



Social Discontent and Voting Behaviour in South Africa's 2024 General Elections: The Transition from One-party Dominance to a Multi-party Coalition

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper was to analyse South Africa's transition from one-party dominance to a multi-party coalition government, with specific reference to the 2024 general elections in South Africa. Through the use of secondary data collection, the paper critically analysed the nexus between social discontent and voting behaviour in South Africa's 2024 general elections. Using rational choice theory, the paper argued that voting behaviour in the 2024 elections was influenced by people's choice to vote for a political party that promised to improve their welfare by addressing existing socio-economic challenges. The study found that the African National Congress (ANC), which has been a single dominant party in national government for 30 years, has failed to address pressing challenges that cause social discontent such as poor service delivery, poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and the energy crisis. As a result, the party fell below the threshold to govern on its own, leading to the formation of a multi-party coalition government with former opposition parties named the Government of National Unity (GNU). The paper concluded that parties that form multi-party coalition government should prioritise people's interests such as mitigating existing social discontents, because failure to do so shall influence voting behaviour in the upcoming election cycles, which might affect their electoral support as was the case with the ANC's decline of support post-2024 general elections. This study anticipates making a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge by offering practical insights into the nexus between social discontent and voting behaviour in South Africa's elections. In addition, the study provides recommendations on how the newly formed government of national unity can mitigate the existing social discount among electorates.

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INTRODUCTION

Elections are at the heart of democratic societies, as they shape the composition of government and determine policies that govern the country.¹ The year 1994 marked a new era in South Africa as the

¹ Waiphot Kulachai, Unisa Lerdtoomsakul, and Patipol Homyamyon, "Factors Influencing Voting Decisions: A Comprehensive Literature R" *Social Sciences* 12, no. 9 (August 22, 2023): 469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ss12090469>.

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Table of Contents Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S

1. Understanding the eBook Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S User Reviews and Ratings
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S Free and Paid eBooks
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S Public Domain eBooks
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S eBook Subscription Services
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S eBook Formats

- ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S Compatibility with Devices
 - Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Interactive Elements Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 8. Staying Engaged with Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Setting Reading Goals Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Voting Behaviour And General Elections Access To Politics S
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
 14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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