

NEO-PATRIMONIAL POLITICS IN THE ANC

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ABSTRACT

Following Jacob Zuma's ascension to the presidency in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has been dogged by rumours of escalating corruption and the personalization of power. This article documents these trends and explores three ways of understanding neo-patrimonialism in South Africa's ruling party. First, the article addresses the possibility that such political habits have a long history within the ANC but were restricted during its years in exile and have begun to resurface now that the armed struggle is over. Second, it considers explanations that relate to the party's historical ties to criminal networks and pressures arising from the transition to majority rule and contemporary electoral politics. Finally, the article investigates whether neo-patrimonialism is a reflection of broader tendencies within South African political and economic life. All three factors are found to have played a role in the rise of neo-patrimonial politics, and it is the confluence of these trends that explains why these dynamics have taken such a strong hold on the party.

WHAT EXPLAINS THE ANC'S apparent transformation from a rule-regulated, mass-based party into an organization in which internal dynamics are mostly shaped by personal interests? Increasingly within the ANC, leadership behaviour appears to be characterized by neo-patrimonial predispositions and, while formal distinctions between private and public concerns are widely recognized, officials nevertheless use their public powers for private purposes.¹ Other symptoms of neo-patrimonial political behaviour have also appeared. There is factionalism, that is, the emergence of internal rival groups constituted by personal loyalty rather than shared ideological beliefs. Another manifestation is the affirmation by the ANC leadership of 'traditionalist' representations of indigenous culture, whereby moral legitimation is sought more and more from appeals to 'Africanist'

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1. Following Christopher Clapham's definition of neo-patrimonialism in *Third World Politics* (Helm, London, 1985), p. 48.

racial solidarity and nostalgic recollections of patriarchal social order rather than on the basis of the quality of government performance.²

Neo-patrimonial indicators include the acquisition of business interests by leading politicians and their families, most notably the proliferation of the presidential family's business concerns since Jacob Zuma's accession to the presidency.³ Despoliation by local office holders through municipal and provincial tendering procedures began earlier.⁴ This was a consequence of the 'capture' of municipalities by informal networks that in the ANC's weaker regions could especially easily impose their influence over local branches.⁵ This kind of behaviour has been accompanied by sharpening competition for posts in government and within the party organization, which in turn has eroded the decorum that used to characterize the ANC's internal procedures. The ANC's leadership increasingly reinforces its authority and demonstrates its power through displays of ostentation and through elaborate security procedures.⁶

Meanwhile, the ANC's mobilization of public support relies increasingly on patron–client relations.⁷ Reminding us that patrimonial power must involve reciprocal exchanges, and, indeed, in contrast to the socially aloof

2. For Jacob Zuma's statements on childbearing as 'good training to a woman', see *The Guardian*, 'Jacob Zuma says it is not right for women to remain unmarried', 22 August 2012, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/22/jacob-zuma-women-unmarried>> (1 November 2013); on the taking away of 'our dignity ... because our traditional system and leadership was undermined', see *City Press*, 'Zuma scolds "clever" blacks', 4 November 2012, <<http://www.citypress.co.za/news/zuma-scolds-clever-blacks-20121103/>> (1 November 2013).

3. By March 2010 members of the Zuma family held 134 company directorships. Of the companies in Zuma's official declaration of interests, 83 were registered after Zuma became ANC president. *Mail and Guardian*, 'Keeping it in the family', 19 March 2010.

4. In a survey undertaken in the Eastern Cape in 2005, 27 percent of local government officials had witnessed the award of jobs or contracts to political allies. Doreen Atkinson, 'Taking to the streets: has developmental local government failed in South Africa' in Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, and Jessica Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2007* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2007), pp. 53–77, p. 67.

5. According to Atkinson, this was a particular feature of political life in the Free State, a region where for most of its history the ANC lacked a strong organized base. Atkinson, 'Taking to the streets', pp. 67–8.

6. Both grandiose ostentation and extreme security precautions are combined in the features of President Zuma's new residential estate at Nkandla in KwaZulu Natal where R250 million in public funds have been spent on protective arrangements. Disapproval of such measures is by no means universal. On learning that the leader of the parliamentary opposition, Helen Zille, intended to visit Nkandla to inspect the project, the local *inkosi* (chief) expressed outrage. 'She was supposed to first consult traditional leaders before going to the President's home ... we have arrived at a point where we say enough of this disrespectful white girl.' *Sunday Times*, 'Zille told: we will defend Zuma's home', 4 November 2012, <<http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/2012/11/04/zille-told-we-will-defend-zuma-s-home>> (1 November 2013).

7. A letter in *City Press* may express more widely shared views among the ANC's more partisan supporters: 'Zimbabwe has a life President and Angola is doing well, so this is the best route for us if we are to indigenize and deal with the land question. South Africa needs a big strong man to force things to happen.' Themba D. Ntshangase, 'Former MK Cadre', *City Press*, 4 November 2012.

predisposition of his predecessor, President Zuma cultivates a reputation as an accessible man of the people, always ready to entertain petitions.⁸ These developments are dynamic and they have yet to become all-encompassing – they do not constitute the entirety of the ANC's internal life, nor do they affect other South African political parties in the same way.⁹ Both within the ANC and in the wider political system patrimonial behaviour interacts with norms that reflect bureaucratic legal rationality as well as democratic procedures: that after all is the hallmark of a *neo*-patrimonial polity.¹⁰ Indeed, studies that have explored the ANC's base-level organization have documented key features of a mass-based party with a membership animated by political principles and horizontal ties of solidarity.¹¹

This suggests that with respect to the typologies that are used to classify party organizations, the ANC still belongs to the broad family of mass-based parties, and this does make it unusual in the broader African context.¹² But the ANC's patrimonial characteristics are becoming more pronounced, and as a result the argument that South African politics represents an exception to the general trends that shape political life elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa is becoming less compelling. The behaviour of ANC leaders and their followers is beginning to correspond to conventions associated with clientelistic organizations, in which specific public services and resources are offered to particular groups in exchange for political support.¹³ At the rate that this behaviour is proliferating it threatens to overwhelm what used to be a relatively disciplined and well-structured political

8. 'There are often long queues at Mahlamba Ndlopfu, the presidential residence in Pretoria, of people seeking to see him. The situation is no different in Nkandla, his KwaZulu Natal rural home, where Zuma is said to hold one-on-one meetings until the early hours. ... It is people from all walks of life who come to see him: business people, politicians and even ordinary locals who come to complain about pensions and unsafe roads.' *Sunday Times*, 'Who's who in the Zuma web', 5 August 2011.

9. For example, the Democratic Alliance, traditionally a white middle-class party, is probably more immune to neo-patrimonial compulsions because of its fairly impersonal approaches to the electorate. DA planners favour 'relying on public relations as the primary driver of the party's popularity with voters' and assign a low priority to the task 'of establishing membership structures on the ground', even in black townships. *Business Day*, 'DA not creating home-grown members', 5 November 2012, <<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/politics/2012/11/05/da-not-creating-home-grown-members>> (1 November 2013).

10. Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel, 'Neo-patrimonialism reconsidered: critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 45, 1 (2007), pp. 95–119, p. 105.

11. See Tom Lodge, 'The ANC and the development of party politics in South Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42, 2 (2004), pp. 189–219; Vincent Darracq, 'The ANC's organization at the grassroots', *African Affairs* 107, 429 (2008), pp. 589–609; Alexander Beresford, 'Comrades back on track: the durability of the Tripartite Alliance', *African Affairs* 108, 432 (2009), pp. 391–412.

12. Matthijs Bogaards, 'Counting parties and identifying dominant party systems in Africa', *European Journal of Political Research* 43 (2004) pp. 173–97, p. 178.

13. For distinctions between clientelistic, class, and mass parties see Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, 'Species of political parties: a new typology', *Party Politics* 9, 2 (2004), pp. 167–99.

organization unified by beliefs about programmatic purpose and securing public support through ideological appeals to widely shared collective interests. The consequences of this for the party, its original mission, and South African democracy would be profound.

Explaining neo-patrimonialism

Before considering explanations for this change we need conceptual clarity: what is neo-patrimonialism, and what does it mean to propose that the ANC is becoming a more neo-patrimonial organization? For Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel, neo-patrimonial systems feature ‘a mixture of two coexisting, partly interwoven, types of domination: namely patrimonial and legal bureaucratic domination’. Personal rule exists alongside bureaucratic order, sometimes ‘twist(ing) its logic, functions and output’.¹⁴ In Africa, neo-patrimonial politics is often a residue of authoritarian politics, both colonial and post-colonial, with the result that many of today’s ostensible democracies are in fact transitional hybrids, ‘neo-patrimonial multi-party systems’.¹⁵ However, the legal-rational element of neo-patrimonialism is not a façade – it can determine key decisions and itself can shape patrimonial behaviour.

The notion of neo-patrimonial rule as a hybrid system in which two kinds of politics co-exist is also central to the way the concept is addressed by Anne Pitcher, Mary Moran, and Michael Johnston. They remind us that in its representation by Weber, patrimonialism meant a specific form of legitimation that included reciprocal exchanges between rulers and groups. In their analysis of neo-patrimonial politics, modern democratic procedures as well as rational legality are built ‘on a foundation of traditional and highly personalised reciprocities and loyalties’.¹⁶ Their main point is that neo-patrimonialism is not an anachronistic survival that blocks modernization but rather a form of authority that can function in a range of regimes, authoritarian and democratic.

In this article, I explore three different ways of understanding the rise of neo-patrimonialism and assess their applicability to the South African context. First, I address the possibility that what is happening within the ruling party is the effect of entrenched political habits inherited from colonial rule. In this argument patrimonial leadership has a long history within the ANC, but was curtailed after the movement’s embrace of militant activism during the 1950s and during its exile, and has only resurfaced in the era

14. Erdmann and Engel, ‘Neo-patrimonialism’, p. 105.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

16. Anne Pitcher, Mary H. Moran, and Michael Johnston, ‘Rethinking patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism in Africa’, *African Studies Review* 52, 1 (2009), pp. 125–56, p. 145.

of democratic politics. In other words, over the hundred years of its existence, the ANC has ‘moved through a radical arc’ only to return to its roots in the present.¹⁷

Next, I consider explanations centred on institutional uncertainties and the state’s legitimation deficits. These affected the ANC in two ways. First, personalized networks constituted through reciprocal exchanges were fostered by the ANC’s entanglement with criminal networks during its armed revolutionary phase. The apartheid state’s reliance on repression created a moral climate that facilitated such connections between political activists and criminals. Second, there are the effects of the more recent developments following South Africa’s democratization. From this perspective, proliferation of rent seeking is partly the consequence of the circumstances that surrounded the ANC’s abrupt transition from a liberation movement to an electorally oriented political party and the stresses that this has introduced. It is also related to the effect of the ANC’s incumbency in office in a setting in which political procedures and allocative entitlements are still novel and untested. Following this view, neo-patrimonialism has been fostered by a series of political insecurities.

The third sort of explanation relates to broader issues arising from the way in which South African economic life is organized, irrespective of the features of particular politicians or parties. The state’s use of tenders and licences to empower black businessmen has created fresh opportunities for the exercise of patrimonial capitalism.

The ANC’s neo-patrimonialism as a colonial residue

Let us consider our first possible explanation: that the exercise of patrimonial leadership in the modern ANC resonates with historically entrenched habits, norms, and expectations derived from colonial experience. This argument draws upon common explanations of African neo-patrimonialism that attribute its prevalence to the prolonged after-effects of colonialism. Here the state is an alien importation at odds or ‘incongruent’ with pre-existing norms and institutions.¹⁸ Colonial rule confined the legal rational sphere to a small privileged group residing in the administrative centre and most subjects lived under the rule of chiefs whose pre-colonial patrimonial powers were often amplified by colonial authority. In weak post-colonial states bureaucracy expanded very rapidly and ‘was challenged and invaded from below by informal relationships’.¹⁹ In the striking phraseology of Peter

17. Martin Plaut and Paul Holden, *Who Rules South Africa?* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2012), p. 348.

18. Pierre Englebert, ‘Pre-colonial institutions, post-colonial states and economic development in tropical Africa’, *Political Research Quarterly* 53, 1 (2000), pp. 7–36, p. 10.

19. Erdmann and Engel, ‘Neo-patrimonialism’, p. 106.

Ekeh, a new 'public realm' was created, 'in which primordial groupings, ties, and sentiments influence and determine the individual's public behaviour'.²⁰ Ekeh's notion of a second public realm characterized by neo-patrimonial politics reminds us that personalized networks often function in a setting in which there is broad public approval of their operation.

Networks constituted through family, kinship, and childhood friendship certainly played an important role in the formation of the ANC's founding elite. More arguably, such personalized networks continued thereafter to exercise profound influence. The life of John Langalibalele Dube, the ANC's first president, illustrates this point well. Born at the American Zulu Mission at Inanda, Dube was the son of the Mission's first African pastor and the grandson of the Chief of the Qadi. His upbringing was within the Christianized *amakholwa*, a land-owning middle-class elite that supplied political leadership to Africans both within Natal and nationally through the twentieth century. The Champion family were also important members of the Inanda community, and John Dube and A. W. G. Champion, later political rivals in Natal's provincial politics, were classmates. Pixley Isaac Seme, another early ANC president, was a cousin. Dube's school, the Ohlange Institute, itself became an important agency in the socialization of generations of ANC leadership: among Dube's own pupils were members of the Msimang family and Albert Luthuli. Dube was related through marriage to the Cele family, another important family within the provincial ANC leadership.

The linkages that bound this elite were particularly important in a setting in which personal and public concerns were entwined. Members of the *amakholwa* shared the aim of 'managing' the introduction of modernity through leadership that would instil progress through 'Christian improvement and industrial education'.²¹ In this vision, their own social mobility at the helm of meritocratic hierarchy was the key to broader racial emancipation. In a colonial order in which their own private ambitions were under increasing threat it was easy to conflate personal interests with public concerns. From 1906, Dube began to invest in farmland, and subsequently his standing as a landowner would upgrade his status as a notable. Dube was elected as the ANC's first president in recognition of his achievements as an educationalist and landowner, and his interests in such ventures would always shape his political actions. More widely, Natal's African nationalist politics in its first decades was decisively influenced by two factions, both headed by networks assembled through kinship and schooling: one based

20. Peter P. Ekeh, 'Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: a theoretical statement', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, 1 (1975), pp. 91–2, p. 92.

21. Heather Hughes, *First President: A life of John L. Dube, founding president of the ANC* (Jacana, Auckland Park, 2011), p. 42.

around the American mission stations along the coastline; the other formed through the agency of British Methodists in the Natal Midlands. Despite its modernist aspirations, this leadership was often concerned to defend 'a strictly hierarchical social order in which aristocracy and meritocracy combined'.²²

The way private social connections helped to reinforce and reproduce political leadership was not peculiar to Natal. Similar networks, constituted through clan membership, schooling, friendship, and marriage operated within the Barolong elite in the western Transvaal. Here, as with the Qadi settlement around the Inanda mission, a German Lutheran-sponsored Christian elite of rural teachers and professionals allied with the Montshiwa chieftaincy to provide the social base of a tightly interconnected ANC leadership group whose members would include Sol Plaatje, various members of the Molema family, and later Z. K. Matthews and his descendants.²³

Turning to the ANC's later history, the ascendancy of an Eastern Cape elite, drawn primarily from Methodist converts and 'progressive' peasants²⁴ and socialized through education at Healdtown and Fort Hare, has been very evident. Within this group, a shared sense of origin and familiarities derived from attending the same schools was bolstered through more intimate ties. As we know from Mandela's early life in Johannesburg, a 'home boy' network facilitated his early induction into the ANC as well as his placement in a legal firm, with his fellow clansman Walter Sisulu supplying the critical brokerage function. Nelson Mandela would cement his friendship with Sisulu through his first marriage, to Sisulu's cousin Evelyn Mase. The success this elite enjoyed in reproducing its influence across generations is particularly obvious in the subsequent political progression of a talented cohort of younger Sisulus.

Another entrenched source of patrimonial politics can be traced to the reflexes developed during the ANC's participation in official institutions that became hubs of clientelistic undertakings during apartheid. During the 1950s, despite resolutions to boycott township advisory board elections, plenty of ANC elders joined the boards and belonged to them. Mia Brandel-Syrier's ethnographic study of the 'upper classes' in a new 'Bantu subsidized housing estate' near Johannesburg includes a portrait of 'Mr S', an ANC member who joined the Advisory Board in 1951 and who became the dominant township 'boss', presiding over a dissolute politics in which 'votes were secured by money payments together with various forms of

22. *Ibid.*, p. xix.

23. Andrew Manson and Bernard Mbenga, 'The African National Congress in the Western Transvaal/Northern Cape Platteland, c. 1910–1964', *South African Historical Journal* 64, 3 (2012), pp. 472–93.

24. Colin Bundy, 'Introduction' in Govan Mbeki, *Learning from Robben Island* (James Currey, Oxford, 1991), pp. ix–xx.

illegal pressure and extortion'.²⁵ Though formally consultative bodies, Advisory Boards could influence allocations of public goods: they were centres of clientelist politics and such kinds of political activity retained substantial public legitimacy through the 1960s.

Mia Brandel-Syrier's example of a local ANC leader engaged in 'boss' politics in Germiston was not exceptional: fieldwork at the time encountered ANC personalities at the forefront of advisory boards in Durban – here the Combined Board was chaired by A. W. G. Champion, provincial ANC president until 1951. Certainly, by the 1950s, Champion embodied the more conservative predispositions within the ANC's leadership. However, as Leo Kuper noted, in Durban at the end of the decade there were a number of 'active members of Congress ... to be found on the statutory bodies' that included the Boards.²⁶ In East London, various factions of the ANC won Advisory Board elections between 1947 and 1957.²⁷ In general, though it is true that by the 1950s more radical ANC leaders and members were openly contemptuous of the Boards and favoured their boycott, this was not a universal position and in practice ANC leaders tolerated participation within them.

To recapitulate: modern patrimonial reflexes within the ANC's leadership were partly the product of two features of the ANC's historical development. First, there were the networks of notables articulated by affective ties that established the organization. Schools, churches, and dynastic marriages helped to reproduce these networks and consolidate their power up to and through the 1950s, and still do so, though to a lesser extent. The second historic tributary are the clientelistic expectations nurtured through the ANC's engagement in Advisory Board politics in the 1940s and 1950s. Though the ANC moved from being a party of notables to a party based on mass membership more than sixty years ago, the continuity in its leadership lineage until quite recently is striking. This is not unusual. Comparative analysis reminds us that 'parties founded when local notables were politically powerful may remain under the domination of elite factions well past the time when a majority of voters ceased to be deferential to notable elites'.²⁸ As Angelo Panebianco notes, original political choices and ways in which political organizations are formed leave 'indelible marks' on their later development.²⁹

25. Mia Brandel-Syrier, *Reef town Elite* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1971), p. 11.

26. Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1965), page 329.

27. Philip and Iona Meyer, *Townsmen and Tribesmen* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1974).

28. Gunther and Diamond, 'Species of political parties', p. 174.

29. Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and power* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988), p. xiii.

Neo-patrimonialism, state legitimation and institutional uncertainty

The next set of explanations for the ANC's neo-patrimonial operations focus on the insecurities resulting from change. A common explanation for the persistence of patrimonial behaviour in ostensibly modern states – neo-patrimonialism – views it as the consequence of imposed modernization. As Samuel Huntington has suggested, rapid institutional change generates disorder.³⁰ What distinguishes this explanation from the first approach is its emphases on organizational disarray and social insecurity. When institutions change there are no stable public realms in which people can find assurance and comfort. Under such conditions, corruption is an example of the way in which political actors use 'disorder as a political instrument'.³¹

Here too there is an historic dimension to the argument. ANC leaders moving to embrace militant activism during the 1950s defied the law at a time when apartheid criminalized many actions that black South Africans would not have recognized as immoral. This created an environment that drew together political and criminal networks. During the 1950s, certain ANC leaders made a point of trying to rehabilitate *tsotsi* gangsters, motivated partly by a compassionate perception of criminals as victims of social injustice as well as recognition that *tsotsis* 'could be trusted' to promote social disorder and hence might help to reinforce militant activism.³² In Sophiatown in Johannesburg, ANC activists found themselves on the same side as the gangsters in resisting removals and the local Youth League recruited among the gangs. One explanation for ANC leaders' modern cupidity is to view it as the outcome of routines nurtured through the incorporation of criminal networks, beginning with these efforts to secure *tsotsi* support in the 1950s. The career of one-time Alexandra gangster Joe Modise is illustrative.³³ In 1994 Modise was Minister of Defence in President Mandela's cabinet, an appointment that helped him to become a major beneficiary of the bribery that accompanied the 1997 arms contract. Modise's record of criminal undertakings, including car theft and smuggling, stretched back to his youth in the 1950s. He continued such activities in exile as profitable sidelines to leading Umkhonto we Sizwe. From 1994, foreign arms contractors' access to Modise was facilitated by Fana Hlongwane, ex-Umkhonto commander and – from 1994, as Modise's ministerial 'political adviser' – already in receipt of payments from British

30. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1968), pp. 59–64.

31. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as a political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999), pp. 85–91.

32. Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The youth gangs of Soweto, 1935–1976* (James Currey, Oxford, 2000), p. 82.

33. R. W. Johnson, *South Africa's Brave New World: The beloved country since the end of apartheid* (Allen Lane, London, 2009).

Aerospace and SAAB.³⁴ British Aerospace's relationship with Modise began in 1995 with a R5 million donation to the Umkhonto veterans association, a body that Modise chaired.³⁵

Stephen Ellis's research suggests that Modise hardly represented an isolated case. In 1980, ANC leaders expressed alarm over the prevalence of car smuggling by their members and government sources corroborated this concern, alleging also ANC engagement in mandrax smuggling. Later the ANC's intelligence department under Jacob Zuma's direction enlisted the help of Johannesburg-based criminal syndicates to supply weapons for Operation Vula, the operation to establish a military operational command inside South Africa. In 1987, the Civil Cooperation Bureau, a clandestine counter-insurgency agency, employed Ferdi Barnard, a convicted criminal. His task was to recruit agents within those criminal syndicates engaged in ANC supply operations.³⁶ Both the SADF and the ANC used the same smuggling routes and criminal agencies in efforts to penetrate each other's organizations and in the process they would increasingly develop mutually beneficial operations.³⁷

There is considerable evidence that the legacy of these relationships continues to shape ANC politics. At least two of the major corruption scandals in South Africa's post-democratic political history had their origins in symbiotic relationships that evolved between key ANC officials and businessmen, some of the latter being individuals implicated in organized crime. Well before the 1997/8 arms deal, for example, businessman Shabir Shaik was making gifts to Jacob Zuma, his old comrade in ANC intelligence, and Zuma would later reciprocate in facilitating contracts for Shaik and his clients after his appointment to KwaZulu's regional government in 1994.³⁸ A rather more sinister relationship would develop, again through initial offers of help in resettling in South Africa, between Jackie Selebi, then head of the ANC's Youth Section, and Glenn Agliotti, a commodity broker with a history of illicit dealing. Agliotti's friendship with Selebi began with his paying an urgent medical bill for the treatment of Selebi's infant daughter. Agliotti would later control a criminalized security firm that would undertake errands for Selebi after the latter's appointment as police commissioner. Meanwhile, Agliotti himself would extract commissions from

34. Plaut and Holden, *Who Rules South Africa?*, p. 109.

35. Andrew Feinstein, *After the Party: A personal and political journey inside the ANC* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2007), p. 155.

36. Peter Stiff, *Warfare by Other Means: South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s* (Galago, Alberton, 2001).

37. Stephen Ellis, 'Politics and crime: reviewing the ANC's exile history', *South African Historical Journal* 64, 3 (2012), pp. 622–36.

38. Feinstein, *After the Party*.

businessmen wishing to meet Selebi.³⁹ ANC insiders insist that Selebi's dealings with Agliotti were naïve rather than intentionally criminal: in the words of ex-ANC intelligence operative Barry Gilder, 'Selebi thought he was running Agliotti as a source.'⁴⁰ Gilder's views about the incidence of ostensibly corrupt behaviour are probably widely shared among his comrades. As he observes, the obligations arising from tightly knitted camaraderie that had sustained ANC cadres in exile often conflicted with new rules and norms:

The question has to be asked, however controversial it may be: to what extent do the notions of nepotism and cronyism adequately take into account the South African cultural realities of reciprocity and obligation to extended families and communities and, of course, to the solidarity amongst those who gave so much of themselves in the struggle for democracy. ... [I]n moment-by-moment individual judgement calls, the cultural instinct to come to the aid of comrade, friend, family and community is strong and, in the eyes of the one who provides, morally correct.⁴¹

Criminal networks incorporated into the organization during its insurgent phase would certainly strengthen any patrimonial predispositions within the ANC's leadership. Their influence today might be accentuated by the ascent within the ANC hierarchy of a tightly knit group, composed of Jacob Zuma's former comrades within the ANC's intelligence section – that part of the organization most concerned with deploying criminal networks during the anti-apartheid struggle.

The ANC's organizational requirements during the political transition between 1990 and 1994 also help to explain the growing influence of personalized networks within it. For top leaders it was imperative to build organized political followings in areas where the ANC had little previous support. Indeed, the need to expand the organization's base into new territory may have had an even more profound effect on the ANC's prevalent norms and values than the opportunistic friendships that developed between certain of its officials and dishonest businessmen. To illustrate the point it is helpful to recall the manner of the ANC's organizational entrenchment into what was then the eastern Transvaal.

In the eastern Transvaal – today's Mpumalanga – the provincial organization chose as its chairman a recently returned exile, Matthews Phosa. He had departed from South Africa in the early 1980s, leaving behind his partnership in a firm of Nelspruit attorneys. Phosa's law practice had continued to function during his absence, the only black attorneys' office in the Lowveld. It provided vital services to traders in their efforts to negotiate

39. Mandy Weiner, *Killing Kebble: An underworld exposed*, second edition (Macmillan, Johannesburg, 2012), pp. 76–7.

40. Barry Gilder, *Songs and Secrets: South Africa from liberation to governance* (Jacana, Auckland Park, 2012), p. 430.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 399.

licences with the relevant homeland officials, and supplied Phosa on his return with valuable networks of potential allies within the homeland-based business and bureaucratic elites. Even so, the real power within the Eastern Transvaal ANC lay in the hands of those who helped to 'convene' the organization.

The 'conveners' had emerged from the Youth Congress network. Before the regional executive elections, there were allegations that ANC 'branches' were set up after bulk sales of membership cards to traders.⁴² In many districts the ANC's organization rested on a substructure of youth cohorts mobilized around local 'big men', effectively reproducing customary patterns of patronage. Sitting on the new regional executive were a number of old Bantustan notables, including an MP who underwent a very sudden political conversion after losing his seat and a former chief deposed by his community. After 1994, as new provincial ministers, several former homeland politicians would be engaged in corrupt practices. David Mkhwanazi, for example, MEC for environmental affairs, a former member of the KaNgwane administration, was eventually dismissed in 1998 after accusations that he had appointed family members to positions in his department. The generalized sense of entitlement that helped to prompt such behaviour is evident in the explanation given by another prominent provincial ANC leader, Jackson Mthembu, MEC for Transport in Mpumalanga, when he was asked about his department's purchase of ten BMW 528s for transporting his colleagues on the provincial executive: 'I am a leader in my community and therefore have a certain status – you can't therefore be saying that I should drive a 1600 vehicle.'⁴³

After 1994, the need to fund the party's organization also amplified the contribution of patronage and venality to its internal politics. Between 1990 and 1994, the ANC signalled its willingness to accept support from almost any source, no matter how morally compromised donors might have been by previous engagements with the earlier regime. Nelson Mandela's embrace of Sol Kerzner was a case in point. In this case, the ANC's lack of concern about venal associations was underlined by Mandela's retention within his cabinet of Stella Sigcau, the Transkeian minister implicated in a corruption case against Kerzner a decade earlier. Kerzner contributed R500,000 to the ANC's electoral campaign in 1994. Mandela's actions supplied the template for future electoral fundraising. As Andrew Feinstein observes, 'speculation has refused to go away that the ANC received

42. Edwin Ritchken, *Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, 1995).

43. *Sunday Times*, 'Big wheels', p. 4, 14 December 1997.

millions of rands from the successful bidders (in the 1998 arms contracting), money that was probably used in our 1999 election campaign'.⁴⁴

Since then, though, the ANC has become increasingly reliant on local funding sources. Accordingly, the ANC nurtures its relationship with the corporate world through initiatives that include the Progressive Business Forum, a body that sells access to key government ministers. Access to such resources enables the ruling party to maintain a very well-paid echelon of senior officials – raising the stakes in the competition for such offices – but it has also helped to instil a culture of 'gatekeeping', in which convivial meetings between businessmen and politicians are expected to be mutually rewarding. Moreover, through the ANC's efforts to extend its influence in the business world by deploying its own cadres in key corporate positions, there has developed a sizeable group of businessmen who continue to view themselves as politicians.

One consequence of the development of an ANC oligarchy is the increasing role that private sources of wealth play *within* the ANC's internal politics. In 2012, Tokyo Sexwale, for example, was reported to be selling his stakeholding in the ABSA group to finance his 'war chest' for contesting the leadership elections at the ANC's national conference.⁴⁵ In 2010, Richard Mdluli, then head of the police's Crime Intelligence unit and a key ally of Jacob Zuma, reported that politicians were using proceeds from tendering to build up reserves to fund their leadership campaigns.⁴⁶ When candidates for internal offices need to mobilize support through such investments, clearly they are functioning in a milieu in which candidates are expected to reward their followers, in effect operating as patrons looking after their clients. In the 2007 conference at Polokwane, Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe confirmed as much, admitting that buying the votes of branch delegates had become 'rampant and pronounced'.⁴⁷

Such abuses are much likelier when an organization experiences spurts of very rapid expansion that strain its capacity for regulation. Expansion may also generate challenges to the values that underpin the organization's administrative arrangements. In particular, the recent growth of the Youth League's following has called into question the ANC leadership's authority, which tends to rely on customary deference to age and seniority. The Youth League's rise also threatens to supplant the Communist Party's ascendancy within the ANC's leadership. In contrast to the labour movement

44. Feinstein, *After the Party*, p. 155.

45. *City Press*, 'Tokyo Sexwale to cash in on ABSA shares', 5 August 2012, <<http://africajournalismtheworld.com/tag/tokyo-sexwale-share-gains/>> (1 November 2013).

46. *Mail and Guardian*, 'Sexwale's prints all over R10bn tender', 23 March 2012, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2012-03-23-sexwales-prints-all-over-r10bn-tender>> (1 November 2013).

47. Susan Booysen, *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2011), p. 63.

that provides the South African Communist Party with its leverage, Youth League power accumulates through its mobilization of a very different constituency, the unemployed school-leavers in rural settlements, people who have gained much less than organized workers from ANC governments. This is a constituency that has very different expectations of leadership from the 'comradely' accountability expected if not always practised by organized workers, taking their cues from the ethics of shop-floor democracy.⁴⁸ Indeed Jackson Mthembu might have been quite correct in assuming that in rural Mpumalanga, his own former Youth Congress comrades would have felt affronted if he arrived at meetings in an economical Nissan rather than a prestigious BMW.

The Youth League, established in 1944, ceased functioning at the time of the prohibition in 1960 – but, in any case, had not really played an assertive role of its own during the 1950s.⁴⁹ Today's Youth League, re-established in late 1990, is a force in its own right. Following its reformation, the League built its membership structure along the networks supplied by the Youth Congresses, the main rural bases of the United Democratic Front in the 1980s. Through the 1990s, under the charismatic presidency of Peter Mokaba, the League began to play a major role within the ANC's internal politics, in particular in supporting Thabo Mbeki's ascendancy and in enabling Mbeki to offset the influence of the Communist and trade-unionist left. The next stage in the League's trajectory was a swift multiplication of its membership, between 1990 and 1994, up to half a million, much of it in semi-rural settings, especially in KwaZulu-Natal and in Limpopo among unemployed school leavers.

Under the presidencies of Fikile Mbalula from 2004 and Julius Malema from 2008 the League began to confront the authority of older and more senior ANC leaders. Together with the Communist Party and the trade unions, it mobilized the vote against Mbeki at the 2007 Polokwane conference after two years of mutinous support for Jacob Zuma's reinstatement as Deputy President. In mid-2010, however, Julius Malema and other Youth League leaders turned on Zuma, criticizing him for failing to keep his promises to the ANC's poorest supporters and calling for nationalization of the mines and land redistribution. By mid-2011 Malema was proposing Zuma's replacement.

There are several reasons why this incarnation of youth politics is so much more unmanageable than earlier generational challenges to the authority of ANC elders. First, the League itself embodies a major share of the ANC's active support with its own claimed membership rivalling that of the parent body. During the recent branch meetings held to nominate

48. Beresford, 'Comrades back on track'.

49. Clive Glaser, *The ANC Youth League* (Jacana, Auckland Park, 2012), p. 46.

candidates for the ANC's National Congress in December 2012, so often those 'who turned up ... were young, unemployed and predominantly male'.⁵⁰ In the mainly rural provinces, now the areas of the ANC's firmest voting support, the League's role as an electoral mobilizer is probably more significant than the trade unions' contribution to ANC activism, especially at a time when industrial trade union membership has been declining.⁵¹

Second, Youth League leaders today have backgrounds that contrast sharply with the social settings that traditionally incubated ANC leadership. They often lack advanced education and they have no real work experience. Julius Malema's upbringing in the poorest of households in Seshego, a settlement outside Polokwane, and his political ascendancy through COSAS class-room activism at his Senior Primary School, is typical. Notwithstanding their own social mobility, they often retain a polarized worldview shaped by the wretched conditions of their upbringing.

Third, the Youth League leadership's power bases have become consolidated around the most dysfunctional segments of South Africa's public administration – rural, local, and provincial government. In local settings where government itself supplies the main economic impetus and where political venality is already deeply entrenched – classically neo-patrimonial settings – accession to public office or even less formal positions of political influence is a main route for private accumulation. Julius Malema's career again offers illustration. His fortune began with winning a tender to supply school uniforms while he was a COSAS leader. By 2000, through his command of activist support, he had become a decisive figure in determining candidatures in Limpopo's municipal elections. It was his support within the municipalities that enabled him to take on more established figures within Limpopo's ANC hierarchy in competing for tenders. By 2009, Malema controlled the unit that 'outsourced' capital expenditure by the provincial Department of Roads and Transport.⁵²

Fourth, quite aside from the personal wealth of certain of its leaders, the League itself has been able to win its own financial support, separately from its parent organization, most notoriously in the sponsorship it received from the mining entrepreneur, Brett Kebble, who helped to set up the League's company, Lembede Investments.

Additionally, and most importantly, it is the League's political volatility that makes it such a difficult constituent for the wider movement. The unruly politics of the Youth League draws upon an inherited repertoire of bellicose and even violent activism. Factionalized divisions are encouraged

50. *City Press*, 'Cape branch meeting a damp squib', 3 November 2012, <<http://www.citypress.co.za/news/cape-branch-meeting-a-damp-squib-20121103/>> (4 November 2012).

51. Sakhela Buhlungu, *A Paradox of Victory: COSATU and the democratic transformation in South Africa* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2010), p. 106.

52. Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth*, p. 168.

by an internal organizational politics in which personal accumulation supplies a key dynamic. Such rapid expansion would have tested the procedures of even a well-established organization; unsurprisingly, the Youth League's ballooning membership has been accompanied by organizational disarray within the parent organization, in which Youth Leaguers play an increasingly assertive role. Meanwhile the rags-to-riches progression of individual leaders through their acquisition of political kingdoms has supplied meaning and moral valorization for an ideology of racialized redistribution through the exercise of state power.

A final feature of the environmental insecurity that reinforces neo-patrimonial predispositions is apparent in the public expectations engendered when the ANC exercises its incumbent power as a government. Here exchanges between the party and its supporters project the idea of support bringing rewards. In such transactions, citizenship is reduced to the passive role of beneficiary. This predisposition is nicely captured in vignettes from the ANC's campaigning during the 2004 election. In Jane Furse in Limpopo, a praise singer opened proceedings before Mbeki's address: 'I may be hungry, I may be poor, but things are good because the ANC takes care of everything.'⁵³ In northern KwaZulu-Natal, possibly in response to the challenge of contesting for support within Inkatha's home base, ANC electioneering included what were clearly understood as transactional exchanges between regional leaders and the local *amakhosi*. For example the former MEC for transport was invited to hold a special meeting with the *amakhosi* 'to develop a programme of action to deliver the goods in their respective areas'.⁵⁴

To be fair, on the whole ANC campaigning is still largely driven by national programmatic undertakings rather than clientelist promises of special favours to particular groups, a predisposition that is reinforced by the national-list system of proportional representation used in national and regional elections.⁵⁵ This might still make South African politics distinctive on the continent, though analysts disagree about the prevalence of clientelism elsewhere.⁵⁶ The ANC also tends to eschew narratives about particular personalities, though in the 2009 election a fresh precedent was established when the portraits of regional politicians began to appear on placards. But in rural regions in which the numbers of beneficiaries of welfare have

53. Lodge, 'The African National Congress', p. 119.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

55. For comparative insights see Herbert Kitschelt, 'Linkages between citizens and politicians in democratic polities', *Comparative Political Studies* 33, 6–7 (2000), pp. 845–79, p. 859.

56. See Daniel Young, 'Is clientelism at work in African elections?' (Afro Barometer Working Paper No. 106, IDASA, Pretoria, April 2009) and Staffan Lindberg, 'It is our time to chop: do elections in Africa feed neo-patrimonialism rather than counteract it?', *Democratization* 10, 2 (2003), pp. 121–40.

expanded very quickly as a consequence of deliberate efforts to ensure that people entitled to grants actually receive them, it is still quite easy for voters to perceive pensions and other benefits as the reward for their political support.

Let us summarize the argument in this section. From the 1950s the ANC was drawn into extra-legal and armed opposition, processes which led its leadership to incorporate criminal groups into its networks. This helped to strengthen patrimonial political predispositions. Then, after 1990, the ANC needed to transform itself very swiftly into an organization equipped to win elections and maintain its support once ensconced in power. The first requirement was simply to expand its organized following outside the towns, which had been its historic centres of strength, into the countryside where it had been largely absent organizationally, and in parts of which it expected to find electoral opposition. The quickest way to accomplish such expansion was through the incorporation of the elites and networks consolidated around homeland politics. The corollary to this was that in certain predominantly rural provinces the ANC's local leadership would re-enact the social relationships of established patterns of clientelistic politics.

The second need was financial: the ANC believed it needed massive funding to win its first election and this set expectations for future contests in which it began to rely on resources generated by party-controlled enterprises or by politically motivated contracting. With the appointment of its own cadres onto company boards, internal factional contests for party positions and public office began to be financed by private fortunes. The third dynamic associated with the ANC's movement away from liberation politics was the expansion of its Youth League and the consequential displacement of organized labour as its main power base. Given the backgrounds and aspirations of the League's constituents, the ANC's mass following became increasingly amenable to a politics in which authority is manifest in the exercise of personal power, conspicuous consumption, and individual generosity. After all, clientelist politics tends to thrive in settings in which livelihoods are precarious and quite modest 'selective incentives' offered through face-to-face encounters have especially telling effects. This is more likely among an electorate living in isolated rural locations, in which young unemployed people predominate, than among industrially organized urban residents.⁵⁷ The fourth and latest development arising from the ANC's transformation into an electoral machine is the increasing incidence of promises of particular rewards to specific groups of voters in exchange for their electoral support. Each of these developments reinforces patrimonial predispositions within the ANC's leadership and each of them reflects the

57. Kitschelt, 'Linkages between citizens', pp. 851–2.

wider environment in which institutional life is rendered inchoate as it becomes subject to sudden change and consequent disorder.

In other words, in the ANC's case patrimonial predispositions are not simply the consequence of functional imperatives for building and retaining electoral support in this particular environment. They are also a residual effect of liberation movement politics, of the incompleteness of the ANC's organizational change from movement to party. In this setting, politically biased contracting is morally excusable as a strategy to reverse historic racist inequities. The exercise of partisan patronage through 'deployments' of party personnel to positions of influence in business and public institutions is similarly justifiable. The ANC itself resists classification as an electoral party and prefers to view its role as much broader: disciplined members are expected to achieve party goals in a range of arenas, not just electoral and parliamentary politics – in Gunther and Diamond's terminology, the ANC's orientation is still proto-hegemonic rather than pluralistic.⁵⁸ Ironically, though, these aspirations extend the possibilities for the operation of personal networks. As its own officials admit, such networks ultimately undermine the party's own institutionalized procedures and in the long run might weaken its organizational capacity and ideological authority.

The ANC and the political economy of South Africa

A third kind of explanation for the socio-political orientation of ANC's leadership is to view it as the reflection of deeply instilled characteristics of South Africa's political economy. Here neo-patrimonial politics reflects a particular level of economic development. From this perspective, neo-patrimonial political systems consolidate in environments in which the acquisition of political office represents the best avenue for personal accumulation, in settings where the emergence of local capitalist groups has been thwarted by the state. As Pitcher, Moran, and Johnston propose in the case of Botswana, the relative resilience of the legal-rational domain is the consequence of its rulers having emerged as rural capitalists *before* their ascent to national public office. Conversely, recent writing about the political economy of the Arab world has suggested that in weakly institutionalized settings a system of 'patrimonial capitalism' exists in which 'property rights and contract security can best be secured and guaranteed through personal socio-political ties with the "right" individuals'.⁵⁹

An application of this model to post-Soviet experience offers especially close parallels to modern South African developments. Neil Robinson

58. Gunther and Diamond, 'Species of political parties', p. 171.

59. Oliver Schlumberger, 'Structural reform, economic order and development: patrimonial capitalism', *Review of International Political Economy* 15, 4 (2008), pp. 622–49, p. 634.

suggests that post-Soviet politics embodies ‘patrimonial capitalism’. Here power over the economy is heavily personalized and exchanges require ‘a high degree of relational capital’.⁶⁰ Relational capital is accumulated through successive personal one-to-one encounters: the resulting affective ties facilitate wealth creation. In such cases, the key issue is that the accumulation requirement for relational capital makes it difficult for other groups to gather the resources needed to challenge the elite. Moreover its operation blunts the impact of external forces. Global economic actors have to work through local holders of relational capital and this limits the transformative potential of global firms. Political power derives from systems of economic control in which local ownership is highly concentrated – a situation that in Russia is the consequence of the economy’s dependence on energy sales.

Robinson’s conception of the Russian political economy is complicated and differs in several important respects from South Africa, but there are striking resemblances. Like Russia, South Africa is dependent upon mineral exports in fields where the state can in effect award monopolistic prospecting rights. In South Africa, legislation in 2004 institutionalized preference to ‘historically disadvantaged persons’ in the award of such rights. As in Russia, dependence on external investment has prompted programmes of market reform which themselves have helped to create openings for oligarchical accumulation through the privatization of state assets or the ‘outsourcing’ of public services.⁶¹ In both Russia and South Africa, state and business transactions involving ‘relational capital’ have become increasingly important, because of the role that political patronage is playing in tendering. In South Africa the role of relational capital is accentuated by policies that have made the black business elite ‘a pivot in relations between business and state’,⁶² despite the relatively small share of the economy it controls directly. Black businessmen’s influence certainly exceeds the scale of their actual holdings. In 2004, for example, at a time, when ‘empowered’ businessmen owned about 10 percent of the shares of the largest companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, nine of them were listed by the *Financial Mail* as among South Africa’s twenty top businesspeople, including three heavyweight ANC notables: Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, and Saki Macozoma.⁶³ As government purchasing is

60. Neil Robinson, ‘Russian patrimonial capitalism and the international financial crisis’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 27, 3-4 (2011), pp. 435–55, pp. 436–7.

61. See for example *Mail and Guardian*, ‘Sexwale’s prints all over R10 billion tender’, 23 March 2012, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2012-03-23-sexwales-prints-all-over-r10bn-tender>> (1 November 2013).

62. Don Lindsay, ‘BEE reform: The case for an institutional perspective’ in John Daniel, Prishani Naidoo, Devan Pillay, and Roger Southall (eds), *New South African Review 2: New paths, old dependencies* (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 2011), p. 249.

63. Roger Southall, ‘Black empowerment and present limits to a more democratic capitalism in South Africa’ in Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman

regulated by 'preferential procurement' legislation, there are incentives for companies to recruit politically well-connected personalities onto their boards: the rising fortunes of Jacob Zuma's kinsfolk are illustrative of this predisposition.

Of course, Russia represents a much more complete and advanced model of patrimonial capitalism, and in South Africa ownership and economic activity remain more diversified. There also remain in South Africa tougher democratic constraints on the exercise of authoritarian leadership than in Russia. But the correspondence between the broad circumstances of the two political settings is striking: in both neo-patrimonial leadership is consolidated in an environment in which market reform of what was previously a heavily *dirigiste* economy has facilitated and continues to reinforce the transformation of a political elite into a tightly networked class of accumulators.

Conclusion: the ANC and the roots of neo-patrimonialism

This article has surveyed three different explanations for the expansion of neo-patrimonial forms of leadership behaviour in South Africa's ruling party. Taken together they supply a comprehensive account of neo-patrimonialism within the ANC and indicate its most important drivers. With respect to the roots of ANC patrimonialism, the evidence is compelling. In the organization's early history, family and friendship bound leadership together in strong affective ties. In a social environment where the state restricted black property owning and occupational mobility so tightly, it was understandable that individual success was valorized politically. Meanwhile, in its local settings the ANC was drawn into the township boss-style politics that developed around advisory boards. Today's ANC has certainly incorporated into its municipal representation the legacy of such politics, whether this was part of its local political history or not.

The second proposition regards the expansion of patrimonial behaviour as a corollary of the ANC's interaction with criminal syndicates during its insurgent phases and, more recently, the expediencies the ANC embraced in its efforts to assemble an electoral machine. For this latter purpose, the ANC was willing to accept help from self-interested donors after its legalization. Its territorial expansion was facilitated by the embrace of homeland politicians. As internal competition for office has sharpened, a new generation of politicians-turned-businessmen have financed new kinds of factional rivalry. Meanwhile the ANC's activist base has shifted away from organized labour and towards unemployed youth, for whom a political

ideology constructed around patriarchal notions of masculinity has a special appeal.⁶⁴ At the same time and increasingly, the ANC has solicited electoral support by promising specific rewards to particular groups, appealing to voters as passive clients rather than assertive citizens.

Finally, it is also clear that powerful environmental compulsions help foster a contemporary politics in which leaders function as patrons. Patrimonial habits are stimulated by an economic setting in which 'relational' capital is an important asset. The role of relational capital is accentuated by the state's efforts to nurture a politically loyal oligarchy constituted by black businessmen, themselves often former politicians. The structural conditions that favour the operation of patrimonial capitalism include a large share of the national economy being based upon resource extraction in which the state plays a pivotal role as a regulator and licensor. Foreign capital helps to strengthen its hold through the recruitment of local oligarchs as political intermediaries and brokers. These are all features of South Africa's political economy that have become increasingly conspicuous over the last decade and help to explain the changing character of South Africa's ruling party.

The focus in this article has been on the behaviour of leaders and leadership – but South Africa's generalized public sentiment often supplies a receptive setting for neo-patrimonial modes of political incorporation. Amongst former exiles, as Barry Gilder has noted, there are 'cultural instincts to come to the aid of a comrade, friend, family and community'.⁶⁵ Such instincts may become more prevalent over time. Peter Ekeh observed two public realms that people inhabit in post-colonial settings, an imposed civic public domain 'from which they gain materially but to which they give only grudgingly', and a 'primordial public' from which they derive little material benefit but to which they give generously and from which they extract moral sustenance.⁶⁶ It is within that primordial domain that people confine their proper behaviour, for in the civic or modern realm a person will try only to gain. They will then be admired if they channel at least part of what they appropriate from the civic public into the primordial realm.

Ekeh was writing about West Africa a decade or so after independence – a region arguably much less transformed by the intrusion of colonial political economy than Southern Africa. Writing more recently about the abrupt repudiation of socialism by former liberation movement leaders in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, John Saul has suggested that the explanation could be that 'social contradictions just

64. Shireen Hassim, 'Democracy's shadows: sexual rights and gender politics in the rape trial of Jacob Zuma', *African Studies* 68, 1 (2009), pp. 57–77, p. 65.

65. Gilder, *Songs and Secrets*, p. 399.

66. Ekeh, 'Colonialism and the two publics in Africa', p. 108.

do not cut deeply enough in Southern Africa' and that communal kinds of solidarity will 'trump class consciousness every time'.⁶⁷

Ekeh's conceptual distinctions between two normative spheres can explain Jackson Mthembu's defence of ministerial ostentation. Leaders are expected to project glamour. Their own success in extracting resources from the civic public can serve as a beacon of hope for their supporters, who might themselves become beneficiaries of any redistribution of their patron's store of public goods.⁶⁸ Moreover, in a society in which such sharp social inequalities are still so obviously correlated with race, Julius Malema's illicit acquisition of riches becomes a saga of popular empowerment, a story in which a native son has challenged and triumphed over remote and alien citadels. As Jonny Steinberg has noted, in impoverished villages, Malema's name evokes respect. Villagers 'have received as a revelation the story he tells about their country. He says that when black people won South Africa at the ballot box, whites began to hide power in invisible places . . . He says his mission is to go and find power where it hides and retrieve it.'⁶⁹

Significantly, when power makes itself visible, as may occur during election seasons, its representatives are expected to render tribute to that realm of personal probity. This is Ekeh's 'primordial' arena, the place in which the hungry and the poor can expect their leaders 'to take care of everything'.

Can this South African experience yield insights that are more generalizable? The continuing importance of lineage and other affective ties in the ANC's internal politics is partly an effect of relationships consolidated over generations of political leadership: dynastic succession within the political elite is discernible in other African countries that have parties that embody particular political traditions – Angola's rulers are a case in point.⁷⁰ The ANC's history reminds us how enduring the affective ties initially generated through the construction of networks around very personal loyalties can be in political parties, even after successive changes in their form and purpose. They also persist long after the modernization of the settings that nurtured local elites such as the *amakholwa*.

67. John S. Saul, 'The strange death of liberated South Africa', *Transformation* 64 (2007), pp. 1–26, p. 20.

68. For evidence from Limpopo, see Isak A. Niehaus, 'Doing politics in Bushbuckridge: work, welfare and the South African Elections of 2004', *Africa* 76, 4 (2006), pp. 526–48, p. 542.

69. Jonny Steinberg, 'Julius Malema: the man who scarred South Africa', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2012, < <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/10/julius-malema-south-africa.anc> > (1 November 2013).

70. Which, as David Birmingham observed in 1988, constitutes a government 'controlled by a network of a dozen families of the old creole military caste that had dominated the black elite in the nineteenth century'. David Birmingham, 'Angola revisited', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, 1 (1988), pp. 1–14, p. 9.

Within an African setting, the ANC belongs to a family of political organizations with their roots in liberation politics that attempted to mobilize a popular following on the basis of mass organization drawing on broad social solidarities among oppressed groups. After their legal incorporation into a newly institutionalized arena of procedural democracy, and pulled by the logic of electoral competition, they extended their organizational base in ways that opened up space for the narrower and more personalized channels of clientelist politics. With adaptations, much the same narrative could be drawn from the modern-day operations of Mozambique's ruling party, as well as the former liberation movements in other ex-Portuguese colonies.⁷¹

Finally, keeping in mind the third set of arguments about the effect of today's political economy on the ANC's organizational culture, the South African experience can be read as a case study of the implications for party politics of a more general change whereby organized labour has lost political leverage in previously heavily industrialized economies. Mass parties are generally in decline, in part because of the rise of new electoral technologies that render them redundant and in part because of the breakdown of the traditional working class. The degenerative changes that are observable within the ANC thus appear to reflect a global trend in which mass parties are being replaced by electoral machines that depend less and less upon militant activism.⁷²

71. As noted by members of a 'Strategic Conflict Assessment' commissioned by the United Kingdom's DfID, 'the socialist ideology of FRELIMO has long been replaced by pragmatism. ... Relations based on extended families (and in some cases ethnic affiliations) determine access to state resources and political power.' Tony Vaux, Amanda Mavela, Joao Pereira, and Jennifer Stuttle, *Mozambique* (DfID, London, April 2006), p. 19.

72. See Otto Kirchheimer, 'The transformation of Western European party systems' in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1966).