

The Consolidation of Democracy in South Africa**Chris Sibanyoni****Abstract**

The elections of May 1999 marked the end of South Africa's transition to democracy. The country is now faced with the challenging task of consolidating its democracy. The process of democratic consolidation raises the question of whether democracy is likely to be consolidated in a country that has relatively unfavorable socioeconomic conditions. In the extensive comparative literature on democratic consolidation there are two schools of thought, namely functional and genetic schools. On one hand, the functional school maintains that the chances that democracy will emerge and endure in a country are greater the higher its level of social modernization. On the other hand, the genetic school argues that the mode of transition to democracy influences the likelihood and nature of democratic consolidation. However, these schools of thought are not mutually exclusive. Objective socioeconomic conditions play an important role in democratic consolidation, and actors have room to maneuver to change these conditions. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the implication this literature has for democratic consolidation in South Africa, a middle-income country with severe socioeconomic inequalities and a relatively low level of economic growth, along with related problems such as high rate of unemployment and crime. And the argument of this paper is that with a sustainable economic growth and declining race- and/or class-based socioeconomic inequalities, social conflict is less likely to adversely affect democratic consolidation in South Africa.

Introduction

The elections of May 1999 marked the end of South Africa's transition to democracy, for 1994 election was about electing a transitional Government of National Unity that was governed by an interim constitution. The country is now faced with the challenging task of consolidating its democracy. Democratic consolidation is a post-transition and continuous process -- a move from the election of a democratic government to the institutionalization of a democratic political regime. Institutionalization refers to the habituating of political actors to the resolution of social conflict within the laws and procedures of democratic political institutions (Linz & Stepan 1996, 16). This process of democratic consolidation raises the question of *whether democracy is likely to be consolidated in a country that has relatively unfavorable socioeconomic conditions.*

The "third wave" of democratization, which has seen a major worldwide shift toward democracy, has given rise to an extensive comparative literature on democratic consolidation. *So, the chief purpose of this paper is to examine the implication this literature has for democratic consolidation in South Africa, a middle-income country with severe socioeconomic inequalities and a relatively low level of economic growth, along with related problems such as high rate of unemployment and crime.* In the comparative literature on democratization and democratic consolidation there are two main schools of thought, functional and genetic (see Rustow 1970, 337-341; Munch 1994; Shin 1994). It is vital to examine the views of these schools as they point to factors that impact on democratic consolidation. For example, the functional school argues that the level of socioeconomic development affects democracy. It is called the functional school because it seeks to identify conditions conducive to democratization by looking at the social characteristics of functioning democracies and comparing them with those of non-democracies (see Lipset 1959; Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995).

In contrast, the genetic school looks at how democracy comes into being (see Rustow 1970, 350-362; O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986). The genetic school stresses the importance of political leadership, tactics and strategies during the transition process, and

shows how these factors impact on democratic consolidation. In addition, this school argues that the mode of transition determines the nature of the consolidation process.

However, specific patterns of social conflict play a vital role in a democratizing country. Major studies of the apartheid era in South Africa have highlighted the cleavages of race and social class (e.g. Lodge 1983; Marx 1992). The negotiated settlement on the constitution addressed the problem of racial discrimination directly, but it dealt only indirectly with racial-based socioeconomic inequalities. *However, with a sustainable economic growth and declining race- and/or class-based socioeconomic inequalities, social conflict is less likely to adversely affect democratic consolidation in South Africa.*

In trying to analyze the prospects for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa, I will first discuss the concept “democratic consolidation”. Then I will briefly examine the differences between the theories of the functional and the genetic schools. Thereafter, I will discuss class and racial conflict and effects of socioeconomic inequalities. The final section of the paper will discuss the attempts of the South African government to redistribute income and wealth. Nevertheless, it is important first to start with conceptualizing the term -- democratic consolidation.

Conceptualization of democratic consolidation

Because the term “democratic consolidation” is a double-word term, it is important to define its constitutive parts separately. “Democratic” is related to the term “democracy”, about the meaning of which there is little agreement. There is a minimalist and maximalist approaches. The minimalist approach equates democracy with the holding of competitive elections (see Schumpeter 1943; Lipset 1960 & Huntington 1984). For example, Schumpeter (1943) defines democracy as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. This definition sees the leadership as important, and limits the role of the citizens to elections (Diamond 1999, 9; Pennock 1979, 449). This definition also sees the involvement of individuals in decision making

as affecting the efficiency of decision making. The Schumpeterian democracy come close to attacking the idea of individuals as active citizens not subjects of another power (Held 1988, 179).

Contrary to the Schumpeterian democracy, the maximalist approach highlights the social and economic rights (Held 1987, 284-7). Held (1988, 285) asserts that a constitution should not only guarantee political rights, for instance equal right to vote, but also “equal right to enjoy the conditions for effective participation, enlightened understanding and the setting of the political agenda”. To achieve this, Held argues (1988, 285), that citizens should have social and economic rights, for without these rights political rights could not be fully enjoyed. Despite the fact that the extreme inequalities in the distribution of resources, for instance income, status, knowledge, occupation, and organizational position, lead to inequality in political resources (Dahl 1971, 82), social and economic rights should not be confused with democracy.

For the purpose of this paper democracy is regarded as a method of rule that allows individual adults, who are citizens of a state, to periodically elect among competing parties representatives to take final decisions on their behalf. The representatives are also entrusted with the duty of establishing democratic institutions that give individuals and social groupings an opportunity to reach compromises on their conflicting interests. The definition excludes children and foreigners despite the fact that the laws and decisions of a country are binding to them. Also, the definition recognizes the importance of competitive elections and the role of conflicting interests. In addition, the definition recognizes the need for political parties, social groupings and individuals to participate in policy-making processes and act within the law. This raises the following question: Given the recognition of clashes of interest and political competition, when can democracy be regarded as consolidated?

As is the case of “democracy”, there is no agreement on the term “democratic consolidation”. “Originally, the term ‘democratic consolidation’ was meant to describe

the challenge of making democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against eventual 'reverse waves'" (Schedler 1998, 91). Gether, Diamandouros and Puhle (1996, 2) define "democratic consolidation" as a stage where all major groups view political institutions as the only legitimate setting for contesting political issues, and following democratic rules. This definition stresses the importance of the attitudes and behaviors of significant political actors, and that the political actors or groupings should believe in and act within the democratic structures and refrain from using undemocratic means to attain their goals. Linz and Stepan (1992, 5; Diamond 1999, 68) define "democratic consolidation" in a similar way. They regard a democracy as consolidated when democracy is "the only game in town", that is, when no significant political groups endeavor to overthrow the democratic regime or secede from the state. In addition, even in a state of severe economic crisis, for instance increasing unemployment and inflation, the overwhelming majority of the citizens should believe that they ought to act within the confines of democratic structures. Furthermore, the actors should accept of the idea that political conflict is to be resolved according to constitutional norms. The constitutional dimension in Linz and Stepan's definition is an addition to Gether, Diamandouros and Puhle's definition.

Schmitter's definition emphasizes the stabilization of arrangements, norms and solutions that were decided upon during a transition period. This definition recognizes that there are different types of democracies, for instance presidential and parliamentary democracies. Shin (1994, 144) argues that consolidation and stability are not the same. Stability is part of consolidation and exists only within a persistent democratic regime, while consolidation means significant changes in the quality of democracy. That is, "political competition can be made fairer and more open; participation can become more inclusive and vigorous; citizens' knowledge, resources, and competence can grow; elected (and appointed) officials can be made more responsive and accountable; civil liberties can be better protected; and rule of law can become more efficient and secure" (Diamond 1999, 18).

The definitions above, and others not mentioned here, demonstrate that democratic consolidation shows at least four, as stated by Dawisha (1997, 43-44), distinct conceptual aspects: the two-turnover test, which means “peaceful alteration in government between parties” (Gunther, Puhle & Diamandouros 1995, 12; Jung & Shapiro 1996, 179), low public support for anti-system parties or groups, high public commitment to the fundamental values and procedural norms of democratic political politics, and elite consensus about the desirability of institutionalizing and legitimizing democratic norms and values. The two-turnover test is less important in determining whether a democracy has been consolidated or not as there may be a founding and a follow-up democratic election without democracy being consolidated, as was the case in Chile, for example. General Augusto Pinochet retained power that violated democracy (Gunther, Diamandouros & Puhle 1996, 5-6). Pinochet, who led the army before and after transition, appointed Supreme Court judges, mayors, regional governors, and one-fifth of the new senate. This gave his allies the power to block or delay the policies of the new democratic government (Haggard & Kaufman 1993, 271). Another example is that of Japan and Italy. Single parties dominated Japan and Italy for four decades, yet they managed to consolidate their democracies. Thus, periodic, free and fair, and competitive elections will be a better measure than two-turnover test, as will public participation in the political system and the rule of law. The rule of law in a constitution is imperative for democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan 1996, 10). Indeed, lawlessness and disorder lead to chaos and affect the legitimacy of judicial system and the rule of law, thus undermine democratic consolidation (Diamond 1997, 24; 1999).

Because of disagreements between the functional and genetic scholars on the meaning of democratic consolidation, it is necessary to examine these schools theoretical (analytical) perspectives on democratic consolidation.

Democratic consolidation: the two chief schools of thought

The “third wave” of transition to democracy started in 1974 when the Portuguese dictatorship lost its power to the military. It continued in 1989, when the Stalinist

dictatorships in Eastern and Central Europe collapsed (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995; Gunther, Puhle & Diamandouros 1995; Huntington 1996). The “third wave” culminated in 1994, when the democratic government was elected in South Africa. These political developments led to a change in the study of democracy and its consolidation.

Before the “third wave,” scholars mainly focused on identifying conditions and prerequisites for the emergence of democracy. As from 1972, scholars became preoccupied largely with the dynamics of democratic transition and consolidation (Shin 1994, 139; Gunther, Diamandouros & Puhle 1995). This shift in scholarly focus was occasioned by the emergence or reemergence of democratic regimes in a large number of countries that lacked the presumed socioeconomic preconditions for democracy. For instance, democratization in Eastern Europe and Latin America occurred despite falling GDPs, fiscal crises and foreign debt (Maravall 1997, 11).

However, the functional school, maintains that the chances that democracy will emerge and endure in a country are greater the higher its level of social modernization. The main indicators of modernization are wealth, industrialization, urbanization and education. For example, in his classic article on the “social requisites of democracy,” Lipset divided a number of countries into two groups, “more democratic” and “less democratic”. He then examined indices of wealth, industrialization, education and urbanization in each group and demonstrated a relationship between democratization and economic development (Lipset 1959, 76; 1960; 1994). However, Chile, Taiwan, and South Korea, despite being successful economically their democracies are unstable (Diamond 1999, 87; see Mainwaring 1992, 328; Friedman 1995, 543). The functional school does not distinguish between transition and democratic consolidation. It stresses the importance of structural and political factors such as legitimacy, crosscutting cleavages, for example, class and race, and physical safety and security (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995, 9-50; Diamond 1999, 78-93; Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992, 48).

According to the genetic school, the mode of transition to democracy influences the likelihood and nature of democratic consolidation. For example, it has been argued that countries with transitions that involve explicit “pacts” among the leaders of major political groups are least likely to revert to authoritarian rule (Karl & Schmitter 1991). In contrast to the functional school, it distinguishes between the transition and the consolidation phases of democratization, arguing that the political conditions conducive to the successful transition to democracy may not be the same as the ones likely to lead to its consolidation (see Karl & Schmitter 1996, 269-282; Valenzuela 1992, 73-93). Also, the genetic school argues that political leadership may also play a direct part in facilitating consolidation (Higley & Gunther 1992). Leaders may be able to convince their followers of the merits of democracy and convey the difficulty of overcoming the legacy of past authoritarian rule and the mistakes accumulated over the years (Shin 1994, 139-140). The more unfavorable the structural factors, the greater the need for skillful and committed political leadership if democracy is to survive (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995, 16; Shin 1994, 144).

The genetic school also argues that another factor that is important in democratic consolidation is democratic institutions. What makes democratic institutions to be equally, if not more, important is the fact that the genetic school fails to state how citizens can identify the required skillful, innovative and courageous political leadership before making an electoral choice. South Africa does indeed have skillful leadership, but it is not a foregone conclusion that the leadership will continue to be committed to democracy. In an absence of skillful leadership an inclusive constitution-making process could help democratic consolidation. This implies that the constitution should ensure that social groupings or political parties organize and promote their interests. In addition, the constitution should guarantee that parties have access to political institutions. Furthermore, the constitution should make sure that losers continue playing the political game (Przeworski 1994, 56).

The economic and political factors are not mutually exclusive. *Objective socioeconomic conditions play an important role in democratic consolidation, however actors have room to maneuver to change these conditions. Also, socioeconomic factors can be articulated in conflictual ways.* Recent research on democratization and democratic consolidation has shown that democratization is neither “structurally determined” by socioeconomic variables nor entirely contingent on negotiations among the political elite (Karl & Schmitter 1991; Pridham 1995, 595; Huber, Rueschemeyer & Stephens 1997). In the absence of skillful leadership, favorable socioeconomic conditions play a significant role. Economic and political issues can have a negative or positive effect on democratization. If the leadership fails in the long term to address the poverty experienced by a majority of the population, the political skills of the leadership will not save a democracy. The inequalities between blacks and whites in South Africa will lead to social conflict, which conflict, if not reduced and well managed, will impair democratic consolidation.

Class and racial conflict in South Africa

The existing racial conflict in South Africa can be traced to about 1652 when dispossession became a vital part of colonialization (Skweyiya 1990, 195). The racial and socioeconomic conflict took root in the last three decades of the nineteenth century when vast deposits of diamonds and gold were discovered. During this period British investors and white settlers wanted cheap labor and more land. Thus, the British colonial authorities continued conquering independent African territories so that the land belonging to the Africans living there could be confiscated and the Africans be forced into wage labor (Pampallis 1991, 7; Du Pre 1990; Friedman 1995; Magubane 1999, 2-3). The process of confiscating the land of Africans became law when the Native Land Act of 1913 was passed. The Land Act of 1936 gave the government of Hertzog even more power to control Africans, particularly in the rural areas (Platzky & Walker 1985, 85-89).

The racial inequalities created in this way hardened when apartheid policies came into effect in 1948 (Friedman 1995; Platzky & Walker 1985, 71-72). The National Party

government justified apartheid by saying that “[i]n South Africa there are two major racial groups, Africans and Whites, who represent differences in history and culture. They are at vastly different poles in terms of cultural attainment. The whites who are highly developed are in minority while Africans who are outnumber them...are on the whole relatively primitive. It is the duty of the Whites, for the sake of their descendents and Western democracy, to maintain the superior position” (Du Toit 1966, 106). This quotation shows the mentality of the British and Dutch colonizers who came to South Africa to “civilize” Africans. Since Africans were “primitive” they were disqualified from having civil, political and socioeconomic rights.

To prevent blacks from enjoying citizenship rights, the apartheid government passed, among other laws, the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950. This ensured that people are classified according to race and that blacks did not climb the social ladder. In addition, the development of blacks was hindered by the establishment of separate facilities and residential areas, the provision of inferior education from primary to tertiary level, the reservation of semi-skilled and skilled jobs for whites, and the enactment of measures to ensure that white employees were not subordinated to black employees (Dugard 1978, 55-87).

The uprisings in the rural areas in the 1950s, the armed struggle of the liberation movements since the 1960s, the black workers’ strikes and student uprisings in the 1970s and the strikes and boycotts led by mass democratic organizations in the 1980s were aimed at correcting the injustices perpetrated by the Dutch and British colonial authorities and the apartheid governments. The ANC saw the establishment of democracy as the best way of addressing racial inequalities (Friedman 1995, 536-541). The ANC’s intention of establishing democracy is reflected in its programme of action adopted in the annual conference of 1949 (see ANC, *Annual Conference* 17 December 1949). However, neither the liberationists nor the apartheid government could win the battle. The Nationalists were no longer succeeding in suppressing the liberation movements and mass organizations. But at the same time the mass organizations and the liberation

The negotiations also led to the inclusion of the “sunset clause” in the constitution. The “sunset clause” guaranteed power sharing between the major political parties for the first five years of democratic government (Jung & Shapiro 1996, 98). The “sunset clause” also made provision for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and guaranteed white civil servants, including the members of the South African Defense Force and the South African Police. The ANC justified these compromises by arguing that they would lead to the success of negotiations, for the “sunset clause” addressed the fears and insecurities of the apartheid regime and its constituency (Rantete 1998, 201; ANC, November 92).

Furthermore, the ANC conceded to the inclusion of the “property clause” in the interim constitution. According to Chapter 3, Section 28(2) of the interim constitution “[n]o deprivation of any rights in property shall be permitted otherwise than in accordance with a law”. Because rural communities and COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) strongly objected to the property clause, this section was amended and put under human rights section of the final constitution to allow land reform to take place (Marcus, Eales & Wildschut 1996, 163-170; *AFRA Annual Report* 1994, 24).¹ Section 25(6) of the final constitution gave the state the right to confiscate land but it has to pay the owners the market prize for the land.

The negotiation process had some advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that the process was inclusive. Inclusiveness ensures that the political actors accept the “rules of the game”. The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) started with 19 parties. In April 1993 the number increased to 26 parties. Also, the formation of the Government of National Unity ensured that the major parties, for example NP and IFP, and their supporters became loyal to the democratic system. Another advantage is that, despite ANC dominance at the National level, other political parties have a chance to win power at the provincial and local level. For example, IFP in Kwazulu-Natal, and the NP

in Western Cape Province. Besides, because of proportional representation, the major parties are presented in National parliament, thus giving opposition parties “some direct stake in the political system” (Diamond 1999, 130-131). Whether proportional representation promotes democratic stability and consolidation is subject to debate (see Diamond 1999, 100-102, 108-109; Jung & Shapiro 1996, 176-185; Pasquino 1995, 261-283; Morlino 1995, 315-338). However, Italy’s highly proportional electoral system did not affect democratic consolidated (Diamond 1999, 100). When it comes to constitutional arrangement or electoral system, there is always a trade-off, for instance, between efficiency and representatives, and also a trade-off between inclusiveness and vertical accountability. In South Africa, the choice of constitutional arrangement was the product of negotiations and compromise, which has its disadvantages.

The disadvantages of the negotiations, while they shifted the political power from the NP to the ANC, they maintained the status quo in the economic arena. For whites still own and control most of the country’s wealth. The property rights and “sunset clause” put the ANC government in a difficult position because the state has limited financial resources and has to exercise fiscal discipline according to its macroeconomic policy. So, the socioeconomic structures and political institutions constrain the government in its attempts to address inequality. The ANC argued that the property and sunset clauses had “... a direct bearing on the pace of transformation, on the route towards the strategic objective, as well as on the extent of the danger of this process being derailed” (ANC, December 1997).

Regardless of these constraints, the ANC promised the masses a “better life for all” during the 1994 election. The ANC believed that the objective constraints could be overcome on account of dynamic internal and external factors that would promote social change (ANC, December 1997), although the nature of these factors was not stipulated. In all probability the ANC had economic growth, direct investment and decrease in

¹ The representatives of 80 rural communities and COSATU objected to the property clause by protesting outside the World Trade Center, where the negotiations were taking place (Marcus, Eales & Wildschut,

unemployment in mind. Because of ANC's optimism and its inauguration into government the impoverished masses believed that racial inequality would disappear.

When democracy was established there was a big gap between blacks and whites in South Africa. The per capita income of blacks was estimated at one-eighth that of whites, about 4,4 million people, mostly black, aged 15 years and older were illiterate, the GDP per capita was \$2, 830, only 50% of people were urbanized and unemployment stood at 35% (Mainwaring 1992, 328; Friedman 1995, 534-543). Whites who constituted 13% of the population owned about 87% of the land, and blacks who constituted 87% of the population owned about 13% of the land. Thus the government was faced with the almost impossible task of eradicating these inequalities while implementing fiscal discipline.

The long and inconclusive process of political conflict in South Africa points to major social divisions, namely race and class. Yet if there are no crosscutting cleavages, for example between class and ethnicity, it is difficult to achieve even a minimalist degree of "national unity," which the genetic school sees as necessary for successful democratization (see Rustow 1970; Rueschmeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992, 48). Some divisions are more difficult to handle than others are, particularly the ethnic and religious cleavages, for they carry great emotional weight for the groups concerned. For example, in Northern Ireland democracy has been adversely affected by relentless feuds between the religious groups in the population (Hadenius 1992, 113). Ethnic divisions in South Africa were strengthened by apartheid racial policies. Ethnic cleavages are usually seen as a major problem for democratic stability in South Africa. However, there are numerous democracies that work well despite their ethnic divisions, for instance Switzerland and Belgium. This could be attributed to the fact that ethnicity is not strongly linked to class (Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992, 49; see Dahl 1971, 111-121). So, ethnic diversity is less the issue (Lane & Ersson 1997, 7-8). Ethnic diversity is hardly likely to endanger democratic success in South Africa.

1996: 163-170; *AFRA Annual Report*, 1994: 24).

Religion could also be a powerful cause of division in South Africa but, with the exception of the African Christian Democratic Party, it has not been utilized by political parties to enlist support. Religious heterogeneity, therefore, does not create a major hindrance for democratic stability in South Africa (Lane & Ersson 1997, 8). Whereas racial, religious and ethnic conflict focuses on the elimination of contenders, class conflict focuses on the reduction of inequalities that restrict full participation (Dahrendorf 1988, 27), in political decision making. In the area of economic disputes it is often easier to devise compromises than in the areas of racial, religious and ethnic conflict, partly because the issues are more of a material nature (see Elster, Offe & Preuss 1998, 147). But when the state is depended on international capital and has very limited resources, and when race is linked to class, it becomes difficult to handle these economic cleavages.

Race is an issue in South Africa because it is linked to class. Also, race, like religion, language and ethnicity, is socialized. Segregation and Apartheid were based on the belief of irredeemable black inferiority. Thus, allowing blacks to enjoy the same socioeconomic status was seen as endangering the white supremacy and class structures (Magubane 1999, 13). Repealing and establishing democracy did not necessarily change racial attitudes and addressed racial divisions. Racial divisions may adversely affect the project of national unity. South Africa is still divided on racial lines, as the 1994 and 1999 elections showed. For instance, one hundred percent of FF (Freedom Front) support during the 1994 elections came from white voters, 99 percent of PAC (Pan African Congress) came from black voters, 94 per cent of ANC support came from blacks (6 percent non-black), and 85 percent of IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) came from Zulu voters (15 percent from non-Zulu and white). The NP was the only party that drew "mixed" support in that whites accounted for 49 percent, coloreds for 30 percent, blacks for 14 percent and Indians for 7 percent (Breytenback 1996, 62). In 1999 elections the party support was still based on color lines (see HSRC March 1999). The identification with a racial group may have a negative impact on national identity and national integration (Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992, 49).

National unity and integration is likely to be unsuccessful if race and class reinforce each other or are not overlapping. Severe socioeconomic inequality on its own is also likely to lead to social conflict. Although class, presently, is not the main source of conflict in the medium- and long term severe socioeconomic inequality is likely to cause social conflict. Democracies in advanced industrial countries that have inequalities have endured (Dahl 1971, 81; Przeworski 1986, 63), for example the United States. This can be attributed to the fact that they did not experienced the severe inequality, poverty and high unemployment estimated at 38 percent as South Africa. These problems in South Africa affect blacks who constitute majority of the population. In advanced industrial societies middle class is in majority, giving it more political power than the lower class. Also, in these countries, social conflict is individualized and people climb the social ladder through their own efforts, without the help of the trade unions. This has been a trend for a long time in the United States, and most other industrial countries have followed this path (Dahrenderf 1988, 159). Dahl (1971, 89) gives two other explanations for democratic endurance in advanced democracies with extreme inequalities. First, when disadvantaged groups make demands for greater equality, their government mostly responds to some of these demands. This is what the Swedish government did when it reduce unemployment in the 1930s, and the Franklin Roosevelt's administration did when it provided economic security to the poor in the United States (Dahl 1971, 90). This kind of reaction strengthens support for the government even if the causes of inequalities remain intact. Second, disadvantaged groups do not demand equality (for they are oblivious of alternatives or feel powerless to change the status quo). South Africa has a problem in this regard: the disadvantaged groups are aware of alternatives and demand change, but the government finds it difficult to provide the required social security because it has committed itself to neo-liberal economic policies that require a reduction in government social spending. The only country that is comparable to South Africa, in terms of socioeconomic inequality, is Brazil. The income distribution, high levels of poverty and economic concentration have adversely affected democratic consolidation in Brazil (Diamond 1999, 81), and in Dominican Republic, Peru and most

Central America (Lamounier 1995, 156). In these countries socioeconomic inequalities led to an increase in militant mobilization by rural and urban labor, intensified crime and social anomie (see Diamond 1999, 81-82; Lamounier 1995, 156). Diamond (1999, 82) believes that South Africa's condition is worse than Brazil and Guatemala, because inequality in South Africa is heavily related to race. Contrary to Brazil, blacks constitute an overwhelming majority in South Africa.

In addition, in advanced industrial countries democracy was consolidated because the sector and labor managed to reach a compromise. The former provided concessions to labor; for example high wages, full employment and social welfare, and labor in return accepted the capitalist system. The compromise was achieved because of contingent factors, namely the development of Keynesian macroeconomic demand management, Pax American, Fordist production systems and labor movement militancy (Webster & Adler 1999, 4). This interaction between labor and business led both workers and business to develop an interest in protecting and maintaining the democratic capitalist institutions. The South African government on the other hand is constrained by the macroeconomic policies it adopted, and by substantial government spending on debt repayment, which is about 21 percent of the total budget (Msebenzi 1998, 4). Though economic development does not guarantee democratic consolidation, unemployment, poverty and economic inequality make democracy very vulnerable to collapse.

Poor democracies, particularly those with an annual per capita income of less than \$1000, are extremely sensitive to socioeconomic factors. With a per capita income above \$6000, democracies can be expected to live forever. No democratic system has ever fallen in a country where per capita income exceeds \$6 055, Argentina's level in 1976 (Przeworski *et al.* 1996, 42-3). But the government's macroeconomic policies are contested, as evidenced by ongoing debates about the macro-economic policy.

Effects of socioeconomic inequalities and crime

Dahrendor (1988, 45) asserts that modern society has produced new social problems, namely persistent poverty and long-term unemployment. Dahrendor (1988, 44) argues that it is difficult to say what form of conflict could arise under such circumstances but, like Glassman (1997, 73), notes that the conflict could manifest itself through lawlessness and disorder. However, in addition to lawlessness and disorder, conflict is likely to have a racial color in South Africa. For the inequalities between the rich (mostly white) and the poor (mostly black) were not solved when democracy was established.

Socioeconomic inequalities could be the source of intense and unlawful social conflict, which could manifest itself in different forms, crime being one. Although rich people also resort to crime, poor people are especially vulnerable to crime and to exploitation by crime syndicate (see S.A. Struggles with Legacies). If, in addition, people perceive their chances of escaping punishment for crime as very good, as is the case in South Africa, involvement in crime becomes a greater possibility. The incidences of crime are not limited to socioeconomic aspects, but also to a weakness of authority (Caldeira 1996, 202). The institution of the rule of law through a constitution is imperative for democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan 1996, 10). The high level of violent crime in South Africa, the failure of the ANC government to address this problem, the involvement of members of the South African Police Services in crime, the failure of the courts to prosecute criminals due to lack of evidence and resources all undermine people's trust in South Africa's democratic institutions. An HSRC survey (1999) states that about 32 percent of the population distrust the courts and 45 percent feel unsafe. Thus, crime has led to the formation of vigilante groups, for example, Mapogo and Pagad, who take law into their own hands. This shows that South African citizens, generally, have lost faith in the police and the justice system.

Crime may also threaten democracy because it undermines the economy. It may affect economic efficiency and growth considerably, and at the same time increase inequality by concentrating wealth in the hands of criminals. Crime also discourages foreign direct

investment and tourism and inspires the emigration of skilled workers (Diamond 1997; 1999, 91).

Mushrooming crime may even encourage the public to avail itself of drastic, illegal and unconstitutional actions in a endeavor to control it (Linz & Stepan 1996, 26). For example, Pagad (People Against Gansterism and Drugs) was formed to address the problem of crime on the Cape Flats. This organization ended up using unlawful means, such as killing in order to stop gangsters and druglords from terrorizing residents of, and selling drugs on, the Cape Flats. Pagad now appears to be a terrorist organization and is allegedly involved in bombings in Cape Town, for instance Planet Hollywood.

Besides crime, socioeconomic conflict based on race manifest itself through conflict over farmland, which is regulated by the property rights clause in the constitution and the Land Reform (Labor Tenant) Act. The latter gives labor tenants on a farm certain rights to that farm, for example residential rights. A farmer who wishes to evict a labor tenant must therefore have a very good reason and must follow the legal procedures stipulated in the constitution and the act. Even after the adoption of the new constitution and the act, conflict that started before 1994 elections is still continuing. According to some people the murder of white farmers is largely the result of conflict over, or need for, land (*The Star*, 22 October 1997). Former Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi, however saw the murders as criminally motivated (*The Star*, 7 July 1998). In 1997 farmers demanded that the national intelligence agencies be involved in investigations of farm attacks (*The Star*, 22 October 1997). An Intelligence report that followed the request of the farmers revealed that attacks on white farmers were largely the work of criminals and that no other significant reason could be attributed to the attacks (*The Star*, 7 July 1998). However, following the increase in farm attacks (100 farmers were killed between November 1997 and July 1998 according to *The Star*, 7 July 1998), the government decided to review its stance that criminal elements were responsible for the attacks.

Farms' attacks mostly affected the northern half of South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal being the most affected province (Helen Suzman Foundation 1998, 5). In 1997, for instance, out of 433 nationwide attack cases of farmers, 107 occurred in KwaZulu-Natal. In Mpumalanga there were 101, followed by Free State with 51 cases (Helen Suzman Foundation 1998, 6). The attacks took various forms, namely robbery and stock theft, raping, torturing and killing (*Farmers Weekly*, 26 June 1998). Neither of these resulted in the attackers obtaining any land, although the slogans that were sometimes found at the scene of crime ("Kill the Boer [white person/Afrikaner] Kill the farmer" and "One Settler one Bullet") pointed to political motives (Helen Suzman Foundation 1998, 5).

Farmers were however also guilty of attacking labor tenants. There are cases where evictions of labor tenants have taken place violently (Hornby 1998, 79; *Land info*, vol. 5, no. 1 Jan/Feb/March 1998). In some cases labor tenants were even evicted by private companies, for instance, Imbube, which operated in Paulpietersburg, Green Four, in Vryheid, and Combat Security, in Greytown and Muden (Kunene, Hlela, Harley, John & Aitchison 1998, 42; *Natal Witness*, 18 November 1997). These security companies and farmers were violating the rights of labor tenants because, according to the constitution "[n]o one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made..."

Citizens have to act within the constitution and the laws of the country. This was explained by ANC MP, Lorna Maloney when she asserted the following: "While freehold rights to a piece of land entitles its owners to sovereignty over his or her possession, this freedom comes with great responsibility...One of the great achievements of our new society is the enshrinement of basic human rights for everyone, and this includes legislation giving certain individuals or families the right to live on a piece of land even if the freehold is retained by the owner" (*Natal Witness*, 13 February 1998).

Despite the problems between white farmers and labor tenants, what is encouraging is that the conflict between farmers and labor tenants is beginning to take place within the

institutions of conflict resolution, namely Land Claims Court, mediation and arbitration bodies, and that compromises are reached.

Another source of conflict is the government's macroeconomic policy. The ANC government has adopted GEAR (Growth, Employment, and Redistribution) strategy which induced it to become export-orientated, apply fiscal discipline and privatize some parastatals (Webster & Adler 1999, 1; Alence 1998, 11). This was a major diversion from its former explicit commitment to the nationalization of the economy and was occasioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union which rendered the United States, Britain, German and Japan important actors in South Africa's democratization.² These advanced industrial countries demanded the ANC's commitment to a free-market economy in exchange for financial support to the democratic South Africa (Webster 1999, 24). For example, in November 1993 the ANC concluded a loan agreement worth \$850 million with the International Monetary Fund. On its part the ANC agreed to tighten monetary policy, prioritize inflation reduction, contain government expenditure, and curtail tax rates (Webster & Adler 1999, 12). Thus the ANC government aims at economic growth and development, as well as wealth redistribution in order to improve the quality of life of the poor. In addition, it aims at consolidating government ownership and restructuring parastatals that provide essential services, while establishing partnerships with the private sector (ANC, December 1997).

GEAR, however, has put the ANC under internal pressure from an influential labor representative, namely COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), because similar neo-liberal economic policies have occasioned a decline in material welfare, and an increase in the gap between the rich and the poor in other parts of the world (see Przeworski 1992; see Lamounier 1995, 156-157). For example, between 1970 and 1989, the average wage in Chile decreased by 10 percent. By 1988 the minimum wage had declined by 40 percent from that of 1981. And between 1987 and 1988, those who were

rich became richer by 10 percent (psirus.sfsu.edu). Recently, COSATU has been in conflict with the ANC over government's plan to reduce the public service, privatize some parastatals, and wage dispute. The government is planning to privatize Transnet with the about 27 000 job losses expected. In addition, the government want to retrench about 55 000 civil servants (epoliticsSA, 4 October 1999).

Besides COSATU, other government supporters also oppose GEAR, such as the SACP (South African Communist Party), NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and sections of the church. However, these organizations have failed to impose their will on either the state or domestic and international capital. The former President of South Africa, Mandela, told COSATU that "GEAR ...is the fundamental policy of the ANC. We will not change it because of your pressure. If you feel you cannot get your way, then go out and shout like opposition parties. Prepare to face the full implications of that line" (Webster & Adler 1999: 15). However, the government has not succeeded in convincing these organizations to accept GEAR (Webster & Adler 1999, 17). For GEAR has not achieved significant growth, unemployment is still every high, and companies continue to retrench people (Nattrass & Seekings 1999, 15). If the situation does not change for better, income inequalities between the rich and poor are set to negatively affect the prospects of democratic stability and democratic consolidation. However, although economic development and democratic stability correlate, the relationship is not deterministic. Actors and social groups, despite their conditioning by debilitating circumstances, do have room to maneuver (Habib 1995, 65; Karl 1990). If, therefore, in South Africa, the leadership continues to desist from stressing social cleavages, particularly racial or ethnic ones, and addresses economic factors over time, democracy can be consolidated despite unfavorable socioeconomic conditions and need not revert to authoritarian rule.

² Since the 1950s the ANC was committed to the nationalization of the economy. The Freedom Charter, which was adopted by the ANC in 1955, states that "[t]he mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and

Deconcentration of income and wealth

For Lamounier (1995) a regime can increase either representation or deconcentration, or it can do both. In other words, it can be either competitive and inclusive without redistributing wealth or redistribute wealth without democratizing, or it can democratize and redistribute wealth at the same time. Bringing social and economic factors to democratic consolidation is important for two reasons. First, these factors would appear to political actors as objects of decisions or conflict. Second, after democratic consolidation, there is a change from procedural to substantive demands (Lamounier 1995, 155).

In an endeavor to deconcentrate wealth, in other words to redistribute it from the rich to the poor, the ANC government has developed policies to uplift blacks, the population group that has been most disadvantaged by Apartheid. To deal with poverty and inequality the government has identified two strategies, namely redistribution programmes and restructuring the economy (Ready to Govern 1992). One of these is land reform policy, which deals with land redistribution, land restitution and land tenure reform. Land redistribution is aimed at providing landless citizens, poor labor tenants, farm workers as well as new entrants to agriculture with residential and/or productive land. Land restitution is designed to give back land or compensation to those who were forcibly removed from their land since 1913. Land tenure reform covers land policy, administration and legislation to improve security of tenure (Green Paper on Land Affairs Policy in South Africa 1997, 2-3).

The government has also come up with Black Economic Empowerment. This deconcentration programme promotes partnership between white businesses and small black businesses. The government tends to give public tenders to black companies and white companies that have established partnership with black companies. According to Webster & Adler (1999: 16) the government shift toward neo-liberal economic policies corresponds well with the interests of black middle class and business. Black companies,

monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole."

white-black ventures and white businesses gained from privatization of state assets. And some white companies offered black businessmen or businesswoman, intellectuals, and black politicians financially rewarding directorships and shareholdings (Wester & Adler 1999, 16; epoliticsSA September 1999). About \$6 billion wealth, between 1991 and 1996, was distributed to the 10% of South Africa's richest households. Only \$145 million that is 1,5% was redistributed to the poorest 40 percent of all race groups. Poor African families fared the worst in the redistribution, for they received 9,1 million compared to the rich African families who got \$4 billion. And about two-third of Africans leave in poverty compared with less than one in 10 white (Sunday Times, 24 October 1999). The fact that few families have benefited from wealth redistribution and that the majority of people remain destitute could compromise the political legitimacy, economic reform programs, especially if the unfair benefits are attributable to political connections and corruption (Diamond 1999, 80).

Closely linked to Black Economic Empowerment Programme is Affirmative Action Programme. Also a deconcentration programme, it gives blacks, women and disabled people preference over whites, particularly males. The ANC came with the idea of Affirmative Action in the mid-1980s, in anticipation for social change. The Constitutional Committee of the ANC proposed two strategies of addressing socioeconomic inequalities: affirmative Action guaranteed in a constitution and the confiscation of wealth of the whites and giving it to the blacks. The ANC decided against the latter option as it was deemed unfeasible in view of the negotiated transition to democracy and in view of an expected capital flight, the destruction of the economy and international isolation (ANC policy document 1998, 1). However, in opting for affirmative action, the ANC overlooked the likelihood that it would largely benefit the few blacks with work experience and tertiary education.

One of the advantages of black economic empowerment and affirmative action is that they are creating a black upper and middle classes (for instance, professionals, civil servants and technicians). The ANC sees the black upper and middle classes as

objectively important in social transformation because their interests are "similar" to that of the majority of blacks. The ANC, also, argues that these classes contribution is contingent on their organization to reconstruct and develop South Africa (ANC, December 1997). These classes, in addition, could play a mediating role between the poor blacks and whites in the middle and upper classes, in order to protect their new privileges that came with democracy (see Miliband 1969, 128-9). However, the middle class currently seems to be only concerned with advancing or retaining its own status and material well being. Among blacks a significant proportion of the middle class is moving away from their communities to previously white suburbs and might become an appendix to the ruling class. As the Marxists theorists argue that the middle class role is determined by the balance of forces between the upper class and the lower class (Koo 1997, 500-501).

In addition to creating a very small black middle and upper class, black economic empowerment and affirmative action also seem to have alienated the youth because these policies have not created employment for this sector of the large unemployed population. An HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council, 1999) study revealed that 72% of the unemployed are younger than 40 years of age. Given that history has proven that youth frustration and/or determination may ultimately be vented through violence (Lipset 1985, 25; Kaplan 1997), as was the case in the student revolts of 1976 and 1980s in South Africa. The high unemployment rate of the youth sector does not augur well for the endurance and consolidation of democracy in South Africa. This problem is compounded by the dissatisfaction with the black economic empowerment and affirmative action among whites, and to a lesser extend among Indians and colored. For example, 75 percent of whites reject Affirmative Action, followed by Asians with 41 percent and colored 32 percent, while 75 percent blacks were in favor of Affirmative Action (HSRC's Survey, March 1999). Whites, generally, feel that the economic system may exclude them because of their skin color. The coloreds and Indians feel excluded because they are not "black enough" (see US News 06/09/97). The alienation of these groups may induce them to withdraw from participation in the democratic system. However, if

the government fails to enlarge the black upper and middle classes through its deconcentration policies, that is, if the apartheid status quo in respect of social status and access to wealth is not changed noticeably, the majority of blacks might withdraw their support for the government, for there would be no incentive for them. Also, the inequality between blacks and whites might tempt the black majority to act outside the democratic institutions (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995, 25-26; Lijphart & Waisman 1996, 236).

Static, unfavorable or worsening conditions on their own do not necessarily lead to unconstitutional and violent means of raising concerns and frustrations. As Przeworski (1986, 66) put it: "a regime does not collapse unless and until some alternative is organized in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals [and social groups]". However, when that alternative is presented the social actors have to believe that they are likely to succeed in transforming the regime (Przeworski 1986, 66). Until such time that social actors believe that the alternative can make change, the majority of people remain relatively apathetic (see Crozier 1975; Przeworski 1986, 53; Dahrendorf 1988, 4), and divided by self-interests, which sometimes tend to conflict with each other. For example, interests of trade unions tend to conflict with those of the unemployed groups (see Nattrass & Seekings 1999).

Although trade unions protect their members, and workers in general, from being exploited, and although they negotiate better packages, for instance living wages, health care and group life insurance, their intervention tends to raise the cost of employment. Because capital owners tend to invest where labor is cheap or they resort to hiring fewer workers. Nattrass and Seekings (1999, 17) assert that between 1995 and 1998 real wages have increased by more than 2.5 percent per annum, and unemployment has also risen by 2.5 percent for the same years. However, COSATU has embarked on a money-raising project to create jobs. COSATU was also one of the leading actors in developing the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which was aimed at creating jobs, effecting land reform, and providing housing, water, electricity, telecommunications,

transport, a clean and healthy environment, health services and social security. At the same time COSATU asked salary increase of civil servants. The government could not comply with the latter request as its budget is largely used to pay foreign debt and civil servants salaries and little is left for the provision of services, especially to the poor.

In the short and the medium term some social actors in the black population might feel that, despite the unfavorable conditions, the present government is better than the apartheid regime. Also, the ANC is morally appealing to the blacks because of its leading role in the struggle against apartheid (Friedman 1995, 566; Booysen 1997). Despite the ANC's failure to deliver on some of its promises, for example, building the economy, creating jobs, providing peace and security for all, and meeting basic needs, made before 1994 election, the organization was reelected into power by about 64 percent of the voters. Because of weak opposition and moral appeal of the ANC, it could afford to postpone distribution (Natrass & Seekings 1999, 24), and implement its macroeconomic policy. However, in the long run these people might forget what life was like under apartheid or feel that they can establish a more responsive government than the current government. But it is the subjective reactions to these unfavorable conditions by the social actors, for instance, COSATU or demagogues, and the response of the government to these social changes, and the balance of power that will determine whether democracy continues to be stable and to become consolidated in South Africa.

The South African government may use different approaches in addressing the problem. The government may use its political and economic resources to widen the gap among blacks and legitimize inequalities, or to close the gap and ensure that democracy endures. Unlike in the apartheid era, different socioeconomic interests would divide the black population if the government resorts to the first option. However, the government will then lose the support of a COSATU and the poor, which constitutes the majority of the black population. Moreover, the weakening of their social standing will probably result in these groups taking action to enforce social change.

Social change tends to produce more conflict than static condition (Crozier 1974, 15) as the “third wave” of democratization has demonstrated. The worsening of material conditions is likely to lead to frustration, which makes the frustrated vulnerable to influence and to uniting them in actions outside democratic institutions to show their dissatisfaction regardless of their particularistic interests. If the government holds an extreme view and reacts by using violence and thus violating human rights, it would lose even more support. The actions or reactions and events in such situations tend to have a “cumulative and reinforcing effect that increases or decreases the probability of survival of democratic politics” (Linz 1994, 4). But if a government has, despite such unfavorable and constraining structural circumstances, a skillful, innovative, courageous and political leadership committed to democracy, it is likely to be a victor (Diamond, Linz & Lipset 1995, 16; Shin 1994, 144), as Mandela and other political leaders demonstrated in the transition to democracy. The ex-President alleviated the fears of the white bourgeoisie that the government of National Unity would nationalize private property. He also promised Afrikaners that there would be no dismantling of their monuments or symbols (Hislope 1998, 77).

Deconsolidation, however, may not be the result of the failure of the political elite, but the well-organized and strong social movements (Tarrow 1995, 206-209). Social movements played a leading role in the transition to democracy in South Africa; they can also play a leading role in its consolidation or deconsolidation. The stage of demands is crucial, for if it is not handled skillfully the situation could lead to unconstitutional and violent means of raising dissatisfaction and/or suppressing demands by social groupings and the government respectively (Gunther & Higley 1992, 2-3). So, the relationship and interaction between the government and the social groupings, and among these groupings themselves will determine the future of democracy. Nevertheless, crosscutting cleavages will moderate the intensity of conflict and encourage compromise.

One way to manage social conflict and racial or class polarization in South Africa is to reach compromise on limitation on state actions, that is, compromise on the priority of

the state in terms of services. According to Weingast (1997, 256), members of different groups in divided societies tend to have different opinions about all issues of government, policy and the role of the state.

The failure to agree such a limitation on state action could turn prevailing hostility into violent conflict (Weingast 1997, 257). Frequent confrontations between competing social groups are destructive of democracy, especially if these groups perceive themselves as involved in a zero-sum conflict. If there is a greater consensus among social groups on the limitations of state actions, it becomes easy to consolidate democracy. Distributive conflicts can then be institutionalized, and all significant political actors must direct their economic demands through the democratic institutions and avoid undemocratic actions (Przeworski 1992, 127). However, social actors will only engage in conflict resolution through democratic institutions if they feel that their material standing is improving (Przeworski 1992, 127). Yet their material standing will only improve if the major social actors are willing to compromise.

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