

CHAPTER SIX

SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM

Introduction

This chapter explores the need for, and development of, a model for the analysis of the democratic political system within the context of South Africa. A core approach is advanced which allows for the realisation of a democratic political system as well as other imperatives that motivate and affect democracy and the existence of links that exert their influence within a political system.

In this chapter the three components of the core approaches, namely democracy, political system and South African democracy, are expanded and examined separately. This part of the chapter will look at the elements that exist in a political system and later at what constitutes a political system to be democratic as a whole, together with its subsystems as its analytical component. It will also explore the political processes as subsystems. It is therefore necessary to explain the political system and processes in assessing how far these elements can be linked in upholding democracy.

Explaining and defining democracy

The origin of the term democracy can be traced back to ancient Greece. The word democracy is derived from the Greek word *kratos*, meaning power, or rule. The word therefore means “rule by the *demos*”, the *demos* referring to the “the people”, although the Greeks originally used this to mean “the poor” or “the many”. (Heywood, 1997). Democracy in essence means to designate a government where the people share in directing the activities of the state, as distinct from governments controlled by a single class, select group, or autocrat. The definition of democracy has been expanded, however, to describe a philosophy that insists on the right and the

capacity of a people, acting either directly or through representatives, to control their institutions for their own purposes. Such a philosophy places a high value on the equality of individuals and would free people as far as possible from restraints not self-imposed. It insists that necessary restraints be imposed only by the consent of the majority and that they conform to the principle of equality.

Democracy is an expression often used to describe Western democratic political systems, such as Australia, the United States, Britain, New Zealand, Canada and other nations. It refers to political systems in which there are attempts to:

- defend and increase civil liberties against the encroachment of governments, institutions and powerful forces in society
- restrict or regulate government intervention in political, economic and moral matters affecting the citizenry
- increase the scope for religious, political and intellectual freedom of citizens
- question the demands made by vested interest groups seeking special privileges
- develop a society open to talent and which rewards citizens on merit, rather than on rank, privilege or status
- frame rules that maximise the wellbeing of all or most citizens.

It is generally agreed that liberal democracies are based on four main principles:

- A belief in the individual, based on the idea that the individual is both moral and rational.
- A belief in reason and progress, based on the belief that growth and development are the natural conditions of mankind, with politics the art of compromise.
- A consensual theory of society, based on the belief that society is a kind of mutual benefit association, based on the desire for order and cooperation, rather than disorder and conflict.
- A suspicion of concentrated forms of power, whether by individuals, groups or governments.

Accordingly, liberal democracies are organised in such a way as to define and

limit power in order to promote legitimate government within a framework of justice and freedom:

Power: Efforts are made to define and limit power, usually by means of a written constitution. Checks and balances are instituted, such as the separation of legislative, executive and judicial power. There are conventions of behaviour and an equitable legal system to complement the political system.

Legitimacy: The notion of a legitimate government with a mandate/authority to rule is crucial. Governments require a high degree of popular support, derived from an electoral system that allows for popular, free and frequent elections with the highest possible franchise.

Justice: This is achieved by the full implementation of the equitable things already mentioned so that citizens live in a climate where representative democracy prevails, tempered by constitutionalism, free elections and restraints of power, so that all citizens are treated equally and accorded dignity and respect.

Freedom: For freedom to exist there must be the freedom to make decisions, to learn from them and to accept responsibility for them. There must be the capacity to choose between alternatives and the freedom to do what the law does not forbid. Prohibitions should exist for the general good and there should be respect for political and civil liberties. Liberal democracies often experience disputation about the appropriate role of government in economic matters, some groups arguing for a totally free market, whilst others support varying degrees of regulation and intervention.

A democratic political system

Democratic political systems have been varied, from those of the Greek-political system to the more contemporary complex structures, with common structures to every democracy, freedom of opinion, expression, press and organisation, as well as institutions whereby the people decide on behalf of others through an election in which voters have a free choice, an independent court system and a respected legal system, and minimal violence in a political system. Freedom and equality – the two-pronged approach to democracy – are inextricably bound and there cannot be much of one without the other. Freedom can be assured in a democracy, and the need for political rights is inseparable. (Diamond, Linz and Lipset, 1988)

Democracy means popular control and, to that effect, the then President of America once defined democracy as "government of the people by the people". Government of the people means government on behalf of the people, government by the people means representative government, and government for the people implies that government should be carried by the persons responsible in that nature. It is the responsibility and nature of the government that it is encompassed within different components, legislature, executive and judiciary, in which the distribution of these components concretises the degree of democracy. (Held and Pollit 1993)

Essential characteristics of the political system

Aristotle (384-322 BC) maintained that man is by nature a political animal. The essence in this notion is that of social existence as to politics, by implication, two or more human beings interacting with one another are invariably involved in a political relationship, hence human beings, as they try to define their position in a given society, try to extort personal security from available resources and also try to influence their fellow men to accept their point of view, they find themselves engaging in politics. Thus the only way to maximise one's individual capabilities and to attain the highest form of social life was through political interaction with others in an institutionalised setting in which a political system is able to provide an environment for conversion to take place. (Rodee, Christol, Anderson and Green 1983)

From the above it is clear that there is a need to analyse so as to avoid an oversimplified assumption. Consequently, before any conclusion can be drawn it is important that the environment in a political system should be taken into consideration so as to validate the fact that an analysis of all factors is significant in a political system. The central concept in this discussion is that the political system and its components, like the political processes, exist as subsystem.

The notion of the political system derives from the recognition that the purpose of government is to make and implement decisions for society. The process of decision-making involves the process of allocating goods and services to members of the society, and the allocation of values as policy-making is concerned with values and authority because the political system needs to be acceptable to the society for the

implementation of its policies.

Political system as an analytical concept suggests that the authoritative allocation of values goes through a series of phases that arise from the fact that the political system is the mechanism by which policies are decided. It is this idea of policy making which implies the existence of a succession of phases. It is in this that policies will first be initiated, elaborated and then implemented (input – conversion – output).

Conversely stated, the political system converts demands and support in the form of input, which corresponds to the initiation phase as output, and the conversion process takes place in between, i.e. in the main or core. (Easton 1969 and Almond and Coleman 1960).

The inputs are the responses of all kinds exercised on the system which is activated by way of the demands and which can then elaborate on decisions which will become outputs and be presented to society.

The sequence, input, conversion and output could be divided. The input can be described as having an articulation of demands as an activity consisting of ideas that are presented for discussion and in due course for decision, and the aggregation of demands as an activity which consists in bringing these demands together in a bundle, like policy guidelines to decrease problems by reducing inconsistencies.

Various activities correspond in the output phase, in which rule-making or initiating is the most general, and the first aspect of the conversion process – the rule implementation details, rule-making and rule adjudication – takes place when there is a conflict over rules. These phases, which are called functions, suggest that there is a sequence in which there is articulation and aggregation of demands, rule-making, rule implementation and rule adjudicating, in which they are generally referred to as institutions to describe components of the political system. (Almond and Powell 1966)

Succinctly stated, a political system is a system that deals with political matters, being a structure with interdependent parts which, like any system, has activities that are interrelated and which all define the inner boundary of the system. It is an attempt to

view the political arena in the organised form of a system, hence it possesses the input, conversion and output functions. In any given political system, it is taken that the inputs in particular circumstances are public interests and demands of various types, be it substantive inputs which are more of demands, and support or functional inputs which constitute the expression or articulation of various interest. Citizens may link themselves to the government as active participants or by way of input as to taking part in the work of an organisation. Demands do not always seek change but they do seek government action. (Easton, 1979)

Demand and support are marked out as inputs to the decision-making system; they are essential to the system because they feed definite information into the main or core system. The core or main of the political system is the democratic decision-making representatives or mechanism; they convert input into output. Government is the decision-making instrument that receives inputs and emits outputs since it constitutes the formal government structures. Output from the democratic decision-making mechanism is public policy, which is understood to be laws and government proclamations that are made, enforced or adjudicated. (Hanekom, 1987)

In the political system demands and support of input do actively give one an understanding of the manner in which the environment influences the workings of the system. Demands combine a broad scope of subjects and activities that are transmitted to the system. Without ignoring the importance of support in the input, one would consider demand, in that the flowing into a system constitutes one of the major sources of stress behaving on its important variables.

A demand may be defined as an expression of opinion that an authoritative allocation with regard to a particular subject matter should or should not be made by those responsible for doing so. As such a demand may be quite narrow, specific and simple in nature, as when grievances and discontents relevant to a given experience are directly expressed. For example, exposure of corruption in government may give rise to a demand for control. Broad pleas for better government without specification of the exact steps to be taken represent a highly generalised demand. (Easton, 1975).

Demands have a built-in direction towards the authorities. Directionality of demands

is important as demands are specified and produce accepted binding decisions. They may be expressed or implied.

Every political system function in an environment and certain characteristics of its particular environment contribute materially towards determining both its form of government and its policy output. In a political system the form of government can be understood only against the background of the environment in which it operates. It is generally assumed that a democratic government is likely not to survive in a nation whose people are bound to non-democratic modes of thought and behaviour; hence it is important to give meaning to a democratic political system, and even though the form of democratic political systems has been varied, there are common aspects prevalent to the existence of democratic political systems. (Ranney 1975).

Description of a democratic political system

Ever since the time of Plato and Aristotle, most political scientists have sought to discover universally valid descriptive statements that accurately describe and explain political systems and processes. A general characteristic, which tends to suggest that a political system is democratic, or non-democratic, constitutes a standard principle. It is standard because it explains the way in which the government that runs the country has decided to frame the political system, and as such the manner in which the government runs the country is based on the recognition that government itself constitutes a system, i.e. a political system, because it is engaged in an activity in which a number of elements are interrelated, through which policies are initiated, developed and implemented. (Easton, 1969) These elements include structures that are established by the constitution.

Essential elements of a democratic political system

The political system is composed of sets of institutions, organisations or groups, some of which are set up by a constitution as political processes, and many of which are not. These components and elements together form the framework within which decisions are taken. It is only by understanding how these institutions, organisations and groups can allocate values in a society that these elements and components can exist within a political system. Hence it is essential to describe these elements and components to be able to obtain a detailed picture of what a democratic political system is.

A democratic political system is more than a set of constitutional rules and procedures that determine how a government functions. In a democracy, government is only one element coexisting in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political parties, organisations, and associations. This diversity in a political system is referred to as pluralism, and it assumes that the many organised groups and institutions in a democratic society do not depend upon government for their existence, legitimacy, or authority.

The following are what most authors would consider to be reasonable, essential elements of democracy:

- Sovereignty of the people.
- Government based upon consent of the governed.
- Majority rule.
- Minority rights.
- Guarantee of basic human rights.
- Free and fair elections.
- Equality before the law.
- Due process of law.
- Constitutional limits on government.
- Social, economic, and political pluralism.
- Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and compromise.

Many organisations operate in a democratic society, some local, some national. Many of them serve a mediating role between individuals and the complex social and governmental institutions of which they are a part, filling roles not given to the government and offering individuals opportunities to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

In an undemocratic society, virtually all such organisations would be controlled, licensed, watched, or otherwise accountable to the government. In a democracy, the powers of the government are, by law, clearly defined and sharply limited. As a result, private organisations are free of government control; in fact, many of them lobby the government and seek to hold it accountable for its actions. Other groups, concerned with the arts, the practice of religious faith, scholarly research, or other interests, may choose to have little or no contact with the government at all. In this scope of democratic political system, citizens can explore the possibilities of freedom and the responsibilities of self-government, unpressured by the potentially heavy hand of the state.

The character of a political process in a democratic political system

It is understandable that within a political system the political process is based and concentrates on the organisation and operation of institution which makes the law, enforces it, and settles controversies arising from different interests and various interpretations of the law.

Political process, being generally accepted, implies a recognition that legislatures, executives, and the judiciary do not operate independently of either one another or of the other political organisation in society; they include political parties and interest groups which together with the more formal institutions of government, constitute the political system, which implies that politics involves citizens' attitude and interests, group organisations, and implementation, interpretation of law and policies. It is in the attitudes and interests that different elements and components necessary in achieving a democratic political system are discussed below. (Sainsbury, 1988 and Rodee et al., 1983)

Democratic political process refers to a set of requirements that applies to the institutions and that makes it possible for the citizens to participate in political decision-making processes within a political system. In absolute terms, support for democratic efficacies is widespread. One becomes content at significant levels of endorsement of democratic elections, rights and liberties, political equality and democratic forms to be prevalent in most countries. Most of the criteria used to determine conditions for democratic political process correlate, which leads one to postulate the existence of a general underlying dimension of democratic efficacies. Various conditions of the democratic political system go naturally hand in glove; it is therefore necessary to effectuate a functional meaning of democracy. The triad of democracy, freedom, and equality are inextricably bound in approach and functional meaning. There cannot be much of any one without the other; only in a democracy can freedoms be assured. The demand for political rights is also inseparable from the call for freedom. Again broad political participation is the best evidence of equality in a democratic political system. (Nwabuzor and Mueller, 1987).

It is for this reason that Montesquieu (1689-755) presented and argued that all

functions of the political system could be encompassed within the separation of power that is basically a reflection of what happens in the political world. It is fairly a clear description of the proper function of the government in any democracy where liberty is best assured by the distribution of these different functions among separate institutions of government. (Renwick, 1980).

Given this perspective, from Montesquieu's presentation of the political process, they do not operate and function independently from one another or of the other political organisation in society; primarily, they include political parties, interest and pressure groups, which together with formal institutions of the state constitute the democratic political system, which means that politics, complex as it is, involves citizens' attitudes and interests measured by the public opinion for the formulation, implementation and interpretation of policies. (Maidment and McGrew, 1986).

The effect of public opinion in a political system

The wide acceptance of the democratic thinking led to the idealisation of the role of public opinion in the democratic political system, as to the public being interested in making the laws of the country, the public having the right to know, deliberating and reaching national consensus. Rationally conceived, individual opinions would be held unvaryingly throughout the social order. Having reached consensus as to the democratic political process, the public would make its will known at the polls and in one way or the other, the will or views of the majority would be enacted into law, and continued surveillance and constant criticism would ensure the maintenance of an enlightened public opinion and consequently a public policy will be based upon the environment in which there is demand for democracy and justice.(Budge, 1994).

In any given society, when responding to the challenges of the environment in which one finds oneself, it is one method by which an individual adjusts to the demands of day-to-day life. It is rare that a day passes that an individual does not express his or her views either for or against many subjects. Taking no account of particular case or exception, it is believed that opinions are the end product of the interrelationships between a person's values, beliefs and attitudes, which do not exist in isolation but among others members of the public. (Rose-Ackerman 1978).

As such the public cannot be regarded as a conglomerate and undifferentiated mass of people. Essentially, a public is a segment of society comprising many different types of publics which may be identified by a specific geographic base, such as political system, nation, country, city, peri-urban or rural, and may share common interests. Most authors maintain that "public opinion" is the expression of all those members of a group who give attention in any way to a given issue. Public opinion represents the collectivity of individual opinions of a designated public, thus each issue has its own public. (Dye 1978).

The foundation of an individual's opinion rests upon his or her value systems that represent the objective one wishes to achieve. It is through one's attitude that the belief system finds expression. They structure and focus on beliefs, serving as a frame of reference to guide our thinking and behaviour in a political system.

Political behaviourism in a democratic political system

Naturally men have developed methods by which they can resolve disputes among themselves and agree upon goals, which they wish to pursue by cooperative action. The existence of a common procedure for resolving disputes and reaching common decisions is an important requirement in any political system. Such agreements can be reached by surrendering the right to decide to one person or by fighting to determine whose will shall be reached by either arriving at an agreed view, consensus or by accepting the decision that commands majority support in different situations involving different types of issues. One may wish to insist on a unanimous vote or approval by more than a simple majority. (Elcock, 1976).

A variation upon this decision procedure is for the public to elect representatives who will make decisions for them and who they will hold periodically accountable for their decision by requiring the representatives to submit to re-elect at regular intervals. Thus, a political decision procedure involves discussions and debates followed by a decision which is broadly acceptable to all parties, or is at least not so unacceptable to any party that members decide to oppose it to the point of disrupting the system. This led to the in-depth study of behaviouralism, which most social

scientists found to be more meaningful in reaching a national political decision. (Lindsay, 1992).

The reason why behaviouralism has developed in politics is that it has been the growth of other social sciences. The main reason has been a reaction against the traditional approaches to politics, legalistic study of formal political institutions and a normative and speculative political theory. (Stadler, 1987).

Political institutions are traditionally observed by examining the contents of a country's constitution and law, and interpreting them, rather than by considering how political actors conduct themselves in the context of constitutional law. Of importance is that appearance does not necessarily bear much relationship to reality, the crux is what are individuals' attitudes and informal relationships, rather than the formal structure of power. (Held and Pollit, 1986).

The behaviouralists wanted to see how people carry on with their activity, whatever the formal rules of the constitution and the law might say, and they sought to do so by looking for objectives and indisputable facts which could be analysed systematically. It is given that in any political system political behaviour does affect facts, which are objectives and can be verified by anyone who wishes to check them. There is no question of reality being determined by the observer's viewpoint or ideology. (Lindsay, 1992).

Political behaviour may affect politics in any political system; it raises issues of central importance and it also enables us to answer questions such as the nature of consent, the operation of representatives in government and the extent to which public officials will execute policies as having a bearing on the political socialisation of communities which make up their political culture, the political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills possessed by the political community, and in political life, on the basis of protecting their interests. (Nwabuzor and Mueller, 1987).

Political culture as a variable in the political system

The characteristics of political socialisation and a close group of opinion, attitudes and beliefs that make up a society are in turn part of the society's political culture and

are important variables in helping to answer some fundamental and enduring questions as to what accounts for a society's political stability or instability. The answer is partly in terms of the extent to which the actual conduct of politics and the moral tendency of citizens coincide with the norms of behaviour prescribed by the political system. (Jaros, 1973).

Some centuries ago, one author declared that, since force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have no support but opinion. When minority groups command the means to destroy millions of people, one may, to qualify this, in a political system, say it is still relevant to say that the people of a country can render it ungovernable, more especially when their grievances are not being investigated so as to institute correctional measures. (Parry and Moran, 1994).

If that being the case, one can safely say that the political system depends on the support of the people. Stable government can be assured only if it is able to retain that support, thus increasing an understanding of the link between the structure of a society and the attitudes of its members on the one hand and the political process on the other. If people are used to running their private lives democratically, they will expect the political system to be run on the same lines and will be able to accept the problems and responsibilities that go with such a system, coping with the continual presentation of contradictory proposals. (Parekh, 1992).

Fundamentally the political culture of any society is made up of the political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills possessed by the members of the political community. It is reflected in a nation's ideology, in attitudes towards political leaders, in the duties of citizenship, in the conduct and style of political activity, in what is considered to be political or not. (Almond and Verba, 1963).

Basic aspects to any political culture would involve the cognitive knowledge and beliefs people have regarding the various characteristics of the political system: How much do South African citizens know about their national political structure? Does their knowledge begin and end with President Mandela? Do Americans living in South Africa understand the way of doing things in the South African political system or are they more informed regarding the US? This has an effect in that it involves

people's feelings about various characteristics of the political system. For instance, do the people of Rwanda feel loyalty or patriotism towards the regime in Rwanda? Do most South Africans feel admiration for the personality of President Mandela? Lastly, it is also evaluative, in that this involves judgements and opinions regarding the political system and occasionally involves a combination of values or standards with information, i.e. cognitive aspect and affective feeling aspect. How do citizens evaluate their government's performance?. Their judgements are likely to rest on the leading members of the regime as well as on certain values or moral criteria. Thus the cognitive and effective orientations are important aspects in evaluating the cultural way of a political system by integrating the various political substructures, components or elements. Taking it from the history of South Africa, it is necessary to transform the political culture so that it fits the evolving democratic political system. (Almond and Powel, 1966).

Members of a political community can never share the same orientation towards the political system, importantly so for the stability of any political system, that there should be common assumptions and beliefs that will be shared so that the political culture can evolve into relatively political toleration at all angles. Political toleration should be able to resolve dividing issues as in any political system, outputs, as policies, which are popular with some section of the citizens, are bound to be extremely unpopular with others; and the result will be political strife and instability, which will render the executive institutions ineffective.

Political tolerance as an imperative in a political system

A democratic political system requires relatively moderate tension among its contending political forces. And political moderation is facilitated by the process capacity to resolve key dividing issues before new ones arise. For instance, if the issues of religion, self-determinism and the role of the traditional leaders are allowed to accumulate, they reinforce each other and the more reinforced and correlated the sources of cleavage, the less the isolation from heterogeneous political stimuli; the more background factors pile up in one direction, the greater the chance that the group or individuals will have an extremist perception. These two relationships are joined by the fact that parties reflecting accumulated and unresolved issues will

further seek to isolate their followers from conflicting stimuli. (Macridis, 1983).

Within these relationships, similarly, peoples working in isolation are likely to find the world outside their settlement and their business strange, intimidating or at best irrelevant, and will therefore tend to be apathetic towards the political system or alienated from it. Generally toleration depends on the extent to which people mix with a varied selection of their fellows and on their level of affluence, which can include a societal level and the amount of education available. Education should also give a person a deeper understanding of his own views and position in life, besides giving him more information about other people's background. He will become more tolerant of others who have origins, beliefs, attitudes or accents different from his own.

Education is often, not always, an important determinant of levels of toleration. In Germany and Italy, both problematic in terms of the congruence of their political system within the attitudes of their people, education made little difference to the low levels of allegiance to the political system.

Political attitudes, not ignoring toleration, are linked with other attitudes and these are formed by the social activity groups of which the citizen is a member. Opinions and group membership are either superimposed one upon another, presenting the individual with a series of competitive views of the world which support and strengthen one another, or cross-cutting, presenting a variety of different and possibly incompatible views. This latter collection of attitudes and affiliation is more likely to lead to toleration, since it will accustom citizens to dealing with and reconciling different points of view within their own minds. Superimposed opinions or membership will confirm the individual's rightness of existing convictions. Hence the degree of exposure of an individual, a group, or society to either superimposed or cross-cutting opinions or activities will have important consequences for his or their level of toleration.

A particular interesting set of social institutions, from the point of view of the creation of political tolerance or dogmatic political attitudes, is the churches. Most churches are authoritarian structures and their members tend to be associated with one party or

another – social groups and organisations clearly have a considerable influence upon political attitude and the extent to which the citizen is exposed to diverse or consistent opinion will help to determine the strength of his party self-image and the extent to which he is prepared to tolerate the opposition being active and winning power. Thus they have a large role in determining whether conflict in a given society is of intolerance and is sufficient to render the political system unworkable.

A meaningful democratic political system will also be impossible if there are insufficient expressed differences of opinion to give rise to a political debate about which members of society can care sufficiently to involve themselves in or at least to give it a reasonable share of their attention. (Gibson, Duch and Tedin, 1992).

It is therefore imperative that in any political system there has to be a level of political toleration that will in effect help either to facilitate or deepen democracy. It suffices to mention that there are certain conditions necessary for attaining a meaningful democratic political system.

The South African democratic political system

South Africa's National Party apartheid regime can be mapped out back before 1948 when it came into power. The 1910 apartheid Constitution of South Africa provided for an all-white government and gave a continued system of discrimination and oppression. A number of discriminatory measures were taken during this time, including the enactment of the 1913 Land Act which effectively deprived African people of their land. This was also the time of the birth of the African National Congress (ANC), which provided the largest mass-based forum for the freedom struggle in South Africa. The struggle for freedom reached its height in the 1970s and 1980s, when State repression and internal opposition intensified and international attention was focused on the plight of South Africans. One of the significant developments in this period was the adoption of the 1983 Constitution, which unsuccessfully attempted to restructure racial and political arrangements while keeping power in the hands of the white minority. It created a tri-cameral parliament that sought to co-opt Coloureds and Indians into the national parliament in separate houses. The African majority were excluded from this political system and were

relegated to black local authorities in their townships and the so-called 'independent' homelands and self-governing territories. While South Africa was isolated from the international community, this period also saw the rise of the United Democratic Front, a mass-based umbrella body, which identified itself with the African National Congress in exile.

The beginning of 1990 saw the unbanning of the ANC and the release of political prisoners. In 1993 the ANC, as the chief negotiator on behalf of the liberation movement, the government and other political parties came together to negotiate South Africa's transition to democracy. A number of organisations and structures that formed the broad liberation movement worked together in developing policy positions and determining priorities for a new South Africa democratic political system.

One of the priorities for the new South African democratic political system was to have a constitution. An interim constitution was implemented and then later the final Constitution. One of the most important reasons for the success of the process of drafting the final Constitution was the use of technology. The Constitutional Assembly's public awareness and education campaign strategy used several ICT platforms to engage the public in its campaigns. The campaigns were designed to educate the public on constitutionalism and basic rights, as well as to elicit the views of the public on the content of the new Constitution. The use of technology involved several strategies which were used during the campaign and whereby thousands of public meetings were held, covering nearly every town and village in South Africa, both to educate and allow people to give feedback and make submissions. These meetings were advertised widely, especially through television and radio.

Participatory workshops were organised. Members of the Constitutional Assembly participated extensively in this campaign, and travelled across the country, to townships, informal settlements, rural villages, churches, schools, etc. to consult with the public about the constitution-making process. The media technology was also used extensively; over 10 million people a week listened to the Constitutional Assembly's show on the radio in one of the official languages, and an estimated 160 000 people received a copy of the newsletter "Constitutional Talk", also published in the 11 official languages, each fortnight. In addition, an Internet site was launched, providing information on the constitution-writing process. Through the use of ICT a Constitutional Talk Line was set up to enable people to make submissions

over the telephone. Members of the public could make submissions in their own languages, and approximately 2,5 million written submissions were made. Public meetings were held with many organisations representing a number of diverse interest groups.

After the 1994 general elections and during the negotiation process, South Africa experienced a diverse compelling political system. There was first the politics of transitional arrangements, which brought a lot of uncertainty, tension and mistrust between different negotiating parties, and at that time there was ongoing violence in the country. Many concessions had to be made which were based on the will to make the political negotiations work. These involved some form of persuasion in politics, as the need to win the public support became essential together with the international community that played a vital role throughout the negotiation process. For all intents and purposes, it was important to build a transitional facet into changing from a shun-orientated apartheid status quo to the new political system, which was a good way of ensuring democratic political consensus.

The intensity of the political reform process increased, particularly after the April 1994 elections and those of 1999. South Africa assumed a new political order when the general election gave birth to a democratic, popular and legitimate government.

South Africa's new political system qualifies as a genuine democracy. It has now run two largely peaceful national elections, in 1994 and 1999 respectively, judged to be free and fair. It has the Constitution that encapsulates features like the National Council of Provinces, a range of independent watchdog agencies and commissions, like the Office of the Public Protector, Youth Commission, Gender Commission, Human Rights Commission, the Equality Court, etc. guaranteeing a wide range of classic political rights as well as an array of socio-economic rights, all guarded by a relatively strong Constitutional Court. A constitution and elected representative institutions do not necessarily complete the democratic picture. No matter how well designed its political institutions and processes are, in order to sustain and consolidate democracy there is a need for society to support the democratic sustenance practices.

The South African political system should be understood in the realm of a sovereign

state that makes formal provision for the entitlement of every citizen to citizenship and franchise. The legislative and executive organs of the State at all levels of government are bound by the application of fundamental human rights, which apply to all the laws in force and all the administrative decisions and acts. Every citizen has the right of equality before the law and to protection of the law, and to human dignity, freedom and security. The South African political system is characterised by far-reaching administrative, social and political changes that have left virtually no governmental structure unaffected

Conclusion

The 1994 elections in South Africa presented a new democracy that delivered not only a universal right to vote but also formal equality before the law, channels for citizens' participation in governance, and institutions strengthening democracy. The second democratic elections in 1999 took place amidst large-scale societal transformation and reform and presented the first major opportunity to determine the extent of the impact of technology in a democratic South Africa.

South Africa made the transition from a minority-ruled country to an inclusive majoritarian democracy in 1994. A special feature of this transition was that it was pact-driven, i.e. negotiated between and among the major political stakeholders at the time, namely the National Party government and the African National Congress. The pact-driven phase commenced with FW De Klerk's "reform speech" of February 1990. From that point onward, apartheid legislation was systematically scrapped, while the major political role-players engaged in multiparty negotiations on a new constitutional order. This process was completed in 1993 when an interim constitution was adopted that led to the introduction of democratic rule in 1994 under the political leadership of the ANC, which had won the elections of April 1994. Then a final constitution was negotiated, under which the ANC won by a landslide. The principle of the constitution when interpreted makes provision for characteristics of liberal democracy. (Breytenbach, 2000).

South Africa's two constitutions drafted during the nineties, that is the Interim Constitution of 1993 and the final Constitution of the Republic, adopted in 1996, are

fully-fledged "liberal democratic" constitutions as presented by Breytenbach (2000).

He also presents salient features, as follows:

- The supremacy of the constitution, making South Africa a typical "rechtstaat", with an independent judiciary, Bill of Rights and Constitutional Court;
- Although the head of state is the President, South Africa does not have a typical presidential system. Instead, South Africa has a parliamentary - really Westminster system, where the Executive is formed only after elections and represents the strongest party in parliament and is therefore accountable to parliament, as in the UK parliamentary system;
- Unlike the UK/ British system, South Africa's electoral system is not based on geographical constituencies as basis for representation in parliament. It is based instead on the typical, continental, European system of Proportional Representation (PR) based on party lists;
- Division (in the Constitution) of functional areas of concurrent and exclusive competencies between national and provincial powers. The central level has stronger exclusive powers than provinces; it also takes precedence over provincial powers in the case of concurrent powers, making centralisation stronger than provincialisation. This suggests that South Africa has a hybrid system ("regionalism") between federalism and unitarism (very much like Canada);
- Elections at all three levels of government – national, provincial and local – every 5 years, and equal and full participation for all adult citizens in public institutions where citizens normally participate in liberal democracies. So, institutionally, the system provides for "contestation" and "participation" which is a typical "polyarchy" (in Dahl's terms), otherwise known as "plural" system.

But is it "plural" (or "liberal") in all respects?

Polyarchy and pluralism and a liberal constitution, Breytenbach (2000), in South Africa are the product of two major forces: a pact-driven negotiated settlement

between the former NP government and the ANC. The negotiated settlement made for a pact-driven process emphasising shared rule during the transition.

The word transition literally means the passage from one condition or stage of development to another. Transitions are said to exist for a particular duration, usually medium to long term. Transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy are usually referred to as transformations. In transformation the passage from one condition or stage of development should be interpreted as structural change affecting especially the political, social and economic spheres of state and society, and resulting in a fundamental change or the relations of power, which existed prior to the transition. In this respect, transition resembles managed revolutions over time. (Roux, 2000).

Transitions may take on many forms, in some instances present in one and the same country as in South Africa. South Africa faces the daunting challenge of having to manage the passage from one condition to another on three levels: politics, society and economics. South Africa is trying to get through its transition under very difficult economic circumstances. The Nedcor/Mutual scenario-team (1990), after having studied a variety of transitions, become convinced that South Africa's transition is probably more far-reaching than any other which has been attempted. It was stated by the team that "poor social conditions, poor economic performance, and violence could well disrupt the transition or create a situation in which a new government would find it impossible to govern successfully" (Nedcor/Old Mutual, 1992:14), thereby creating "political instability".

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986:7) in Roux (2000) display three stages that form part of South Africa's transition:

Liberalisation, where the incumbent government cedes power to, and recognises additional rights of, citizens.

Democratisation, where the loser of an election cedes power to the winner while at the same time government acknowledges and respects the full rights and obligations of citizenship.

Socialisation, where democracy is consolidated into a way of life which has broad support among the populace. (Nedcor/Old Mutual Scenarios, 1992).

The Nedcor/Old Mutual scenarios also described a successful transition as one where a stable democracy becomes entrenched; where rising incomes earned are experienced; where a reasonable distribution of incomes takes place; and stable social fabric is in existence. Roger Southall (indicator SA, 16(1), 1998) refers to six factors, as identified by *Przeworski et al*, which can be used to determine whether or not democracy will survive, i.e. the existence of democracy itself; parliamentary, as opposed to presidential democracy; the level of economic development; positive economic performance; narrowing income inequality; and a favourable international climate. (Roux, 2000).

It is within the context of South Africa's level of economic development and positive economic performance that technology could have an impact on democracy. It is given that South Africa is in a more fortunate position as it has mostly relatively well-developed infrastructure, good financial and banking institutions, a functioning bureaucracy, efficient security forces and, importantly, a private sector and entrepreneurial class which are both the envy of many entrenched first-world democracies. These beneficial issues can only strengthen long-term development if they are maintained and properly managed. In any democratisation process elections are a mere event; they are an essential, but not sufficient, condition for the consolidation of democracy, for "stability and development". Given the transition in South Africa, this period of a democratic political system also provides an opportunity to examine whether advances in technology can enhance democracy in South Africa so as to validate the claim that political stability and development can consolidate democracy.

Political stability and sustainability of a democratic political system cannot be taken for granted. Robert Dahl, in Muthien, Khosa and Magubane (2000), points out that the number of democracies increased from 21 in 1950 to 51 in 1996, and that 30 countries achieved democratic status between 1993 and 1996. However, between 1900 and 1985, non-democratic regimes replaced democratic regimes 52 times.

Democracy in South Africa has delivered the franchise to the disenfranchised majority. It also put in place the key pillars of democratic constitution, i.e. a functioning multiparty parliamentary system; a strong sense of constitutionalism and the rule of law; mechanisms of accountability; a professional civil service functioning

on the basis of constitutional values; mechanisms for civil participation in government; and an integrated and highly developed economic infrastructure. The democratic political system meets the requirements as an indisputable democracy. It has also run two national elections, which were judged to be free and fair. It has the Constitution that encapsulates features like the National Council of Provinces, a range of independent watchdog agencies and commissions, guaranteeing a wide range of classic political rights as well as an array of socio-economic rights, all guarded by a relatively strong Constitutional Court. A constitution and elected representative institutions do not necessarily complete the democratic picture. Despite how well designed its political institutions and processes are, in order to sustain and consolidate democracy there is a need to determine the level of democratic sustenance (Idasa, 2000) by assessing the effectiveness of transformational public policies in a democratic political system.

An important aspect of transformation in South Africa during the first term of office of the democratic state was the democratisation of public policy-making, particularly the science and technology policy. The new political environment introduced processes and practices that differed radically from those that marked policy-making during the apartheid era. In particular a more transparent public and answerable policy-making process replaced the previously semi-secretive, technocratic, authoritarian mode of policy-making.

The most significant example of this new political culture was demonstrated by the number of inputs received during the discussions on the Science and Technology Green Paper. Popular participation in the policy-making was made possible by encouraging the citizenry to make submissions, resulting in many written submissions.

This new policy-making approach created opportunities for a greater and more active role of communities on issues of governance. It also proved the desire for transformation of the relationship between technology and political democracy.