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# Hegemonic Struggles of the African National Congress: From Cacophony of Morbid Symptoms to Strained Renewal

Susan Booyesen

**Abstract:** The contemporary condition of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, viewed through the lens of hegemony and by means of four sets of correlates of decline and potential renewal, reveals an organisation that has turned away from lethal decline, yet by 2018 was battling to reconstitute a powerful, united historical bloc to underpin a new hegemony. The assessment is executed across the outward fronts of the ANC in relation to the people, the state, and elections, and on the inward side, the ANC organisationally. The ANC, up to late 2017, had undergone a process of hegemonic decline that appeared irreversible. Manifold morbid symptoms of hegemonic decline were evident. In late 2017 the ANC secured a leadership change that held the potential to reverse the decline and reinvigorate the ANC's prospects for hegemonic hold, even if at best it would be a long-term, incremental process. Yet, at the centre, the organisation remained riven with factionalism that pivoted around power and control over public resources; those entrenched in the status quo ante were fighting back, and the new order was struggling to emerge. By drawing together these symptoms (correlates) of decline and possible reversals, the article synthesises the state of ANC hegemony as the movement approaches 25 years in political power.

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**Keywords:** South Africa, hegemony, African National Congress, historical bloc, factionalism, consent, state capture, corruption

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## Introduction

The African National Congress (ANC) once embodied the moral and intellectual leadership of South Africa. Its liberation movement credentials helped elevate it to a politically dominant and morally esteemed position. It towered over other contestants in the country's post-1994 multiparty system. The vast majority of South Africa's population consented to ANC rule, accepting both the legitimacy of the democratic order and the ANC's electorally dominant position. In recognition and representation of collective will, it approximated Gramsci's *Modern Prince*;<sup>1</sup> the ANC had asserted its hegemony, and persistence seemed a given. Instead of hegemonic permanency, however, the ANC started declining barely a decade after the 1994 moment of liberation and then advanced relentlessly downward in the period of ANC and South African president Jacob Zuma, from 2007 to 2017. At the time of this analysis, the ANC had reached a turning point and negotiated the turn, yet was struggling to emerge from a cauldron in which multiple morbid symptoms of decline battled against tentative signs of renewal. The condition is captured by Gramsci's (1971: 275–276) depiction of a dying old order and a new order struggling to emerge.<sup>2</sup>

By late 2017, interrelated outward and inward struggles of the ANC had spiralled and hegemonic decline was tangible. The internal symptoms of decay were related to ANC organisational integrity and political leadership that had failed in many respects. Renewal advanced upon the ANC leadership change of December 2017,<sup>3</sup> yet many layers of organisational decay subsequently required turnaround. The ANC problems affected the South African state and its ability to govern and transform society. The state-institutional problems, driven by entrenched and often corrupted factional interests, were severe and resistant to change. Multiple initiatives to rebase government commenced once the ANC and state top leadership changed. Yet at both political and bureaucratic levels

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- 1 The *Modern Prince*, in the words of Gramsci (1971: 129), is “an organism; a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party – the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total.”
  - 2 Hart's (2013) South Africa analysis offers a more ideological and class-centred approach, while the current analysis is centred on the party and its positioning in relation to the people.
  - 3 The national elective conference was held at the Nasrec exhibition centre, Johannesburg, and “Nasrec” came to denote this ANC moment.

the demands for rapid change competed with the new leadership's quest to retain organisational unity – and to not alienate the old-order functionaries who were associating only tentatively with the new order. The former liberation movement's relationship to the people of South Africa had changed. Evidence of discontent had started accumulating as the ANC peaked electorally in 2004 (see Hamill 2010; Lodge 2004). What seemed at first to be a gradual decline was aggravated by party split-offs and then combustible factional struggles for control over the ANC. These struggles moved to centre stage from 2014 to 2017. Again, tentative but strained changes revealed themselves upon leadership change and the promise of a new ANC order.

These changing configurations of the ANC's hegemonic position were reflected on the fronts of direct engagements between the governing party and the people, through elections, and via the state's often-compromised capacity (see Booysen 2011). These were the first three fronts external to the ANC organisationally along which the ANC's current struggle to retain the consent of the people was unfolding. The fourth front, representing the internal site of hegemonic struggle, was the ANC organisation itself, which had become the site of a factional struggle for control over the ANC: the two predominant factions were the Zumaists, who were associated with former presidential incumbent Jacob Zuma and his associate Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (seemingly in continuous ascendance, but then defeated), and the Cyril Ramaphosa faction that emerged narrowly victorious at the 2017 ANC elective conference. Both used the personalised mechanism of leadership and select ideological positioning in their quests to become the dominant force within the ANC and leader of all of society.

The dialectical nature of the ANC's internal and external struggles to retain hegemony shapes this analysis, which focuses both on the decline and on the ANC factions' reticent turnaround actions. This article argues that the ANC has been undergoing a prolonged phase of gradual hegemonic decline, occurring on a jagged curve, but with a potential concentrated upward movement should the Ramaphosa camp consolidate the renewal in state and party. In the first part of this process, characterised by decline, the intersecting internal–external struggles reinforced the ANC's increasing distance from the people. Popular scepticism and despondency arose on the back of unfulfilled expectations over time and malfunctions in policymaking and implementation in party and government; these sentiments were further stoked by perceptions of internal and external state capture and corruption that impaired better performance. The internal ANC leadership contests became

paired with control over state resources for individual benefit (see Pauw 2017; PARI 2017), quests that were veiled in ideological terms of feigned radicalism, nationalism, and the foregrounding of incomplete colonial struggles. The essential difference between the factions was the Ramaphosaists' stress on a less corrupt government, while the Zumaists veiled corruption under the cover of radical rhetoric. Ramaphosa was clearly linked to domestic and global capital, yet also to social democracy and the ANC's variants of radicalism; Zuma was linked to a personalised network of arriviste capital.

To justify its own failures, the Zumaist ANC demeaned the organisation's negotiated political revolution of 1994: the Apartheid and colonial pasts, it argued, remained responsible for South Africa's morose present. Using Joseph Femia's (1981, in Moore 1995: 48) notion of minimal hegemony,<sup>4</sup> it is clear that the divided, factional ANC by late 2017 was not exercising even this marginal form of hegemony, had incomplete command of its popular base, and therefore had a compromised ability to exercise societal hegemony.

The antitheses to these arguments and conditions advanced by the opposing, tentatively ascendant faction that rose to power under Ramaphosa included the more liberal nostrums of constitutionalism and clean government, restoration of ANC values,<sup>5</sup> and the amplification of established ANC policies. In most instances, such elaborated ANC policies would be equal in outcome to the effects of the radicalism that had been claimed by the Zumaists. The policy-ideological result that emerged from the ANC's 2017 conference deliberations was a commitment to "radical economic transformation" that amounted to mild amplifications of prevailing policy with elevated radical rhetoric (ANC 2018).

The aim of this analysis is therefore to unpack the nature of the ANC's condition of declining hegemony and assess the possibilities of consolidating a reversal. The study is interpretative, drawing on cumulative research by the author, supplemented with other pertinent scholarly insights. It offers a framework for analysis, complemented by the identification of a series of interrelated correlates relating to the ANC's decline and its reversal. The correlates, on occasion fused across fronts but for analytical purposes viewed as external and internal, are manifested on four fronts: outwardly, these are the ANC's hegemonic-struggle relations (1) with the state and (2) with the people – especially, in the latter case,

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4 Minimal hegemony means that a dominant group unites in aims and purpose irrespective of whether the subaltern groups follow (see Moore 1995).

5 These values include the essence of humility and a selfless dedication to the interests of the people (ANC 2017b).

(3) through elections; inwardly, this refers to (4) the party's battles for factional control over the organisation. The cut-off point of the analysis is April 2018, shortly after the ANC affirmed at its national elective conference that it would work to reverse the preceding Zumaist tendencies.

After the next section's conceptualisation of hegemony and identification of mid-level connotations linked to hegemony (such as consent without coercion, unthinking endorsement, widespread legitimacy), the rest of the article identifies concrete manifestations or correlates of hegemony at the operationalised level. This is executed along the dimensions of the two interrelated internal–external struggles (across the four fronts that were identified) specific to the period from the second term of President Jacob Zuma into the first months of the incumbency of President Cyril Ramaphosa.

## Conceptualising and Attaching Correlates to ANC Hegemony

As Eagleton notes, Gramsci “normally uses the word hegemony to mean the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates” (Eagleton 1991, with reference to Gramsci 1971: 112). Gramscian terms of coercion versus consent, the latter denoting hegemony, hence inform the analysis. Hegemonic predominance by consent for Gramsci is a condition in which a fundamental class exercises a political, intellectual, and moral role of leadership that is held together by a common world view or organic ideology (see Ramos 1982). It is worth bearing in mind that even in this condition force is never completely eliminated (see Moore 2014).

The most frequent interpretations of hegemony are in Gramscian (Gramsci 1971) or neo-Gramscian Marxist literature and, recently, in theorising international relations (Cox 1983; Gill 1990; Morton 2007). Up until Cox, hegemony was used in the local context; its use in international relations was limited to “domination.” Hegemony is used widely in political studies but has not been systematically operationalised in relation to the political position of the ANC. Hence, in ways comparable to Spiezio's “correlates of war” (1990), the study identifies correlates of the loss and provisional renewal of ANC hegemony. For example, it will argue that the incidence of ideological delegitimation, attempted suppression of criticism, de facto creation of state capture–related disorganisation in state administration, and corruption (as a co-optive measure) are inverse correlates of ANC hegemonic power. In comparison, the removal from power of a discredited president of party and state, steps

to clean up corruption-infested and often dysfunctional state institutions, and modestly restored public opinion ratings are correlates of potential hegemonic renewal. There is, however, nothing singular and simple in the relation between counter-hegemonic and pro-hegemonic indicators: some of the actions to renew hegemony (such as cutting the co-optive corruption link) could in turn elicit fractious intra-organisational effects.

Gramsci's notion of the historical bloc helps direct the analysis. Historical bloc denotes the historical congruence between material forces, ideologies, and institutions: forces that are politically organised around a set of hegemonic ideas that give strategic direction and coherence to the constituent elements (see Gill 2002: 58). The historical bloc's "unity of struggles"<sup>6</sup> (Jessop 1997: 6–7) forms the basis of consent to a particular socio-economic order, yet all elements of the historical bloc contain potential contradictions. Hence alliances and compromises between the elements are commonplace.

The conceptualisation of hegemony factors into the effect of corruption. Corruption does not often register in the Gramscian schema (and mainstream corruption analysis rarely acknowledges Marxist ideas), but it constitutes an element of hegemony's decline, lying somewhere between Gramsci's binaries of consent and force. For Gramsci, corruption

consists in procuring the demoralisation and paralysis of the antagonist (or antagonists) by buying its leaders – either covertly, or, in cases of imminent danger, openly – in order to sow disarray and confusion in his ranks, [and it may cause] cracks [to open] up everywhere in the hegemonic apparatus. (Gramsci 1971: 248)

Hence, the visible occurrence of corruption, evident in the ANC-controlled South African government, fostered discontent and helped deplete hegemony.

At this mid-level of theorisation, one can operationalise the concept of hegemony and in turn derive its correlates. In the context of the overarching theme of constructing and maintaining the consent of those who are governed, mid-level theoretical references to hegemony include: preponderance of power, with power enabling the dominant agency to shape the political system – or, in international relations terms, unipolarity (Gilpin 1981) and the pervasiveness of power or its "total social authority" (Hebdige 1979); agreement that stabilises particular social orders (Arrighi 1994); and power in underpinning stability (Keohane 1980).

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6 As opposed to the unity of social forces that constitutes the "hegemonic bloc" (see Gramsci 1971: 52).



These theoretical statements on the presence of hegemony in national-level politics help generate correlates for studying the hegemonic hold of a governing party like the ANC over society. They direct the investigation to explore whether the ANC holds unquestioned power, is accepted as being the voice of society, and is largely unchallenged in its exercise of power, in addition to whether its political presence constitutes a stabilising force. These pointers also suggest the inverse conditions of declining, absent, or under-repair hegemony of dominant liberation-movement parties. As they recede from high levels of popular veneration and consent, they have often used manipulative, forceful, or outright violent ways to compensate for their loss of organic power, often leaning towards control through both the manipulation of people's perceptions and the delegitimation of opposition (for applications, see Melber 2003: viii–xiii; Cammett 1967: 20). Authoritarianism enters as an antithesis to hegemony, a thesis that stands at the core of Southall's (2013) analysis of southern African liberation movements turning into political parties. To illustrate the case of the ANC in South Africa, Ronnie Kasrils (2013) remarked specifically on the Protection of State Information Bill (but with broader potential application) that “government administration was turning [the Bill] into a draconian instrument” of threat to freedom of expression and “alarm bells were sounded by concerned civic society [...] for the signs were of a slide to authoritarianism.”

Linz's classic work (1964) further helps flag correlates of declining hegemony and assists in analysing the ANC's hegemonic condition. He highlights constrained pluralism, suppression of political opponents, mobilisation under the banner of a threatened political class purporting to counter societal threats, and vague and frequently shifting parameters of executive power. His work confirms that in practice authoritarian and coercive acts are often easier to identify than consent. Furthermore, Nathan (2003) points out that authoritarian systems suffer from weak legitimacy, use of coercion, centralisation of decision making, and personal power that prevails over institutional norms. Salamini's emphasis on the Gramscian differentiation between legitimacy, hegemony, and authoritarianism – in the context of defining conjunctural versus organic phenomena<sup>7</sup> – helps illuminate the ANC balancing act of consent versus coercion:

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7 Saul and Gelb (1986) analysed the organic crisis of the National Party regime in Apartheid South Africa.

Conjunctural phenomena denote a momentary period of crisis which gives rise to a political strategy of limited political significance, consisting of “minor political criticism” and always subjected to political leaders with government responsibilities. Organic phenomena, in contrast, refer to a long-range strategy to restore the political and ideological hegemony within a given historical bloc. (Salamini 1981: 60)

In this context, the ANC appears to be between conjunctural and organic crises: it is in a phase of declining hegemony that suggests a critical situation that has moved beyond Salamini’s idea of the “conjunctural” but is not yet “organic,” and might, with the 2017–2018 ANC interventions, possibly be contained at the level of the conjunctural. The decline is playing out, triggered by some groupings and cultures in the ANC while other ANC agencies are attempting to return the organisation to legitimate popular roots: in this case, therefore, “opposition politics” also plays out *within* the organisation. The Zumaist ANC accused multiple agencies within and beyond the ANC who dared oppose the Zumaists of “regime change” intentions, state intelligence was manipulated, and law enforcement agencies were subjugated to veil factional misconduct. Opposition to this factional ANC included a less-tainted, change-driven part of the ANC (victorious by a small margin in the December 2017 ANC leadership elections), broad civil society coalitions of opposition that included the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and the South African Communist Party (SACP), the latter two focusing on state corruption and de facto collapse of core state institutions.

Similarly, the decline of the ANC’s tripartite alliance with the SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the time of Zuma, in addition to the split of COSATU and the formation of the new South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), indicate slippage of hegemony; the resuscitated SACP and COSATU’s endorsement of the post-Nasrec ANC in turn showed a potential advance to regain lost hegemony. The ANC’s Zumaist incumbents in the 2014–2017 period were trying to recast the crisis as not of their own making, while the Ramaphosaists (associated with victorious ANC candidate and new president, Cyril Ramaphosa) projected their actions as redirecting and correcting the distorted ANC, working towards resurrecting an alternative ANC and associated hegemony, in the mould (so they argued) of the Mandela ANC.

The analysis of the ANC’s hegemonic base hence takes forward relevant correlates that are supported theoretically. On the side of loss of hegemony, these correlates include coercion and suppression, ideological

construction and propaganda, reinvention of liberation identity, electoral decline, and strategic outmanoeuvring of opposition parties. On the opposing side, renewal of hegemony, there are several complex indicators, such as ideological reclamation of earlier ANC roots; rebuilding an ANC organisational image of unity, radicalism (to satisfy growing masses of discontented voters), and anti-corruption; and minor interim rewards in the repressed economy and politics to affirm the leadership change away from the Zuma camp. The correlates can also be categorised broadly as those that affirm hegemony or indicate declining hegemony, and ones that attest to the ANC (as party organisation and as government, often indistinguishable) fighting back against hegemonic decline.

## The Outward ANC Hegemonic Struggle

The analysis of the outward ANC hegemonic struggle assesses select correlates of decline and renewal that have been manifested on the three outward fronts named above. The term *external* is used for conceptual purposes to help differentiate between the ANC's *internal* organisational politics and the external front on which the organisation engages with people directly, through elections and via the state. All of the external struggles are also reflected in the internal hegemonic struggles.

## Popular Correlates of ANC Hegemonic Decline and Renewal

Popular protest in South Africa is a key indicator of the state of ANC hegemony. Community protest – aimed at local, provincial, and/or national governments, their incumbents, and/or their performance – suggests that acceptance of and satisfaction with ANC rule is in question. Alexander (2010) points out that protests in some instances assume insurrectionary dimensions. Community protest (frequently in response to services and government delivery on policy undertakings), however, is not necessarily an expression of failing legitimacy. For much of the first protest decade of 2005–2015, such protest coexisted with continuous pro-ANC voting (Booyesen 2007; 2015): the same communities that protested against ANC local service delivery in ANC-controlled municipal councils again voted ANC come the next election. This relationship persisted but became diluted over time. Even when the ANC suffered setbacks in the 2016 local elections (Engel 2016), the turn to the opposition came only in modest measure from the areas inclined to protest (informal settlements and South Africa's townships). We also know that

protest is used as a supplementary representational measure: the ANC is accepted as legitimate and well-meaning, but communities need to ensure the visibility of their demands amidst many competing demands for the time and resources of the busy ANC (or other party) government (Booyesen 2013).

Although also cyclical, popular or community protest grew as citizens became less certain that elected representatives were being beckoned by protest and fire (mostly of burning tyres on roads; Von Holdt et al. 2011) to come and take care of their needs. Citizens increasingly doubted whether voting and electing representatives were going to bring better service. The lack of national economic performance that reduces income inequality (see Netshitenzhe 2014) is amongst the socio-economic trends that converged with urbanisation and growing discontent. As more evidence of corruption, patronage, and pursuit of leadership self-interest solidified, disenchantment and citizen distrust in public institutions also advanced (see World Values Survey 2015; Harris 2017).

By 2016, protest had started to reflect many of South Africa's unresolved issues relating to structural and racial inequality. In times of high hegemony, the ANC managed to persuade people to trust that it was in the process of addressing such issues. In the time of declining hegemony, though, the ANC worked to project the 1994 transition to democracy as a severely flawed starting point, and citizens increasingly turned to alternative forms of expressing their frustrations and anger. The #FeesMustFall revolt of 2015–2017 (Nyamnjoh 2016; Booysen 2016a) and the xenophobic attacks of 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2018 were cases in point. By all indications, citizens had come to believe that the ANC government was still to be trusted more than party-political alternatives, but that citizens needed to supplement elections and representative democracy through protest. Protest would have a better chance to succeed should it be violent and disruptive. Alexander et al. (2018) note not just a rising trend in the frequency of community protests, but also a tendency towards those protests being disorderly. Both student and service-delivery protests became more destructive; xenophobic attacks were unequivocally violent. Arson was a form of cathartic, anti-systemic expression of unhappiness with service delivery or with any government performance. Train coaches, freight-carrying trucks, buses, municipal offices and a city hall, public libraries, police stations, and major university buildings were destroyed.

Besides the students, it was at first largely working-class, sub-working-class, and lower-middle-class citizens that turned to protest. Middle-class civil society gradually joined and challenged multiple policies, in

both the formulation-adoption and implementation phases, and increasingly also the incumbency of President Jacob Zuma. For example, automated freeway e-tolling in Gauteng province could not be implemented as intended, nuclear procurement policies were challenged and halted, and some state-security legislation was aborted (Booyesen 2015). The Zuma/Gupta Must Fall<sup>8</sup> civil society mobilisation of 2016–2017 was at first middle-class driven, targeted at abuses in public policy and state management. It targeted Zuma in the wake of the extended state capture and corruption scandals (see Gumede 2018). Multiple non-governmental organisations mobilised and spawned new issue-specific civil society organisations. The action assumed a multi-class and multi-race character (see Anciano 2013). The class configuration was evident in several instances of internal ANC anger that turned into major and destructive public protests: the school-burning protests in the Vuwani district of Limpopo province (against municipal demarcation that would see local ANC leaders' political power bases erode) and the City of Tshwane municipal riots of 2016 (to get a specific ANC leader as the ANC's mayoral candidate).

The trends show how citizen protest diversified and came to symbolise the ANC's inability to rely on consent engendered by liberation history and formal government processes. For close to a decade, the ANC government's authority was challenged to varying degrees. The ANC government could not enforce procedurally many aspects of its rule. Simultaneously, it limited itself in the amount of force used, especially in quelling local-level protests, for fear of fostering political alienation and defection to opposition parties.

While destructive protests were anchored in discontent with poor delivery and social transformation, a growing culture of civil disobedience and lawlessness lubricated the protest wheels. Popular hopes receded that government would deliver in line with 1994 ideals and would "stop eating" in greed and self-enrichment (Mashele and Qobo 2017; Booyesen 2013). Citizens did not disengage entirely from the political system, but supplemented the system stridently with direct and frequently violent-destructive protest. Crime (see Wiener 2018) and gender violence, along with vigilantism and community self-administration of justice thrived in conditions of ineffective and corrupted law enforcement through the formal channels of investigation and prosecution.

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8 With reference to a family with inordinate, proven influence over President Zuma (see Amabhungane 2017; Pauw 2017; PARI 2017).

Much of the mobilisation was possible because South African citizens could exercise their constitutional right to protest (Constitution 1996). Mobilisation for purposes such as pressure for Zuma to resign as president of South Africa was carried off with the support of select state institutions entrusted with political oversight functions, such as the Constitutional Court, various divisions of the High Court, and the public protector (ombudsperson, at least for the incumbent term that ended in 2016). Citizens, civil society, opposition parties, and parts of the ANC could turn to the Constitution and legal system when the ANC abrogated civil and administrative rights. Even if the ANC was not consistently sensitive to citizen demands, citizens could mobilise and get satisfaction through legal and ombudsperson results. At least parts of the system worked for them and thus helped to coalesce ANC power and hegemony.

These select correlate details on the ANC's standing in relation to one of the pillars of its hegemony thus reveals the strong but varying levels of discontent within the historical bloc. ANC hegemony is not entirely undermined; there are multiple indications of protesting citizens "working" to get the ear and amplified government attention of the ruling party, or to change the leadership of the party. The people target the ANC as government for delivery demands rather than engaging with the ANC as political organisation. The ANC leadership change of December 2017 helped the organisation to improve its credibility in government (see section on the state), and generated popular consent as evidenced through opinion polls (see section on elections), but at the level of protest it did not bring change; protest had become ingrained in repertoires of political action. Rather, as evident in protest action in the North West, Gauteng, and Western Cape provinces in the short-term post-Nasrec moment, community protesters joined ANC action to effect intra-ANC provincial leadership change, or escalated their demands to ensure they would not be left behind as the new ANC government takes hold. The protests illustrated that ANC hegemony had been dented, especially in the years of Zuma rule, yet the ANC had not lost its hegemonic anchoring in the community. The struggles also revealed the varied degrees and manifestations of consent.

## Electoral Correlates of ANC Hegemonic Decline and Renewal

Amongst the most graphic correlates of ANC hegemonic decline are those in electoral politics, in the form of both party support and party-specific turnout. ANC-oriented citizens realise the incisiveness of elec-

toral choices and follow a hierarchy once they start dissenting: withdrawing or abstaining from voting (see Lodge 2004), only after that voting for an opposition party, and possibly returning to the ANC when their party of original choice “self-corrects” (see Davies 2017). One of the bases of electoral behaviour in South Africa, elections as a “racial census” (Ferree 2006), helps inform these patterns: dissidence from the ANC, and the party’s significant loss of proportion of the vote over time (Schulz-Herzenberg 2014), occurred largely in the form of electoral migration by black South African voters. This migration might be of a temporary nature, should the ANC be deemed to be self-correcting and party political alternatives, such as ANC split-off parties, not retain their allure.

Several split-offs contributed to the ANC’s declining electoral hegemony. ANC internal fallout led to new opposition parties that diluted the ANC base (even though big proportions of these dissidents returned to the ANC over time). The split factor played out serially in three preceding national elections – in 1999 the United Democratic Movement first contested elections, followed by the Congress of the People in 2009, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in 2014.

In 2004, when the ANC was at its all-time electoral peak, there had not been an antecedent split. At first, post-2004, there were minor drops in successive election outcomes. The downward trend accelerated in the 2014 national and provincial elections and dropped further in 2016. Electorally, however, the ANC only started slipping below the 50 per cent mark when in 2016 it was in a pincer grip between the Democratic Alliance (DA), which was growing incrementally from its right, and the EFF, encroaching from its left. Both opposition parties grew modestly, but the cumulative pressures alerted the ANC to the real possibility of future electoral losses.

Nationally projected, the 2016 local election outcome delivered barely an outright majority to the ANC. The DA’s modest inroads of 2016 into the black voter corps (Booyesen 2016b) damaged the ANC, and the EFF captured votes that would otherwise have gone to the ANC; in addition, many previous ANC supporters chose to abstain rather than vote against the ANC. High across-race turnout from DA supporters facilitated the change.<sup>9</sup>

By the time of the 2016 election, the pro-opposition drift had combined with the ANC’s registered voter constituency’s low motivation to vote. There were 257 municipalities, and the ANC still won the vast

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9 The trends in this section build on detailed election results information, drilling down to electoral wards and voting districts, obtained by the author from the Electoral Commission website, <[www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za)>.



majority, although with countrywide decline in margins of victory. This resulted in 27 hung councils, often in important metropolitan and urban centres.<sup>10</sup> In a number of cases, control slipped into the hands of opposition party alliances or, short of formal alliances, to less formal anti-ANC cooperative arrangements (Booyesen 2016b). In the key province of Gauteng, the ANC fell to below the 50 per cent level in two of the three metropolitan councils and some other urban councils.

Public opinion polls – for example, those that depict the standing of the president of South Africa – illuminate the consequences of electoral decline for ANC hegemony. The president of South Africa is indirectly elected by members of Parliament, and the ANC's candidate is its own party president – namely, the person who would have occupied the top position on the party's proportional representation list. A substantial gap existed between president Zuma's continuously declining and dismal public endorsements, on the one side, and the ANC's still-high electoral support, on the other side, even at the moderated Zuma-era levels: Zuma's approval ratings were less than half of the ANC's (TNS media statement 2017).<sup>11</sup> ANC internal research in late 2016 suggested that in an election with Zuma or a Zuma associate as the top candidate, the ANC would fail to get an outright majority (see also ANC 2017a). A 2017 Ipsos survey found that only 18 per cent of South African adults wanted Zuma to remain president, and that his approval rating had fallen to 2.8 out of 10, compared with the 6.7 and 8.7 for presidential predecessors Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela, at comparable points in their respective incumbencies (Harris 2017).

Illustrating the trends in Gauteng, another poll inquired about the impact of the ANC leader on 2016 election outcomes. According to Everatt (2017), in the context of the ANC's 11 per cent decline in Gauteng Province from 2009 to 2014, Zuma's behaviour "had a direct and negative impact on the choices voters made" (respondents were asked about significant Zuma-related events in the run-up to the election). This would have negatively affected future electoral choices regarding the ANC (Everatt and Jennings 2017).

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10 Given the absence of outright majorities, and the fragility of opposition alliances between ideologically and strategically diverse parties, several of these councils have subsequently changed power to different alliance formations, on occasion also turning power back to the ANC, in coalitions that had not been possible immediately after the election.

11 Kantar-TNS conducted a mobile survey with a representative sample of 1,000 South African adults, 1–3 April 2017. The distribution was representative in terms of race, age, gender, and province.



These correlates of ANC electoral support reinforce that the ANC no longer had a compelling hold over voters, and that Zuma as president had exacerbated the decline. If this potential loss of electoral hegemony, however, was anchored so strongly in ANC leadership factors then the ANC's December 2017 leadership exchange should have helped the party restore its electoral standing. Polling in February 2018, Citizen Surveys (2018) showed indeed notable improvements in public perceptions of ANC government performance. Ramaphosa's approval rating was close to 60 per cent, compared with Zuma's 24 per cent of late 2017. This poll, however, reflected citizen sentiments amidst national euphoria about the ANC leadership change and before criticisms of the slow pace of change in government, despite Ramaphosa assuming power, were reflected in the national mood. Zuma's incumbency had affected ANC hegemony negatively, and while some of the ANC's standing could be recovered, it is likely that there was also more lasting damage.

There were ongoing and deep-cutting factional fractures in the ANC (see section on organisational correlates) that could still counteract, although probably not negate entirely, ANC electoral gains that were linked to Nasrec 2017. By early 2018 the ANC was also working to try to recapture the EFF organisationally, as well as the EFF support base. There was some rapprochement between Ramaphosa and EFF leader Julius Malema, and the post-Zuma ANC was positioning its ideological and policy base as the radical equal to the EFF. These were largely cases of strategically leveraged, or manufactured, consent that might no longer be evidence of generalised hegemony of the ruling party. Irrespective, it served to counter other political parties' encroachment.

The potential electoral support of the ANC was tentatively resuscitated in the period following leadership change and de facto regime change when Ramaphosa took over as president of the ANC and South Africa. This meant that despite earlier firm indications of withdrawal of consent and fracturing of the historical bloc that supported ANC hegemony, there was still a popular willingness – come the signals of change away from discredited leadership and corruption among the elite circle in ANC government – to revert to earlier positions of support. This was a pro-hegemonic signal for the ANC, as it provided evidence that no opposition party had succeeded in replacing the ANC hegemonically. The sustainability of this trend, however, would be obtained only in the next national and provincial elections.<sup>12</sup>

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12 By May 2018 there was speculation that the ANC would bring forward the elections that were formally expected between May and August 2019. However, turmoil associated with factional contest within the ANC thwarted such plans.

## Correlates of State-Institutional Decline and Renewal in ANC Hegemony

For a long time, the ANC strived to be in total command of the South African state, understanding such control to be the final conquest of the status quo ante. When the ANC took power in the Western Cape province (for a limited time, and via a 2000 floor-crossing deal with the old-regime National Party) and finally in KwaZulu-Natal by outright provincial majority in 2009 (following power sharing with the Inkatha Freedom Party, which the ANC then gradually eclipsed), the ANC interpreted these majorities as milestones that sealed its hegemony.

The process of the party asserting itself over the state advanced into extensive party–state fusion nationally and across provinces (see Booysen 2015), with ANC cadres being deployed into public institutions as a reward for political loyalty. Under Zuma’s control, the fusion bolstered ANC-factional control. Control and capture (both Zuma being captured by his business associates, and the ANC-Zuma faction capturing state institutions) closed the circle when they drained ANC hegemony due to compromised capacity, diluted commitment to the public good, and imploding public perceptions of the goodwill of ANC leaders. Cadre protectionism for faction members lessened the ability of the state to perform in trust-earning ways: *de facto* immunity existed against sanction in cases of non-performance or mismanagement/abuse of public resources, both for personal gain and party-political patronage–loyalty networks (see Southall 2013). In the decade under Zuma as ANC leader (2007–2017; he ascended into the state presidency in 2009 and remained until February 2018), factional capture of state institutions also descended into capture by a Zumaist clique within the faction. The entire faction nevertheless remained loyal, also to try to ensure a faction-friendly transition upon the end of Zuma’s term, which would have been realised had Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma won the ANC presidency.

Capture<sup>13</sup> was a long-time concern in the ANC and Tripartite Alliance, and the focus sharpened as Zuma’s links with the Gupta family, amongst others, started plaguing the ANC (see Amabhungane 2017). Earlier, the SACP had rallied against capitalist capture of the movement by the Black Economic Empowerment emerging business elite:

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13 Capture is summarised in the SACC report (2017) as “securing control over the state wealth through the capture of state-owned companies by chronically weakening their governance and structures. Also securing control over the country’s fiscal sovereignty.”

the post-1994 anti-communism has been informed by the new emergent class interests accompanied by very real prospects of using state power or accumulated dependent BEE capital to capture our movement. (SACP 2009)

By explicating Zuma's links to both state security apparatuses and the criminal underworld, the Pauw (2017) study confirmed the disproportionality of higher-end patronage and corruption, which was used to co-opt and compromise a wide ANC circle.

The range of state institutions that was implicated in capture and corruption under the rule of Zuma (see, for example, Outa 2017; PARI 2017) indicates the scope of the ANC's problem of retaining credibility and esteem in governance, and the extent of turnaround and clean-up that was required once Ramaphosa became president. In mutually weakening formations and with implications for credibility and popular consent, South Africa's compromised state institutions in the time of Zuma extended across the following entities:

- The presidency of South Africa, with multiple signals that the president was influenced and co-opted by private interests – for example, the Gupta family (Myburgh 2017), the criminal underworld, and Russian president Vladimir Putin (Wa Afrika, Jika, and Skiti 2017; Pauw 2017) – both in terms of appointments and the subversion of policy decisions, including on nuclear procurement. Zuma's cabinet came to be held to account only when there was slippage in personal loyalty and insufficient advancement of pro-Zuma interests. Public accountability faded and the president often acted as if he was commanding a presidential-personal parallel set of state operations.
- Core state departments, especially those with decision-making power in mineral resources, mines, and energy. The range extended into the National Treasury, the South African Revenue Service, and the Public Investment Corporation.
- State-owned enterprises, such as the electricity supply agency Eskom, Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa), supplier of defence products Denel, and South African Airways (SAA). These were exposed for deals in which, for example, Zuma- and Gupta-linked companies drew inappropriate benefits. Successive ministers of public enterprises helped enable looting of state enterprises in favour of narrow private-business enclaves. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), especially until March 2017, ensured favourable coverage when required by President Zuma and his associates.

- The investigative and prosecutorial agencies, including the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks), Special Investigating Unit (SIU), and the State Security Agency and Department of State Security, which helped leverage investigative silences and prosecutorial inaction where it was required to protect factional ANC insider groups.

With the aid of these institutions, there was also extensive influence over ideas and the shaping of public narratives – for example, those that were conducted through the subsequently disgraced international public relations firm Bell Pottinger operating for the Zuma–Gupta network to try to ensure consciousness shifts amongst the South African people towards narratives of “radical economic transformation” that were designed to build a base for the continuation of the Zuma order of things. These campaigns were also intended to veil state capture and the benefits reaped by the then president and his associates in the name of the Zuma faction, who argued they were fighting a struggle to subvert “colonialist white minority capital.” These actions amounted to thought control and propagandist coercion, both of which run counter to organic consent.

These state-institutional conditions under Zuma, argued a South African Council of Churches (SACC 2017) report, showed that “the problem is far greater than corruption, but [rather amounts to] organised chaos [...], a systemic design of the madness that ill[s] our governmental environment.” The control was achieved “through a power-elite that is pivoted around the President of the Republic that is systematically siphoning the assets of the State” and that relies on “parallel governance and decision-making structures that undermine the executive” (SACC 2017). The capturist operations were used by the Zumaists in power in ways that affected state legitimacy. The Zuma government, according to the SACC (2017), seemed to be driven “to periodically raid the various attractive units of the State, of which a legitimate government should be steward [...]. What we see persuades us that the present government has lost moral legitimacy.”

Polls confirmed that citizens interpreted these institutional failures and attempted thought control in ways that relate to legitimacy and hegemony. The World Values Survey (2015, data generated in 2013 before the bulk of damaging revelations about the Zumaist state) reported declining confidence in a cluster of public institutions that define the South African state (confirmed by the IJR poll of 2013). This survey showed that confidence in “the government” (47 per cent), police (45 per cent), and the courts (50 per cent) in 2013 were at their lowest since 1994. In the decade from 2003 to 2013, the IJR measurement of confidence in the

presidency and national and provincial government declined from 77 to 55 per cent, 73 to 55 per cent, and 65 to 52 per cent, respectively. The overall trend was one of precipitous decline, even before the Zumaist problems peaked.

Civil society mobilisation, along with opposition parties and legal initiatives by a former public protector (Madonsela 2016), was society's way of fighting back against state capture and the complicity of the governing party (see Ndjwili-Potele 2017). The range of High Courts and in the final instance the Constitutional Court judgements – such as ordering the president to implement the public protector's recommendations and ruling that the 2007 arms deal charges against the president needed to be reinstated (by the National Prosecuting Authority) – increased the legitimacy of the legal and oversight parts of the state apparatuses in the eyes of citizens. The range of judgements also created openings for sections of the ANC to try to demonstrate that the Zumaist ANC was being challenged through a legal system that was respected, albeit also played, by the governing party. The response of the ANC's Zumaists occurred under the pretence of defending the people against a superior (capitalist, Western) onslaught, so they argued, in which leaders such as Zuma and his post-Nasrec cronies who remained in positions of state power were being targeted.

Upon Ramaphosa's assumption of power in early 2018, the substantial ANC government task of stopping the decline that affected the credibility, legitimacy and, in the end, hegemony of the ANC was begun immediately. Ramaphosa treaded with circumspection in the clean-up action, ensuring that he would act only with the consent of the top six ANC officials, then the ANC National Working Committee (NWC), and finally the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) before he took decisive steps. The same process was followed on, for example, reshuffling his cabinet and removing from power both Zuma (January/February 2018) and the Zumaist premier of the North West Province, Supra Mahumapelo (April/May 2018). Ramaphosa exercised more of his immediate presidential powers when he acted against corruption in state-owned enterprises and prosecuting authorities (as illustrated in Kotzé 2018; Southall 2018).

This phase of clean-up executed by the Ramaphosaist ANC hence attempted to recover lost hegemony. The process revealed much about the complex hegemonic construct that prevailed in that conjuncture. The ANC had much popular consent in undertaking the clean-up actions and was impelled further by public protest – for example, against the North West premier, who was reluctant to move. It appeared that a fundamental

form of popular goodwill had persisted, indicating consent to continuous ANC incumbency in the state – even if this consent was in an unusual adversarial-cum-cooperative relationship to the ANC as organisation.

## The Inward ANC Hegemonic Struggle

The ANC's outward hegemonic struggle – across the fronts of people's direct action, people in elections, and state institutions as they impact the people – affects the organisation, in addition to the ANC as organisation also impacting the outward struggles. In terms of these interconnected relationships generally, great organisational operation will not only strengthen the ANC electorally and in relation to the people, but will also help foster well-performing state institutions. Inversely, a discredited organisation that is in command of government but which fails to govern well is unlikely to establish a hegemonic base. This section reviews key correlates of ANC hegemony organisationally, as affected by factionalism and leadership struggles, reflected in membership and subnational organisation, followed by signals of contested and tentative hegemonic resurrection once Zuma was ousted. In line with Gramsci's arguments on corruption (1971: 268), the section also considers how this phenomenon had helped organisational structures sustain a discredited president and how a straightforward anti-corruption conference resolution (ANC 2018: 21) placed the organisation on a trajectory towards possible renewal.

## ANC Organisational Correlates Signifying Hegemonic Decline and Its Tentative Reversal

Periods of rapid decline in the post-1994 ANC have regularly materialised at moments of leadership succession: these periods concentrate organisational efforts to reposition, especially if there was preceding decay. At two such points, after the party's Polokwane and Mangaung national elective conferences, factional disunity heightened and the ANC suffered split-off opposition parties. The remaining ANC increasingly lacked the ability to retain the organisation as a national political hegemon. In the run-up to the 2017 conference, the ANC suffered a president (Zuma) that was damaging the ANC (and state) but remained entrenched, in control of core state apparatuses.<sup>14</sup> At the conference, he

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14 The ability of Zuma to remain in control of the ANC until late 2017, despite divisions in the National Executive Committee, in all ANC structures from

only narrowly missed his target of installing a Zuma sympathiser-successor. Out of the top six ANC positions, the Ramaphosa camp won the presidency, the national chairpersonship, and the position of treasurer-general. The deputy president, David Mabuza, entered this camp upon a so-called “unity” deal that he and the treasurer had struck (Mashatile 2018).<sup>15</sup> All election victory margins at this top-six level were minimal and came to characterise the ANC in the subsequent transitional, post-Nasrec period. Ramaphosa had a conference mandate to act on ANC state corruption and win the next national elections for the ANC, yet he had to act within the constraints of a majority of 179 ANC conference delegate votes out of the total delegate number of close to 4,731 (see ANC 2018: 2–10). If the losing, Zumaist faction was to be alienated, and possibly split from the ANC, the ANC would be unlikely to maintain an outright electoral majority in a next national election. The Ramaphosa victory – as important as it was for potential ANC credibility, popular consent, and reconstruction of hegemony – was therefore fragile, and Ramaphosa was compelled to balance unity with a tainted faction over outright moves to counter corruption.

The ANC’s internal factional struggle for control over the organisation had manifested itself as a two-faction succession battle between the Zumaists (with Zuma associate Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as candidate for the December 2017 ANC presidential elections) and Cyril Ramaphosa (ANC deputy president, with his CR-17 campaign). The factions operated at three levels of organisation – the first was the immediately evident factions aligning with ANC leaders and candidates, the second was the overlay of these factions with patronage (determined in the first instance by state incumbency; see also Beresford 2014), and the third was factional placement to influence public discourses through state institutions and state sanction. The factional battles were fought therefore on interconnected fronts that covered control over ANC structures, mass media, and popular narratives.

Control over the ANC’s branches, regions, and provinces was a core aspect of Zumaist strategy to structure the outcome of the Nasrec elective conference. A Zumaist victory would have helped to limit reper-

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branch, regional, and provincial structures to ANC caucuses in national and provincial governments, still remained to be fully investigated and explained.

15 The deal, largely clandestine, was that Mashatile (ANC Gauteng leader) and Mabuza (Mpumalanga leader) would pool their provincial delegates and ensure respective elections as treasurer-general and deputy president in 2017, with the prospect of winning the respective positions of ANC deputy president and president in the 2022 ANC elections.



cussions for corruption and capture (see, for example, Chikane 2017; Mbeki 2017). Decisive criteria at the base were membership recruitment, branch formation (legal and legitimate, or manufactured for election purposes – several of these, mostly Zumaists, were subjected to court rulings against malpractice), and gatekeeping (exclusion of Ramaphosaists) over participation in branch general meetings (and hence control over the election of delegates to represent the branch at national ANC elections). These battles continued beyond the Nasrec moment – given the bitterness and disappointment that nearly half of the ANC Nasrec delegates experienced. Many started repositioning with a view to regaining control over the ANC and deployment to high positions; some Nasrec losers schemed to force an early subsequent ANC elective meeting and re-establish their faction.

Beyond the internal instability of leadership battles, the ANC-factional control over the media and over narratives to promote and entrench ideological and corruption-veiling actions was at the core of the battle for the hearts, minds, and pockets of ANC Nasrec delegates. The pro-Zuma campaign featured prominently the feigned ideological repositioning of the (factional) ANC as a new radical presence that was, as argued, at long last going to execute colonial-white-capitalist conquest. The Ramaphosaists adopted the radical narrative that was incorporated at the mid-2017 ANC policy conference, but had action on corruption as its frontline. Hence both these campaigns promoted narratives that were to ensure popular appeal, and possibly hegemonic consent. The factions offered the choice between retaining constitutionalism and concerted implementation of policies (Ramaphosa camp) or fighting (white) monopoly capital and its agents' attacks (Dlamini-Zuma campaign). The Ramaphosa delegates prevailed. This delegate orientation was also reflected in the MarkData public opinion poll (September–November 2017) in which large majorities of respondents across provinces stated their preference for business-friendly policies that would promote job creation, rather than taking jargonistic positions on “radical economic transformation.”

The ANC in late 2017 was at a tipping point where coercive power was being incorporated by the Zumaists to retain control over the party. Factional control over state institutions tasked with security and intelligence helped the Zuma camp to delegitimise opponents, hoping to turn ANC branches and delegates in support of a pro-Zuma outcome. Amongst others, state security was used to contain ANC top-level fallout against the Zuma campaign (SACC 2017; PARI et al. 2017). For example, a range of dual SACP–ANC members operating in the branches, local



candidates and councillors, and local municipal functionaries had been “dealt with” (killed or attacked) when they threatened to expose the factional abuse of state resources.

One of the correlates of declining ANC hegemonic stature was its membership decline in the period since 2012, when massive mobilisation was effected in the run-up to the 2012 ANC centenary celebration; during this time, the Zumaists tried to bolster the pro-Zuma provinces to help swell the number of delegates that would vote for Zuma at the Mangaung conference (Booyesen 2015). By the time of the ANC National General Council (NGC) meeting of 2015, the figures revealed massive decline: to 767,970 (see also Butler 2015). In contrast with previous conference practice, the ANC did not release updated membership figures at the time of the 2017 policy and elective conferences. Membership was reported to have increased to 980,000, although the ANC failed to substantiate the figure by means of its conventional provincial breakdowns.

A further correlate to the ANC’s organisational hegemonic status was in the failing Tripartite Alliance with COSATU (after COSATU had already split in 2015 under pressure for its criticism of the ANC’s Zumaist leadership) and the SACP. Both the SACP and COSATU had been instrumental in bringing Zuma to power after their fallout with Mbeki. By 2017 the emaciated COSATU (purged of Zuma critics) had also turned on Zuma, barring him from COSATU events. The SACP turned similarly: by 2016–2017 it had become a fierce critic of Zuma and the corruption and mismanagement associated with the Zuma faction’s looting of state resources. In the final days of Zuma rule, the Tripartite Alliance was practically dead. As soon as Ramaphosa was elected, alliance criticisms of the ANC nevertheless turned into endorsements and legitimisation.

Despite the ideological face of factionalism in the ANC, the ideological orientations were elastic and subject to opportunistic alignment of ANC leaders. The base of these factions was, on the one hand, patronage and the opportunity to “drink from the trough” (Booyesen 2015), followed by self-preservation through prevention of the scrutiny associated with the rise of competing factions. On the other hand, the Ramaphosaist faction rose on the construct of eliminating corruption and rescued the ANC from popular-electoral disintegration (ANC 2018). Those ANC leaders in the Zuma faction who had no incriminating baggage felt free to commence factional realignment.<sup>16</sup> This was a “manu-

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16 In the aftermath of the marginal Nasrec Ramaphosa victory, his faction incrementally consolidated its comparative standing, bolstered by the ANC conference resolutions on the elimination of corruption: the top six split 4 to 2 in fa-

factured” alliance of factions, however, which incorporated compromised members of the Zuma alliance. As Southall (2018) notes, this construction might still hold negative implications in future.

## Concluding Analysis

In his seminal Gramscian analysis, Perry Anderson (1976: 13) points to the loop relationship between civil hegemony, war of position, and united front. These elements emerge strongly in the analysis of the internal contradictions and conflicts that characterise the ANC’s struggle to retain and renew hegemony. The ANC historical bloc circa 2017–2018 moved from crisis to strained renewal, as evidenced in the review of correlates across the four faces of ANC hegemony. The contradictions were the symptoms of the struggle, in effect, between two contending ANC hegemonies: the old Zumaist order that had become synonymous with corruption and the abuse of state power and that was trying to reinvent itself under the ideological mantle of radical economic transformation, and the Ramaphosaist order that was trying to establish a new hegemony – namely, one of identifying with the ethos of the Nelson Mandela era (assumed to have been democratic-inspirational, non-corrupted, and driven by ANC unity). The lines of division between the old and the new, however, were often blurred and contested.

The ANC up to late 2017 had been building up to a point where four sets of correlates of hegemonic decline converged and delivered weakness. The analysis indicated that at that stage the ANC’s hegemonic power had receded substantially. Still re-elected nationally at a 62 per cent level in 2014 (yet with provincial weaknesses), the 2016 municipal elections and subsequent opinion polls suggested that the ANC would either slip below the 50 per cent mark of outright approval in future elections, or would retain a majoritarian edge only with great difficulty. Declining levels of trust in core ANC and state institutions supported this outlook. A wide range of protest forms, from lawless disregard for public order to civil society mobilisation against ANC leadership underscored the argument of the ANC’s volatile, demanding interface with its popular base. The ANC of 2018, after its December 2017 leadership change, had improved prospects for rebuilding a sound hegemonic base.

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avour of Ramaphosa; the NEC (estimated on the slate lists at Nasrec to have been roughly 42 to 38 at best in favour of Ramaphosa) started featuring stronger pro-Ramaphosa majorities; and subsequently the NWC, originally balanced slightly in favour of Ramaphosa, carried pro-Ramaphosa resolutions routinely.

The ANC organisationally was divided along deep factional lines. The factionalism affected the movement and also compromised the state: state institutions, as carriers of ANC organisational policy and governance, as well as state-related implementation, suffered in credibility and actual performance. The ANC's citizen base expressed sentiments that testified to renewed goodwill, yet with governance and service-delivery demands attached. The demands were fair, but the volume was immense and could still make the ANC government stumble. The ANC, in its custodianship of the state, could no longer, as in earlier times (see Lodge 1995), rely on citizens believing that the ANC just needed time to get government delivery projects on track.

Hegemony presupposes that "account is taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised" (Gramsci, quoted in Anderson 1976: 19). The new ANC hegemony that was emerging tentatively was building on the conscious social force of receptive popular sentiments. The competing countering forces, harking back to the Zuma period, appeared to be based, in contrast and predominantly, in a party-elitist, patronage-driven leadership group who wanted to protect old patterns of patronage and corruption. In the period of analysis, this did not take hold, because it ran against the social forces pushing the ANC into self-renewal, fostering reinvented, minimal-corruption governance while working in close association with its popular base. This was reminiscent of the hegemony that was expected to have been created when Zuma assumed power in 2007–2009, when people and party cadres alike longed for a president that would show a connection to the citizenry. The people as a social force can be seen to have remained on this track, still looking for a new and potentially reinvented ANC, to realise this organic connection. Contemporary South African opinion polls suggest that there is a unison of political and economic aims to overcome the status quo ante of discredited ANC governance, and this may be seen as a conscious social force that could help a reconstituted historical bloc to emerge, drawing on the economy and civil society. There are, however, still internal contradictions in this emergent historical bloc. Lack of congruence is evident in parts of the old that are refusing to die.

The details in this analysis of the unfolding struggles between two hegemonies, showing themselves over the four fronts of people, state, elections, and the ANC organisationally, highlight the two ANC factions' war of position. The new is still emerging ambiguously: while civil society is supporting the emerging hegemony, it is the contests and organisational internal contradictions that are restraining the new order.

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### **Kampf um die Vorherrschaft im ANC: Vom Missklang morbider Symptome zur angespannten Erneuerung**

**Zusammenfassung:** Betrachtet man den gegenwärtige Zustand des Afrikanischen Nationalkongresses (ANC) in Südafrika im Bezug auf Hegemonie, Niedergang und potenzielle Erneuerung, zeigt sich eine Organisation, die dem tödlichen Verfall entgangen ist, aber im Jahr 2018 dafür kämpft, als vereinter Block die einstige hegemoniale Stellung wiederzuerlangen. Die Analyse umfasst die äußeren Beziehungen des ANC zur Bevölkerung, zum Staat und zu den Wahlen, aber auch seine interne Organisation. Der ANC hatte bis Ende des Jahres 2017 einen Machtverfall zu verzeichnen, der unumkehrbar schien. Vielfältige Symptome des hegemonialen Verfalls waren offensichtlich. Ende 2017 gelang ein Führungswechsel an der Spitze des ANC, der potenziell den Niedergang aufhalten und die hegemoniale Stellung des ANC wiederbeleben kann, auch wenn dies bestenfalls ein langfristiger und inkrementeller Prozess ist. Der Kampf verschiedener Fraktionen um Macht und Kontrolle über öffentliche Ressourcen spaltet die Partei noch immer. Die Anhänger des alten Status quo wehren sich während sich eine neue Ordnung herauschält. Der Artikel zeigt den Zustand des ANC auf, der bald 25 Jahre an der Macht ist, indem er die Symptome des Niedergangs und möglicher Umkehrungen zusammenführt.

**Schlagwörter:** Südafrika, Vorherrschaft, Afrikanischer Nationalkongress, historischer Block, Parteikämpfe, Zustimmung, Staatsvereinnahmung durch private Interesse, Korruption