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Chapter Thirteen

REGENERATION OF ANC POLITICAL POWER, FROM THE 1994 ELECTORAL VICTORY TO THE 2012 CENTENARY

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INTRODUCTION

In the process of bringing remarkable change to South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has, itself, become a remarkably changed organisation. The power it wielded over the country was persistent and strong, yet simultaneously post-peak and declining across the ‘four faces of power’ – the ANC in state and government; the ANC electorally, in competition with other political parties; the ANC in relation to the people; and the ANC organisationally. Its ‘continuous struggle for liberation’ was, by 2012, especially social and economic, yet also political in its interrogation of the 1994 constitutional values. Its struggle had, after more than 18 years in power, in many respects become a struggle to retain its power, while recognising that its liberation project was phased and incomplete. Even while the project was incomplete, processes set in that detracted from and undermined the power the ANC had gained. The odds were that the liberation it had wrought was probably never going to be complete.

In many respects the ANC’s decades-long challenge to apartheid power and its own ascent to dominance are well recorded. Yet the details of its contemporary position and the change in its political power between 1994 and 2012 are only occasionally explored in an integrated and systematic manner. In the years after 1994, the ANC worked to build, extend and consolidate its base. The ‘four faces of ANC power’ offer an inclusive analytical framework for tracking its consolidation of power and its ability continuously to reinvent itself and retain that power. This framework gives an all-around perspective of its political operations since 1994.

This chapter uses the four faces of power to deconstruct the ANC’s continuous reinvention since it took over the running of the state. These years have been both
kind and cruel and the burdens and seductions of being in power changed it. By 2012, it had become an amalgam of contradictions, with all four faces displaying blends of continuous strengths (no new strengths) and accumulating weaknesses. Still, new visions, new plans and turnaround strategies were recorded, albeit with moderated expectations for realisation. This chapter presents an interpretative synthesis of arguments and research data to arrive at an appraisal of the state of ANC power circa 2012. My book, *The ANC and the Regeneration of Political Power*, anchors the chapter’s arguments. Additional research has extended and updated the analysis into the centenary year.

The ANC obviously wishes to reinvent itself ad infinitum, to stay in power ‘until Jesus comes.’ The analysis demonstrates that the organisation is not in full control of this mission. Yet, the four-face character of its power means the ANC has inter-face backup – slippage on any particular front is unlikely to extend equally to all fronts. The inter-face operations are manifested on two parallel tiers of democracy. The continuously deep link to ‘the people’ gives backup against, for example, failures in government and declines in electoral support. In the words of an ANC intellectual, the decline of the ANC’s electoral power ‘is like a wave of the ocean rolling towards the coast ... it will happen, but we do not know the distance to the shore.’ This chapter first positions the period since 1994 historically, from the vantage point of the ANC’s conquest, consolidation and defence of the power it gained. Next, it tracks and compares how the power developed across the faces over the 18 years after 1994, then compares and synthesises the trends.

**THE ANC AND POLITICAL POWER**

Upon the political liberation of 1994, the ANC’s world of influence expanded into the domains of elections and the state. Its quest to regenerate power and reinvent itself continuously in this new era came with both new opportunities and new demands and challenges. The organisational and people-related control that carried over from the earlier struggle era was transformed, yet remained rooted in the struggle. The ANC’s post-1994 experiences with power pushed it into a world that brought many variations on the themes of mandates and reservoirs of support, both electoral and in direct engagements. It gained and consolidated immense strength, yet its walk in power twisted and turned in ways that rendered its standing more ambiguous and fragile than had been imagined at the onset.
This chapter touches on the dimensions of ‘who has the real power’ and what forces push the ANC to govern in particular ways, or to effect (or not effect) policy decisions. The analysis is largely located in the behavioural world, while interpretations recognise the likelihood that power is at its most effective when least observable. The chapter covers many of the collective and economic bases of the reproduction of political power, but the predominant focus remains political. The analysis is thus that of the superstructure – recognised to be extensively affected by economic power.

‘Power,’ in this chapter, denotes the ability to influence or control decisions and directions, be it in the ANC, the ANC in government or in the Tripartite Alliance (the alliance of the ANC, the South African Communist Party – SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions – Cosatu) via the ANC and/or government. It refers minimally to the balance between control and consent that governs the relationship between ruler and ruled. In a bottom-up manner, popular and voter support deliver the space to the ANC to take and implement organisationally and governmentally binding decisions; top-down voters and people can generally be steered to extend support and trust. Electoral mandates are crucial expressions – formal declarations – of the affirmative popular orientations. Without these forms of power, governments rule by force, coercion or outright violence and oppression. The ANC is no stranger to manufacturing consent and limiting dissent through propaganda and the control of information and intra-movement behaviour, yet it has not entered the trajectory of coercion and force.

The current chapter assesses a blend of strength-weakness gauges of the state of ANC power across the four faces and this section sets out the conceptual parameters of ‘strong’ and ‘weak.’ At the organisational level, the ANC’s strength is signalled by relative internal unity and co-operation, frank assessments despite contestation, and the acceptance of democratic centralism. When factional politics dominate the flow of ideas and challenges to the mother body prevail, weaknesses materialise. The acceptance of members’ rights to mobilise for leadership succession and for democratic branch operations suggests a vibrant ANC. However, factions mobilising for ‘a turn to drink from the trough,’ lingering discontent, and sense of organisational mission being subjected to the financial and political interests of factions point to an organisation that is increasingly fragile.

Secondly, the ANC’s electoral standing is strong if it retains support above 60 per cent both nationally and in a sizeable majority of the provinces and municipalities. It is considered weak if slippage takes it to below 60 per cent, towards a zone where...
opposition parties see opportunities for co-operation to construct alternative
governing alliances. Abstention and more general boycotts by (continuous) ANC
supporters suggest an intermediary zone where the organisation’s weakness does
not convert into opposition-party electoral support. ANC strength is also indicated
by acts to subsume other political parties, form alliances or co-opt individuals and
conduct above-board campaigns to defuse electoral threats. Crossing the boundary
to ‘underhand’ campaigning – using dirty tricks, forcing mass media into affirmation,
or using state resources – suggests that the ANC feels increasingly insecure.

Thirdly, in relation to the people, the ANC is virtually guaranteed continuous
strength as long as economic and social indicators are experienced as delivering
a better life in some way or another, and there is a continuous popular belief that
even if imperfect, the organisation is on the side of the people and is their best hope.
Weakness prevails in the face of failure to turn away from inequality, poverty and
unemployment. Associations with corruption-mismanagement detract from its
image as the best custodian. Equally, the ANC will be seen as strong if it continues to
be trusted to deliver, despite protest, and weak when community protest no longer
combines with electoral support, or combines less consistently. It is strong if there
is sound public participation and belief that inputs have a chance of successfully
influencing governance. Apathy and cynicism about public participation, co-optation
and participation ‘management’ constitute weaknesses.

Fourthly, at the all-important face of state and government, signals of a strong
ANC include policies that are experienced as addressing community needs and are
thus effectively implemented or realised policies. The review and correction of weak
institutions, effective co-ordination of government functions, proactive and inspir-
ing leadership and deployment that is matched with skills and accountability are
regarded as strengths. A weak ANC is characterised by policies that fail to meet tar-
ggets, the inability to decide on appropriate alternative policies, reluctance to change
deficient policy and pretence that policy is being changed, when, instead, it is just
being recast. In addition, institutional design that obstructs policy implementation,
or institutions that are continuously reinvented to create images of a government
at work, public institutions constituting zones for ANC organisational warfare, and
the private appropriation or abuse of public resources for individual or factional
interest, along with untouchable political deployees, are tangible weaknesses in the
ANC’s project for its own reinvention.
Parties and leaders aspire to power because it facilitates their pursuit of high ideals and real-life benefits. In the ANC it is, at best, about political leaders who govern from carefully crafted platforms that combine the public and private driving forces and arrive at reasonably credible compromises. Individual interest and the drive by public representatives and officials across the spheres of government to capture position and privilege have, in many instances, overshadowed the public good. The ANC’s saviour has been the reservoir of popular goodwill and continuous trust that it remains the prime delivery force. It retains power by being seen to be making progress in pursuit of shared ideals, or being imagined to be better able, thus far, to do that than opposition parties, despite many questions about public ethics.

The line that differentiates legitimate personal power and prestige from the untoward is diffuse and winding and profoundly affects the post-1994 ANC. When does the award of tenders to acquaintances, friends and constituents cross into inappropriate (dubious, even if perhaps not outwardly corrupt) behaviour? When do constituents start objecting? When do introductions to power holders to facilitate tendering and contracting become corrupt? Is it sufficient to declare interest and then proceed with involvement in contracts and projects? To what extent is the status of the ANC – as the commanding, iconic liberation party – a guarantee of access to private and corporate funding, both national and international? These questions all help define the ANC’s power in the year of its centenary.

**POST-1994 REINVENTION AND REGENERATION ACROSS THE FOUR FACES OF ANC POWER**

By its centenary year the ANC, both as party-movement and governing party, was working against ‘forces’ that threatened to reduce its organisational stature and impair it in achieving greater realisation of the ideals of the Freedom Charter and the 1996 Constitution through government. There was diminished certainty that it retained the ability to regenerate and restore the power it had lost. The indications were that its power remained vast, but past its peak. The ANC was entrenched in state power, yet fraught with lapses and deficits. It remained in a special relationship with the people, while it appeared that the period of post-liberation grace would be shorter than the duration of the ancien régime. Organationally it was far stronger than potential rivals, yet it was weakened by factions and indecisive leadership. The primary contradiction was that there were few substantive turnaround prospects, while it remained assured of government dominance for years to come.
This chapter’s review of the four faces of ANC power from 1994 to 2012 maps the ebbs and flows in this power. By counter-posing the four faces, it helps explain the depth of and dangers to the ANC’s powers of reinvention.

Organisational Regeneration

The most effective reinventive power of all lies in the ANC as an organisation, especially in its intimate interface with the bulk of the people of South Africa. Dual and concurrent functioning on two parallel levels of democracy is synonymous with the ANC: it operates in both the world of ‘elections, voters and representative democracy’ and in that of ‘direct engagement with the people,’ unmediated by the exploits of liberal-representative democracy. Its stature in party politics and in its command of state power has hitherto nurtured a largely organic people’s relationship.

The ANC has a level of hegemonic presence that no other political party or organisation in South Africa approximates. It is well resourced, and ensures that it stays that way, if necessary by leveraging state resources and by acting as a business operative, often dressed in patriotism and empowerment. The ANC is the best-resourced party in South Africa. Its Chancellor House business operations, largely veiled from public scrutiny, deal in mega-scoring business operations with the state, both by design and default.11 Chancellor House helps guarantee it the resources to counter opposition advances, including electoral initiatives.12

The ANC also suffers organisational flaws that undermine its regeneration of power: opportunism, careerism and preoccupation with movement position and power – for what it can leverage in terms of state influence – dominate many of its operations. Talk about the need for containment is more widespread than action to eliminate it.13 Action can stimulate reaction and trigger revenge, which leaders aiming at elected office in the organisation wish to avoid at all costs. Intra-ANC silences and diplomacy – about issues such as being preoccupied with lucrative business operations while in full-time ANC and/or government employment – are often due to internal positioning for future leadership.

The ANC Youth League (ANCYL)’s internal revolts against the mother body were a double-edged sword. Its apparent contra-ideological, ‘more radical’ positioning vis-à-vis the mother body helped channel potential dissent into the ANC, an effect similar to that rendered by Cosatu critiques plus mobilising for the ANC. The 2011–12 ANCYL revolt undermined the mother body by highlighting the organisational
dominance of succession politics. These actions also profiled the incumbents as incompetents trying to use organisational procedures to address issues of leadership and ideological-policy positioning.

The Tripartite Alliance members play the role of an internal opposition, helping to ensure that voices critical of the ANC will still vote for it. Cosatu has been central to all ANC multiparty election campaigns and Cosatu and the SACP’s battles for centrality of influence nurture the idea of a ‘world of opposition’ within Alliance parameters. Early in the Zuma administration, the Alliance partners imagined open doors for their exercise of influence and power. However, they were in that position solely on ANC terms, with the ANC as the centre of power. Their role intersected with the Mangaung-related clash with the ANCYL. The ANCYL argued, amid strong pointers to the fact that the ANCYL’s ‘left positioning’ was a vessel for the accelerated creation of nationalist patriotic capital, that the ‘communists’ and ‘unionists’ were attempting an ANC takeover.

The ANC worked to contain and control dissent and mobilisation, both in leadership contests and in ideology-policy debates. Evidence included the often-stated notion, particularly in the period since Polokwane, of the ANC as a ‘disciplined movement of the left.’ The organisation fiercely protected democratic centralism and the obligation of cadres or members to accept the wisdom of the centre. The ANC was successful in this – at least on the surface and in as far as transgressors knew that disciplinary action was a real possibility. Nevertheless, it did not prevent mobilisation and plotting to circumvent the centre, with the centre itself being a political faction. These processes were a small part of the ANC’s efforts to manufacture consent. The use and attempted curtailment of mass media, privately and publicly owned, bolstered its efforts to safeguard its ongoing reinvention.

In the final instance, the ANC can only be as strong as its branches and membership. A mixed picture emerges. The case of mobilisation for Polokwane has relevance for Mangaung 2012 and reveals much about the branches in general. From ANC conference and National General Council (NGC) ‘state of the organisation’ reports into 2012, we learn that inactive branches are revived for special occasions, such as national conferences, and that chequebook, parallel and fly-by-night branches exist, many of them the fiefdoms of local and regional power-mongers.

Branches and branch membership statistics at the times of Polokwane and in the run-up to Mangaung were used to construct slate support. ANC top officials know where the dormant or failed branches are and they (and others who know the
strategy) use this knowledge to win elective conferences before they start. In recent years, this has had an impact on most of the ANC’s provincial conferences. In a ‘state of the organisation’ report in 2010, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe described membership auditing as a farce – but averred that the provinces were cleaning up the system. The ANC’s Imvuselelo campaign for a million members by 2012 was challenged to prove full integrity. By September 2012, audited figures showed that there were 1 220 057 members in 4 103 branches, which were declared to be in good standing. At the time of Polokwane, the ANC had a total membership of 621 237 members. The flip side was that the faction that supported the incumbent ANC president retained control over the ANC branch audits and accreditation of conference delegates. The June 2012 ANC policy conference deliberations recognised the unwieldy nature of the mass membership and the problems associated with unconditional acceptance of members. There was also growing cynicism within movement ranks about factional control over accreditation for conferences.

The integrity of cadres has consistently burdened the ANC. The concern surfaced publicly at the first NGC, in 2000, and discussions were linked to ‘Through the Eye of the Needle,’ the document that considers the requirements for good cadres. The ANC’s frequent references to corruption in public office, careerism and ‘service’ as a concept foreign to its deployees relate the scope of the problem. The organisation regards meetings such as the 2010 NGC as its biggest political school, and an opportunity to induct both the branch delegates who attend and those who will take the message back to the branches. The ANC’s main organisational liabilities in persistently reinventing itself were its wrecked state when it came to positioning for internal elections and its inability, from 2005–12, to prevent these battles from spilling over into the state and undermining both credibility and performance.

Regenerating Power in Relation to ‘The People’

Substantial numbers of South Africans identify with the ANC, trust the organisation, continue to believe that it is taking the country in the right direction, tolerate weaknesses and mismanagement on the part of leadership and will the movement to correct itself and better execute its popular mandate. They continue to protest (or condone protest) against the ANC in government, but mostly persist in alternating the brick (protest) and pro-ANC ballots. At worst, and still in modest numbers, the seriously discontented amongst these black-African voters (who are frequently also poor and unemployed) – the core ANC constituency – abstain from
People’s power is usually positioned as the alternative to elective power. Activist literature, nevertheless, shows the articulation between electoral participation and the promotion of people’s power. In the Cuban system people’s power shows how local communities, through the mandat impératif, hold extensive power over their local representatives, with high levels of accountability and powers of recall. In South Africa people’s power is largely associated with pre-1994 internal resistance. The ANC’s attempts to reinvent street committees achieved mixed results.

There is a popular need in South Africa to continue believing in ‘our liberation movement,’ to keep on trusting that the ANC remains the organisation that can be relied on to pursue the people’s interests and help them achieve a better life, or, in many instances, a continuously (even if modestly) improving life. To the bulk of black-African voters, the ANC remains not just patron but parent. Party political ‘alternatives’ are often superfluous where people continue the parallel level of democracy, directly engaging with and protesting against their parent-patron party.

The ANC’s intimate association with ‘people’s power’ and the movement’s status of custodianship of the power of the people bring home its hybrid relationship with the people of post-apartheid South Africa, encompassing both directly connecting with the people and thriving in electoral politics. The model, however, has refrained from exposing its representatives to direct popular scrutiny. Powers of recall are mostly limited to the construction of new candidate lists for elections. People’s discontent with local representation has become manifest in multiple community protests in which they have insisted (overwhelmingly without tangible impact) on visible representation or the recall of faltering municipal representatives and officials. The results of local elections in 2011 testified to moderate punishment of the ANC in the form of, for example, low turnout among its core supporters. Its 2011 local government candidate screenings and implicit powers of recall through ANC community participation faltered in many instances due to candidate rivalry, application of gender, youth and race quotas and, in particular, the imposition by higher ANC structures of candidates who would aid strategic positioning, for example, for Mangaung 2012.
Protest behaviour between elections co-exists with strong electoral mandates for the ANC, a coexistence that has persisted since 2004. ANC and government investigations showed that it is often ANC members and, on occasion, rival councillor candidates who are behind community protests. There was evidence of reduced periods of grace and escalating levels of blame. The protests of May 2009 came within a month of the ANC’s 2009 election victory. In 2009–10 protesters specifically started holding national government responsible for making good on local demands, a link that had previously been less explicit. In the 2010–12 cycle protesters regularly retaliated against police’s rubber bullets – mostly with stones, occasionally with live ammunition.

Communities did not hesitate to do a bottom-up fusion of party and state. Problems with ANC local election candidate lists metamorphosed seamlessly into service delivery protest. In this context, the August 2011 ANCYL-triggered revolt at the organisation’s headquarters, Chief Albert Luthuli House in Johannesburg, signalled a change of pace and direct ‘people’s engagement’ with the top ANC structures. These were ‘mobilisable’ constituents, often young, and with reduced life prospects, angry with the ANC, yet not willing to vote for an alternative government.

The early-democracy phases of consultative, participatory policy formulation had been the easy parts of public participation in South Africa. Several subsequent government initiatives followed to solicit feedback from the citizens on how policy implementation (or the lack thereof) was affecting them. These ranged from izimbizo (gatherings) to co-optive structures in and around the successive presidencies of South Africa and legislative institutions. The opportunities for public participation failed to evolve into concerted engagement of people and government.

Despite a continuously close relationship between the ANC and the people, the 2012 ANC and ANC-in-government were unlikely to experience the luxury of another 18 years of largely unquestioning popular patience. The people were increasingly seeking proof that the parent still cared enough really to exert itself to ‘bring the food home tonight.’ Protest was used to tell the erring parent that the relationship with the people needed work.
Regenerating Power Through Electoral Multiparty Politics

The ANC’s reinvention of itself in a multiparty context as, in part, an electoral colossus, is central to its post-apartheid regeneration of political power. The bulk of the South Africans who are politically active and express their political preferences through elections, and as judged through electoral expression, had, by 2011–12, retained their trust that the ANC would indeed deliver a continuously improving ‘better life for all.’ In cases of failure, voters continued to believe that it is at least more likely than other political parties to edge them closer to the better life. Yet the ANC was moving towards a point where much of its electoral support would come to depend on a confluence of historical credibility and performance in government. An essential response was to keep the memory of struggle alive and to nurture nationalist, continuous-struggle sentiment. These processes were particularly evident in the organisation’s year-long centenary celebrations.

Despite lapses, the ANC remained unrivalled in the electoral stakes. Continuously huge electoral victories gave it room to manoeuvre around the minefields of protest and governance in the periods between elections. There were, however, signs that it was no longer emulating its apparent 2004 and 2006 local and national electoral peaks. From 2004 to 2009, it declined nationally, from 69.69 per cent support to 65.9 per cent (down by 3.79 percentage points); and from 2006 to 2011, it declined on the proportional local government ballot from 65.9 to 62.93 per cent (down by 2.7 percentage points). Democratic Alliance (DA) gains in local election 2011 marked small footholds in the ANC’s core black-African support base; small, but beyond the ANC’s comfort zone.28 In 2011 the ANC lost approximately three per cent of its 2006 local election support to the DA. Detailed analyses show that voters who had become unhappy with the ANC largely abstained in 2011 rather than switch to an opposition party.

Opposition parties, in their prevailing configurations, at best offered intermittent or very gradually accumulating threats. In 2009 the ANC had lost about a million of its previous voters to the Congress of the People (COPE).29 This conundrum was contained, and served as a message to would-be splinters of the fate that awaits them should they embark on COPE-like experiments. The earlier absorption of the New National Party (NNP) into the ANC had also demonstrated the threat to challengers. Such opposition destinies further concentrated oppositional pressures within the ANC, making it electorally safer but internally more combustible.
The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal and the DA in the Western Cape shed light on the provincial electoral states of the ANC. The ANC’s 2009 KwaZulu-Natal eclipse of the IFP (through a turnout surge in urban-metropolitan areas) helped veil the multi-province decline of its proportion of the vote, which had dropped in a majority of the provinces and, in 2011, in all provinces except KwaZulu-Natal. In 2011, as a result of the National Freedom Party (NFP) split from the IFP, the ANC’s gains in KwaZulu-Natal were more modest than those of 2009. Even the DA’s outright 2009 Western Cape victory (continued in the 2011 elections) was not due to extensive voter realignment, it was largely a result of a higher turnout among the DA’s traditional white-voter base and its mopping up of small opposition party support. On national proportional vote calculations in 2011, the ANC remained roughly three times stronger than the DA.

ANC electoral power has hitherto been shielded by the ‘different world’ status its supporters have afforded it. Grievances about elusive rights were not ‘dragged into elections.’

The Alliance and the ANCYL also aided the ANC through the practice of (contained) internal opposition that helped prevent vote slippage to opposition parties. This was legitimate opposition, all around, co-existing with the multiparty electoral domain. The ANC – not assured of the indefinite continuation of these trends – was in need of regeneration to stop opposition party creep into its buffer of electoral support.

The ANC’s electoral power was perpetuated despite the low quality of democratic representation. Public representatives frequently failed to maintain close contact with their communities. Many constituency offices were ineffective or beset by factional politics rather than constituency service. There was variable and reluctant oversight of the ANC’s political chiefs and leaders in the government executive. Parliamentary outreach projects hardly exposed representatives to the critical mass of sub-optimal representation.

Regenerating Power Through Government and State Institutions

With the ANC’s liberation dividend showing decay, ‘born-frees’ (those born after April 1994) joining the electorate, vote defections to opposition parties more imaginable than before, and the ANC becoming ever more undermined by internal factions vying for power and position, the fourth face of its power – performance
and leadership in government and the public sector – increasingly holds the key to power regeneration.

Performance centres on policy and accompanying institutional-procedural arrangements to give effect to plans and projects. The promotion in government of the ANC’s Polokwane resolutions as a more caring, state interventionist and developmental version of the preceding policy order stimulated expectations. A process of downscaling prospects nevertheless took hold with the ANC’s 2009 election manifesto. By the time the Zuma administration assumed power, it was falling back on limited institutional restructuring and a handful of strategies to bring better policy realisation (including monitoring and evaluation), along with incremental policy adjustments.

In several respects government plans appeared to be falling into place, with the National Growth Path (2010) supported by the National Development Plan (2011) and a bold plan for infrastructure development (2012). Trade and industry initiatives linked into this thrust. Yet, continuously, and with no certain indications of turning points, glaring gaps between policy objectives and realisation persisted. Developmental government plans were struggling to match the Freedom Charter’s and the 1996 Constitution’s human rights benchmarks.

Government (mostly ANC) missed delivery targets due to inefficiency and ineffectiveness, along with shifting targets and rising expectations. Some of the causes were in global policy networks, not just in the hands of national government. The complex of national causes included regional and rural-urban migration, the pursuit of inappropriate policies, government becoming bogged down in repeat cycles of policy and process (re)invention, unsuitable organisation of state power and its conditional diffusion between the levels of government. There was also an institutional lack of capacity and the failure of deployed cadres courtesy of corruption, tender manipulation, elevating the pursuit of personal power and position above service to the people and not being held accountable for lapses. Still, South Africans frequently did not connect the dots between corruption and delivery failures.

Promises of policy implementation to match the issues of the day came to a head with Zuma’s 2010 State of the Nation address and the accompanying national budget statement. The reverie ended. Leading Cosatu members, including general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, concluded that the Zuma administration was trudging along old growth paths and discredited Mbeki-ist trajectories. In September 2010, Zuma sought rapprochement and Cosatu saw new light in NGC speeches, which
again was dimmed with the emergence of details of the New Growth Path (NGP) in 2010 to 2011.

The 2011 State of the Nation address brought hope that the ANC-in-government was achieving job creation. One year into the NGP, it was falling far short of its job creation targets. By 2011 it was reported that governance operations in the presidency had, in effect, halted, given the primacy of the succession battle in the ANC, the engine room of government in the Zuma administration. The 2012 State of the Nation address and budget statement acknowledged the failures, marked the (minor) advances, and shifted focus to (largely still unbudgeted) longer-term plans for infrastructure development.

Shortcomings in government performance resulted from poor-fit institutions, maladministration, corruption and government arrogance. In conferences and through senior government persons, the ANC confirmed that corruption was rife, debilitating and needed to be stemmed. The ANC-in-government exercised patronage and government was a primary source of employment and career advancement. It agonised about the pitfalls of deployment, introduced legislative constraints on deployment in local government and repeatedly envisaged finalising the Ministerial Handbook, while hoping that trusted cadres would self-correct to make the imprint of the governance project more coherent. The 2012 policy conference delivered a host of proposals to escalate control over cadres. Implementation plans and timelines remained to be specified.

Despite some efforts at correction, there were many instances of local and provincial infighting to secure positions of political power and socio-economic self-empowerment via state deployment. There were purges (but often just musical chairs) of political and bureaucratic incumbents and top-level political bureaucrats. Zuma effected three Cabinet reshuffles in as many years as head of government. There were national efforts, from the ANC’s first NGC meeting of 2000 onwards, to rehabilitate the cadres, who were once believed to be prepared to serve selflessly. Devious deals nevertheless continued to flourish. And overlaying these factors were state institutions continuously constituting the trenches for intra-ANC warfare. These wars, in turn, were overlaid by nationalist/communist/unionist lines of mobilisation for the Mangaung succession battle.

Redesigned state institutions in monitoring and evaluation – located centrally in the presidency to help reinforce the positioning as ‘new’ of the Zuma administration
appeared set to falter, with the administration appearing to lack the ability to implement an accurate system. Information fed into the monitoring and evaluation processes, for example, was incomplete and was massaged to make departments, units and provincial and local governments look good. National departments and provincial governments infused reports with appropriate political, developmental and achievement spin before clearing them for submission to political chiefs. Joint executive teams in the presidency and premiers’ offices tried to fill in the gaps.

Policies also faltered at the point of implementation because the spheres of government were ill-aligned, functions insufficiently co-ordinated and civil servants often unqualified, despite many institutional design efforts (including the 2012 policy proposals) to address the problem. Local government turnaround strategies, when diffused to local municipalities, often lost the potential for meaningful interventions.

By early 2012, the local government ministry could merely recount that it was fast-tracking ‘the implementation of issues that will address the true aims of the turnaround strategy.’ Bureaucrats were often unsuitably deployed and benefited insufficiently from a plethora of training programmes. The greatest sabotage of the regeneration of ANC power was in the interface of inability to effect turnarounds of note and long-standing community observations of lack of accountability that combined with pervasive evidence of corruption.

The ANC’s organisational interface with the state – and the superimposition of the ANC on the state – was a potential strength in as far as it could leverage concerted policy action and governance. However, it unfolded differently. In the provinces, provincial executive committees often gave orders to the provincial governments in dictates that were overwhelmingly focused on the appointment of loyalists. Qualifications and experience were secondary, although in many cases they would have made no difference because predecessors had been appointed on the same basis. Party problems translated seamlessly into public power problems and public sector problems affected the character and dignity of the former liberation movement.

COMPARATIVE TRENDS AND THE LOOMING MANGAUNG MOMENT

In the second half of Zuma’s 2009–14 term, it appeared possible that the ebbs of ANC power would grow, the flows contract and the organisation’s ability to continue reinventing itself would be compromised. The overall declines across the four faces up to September 2012 were notable, yet not calamitous. The convergence
of declines nevertheless suggests that the ANC’s weaknesses in organisation and
government are accumulating, and popular disappointments and disenchantment
have gained footholds the organisation may contain but is unlikely to reverse.

This section synthesises the arguments that inform the conclusion that the ANC
is ‘in gradual decline but dominant.’ Fragility and vulnerability are hovering, but
the weaknesses do not amount to ‘crisis.’ The ANC remains hegemonic. Weakening,
however, is evident in issues of government, leadership, public ethics, policy and
institutional renewal, along with intra-Alliance problems and the fallout with the
ANCYL and factional struggles being transposed into the state. The section concen-
trates on the synthesises of strength-weakness trends at each of the four faces of ANC
power and extends this analysis into the centenary year.35

The details point to a situation where the ANC is indeed continuously regenerating
power – but simultaneously suggest that this regeneration is not sufficient to retain
it at the peaks that were probably experienced in 2004 before escalated internal
warfare changed the face of the organisation and while hopes for the realisation of
ideals were still relatively untainted.

The ANC in its centenary year remains close to hegemonic and this societal
presence tends to self-sustain. The dominant ANC propels itself into continuous
public focus, holds ample resources and investments and its campaigns and resources
attract people to it. The Tripartite Alliance draws opposition into the self-contained
world of the ANC, legitimises criticism and then pulls it back into the ANC. The
ANC works on its membership and branches, maintains it is 95 per cent on track
to have a branch in every ward in South Africa and claims an audited membership
of more than 1.2 million. Until 2012, it had survived serious leadership struggles
and used them for organisational renewal. It uses its NGC and policy conferences
to induct new generations of cadres and has used its centenary celebrations to keep
memories of struggle and oppression alive, along with its role in bringing victory
over the ancien régime.

Simultaneously, its branches are often weak, phantom or parallel to those of
another faction and, in 2012, were again being manipulated for conferences and
elections. The ‘quality of cadres’ is a long-standing concern. Careerism, opportunism
and self-interest often predominate in the organisation. Motivations to self-enrich
are often visible among the leadership, including in deals between leaders and
state institutions or foreign governments. The organisation experiences a decline
of democratic centralism and internal discipline that causes the leadership to lose
control of centripetal forces, and factionalism and the proliferation of decentralised power enclaves prevail, at the cost of organisational renewal. There are many ‘little ANCs’ – the discontented do not go to the opposition, rather, they withdraw from the mother body while continuing to regard themselves as ANC. Incessant leadership struggles and positioning for the next internal election dominate much of party deliberations.

Hence, the ANC works on rebuilding branches, but weaknesses are also self-regenerative. The central body no longer has the authority it had a decade earlier. The Imvuselelo campaign filled in some gaps, but the central problem of quality and dedication of cadres is not addressed. Increasingly, ANC internal succession faction-league battles affect the organisation’s ability to focus on issues of state governance and deeper transformation.

It is evident that the people of South Africa largely respond to ANC mobilisation and endorse the movement. Survey evidence shows that the ANC remains by far the most trusted party (on higher levels than electoral support) in the country. Communities often display open adoration at the appearance of iconic leaders. People associate and identify with the ANC. It helps to constitute their identity in a semi-transformed country. There is much evidence in South Africa of a dual ballot-and-brick protest-vote repertoire – communities protest within the ambit of ANC electoral support. People relate to the ANC on parallel tiers of electoral democracy and direct ANC-people democracy. The latter remains a world that that is alien to opposition parties.

Simultaneously, the ballot-and-brick repertoire could be a period effect that will lapse. The ANC does not know how much of this type of borrowed time it has. Dark corners of protest (especially xenophobic protests) show that anarchic tendencies combine with community power vacuums. Popular and ANC-organisational rhetoric increasingly stresses the inadequacy of the Constitution to facilitate socio-economic liberation. The ANC often conveniently under-emphasises its own responsibility and complicity in the state of transformation in 2012. Widespread poverty, unemployment and inequality render its powerful edifice fragile – and it has not hitherto demonstrated that it has the power to correct these problems. It is caught in a pincer grip of younger generations either finding it increasingly insufficient to let the liberation struggle dominate over contemporary socio-economic conditions or arguing that it has compromised socio-economically – hence the ANC’s effort to project itself as only now entering ‘the second phase of the transition.’ In addition,
public participation is often politically manufactured and manipulated. There is increasing evidence of an issue-specific ‘new opposition’ in a convergence of civil society, non-governmental organisations, some opposition parties and select state institutions joining to pressurise and constrain ANC government decisions. New forms of enforced public accountability emerge.

In this way the ANC has retained the ability to connect with its followers. Its credibility and incumbency mostly still work as mutually reinforcing. Its campaigns have attempted to bring its people relationship into the state, but with mixed success. However, strong signals have emerged that the ANC is coming under pressure to capitalise on the liberation dividend and work for allegiance by all followers of the movement.

In elections and multiparty politics, the ANC in 2012 remains the dominant colossus, with 60 per cent-plus support. Its supporters show repeated willingness at election times to close ranks against a party-political enemy – elections are still overwhelmingly not the time of reckoning for the ANC. It has suffered electoral declines, yet remains by far the strongest party in eight provinces. Its KwaZulu-Natal growth veils less glorious electoral outcomes in other provinces. It subverted the COPE onslaught and COPE’s fate issued a message of ‘no life after the ANC.’ ANC support was particularly unrelenting in black-African communities – the bulk of the electorate – and it had more resources than any other party to keep campaigns, mobilisation and persuasion going.

By all indications, the days of the ANC winning two-thirds electoral majorities are over, unless it makes dramatic turnarounds – it declined nationally by four per cent in 2009, courtesy of the surge in KwaZulu-Natal, and by three per cent on the proportional representation ballot in local election 2011 (moderated by the emergence of the NFP).

Well-resourced ANC campaigns prevail, opposition parties have limited ability to compete electorally, and the ANC’s core political and demographic constituencies remain virtually untouched by opposition parties. Elections retain their status as a phenomenon that is in a different world from ‘real-life, between-elections’ politics. Frailty, however, is evident on several non-electoral fronts, including in destructive intra-ANC politics and rising de facto issue-specific opposition alliances.

In state and government, the ANC remains widely in control, which makes it a source of jobs and careers and attracts people to it: power (re)generates power. The
message is to ‘stay in the good books of the ANC.’ The ANC-in-government is the
dispenser, the patron that ensures social grants and other benefits. The ANC is ‘the
good parent.’ As government the ANC has presented multiple plans to end corrup-
tion and mismanagement in the state and is working on monitoring and evaluation,
planning to help secure better conversion of policies into realised effects, also through
redesign of state institutions and possibly rethinking the Constitution. Assessments
continue of the powers of provincial and local government to effect their mandates.

Simultaneously, the ANC-in-government is the custodian of high levels of visible
corruption, mismanagement and exploitation of state resources for personal benefit.
The ‘dubious but legal’ is well tolerated – and emulated. There is little hesitation in
pursuing business interests through the state. Many ANC leaders increasingly raise
questions about the commitment of deployed cadres to serve. Volatility prevails as
the limits of deployment are increasingly evident. Yet the ANC is constrained in
counter-action, fearing succession-faction fallout.

There is limited evidence of realised action against perpetrators of corruption and
related enrichment schemes. Furthermore, the public sector suffers from ongoing low
capacity. Turnarounds, even if they are effectively initiated (which is yet to be done),
will take time. Zuma-era restructuring of state institutions is slow to deliver evidence
of turnarounds and pressure is mounting to reshape the Constitution, re-envision
the judiciary and the Reserve Bank and create party-linked state institutions to take
over the strategic functions of banking, mining and media. This demonstrates the
ANC’s propensity to build and consolidate state-institutional power at times when
power on other fronts is becoming more fragile. Provincial and local governments
struggle incessantly with mandates and their turnaround proposals are long term.

The ANC is working to clean up, or present an image of cleaning up, the rot
in the heart of the state. Lapses in ‘the ANC is working in the best interest of the
people, to the best of its ability’ are core points of weakness, along with its inability
to implement successfully more of its policies. In 2012 the ANC is reacting through
initiatives to extend its control over the state and increasingly points fingers at the
Constitution for imposing limits on transformation.

The suggestion that the Zuma ANC would usher in a new time of caring and con-
nection with the people was strong on assertion but weak on implementation and
realised evidence. This was not for a lack of caring and concern on the part of many
in the organisation. Nor was it for a lack of sincere intentions and honourable names
in the ANC and government. Processes of intra-ANC contests for centrality in power
and control over succession often prevent the ANC-in-government from operating at its best or achieving a dedicated focus on governance and delivery. Roughly halfway into the 2009–14 Zuma administration much of the early momentum had dissipated.

The unevenness of local-level delivery and socio-economic transformation led to the potential for increased movement away from protest that co-exists with continuous ANC electoral support. Protests from 2009 to 2012 demonstrated growing impatience and ranged from violent and angry to peaceful, passive and comradely. The participants were frequently unemployed young people, likely to lack full secondary school qualifications and increasingly unlikely to find employment any time soon.37 Their presence constituted a renewed call for improved policies and more effective policy conversion – demonstrating the shortfall on the most crucial aspect of the ANC's regeneration of political power.

Taken compositely, the details show that ANC power in the four domains has, by all indications considered in this chapter, moved beyond the peaks – at the time regarded as pre-peak – that were experienced in the years prior to the recall of Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki's departure, which, at the time, was widely projected as a rejuvenating development – arrived too late for reinvigoration to take hold firmly, besides the fact that ANC renewal under Zuma was an elusive event. Early initiatives bore little fruit and the 2012 policy conference was unconvincing.

CONCLUSION

The sustainability of the ANC's all-round power has increasingly come to depend on performance in government. Here, the organisation is battling itself, and time, to salvage the government project from frequent ineptitude, mismanagement, corruption and subjugation to factional warfare. There is a continuous popular need to believe in 'the liberation movement in government'; to keep on trusting that the widely preferred political party-movement remains the one that can be trusted to pursue popular interests and achieve more definitive outcomes.

By 2012, however, popular belief in the ANC lacks the innocence and idealism of 1994. The organisation itself, and specifically its leadership, undermines its power through incessant factional clashes. The ruling ethos too frequently appears to be 'the battle for control of the trough.' This is precisely at a time when a concerted focus on matters of government is required. This suggests that the ANC is still regenerating power but at lower than replacement level. Only future election results will show whether the combination of weaknesses will result in linear or exponential deficits.
The trends in ANC power across the four faces pose interconnected ‘power questions.’ The first is whether electoral support will decline further. The ANC suffered relatively mild setbacks in both the 2009 general election and the 2011 local election, first largely courtesy of the breakaway COPE and then due to DA encroachment, combined with a modest turnout by ANC supporters. COPE support, nevertheless, confirmed the existence of a reservoir of alienated voters.

A connected question is whether the ANC will be able to resuscitate its grassroots branch organisation (away from politically manipulated, opportunistic structures that often resemble fiefdoms for local power mongers) and esteemed community standing in order to further deflect the conversion of community discontent into protest ... Or, to prove that neither the DA nor fledging left-community parties will break the ANC's hold on voters.

South Africa’s curse of seriously flawed governance is substantially precipitated by internal warfare within the ANC, growing disregard of the ANC as a ‘disciplined movement of the left’ that is governed through ‘democratic centralism,’ indiscriminate appointments of cadres to poorly-matched positions and reluctant or slow action against corrupt personnel in representative institutions and the public sector. The question for 2012 is whether the ANC can break out of this vortex. There are also leadership questions. The period between 2008 and 2012 created expectations that the incoming ANC leadership would rise to the occasion of the need for renewal, rejuvenated popular connections and effecting far-reaching further transformation. Instead, Zuma’s first term as ANC president ended with only the promise of the desired ‘second phase of the (ongoing) transition.’

These paradoxes mean that there are only complex answers to the question, ‘how long will the ANC remain able to reinvent itself as the continuously credible bearer of the aspirations of South Africans?’ Both its reservoir of support and its edge over opposition parties suggest that it is predisposed to retain power for some time to come – weakened and often internally chaotic, yet sufficiently coherent at crucial times to keep afloat the ship of movement and state.
Endnotes
1. The ‘Three Institutional Faces of a Political Party,’ according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), are the functions of representation, governance and mobilisation. IDEA, Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multi-Party Democracy (Stockholm: IDEA, 2007). This chapter adapts and extends IDEA’s notion.
4. Zuma said the ‘ANC will rule until Jesus comes again’ and ‘only those with ANC membership will go to heaven.’ See, eg, S Ndlangisa, ‘Vote ANC, Vote for God,’ City Press, 10 April 2011; ANC, ‘President Jacob Zuma’s Figurative Expression Amounts to No Blasphemy,’ media statement, Johannesburg, 6 February 2011; M Wiener, 2011. ‘Politics, the 2011 Polls & the Afterlife,’ available at: http://www.ewn.co.za/articleprog.aspx?id=65718. In April 2011 Zuma also stated: When you vote for the ANC you are voting for Qamata [God], Qamata is the midst of the ANC. We are the mother of democracy, no other party deserves to be voted for other than the ANC. There’s always the presence of God where we are. When you vote for the ANC even your hand gets blessed. In February 2011 he told a crowd in Mthatha that a vote for the opposition is a vote for the devil. In May 2011 he told a meeting in Delareyville that those who turn their backs on the ANC will have to explain themselves to their ancestors when they die.
6. Many of these changes are fleetingly recorded and mapped in personality-centred ways. See, eg, the range of political biographies and autobiographies of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa. See N Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom (London: Little Brown, 1994); M Gevisser, Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2007); WM Gumede, Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005); J Gordin, Zuma: A Biography (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2008); A Butler, Cyril Ramaphosa (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2007).
9. This is a phrase used in song by delegates to the ANC’s 2007 Polokwane conference, indicating that the incumbents should make way for a new set of ANC principals.
10. These themes are explored in Booysen, The African National Congress, especially chapter 2. Pallo Jordan, for example, argued that the ANC’s contemporary problems are anchored in its past failure to deal sufficiently with issues of public morality. (P Jordan, ‘A Letter to Comrade Mtungwa, an Old Comrade and Dear Friend,’ address to the Platform for Public Deliberation, University of Johannesburg, 14 November 2008.) From 2009 to 2011 the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions were outspoken about tender-rich ANC elites.
15. The ANC’s 53rd National Elective Conference in Mangaung in the Free State in December 2012 will elect the next set of ANC officials and the NEC. The victors are likely to assume prominent office in the 2014-19 government.
17. The ANC's 52nd National Elective Conference took place in Polokwane in Limpopo in December 2007.
21. Chapter 3 in Booysen's *The African National Congress* offers a range of survey findings that testify to this trend – even if some findings are counter-intuitive, given continuous suffering and discontent with government.
27. In a 1997 research project, a young man from Soweto remarked: 'You expect the father to go out and get food. If he comes with it, you eat and sleep. But if he returns without food, we stop getting along.' See S Booysen, 'Life in the New Democracy,' commissioned research project and report, Matla Trust 'Democracy and Citizen Education Project,' Johannesburg (unpublished, 1997).
29. The losing faction at the Polokwane conference, supporters of Thabo Mbeki, split from the ANC in 2008. This happened upon the removal of Mbeki as president of South Africa a few months before his term would have expired. COPE was formally constituted as a political party in December 2008.
30. The words of a Free State protester; see W van der Berg, 'Polisie Brand Los,' *Volksblad*, 19 July 2011.
31. In mid-2011, the ANC acted to protect its councillors from community wrath. Measures included offering constituency offices as work bases for councillors and, in a few instances, the provision of bodyguards (SA Local Government Research Centre, *The SA Local Government Briefing* (supplementary), July 2011 (electronic dissemination), 25.
32. For example, Pravin Gordhan (Budget Speech, Minister of Finance, Parliament of South Africa, Cape Town, 22 February 2012) referred to new initiatives to contain tender manipulation and fraud. In 2010, Gordhan noted that corruption was widespread (S Qoza, 'The Business of Finance,' *City Press Business*, 21 February 2010). Grootes explores weaknesses in acting due to the diffusion of corruption and prior leadership misdemeanours (Grootes, 'The Curious Case of One Julius Malema').
33. C Chabane, 'Cleaning up Service Delivery,' *Sowetan*, 1 September 2011.
34. R Baloyi, *Forum at 8*, SABC-SAFM, interview with Xolani Gwala, 28 February 2012.
36. The June 2012 ANC national policy conference decided that the ANC was entering the 'second phase of the transition.' It rejected the notion of a 'second transition,' which was proposed in the original conference discussion document. See S Booysen, *The ANC's March on Mangaung* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2012, Tafelberg Shorts e-book).
37. Paton notes that 50 per cent of South Africa's employment-age youth in 2011 were estimated to be unemployed (C Paton, 'Time Bomb,' *Financial Mail*, 26 March 2010). Young participants frequently predominated among protesters. The trends became even more pronounced in 2011.