level of governmental or intra-party decision-making were solved through authority and patronage from the next-upper level, factional struggles in the upper echelons of government or party were solved by building coalitions through deal-making on a lower level. On the other hand, factionalism guaranteed a high degree of elite-turnover[38] and informal 'internal democracy'. The most prominent example of factionalism and its functionality for the INC was the rivalry between organisational wing and parliamentary wing. As Mitra (1990: 85) pointed out: "The parliamentary wing publicly identified itself with the basic values of secularism, bureaucracy planning, nonalignment and egalitarianism which formed the basis of the modern state. The organisational wing acted as the intermediary between the state and the society, modifying the 'primordial' to suit the 'modern' and adapting modern institutions to the norms of a traditional society."

But party leadership always had to be aware of the potential dangers inherent in factionalism and to intervene whenever factional tendencies threatened to get out of control. The famous clash of the INC's governing elite and the 'Syndicate' or the conflict over the succession of Shastri were first signs of the gradual decline of the intricate factional balance prevalent during the heyday of OPD in India.

Factionalism in South Africa is to some extent institutionalised in form of the Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, COSATU and SACP. Additionally, the close linkage between the ANC and civil society stemming from the shared experience of the anti-apartheid struggle reinforces the tradition of the movement's often loud diversity.

But, in contrast to the INC, the different factions within the ruling alliance are mainly of an ideological nature. On the one hand, this is a guarantee that not every personal ambition is translated into a faction. On the other hand, if there are major policy shifts, factional conflicts can go off the rails more easily. The recent tensions within the alliance over the adoption of GEAR bear witness of this fact.

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[38] An example of this kind of informal elite-rotation was the *Kamaraj* plan of 1963.

And, with the gradual gaining of power of the exile wing within the ANC – personalised in the ascendancy of Thabo Mbeki – emphasis on party discipline in the tradition of an exile movement has gained momentum. Much will depend on reducing centralist tendencies to ensure that the tacit agreement on 'unity' within the alliance will endure for the foreseeable future.

In terms of representativeness of the governing elite, the ANC is basically pursuing the same strategy as the INC (Nicholson 1975). In principle, the PR list electoral system gives the party leadership a strong instrument at hand to impose discipline on its cadres, but, rather, the ANC has used this device to display its readiness to represent every section of South African society. In the words of Giliomee and Simkins (1999: 17): "The ANC has forestalled criticisms of a black bias by drawing up its party list in such a way that 30 per cent of those elected to Parliament come from the coloured, Indian and white communities despite the fact that these communities contributed only six per cent to the overall ANC vote."

State-party collusion and patronage

> I'll vote for the opposition when they are in power[39]

The last and often most prominent of these four processes is the gradual attempt of the dominant party to blur the line between it and the state. This is done for two reasons: On the one hand, it facilitates the bestowal of patronage on the dominant party's clientele. On the other hand, identification with the state to some extent becomes synonymous with identification with the dominant party.

In India patronage politics were favoured by what has been termed as "state-dominated pluralism" (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987: 255). The omnipresence of the state and the effect of the close liaison between the INC and government agencies on partisan attachment is illustrated by Morris-Jones (1978: 222) as follows:

> (…) every group that seeks new advantages and amelioration of its position must above all try to ensure that its voice is heard in the counsels of government. The level of government that is most relevant varies according to the kind of benefit that is sought: for a private commercial licence, it is the Center; for educational concessions for a caste bloc, it will be the State, for this or that development benefit for a cultivator, it will be, increasingly, the new indirectly elected local bodies such as the Panchayati Samiti. For these operations one must have friends who can influence people. Congress is such a body of organised friends.

The second factor that facilitated a patronage structure was the existence of traditional clientelist institutions like the *jajmani* system of reciprocal bonds between status bearers and clientele. Often, these were the base for the dominant

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[39] Anonymous Serb peasant cited by Timothy Garton Ash. Quoted in Gilomee and Simkins (1999: 337)

party's organisation of political machines corresponding to Arian and Barnes' (1974: 601) view that "(…) these [hierarchical] lines of communication, extended and humanized by networks of personal ties, are the true instruments of control in the societies, and they are largely co-opted by the dominant party."

Blurring the line between the state and the dominant party is a standard device of the ANC's rhetoric. By equating the ANC's historic mission of 'transformation' of the society with the South African state's rationale, ANC leaders and government spokespeople are very ready to view criticisms and even legal challenges to their authority as evidence of conspirational resistance to transformation (Lodge: 1999: 73). Characterising opposition as 'unpatriotic' leaves little room to manoeuvre, since every attack on the ANC comes close to an assault on the state.

But patronage politics while part of the ANC's strategy to widen its support base is constrained by the limited reach of the South African state and the ANC's embrace of a market economy. Given the limited opportunity of the ANC to rely on a strong interventionist state makes the expansion of distributive politics more difficult and even more dangerous taking into account that, whereas a dominant party must distribute enough to its support base to retain its loyalty, it must also ensure "that its opponent's supporters derive enough from public administration to ensure their continued loyalty to the democratic order." (Friedman 1999: 104).

SOUTH AFRICA TURNS INDIA: WHAT WAY AHEAD?

Despite the similarity in the historical outcome - a competitive party system structured around the electoral and ideological dominance of one party that is seen as the primary embodiment of an all-inclusive nationalism -, and the similarity in processes of control and competition inherent in the working of the two respective party systems as elaborated above, there are three intervening variables that have a crucial impact on the strategy of the dominant party and the working of the system: The first one is the level of political awareness and political penetration of the electorate. Political apathy and lack of interest in political matters serves the dominant party, for it makes the task of manipulating cleavages easier and the probability of a 'floating vote' less likely. In the same vein, the strength of civil society and associational life in South Africa provides a countervailing force to the dominant party's control over the electorate. Second, the globalised international political economy wherein the South African state is embedded minimises the availability of a strong interventionist state thus reducing its reach and hindering the effective use of patronage politics. And, third, the status of industrialisation and size of organised labour suggests a stronger emphasis on corporatism as strategic device for the ANC to entrench its dominance. These differences, together with the fact that - compared to the INC - the ANC is much less prepared organisationally to bring about sufficient elite-mass integration, may account for a different development of the two countries' systems of OPD.

Nevertheless, three scenarios based on the Indian experience of post-OPD development are likely to emerge in the South African context as well: Tensions

within the ruling tripartite alliance may foreshadow a split of the dominant party as was the case with the INC in 1969. But whereas the INC under Indira was able to consolidate electoral dominance once again, a leftwing contender of the ANC harping on a similar ideological programme and relying to some extent on the same clientele, would make a return to a system of OPD more difficult. Another scenario would be the regionalisation of the South African party system along the Indian pattern. Signs of a conflict between national leadership and provincial ANC cadres that stems from a neglect of the provinces by the upper echelons of the party are already visible and remind one of the clashes of the INC's governing elite and the 'Syndicate'. Additionally, the demographic distribution within South Africa allows for the materialisation of differing patterns of party competition in the provinces and the emergence of sub-national tendencies. The final and most dangerous scenario would be the turning of the ANC's leadership to a kind of populism as exercised by Indira Gandhi and based on the need to accommodate and mobilise the rural poor and unemployed in order to uphold control over the electorate.

As we have seen from the foregoing, the 'road' that the South African party system will take is much more dependent on decision-making by and agency of the party elite than on any kind of structural or institutional determinism.

OPD: MIDWIFE OR GRAVEDIGGER OF DEMOCRACY?

Now to the final and most important question of the paper, a question that I am not ready yet to answer satisfactorily, at least with regard to the South African context: Has OPD a positive or negative effect on processes of democratic consolidation, national integration and socio-economic development as the most pressing challenges changing societies are facing?

What seems clear is that OPD contributed to India's political stability and integrative capacity in the first two decades following independence. And, even sceptics of the putative benefits of OPD for nascent democracies like Giliomee and Simkins (1999: 3) concede that the ANC's dominance was a much better stabilising mechanism than "(…) a fragmented party system with a huge price at stake [where] competition might well have been so fierce as to derail the democratisation process." When we turn to the contribution of the 'Congress system' to India's democratic resilience and socio-economic development, we are on more speculative ground. On the one hand, some of the mechanisms of control described above sail close to the winds of a full-fledged liberal democracy and India's record of economic growth and distribution is far from being impressive. On the other hand, given the context of changing societies that demands capacities from the political system going far beyond the 'classic' functions ascribed to parties and the party system in western democracies, India's democratic career and incremental growth is remarkable. And, seemingly 'undemocratic' features of the representational system, like clientelism or patronage politics, gain a new meaning considering this specific context. As Kitschelt (2000: 873) argues:

> (…) in the absence of a redistributive welfare state, democratic politicians may contain distributive struggles from spinning out of control and threatening the foundations of democracy by building clientelist-elite linkages wherever the circumstances are conducive […]. For democracies from India to much of Latin America, clientelist politics has constituted the functional equivalent of the welfare state, appeasing the have-nots to abide by political orders that tremendously advantage the haves.

But the argument – and final point made here - for a positive impact of OPD on democratisation in changing societies is based on another, more actor-oriented reason: Taking the stabilising effect of the Indian system of OPD as a premise for a judgement on the South African context, I would like to put an emphasis on party system characteristics as political opportunities or constraints bearing greatly on actors' decisions as to whether or not they can tolerate a democratic game. Referring to a recent consideration of Angrist (2001) this line of thinking conceives of a viable democracy as a bargain struck by elite actors, a bargain which no actor is keen to terminate. As long as no actor is calculating the risk of open-ended governance outcomes (as the essence of democratic governance) as to high, democracy as "the only game in town" (Przeworski 1990) has a chance to survive. Angrist now puts the pivotal role of parties and party system characteristics as determining factors of who will wield policy-making power to the fore. Depending on the outline of the party system the 'assessment of what rival parties bring to the competitive market ideologically, organisationally and mobilisationally' is a decisive factor in any given party elite's calculation whether democratic governance is tolerable. A system of OPD at least offers the chance that this calculation is made in favour of democratic governance.

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