

# SOUTH AFRICA AND THE 2014 NATIONAL ELECTION: A SHIFT TO THE LEFT?

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## *Abstract*

*The period prior to the 2014 South African national and provincial elections witnessed the mobilisation of numerous socio-economic and political forces. Consequently, the outcomes of the 2014 election is of particular importance in charting the political landscape that lies ahead. This article hypothesises that South African politics has undergone an incremental (but increasingly radical) shift towards the left of the political spectrum. Through an integrated analysis of trends in the ruling party, opposition politics, socio-economic conditions, organised labour and electoral outcomes, this hypothesis is confirmed.*

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**Keywords:** South African elections 2014; South African politics; opposition politics; organised labour; left-wing politics; the political spectrum.

**Slutelwoorde:** Suid-Afrikaanse verkiesing 2014; Suid-Afrikaanse politiek; opposisiepolitiek; georganiseerde arbeid; linkse politiek; politieke spektrum.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

South Africa's fifth democratic national election was the most eagerly anticipated and contested democratic episode since the inaugural multiracial elections of 1994. Whether the levels of political activity in the period prior to the election came about as a result of the controversies related to the ruling party, or whether it sprang from the unprecedented energy with which opposition parties had campaigned, one outcome is indisputable – the South African political environment has been irrevocably altered.

What, however, can be described as the exact nature of this post-election political change? The answer to this question may largely be found in a reconfiguration of the South African political spectrum in the period surrounding the 2014 election. Policy shifts within both the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA), the state of organised labour, persistent economic challenges and rising expectations, upstart radicals such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) emerging in the months before the election, as well as the

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much anticipated “NUMSA moment”, all served as pointers towards a watershed election in May 2014.

This article hypothesises that an evaluation of tendencies in the contemporary political environment reveals that the South African political *status quo* is in the process of undergoing a clear shift towards the left of the ideological spectrum, preparing the way for a complete reconfiguration of the political landscape. The testing of this hypothesis will be conducted by addressing the following foci in this article, namely:

- Theoretical point of departure: the political spectrum;
- Challenges facing the state after 20 years of democracy: economic and social challenges vs. political decay;
- The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as ruling ideology and the second phase of transformation/second transition;
- The reconfiguration of organised labour and opposition politics;
- Analysing the outcomes of the 2014 election.

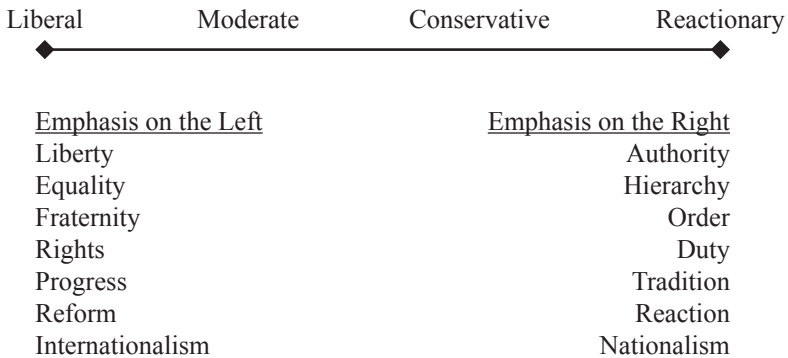
Following this deductive methodology, the central argument will demonstrate that the South African political *status quo* is currently undergoing a clear shift towards progressive and radical political forces, and that the vast majority of electoral weight now resides in parties that are positioned on the left-wing of the political spectrum.

## **2. THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE: THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM**

The purpose of constructing a political spectrum is to organise and understand a given political context and its role-players. From this point of departure a political spectrum is essentially a form of conceptual shorthand, used to delineate and classify political ideas and beliefs. It is therefore a macro-typology that employs general criteria for the positioning of political actors, which is sufficient for the purposes of identifying political tendencies – and it is in this capacity that the political spectrum serves as point of departure in verifying the hypothesis stated previously.

The two most important variables in constructing and interpreting a political spectrum are the various role-players’ conception of political change (e.g. progressive/reactionary) and the values that underpin such change (e.g. constitutional/violent). Many representations of the political spectrum have been developed (see e.g. Ferguson 1944; Eysenck 1958; Rokeach 1973). Its simplest incarnation however is a linear scale, represented below (accompanied by core values):

**Figure 1 – Linear representation of the political spectrum and values (Eysenck 1958:281; Heywood 2002:252)**



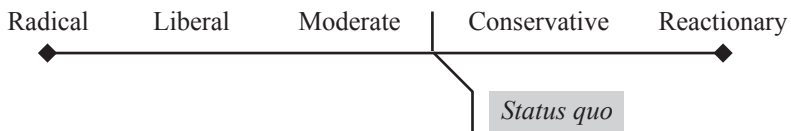
Both extremities of the political spectrum, be it the left or right, are characterised by a certain approach towards changing the political system – i.e. the political *status quo*. Whereas moderate, liberal and radical role-players favour progressive change (in the form of an idealised and better future), reactionary elements agitate for retrogressive change (a return to the ways of the past). Those who favour the political *status quo* and endeavour for its preservation normally adopt conservative political positions that may only support incremental (often superficial) political changes towards either side of the spectrum. However, it is vitally important to note that the political *status quo* is far from being a generally applicable set of political circumstances or values. Whereas a communist party in the United States of America may be perceived as being a radical role-player vying for rapid progressive change, its equivalent in the Russian Federation will be perceived as a reactionary influence, yearning for the policies and institutions of the erstwhile USSR. Thus, the political *status quo* of any system is influenced by its historical development and the manner in which political change has occurred in the past.

Given the fact that the political *status quo* differs from one system to another, and is in fact a dynamic equilibrium, that within political systems, political role-players must constantly reposition and redefine themselves within this context of political change in order to remain politically relevant. This insight represents the fundamental point of departure from which this article's hypothesis concerning political change in South Africa will be evaluated.

In relation to South Africa, there has been a discernable alteration of the political *status quo* over the last two decades. Prior to 1994, the *status quo* was defined by apartheid as political system. The subsequent negotiated transition defined a new *status quo*, which the ANC and its alliance partners have described as

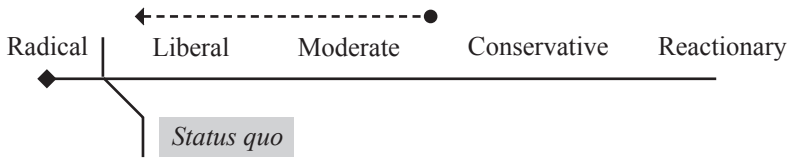
the outcome of the “first transition” or the “first phase of the revolution”, in line with their guiding ideology of the NDR. According to the ANC (2012:5) the first transition was that of “peaceful and thoroughgoing political and democratic transformation” and was essentially the process of attaining political power and control over the so-called “levers of power”. The defining outcome of this transition was the negotiated Constitution, which currently serves as compass for the state and political system. However, the ANC (2012:17) also explains that currently “the central task has shifted towards the socio-economic legacy of apartheid colonialism”. According to ANC NEC member, Jeff Radebe (2012), “our first transition embodied a framework and a national consensus that may have been appropriate for political emancipation, a political transition, but has proven inadequate and inappropriate for our social and economic transformation phase”. In concurrence with this perspective, President Jacob Zuma confirmed during his 2014 State of the Nation address that, “After the elections, the country will enter a new radical phase in which we shall implement socioeconomic transformation policies and programmes that will meaningfully address poverty, unemployment and inequality”. Within the ANC’s conceptualisation of a second transition focussing on socio-economic transformation, one can clearly identify a process aimed at progressively and radically redefining the political *status quo*, signalling a departure from the incremental operationalisation of leftist policies by the ruling party, in favour of a more decisive shift – in line with the hypothesis noted previously. This article further argues that the true significance of this process resides in the fact that other (opposing) political role-players have also realigned towards such a political *status quo*, denoting a leftward shift in the South African political spectrum as a whole. Thus, the political *status quo* during the first transition may be illustrated as follows:

**Figure 2 – Status quo of the political spectrum [1994 - ca. 2009]**



Noting this, the second transition implies a shift in the political *status quo* towards the progressive and radical end of the spectrum, with the implicit renouncing of the current constitutional dispensation:

**Figure 3 – Redefinition of the status quo in the second transition**



In the remainder of this article, it will be demonstrated that the most significant political role-players and the majority of political momentum currently resides on the left-wing of the South African spectrum, with further migration likely in the post-election environment as the ANC expedites the second transition and emergent left-wing forces move to consolidate support in opposition to the ANC. In turn, in relation to the hypothesis, this may prepare the way for a complete reconfiguration of the political landscape

### 3. EVALUATING THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE SINCE 1994

It is of course true that 2014 was more than just an election year in South Africa – it was also the twentieth anniversary of the peaceful democratic transition that marked the end of apartheid. Simultaneously, the ANC notched its second decade of continuous national government. The concurrence of democratic rule (and all its benefits) with the ANC hegemony was communicated to the electorate through an intensive communications offensive by the ruling party prior to the election. In the ANC’s election manifesto entitled, *Together we move South Africa forward*, Jacob Zuma writes that, “Twenty years ago we began a new journey to eradicate the oppressive legacy of colonialism and apartheid. It has been 20 years of freedom and democracy in which we have made significant steps towards achieving the vision of the Freedom Charter” (ANC 2014:3). In motivating its “good story” the manifesto asserts that, amongst others:

- In 1994, 1,2 million families were without homes. In 2013, more than 3,3 million families have free homes;
- In 1994, 5,5 million households had access to electricity. In 2013, more than 11 million households have access to electricity;
- In 1994, only 2,6 million grants were awarded to a select few. In 2013, more than 16 million South Africans receive social grants;
- The economy regained the one million jobs lost as the result of the 2008 global recession. Employment is now higher than it has ever been;

- Nearly 80 000 land claims, totalling 3,4 million hectares, have been settled; 1,8 million people have benefited;
- In 1994, 10% of our communities had access to safe water. In 2013, more than 92% of our communities have access to safe water;
- More than 1 500 healthcare facilities have been built and hundreds more are being revamped.

These achievements are indeed impressive and generally indicative of the increased prosperity enjoyed by the majority of South Africans since the demise of apartheid, and the realisation of “a better life for all”.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1 Mounting concern over state dysfunction

Despite the apparent progress under ANC rule, questions are increasingly being raised around the integrity of the South African state and its ability to provide for its citizenry (see Hagedorn 2012; Patel 2012; Hoffman & Welsh 2013). In 2012, the *Economist* wrote about South Africa’s decline, arguing that, “South Africa is sliding downhill while much of the rest of the continent is clawing its way up”. The renowned futurist and scenario planner, Clem Sunter, remarked in 2012 that major concerns needed to be addressed to prevent South Africa’s slipping from the “premier league of nations” and eventually becoming a failed state, adding that, “we are just one random event away from an Arab Spring” (Kolver 2012). In Alex Boraine’s (2014) book entitled, *What’s gone wrong? On the brink of a failed state*, the author notes that the “ANC has dug itself into a huge hole, socially, morally and politically, and has taken South Africa with it” and that it is up to actors outside the ruling party to ensure that “a failing state does not become a failed state”.

Similarly, the Director of the South African Institute for Race Relations, Frans Cronje, relates that in the SAIRR’s interface with many business and private sector actors in South African society, “the questions we increasingly confront in the course of our interactions with these sorts of role players are also asked by more and more ordinary members of our society. Will the increasingly angry poor rise up and seize land, homes and businesses? [...] Will a desperate government sacrifice our democracy in order to help it cling to power? [...] Is there any reason we will not go the way of Zimbabwe?” (Cronje 2014:5). Thus, it would appear that there is a growing realisation in different sectors of society that the integrity of the South African state may be decaying, which in turn impacts on the prosperity of the nation.

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3 Somewhat less encouraging is the verification of these claims conducted by Africa Check, a non-profit fact-checking organisation, which found that most of the assertions are either false, misleading or unverifiable (Wilkinson 2014).

A weak or dysfunctional state is generally understood to lack the institutional capability to apply a legitimate set of political “rules of the game” in a given jurisdiction. In his seminal 1995 article entitled, “The blood of experience”, Ali Mazrui (1995:29) identifies six essential state functions that may serve as a barometer of the integrity of a state, to wit:

- Sovereign control over territory;
- Sovereign supervision (though not necessarily ownership) of the nation’s resources;
- Effective revenue extraction;
- Capacity to build and maintain an adequate national infrastructure;
- Capacity to render such basic services as sanitation, education, housing, and healthcare;
- Capacity for governance and the maintenance of law and order.

Even though South Africa cannot currently be described as a failed state according to the criteria above, worrisome tendencies of dysfunction emerges when evaluating the state’s capabilities in many of these areas. Aspects such as the prevalence of corruption and nepotism, the absence of civil infrastructure maintenance, service delivery shortfalls, ineffective border control, and manifold other issues of governance and political management attest to the erosion of the institutional capabilities of the state. While it is possible to cite innumerable figures and indicators that illustrate the incapacity of the South African state, only one exceptionally representative example will be included here, namely that of local government – a sphere of institutional decay that affects the lives of all citizens directly. The following table represents the outcomes of the Auditor General’s financial audit of local government for the period 2012-2013:

**Table 1 – Summary of local government financial audit outcomes, 2012-2013 (AGSA 2014)**

<b>Audit outcomes</b>	<b>Metropolitan municipalities</b>	<b>District municipalities</b>	<b>Local municipalities</b>	<b>Municipal entities</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unqualified (clean) audits	1	5	16	8	<b>30</b>
Unqualified with findings	4	20	73	41	<b>138</b>

<b>Audit outcomes</b>	<b>Metropolitan municipalities</b>	<b>District municipalities</b>	<b>Local municipalities</b>	<b>Municipal entities</b>	<b>Total</b>
Qualified, adverse and disclaimers	3	16	126	7	<b>152</b>
Audits outstanding	0	3	11	1	<b>15</b>
Total	8	44	226	57	<b>335</b>

The table above requires little interpretation, yet its content is readily understood and compelling. Of the 335 municipalities and municipal entities audited according to the requirements of the Municipal Financial Management Act (MFMA), only 30 returned an unqualified audit without findings. In other words, only 8,9% of local government institutions of any kind are being governed in accordance with required legislation(!). Furthermore, a total of 152 municipalities and entities essentially failed the audit, translating into 45% of local government institutions fundamentally mismanaging taxpayer revenue. It stands to reason that if these audit outcomes are a reflection of the ability of local government to deliver basic services, many millions of South African citizens are currently experiencing the effects of political decay first-hand.

Given these perspectives, it is reasonable to posit that as far as its interface with the average citizen is concerned at local level, the South African state is characterised more by dysfunction than good governance.

### **3.2 Transformation and the incremental leftward shift**

What is particularly disconcerting about this trajectory of decay is that it represents the antithesis of a truly transformative state. The concept of “transformation” stands centrally in the ideological lexicon of the ANC (as the subsequent section will explore in more detail) and it may be argued that the party’s very existence is intimately linked with a South African project of national transformation. As Nelson Mandela remarked during his 1998 State of the Nation Address, “Transformation is *this* government’s reason for existence” (Mandela 1998). In a policy document entitled, *The state and social transformation* (ANC 1996) the party contends that, “the struggle for the social and economic transformation of the South African society is essentially the task of replacing the Apartheid (*sic*) state with a democratic one” and furthermore that, “the establishment of a democratic state is the task which continues to define the nature and character of the African



National Congress”. Indeed, as Houston and Muthien (2000:39) duly point out, the word “transformation” is found in virtually all ANC documents, speeches and policies, as well as those of government (conversely, the term does not appear once in the Constitution). It is this transformative character that has traditionally guaranteed the ANC and its allies a virtual monopoly in the progressive, left-wing of the South African political spectrum with an electorate that desires, above all else, socio-political and economic equality. Given the fact that South Africa is still regarded as one of the most unequal societies in the world (with a GINI coefficient of 0,63) the appeal of left-wing politics that agitate for social equality cannot be underestimated in the domestic electoral context.

### **3.3 A deficient South African developmental state and economic challenges**

The institutional vehicle through which the ANC aims to achieve its transformation project, including the second transition, is a “developmental state”, which it defines as, “An activist state that intervenes decisively in the economy with a generally progressive agenda” and “a state which leads and guides that economy and which intervenes in the interest of the people as a whole” (ANC 2007). According to the party’s *Strategy and tactics* document, the ANC is, “building a developmental state and not a welfare state given that in a welfare state, dependency is profound” (ANC 2007).

However, state capacity is considered to be a critically important and distinguishing feature of a developmental state, achieved through the creation of an inexpensive, efficient and effective public service staffed by the nation’s brightest civil servants, functioning without constraints and capable of being innovative in addressing the socio-economic needs of citizens (Maserumule 2007:212; Terreblanche 2007:117; Marwala 2006:2). According to Van Dijk and Croucamp (2007:665), in the South African context the development state concept is applied by the ANC in a nominal ideological sense, with little understanding of the institutional requirements of such a state. Taking into account the apparent lack of capacity to successfully administer a developmental state, along with government’s questionable performance at local government level (where the developmental state should manifest its greatest presence), it is this article’s position that the developmental state, as implemented in the South African context by the ANC, is firstly an attempt to legitimate the ANC’s on-going transformation agenda, and secondly, not a developmental state at all (lacking the capacity to conduct itself as such) but rather a more crude redistributive socialist state. The growing gap between the political rhetoric of “development” and government’s policies of redistribution are illustrated below through three key indicators, namely the number of social grant recipients, the unemployment rate and GDP growth over a 14 year period:

**Table 2 – Social grant beneficiaries, unemployment and economic growth in South Africa, 2000-2013 (SAIRR 2013)**

	<b>Social grant beneficiaries</b>	<b>Unemployment % (Official)</b>	<b>GDP growth %</b>
2000	2 687 169	26,7	4,2
2001	3 773 998	24,6	2,7
2002	3 982 801	27,7	3,7
2003	4 913 275	29,3	2,9
2004	6 476 587	26,4	4,6
2005	7 869 143	24,2	5,3
2006	10 947 116	23,1	5,6
2007	11 983 141	23,6	5,5
2008	12 386 396	23,1	3,6
2009	13 072 173	23,6	-1,5
2010	14 057 365	25,2	3,1
2011	14 935 832	25,7	3,5
2012	15 595 705	24,9	2,5
2013	16 577 017	25,6	1,9
<b>Increase/decrease</b>	<b>611%</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>	<b>-2.3%</b>

As is evident from these figures, South Africa has witnessed a remarkable increase in the distribution of state social grants during the last 14 years. This has resulted in the tangible liberation of the poor for those members of society at the lowest income levels. However, it is disconcerting that this massive expansion of welfare (South Africa may rightly be called a welfare state, despite the ANC's protestations to the term) has neither coincided with, nor stimulated, genuine economic development, as also illustrated above. Unemployment has remained stubbornly high during the same period, whilst GDP growth has receded since the "golden decade" of growth. Given the fact that 31% of the population now receive social grants, it can be argued that there is not only a dependency upon state welfare (noting high unemployment) but also an expectation that such a level of expenditure on grants will be maintained and expanded. How this massive expense will be afforded by the government in times of low economic growth is unclear.

### 3.4 Evaluating the prospects for a radical leftward shift

How does the line of argumentation constructed thus far link to this article's hypothesis of a leftward migration of the South African political landscape? The aspects of weak state capabilities, ideological transformation, high levels of dependency upon the state and low levels of economic development dovetail naturally in James Chowning Davies' (1962:5) familiar theory of political instability, better known as the Davies Curve. The principle of the Davies' Curve holds that for as long as the actual satisfaction of needs of a given population coincides approximately with its expected needs satisfaction, relative political stability will prevail. However, if expectations (what people want) exceeds actual need satisfaction (what can be delivered by government) by a critical margin, political instability and eventually revolution will occur.

Applied to the South African context, this means that expenditure on social welfare creates the satisfaction of basic needs (upliftment from poverty) but also leads to heightened expectations. Such expectations may be accommodated and satisfied during times of economic growth and development, since resources are available for redistribution. However, during times of economic stagnation or decline, expectations may no longer be satisfied, due to the scarcity of resources and lack of economic production. This results in the divergence between need formation and need satisfaction (exacerbated by dependency and unemployment) leading to public discontent and political instability.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, noting the apparent inadequate capacity and inefficiency of the nominal developmental state in South Africa (particularly at the level of local government where basic services are rendered), and further noting the fact that dependency on social welfare has increased exponentially over the last 14 years (notwithstanding declining economic growth and development), this article posits that given the ANC's ideological identity that strongly emphasises socialist tenets, the most likely course of action in satisfying the expectations of the populace (and electorate) will be a policy shift to accentuate and accelerate aspects such as economic transformation, redistribution and state interference in the economy – a clear and radical shift to the left. This policy shift (and reconfiguration of the political *status quo*) is currently conducted within the ANC's ideological framework of the National Democratic Revolution and its second transition, discussed below.

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4 In this regard, Huntington's (1968) analysis of political instability is also insightful since it juxtaposes heightened levels of political mobilisation and participation with weakened political institutions that are incapable of mediating political demands. Political violence, labour unrest and service delivery protests may be meaningfully evaluated by means of this approach (in tandem with Chowning's analysis).

#### **4. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION AND THE “SECOND TRANSITION”**

No concept figures more centrally in ANC ideology than that of the NDR, which is defined by the ANC (2007) as, “A process of struggle that seeks to transfer power to the people and transform society into a non-racial, non-sexist, united, democratic one, and changes the manner in which wealth is shared, in order to benefit all the people”. As noted previously, the revolution is completed in two phases, of which the first was the political transition in the form of the 1994 negotiated transition and the Constitution of the Republic, both of which are viewed as temporary compromises employed to attain political ascendancy – in fact, the Constitution is regarded to be subservient to the ideology of the party, “the Constitution and the state system provide the requisite wherewithal to implement the objectives of the NDR” (ANC 2007). After the attainment of political power and the subsequent incremental progressive orientation, the second phase of the revolution encompasses rapid social and economic transformation that has been much publicised by the ANC since its 2012 conference in Mangaung – this serves as the most important reference for understanding the post-election political environment and the repositioning of ANC policy toward the left of the spectrum. The party’s policy will henceforth be guided by, “a vision for a second transition that must focus on the social and economic transformation of South Africa over the next 30 to 50 years” and an emphasis on the, “character and values of the ANC as a revolutionary peoples’ movement” (ANC 2012:4).

##### **4.1 Legislation pertaining to the radical second transition**

Key amongst the strategic socio-economic goals of the second phase is job creation, poverty alleviation, social security, the elimination of inequality and improved service delivery, all of which are still justified normatively through orthodox postcolonial-socialist notions such as demographic representivity, recompense for an unjust past, equality, democracy and development. Consequently, the realisation of these outcomes are to be facilitated through interventionist approaches such as the redistribution of wealth, greater regulation of the ownership of the means of production (including land, capital, labour and business) and even the expropriation and deprivation of property. Expediting this leftward policy shift will most likely require Constitutional amendments and the redrawing of the political “rules of the game”.

Many of these more radical themes are already contained within policy documents and proposed legislation. Examples of proposals to curtail private ownership, particularly through means of deprivation and expropriation, include (AfriSake 2014):

- The National Development Plan;
- Recent jurisprudence from the Constitutional Court and its Chief Justice (in the case of *Agri South Africa v Minister for Minerals and Energy*);
- The Draft Expropriation Bill (2013);
- Draft Extension of Security of Tenure Amendment Bill (2013);
- Draft Land Management Commission Bill (2013);
- Draft Promotion and Protection of Investment Bill (2013);
- Infrastructure Development Bill (B49-2013);
- Rental Housing Amendment Bill (B56-2013);
- Local Government: Municipal Property Rates Amendment Bill (B33-2013);
- Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act (Act 15 of 2014);
- The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (Act 16 of 2013);
- Property Valuation Act (Act 17 of 2014).

What is noteworthy about these policies is their relatively specific focus, their timing and number, as well as the apparent urgency with which their implementation is being pursued. In particular, the coincidence of the Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Act with the 2014 elections can be seen as adroit political timing, since the act re-opens the land claims process that closed at the end of 1998, giving claimants a five year window (until June 2019) to lodge land claims.

However, currently the most radical proposition relating to the context of property ownership and land reform is the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform' Policy Proposal entitled, *Strengthening the relative rights of people working the land* (DRDLR 2013). This document envisions a drastic reconfiguration of ownership in the agricultural sector, "based on the relative contribution of each category of people to the development of defined land portions or farm units. The historical owner of the land automatically retains 50% of the land, while the labourers on the land assume ownership of the remaining 50%, proportional to their contribution to the development of the land, based on the number of years they had worked on the land" (DRDLR 2013:12).

These examples serve as clear indications that this surge of legislation embodies the radical leftward policy shift of the second transition, as opposed to a "business as usual" approach by the ANC government.

## 5. INCREMENTAL AND RADICAL SHIFTS IN ORGANISED LABOUR AND OPPOSITION POLITICS

The importance that the working class is accorded in radical Marxist influenced ideologies means that organised labour and trade unions have typically stood at the vanguard of left-wing politics worldwide. The domestic political environment is no exception, and the power of organised labour is perhaps more robust in South Africa than in many other states of the developing world. The South African context has witnessed the institutionalisation of the interests of organised labour in the form of the Tripartite Alliance, consisting of the ruling ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the latter of which is the country's largest trade union federation with a membership of more than two million workers. At the core of COSATU's membership lies the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), a union that, as De Lange (2012) explains, is "a highly sophisticated and professional union with coherent leadership [...] it is no coincidence that top ANC leaders regularly come from its ranks". At the same time, the mining sector remains the single biggest contributor to the South African economy and, as such, control of organised labour in this sector is lucrative, both in economic and political terms.

It therefore came as a major disruption when the independent Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), having eroded the NUM's membership at the Lonmin platinum mine at Marikana, resolved to strike for wage increases and better working conditions. At the core of AMCU's appeal was its assertion that the NUM leadership was being influenced by both the government and the Chamber of Mines, to the detriment of the workers' interests (Mashala 2012). The strike culminated in the so-called Marikana Massacre on 16 August 2012, which has since become a seminal event in South African politics in general and for the radical left-wing of the spectrum in particular (Munusamy 2012). The Marikana incident signalled an unprecedented radicalisation of organised labour in South Africa, leading to a further unprotected AMCU strike action in 2014 that lasted for 152 days, bringing the production of platinum group metals to a grinding halt. The effect on the economy was significant and the outcome was a 0,6% quarter-on-quarter contraction of GDP in the first three months of 2014.

If any doubts lingered about the role of organised labour in the welfare of the South African state, they have surely been dispelled by AMCU over the last two years. What serves as a reliable indication of a shift to the left in organised labour is not only AMCU's radical actions, but the fact that any other union can essentially only employ the same radical tactics in attempting to gain/regain dominance – attracting worker support cannot be achieved by adopting more conservative demands or negotiating styles. This creates fertile ground for the formation of a radical left-wing labour

federation that would serve as a counter to COSATU's dominance, and is given ever more credence by the split between the federation and its largest affiliate, NUMSA. It therefore appears that the future of organised labour will become more politicised and radical, as will be motivated subsequently in this article.

## 5.1 Opposition politics

Through five national elections, South African politics has been dominated by the ANC. The party has consistently garnered more than 60% of the national vote, as well as the majority of votes in eight provinces. Given the role the ANC played in liberating South Africa, this overwhelming support initially came as no surprise. However, even as the party faced mounting challenges in steering the ship of state, coupled with at times severe internal dysfunction, it remains the single most important political institution in South Africa.

In the Westminster tradition of South African parliamentary politics, the ANC's successive majorities has provided it with the opportunity to fuse its ideology with the state itself through its project of transformation (discussed previously) expedited through party doctrine such as cadre deployment. This political preponderance, coupled with its liberation credentials and leftist ideological underpinnings (Tripartite Alliance and the NDR) has positioned the ANC as the hegemon of the political left in South Africa. As Lodge (2002:192) explains, "The social character of its following prompts the ANC to maintain that it provides 'a disciplined force of the left', representing 'the needs and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of South Africans, many of whom are poor'".

Consider, for instance, the outcome of the 2009 national election when party support was distributed according to the ideological spectrum, illustrated in oversimplified<sup>5</sup> terms below:

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5 The diagram is employed in order to illustrate a trend, and therefore does not claim absolute accuracy and/or scientific infallibility. For the purposes of this diagram, the political centre is constituted by parties that adhere to a liberal-democratic ideology; the left of centre by parties that adhere to Socialist, Marxist and Radical Black Power ideologies; and the right of centre by parties that adhere to conservative, nationalist, religious or traditionalist ideologies. Only parties with parliamentary representation were included.

**Table 3 – Electoral support represented on the ideological spectrum, 2009 (IEC 2009:100)**

Left of Centre		Centre		Right of Centre	
<i>African National Congress: 65,9</i>		<i>Democratic Alliance: 16,66</i>		<i>Inkatha Freedom Party: 4,55</i>	
<i>United Democratic Movement: 0,85</i>		<i>Congress of the People: 7,42</i>		<i>Freedom Front Plus: 0,83</i>	
<i>Pan Africanist Congress: 0,27</i>		<i>Independent Democrats: 0,92</i>		<i>African Christian Democratic Party: 0,81</i>	
<i>Azanian People's Organisation: 0,22</i>		<i>Minority Front: 0,25</i>		<i>United Christian Democratic Party: 0,37</i>	
<i>African People's Convention: 0,20</i>					
% of electoral support left of centre	<b>67,44</b>	% of electoral support at the centre	<b>25,25</b>	% of electoral support right of centre	<b>6,56</b>

This approximate representation serves to highlight two important macro trends of the South African political spectrum, namely the ANC's position as pre-eminent party of the people and the left, but, more significantly, the fact that any party that has ambitions of gaining substantial support amongst the South African electorate has to court voters on the left. This is not only a meta-perspective that applies to the domestic political arena, but perhaps also the most important factor in hypothesising a shift to the left, as this article does – the simple truth is that the left harbours the most potential votes for any opposition party. Thus, there is ample incentive for parties to adopt more progressive or populist policies, in the hope of eroding the ANC's outright majority.

## 5.2 The centre and the right

This indeed appeared to be the case in the build-up to the 2014 elections as the largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), initiated leftward shifts in relation to several important aspects, both in terms of symbolism and policy. Regarding the former, the DA staged an unprecedented march to the headquarters of the ANC at Luthuli House, which had undeniably populist overtones, being more reminiscent of an ANC demonstration (complete with workers' overalls, blue hard hats, and even a crowd-pleasing jig by DA leader, Helen Zille). The march gained much publicity in the media, particularly since it ended in a violent confrontation between DA and ANC members in the streets of downtown Johannesburg (ENCA 2014). Concurrently, the party had launched a communications campaign dubbed, *Know your DA*. The purpose of the campaign was to clarify the party's role in fighting apartheid, which it contended was a "story that remains largely untold"



(DA 2014). Its intent to associate with the political left was also clear, as it explains that, “Some DA leaders have their roots in the ANC, the Black Consciousness Movement, the PAC and the UDF [...] Some were trade unionists; others were detained, harassed or even imprisoned for their part in the struggle” (DA 2014). The material produced for the campaign also made use of Mandela’s image (specifically of him embracing Helen Suzman) to the ire of the ANC. Equally telling of the DA’s shifting identity was the fact that the *Know your DA* campaign had wholly omitted mention of the party’s previous leader, Tony Leon, under whose auspices the DA had garnered significant electoral support in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the adversarial *Fight back!* election campaign.

From a policy perspective the DA published its Green Paper on Economic Inclusion (DA 2013), of which the primary purpose was to emphasise the party’s commitment to policies such as affirmative action, employment equity, and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment. This indicates a clear leftward shift for the Democratic Alliance (a party that has firm historical roots in the liberal tradition) that prompted political analyst, Gareth van Onselen<sup>6</sup> (2013) to question, “Where do the DA’s foundational values start and stop? Or is the DA going to become only the latest person on the politically correct soapbox, trying to advocate for and define those illiberal ideas about which the ANC and its alliance partners spend so much time trying to legislate for already.” This, in turn, suggests that the DA is migrating on the political spectrum to accommodate (and appropriate?) the policy and even symbolism of the ANC in a manner that would place it left-of-centre, at the expense of its foundational liberal identity, in order to gain electoral support on the left.

Even the arch-conservative Freedom Front Plus (FF+), descendent from the erstwhile Conservative Party, has in recent times moderated its conservative and Afrikaner-ethnic identity. The party’s 2014 election manifesto instead incorporates and added emphasis on minority groups and their rights, which in fact represents a more classically liberal position. In December 2013, the FF+, along with five opposition parties from the centre-right, had formed a coalition named the Collective for Democracy (CD), chaired by the COPE leader, Mosiuoa Lekota. It was agreed that while the parties were united around a list of 20 strategic priorities, they would retain their own identity and contest the election individually.

### 5.3 The left

When considering the reconfiguration of the political spectrum, the 12-month period leading up to the most recent elections was dominated by Julius Malema and the EFF. Malema, the controversial former ANC Youth League leader, launched

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6 Van Onselen was a former Chief of Staff in the office of the DA party leader.

the party with other former ANC members in July 2013, vowing to contest the 2014 elections. In terms of ideology, the EFF positions itself to the left of the ANC, making it a radical leftist role-player. Indeed, the party's own declaration states that the EFF is a, "radical and militant economic emancipation movement that brings together revolutionary, fearless, radical, and militant activists" and elsewhere, that it is, "a radical, leftist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement [...] [that] draws inspiration from the broad Marxist-Leninist tradition and Fanonian schools of thought in their analyses of the state, imperialism, culture and class contradictions in every society" (EFF 2014a). The party's apparent proclivity for organised violence is also emphasised by its use of paramilitary party titles (commander-in-chief, etc.) and violent slogans ("A revolutionary must become a cold killing machine motivated by pure hate"). This orientation has led other actors on the left to label the EFF as fascists and Nazi's. The party is also influenced by Black Consciousness/Power ideologies, having absorbed the Black Consciousness Party and the Socialist Party of Azania prior to the 2014 elections. From the abovementioned aspects, it is clear that the EFF has come to define the leftmost radical and militant extremity of the South African political spectrum.

However, the pre-election proliferation of leftist parties extended past the EFF, which was only the most prominent example.<sup>7</sup> In March 2013, the Workers' and Socialist Party (WASP) was launched as an umbrella organisation, led by the Trotskyist Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) that was itself a product of the 1970's Marxist Workers' Tendency (MWT) of the ANC. According to the party's manifesto, the formation of WASP was galvanised by the Marikana Massacre, with its aim being to, "accelerate the process towards the formation of a mass workers' party on a socialist programme. We see ourselves as pioneers, assembling under the WASP banner the forces that can begin this historic task" (WASP 2014). The emergence of WASP in the aftermath of Marikana and its initial overtures to AMCU as well as the moves towards establishing a workers' party by NUMSA (discussed later) reaffirmed the highly politicised nature of organised labour in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, not only did several new contenders emerge on the left of the political spectrum prior to the elections, but existing centrist and even conservative parties adopted more progressive approaches in an attempt to tap into the large amount of electoral support left of centre. Whilst these developments clearly point towards a reconfiguration of opposition politics, the viability of this strategy would

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7 Another party that emerged from the ANCYL/Julius Malema aftermath was the Patriotic Alliance (PA), headed by Kenny Kunene. Kunene was formerly associated with both the ANC and EFF, and had close personal ties with Malema.

8 It subsequently became evident that WASP would struggle to consolidate its support amongst AMCU members, since the African People's Convention and United Democratic Movement already had strong membership bases in the union, not to mention the eventual challenge of the EFF (Marrian 2013).

only be determined once the nation had gone to the polls, the result of which is considered in the next section.

## 6. OUTCOMES OF THE 2014 ELECTION

Rarely has an election generated as much anticipation as it did in 2014. With early opinion polling predicting a dramatic decline in support for the ANC, the explosive birth of the EFF, “Nkandlagate”, “Guptagate”, the enduring arms deal investigation, intrigues surrounding the Zuma “spy tapes”, escalating service delivery protests, mounting conflicts within the Tripartite Alliance (and in particular COSATU), it appeared as if the scene was set for an historic outcome – or so many believed.

On both sides of the political spectrum arguments were advanced in expectation of political gains and losses. The results of the 2014 election are summarised below, along with a comparison with the previous (2009) election (only parties with parliamentary representation included):

**Table 4 – Results of the 2014 national election (IEC 2014)**

Party	Votes	Percentage	Seats	% Gain/ Loss since 2009
African National Congress	11 436 921	62,15	249	-3,75
Democratic Alliance	4 091 584	22,23	89	+4,62
Economic Freedom Fighters	1 169 259	6,35	25	New
Inkatha Freedom Party	441 854	2,40	10	-2,15
National Freedom Party	288 742	1,57	6	New
United Democratic Movement	184 636	1,00	4	+0,16
Freedom Front Plus	165 715	0,90	4	+0,07
Congress of the People	123 235	0,67	3	-6,75
African Christian Democratic Party	104 039	0,57	3	-0,24
African Independent Congress	97 642	0,53	3	New
Agang SA	52 350	0,28	2	New
Pan Africanist Congress	37 784	0,21	1	-0,07
African People’s Convention	30 676	0,17	1	-0,04

Given the results of the recent election in addition to voting patterns since 1994, the 2014 poll in many ways represents a continuation of established electoral trends, discussed below.

The South African political arena may still be described as a dominant party system (Southall 2005:617). In consecutive elections, the ANC won 62,7% (1994), 66,4% (1999), 69,7% (2004), 65,9% (2009) and 62,15% (2014) of the vote. The party's trajectory of support has therefore been consistent over 20 years, even though its 2014 result was achieved with considerably more effort.

The DA, as the largest opposition party, has consistently increased its share of the vote in five consecutive elections, from 1,7% (1994) to 9,6% (1999), 12,4% (2004), 16% (2009) and 22,23% in 2014. This increase in support has correlated with the party's repositioning towards the left of the political spectrum and a simultaneous shift in identity from liberal to social democratic.

Voter apathy remained a significant factor in the election outcome, continuing a trend that emerged after 1994. True to a dominant party political system, a large part of the electorate has become disinterested or apathetic towards their rights to political decision-making (Brooks 2004:121). This trend has grown over the last two decades, resulting in lower rates of voter registration and voter turnout amongst those that did register, as can be seen from the following table:

**Table 5 – Voting trends, 1994-2014 (SAIRR 2013:868)**

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Eligible voters [millions]</b>	<b>Registered voters [millions]</b>	<b>Votes cast [millions]</b>	<b>% Eligible voters</b>	<b>% Eligible voters that did not vote</b>	<b>% Registered voters that voted</b>
1994	22,7	22,7	19,5	86	14	86
1999	22,8	18,1	16,2	71,2	28,8	89,3
2004	27,4	20,6	15,8	57,8	42,2	76,8
2009	27,5	23,1	17,9	65	35	77,3
2014	31,4	24,1	18,6	59,2	40,8	77,1

Even though parties such as the EFF may have attracted new or formerly apathetic voters, a full 40% of eligible voters chose not to cast a ballot. Similarly, the percentage of registered voters that did not cast a ballot on the day also reached a historic low.

A final trend that persisted was the declining impact of smaller parties. In general, small parties retained their very limited support (the UDM and FF+ saw, at best, marginal increases) or shrank. Parties that no longer occupy a seat

in parliament after the elections include the Minority Front, UCDP and AZAPO. Whilst newcomers Agang SA and the NFP managed to secure minor support (the latter mostly from IFP defectors), WASP failed to secure parliamentary representation. It is entirely plausible that COPE ceded virtually all its 2009 gains to the ANC, and it too is now a minor parliamentary role-player. This seems to confirm the trend that breakaway movements from the ANC find it difficult to achieve political sustainability, with the UDM and PAC being earlier examples.

However, two aspects emerged that signalled a deviation from the electoral trends up until the 2014 election. Firstly, as was extensively discussed earlier, the pre-election political landscape was characterised by a generally progressive shift in policy to the left of the political spectrum. Secondly, the ANC now appears to be particularly vulnerable in urbanised areas such as the metropolises. In Gauteng, the most populous and urbanised province, the ANC saw its support decline by more than 10%, whilst the EFF debuted in the province with 10,3% of the vote and the DA grew to 8,3%.

Finally, by means of conclusion, one can reassess the balance of the political spectrum (see Figure 1) by accounting for pre-election shifts among opposition parties and incorporating the most recent election results. Premised upon the fact that the DA underwent a progressive shift in order to erode the ANC’s majority, and taking note of the strong performance of the EFF’s first electoral outing, it becomes evident that more than 90% of South African electoral support now resides left of the political centre, which constitutes a tangible redefinition in the political *status quo*:

**Table 6 – Electoral support represented on the ideological spectrum, 2014 (IEC 2014)**

Left of Centre		Centre		Right of Centre	
<i>African National Congress: 62,15</i> <i>Democratic Alliance: 22,23</i>				<i>Inkhata Freedom Party: 2,40</i> <i>National Freedom Party: 1,57</i>	
<i>Economic Freedom Fighters: 6,35</i> <i>United Democratic Movement: 1,00</i> <i>Pan Africanist Congress: 0,21</i> <i>African People’s Convention: 0,17</i>		<i>Congress of the People: 0,67</i> <i>African Independent Congress: 0,53</i> <i>Agang SA: 0,28</i>		<i>Freedom Front Plus: 0,90</i> <i>African Christian Democratic Party: 0,57</i>	
% of electoral support left of centre	<b>92,11</b>	% of electoral support at the centre	<b>1,48</b>	% of electoral support right of centre	<b>5,44</b>

## 7. THE POST-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

While post-election trends will only crystallise with the passage of time, since May 2014 there have been several notable events that point towards both progressive and radical shifts in the political arena and organised labour. Furthermore, the convergence of these two domains appears increasingly likely in the post-election environment.

In the same manner that the EFF dominated headlines in the build-up to the election, the party has also remained highly controversial and visible in its aftermath. The first symbolic salvo denoting the party's intent, after being incorporated as part of the institutionalised politics, was evident at the opening of the National Assembly. During the induction of members of South Africa's fifth parliament, the 25 EFF members took the oath of affirmation dressed in red workers' overalls and domestic worker attire. Malema himself donned gumboots and a red hardhat in addition to his overalls. The choice of apparel stood in stark contrast to the formality of the ceremony, and was a clear co-optation of socialist symbolism, both in terms of the use of colour and the workers' garments. This was confirmed by the EFF (2014b) which explained that its dress, "seeks to register who the EFF stands for and who the EFF will fight for and that is the excluded, super-exploited and marginalised masses of the working class". Subsequently, on 1 July 2014, seven EFF members of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature were expelled after the speaker ruled that their attire was inappropriate.<sup>9</sup> After refusing to vacate the legislature, the MPLs were forcibly removed by the SAPS, during which it is alleged that they were manhandled and injured at the hands of the police. On 22 July 2014 the issue escalated when approximately 2 000 EFF supporters marched on the Provincial Legislature, forced entry into the premises and staged a sit-in. The protest was generally chaotic, and EFF supporters allegedly, "looted hawkers' stalls, burned down a mobile police satellite station and broke the windows of several shops on their way to Braamfontein" (Evans 2014). Riot police dispersed the protesters with rubber bullets, injuring several. It is doubtful whether such behaviour can be viewed as constructive to South African parliamentary politics; the use of violence and criminality is particularly disquieting. Should the EFF continue with its brand of radical anti-system politics (as the party has vowed to do), it will serve as further example of the political spectrum shifting towards the left (or extreme-left, in this instance). Such a dynamic may in turn prompt increased securitisation from the ANC regime through means of the police and intelligence establishments in an attempt to stabilise the political landscape through means of coercion.

However, in the immediate post-election environment, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) appears to be the strongest motive force

<sup>9</sup> The MPL's red overalls bore the word "asijiki", which means "we will not retract".

behind a leftward shift in the political landscape. Since 2013, the COSATU affiliate has been at odds with the country's largest trade union federation over the suspension of COSATU General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi. On 20 December 2013, during the conclusion of a special national congress, NUMSA announced its withdrawal of support from the ANC during the 2014 election, calling instead for an alternative movement of the working class to be established (Letsoalo & Mataboge 2013). Since then, NUMSA staged a general strike immediately after the conclusion of AMCU's strike in the platinum industry, which many interpreted to be a calculated show of political force ahead of the establishment of a leftist workers' party (Munusamy 2014). NUMSA had since 2013 maintained, "that the South African working class is in need of an independent working class party since the South African Communist Party has forsaken the working class" (NUMSA 2014). Moves towards the establishment of such a party were given further credence in August 2014, when NUMSA hosted an International Symposium of Left Political Parties and Movements, where the keynote presentation delivered by the union's President, Irvin Jim, was entitled *The state of the South African revolution and the significance of the Numsa moment*. Jim confirmed that the union is in the process of establishing a "Movement for Socialism" (Aboobaker 2014) that could potentially contend in the 2016 local government elections. The COSATU/NUMSA clash came to a head on 8 November 2014, when COSATU's Central Executive Committee voted to formally expel NUMSA from the federation.<sup>10</sup>

Should a NUMSA-backed workers' party be established towards the end of 2014 (and all portents point to such an eventuality) it will precipitate a further reconfiguration of the South African political spectrum. Given NUMSA's membership of 338 000 workers, the union's departure represents a significant blow for the Tripartite Alliance. This also signals a further convergence of organised labour and politics on the far-left of the political spectrum, which may have far-reaching implications for the national economy, particularly if labour is to become a political football. The latter scenario appears likely, given the current animosity between the ANC/COSATU alliance and NUMSA, who may in time align with the EFF and other political forces on the far-left.

## 8. CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

Given the range of aspects pertaining to the South African political landscape that have been discussed thus far, the line of argumentation must be reconciled with the hypothesis posited at the beginning of this article, namely that an evaluation of

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10 At the time of writing this article, it remains to be seen what course of action COSATU affiliates sympathetic to NUMSA's cause will adopt. It is, however, a distinct possibility that NUMSA's departure may precipitate the further disintegration of the Tripartite Alliance.

tendencies in the contemporary political environment reveals that the South African political *status quo* is in the process of undergoing a clear shift towards the left of the ideological spectrum.

Firstly, it was noted that since the 1994 government, led by the ANC (as party of the liberation and the masses), has embarked on a project to transform South African society at large according to an essentially socialist blueprint. The ideological justification for this course of action is found in the party's conceptualisation of the NDR, according to which the ANC is the authoritative interpreter of this transformative vision. However, it is apparent that the capabilities of the South African state have been eroded in recent years, fundamentally hindering the process of socio-economic transformation via a developmental state. It was concluded that the discrepancy between transformative ideology and transformative capacity is essentially analogous to the discrepancy between the expected levels of need satisfaction and actual levels of need satisfaction, according to Davies' theory of revolutions.

Secondly, it was argued that given the high levels of political expectation, it is likely that the government will formulate and implement radical policies aimed at transformation through economic redistribution, expropriation and deprivation. This becomes more probable as the capacity of the developmental state erodes, and during times of economic adversity. It was confirmed that such policies would be particularly germane to the NDR as ideological blueprint, and furthermore, that numerous examples of such policy currently exists in the form of bills and newly-assented legislation.

Thirdly, the reconfiguration of organised labour and opposition politics was reconstructed. It was noted that organised labour had become more radicalised and highly politicised since the emergence of AMCU, which resulted in considerable losses to the national economy. Additionally, labour is likely to become instrumental in South African politics, given NUMSA's departure from COSATU. Regarding opposition politics, it was noted that not only had numerous leftist parties emerged prior to the 2014 elections, but also that existing opposition parties (notably the DA) had undertaken progressive shifts in terms of policy and identity in order to gain electoral support (which resides overwhelmingly on the left of the political spectrum).

Finally, the 2014 election results confirmed the leftward reconfiguration of opposition parties, with the EFF securing over one million votes and the DA growing its support base by 4,6%. ANC losses were most evident in Gauteng, where the province's urbanised nature and economic activity exacerbates socio-economic inequality. The recent post-election environment reveals further tendencies towards radicalisation in opposition politics (notably the anti-system politics of the EFF) and organised labour (consecutive strikes by AMCU and NUMSA) with the likelihood of convergence between the two domains (the establishment of a NUMSA-led



workers' party). The product of this convergence will by all accounts position itself to the radical left of the ANC, in an attempt to satisfy the demands of workers and the poor masses.

Therefore, taking into account the theoretical points of departure and the reconstructed tendencies from the South African political context, this article can conclude that there is strong evidence in support of the verification of the hypothesised radical leftward shift of the South African political landscape and the potential of its reconfiguration in the near future.

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