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The prospects for a vigorous parliamentary opposition in a democratic South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This research report is a probe into prospects of meaningful political opposition in the parliamentary system South Africa. Political oppositions play a very constructive role in the entrenching of democracy. A free and open democratic system owes a lot to politics of opposition. The political landscape in South Africa is characterized by one dominant ruling party opposed by small and fragmented opposition. Thus there is a challenge in South Africa's democracy due to poor opposition politics.

The importance of opposition cannot be overstated, democracy thrives when there is healthy deliberation and contestation in parliament. Thus different goals, values and ideas are given the chance to be argued for or against. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) enjoys large support that dwarfs even the official opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA). There are other opposition parties inside and outside parliament. However the fact that the opposition is still relatively weak, is a call for concern.

Although relatively weak, the opposition in South African politics is of vast importance. The effectiveness of the opposition can be measured in the debates in parliament and the positions that the opposition adopt to counter the ruling party. Currently there is the reality of a very loose and weak opposition. The opposition is not being effective enough to be of considerable substance in the political landscape. The fact that much of the policies the ANC adopts are in principle similar to the beliefs and ideas of the opposition renders the opposition ineffective and the electorate is left with no real alternative. The point of departure of this research report is that the opposition should assume policies that are an alternative to the ruling party so that they can attract the electorate and thus boost democracy in South Africa.