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

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *INTRODUCTION: MEANING OF PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION AND DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY.*

Over the last few decades, the functionality of competitive party politics in the democratization process has become a subject of renewed debates (Pempel, 1990, Huntington 1991, Diamond and Guenther 2001). That political parties are key pillars of "good governance", the rule of law and the protection of human rights in mature democracies (like U.S.A, Australia, Britain) is widely accepted. That "illiberal" democracies typically suffocate competitive party politics is not debatable (cf. Walle and Butler 1999). What is debatable (according to some authors) is the role and desirability of opposition parties in expanding space for the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance in developing democracies (Kiiza 2005, Rakner and Svansand 2004). It is the purpose of this paper to examine the prospects for the opposition parties in the process of South African democratic consolidation. The aim of this paper is to outline what opposition parties would do or the policies they should adopt if they are to halt/transform the current trend of one-party predominance in South Africa. The central claim of the thesis is that the adoption of a more competitive party system coupled with a vigorous parliamentary opposition undoubtedly furthers democratization by providing the electorate with electoral alternatives.

I will begin by having an overview of various perceptions of the word opposition. By a simple definition, opposition in a very general sense means, dissension, contradiction, contrast. According to Ulrich Karpen of the University of Hamburg "Opposition is a basic position in which a single person or a group of people differs from the prevailing values, goals and intentions of others";[1] because some conflict of views seem to be unavoidable in human affairs, political societies have always had to deal somehow with the fact of opposition.

[1] Karpen Ulrich, 'The International Experience of Opposition Politics. Lessons for South Africa?' in Kotze Hennie (ed), *Parliamentary Dynamics: Understanding political life in the South African Parliament*, Centre for International and Comparative Politics, South Africa, 1996. P.11

There are those who propose that opposition suggests representation and acceptance of difference; some extended the term to incorporate a much wider range of anti-government behaviours that are normally found in the established democratic world.[2] But Rodney Barker has noted the different connotations in the word (Opposition) and identified six uses of the term, firstly, opposition may mean total resistance to the form and basis of the state; second, it may denote resistance to the power of the state when the latter is viewed as an oppressive institution; thirdly, it may refer to resistance to the group, faction or dynasty in command of the state, and to a denial of its legitimacy; fourth, it may be used to denote a loyal opposition which opposes the commanding group without either contesting its legitimacy, or threatening or rejecting the basis of the state or the constitution; fifth, opposition may refer to a system of checks and balances whereby the constitution guards against and corrects its own excesses; and finally, the term may describe the methods whereby the citizen or group modifies a government's actions or prevents its tyrannies, without condemning the latter as inherently oppressive.[3]However, he regretted the unfortunate consequence that the different phenomena are often treated as if they are the same. He therefore identified the fundamental requirement for the flourishing of opposition as some separation between the person or persons symbolizing sovereignty and those exercising government;[4] observing that oppositional politics only developed in countries where a distinction had been allowed to grow, where there was a generalized acceptance of rules of fair play whereby those out of power expressed their grievances or demands for reform in a manner that did not challenge the essence of the existing state.

Karpen is of the view that opposition in political life is a political counter-power with the following features: it attempts to convince the majority that its values and goals are better; it tries to remove the majority legally or even illegally from power. In other words, it strives to take over government and in the latter case, opposition requires a minimum of ideology and organization.[5]The idea of opposition is not synonymous with democracy since it can be practiced in other forms of government.

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[2] Southall Roger, 'Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems' in Southall Roger (ed) *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, Frank Cass Publishers. London, 2001.p5

[3] Rodney Barker, cited in Southall Roger, 'Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems' in Southall Roger (ed) *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, Frank Cass Publishers. London, 2001.p6

[4] Ibid.p6

[5] Karpen Ulrich, 'The International Experience of Opposition Politics. Lessons for South Africa?' in Kotze Hennie (ed), *Parliamentary Dynamics: Understanding political life in the South African Parliament*, Centre for International and Comparative Politics, South Africa, 1996. P.11

Even if some governments do not want to accept the idea, people are never of the same opinion, as they have different goals, share different values and could like and dislike certain politicians. That is what majority government and opposition are about. Obviously, there are many forms of opposition as there are of governments. Therefore, a distinction can be made between an opposition which is acting legitimately within the framework of a constitution and another form of basic opposition which strives to overthrow the political system. This generally requires physical power and very often includes revolutionary measures which sometimes result in armed battles. However, my primary concern will be in the legitimate form of opposition within the framework of the constitution, the acknowledgment of which is an essential constituent of the South African democracy.

If opposition politics is conceptualized inclusively, it encompasses all oppositional activities in the polity (direct and indirect pressures from agencies); of which party politics is but one component. The activities in the South African parliament will account for only a part of total oppositional politics. Parliamentary Opposition could be defined as a form of political opposition to a designated government, particularly in a Westminster-based parliamentary system[6]. In a proportionally representative assemblies (such as in South Africa) there is the tendency of multiple political parties appearing in the parliamentary debating chamber and this normally will foster multiple "opposition" parties (twelve in the case of South Africa) which may have little in common and minimal desire to form a united bloc opposed to the government of the day. Some analysts such as Geraint Parry, argue that to be meaningful, opposition should be restricted to the idea of "institutionalized opposition", within a context of established liberal democracy;[7] in this case, opposition can be viewed as most constructively embodied in constitutional checks and balances; or as entailing pressure upon government directed from outside parliament by civil society, from both within and beyond the Tripartite Alliance.

It is the objective of this research therefore to study the effectiveness of the opposition parties cum politics in the new South African democracy and in the process find out why they are facing

[6] Encyclopedia: Opposition (Parliamentary); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_(parliamentary)
[7]Southall Roger, 'Opposition in South Africa: Issues and Problems' in Southall Roger (ed) *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, Frank Cass Publishers. London, 2001.p6

dwindling fortunes in the present democratic dispensation. In so doing, the work will look into the formation of the present parliamentary oppositions especially the defunct alliance of the Democratic Party and the New National Party which combined to form the Democratic Alliance; why it failed which leaves the DP alone in the alliance, though maintained the name DA (which is currently the official opposition in the parliament); the romance between the IFP and DA; and also to find out their present relevance. It will also assess the possibilities of future alliances or even the formation of new political parties which may take an entirely different outlook to boost a vibrant parliamentary opposition in the South African democracy. The work will be much concerned with active rather than passive opposition because according to Dr. Susan Booysen, opposition politics under democratic rule should be perceived first at the levels of political participation, mobilization and expression on the side of the citizens, organizations and institutions and second; at the levels of tolerance and encouragement, as well as substantive action on policy and strategy on the side of the government.[8]

It needs to be pointed out here that the opposition in South Africa needs to be institutionalized, not in racial polarizations, but in a broader manner capable of attracting the support of a diverse set of constituencies and in particular the growing community of independent African voters.[9] As Ghita Ionescu and Isabel De Madariaga also acknowledge, "opposition is rightly understood to be part and parcel of the political process as a whole, indeed, it is the 'altera pars' of government or power. Any analysis or history of power must of necessity embrace its counterpart logically, organically and morphologically; opposition is the dialectic counterpart of power".[10]

Based on the aforesaid, this study is intended to find out why opposition politics (as a whole) is in retreat in South Africa and what can be done to change this present scenario, considering the important role it should play in a viable democracy. Could there be a future change of attitude by the electorate, in the light of the growing disenchantment and disaffection amongst the populace with the failure of the ANC to deliver on its promises? It is obvious that having a vibrant opposition will have

[8] Booysen Susan, 'The changing face of opposition politics in South Africa' in Kotze Hennie (ed), *Parliamentary Dynamics: Understanding political life in the South African Parliament,* Centre for International and Comparative Politics, South Africa, 1996. P.52

[9] Habib Adam and Taylor Rupert, 'Political Alliances and Parliamentary Opposition in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in Southall Roger (ed) *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa*, Frank Cass Publishers. London, 2001.P216

[10] Ionescu Ghita and De Madariaga Isabel, *Opposition: Past and present of a political institution*, C.A Watts and co. ltd, London, 1968.P2

significant consequences to the consolidation of the South African young democracy; because it is a well known fact that holding regular elections is not the final test of whether a country is a democracy. It may be a necessary condition but it is not sufficient. The real test comes (as Lodge says) when "a ruling party in power at the democracy's inception is subsequently defeated in an election and allows the winners to take office"[11] Therefore there must be a vigorous and strong opposition before this electoral challenge can be experienced. This is one of the defining moments of whether a country qualifies as being a democracy; and which is where the incumbent government could be put to real test.

Both the National Party (NP) in the past and the African National Congress (ANC) currently constitute the government in a one dominant party parliament; therefore single-party dominance is nothing new in South African politics. In fact, it has been its dominant characteristics since the 1950's when the NP through manipulation and other forms of gerrymandering managed to secure a monopoly control over white South African politics. If two large parties or more contesting for government dominated parliamentary politics, the whole style of inter-party competition would be vastly different, but in the South African case, the story has always been different; as there is always one dominant party in control. Now opposition parties thrash about at local and provincial level for some incremental advantage and relevance; because at national level, Parliament is used to "play politics", not to change government.[12] However, it needs to be clarified here that there is a huge and qualitative difference between the ANC's single party dominance of the present and that of the NP of old. That domination by the NP derived from an illegitimate electoral process which they frequently manipulated to their electoral advantage.[13] The ANC's domination is quite the opposite because it derives from a wholly legitimate electoral system and is the product of successive expressions of the democratic will of most South Africans.

This work will consequently provide a general discourse on the concepts of democracy, political parties and opposition politics not as inter-related variables; recognizing that there will be some

[11] Lodge Tom, *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, David Philip, Cape Town, 2002. P154.
[12] Slabbert Van Zyl F., 'Comments on current Parliamentary politics in South Africa', (http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/umrabulo13j.html)
[13] Roger Southall and John Daniel, 'The state of parties post-election 2004: ANC dominance and opposition enfeeblement' (www.hsrcpress.ac.za)

betwixt – and – between cases that may be appropriate in classifying systems as – democracies, semi-democracies or pseudo-democracies. In the process, the project will look at the role of the opposition in the success or failure of democracy - the South African experience.

Unfortunately, there have been identifiable "flaws" within the practice of democracies in Africa. In particular, while the transition to 'democracy', equated with multi-party elections has occurred, in many cases, there has been reversion to one or other form of 'authoritarian' rule.[14] Indeed, many of the transitions in Africa have been reversed or have seen military regimes transform themselves into political parties. Electoral laws which favour them and conditions which make it difficult for opposition parties to generate resources have often secured confirmation of quasi-military rule.

This work will attempt (obviously within its limited scope) a survey of and the future possibilities of opposition emerging more strongly, which will be pivotal to the functioning and sustenance of the parliamentary system in South Africa. Is there a hopeful future for the opposition parties or will the opposition continue to decline (as they are doing presently) until they go into oblivion? In that instance, South Africa would change from a one dominant party democracy to a "de facto" one party state. Should such a situation develop, the landscape of current electoral politics will change beyond imagination and the populace will not be better for it because of the anticipated non-challance and negative consequences likely to go with such developments in governance.

It is a known fact that a segment of the people are already complaining and bemoaning that there is no credible opposition which can harness their views, represent them effectively and act as a shadow government; no way that the disillusionment with the present ANC government can be translated into a protest vote. How then will things look if there isn't an opposition at all or there is no choice available to the electorate? It will better be imagined than experienced. This is why this paper is of the view that a strong and vigorous opposition is necessary to keep the government on its toes, awaken it to its responsibilities and oblige it to keep to its electoral promises. This will be elaborated further in the next chapter.

[14] Ibid

Some theorists say that opposition politics in South Africa is now in real crisis because not only has the opposition's share of the votes been going steadily down election-on-election since 1994, but the minority parties appear determined to weaken themselves further by self-induced fragmentation. Although according to Richard Calland, this phenomenon of the splintering of political parties in transitional societies is well documented in political science. The literature suggests that it would, in fact, be surprising if there was not some sort of fragmentation of parties during the period of democratic consolidation. In Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980's and 1990's, transitions from military dictatorships and communism prompted a growth industry in minor political parties and, shortly after, a splintering of the larger ones[15]. If we are to follow this trend, then we can say that South Africa is now headed that way because in 2004, 12 parties managed to overcome the modest threshold by obtaining at least 0.25% of the popular vote to win representation in Parliament – though nine of the 12 held only 10% of the seats. Now after the grim reality of the latest floor-crossing exercise, there are five more parties, which brings to a total number of sixteen (the NNP having finally been eliminated). Thirteen of those parties have less than 10% of the seats (37 out of 400)[16] between them; and given that the prospects of them operating in a coalition is very remote; the effect is that these seats are rendered almost completely irrelevant.

This is why I want to point out here that South Africans should understand very clearly that their democracy cannot be taken for granted. Its consolidation is neither inevitable nor need the process take the form of a linear progression. As Julius Kiiza says, inter alia "the object is to underline one important point that democracy is not god-given. It is historically created. The history of democracy is a history of social struggles over the expansion of political space. It is a history of contestations over the transformation of the human wrongs of marginalized groups (the poor, blacks, women, etc) into human rights"[17].

Democracies are susceptible to reversions to authoritarianism. As Robert Dahl demonstrated in his work, ***On Democracy***, authoritarian regimes have replaced democratic ones some 52 times between 1900 and 1985 (Dahl, 1998). Significantly the South African democracy is yet to follow the "reverse

[15] Calland, Richard, 'An incoherent opposition' Mail and Guardian, Tuesday 15 November,2005.
[16] Ibid
[17] Kiiza Julius, 'The Role of Opposition Parties in a Democracy', A paper presented at the Regional Conference on Political Parties and Democratization in East Africa, Impala Hotel, Arusha, 25-27 August 2005.

wave" of democratic breakdowns as witnessed in some other countries of the world where democracies have risen and fallen. As Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner would observe how the October 1999 military coup in Pakistan highlights more general problems of governance that threaten many insecure democracies around the world[18]; which is why caution should be applied and also why this study shall be carried out to know how the suppression of the opposition had always resulted in the "reverse waves" as categorized by Samuel P. Huntington.[19]

South Africans do not need to be quoted statistics to be made aware of this fact. Indeed, the point has been graphically brought home by developments in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. In the case of the former, a trade union leader who led resistance against what had been the only president of post-independence Zambia, then subverted that same democracy by first attempting to re-write the constitution to enable him to seek a third term and when that failed, manipulating elections to ensure that his nominee was elected president. In Zimbabwe, a first generation independence leader succeeded in holding onto power through graft, patronage, electoral fraud, constitutional manipulations and intimidation of opponents and dissidents. In both instances, democracy and the promise of development dissipated as a result of both structural conditions and leadership behaviour.

South Africans should be constantly on guard against any threat of reversion, notwithstanding some constitutional provisions of checks and balances in which were intended to contain arbitrary and authoritarian behaviour and empower the citizenry. This is not enough guarantee and can only be boosted with a vigorous parliamentary opposition. According to experts, the concern of the electorate should be how to ensure not only that there is democracy, but also, that it is sustainable. That is unobjectionable if it means ensuring that democratic rights are protected and that freedom of political activity will be defended. More so, because the weakness of the opposition, though not related to significant electoral irregularity, is seen as a basis for withholding accreditation of the South African

[18] Diamond Larry and Plattner F. Marc (ed), *The global divergence of democracies*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001. Introduction.
[19] Huntington Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*, University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London, 1991. Pp. 16-26.

transition as a democracy that has been consolidated. Such ones are described by Jung and Shapiro, as lacking a "system of opposition institutions that any healthy democracy requires".[20]

There is no doubt that functioning political opposition is essential to democracy. Although the notion of a loyal opposition finds its origins in monarchical rather than democratic politics, democratic systems rely on institutionalized oppositions and it is doubtful that any regime could long survive as minimally democratic without them; "if democratic politics is seen as requiring at a minimum that there be turnover of power among elites, then there must be sites for counter-elites to form and campaign as potential alternative governments".[21] If there is not the possibility of an opposition being perceived as a realistic alternative to the government of the day, then the likelihood of turnover is diminished and crises for the government are correspondingly more likely to become crises for the democratic regime.[22] Using a similar paradigm, Southall, under the heading 'The Decline of Opposition' writes of this absence of a powerful opposition signifying the 'hollowness of South African democracy'.[23]

However, not all the analysts share this view on parliamentary opposition. Some observers, especially from the radical circles submit that the lack of a viable parliamentary opposition need not undermine democratic prospects. They maintain that there are a number of features in the South African situation which may in fact provide far greater protection of democratic rights and contribute far more towards consolidation than the existence of strong opposition. In particular, one can point to the extensive constitutional machinery in support of democracy, much of it in advance of that found in countries from which many of these theorists emerge. In this regard, it is worth mentioning, among others, the Constitutional Court, the Public Protector, the Human Rights Commission and the Commission on Gender Equality, the chapter 9 institutions of the South African constitution (See the Constitution 1996)[24] and more so, one has in South Africa, a "public sphere" where citizens and

[20] Jung and Shapiro, 1995:270; See also Giliomee Hermann and Simkins Charles (eds.), *The Awkward embrace: One party-domination and democracy*, Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1991. Introduction
[21] Suttner Raymond, 'Democratic transition and consolidation in South Africa: The advise of 'the experts', Current Sociology, September 2004, vol.52 (5): 755-773, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, C.A and New Delhi.
[22] Jung and Shapiro, 1995:272
[23]Southall Roger, cited in Suttner Raymond, 'Democratic transition and consolidation in South Africa: The advise of 'the experts', Current Sociology, September 2004, vol.52 (5): 755-773, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, C.A and New Delhi.
[24] 'The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa', 1996; Act 108 of 1996; Chapter 9.

organized civil society can express a diversity of opinions, indicating another important variable influencing the strength of its democracy. They equally argue that the internal political pluralism within the ruling party and/or corporatist mechanisms are more important and can make up for the lack of a viable parliamentary opposition.[25] These analyses are premised on the hope that the internal structures of the ANC and/or corporatist mechanisms will enable the political leadership to be held accountable and will allow for the full participation of all social groups and a negotiated resolution of the policy differences between them.

Having said that and in alluding to these points as made above, it has become an almost uncontested fact in modern democratization literature that a viable institutionalized opposition is an essential feature of consolidated democracies. Robert Dahl's comprehensive study on this subject, published in 1966, made the case for oppositions and has not in anyway been refuted. In fact, it's essential thesis has been supported and corroborated by other studies in the course of the four decades that followed its publication – for instance Barker (1971), Epstein (1967), Moore (1989), Huntington (1991), Shapiro (1994) Blondel (1997), Jung and Shapiro (1995).

Whatever the intricacies of this debate, before the first "real" democratic elections of 1994 and prior to the subsequent national elections of 1999 and 2004, none doubted that the ANC was going to win and this ensured that the queries about the durability of the ruling party's dominance framed pre-electoral speculation. This led to various prognoses and questions alike. However, the working hypothesis is that, whilst the 2004 elections have for the moment extended ANC dominance electorally, there is some evidence of underlying change and new developments within the party and the political system which could erode this in the years ahead; and which could boost opposition. Then the questions may be asked; how can opposition utilize these opportunities? Would future elections see a consolidation of, or further fragmentation of, a hitherto divided opposition? What impact would recurrent ANC victories have upon the quality and future direction of South African democracy? All these will be looked into in this research work, but, before proceeding, I would like to project some views of the democratic theorists on the concepts of democracy and opposition which would help in the classification of governments as democratic or non-democratic.

[25] Frederick van Zyl Slabbert (et al), *Comrades in Business: Post-liberation politics in South Africa*, Cape Town, Tafelberg Publishers, 1997. Introduction.

**The Meaning of Democracy:**

The concept of democracy as a form of government goes back to the Greek philosophers. The term "Democracy" is derived from two Greek words – Demos (or people) and Krato (rule). In simple terms, then, democracy is the rule of the people, by the people, for the people. Simple as this definition might appear to be, societies and groups within society have historically fought over who exactly "the people" are; leading to conflicts and deprivations.

Today however, there seems to be broad agreement that democracy is a system of governance where power and civic responsibility are, ideally exercised directly by all citizens. Unfortunately, the practice is different as the 'people' typically exercise their power indirectly through elected representatives. Thus according to Schmitter and Karl (1991), modern democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and co-operation of the elected representatives.[26]For Robert Dahl (1971), it is the responsiveness of government to the preferences of its citizens (who are in theory 'political equals' of the rulers), that is the key characteristics of democracy[27]. Such responsiveness requires that citizens have opportunities to formulate their preferences, articulate them and have them considered in the conduct of the business of government. These credentials of democracy are in turn, dependent on the following institutional guarantees that are central to the proverbial "Western" liberal democracies:

Freedom to form and join organizations (such as political parties);

Freedom of expression;

The right to alternative sources of information, guaranteed, among other things, by a free press that is unencumbered by restrictive state legislation;

Right to vote or be voted into public office;

Regular, free and fair elections; and

[26] Schmitter, P.C and Terry L. Karl, Journal of Democracy, Vol.2, No. 3.,p.76
[27] Dahl Robert, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971. P19

> The right to private property. More recently, the list has been expanded to include the "right" to good governance.[28]

The modern usage of the term democracy dates from the revolutionary upheavals in Western society at the end of the eighteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century, three general approaches emerged in the debates over the meaning of democracy. As a form of government, democracy has been defined in terms of sources of authority for government, purposes served by government and procedures for constituting government[29]. But this definition is entangled with very serious problems of ambiguity and imprecision because of the maneuvering by practitioners; which creates the need for a procedural definition.

In some other governmental systems people become leaders by reason of birth, wealth, violence, corruption, learning, appointment or examination. The central procedure of representative democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern. One of the most important modern formulations of this concept of democracy was by Joseph Schumpeter in 1942 (Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy 1942). He spelt out the deficiencies of what he termed the "classical theory of democracy" which defined democracy in terms of "the will of the people" (source) and "the common good" (purpose)[30]. In his condemnation of these approaches to the subject, Schumpeter advanced what he labeled "another theory of democracy" in which he stated that democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote[31]. His most cogent defence of democracy is his claim that electoral competition lessens the possibility of tyranny.[32]

I quite agree with this Schumpeterian mode of procedural concept of democracy; because of the fact that it is absolutely necessary to draw distinctions between rationalistic, utopian, idealistic definitions

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[28] Kiiza Julius, 'The Role of Opposition Parties in a Democracy', A paper presented at the Regional Conference on Political Parties and Democratization in East Africa, Impala Hotel Arusha, 25-27 August, 2005.
[29] Huntington Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1991. P6
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid.P8
[32] Klosko George, 'Democracy and Liberty: Extending the paradigm in the Review of Politics, vol.67, winter 2005, No.1 P.136

(on one hand) and empirical, descriptive, institutional and procedural definitions on the other; since it will only be useful if the definition provides analytical precision and empirical referents so as to know why some develop and collapse.

Following in the Schumpeterian tradition and in defence of democracy is Winston Churchill with his famous dictum that "Democracy is the worst form of government except for all others".[33] Samuel Huntington (1991) defined a twentieth-century political system as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote[34]. This definition is more acceptable and analytical since it draws from two dimensions – contestations and participation – which Robert Dahl saw as critical to his realistic democracy or "polyarchy". It also implies the existence of those civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns[35].

These procedural definitions of democracy provide a number of bench-marks; grouped largely along Dahl's two dimensions – that make it possible to judge to what extent political systems are democratic, to compare systems and to analyze whether systems are becoming more or less democratic. To the extent for instance that a political system denies voting participation to part of its society – as the South African system did to the over 80% of its black population during the period of apartheid; as Switzerland did to the 50% of its population that was female; or as the United States did to the 10% of its population that were Southern blacks – it is undemocratic. Similarly, a system is undemocratic to the extent that no opposition is permitted in elections or that the opposition is curbed or harassed in what it can do, or that opposition newspapers are censored or closed down, or that votes are manipulated.

The procedural approach to democracy accords with the common sense that military coups, censorship, rigged elections, coercion, harassment of opposition, jailing of political opponents, prohibition of political meetings are incompatible with democracy. Therefore when this approach is

[33] Ibid
[34] Huntington Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1991. P7
[35] Robert Dahl's "A preface to democratic theory" (http://www.towson.edu/~roberts/339/p339ho04.htm)

applied to conditions of democracy to existing world political systems, it can be deduced countries that are clearly democratic and those that are not or those that fall somewhere in –between. Political regimes will never fit perfectly into intellectually defined boxes and any system of classification has to accept the existence of ambiguous, borderline and mixed cases. For instance, the transition of governments saw Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay being more democratic in 1986 than they were in 1976. Historically, the Kuomintang (KMT) system on Taiwan for instance combined some elements of authoritarianism, democracy and totalitarianism. In addition, governments that had democratic origins may end democracy by abolishing or severely limiting democratic procedures, as in Korea, Turkey in the late 1950's and in the Philippines in 1972[36].

Notwithstanding all these difficulties in the classification of regimes in terms of their degree of procedural democracy, it is in my view that if popular election of the top decision makers is the essence of democracy, then the critical point in the process of democratization is the replacement of a government that was not chosen this way by one that is selected in a free, open and fair election. The overall process of democratization before and after that election, however is usually complex and prolonged since it will involve bringing about the end of the non-democratic regime, the inauguration of the democratic regime and then the consolidation of the democratic system.

This notwithstanding, Huntington (1991) listed various connotations of democracy to different people. According to him, first, democracy should have much more sweeping and idealistic connotations. To some people, "true democracy" means liberte, egalite, fraternite, effective citizen control over policy, responsible government, honesty and openness in politics, informed and rational deliberations, equal participation and power and various other civic virtues[37]. Elections, which are free and fair, are the inescapable sine qua non of democracy; and although government produced by such elections may be inefficient, corrupt, irresponsible and incapable of adopting policies demanded by public good, the government will still be seen as democratic, no matter how undesirable they may be.

[36] Huntington Samuel P., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1991. P8

[37] Ibid.P9

Second, implicit in the concept of democracy are the limitations on power. Conceivably, a society could choose its political leaders through democratic means, but these political leaders might not exercise real power. They may be simply the fronts or puppets of some other group. To the extent that the most powerful collective decision makers are not chosen through elections, the political system is not democratic. If those who were democratically elected (decision makers) do not exercise total power; they share power with other groups in the society; if those democratically elected decision makers become, however, simply a façade for the exercise of much greater power by a non-democratically chosen group, then clearly that political system is not democratic[38]. Legitimate questions may be raised for instance, as to whether the elected governments in Japan in the late 20's and in Guatemala in the late 1980's were sufficiently dominated by their military as not to be truly democratic. It is also easy for critics of a government to allege that elected officials are simply the "tools" of some other group or that they exercise their authority only on the sufferance of and within severe constraints set by some other group. In my own thinking, I believe that such allegations, which were often made, may or may not be true. But they should not be judged to be true until they have been demonstrated to be true; and this might be quite difficult to be proven sometimes; although not impossible.

A third issue concerns the fragility or stability of a democratic political system; which could incorporate into the definition of democracy a concept of institutionalization. This typically refers to the degree to which the political system may be expected to remain in existence. Stability is the central dimension in the analysis of any political system. A political system may, however be more or less democratic or more or less stable. Systems that may be appropriately classified as equally democratic may differ greatly in their stability. For instance, in its survey of freedom in the world published at the beginning of 1984, Freedom House quite reasonably classified both New Zealand and Nigeria as "free". When that judgment was made, freedom may well have been no less in the latter than it was in the former. It was however much less stable: a military coup on new years' day 1984 effectively ended Nigerian democracy[39]. Democratic and non-democratic systems may be created but they may or may not endure. One of the major concerns of this thesis is to find out what

[38] Diamond Larry and Plattner Marc. F (eds.), *The Global Divergence of Democracies*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2001. introduction P. xiii
[39] 'The Third Wave: New Democracies in the 1990's and Beyond' (http://www.ccd21.org/library_thirdwave.htm)

should be done to ensure that the South African democracy stood the test of "democratic consolidation" through the institutionalization of the opposition.

Fourth, there is the issue of whether to treat democracy and non democracy as a dichotomous or continuous variable. Many analysts have preferred the latter approach and have developed measures of democracy combining indicators of fairness of elections, restrictions on political parties, freedom of press and so on. This approach is useful for some purposes, such as identifying variations in the degree of democracy among countries (United States, Sweden, France, Japan etc) that would normally be considered to be variations in the degree of authoritarianism in non-democratic countries. But this approach does however pose many problems, such as the weighting of indicators. Even when analysts use somewhat different measures, their judgments as to which political systems are democratic and which one are not correlate to an extremely high degree.

Fifth, most non-democratic regimes do not have electoral competition and widespread voting participation (USSR exempted). Apart from these shared negative characteristics, they have little else in common such as absolute monarchies, bureaucratic empires, oligarchies, aristocracies, constitutional regimes with limited suffrage, personal despotisms, fascist and communist regimes, military dictatorships and other types of governance, like apartheid etc. Some of these forms were more prevalent in previous eras while some are relatively modern; for instance, the emergence of totalitarianism regimes in the twentieth century after the beginning of democratization; with an attempt for mass mobilization of their citizenry to serve the purposes of the regime. The features or characteristics of this type of non-democratic government include a single party, usually led by one man, a pervasive and powerful secret police; a highly developed ideology setting forth the ideal society which is enforced upon the citizenry and which the totalitarian movement is committed to realizing; government penetration and control of mass communications and all or most social and economic organizations[40]. All these characteristics are in open conflict with the ideals and essence of democracy which after the discourse in this research will help in ascertaining the proper placement of the South African democracy as truly democratic or not.

[40] Diamond Larry and Plattner Marc. F (eds.), *The Global Divergence of Democracies*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press 2001). introduction.

As Dahl still maintains that democracy rests on compromise, the Madisonian theory of democracy is an effort to bring off a compromise between the power of majorities and the power of minorities, between the political equality of all adult citizens on the one side and the desire to limit their sovereignty on the other".[41]It follows therefore that the culture of democracy rests on the principle of majority rule, coupled with tolerance of dissenting views. Democracy also calls for the zealous protection of the fundamental rights of individuals, disadvantaged groups and minorities, even when they disagree with the ideology, policies and programs of the ruling party. This suggests that a vibrant opposition is possible and desirable.

This paper is of the view that an institutionalised and vigorous parliamentary opposition will be pivotal to the sustenance and consolidation of any liberal democracy, including that of South Africa; and this has influenced the analysis of this work.

[41] Robert Dahl "A Preface to Democratic Theory" (http://www.towson.edu/~roberts/339/p339ho04.htm)