

Likely Electoral Setback to African National Congress (ANC) in 2024 Elections in Republic of South Africa (RSA) and Regional Ripple Effects: Options for Pakistan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Likely Electoral Setback to African National Congress (ANC) in 2024 elections in Republic of South Africa (RSA) and regional ripple effects: Options for Pakistan

The African National Congress (ANC) has withstood its dominance in South Africa since 1994. The upcoming elections in South Africa- which are scheduled to take place on May 29- indicate a notable departure from this trajectory. The data collected through surveys indicates a substantial decline in the ANC's vote share at national level. Where historically, the party used to enjoy majority position, this time, the vote share has dropped to below 50 percent, indicating a deviation in the pattern. The party's plummeting popularity since 2007 can be attributed to the growing disconnect with the South African populace, increasing perceptions of party's systemic corruption, upsurge in youth unemployment, and poor service delivery. This deviation in South Africa is likely to impact economic and political landscape in the region, influencing overall regional geopolitical dynamics in the coming years. Firstly, the electoral outcome could have possible regional ramifications since it has a potential to impact South Africa's stance within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) framework. It can further prompt shifts in diplomatic engagement, policy alignment, and collaborative efforts on regional development initiatives. Secondly, it is likely that the electoral outcome could also influence South Africa's relationship with the African Union (AU), impacting its leadership position, advocacy efforts for African unity and development, and diplomatic strategies on the continental stage. Thirdly, this divergence highlights prospects for the improvement of ties between Pretoria and Washington. Traditionally, ANC enjoyed cordial relations with Moscow- primarily because of the latter's support during the struggle against apartheid; but, the former's decline could open new diplomatic avenues for the state. Lastly, with regards to Pakistan, Islamabad has always maintained good ties with the ANC- marked by unwavering solidarity during the anti-apartheid struggle. Pakistan honoured Nelson Mandela with prestigious awards, such as the *Nishan-e-Pakistan* and *Nishan-e-Quaid-e-Azam*- honouring his struggle for human rights. As ANC's popularity shifts, Islamabad must diversify engagements in Pretoria. Strengthening relations with varied political actors in South Africa ensures continuity and resilience in Pakistan-South Africa diplomacy.

Policy Recommendations

- To diversify its diplomatic outreach within South Africa, Pakistan should engage and collaborate with multiple political actors and stakeholders. This strategy can be helpful in mitigating the impact of political transitions on bilateral ties by cultivating robust connections across the political spectrum. The establishment of a task force under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could encourage collaboration and dialogue in order to ensure continuity in cordial bilateral ties.
- Establish a committee under the Ministry of Commerce to encourage trade events in South Africa. The committee should include multiple stakeholders from Pakistani business associations. Promotional activities should also be organized in order to strengthen partnerships and networking, with an aim to address Pakistan's trade deficit and to expedite Pakistan's exports.
- To foster cultural engagement, Pakistan should promote cultural exchanges, academic collaborations, tourism, and people-to-people contacts to strengthen the bond between Pakistan and South Africa, transcending political transitions.

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Issue

The policy brief aims to analyse the challenges likely to be faced by African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa's upcoming 2024 elections, along with their regional ramifications. It underscores the repercussions of electoral setback to ANC on Pretoria's socioeconomic and political landscape, while assessing options for Pakistan in the light of political transition in South Africa.

Analysis

The African National Congress (ANC) has withstood its dominance in South Africa since 1994. The upcoming elections in South Africa- which are scheduled to take place on May 29- indicate a notable departure from this trajectory.¹ The data collected through surveys accentuates a substantial decline in the ANC's vote share at national level.² Where historically, the party used to enjoy majority position, this time, the vote share has dropped to below 50 percent- indicating a deviation in the pattern and a potential transition towards coalition governance in the country's political landscape.³

Founded in 1912, the African National Congress (ANC) has been a key figure in South Africa's history, rising to prominence as leaders in the anti-apartheid movement.⁴ Governed by moral legitimacy, the ANC has influenced foreign affairs, trade, and domestic policy, shaping the nation's trajectory since its inception. Over the years, it has played a pivotal role in fostering a more racially inclusive society in the nation of nearly 60 million people, which boasts the third-largest African economy.⁵ However, the shifting political landscape and potential loss of ANC's absolute majority signal a significant

¹ Damian Zane, "South Africa election 2024: When is the poll and what is at stake for the ANC?," *BBC News*, March 27, 2024 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68590538>

² Joseph Siegle and Candace Cook, "Africa's 2024 Elections: Challenges and Opportunities to Regain Democratic Momentum," *African Centre for Strategic Studies*, January 17, 2024 (updated on March 15, 2024).

<https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2024-elections/>

³ <https://www.africanews.com/2024/03/11/south-africas-ruling-anc-not-likely-to-hold-majority-survey//>

⁴ <https://www.anc1912.org.za/history/>

⁵ Ralph Mathekga, "South Africa's upcoming election could change everything," *GIS Reports*, February 29, 2024, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/south-africas-upcoming-election-could-change-everything/>

turning point in South African politics. The party's plummeting popularity since 2007 can be attributed to the growing disconnect with the South African populace, increasing perceptions of party's systemic corruption, upsurge in youth unemployment, and poor service delivery, including electricity blackouts. South Africa faces challenges of growing inequality, poverty, and high youth unemployment, with over 60 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds jobless.⁶ The ANC's prolonged dominance makes it difficult to avoid accountability for these widespread grievances. Nonetheless, the ANC still maintains its political dominance in South Africa, despite potentially securing less than a majority of votes.

The ANC's 1994 policy document, "ANC Foreign Policy in a New Democratic South Africa," outlined seven principles guiding South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy.⁷ These included Human Rights, democracy promotion, respect for justice and international law, peaceful conflict resolution, prioritization of African interests, interdependence, and reflection of democratic values. These principles facilitated South Africa's reintegration into the international community, enhancing perceptions of its moral standing and legitimacy.⁸

Potential Opposition Parties to ANC

The primary opposition, led by John Steenhuisen, is the Democratic Alliance (DA), which garners substantial support, accounting for a quarter to a third of the electorate.⁹ The DA's platform emphasizes good governance and anti-corruption efforts but contends with perceptions of being predominantly white-led. To fortify its position, the DA has forged an alliance, known as the Multi-Party Charter for South Africa, with six predominantly smaller parties.¹⁰

Furthermore, the ANC confronts a significant challenge from the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), helmed by former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema.¹¹ The EFF

⁶ Mathekga, 2024

⁷ https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Govern_Political/ANC_Foreign.html

⁸ https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Govern_Political/ANC_Foreign.html

⁹ Siegle and Cook, 2024

¹⁰ Siegle and Cook, 2024

¹¹ Nathanael Grant Joseph, "The Economic Freedom Fighters and the Dynamics of Insurgent Practice in South Africa." PhD diss., *University of Pittsburgh*, 2021 http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/42027/1/Joseph_Final.pdf

advocates populist measures such as state-provided housing and nationalization, drawing approximately 10 percent of the electorate according to polls.¹² Additionally, the possibility of disgruntled ANC supporters abstaining from voting adds to electoral uncertainty, signalling a potential shift towards coalition politics in South Africa. This transition underscores the need for adeptness in power-sharing and compromise among political factions.

Regional Ripple Effects

The electoral setback for the ANC in 2024 elections has the potential to resonate throughout the region, influencing political and economic dynamics in neighbouring countries and shaping regional geopolitics in the years ahead.

Firstly, South Africa under the leadership of ANC has successfully developed positive relations with all nations, particularly its neighbours in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other members of the African Union. The former is a regional economic community (REC) comprising 15 countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.¹³ The objectives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are centred on fostering development, economic growth, poverty alleviation, and improving the standard of living for the people of southern Africa.¹⁴ These goals aim to support socially disadvantaged communities through the promotion of regional integration and cooperation. For example, the Trans-Kalahari Highway project, linking South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia, is an emblem of a collaborative effort aimed at fostering trade and transportation at the regional level.¹⁵ The election outcome may influence South

¹² Siegle and Cook, 2024

¹³ Nelius Boshoff, "South–South research collaboration of countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)." *Scientometrics* 84, no. 2 (2010): 481-503 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220365042_South-South_research_collaboration_of_countries_in_the_Southern_African_Development_Community_SADC

¹⁴ Andrew Osehi Enaifoghe, "South Africa's politics of regional integration in SADC and its socio-economic implications." *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2019): 85-106. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/e26664081>

¹⁵ Katrina Michelle Simon-Agolory, "From Botswana to Namibia: getting the Trans-Kalahari railway on track." *Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-03-2018-0047>

Africa's approach to regional cooperation and integration within the SADC framework, potentially leading to changes in diplomatic engagement, policy alignment, and collaborative efforts on regional development initiatives.

Secondly, the African Union (AU) holds a major aim of promoting peace, unity, and development throughout Africa, and serves as a useful platform for a collective action. The focus areas of AU include governance, economic integration, peacekeeping, and working on advancing Africa's influence at global level.¹⁶ The ANC's leadership in South Africa has facilitated the country's involvement in AU development initiatives. South Africa's backing of programs such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) underscores its commitment to enhancing Africa's socio-economic development and governance standards.¹⁷ The ANC's electoral setback could reshape its relationship with the African Union, potentially impacting its leadership position, advocacy efforts for African unity and development, and diplomatic strategies on the continental stage.

ANC's Moscow-Washington Relations

Thirdly, ANC has historical ties to Moscow, dating back to the Cold War anti-apartheid struggle, strengthening its current relations with Russia. During the 1960s, the Soviet Union provided significant support to the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, offering arms, ammunition, equipment, and military training to its members and leadership when other sources of support were lacking.¹⁸ This bond is reinforced by Pretoria's recollection of Washington's delayed actions, designating the ANC as a terrorist organization and delaying sanctions against the apartheid government until 1986, further solidifying its affinity for Moscow.¹⁹ That's why Pretoria has abstained from voting on

¹⁶ "African Union." Retrieved from Constitutive Act of African Union: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf. Accessed on 27 (2019).

¹⁷ Fombad, Charles Manga, Zein Kebonang, and Henning Melber. *AU, NEPAD and the APRM: democratisation efforts explored*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2006.

¹⁸ Crystal Orderson, "A 'Russian love affair': Why South Africa stays 'neutral' on war," *Aljazeera*, June 2, 2023 <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/6/2/a-russian-love-affair-why-south-africa-stays-neutral-on-war>

¹⁹ CHRISTOPHER S. CHIVVIS, ZAINAB USMAN, BEATRIX GEAGHAN-BREINER, "South Africa in the Emerging World Order," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 21, 2023 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/12/21/south-africa-in-emerging-world-order-pub-91310>

Western backed U.N. resolutions on Ukraine war.²⁰ Also South Africa's inclusion in BRICS not only cultivated amicable relations with Russia but also underscores its recognition of the partnership with China.

Pakistan and Republic of South Africa

Lastly, under the leadership of the ANC, Pakistan and South Africa have built historical ties during the anti-apartheid struggle, fostering mutual respect and solidarity. President Nelson Mandela was honored with Pakistan's *Nishan-e-Pakistan* and *Nishan-e-Quaid-e-Azam* awards during his visit, following his release from a 27-year prison term.²¹ The security relations between both the countries span defence cooperation, arms trade, joint military exercises, and collaboration on peacekeeping missions and non-proliferation efforts, reflecting a multifaceted partnership.²² Moreover, since the removal of trade embargoes and sanctions by the EU and US in 1994, Pakistan and South Africa have enjoyed cordial and amiable trade relations. In the fiscal year 2021-22, the total bilateral trade between Pakistan and South Africa amounted to US\$ 2 billion, with exports from Pakistan valued at US\$ 238 million and imports from South Africa at US\$ 1835 million.²³ The top three export items from Pakistan were cotton fabric, paper and paperboard, and home textiles, while the primary imports from South Africa included coal, iron waste, and products of iron and steel. Additionally, approximately 200,000 Pakistanis presently reside in South Africa, many of whom are employed in small businesses.²⁴ The ANC's electoral setback in South Africa could bring about uncertainties in its relations with Pakistan, yet it may also pave the way for both nations to revitalize and broaden their bilateral cooperation, aligning with mutual interests and priorities. Therefore, Pakistan needs to diversify its diplomatic engagement in South Africa and foster people-to-people exchanges.

²⁰ "South Africa is 'actively non-aligned' on Ukraine war, says government," *Reuters*, May 14, 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-africa-is-actively-non-aligned-ukraine-war-says-government-2023-05-13/>

²¹ <https://mofa.gov.pk/africa>

²² Tariq Khan, "PAKISTAN'S SECURITY RELATIONS WITH KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS." *Margalla Papers* 27, no. 1 (2023): 123-137. <https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/156/133>

²³ <https://mofa.gov.pk/africa>

²⁴ <https://mofa.gov.pk/africa>

Recommendations

- To broaden its diplomatic engagement in South Africa, Pakistan should initiate dialogue and collaboration with diverse political parties and stakeholders. This strategy ensures sustained bilateral relations amid political transitions and cultivates robust connections across the political spectrum. Establishing a committee or task force under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would facilitate dialogue and collaboration, ensuring continuity in bilateral relations amidst political changes.
- Establish a committee under the Ministry of Commerce comprising representatives from Pakistani business associations to identify and participate in trade events in South Africa. Organize promotional activities to enhance networking and foster partnerships, prioritizing efforts to promote Pakistani exports and address the trade deficit.
- To foster cultural engagement, Pakistan should promote cultural exchanges, academic collaborations, tourism, and people-to-people contacts to strengthen the bond between Pakistan and South Africa, transcending political transitions.