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WHITE POLITICS : CONSTRAINT OR OPPORTUNITY?

INTRODUCTION

The context within which political conflict plays itself out in South Africa has changed dramatically since FW de Klerk's speech to the opening of parliament on 2 February this year. The wide-ranging announcements have impacted on all political actors operating both within and outside the country. For the white political parties in South Africa, one of the consequences of the speech has been the disturbance of the traditional alignments and relationships between them. Some analysts now argue that South Africa has already seen its last white election and conclude that not only has the Conservative Party no chance of ever gaining power, but that the Democratic Party must inevitably crumble under the pressure of an accommodation between the NP and the ANC. Gerrit Viljoen's recent statement that the NP was "not very likely to be in control" in ten years time reinforces this line of analysis (Citizen 7 February 1990).

These are some of the conventional wisdoms colouring the current perspectives of "white" politics. This paper takes issue with some of these perspectives by examining the dimensions of the fluidity in white politics and evaluating the potential role that changing white political orientations may play in the newly emerging politics in South Africa. The analysis of the likely trends in white politics is based on the election and referendum results during the decade of the 1980s. White political attitudes remain an important factor especially since F.W. de Klerk has committed himself to holding either a referendum or an election to endorse any new constitution.

The National Party's victory in the September 1989 election represented its tenth consecutive electoral victory since its assumption of power in 1948. This performance in the retention of power over some four decades has, however, been qualified by the narrowing of its base of support during the 1980s. With the exception of the 1970 election results, the NP had managed to increase its parliamentary majority and its share of the vote with every election, such that in the 1981 election it achieved a record 98 seat majority. By 1989 this majority was slashed to 22 seats under the impact of resurgent opposition on both flanks. Utilizing its prerogative to select its own nominees for the majority of the appointed parliamentary positions, the NPs parliamentary majority has been increased to a somewhat more comfortable level.

Nonetheless, the NP finds itself in the historically curious position of having to interpret its mandate (real or presumed) more extensively than any mandate has been exercised before in South Africa, and it has to do this on the basis of a smaller

margin of electoral power than at any time since 1953.

THE NATIONAL PARTY'S MANDATE

The NP's mandate is based on its 1989 five year "Plan of Action" which incorporates most aspects of both its 1987 Programme of Principles and its 1987 Manifesto. The NP's overall objective, as stated broadly in these documents, includes the achievement of a democratic system, no group domination, a free enterprise economy, independence of the judiciary and the maintenance of safety, civilized norms and good international relations.

More specifically, the NP commits itself in its 5-year plan to, inter alia, the following goals:

* the initiation of negotiations with the "recognized leaders of all groups committed to the pursuit of peaceful solutions" about the "political, social and economic systems for a new South Africa";

* the establishment of institutions in which leaders of all groups can participate in creating a new system;

* the reassessment of the functions, powers, role and election of the head of state in a new system;

* the acceptance of one citizenship for all South Africans;

* the promotion of common values "without inhibiting" group identity;

* freedom of association and disassociation; protection of the right of groups to maintain their own identity and values and giving "content to the overall juridical and structural protection of groups in constitutional structures";

* self-determination regarding "own affairs" together with joint decision-making on "general affairs" by means of the division and devolution of power;

* the recognition of the right of self-governing territories either to independence or to remain part of and participate in the political institutions in South Africa.

In his speech on the 2nd of February, FW de Klerk restated the Government's aim to be the introduction of a new, democratic constitution with the protection of minority and individual rights, as well as the implementation of "dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all". (Sowetan 5 February 1990).

The NP's mandate, strictly interpreted, thus implies some form of

consociation. It also implicitly assumes the continuation of the NP's role in executive government, on the strength of the fact that the NP is assumed to remain the dominant vehicle for the representation of white minority interests. For the average NP voter, the mandate presumably entails support for more than merely a "passive" protection of minority rights - it entails support for an active role for minorities in government. The mandate furthermore assumes that the NP will retain control during the process of transition to the "new South Africa".

While the NP is thus far clearly operating within its mandate in terms of the issues mentioned above, it may well be on the verge of over-extending its mandate on a number of further issues. In the first place, the NP appears to be changing its emphasis from a rather strict definition of group rights in terms of ethnic and racial criteria, to less formalistic, and possibly ambiguous definitions of such rights. Reference has been made to "collective", "minority", and "national" rights, rights based on voluntary association, and all in combination with "individual" rights. The categorical implications of "groups rights" are steadily being softened. Furthermore, specific definitions or descriptions on the part of the NP of these rights are at present being deferred until the Law Commission's enquiry into the means of giving expression to such rights has been completed. The President's Council is also investigating these issues. The precise position of the NP on minority or group rights for the moment thus remains somewhat blurred.

From the ANC's perspective, on the other hand, although cultural rights are recognized and accommodated in several of its policy documents, its position makes no provision for the mobilization of minority participation in either political parties or through constitutional provisions for group (however defined)-based power-sharing. The polarization of the NP and ANC positions on "group" or minority rights implies that some fairly substantial compromises will have to be made on both sides on this question if a mutually agreeable position is to be worked out. This realistic assumption has obvious implications for the electoral mandate of the NP.

The NPs approach to the conditions in terms of which organizations may participate in negotiations is a second problematic area. The NP's position has evolved from one which emphasises a rejection of the participation of any organization which supports violence to a more positively worded emphasis on accepting the participation of any organization expressing a committment to the achievement of peaceful solutions.

The unbanning of the ANC and other organizations by the government was clearly aimed at removing obstacles in the way of those organizations participating in the process of negotiations. The subsequent reaffirmation by the ANC and the PAC of a committment to the armed struggle on the part of their most senior spokesmen stretches to its limit the NP's room to manoeuvre within its mandate to promote negotiations. The ANC's

reiteration of a committment to armed struggle appears to be interpreted by the NP as either a face-saving exercise or as an understandable reserve strategy until such time as sufficient confidence that negotiations will indeed get off the ground, has been built up. The statements of Mandela and Sisulu in other words are being interpreted by the NP as judiciously worded or elliptical committments to peace and thus still justifiable in terms of the NP's mandate with regard to pursuing negotiations. The NP may however, not be able to sustain this operating assumption in the face of continuing violence in the country for any length of time.

A further potential problem area is that while the NP's 5-year plan assumes continued NP control during negotiations, the ANC, in its Harare Declaration, has called for the formation of an interim government to oversee the process of drawing up a new constitution, govern and administer the country and effect the transition, including the holding of elections. Thus, the NP might be within its stated mandate, but obviously precariously so in terms of the future implications of current developments.

The justification of the NPs claim to be operating within its mandate is crucial if it is to successfully avoid calling another election before its 5 year term of office formally expires. The NP therefore has to perform a very delicate balancing act in order to achieve a negotiated outcome within 5 years without manifestly exceeding the limits of its own electoral mandate.

The issue of the electoral mandate is important since it lies at the heart of the CP's attempts to prevent the NP from pursuing its policy as regards negotiation. The CP's tactic in the aftermath of the unbanning of the ANC, the SACP and the PAC has been to call into question the mandate which the NP says it has for such steps and, more importantly, to thereby challenge the legitimacy of the NP's actions. Ultimately the CP hopes to use this lever of claimed legitimacy to force the NP to resign or to defend its actions in another election. This would then provide the CP with what it sees as its final opportunity to win an election.

CP resistance to the NP's policies takes various forms. At an organisational level it has embarked on a campaign of mass meetings and rallies across the country designed to raise its level of support from the 680 000 votes it received in the September election to one million firmly secured supporters on the basis of a membership drive. This campaign is planned to peak in late May with the handing over of a one million signature petition to the authorities. The campaign is thus aimed at drawing support away from the NP and to the CP based on the assumption that the CP is able to gain further substantial support over and above its September election showing.

The major focus of the CP campaign is its attempts to demonstrate that the NP has totally changed its policies as

regards the ANC and the SACP since the publication of its five year plan. It argues that the NP has both allowed itself to be deceived by the ANC's leading spokesmen and that it entirely misunderstands the nature of the events in Eastern Europe during the last year and the true nature of glasnost in the Soviet Union.

At its most direct the CP argues that the NP has deceived the voters since its publications during the election promised that the ANC would never be allowed to operate legally in SA for as long as it retained the armed struggle as a feature of its strategy. The reaffirmation by Nelson Mandela in speeches since his release of the importance of the armed struggle is contrasted by the CP with these election statements. (Patriot 9 February 1990) Less insidiously, the CP also argues that the NP's campaign gave no indication to the voters that such far-reaching steps were being contemplated. It therefore argues that many voters who voted for the NP in 1989 would not have done so had they known what the party was actually preparing to do.

The CP substantiates its argument that the National Party has been deceived by the ANC and the SACP by referring to Mandela's statements since his release. Dr. Treurnicht has described Mr. Mandela's reputed committment to peace as a "transparent deception" in the light of literal interpretations of his words. Treurnicht further argues, on the basis of such literal interpretations, that Mandela remains wedded to the "full programme of classical marxism" (Patriot 16 February 1990).

The importance of this line of attack by the CP is that by portraying Mandela as a hypocrite, the CP implies that not only has the NP government been duped by organisations which have no committment to finding peaceful solutions, but that the NP's recent actions amount to "capitulation before revolution". Put another way, the CP accuses the NP of having "finally and unambigiously taken the side of the ANC against the Afrikaner nation" (Patriot 16 February 1990).

Finally, the changing international context within which South African politics plays itself out, particularly the events in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union, also features prominently in the debate between the NP and the CP. As FW de Klerk's speech to parliament demonstrated, the NP argues that this changing context has provided the framework within which socialist policies can effectively be countered. (Sowetan 5 February 1990)

In common with some conservative and neo-conservative groups in the western world, the CP remains sceptical regarding the significance of glasnost and perestroika. Treurnicht denies that glasnost necessarily means the end of Stalinism or that the Soviet Union has abandoned any claims to world domination. Instead, the CP's most significant reading of the events of the last year in Eastern Europe is that the separatist initiatives in the Baltic states and elsewhere are convincing proof of the durability of the forces of volksnasionalisme (Patriot 9 February

1990).

A leading CP spokesman has incidentally disputed the comparisons often made between FW de Klerk and Mikhail Gorbachev as being similar in their roles as reformers and has rather drawn a parallel between De Klerk and Kerensky as figures who pave the way for the real revolutionaries to take over the centre political stage.

The CP's persistent questioning of the NP's mandate for its actions has forced the NP to respond. Its defence takes three forms. In the first place FW de Klerk denies that the NP's election campaign did not "lay a clear basis...for the steps it is taking now". Yet he admits that the specifics of the recent policy decisions "were not spelled out" to the electorate in the election campaign. But he claims that no political party does this. For example he says the NP committed itself during the campaign to removing obstacles for negotiation and to create a climate in which negotiation partners could be free to pursue their own viewpoints. (Citizen 10 February 1990)

The second form of defence is to argue that "circumstances had changed dramatically" since the election and that this changed dispensation "alone requires and justifies fully the new strategy and approach" (Citizen 10 February 1990). This is a clear reference to the international context within which South African politics takes place and is viewed by the outside world.

The third justification against the CP's attack is to argue that in the context of iminent negotiations the NP has to keep its options and positions close to its chest. Stoffel van der Merwe, a member of the NP's negotiating team, argues that the NP would "risk being criticised as acting one-sidedly and prescriptively if it were at this stage to spell out its vision of the political future of South Africa" (Patriot 16 February 1990). In other words a certain latitude is claimed to present and change policies as these are deemed needed.

Clearly the issue of the mandate is going to be yet more fully exploited by the CP in the coming months. The cogency of the argument and its utility in gaining support for the CP at the cost of the NP can be argued to depend on two issues. The first is that in any climate, or even perceived climate of deteriorating law and order there is an obvious possibility that sections of the white electorate will choose to blame the NP for creating the conditions under which radical movements were free to forment resistance. The second is the obverse of the first: should international political opinion and extra-parliamentary responses be seen to be becoming more accommodative of the NP government and reasonable symbolic progress is made towards a resolution of conflict, then the issue of the mandate becomes all the less relevant.

The ultimate outcome of the CP's campaign in this regard, and the NP's rejoinders, depends on the inevitability cruder

interpretations and perceptions of the rank-and-file voters. Hence the challenge and counter-challenge must be assessed in the light of likely responses by the electorate, to which we now turn.

PROSPECTS

A brief review of the results of the 1989 election for the House of Assembly is given below to provide the broad dimensions of the current political orientation of the white South African electorate. These results are then compared with the results of the previous two elections - in 1987 and 1981 and the 1983 referendum results - in an attempt to highlight the shifts that have taken place in white political affiliation during the 1980s and the estimate the size of the reform and resistance-oriented support bases amoung the white electorate.

From Table 1 it is clear that the dominant shift in white political party affiliation during the 1980s was one to the right wing of the political spectrum. Between 1981 and 1989 the NP lost 38 seats to the CP's gain of 39 seats. The liberal opposition share of the vote (PFP/NRP/DP) appears to have remained fairly constant over the decade with the exception of 1987 when support on the left wing of the political spectrum dropped quite substantially. In an election closely following the countrywide upheavals between 1984 and 1986 this result suggests a latent cohesion among the white electorate in a situation of perceived threat. Once the immediacy of this threat had been contained following the introduction of the State of Emergency, white political sentiment appeared to relax, allowing a more generous response to political reform. The political upheavals of the 1980s added a dimension of reaction to perceived threat which complemented ethnic and class interests in forming a block of white political opinion on the right which has solidified with the framework of CP policy.

TABLE ONE

SEATS : HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (AS ELECTED DURING GENERAL ELECTIONS)

	PFP/DP/NRP/IND	NP	CP/HNP
1981	34	132	
1987	21	123	22
1989	33	94	39
Difference 81-89	(-1)	(-38)	(+39)

While the percentage of the right wing party vote increased from 15,5 in 1981 to 31,6 in 1989 (i.e. doubled in strength) (see Table 2), its major growth appears to have taken place between 1981 and 1987. Between 1987 and 1989 it only grew by 1,7 percent. This allowed the argument to been made that the right wing of the political spectrum has reached a ceiling in its potential for further growth (Simpson, 1990: 8-9). In over 40 constituencies, the CP's percentage share of the vote dropped between these two elections. An alternative view, however, would be that specific circumstances in the 1989 election served to restrict its growth temporarily and that under new conditions its growth could resume.

TABLE 2

TOTAL PERCENTAGE SHARE OF VOTE BY PARTY : 1981 - 1989

	PFP/DP/IND/NRP	NP	CP/HNP
1981	27,5	57,0	15,5
1987	17,4	52,7	29,9
1989	20,1	48,2	31,6

GROWTH/DECLINE

	PFP/DP/IND/NRP	NP	CP/HNP
1981 - 1987	-10,1	-4,3	+14,4
1987- 1989	+2,7	-4,5	+1,7
1981- 1989	+7,4	-8,8	+16,1

In both the Cape and Natal, CP strength remains at under 20 percent of the total provincial vote whereas in the Transvaal and Free State CP support stands at 40 percent or more. (See Table 3). Both CP and DP support are thus at this stage fairly substantially regionally based whereas the NP's support is more widely spread.

TABLE 3

TOTAL PERCENTAGE SHARE OF VOTE BY PARTY BY PROVINCE

		PFP/DP/IND/NRP	NP	CP/HNP
CAPE	1981	31,4	59,1	9,5
	1987	21,8	60,7	17,4
	1989	28,8	53,7	17,5
		(-2,6)	(-5,4)	(+8,0)
TVL	1981	21,8	58,2	20,0
	1987	12,9	48,6	38,5
	1989	13,9	45,8	40,3
		(-7,9)	(-12,4)	(+20,3)
NATAL	1981	57,7	37,4	4,9
	1987	39,1	50,2	10,7
	1989	42,4	44,0	13,6
		(-15,3)	(+6,6)	(+8,7)
OFS	1981	1,8	73,0	25,2
	1987	1,6	55,8	42,6
	1989	2,4	50,9	46,6
		(+0,6)	(-22,1)	(+21,4)

Looking at the 1989 DP seats (see Annexure 1) it is clear that the DP only won 2 new seats if we exclude seats that were either PFP or NRP seats in the 1981 election: North Rand and Randburg. North Rand was won by the DP with only 43 percent of the vote, i.e. if the CP had not put up a candidate in North Rand it is possible that the seat would have remained an NP seat. In Randburg, despite the DP candidate being the MP who had won the seat previously as a Nationalist, the DP share of the vote was no higher than 53 percent.

Liberal opposition performance improved most between 1987 and

1989 in the upper middle class northern Durban constituencies, the Cape Peninsula and some of the newer upper middle class perimeter constituencies around Johannesburg. Earlier in the decade, between 1981 and 1987, the liberal opposition share of the vote had declined markedly in two specific categories of constituences. In the generally lower middle class constituencies in southern Durban and southern Johannesburg, the liberal opposition share of the vote dropped by more than 20 percentage points. The same trend applied to the Natal South Coast constituencies. Yet in areas where there has been a rise in rightwing support during the 1980s, especially on the East and West Rand and in the eastern Pretoria constituencies, the DP share of the vote dropped between 5 and 12 percentage points over earlier levels achieved by the NRP and the PFP. Tactical voting to prevent a split of the anti-CP vote may account for some of the decline in liberal opposition support in these areas (Humphries 1989: 20).

Of the 17 new seats won by the CP in 1989 (see Annexure 2), 8 would have been won by the CP in 1987 had the right wing vote not been split by the presence of a HNP candidate. A more valid reflection of rightwing gains in 1989 therefore amounts to some 9 seats and of these seats, Ladybrand and Meyerton were won with less than 50 percent of the vote due to the presence of a DP candidate in the constituency. Growth of support for the CP in areas in which they were expected to make headway was relatively limited. In the Vaal Triangle CP support grew by only 0,9 percent, on the West Rand by only 1,1 percent while on the East Rand CP support actually declined. However, since 1987 CP growth has developed in areas not traditionally right wing strongholds, such as the border and northern Cape regions, Bloemfontein, southern Durban and southern and central Johannesburg.

Although the CP did not win more than 61 percent of the vote in any constituency, the fact that the NP did not succeed in winning back any marginal seats won by the CP in 1987 suggests a consolidation of CP support despite its relatively low percentage levels.

Research by Pretorius (1989) into the growth potential of the CP in terms of correlations between demographic and economic profiles of the electorate and political party support suggests that right wing support in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand region is predominantly found in constituencies where there are high proportions of Afrikaans speaking blue collar voters. These correlations thereby confirm other indications that right wing support may have a finite ceiling at around 33 percent of the white electorate, at least under the political conditions which held before 1990.

With the lapse of time since the 1989 election, the NP's 22 seat majority suggests a relatively comfortable governing majority. This may be misleading for two reasons: the diminishing size of the NP majorities in the context of a loss of support to both the CP and the DP and, secondly, victories derived as a result of a

split vote in constituencies in which all three parties stood. Twenty-four NP seats were won with less than 50 percent of the vote as a result of the vote being split three ways. On the same basis the NP lost 6 seats to the DP and 2 seats to the CP. In only 29 constituencies did the NP's share of the vote increase between 1987 and 1989. In all other constituencies the NP's share of the vote diminished. The NP implicitly recognized the narrowness of its electoral victory in its interpretation of the election result: De Klerk claimed majority support for reform-oriented policies by aggregating the NP and DP share of the vote and contrasting it with the 30 percent CP share of the vote.

The white electorate thus seems to be relatively volatile in terms of its present political party affiliations. If, however, conditions in the political environment remain stable, several indications point to there being a limit to the growth potential of the CP. Even if one assumes that in a next election the CP were not only to hold on to all its current seats but were to win all seats marginal to it within majorities of 1500 votes, its limit would then be a total of some 70 seats - not enough for an outright electoral victory.

A graphical representation of the results of the 1981, 1987 and 1989 elections together with the 1983 referendum (see Table 4 and Figure 1), confirms that a tapering off of right wing growth occurred in the second half of the 1980s. The right wing's greatest growth appears to have occurred not between 1981 and 1987 but between 1981 and 1983, as we have said, - i.e. a relatively strong surge of growth followed by a much slower rate of growth between 1983 and 1987. Using the referendum as a basis for predicting future CP support, which Simpson does, restricts future growth to those categories of NP voters who voted "no" in the referendum, but who have so far remained loyal to the NP. Table 4 illustrates this point.

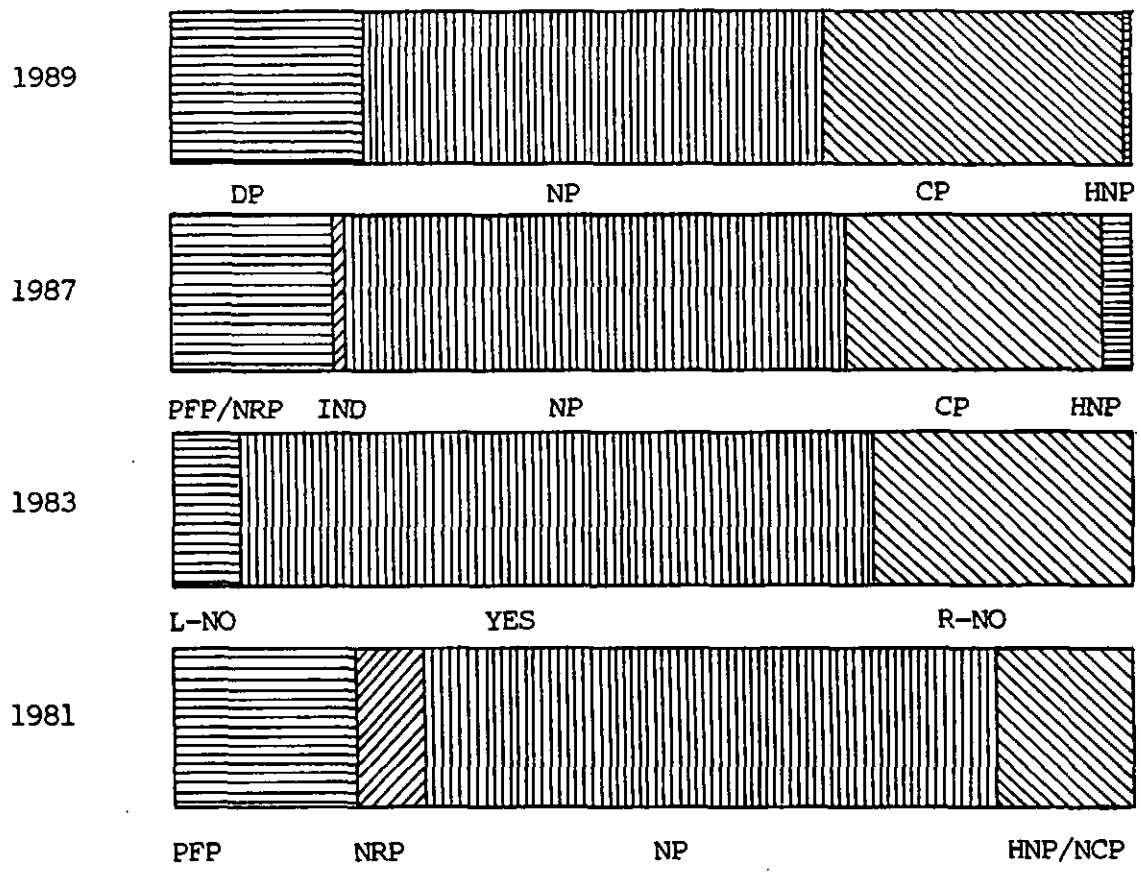
TABLE 4

BREAKDOWN OF WHITE PARTY ALLEGIANCE DURING THE 1980s

1981	1983	1987	1989	%	1989
PFP/NRP	NO	PFP/NRP	DP	7,0	DP
PFP	YES	PFP/NRP	DP	10,2	
PFP/NRP	YES	NP	DP	3,4	20,6
NRP	YES	NP	NP	5,5	NP
NP	YES	NP	NP	41,2	
NP	NO	NP	NP	1,3	48,0
NP	NO	NP	CP	1,4	CP
NP	YES	CP/HNP	CP	6,0	
NP	NO	CP	CP	9,6	
HNP	NO	CP	CP	14,4	31,4

Source: Simpson 1990: 13

FIGURE 1



Source: Laurie (1987: 263) (1989 results added)

A further interesting aspect of the graphic is the minority response by PFP voters (35 percent of its 1981 support level) to the official PFP call for a "no" vote in the 1983 referendum. A majority of PFP supporters thus seem to have supported the NP's 1983 constitutional reform proposals. From this is would appear that the NP could have the latent support of a further 14 percent of the electorate on the left of the political spectrum, at least in terms of its political reform initiatives (giving it a maximum support of a total of some 62 percent of the electorate). Since the principle involved in the 1983 referendum was the extension of the existing political system to incorporate Coloureds and Indians, it can be assumed that a similar principle with regard to Blacks would enjoy at least the same degree of support in 1989.

How the electorate would however respond to reforms in terms of which it would find itself in the position of, or potential position of, a political minority is not clear. If the 1983 leftwing "no" vote is anywhere near to being an indication of the degree of white support for some form of "majority rule", then it can be assumed that white support for such reform would be restricted to a minority of the white electorate.

What we are suggesting is that the model on the basis of which the right wing is argued to have a ceiling may not be appropriate in the political uncertainties which lie ahead. It is vital to note that at no previous stage since the NP began to (grudgingly) adopt reform postures in the 1970s, has the white voter been allowed to experience any uncertainty about the NP's intentions to guard the full spectrum of white interests. The interplay of political prospects has changed however, and one must assume that the growth potential of the right wing may also be modified.

One of the constraints on right wing growth has been its regional or provincial concentration. Under changing over-arching political prospects, this constraint may be weakened. Grobbelaar (1989:22) argues that any growth of rightwing support in the Cape Province is likely to be limited because of the "verlig" tradition of Afrikaner nationalism there as opposed to the "verkramp" tradition in the northern provinces and because Cape nationalism is underpinned by different material conditions: "The headquarters of many of South Africa's established Afrikaner-dominated conglomerates are still to be found in the Cape, e.g. Rembrandt and Sanlam."

Other factors help to explain the inability thus far of the CP to break into the Cape. They include the maintenance by the NP of a solid organizational base under the national leadership of a Cape Nationalist during the 1980s. The racial demographic composition of the Cape, with the rather limited numbers of blacks in the greater part of the Cape, has probably also served to constrain or underplay white fears, to the disadvantage of the right wing. The CP in fact only won two seats in the Cape in the 1989 election - Kuruman and Uitenhage.

Major changes have occurred in recent times including the fact that party leadership is no longer Cape-based and very rapid in-migration of black people into the western Cape has taken place. Indications since the election accordingly suggest some growth on the part of the CP. The results of the two by-elections in the Cape in December in Vasco and Ceres (see Table 5) suggest a fairly substantial CP growth although the reduced percentage polls and the problems of interpreting voter behaviour in by election conditions, may exaggerate the real rate of growth.

TABLE 5

VASCO AND CERES BY ELECTION RESULTS

		SEPTEMBER 1989	DECEMBER 1989
VASCO			
	NP	6544	4185
	CP	2645	2922
	NP MAJORITY	3899	1243
	POLL	56,9	44,5
CERES	NP	5390	4514
	CP	2871	2944
	NP MAJORITY	2519	1570
	POLL	77,4	70,0

The same trend is apparent from the results of a March 1990 municipal by election in Kimberley where the votes were as follows:

TABLE 6

	NP	CP	IND	
October 1988	668 (54%)	330 (27%)	234 (19%)	(Total = 1232)
March 1990	290 (38%)	483 (62%)	-	(Total = 773)

Here we see that the decline in support for the NP, despite the absence of opposition from an independent, was greater than the decline in the percentage poll.

The Rapport polls between June 1989 and February 1990, notwithstanding an apparent (but presumably consistent) under-representation of right wing support, referred to later, also reflect a growth trend for the CP nationally:

TABLE 7

	FEB 1990	NOV 1989	JUN 1989
NP	46,3	41,6	41,1
CP	31,0	27,6	23,9
DP	18,3	24,6	28,2
HNP	0,6	0,8	1,0
DO NOT VOTE	3,8	5,4	5,6

(Rapport 7 January and 25 February 1990)

Thus, it would appear that indications of the CP having reached a ceiling of around 33 percent of the electorate may have been confined to the pre-February assumptions concerning the reform process and white voter security. Although the CP does not appear to have yet grown beyond this boundary at the national level, there are indications that it may yet grow well beyond this limit in particular types of constituencies.

If we take the Transvaal as a model of where the CP is most established and active, it appears that its average level of support varies between constituencies according to predominant home language, urban/rural status and socio-economic class distinctions. CP support is, on average, at the following levels in each of a number of categories of constituencies:

Large urban constituencies

Upper middle class	10 %
English-speaking middle class	26 %
English lower-middle/emerging middle class (students and young family areas)	11 %
Afrikaans-speaking or mixed middle class	41 %
Afrikaans or mixed lower-middle/working class	52 %

Rural and smaller urban constituencies

Large town areas	53 %
Small town areas	57 %

From the above it would appear that the CP's potential for growth is probably limited to predominantly Afrikaans speaking or linguistically mixed constituencies. The regional differentiation in CP support remains a significant factor yet it could, as we have indicated, be starting to overcome this past barrier to growth, enabling it to achieve the typical levels of support in different types of Transvaal constituencies on a nation-wide basis.

Applying the above "Transvaal model" of CP levels of support to constituencies in the other three provinces, likewise classifed by the variables of language, class and urban/rural distinctions, we estimate that the CP could thus attain some 41,63 percent of the national vote. This would apply even if CP strength in the Transvaal remains constant at 1989 levels.

We are suggesting, thus, that the level of support for the CP in the constituency types given above for the Transvaal could potentially apply in all areas once conservative parties have fully established their viewpoints, organisational presence and access to social networks of influence. This has clearly occurred in the Transvaal and substantially in the Orange Free State. It has not yet occurred in the Cape and Natal.

Changed over-arching political circumstances, and possibly heightened white voter insecurity, in particular, may make it possible for the CP to exploit basic voter interests and attitudes within types of constituencies in which they have operated at a disadvantage in the past.

One final indication of future prospects is derived from the Market and Opinion Surveys (Pty) Ltd. poll in November 1989 among its nation-wide panel of 1458 registered voters. It should be noted that this panel has consistently under-represented right wing opposition support, due to more-or-less inevitable under-

representation of geographically mobile white working class voters and socially marginal peri-urban fringe voters, inter alia. For example, support for right wing parties was estimated at 24,9 percent in a June 1989 poll and 28,4 percent in November compared with the result of 31 percent in the September 1989 election. One may cautiously assume that the November result could be adjusted upwards by 31,4/28,4 = 1,106, say 11 percent. (It could be adjusted upward even more if one takes the June pre-election poll as a basis for the correction.)

In the November opinion poll voters in the sample were asked whether or not F.W. de Klerk, in regard to the pace of political reform, was moving "too fast", "too slowly", or "just right". Note that this poll was conducted before the recent announcements unbanning the ANC and PAC and the release of Nelson Mandela. In this poll 14 percent of National Party supporters indicated that de Klerk was moving too fast. This proportion is likely to have increased since November and one might assume, therefore, that at least this 14 percent would be tempted to defect to a CP position in a hypothetical referendum or election. If that were to occur, and correcting for the under-representation of right wing supporters in the poll, as calculated above, it would imply 38 percent support for the right wing opposition nation-wide.

This level of support, in a hypothetical general election, would most certainly ensure a "hung" parliament, with no absolute majority for the NP. It would not, however, ensure a defeat of any proposals put forward by de Klerk in a referendum, since, as said before, most DP supporters would be likely to back the proposals.

Due to the absence of any similar estimates since November, reactions to the most recent moves by government cannot be assessed. A February poll by Market and Opinion Surveys suggests a growth in "pessimism" among white voters of some 6 percent of the electorate since 1985. But this result is not sufficiently specific to allow for interpretations relating to party support. Suffice it to say that the postulated 14 percent defection to the right wing position is, if anything, likely to be an under estimate in the light of subsequent events.

SOME TENTATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Taking all these indications into account, one might conclude that de Klerk could fairly confidently expect to vindicate his interpreted mandate in a referendum, albeit with likely DP support. He would be rather less advised to call a white general election if conditions prevailing at the time and the implications of whatever political agreement has been negotiated spell uncertainty and political risk for white voters. With a re-delimitation of seats, and given his now established ability to give positive signals to the majority-based formations as well as providing substantial reassurances to assuage minority fears,

he probably could win an election but the win would probably be very narrow. This expected victory would probably be achieved either due to substantial numbers of former DP supporters deciding to vote for the NP, or through a formal alliance with the DP. De Klerk would most probably not wish to enter into whatever new constitutional arrangement is negotiated with less than an overall majority of white support, and this would be in doubt in an election.

Among the many interesting uncertainties of the present process of transition, the factor of white voter responses is as difficult to predict as any other. Our analysis suggests that this factor will not prove to be a decisive constraint in the search for a political settlement. At the same time however, complacency would be ill-advised. Perhaps the most telling gesture De Klerk could make in this regard is the reassurance that he will support the right of responsible right wing formations to have a place at the negotiating table and that he will promote the view that any realistic proposals from this quarter will be fully considered. Without these reassurances the right-wing movements are likely to mobilise very intensively to exploit the possible trends in the electorate that our analysis has suggested.

ANNEXURE 1

1989 DP SEATS

	1987	1981	
ALBANY	NP	PFP	
CAPE TOWN GARDENS	PFP	PFP	
CLAREMONT	PFP	PFP	
CONSTANTIA	PFP	PFP	
GREEN POINT	PFP	PFP	
GROOTE SCHUUR	PFP	PFP	
PINELANDS	PFP	PFP	
PE CENTRAL	PFP	PFP	
SEA POINT	PFP	PFP	
SIMONSTOWN	NP	NP	
WALMER	NP	PFP	
WYNBERG	NP	PFP	
BEZUIDENHOUT	NP	PFP	SPLIT VOTE
BRYANSTON	PFP	PFP	
EDENVALE	NP	PFP	
HILLBROW	NP	PFP	SPLIT VOTE
HOUGHTON	PFP	PFP	
JHB NORTH	PFP	PFP	
NORTH RAND	NP	NP	SPLIT VOTE
PARKTOWN	PFP	PFP	
RANDBURG	NP	NP	
SANDTON	PFP	PFP	
YEOVILLE	PFP	PFP	
BEREA	PFP	PFP	
DBN CENTRAL	PFP	PFP	
DBN NORTH	PFP	NRP	
GREYTOWN	PFP	PFP	
MOOI RIVER	PFP	NRP	
PMB NORTH	NP	PFP	
PMB SOUTH	NP	PFP	SPLIT VOTE
PINETOWN	PFP	PFP	
UMBILO	NP	NRP	SPLIT VOTE
UMHLANGA	NP	NRP	

ANNEXURE 2

NEW CP SEATS 1989

KURUMAN	
UITENHAGE	
HERCULES	
LYDENBURG	
MARAISBURG	
MEYERTON	SPLIT VOTE
PRETORIA WEST	
ROODEPLAAT	
RUSTENBURG	
STILFONTEIN	
WONDERBOOM	
HEILBRON	
LADYBRAND	SPLIT VOTE
PARYS	
SASOLBURG	
SMITHFIELD	
WELKOM	

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