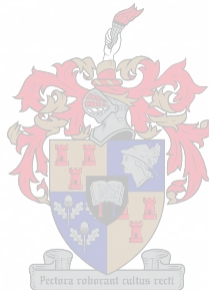


The Cost of South Africa's 1999 National Elections - Too High a Price for Democracy?

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Arts degree in Political Science**



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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

ABSTRACT:

This thesis addresses the financial cost implications incurred during elections, with special focus on South Africa. The discussion is conducted by way of comparing South Africa to countries like India, Australia, Israel and Mexico.

Democracy entails more than merely conducting periodic elections that are free and fair, but it cannot be less. To a large extent free and fair elections are indicative of the governing authority's commitment to democracy. This commitment however, does have financial implications. A question that is very rarely addressed relates to the financial cost implications that accompany this commitment. For a country such as South Africa with a range of other pressing socio-economic issues, the cost factor with regard to the voting process is of vital importance.

The South African electoral experience, in comparison to that of other developing countries, is presently a very costly undertaking at a conservative average cost of more than US \$13.00 per vote. Depending on how the expenses are calculated, this figure takes on hefty proportions.

To an extent the tardiness on the part of the South African Government in appointing the Electoral Commission to conduct the 1999 elections and the subsequent conflicts regarding the budgetary allocations to the Electoral Commission (EC) combined with poor electoral planning, resulted in the EC having to resort to very expensive technology in order to ensure that a free and fair election would be conducted on the date set by the President.

Apart from addressing the above mentioned issues, relating to the cost expenditure during elections, the assignment also addresses possible ways to reduce these costs incurred.

ABSTRAK:

Hierdie tesis fokus op die finansiële uitgawes wat tydens verkiesings aangegaan word, met spesifieke verwysing na Suid-Afrika. Die bespreking geskied aan die hand van 'n vergelyking met lande soos Indië, Australië, Israel en Mexico.

Demokrasie behels baie meer as net die hou van periodieke vrye en regverdige verkiesings, maar dit kan ook nie enigiets minder as dit behels nie. Vrye en regverdige verkiesings is tot 'n groot mate 'n bewys van 'n bepaalde regime se verbintenis tot die demokrasie. Hierdie verbintenis het egter finansiële implikasies vir 'n land. Die finansiële koste verbonde aan hierdie "verbintenis" is egter selde 'n punt van akademiese bespreking. Met die aantal sosio-ekonomiese vraagstukke waarmee die Suid-Afrikaanse regering op die oomblik gekonfronteer word, is dit van kardinale belang dat dringende aandag geskenk word aan pogings om die koste-faktor van die verkiesingsproses so laag as moontlik te hou.

In vergelyking met die gemiddelde koste wat verbonde is aan verkiesings in ander ontwikkelende lande, was die 1999 Suid-Afrikaanse verkiesing (teen sowat US \$13,00 per kieser) 'n duur onderneming en afhangende van hoe die kostes bereken word, onttaard hierdie bedrag in 'n aardige een.

Tot 'n groot mate was swak verkiesingsbeplanning die oorsaak dat daar tot duur tegnologie gewend moes om te verseker dat die verkiesing vry en regverdig verloop, soos op die datum wat deur die President bepaal is. Die laat aanwysing van die 1999 Verkiesingskommissie en die daaropvolgende konflik oor die verkiesingsbegroting, het ook bygedra tot die feit dat duur tegnologie ingespan moes word.

Afgesien van bogenoemde aspekte, bespreek die tesis ook moontlike maniere om toekomstige verkiesings in Suid-Afrika teen 'n laer koste te hou.

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CHAPTER 1

Background to the Elections and Problem Statement

1.1 INTRODUCTION

27 April 1994 marked the official beginning of a new chapter in the political history of South Africa, a chapter which was heralded by the appointment of F.W. De Klerk as State President in 1989. Its inability to sustain the financial costs of apartheid, together with an increase in internal political resistance from the black populace, caused the government to yield to black demands for political equality. Eventually in February 1990 the path was cleared for a democratic settlement accompanied by amongst others the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of Black resistance movements (Kotzé, 2000: 79-81).

The 1994 national elections conjure memories up of a resurgence in political violence in the run-up to the elections, and for the symbolism attached to the elections. After years of struggling for political, social and economic emancipation, South Africa's black population shrugged off the yoke of a political system based on racial segregation and white superiority, which stripped many of them of their dignity and self esteem.

These elections coincided with, what Huntington (1997:4) calls, "the Third Wave of Democracy". This "third wave" of democracy was initiated in Portugal in 1974; the scale and pace of which surpassed that of the previous two waves. The first long wave of democracy started in the early 19th century and by 1920 there were 30 democracies in the world. By 1942, the number was reduced to about half a dozen because of the rise of fascist and authoritarian regimes. Following World War II, the second short wave of democracy increased the number of democratic regimes in the world to just over 30, but this too was followed by the collapse of democracy in many of these countries as they were taken over by Communist regimes. The third wave, as posited earlier, brought about another increase in the number of democratic states in

the world. According to Pastor (1999:4), in 1990 there were 59 democratic states in the world and by 1999 there were 117 states that were classified democracies.

Five years after the first post-Apartheid elections, on 2 June 1999, South Africans voted in the country's second national democratic elections. These were described as free and fair by some domestic and international observers. The group of observers sent by the Commonwealth, however, refrained from using the terms "free" and "fair" to describe the elections. They chose to describe the elections as "sufficiently expressing the will of the South African people". To what extent their assessment clouded the credibility of the final results, was in any event a debatable issue. (For a detailed discussion see Hofmeyr, 2000)

The South African electoral process, like most other processes of this nature, consisted of at least three electoral phases or stages: (1) the pre-election period which included preparatory work on the registration list, the campaign, access to the media, and the use of State resources; (2) the election period, consisting of the voting on election day and the subsequent vote count; and, (3) the post-election period, comprising of ballot recounts and adjudication of complaints (Pastor, 1998:159; Choe and Darnolf, 1999). During the first phase some scholarly concern was raised with regard to the financial cost of the elections (see Sulcas, 1999 and Lodge, 1999: 18-19). According to Barrell in the *Daily Mail & Guardian* (March 5, 1999) "By the time the ballots have all been counted ... more than R1000 will have been spent on each voter."

Both Sulcas (*The Sunday Independent*, 6 June 1999) and Lodge (1999) articulated the notion that too much money was being spent on the South African elections, speculating that by the time the final ballot was counted, the EC was expected to have spent more than R1.35 billion over two years. Although accurate to a certain degree in their contention, Lodge and Sulcas seem to fail to realise that an election, apart from being an instrument through which the ruling elite reasserts and legitimises its positions of power, is also an instrument of job creation (even though it is temporary in nature) and contributes to infrastructural investment (which in itself poses long term cost-saving benefits).

Even when taking into account the cost of the elections held in other states, including for instance India, Australia, Israel and Mexico, it would be premature to assert that the financial cost of the South African elections compares unfavourably with those of the above mentioned states. The cost of the South African electoral experience includes the “indirect” cost calculations (as set out in the following chapters) associated with electoral expenditure.

The aim of the comparison is to put the South African election expenditure in a broader global context and it furthermore allows for an objective judgement as to the manner in which the elections were administered. It should also be borne in mind that country-specific differences (i.e. population density, relative currency values, topography, etc.) trivialise many good comparisons. When dealing with electoral expenses, this factor plays quite a significant role in any comparative deduction that could be drawn in this regard.

As the literature suggests, the cost of conducting elections is influenced by three major capacity-building factors: (a) a country’s experience regarding democratic elections; (b) whether or not the elections are part of a peacekeeping process; and (c) the introduction of sophisticated technology (Lopez-Pintor, 1999 and Reynold and Reily, 1997). It is only fair to mention that the calculated cost of the South African elections, unlike the costs associated with the electoral experience in Australia, India, Israel and Mexico, includes the “indirect” expenses incurred before and during the elections. In addition there are other factors influencing electoral expenses, eg. population density, literacy levels of the adult population and the relative nature of resource expenses between countries (i.e. lower fuel prices in developed countries because of the relative value of currency exchange rates, etc.).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Without wishing to downplay the pivotal role performed by elections in legitimising a new regime and the political system; a country such as South Africa simply cannot afford to overspend on conducting its elections when it is faced with important social and economic issues. Kaiser Nyatumba in the *Cape Times* (June 9, 1999) also expresses this sentiment and uses this as a warning to those in power when he emphasises that “the impoverished masses will not be patient forever.” The normative question that needs to be raised is whether or not democracy and the concomitant liberties it extends to the ordinary citizenry can ever be expressed in monetary terms.

Consequently, the main focus of this thesis will be on the financial costs incurred during the 1999 elections in order to establish whether or not the vast amount of money that was spent could in fact be justified.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the 1999 national elections in South Africa, apart from the ANC's landslide victory, was the cost incurred in running the elections. The underlying principle of this contention is that a country faced with various social problems – a deteriorating health and education system and a spiralling crime rate – cannot continue spending too much money on elections, as it may prove to be a fatal error of judgement in the long run (*Cape Times*, 9 June 1999).

Mattes and Thiel (1998:108) place the social challenges facing South Africa in a broader social context in asserting that “in a poor and grossly unequal society, it is difficult to preach about the value of democracy for realising individual dignity and freedom.” The survival of democracy will be the least of concerns to people whose basic physiological needs (housing, food, etc.) are not being met. This coincides with Bratton's (1998:218) view that South Africans, especially Blacks, have an instrumental view of democracy – associating it with jobs and service delivery – rather than with the intrinsic guarantees of civil and political freedoms. The costs involved in running democratic elections in South Africa, therefore, need to be cut dramatically without sacrificing the legitimacy of the whole process. An area that accounted for heated debate was political party funding during elections. As Lodge (in Barrell,

1999:4) commented: "We may have to look at ways of reducing democracy's price tag in the future... This is a high cost for a country such as ours." Curbing the expenses incurred on the funding of political parties may thus prove to be start in this direction. This study seeks to find explanations for the high cost of the 1999 elections, cognisant that country-specific differences may render obsolete any good comparisons in the international arena. The paper concomitantly explores whether or not it is possible to conduct future elections at a reduced cost.

1.3 PROPOSITIONS

Several different reasons may be posited in order to explain the costs incurred during the South African election process. In the following paragraphs attention will be devoted to the different explanations offered to explain the high costs involved in running democratic elections. These explanations will serve as propositions in this study. Apart from the administrative cost considerations taken into account by Reynold and Reily (1997: 115-119), Lopez-Pintor (1999) asserts that the cost of conducting an election is influenced by two other major capacity-building factors:

(a) a country's experience with democratic elections; and (b) whether or not the elections are part of a broader peacekeeping process. It should be emphasised that most literature omits a third capacity-building factor which influences electoral expenditure, namely the introduction of sophisticated technology to the electoral process. Automation has proven real long-term cost saving benefits but, if mismanaged, is able to inflate electoral expenses in the short term.

1.4 AIM AND PURPOSE

This study is not an essay on different electoral systems, or about choosing an ideal one for South Africa for that matter. The concern of this study is rather the cost incurred during the 1999 electoral process in South Africa, which will be considered

by way of a comparison with other selected democracies, and by examining measures that may be implemented to curb the costs of future elections.

It is, therefore, the aim of this study – after a comparative analysis of the costs incurred during the election processes in countries including Israel, Australia, India and Mexico – to make both suggestions and recommendations as to how the South African election process could be made more cost-efficient whilst simultaneously retaining its legitimacy. Specific attention will be paid to certain areas of expenditure, including overt as well as hidden costs.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although its primary focus is on electoral management bodies, the only study found to be dealing with the financial costs incurred during the election process is a comparative study done by Lopez-Pintor (1999) on electoral expenditure and the factors influencing expenses. However, a country-specific disparity in matters such as relative currency values *vis-à-vis* each other, geographical differences, and population density all influence the relevant cost. Therefore, any analysis that aims to be of any comparative significance should pay due regard to these variances. Indeed, the failure of the study by Lopez-Pintor to take these disparities into account, significantly impairs the comparative value of his study. The study does succeed though in focusing the attention on a field within the electoral studies literature that is in dire need of development. As a consequence, it is fair to assert that studies on elections rarely, if ever, focus on the financial cost incurred by governments in allowing their electorate to exercise their “democratic right” to elect political representatives to both provincial and national legislatures.

This study is significant in that its key focus is on both the direct and indirect costs incurred during the electoral process. As a result, this may serve as a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature regarding the issue of electoral cost in democracies. Its implicit aim is the instigation of more in-depth analyses of this particular feature of electoral studies.

1.6 DATA COLLECTION

The study is explorative-descriptive in nature, and will primarily utilise books, newspapers, academic journals, the Internet, official and unofficial publications from both government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in addition to personal interviews, as sources of information.

Information with regard to the specific countries in the comparative analysis was drawn from their respective electoral commissions' websites. Interviews with the relevant individuals at the IEC and other NGOs were conducted. It is revealing that much of this data coincides in general with what appeared in the popular press.

1.7 DEFINING ELECTIONS

It has been established that the type of electoral system employed significantly influences the cost incurred during the election process. Let us now take a closer look at elections, the type of electoral systems and their importance.

It is not possible for all the citizens of a country to participate directly in the public decision-making process, as it would not only be too time-consuming but also a very costly matter. Consequently they elect political representatives to fulfil that function. In most cases, depending on the performance delivered during his/her time in office, a representative will be elected again and given the task of decision-making on behalf of a particular constituency. According to Jones (in Jennings and Zeigler eds. 1966:21), in theory election time is the period of accounting where the representative is either instructed by the electorate to continue as their representative or his/her mandate is terminated. During this time the candidates discuss and clarify issues and make certain promises to the electorate. As a result elections could be described as issue-orientated events or processes, which are essential instruments of democracy.

Since the Second World War the dominant trend in academic discourse has been to define democracy almost entirely in terms of elections, overemphasising multiparty elections as the foundation for democracy (Huntington, 1997:7; Chege, 1995:47). Democracy is thus viewed as a means of constituting political authority and making it responsible, by means of which the rulers are selected by vote of the ruled. A modern nation-state, according to this procedural definition of democracy, has a democratic political system to the extent that its most powerful decision-makers are selected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and where almost the entire adult population is eligible to vote. Choe and Darnolf (1999), posit that legitimate elections are also necessary for the consolidation of democracy and that a failure of their being perceived as legitimate, may threaten the whole process of democratisation – the transformation from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one.

LeDuc (1996:305) expresses less certainty in drawing such a direct causal relationship between elections and the process of government resulting from such an electoral experience. According to LeDuc (1996:305), “although elections are one of the core institutions in democratic politics, they may reveal either a little or a lot about the process of government that flows from them, as illustrated in the cases of Italy and Japan.” The elections that seemed set to revitalise and refashion Italian democracy in 1994 rather led to renewed political instability six months later. The system of proportional representation resulted in an unstable coalition government. The endless process of attempting to reconcile opposing views led to internal splits and divisions within the government, causing it to collapse. Japan, on the other hand, had three different coalition governments within a year following its 1993 elections. It is evident from this description that the linkage between electoral politics and the actual process of policy making is often quite complicated and indirect (LeDuc in LeDuc, et al., 1996:307).

More apparent is the fact that democracy and elections are not synonymous concepts. However, the existence of free, fair and competitive elections is invariably considered as one of the critical features that define a nation as “democratic” (Bratton, 1998:52), and they are also necessary requisites for a broader democratic consolidation.

According to (Pastor, 1998:154), "Democracy is much more than just having the opportunity to elect public officials, but it cannot be less".

Diamond, too, in his assessment of the procedural definition of democracy, asserts that there is more to democracy than just elections, and consequently draws the distinction between liberal democracy and electoral democracy (in Huntington, 1997:7; and Plattner, 1998:171). According to Huntington (1997:7) liberal democracies are not only characterised by elections. They also have:

- (a) restrictions on the power of the executive;
- (b) independent judiciaries to uphold the rule of law;
- (c) protection for individual rights and liberties; and
- (d) a consideration for minority rights.

On the other hand electoral democracies choose governments during reasonably free and fair elections, but they lack many of the other safeguards for the rights and liberties that are common in liberal democracies. The importance of elections as part of the "democracy package" should not be underestimated because, according to Thakur (1995:220), it is indeed the competition between political parties during election time that gives practical meaning to democracy.

Even more importantly the majority of the electorate should regard the elections as legitimate. This is especially the case in a young democracy with a history of deep racial divisions, such as South Africa. The implication is that the credibility of the electoral process should not be in doubt, for "electoral credibility is the cornerstone of representative democracy" (Bailey and Valenzuela, 1998:47). It is this electoral credibility, according to Bailey and Valenzuela (1998), that will produce "...important immediate effects [like stabilising the political process within the country] and pave the way for democratic deepening", as opposed to the long term effects produced as a result of the consolidation of other democratic institutions.

The notion that an election is more than just a singular activity at a particular point in time is expressed in the works of Dahl (in Harrop and Miller, 1987). Similarly, Schlemmer and Hirschfeld (in Moller and Hanf, 1995:2) state that an election "is a

process rather than an event". According to them, it is a process that starts with the voter education programmes, through to the day the votes are cast, and until the time the results of the elections are announced. Harrop and Miller (1987:2) express the same notion with regard to the definition of "elections," as a process rather than a single event.

However, Heywood (1997:211) have a more limited view of elections, seeing these as "a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people: the electorate". He does not imply that elections are not a process but a single event, but rather that the elections are one event and also part of a wider process - a process which includes amongst others, campaigning and voter education. Heywood (1997:212) further concedes to the popular view of elections as "a mechanism through which politicians can be called to account and forced to introduce policies that somehow reflect public opinion". V.O. Key (in Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge, 1994:7) posits that "unless mass views have some play in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense." This view, professed by Key (in Klingemann, et al. 1994:7), closely coincides more often with the functions of elections rather than the conceptualisation of the concept itself, but it does, however, provide a more enlightened idea regarding the notion surrounding elections.

1.8 FUNCTIONS OF ELECTIONS

To some extent the different kinds of elections and the variety of electoral systems trivialise any generalisation regarding the roles or functions of elections. The adoption of liberal democratic electoral systems associated with the process of democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s, however, contributed to identifying the roles of elections more easily (Heywood, 1997:212). Harrop and Miller (1987) describe two contrasting views of the function of competitive elections:

1. The conventional view (emphasising the 'bottom-up' functions) whereby elections are perceived as mechanisms through which public officials could be called to

account and in some sense be forced to introduce policies that reflect public opinion. V.O. Kelly expressed this view, stating that: "Elections let voters play the rational god of vengeance and reward" (in LeDuc et al. 1996:307).

2. In contrast the radical view of elections (emphasising the 'top-down' functions) perceive elections to be a means through which governments and political elites in society could exercise control over their populations, making them more quiescent, malleable and, ultimately, governable.

Heywood (1997:212) cautions against marginalising elections to a singular character, because: "They (elections) are neither simply mechanisms of public accountability nor a means of ensuring political control... (E)lections... provide the government and the people... with the opportunity to influence one another..."

Probably the most crucial function of elections, according to Reeve and Ware (1992:24), is that they have "the symbolic power in legitimising those in [public] office". Nowhere could this be more true than in the South African case - a country fraught with a torrid political history of racial oppression and one which is still battling with growing political intolerance along ethnic and racial lines (Gouws, 1996). It is a country where those in power can, and to a considerable extent will, use elections to justify particular political and socio-economic interventions. Therefore, elections are more than mere exercises of the public will. The results are interpreted as a mandate to make decisions on behalf of and for the people, regardless of the consequences of such conduct.

This "mandate to make decisions on behalf of the people" more often than not emerges from the type of electoral system in use.

1.9 ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Democracy, according to Lijphart (1994), necessarily means representative democracy in which elected officials make decisions on behalf of the electorate, the body of people who voted them into political office. The indispensable task of electing these representatives is performed by the electoral system.

Electoral systems, according to Krennerich (in Steytler and De Ville eds. 1996:7), could be regarded as a key element of representative democracies. They influence the voting behaviour of the electorate, the election results, and they shape political representation and party systems. Krennerich (1996:7) consequently defines electoral systems, in the same vein as De Ville and Steytler (1996:1) and Lijphart (1994), as mechanisms that: "...determine the rules according to which the voters may express their political preferences and according to which it is possible to convert the votes into parliamentary seats".

Any electoral system should comply with five basic requirements or functional demands, according to De Ville and Steytler (1996:16-18):

1. **Representation:** the electoral system should ensure an adequate representation of minorities and also a fair representation of political parties according to their votes.
2. **Concentration:** this relates to the aggregation of social interests and political opinion in such a way that the political institutions are able to act decisively. The electoral system should enable the formation of an effective parliament based on a reduced number of parties and it should allow for the formation of a stable and effective government based on an absolute parliamentary majority of a party or a party coalition.
3. **Participation:** this criterion determines the extent of voter participation and explores the question of whether or not the voters are in a position to choose between only political parties or also between individual candidates;
4. **Simplicity:** the electoral system should not be too complicated for the electorate and the election administration both to understand and to operate; and lastly

5. **Legitimacy:** the members of the political community, the voters and the electorate should accept the electoral system, the election results and the elected institutions as legitimate.

No particular electoral system ever fulfils all these demands in an absolute manner. Some functional demands are satisfied to a larger extent than others, depending on the electoral system in use. Different functional demands tend to pull the electoral system in different directions (De Ville and Steytler, 1996:17). For example, the demand for increasing the degree of participation within an electoral system, which ensures fair representation, inevitably leads to a more complicated electoral system. In such a case the demand for a simple and easily understandable electoral system may not be satisfied.

The pure proportional representation system complies to the highest possible extent with the demands for fair representation and simplicity, but in general it fails to satisfy the demands for concentration and participation. In essence this stresses the need for multi-functional systems.

According to Krennerich, "The best voting system for any country will not be one which meets any of the criteria completely, but will be one which provides the most satisfactory overall balance between them, taking account of that country's history and current circumstances" (Krennerich, 1996:17). It is thus clear that the evaluation of the respective functional demands cannot be seen in isolation from the particular history of a country and the social and political context in which the electoral system has to function (Butler, Penniman and Ranney, 1981: 8).

In deeply divided societies – as opposed to relative homogenous societies – the representation function is of prime necessity and exceeds in importance all of the other functions. The system's simplicity would be more important in countries with high illiteracy rates than in societies with a fairly low rate of illiteracy.

According to Krennerich (1996) this evaluation of a system's functional demands is not free from the views and interests of the political players involved. In order to

obtain parliamentary representation, the representation function of the system will be of primary concern to small parties. In the case of South Africa it would include parties like the Freedom Front, the Christian Democratic Party and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). In contrast, it would be in the interest of the strongest party, the ANC, to favour the concentration function so as to gain an absolute majority in Parliament.

Therefore, an important issue for lawmakers and politicians, especially in newly democratised countries, is the type of electoral system to be employed in electing the new government. Section 46.(1)(d) of South Africa's Constitution prescribes an electoral system which results "in general, in proportional representation. It also provides for a minimum voting age of 18 in Section 46.(1)(c), and an electorate based on a national common voters' roll - which was not required for the 1994 elections - (46.(1)(b))" (Electoral Institute of South Africa, 1999).

There is an infinite number of electoral systems, but there are two basic principles of representation from which all electoral systems originate. These are (1) the principle of majority representation, and (2) the principle of proportional representation (De Ville and Steytler, 1996:7; Harrop and Miller, 1987; Butler, Penniman and Ranney, 1981; Bogdanor and Butler, 1983). According to De Ville and Steytler, the distinction between these two basic principles of representation is based mainly on their political objectives regarding the outcome of the elections. Whereas the major aim of the principle of majority representation (MR) is to produce a parliamentary majority for one party or a coalition of parties, the major aim of the principle of proportional representation (PR) is to accurately reflect the social forces and political groups in parliament, (De Ville and Steytler, 1996:8).

For the purpose of this study the focus will be placed on the PR-systems of representation, because South Africa employs the closed-list variant of this particular system. Emphasis on this particular electoral system also stems from the notion that in relation to the other types of electoral systems in use, the proportional system is said to be the least expensive to employ.

1.10 PROPORTIONAL SYSTEMS OF REPRESENTATION

According to Harrop and Miller (1987:47; see also Lijphart and Grofman, 1984; Faure, 1996), proportional representation has been used in the past to provide proportional representation for ethnic and religious groups, and for political parties. Harrop and Miller (1987:47) posit that just prior to the First World War, proportional representation was introduced in Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, Moravia, and Finland to give adequate representation to religious and ethnic minorities as a means of integrating them into the wider political system. After the war, PR was introduced to curb the strength of the socialist parties which threatened the livelihood of the old middle-class parties.

For Basson (1984:3) and Faure (1996:193-208) the principle of proportional representation – which have its roots in 19th century liberalism as portrayed in the works of John Stuart Mill – implies that the size of all the groups represented in parliament should be in direct proportion to the number of votes they obtained during the elections. Equally important for our understanding of this particular notion, Bogdanor (1984:46) as well as Lijphart and Grofman (1984:5), posit that proportional representation does not refer to a specific electoral system, but rather to an ideal or principle to which different electoral systems seek to conform, namely the accurate parliamentary representation of all the different groups in society. There are obviously a considerable number of proportional systems. Each of these different systems functions in its specific manner to achieve the common goal of proportionality, and these systems may have different political consequences. The six main types of electoral systems which apply the principle of proportional representation are:

- The Single-Transferable Vote System (STV-system);
- The PR List Systems at the National Level (Pure Proportional System);
- The PR List Systems in Variable Multi-Member Districts;
- The PR List Systems in Multi-Member Districts with Additional Seats at Regional and/or National Level;
- The Mixed-Member Proportional System (Personalised Proportional Representation); and

- The Compensatory System (Mixed-Member Proportional System).

For the purpose of this essay the PR List System at the National Level will be the focus of discussion. The closed list variant is the system used in the South African case. As mentioned above, this is relevant to the administrative factors that influence the cost of the election process.

1.11 SUMMARY

At the most fundamental level elections establish the norms by which political power could be wielded in a society. It helps to determine *how* a country is governed, *who* the people are who would exercise that power, and *what* a government in power actually does (LeDuc in LeDuc et al. 1996:344). Elections are thus important in that:

1. They are one means of transmitting demands to the authorities, and filtering them through the procedures of constructing manifestos, planning campaigns, etc..
2. They are indicators of support for the incumbents.
3. To a significant extent elections determine the priorities in policy outputs of the governing authorities, since their re-election depends on the adherence (if only partially) to the will and demands of the electorate, and
4. It is one of the ways in which the public and the politicians communicate with each other. The elections provide feedback in such a way as to improve the responsiveness of government (LeDuc et al., 1996; Lijphart and Grofman, 1984; Reeve and Ware, 1992; Heywood, 1997; Harrop and Miller, 1987).

The contention of this chapter is that elections are important components of any democratic system, and that the choice of electoral system could significantly affect both the political stability of a country and also the cost of the election process. It is true, however, that democracy entails certainly much more than periodically electing public officials, but it cannot be less than that. The question that subsequently arises is what financial outlay any state, and especially developing democracies, could afford

to devote to this crucial component of democracy when such a state is faced with much more pressing socio-economic issues.

A further contention of this chapter is that extravagant electoral expenditure is no guarantor of free and fair elections. The pivotal factors are sound electoral planning and simplicity, in other words working within the confines and limitations of the electorate.

In the next sections the paper will concentrate on the following:

Chapter 2: A discussion on the South African Electoral Machinery: its Features and Cost Implications;

Chapter 3: A Comparative Look at the 1999 South African Election: Overt as well as Hidden Costs, and Comparing it to the Cases of India, Australia, Israel and Mexico;

Chapter 4: Political Party Funding and the Implications of the overall Cost of the Elections;

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Summary and Recommendations with regard to the Areas in the Electoral Process where financial Expenditures could be reduced.

CHAPTER 2

The South African Electoral Machinery : Its Features and Cost Implications

2.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a national party list system. It is easy to comprehend the basic principle underlying this system, according to Farrell (1997:60). Each party contending in the elections, draws up a list of candidates in each constituency – which may vary in size, eg. provinces of country as a whole – and the size of these lists is based on the number of seats to be filled. In its most elementary form, voters vote for political parties instead of individual candidates. The proportion of votes that each party receives determines the number of seats it may take up in parliament. It is important also to bear in mind that the degree of proportionality is maximised in the event that the entire country is used as one vast constituency, as in the cases of for instance Israel and South Africa.

There are two variants in the list system: (a) the 'closed' list or non-preferential system; and (b) the 'open' list system. For the most part the 'closed' list system is used in “newer” democracies such as Argentina, Israel, Portugal, Spain and South Africa (Farrell, 1997:73; see also Bogdanor, 1984; De Ville and Steytler, 1996; and Lijphart, 1994). This is so because of the advantages the ‘closed’ list system poses to party leaders.

It is not difficult to see what the advantages are for the party elite of such a system, since they can draw up their lists in such a manner so as to maximise the possibility that their preferred candidates be elected. There are also clear advantages to this system wherever a party wishes to increase its proportion of, for instance, female MPs or to guarantee a minimum proportion of seats to ethnic minorities, who may not have received some presentation under any other system. The first democratic elections of

post-apartheid South Africa in April 1994 illustrated this point eloquently. According to Reynold (in Farrell, 1997:73), the South African electorate had absolutely no influence over what person(s) would represent them within their voting districts or at national and provincial level; nor did they have any say over the rank-order of the candidates on these lists.

The first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system of the previous apartheid regime was replaced by the ('closed') list PR, with half of the National Assembly (200 members) being chosen from nine provincial lists and the other half being elected from a single national list. No threshold for representation was imposed and the country used one nation-wide constituency for the conversion of votes into seats in order to secure, as mentioned earlier, maximum proportionality. For a discussion on this feature see De Ville and Steytler, 1996; and Reynolds and Reilly, 1997. The 'Droop' quota was used to apportion seats, and surplus seats were awarded by an adaptation of the largest-remainder method (Reynolds and Reilly, 1997:67; Southall, 1994). Ballot papers contained party names and logos, and colour photographs of the party leaders. According to Reynold (in Farrell, 1997:73) these "national, and unalterable, candidate lists allowed parties to present ethnically heterogeneous groups of candidates, which it was hoped, would have cross-cutting appeal."

However, before venturing into the particulars of the 1994 and subsequent general elections, clarity must be sought as to what institutional body bears the responsibility of conducting and overseeing the whole electoral process in South Africa.

2.2 THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Most elections, according to Choe and Darnolf (1999:2), are conducted by two separate but co-ordinating organs, called "election management bodies": (1) an organisational body in charge of the administration of the electoral process; and (2) a juridical body in charge of judging and deciding electoral disputes and complaints. Important too in this regard is that the independence of these two bodies – especially in countries that have recently made the transition to democratic governance – is of

paramount importance in lending legitimacy and credibility to the electoral process. However, since the budget of the election administration body (especially the organisational body) is dependent on the State coffers, it raises questions pertaining to the perceived or real “independence” of such an institution. Since top government officials, and specifically the President, appoint the members of the juridical body, similar concerns regarding the independence of this latter function in electoral matters may be raised (Choe and Darnolf, 1999:4).

Illustrating the importance of the perceived independence of the election administrative body by both the electorate and opposition, Pastor (1999) cites one of the reasons why so many democratic transitions become derailed, is the real or perceived bias of the election commission in favour of the incumbent. According to Pastor (1999:2), “Repeated failures to conduct elections that are judged free and fair by all sides can lead to political instability.”

According to the South African Electoral Commission Act (1996), the Electoral Commission (EC) is an independent body subject only to the Constitution and the law. From the onset though it should be emphasised that there are considerable differences with regard to the Commission that conducted the 1994 elections and the one that conducted the 1999 elections. (See Glenda Fick, 1999: “The Independent Electoral Commission: The Old and the New” for a detailed account of these differences.)

2.2.1 THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF 1994

The elections in 1994 were conducted by a central Independent Electoral Commission established under the Interim Constitution and the Independent Electoral Commission Act, both designed to lead South Africa from its oppressive past to a new democratic society (Hamby, 1999). The IEC was established by statute during a time in the history of South Africa in which Parliament was sovereign. This body was established by section 4 of the Independent Electoral Commission Act 150 of 1993. It was created as an *ad hoc* institution to ensure that the 1994 elections took place (Fick, 1998:2).

In 1994, the IEC consisted of sixteen members, five of whom were from the international community. The Commission, who was accountable to the Transitional Executive Council, was composed of an Election Administration Directorate, an Election Monitoring Directorate and an Election Adjudication Secretariat. The Commission established for the 1999 elections, however, consisted of fewer members (only five) and were appointed by the President. This led to serious questions being raised by observers with regard to the impartiality of the new Commission (Hamby, 1999).

Opposition parties too questioned the “independence” of the Commission in the run-up to the 1999 national elections (Hamby, 1999). The findings of a Markdata poll conducted among 2 200 respondents in September 1998 posited the overall level of complete trust amongst political party supporters in the EC to be very low. Only 51.8% of the respondents felt that they could trust the EC to manage the election process in a fair and just manner (Jones, Lodge and Ntuli, 1998: 4-6). This consideration is of paramount importance when attention is paid in chapter 5 to the recommendations aimed at reducing the financial costs of the election process.

2.2.1.1 CHALLENGES FACING THE IEC IN 1994

Since its inception in 1993 the IEC was faced with difficulties in the execution of its task to supervise and administer the 1994 general elections. Having met for the first time as a committee on 20 December 1993, the IEC had four months at its disposal to prepare for the elections that were set to be held on 27 April 1994. An additional strain was placed on the Committee because an administrative infrastructure still needed to be put in place.

The time constraint forced the IEC to bypass normal tender procedures. This also meant that readily available, but more expensive options, had to be taken in the fields of telecommunications and information technology (IEC, 1995:9-10). As the elections drew closer the political environment became increasingly unstable and the risk involved in conducting the elections in such an unstable political climate was

escalating. The opposition from certain political parties, especially the Inkhata Freedom Party (IFP) and the Conservative Party (CP), which rejected the Interim Constitution and were not in favour of the elections being conducted in terms of this Constitution, also needed to be assuaged.

According to Sulcas (*The Sunday Independent*, 6 June 1999:4), the IEC was armed with considerable statutory powers and was given a financial *carte blanche*. Some R4 billion was spent on the elections, according to the then Finance Minister Derek Keyes. This amount is in stark contrast with the one released in the official financial report (see table 1) of the IEC. The IEC, however, still faced most probably its most daunting obstacle to the performance of its task: it was a body without precedent in South African experience, an unknown entity with no proven track record. Despite all the initial perceived or real obstacles, both national and international observers regarded the elections to have been conducted in a free and fair manner. It signalled not only “a triumph for the democratic ideal, but the resounding defeat of racism as an organising principle of government” (Southall, 1994:629). Thus, given all the initial constraints faced by the IEC, they pulled off one of post-independent Africa’s political miracles.

According to Kotzé (2000), of the estimated 22 million eligible voters in the country, more than 19.5 million people cast their votes, representing a voter turnout of 86.9%. There were 11 677 voting stations in 78 countries, the vast majority of which were in South Africa, with a number of stations established in South African Embassies and Consulates in various states. Of these voting stations 950 were mobile, 1 047 were special, and 187 were in foreign states. Only 0.99% (193 081) of the total ballots were spoilt, and, according to official reports released by the IEC, votes were cast at an average cost of R46.00 (*US \$12.98) each (IEC, 1994).

(*Calculated at the exchange rate on 1 May, 1994)

2.2.1.2 THE “LIBERATION ELECTIONS” OF 1994

The 1994 national elections revolved around political liberation and political transition, where the politics of exclusion were replaced by those of inclusiveness (Lodge, 1995:471). It was a move from the “old” to the “new”. Southall (1994:88) is correct in asserting that the April 1994 national elections “represented the culmination of a complex transitional process which may be dated as having begun on 2 February 1990, when President F.W. de Klerk proclaimed the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations.” He (De Klerk) also announced the release of political prisoners and committed his government to the negotiation of a fully inclusive, non-racial and democratic constitution. South Africa’s first universal elections, labelled the “liberation elections”, were also the stage for two interesting processes: (a) the transformation of Nelson Mandela from political prisoner to President, and (b) the transfer of political power in a spirit of national reconciliation (Karis, 1994).

The results of the 1994 elections came as no real surprise to observers, except to the National Party, who anticipated to fare much better than it actually did. Its hopes of doing well in the elections were based on:

- (a) The collapse of socialist governments in Eastern Europe in 1989, whence the ANC received most of its financial, logistical and military support.
- (b) The withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and a receding Soviet interest in the region which reduced the threat of a “total onslaught”, and
- (c) It was levelled in the hope that the euphoria and mythical status surrounding Nelson Mandela would have had worn off by the time of the elections, thus “eliminating” him as a source of electoral support for the ANC (Meredith, 1994:17-18).

By capturing a 62.6% share of the vote, the ANC secured 252 parliamentary seats, just shy of a two-thirds parliamentary majority. The National Party gained 80 seats, followed by the Inkatha Freedom Party with 43 seats. The four other parties that gained just enough support to secure national representation were the Freedom Front, the Democratic Party, the Pan-Africanist Congress and the African Christian Democratic Party (Lodge, 1995:471). These seven political parties then discussed and

decided on the current legislative principles guiding the State funding of the election activities of political parties. In the event these principles attracted fierce resistance from opposition parties that subsequently contested the 1999 elections.

TABLE 1: Independent Electoral Commission – 1994 Income and Expenditure Statement for the Period ended 30 September 1994

	R
<i>Income</i>	979 078 426
Grants received	970 382 030
Interest received	7 262 919
Other income	1 433 477
<i>Expenditure</i>	912 131 326
Personnel expenditure	461 350 013
Salaries	460 960 558
Allowances	389 455
Advertisements	30 191 925
Assets written off	86 355 224
Computer expenses	1 395 157
Court fees	14 953
Entertainment	156 113
Freight charges	38 251 701
Foreign voters	2 955 414
Insurance	33 441 603
Other expenditure	8 196 147
Postal and telephone	15 536 702
Printing	57 230 683
Private and public transport	78 408 015
Professional, consultancy, audit, legal fees, bank charges and security	25 974 109
Publications	1 250 560
Rental of equipment	6 054 790

Commission should act as and in effect is the guardian of representative democracy in South Africa (Mdhlela, 1998:15).

Being responsible for the implementation of the legislative requirements in a transparent manner, the Commission has to monitor and assess the result of such implementation. The Electoral Commission Act (1996, Section 5b) requires that the Electoral Commission facilitate actions and should intervene when implementation fails, or when new issues should arise. Procedures and codes thus need to be created, and co-operation between election stakeholders needs to be established to deal with problems that may arise.

The Commission is funded by Parliament and its financial records are subject to audit by the Auditor General (Electoral Commission Act 1996, Sections 12(2)(b) & 13(1) and 13(3)). Further Sections of the Act (14(1-4)), stipulate that the Commission shall report to the National Assembly annually on its finances. In addition, it must relay any information required by the President about the Commission's activities, shall publish a post-election report, and it may publish a report on the likelihood or otherwise that it would be able to ensure that a pending election will be free and fair.

2.2.3 THE 1999 ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The "new" Electoral Commission was established in terms of Chapter nine of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Electoral Commission Act 51 of 1996. In early January 1999 the activities of the EC were disrupted by the sudden resignation of its chairman, Judge Johann Kriegler. This meant that a new chairperson had to be appointed by President Mandela. A multi-party committee of Parliament and a majority of the National Assembly approved the appointment of Brigalia Bam as the new chairperson (Forrest et al., 1999).

In accordance with legislation the Commission consists of five people. One of these five members, according to the law, has to be a Judge (Electoral Commission Act 1996, Sections 2(1) and 3(1)). Consequently the resignation of Judge Kriegler saw

Judge Ismail Hussain being appointed in his place as the new Commissioner (Naidu, 1999).

The appointment of Bam met with some fierce criticism from opposition parties. Her appointment by President Mandela, shortly after the resignation of Judge Kriegler, outraged the Democratic Party and the New National Party who alleged that the President did not honour an agreement to consult them on the appointment of the new EC chairperson (*Cape Argus*, 22 February 1999; *The Star*, 2 February 1999; *Die Burger*, 20 February 1999; *The Star*, 27 January 1999). According to Naidu (*The Star*, 22 February 1999) several other rival parties, however, welcomed Bam's appointment. According to O'Grady (*Business Day*, 7 May 1999:1), Bam's appointment as chairperson was as a result of a perception amongst senior members in Parliament that she was committed to transformation and had an "appropriate" understanding of the role of the EC – which Judge Kriegler apparently lacked.

Most likely Judge Kriegler's decision to resign followed as a result of a perception amongst senior politicians that his view of the role and function of the EC was irreconcilable with that of the government and with views held by some members of the Commission (Greybe, 1999; *Mail and Guardian*, 29 January 1999). The judge was also at loggerheads with government regarding its ruling that all voters had to have bar-coded identity documents during the 1999 elections. He felt that this measure would disenfranchise many potential voters and also inflate the cost of the elections. Needless to say, government did not share these sentiments. A dispute with the Department of State Expenditure regarding the "underfunding" of the Commission which, according to Judge Kriegler, undermined the independence of the EC, apparently further prompted the Judge's decision to resign (*Beeld*, 30 January 1999:3).

The EC's problems could be traced back to the government's tardiness in appointing the members of the Commission. It was only in 1997 that the government appointed the Commissioners and most of the senior staff (*Business Day*, 27 January 1999; *Business Day*, 6 April 1998:1-2). Once appointed, the operations of the EC were further delayed when the Commission and government reached an impasse on the salaries and

staffing structure of the EC. This resulted in the EC having to delay the recruitment of its staff (*Business Day*, 26 March 1998:4; *Business Day*, 6 April 1998:1-2).

Apparent from the late appointment of the EC was the perception that no lessons were learnt from the 1994 election experience. The same process of hasty planning that accompanied preparations for the first elections, repeated itself during the 1999 elections. However, in all fairness to those responsible for conducting the 1994 elections, it needs to be reiterated that the haste accompanying the preparations for the elections was understandable within the socio-political context in which the particular elections transpired. The elections in 1994 dawned upon the people of South Africa with a speed very few have anticipated and as a consequence preparations had to be done at the very last minute.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The different socio-political context in which South Africa's second elections took place necessitated the creation of a new Electoral Commission. Concomitant to the appointment, albeit very late, of this "new" Commission was the implicit expectation of an improved organisational performance. However, friction between the Chairman (Judge Kriegler) of the Commission and other state departments over the budget and consequent independence of the Commission limited the time available to the Commission to adequately execute its undertakings. The time constraint meant that the Commission had to resort to expensive technology – as happened in the 1994 elections – in order to ensure that the elections in fact took place as scheduled.

There is also some contradictory evidence pertaining to the financial expenditure during the 1994 elections. According to the IEC, it spent somewhat more than R900 million – an amount which is more than R3 billion less than the amount the then Minister of Finance Derek Keys disclosed to reporters at the time.

CHAPTER 3

A Comparative Look at The 1999 South African Election

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1999 elections in South Africa signalled to a significant extent the start of the country's move towards democratic consolidation. It was not surprising then that both popular and academic debates during the 1999 election campaign were dominated by the prospect of an ANC two-thirds majority at the polls and the implications for the South African democracy.

It was also the first time that a national common voters' roll was introduced in the country. The EC completed the task of compiling the list on 30 April, when its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mandla Mchunu, presented the certified voters' roll to the Deputy President (EISA, 1999:1). The roll, one of the longest official documents in South African history, contained 960 000 pages. However, not even this venture proceeded without some controversy which was caused by speculations that millions of potential voters were omitted from the final roll. In the end, more than 18 million people registered to vote – see Table 2 – (18 363 300), and the roll contained the names of a million more woman than men.

TABLE 2: The Final Voters' Roll For the 1999 Elections

Province	Registered	Percentage of Potential Voters
Eastern Cape	2 484 298	76.84
Free State	1 239 464	81.74
Gauteng	4 215 775	89.94
KwaZulu-Natal	3 473 629	74.12
Mpumalanga	1 290 545	83.54
Northern Cape	380 227	79.14
Northern Province	1 872 572	77.68
North West	1 538 223	81.17
Western Cape	1 868 567	80.64
Total	18 363 300	80.64

(Source: IEC, 30 April 1999)

In the excitement and sometimes mayhem that characterised the compilation of the voters' roll, little attention was paid to the price tag of this democratic exercise. In some instances the cost of this process could be attributed to the introduction of new measures to ensure that the voting process was conducted in a free and fair manner. However, because of time constraints, the 1999 elections as a consequence differed in many respects from the one held in 1994. It saw amongst others the introduction of state of the art computer technology, the primary aim of which was to make the electoral process more cost and time efficient.

3.2 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 1994 AND 1999 ELECTIONS

There were several differences between the 1994 and the 1999 elections. Whereas the 1994 elections were generally seen to have been a "liberation" election, the elections of 1999 were regarded as part of the consolidation process of the country's democracy. Consequently, the 1999 national elections were marked by a number of departures from the elections held in 1994 (see table 3 for a list of these differences).

Some of these departures, for example the requirement of bar-coded identity documents, met with fierce resistance from opposition parties who claimed that this was a move by the incumbent regime aimed at reducing and marginalising the support of the opposition.

TABLE 3: Differences between the 1994 and 1999 Elections

	1994 Election	1999 Election
Demarcation of Boundaries?	Yes	Yes
Delimitation of Wards?	No	Yes
Voter Registration?	No	Yes
National Voters Roll?	No	Yes
Geographical Information Systems?	No	Yes
Overseas Voting Stations?	Yes	No

(Source: Adapted from EISA, 1999)

3.3 THE PRICE OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is invariably accompanied by a financial tag, one part of which is the cost of periodic elections. These elections are commonly accompanied by extensive voter registration and voter education campaigns, and also at times – such as in the case of South Africa – the need to experiment with new technology (Smith, 1998). This is all done to secure free and fair elections, and lending international credibility to a nation's democratic credentials. There is moreover a need to have credible, free and fair elections that are not too expensive. As a consequence, it becomes important to pinpoint the factors that have a direct or indirect influence on the cost of elections.

These cost-influencing factors, according to Reynold and Reilly (1997) and Lopez-Pintor (1999), could be categorised as:

- (1) Administrative; and
- (2) Capacity-building factors, especially within countries with a very limited or no previous experience with democratic elections.

(1) Administrative Factors Influencing Electoral Expenditure

The cost factor in the electoral process, more specifically the choice of the electoral system, remains and will continue to be a major area of consideration for any country. This could be ascribed to the choice that an electoral system has, according to Reynold and Reilly (1997): (a) a wide range of administrative consequences which impose certain constraints, and (b) by simply choosing the least expensive system may prove to be disastrous for the entire political system and for democratic stability in particular.

Six factors were identified that may have probable cost implications: the drawing of boundaries, the registration of voters, the design of the ballots, voter education, the number of elections, and the counting of the votes (Reynold and Reilly, 1997:115-119):

- The drawing of electoral boundaries:

List PR systems are often the cheapest and easiest to administer, because either one single national constituency – such as Israel – or very large multi-member districts that dovetail with pre-existing boundaries, are used. First-Past-The-Post (FPTP), Alternative Vote (AV), and Two Round (TR) systems prove to be more expensive, since constituencies' boundaries have to be adjusted regularly to take population changes into account. Although the Block Vote, the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV), Parallel, Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) and Single Transferable Vote (STV) systems also require the demarcation of the electorate, they are easier to manage than the three systems mentioned before, because they use multi-member districts, which tend to be fewer and larger (see Lijphart, 1994; Bogdanor, 1994; Harrop and Miller, 1987; for a discussion on the difference between these systems).

- The registration of voters:

This aspect is often the least successful, most intricate and contentious part of electoral administration. Political systems using single-member voting districts quite often require that all voters should be registered within the boundaries of the district. In terms of voter registration, the most expensive and administratively time-consuming systems are: Parallel, MMP, FPTP, AV and TRS systems. The Block

Vote, SNTV and STV systems with their fewer multi-member districts, facilitate the process much more for administrators, whilst large district List PR-systems are the least complicated. Its simplicity was a contributing factor in the adoption of regional List PR at South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Despite this variance in complexity between the different electoral systems, the cost of voter registration remains a highly expensive endeavour irrespective of the electoral system employed.

- The Design of Ballot Papers:

The extent to which ballot papers are user-friendly contributes largely to the reduction in "spoilt" or invalid votes and in maximising electoral participation. This entails the use of symbols for parties and candidates, photographs and colours, as happen in South Africa. FPTP and AV ballot papers are often easiest to print, and in most cases contain a small number of names. Although just as easy to print, its production cost is often doubled since TRS ballots, in most cases, have to be reprinted for a second round of voting. Despite the fact that they are both for a single election, Parallel and MMP systems usually require the printing of at least two ballots. Slightly more complex than the FPTP ballots, SNTV, Block Vote, and STV ballots contain more candidates, symbols and photographs. List PR ballot papers, on the other hand, can prove to be either very simple, as in a closed list system (as is the South African case, as illustrated by the low percentage of spoilt ballots) or very complex (as in the case of Switzerland with its free list system).

- Voter Education:

Each society's needs for voter education is quite distinct from other states'. Clearly identifiable differences also exist between each electoral system pertaining to the education of voters on how to complete their ballots. The principles underlying the voting processes in preferential systems, such as AV or STV, are quite complex if they are being used for the first time. Voter education needs to address this issue, particularly if there are compulsory numbering requirements as in the case of Australia (see Farnsworth, 1997). The same notion regarding voting complexity holds true for MMP systems. After 50 years of using MMP, many Germans are still under the misapprehension that both their votes are equal. In reality the second "national PR" vote is the overriding determinant of party strength in parliament. In contrast with the

preferential and MMP systems, the principles underlying categorical, single-vote systems, such as FPTP or SNTV, are comparatively easy to comprehend.

- The Number and Timing of Elections:

The least costly and least complicated to administer are the FPTP, AV, Block, SNTV, List PR and STV electoral systems, generally requiring just one election on one day. Parallel and MMP systems have logistical implications for the training of election officials and the way in which people vote, since they are essentially a mixture of two or more very different electoral systems. These two-round systems are costly and difficult to administer, because they often require the whole electoral process to be re-run a week or a fortnight after the first round of elections.

- Counting the Vote:

As only a single total figure of votes for each party or candidate is required to compute the results, FPTP, SNTV and simple closed-list PR systems are the easiest to count. The Block Vote requires the polling officials to count a number of votes on a single ballot paper. Parallel and MMP systems virtually invariably require the counting of two ballot papers. AV and STV, as preferential systems requiring numbers to be marked on the ballot, are more complex to count, particularly in the case of STV, which requires continual re-calculations of surplus transfer values and the like.

According to Reynold and Reilly (1997), List PR systems, and in particular national closed-list systems, are on an abstract level the cheapest to run and require fewer administrative resources as opposed to other systems. In their assertion they allow for the more pragmatic situational factors which may render their view to be incorrect. They are thus not asserting their point to be an absolute, but allow for deviant cases that may contradict their expectation.

(2) Capacity-Building Factors Influencing the Cost of Elections

According to Lopez-Pintor (1999:57-58), high electoral costs could be attributed to at least two factors: (a) The experience with multi-party elections in a country, where the cost of elections is higher in countries with a limited experience with multi-party

elections; and (b) In countries where the elections are part of peace-keeping operations. A third factor, not mentioned by Lopez-Pintor that may influence the cost of elections, is the introduction of new technological advances – an element usually introduced to decrease electoral expenditure, but it actually has the potential to inflate expenses incurred.

In assessing the cost of the 1999 elections it becomes apparent that a country's history, political context, experience with elections and available resources are the primary determinants of the types of constraints that any electoral system places on a country's administrative capacity and the costs involved in conducting the elections.

3.4 THE COST OF THE 1999 ELECTION

According to Baxter (in Sulcas, 1999:20), the June 1999 election amounted to an expensive exercise. It is generally the contention of this researcher that when taking into account some of the differences between the 1999 and the 1994 elections, and especially the introduction of new technology in the whole electoral process, the average cost per voter should have shown a dramatic decline. Also, since the country's first experience with democratic elections in 1994 left very little scope to prepare in terms of capacity building (as posited earlier in the paper), the logical assumption would be that the election expenditure should be on par with that of other developing democracies in the world. However, this did not materialise and according to Baxter (in Sulcas, 1999:20) South Africa's June 1999 national elections were the 4th or 5th most expensive in the world.

In assessing the cost associated in conducting an election, two types of cost considerations should be taken into account: (a) the direct costs, and (b) the indirect costs. Direct costs refer to expenditures on such items as the hiring of land and buildings, equipment, administration, and personnel (see table 3). Indirect costs refer to expenditures incurred by the Department of Safety and Security in the deployment of the armed forces, money spent by the Department of Home Affairs on issuing bar-

coded identity documents to the electorate, the loss to the national economy, and the money spent on the inauguration ceremony of the President.

3.4.1 DIRECT COSTS

Unlike in 1994, when the Independent Electoral Commission was given a financial *carte blanche*, the Electoral Commission in 1999 had to operate within a fixed budget. Unhappiness with the approved budget, and financial and administrative control over the EC were major sources of friction between the Commission and the Departments of State Expenditure and Home Affairs (EISA Election Update 99, 1999: 3; *Business Day*, 6 April 1998:1-2; *Mail and Guardian*, 29 January - 4 February 1999:2-3). The Commission's initial requested amount of R1.2 billion for the 1998/99 financial year was downscaled by the government so that the EC's budget amounted to a total of R965 million for the elections, but it initially received only R500 million plus an amount of R40 million from a roll-over from its 1994 budget.

Threats by the head of the Commission, Judge Johann Kriegler, that he would resign if the EC continued to be underfunded, materialised after the government refused to grant extra funds for the operations of the EC (*Business Day*, 13 July 1998). In November 1998 the government announced that an extra R100 million would be granted to the EC during the current financial year (1998/99, ending in March), but a further request for an additional R230 million – which was needed to prepare the new voters' roll – was rejected (*Mail and Guardian*, 6 November 1998). This, in combination with other factors, eventually led to Judge Kriegler's resignation as EC Chairman on 26 January 1999 (*The Citizen*, 27 January 1999). He was replaced by the EC's Vice Chair, Brigalia Bam, who was appointed by President Nelson Mandela as Chairperson, with Judge Ismail Hussain taking Bam's place as EC Commissioner (*The Star*, 22 February 1999: 3).

On 20 February 1999 Brigalia Bam announced that the funding crisis that faced the elections had been resolved after an announcement by Government that it would grant R713.5 million to the Commission for its 1999/2000 financial year (*Sunday Times*, 21 February 1999). (See table 4 on a summary of the budget of the EC) The claim by

Bam that the “financial commitment is sufficient to cover the cost of the elections and also provides for contingencies that may be faced by the EC during the election year”, was in stark contrast to that made by the previous Chairman of the Commission, Judge Kriegler. Shortly before his resignation he stated that, “it’s impossible to conduct national elections... in South Africa... with the current financial means of the IEC...” (EISA Election Update 99, No.5: 1999:17).

There are still conflicting accounts as to the exact amount of money that was spent on the 1999 national elections. The 'official' amount granted to the EC (R713.5 million) did not include for instance the R202 000 the EC spent on contingency planning, relating to marking ink, the rental of voting stations and furniture, the funding of local electoral officers, and special votes pending the outcome of litigation. According to Sulcas (in the *Sunday Independent*, 6 June 1999:4), the EC was awarded the following amounts by government for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 financial years respectively: R640 million and R713.5 million.

The elections were also characterised by the deployment of state of the art technology reminiscent of that used by NASA for missile launches (*Mail and Guardian*, 4-10 June 1999:22; *Pretoria News*, 20 May 1999:3; *Beeld*, 20 May 1999:12). The main auditorium of the Pretoria showground was transformed into a hi-tech election nerve centre. It was furnished with 600 computers, 300 desktop computers and a leading-edge satellite system that relayed and processed the computer data.

In setting up this 12 000m² results centre, an extra cellular tower and a microwave tower for high power telecommunications, as well as 2 000 telephone lines, 120 fax lines and 30 km of computer cable, were used. It is especially here that the pivotal role played by the administration and support services was illustrated. A vital section of these services was the Information Technology function, implementing and maintaining the daily operations of the EC, and also facilitating the online communications between the different authorities and the nerve centre (*The Star*, 1999: 11 June).

All this was in place to speed up the process of declaring the election results. The EC is given seven days by the Electoral Act to declare the election results, but with the help of this technology, the EC expected to have the results out by 3 June (Granelli, 1999:3). The Information Technology infrastructure was composed of a nationwide satellite Wide Area Network (WAN) that allowed data to be “beamed” securely from each polling station via satellite to the EC headquarters and downloaded directly into comprehensive databases of voter information. However, not even the most groundbreaking technology could secure a smooth ride into the elections. The Wide Area Network (WAN) which formed the heart of the EC’s computer activities unexpectedly crashed during a number of trial runs in the run-up to the election, causing great consternation amongst election officials (*Eastern Province Herald*, 1 June 1999; *Beeld*, 2 June 1999). This contributed to the delay in the announcement of the election results, and were only declared five days after the votes were cast.

It is not surprising that this centre had a R100 million price tag. Each political party had its own office in the “nerve centre”, the media had five television studios from which to conduct interviews, and there were also twelve radio broadcast studios (*Pretoria News*, 20 May 1999; *Beeld*, 20 May 1999:12). The investment in this resource centre was perceived as (a) a move to lend legitimacy to the process by delivering free and fair results, and it was (b) a move aimed at making the process transparent, by inviting all political parties and the media to be present in the centre. To secure the premises from possible intruders, the police, traffic police, the army, and patrol guards were employed to guard the premises and surrounding area (*Pretoria News*, 20 May 1999).

Security measures were also extended to the production of the ballot papers. Five South African companies were charged with the enormous task of printing the ballot papers for the 2 June national and provincial elections, as no single company would have been able to perform this task within the one-week time frame that was available. The ballots were printed on specially developed security paper equipped with watermarks and UV characteristics to ensure that the ballot papers could not be duplicated. The papers were produced at a cost of R10 million, which were considerably less than the R25 million that was spent on the production of the 80

million ballot papers printed abroad for the previous elections (*Pretoria News*, 20 May 1999).

An electronic mapping system, the Global Information System (GIS), was used to demarcate the country into 14 650 voting districts. The EC recruited some 220 000 people to staff the voting stations (*Mail and Guardian*, 4-10 June 1999; *Die Volksblad*, 21 May 1999:4; *Die Volksblad*, 19 May 1999:7). Unlike during the prior period of voter registration when the EC relied on 72 000 volunteers from the public service, these public recruits served to signal the independence of the EC (*Business Day*, 7 May 1999:1). 25 000 Barcode scanners or “zip-zips” (as they were commonly called), obtained at a cost of R90 million from ICL South Africa, were used to consolidate and verify all the voter registration information from the voting stations (*The Sunday Independent*, 30 May 1999:11). As with all new technology, they also provided their fair share of teething troubles. Not only did the names of some people who had in fact registered not appear on the voters’ roll, but some election officers also had to struggle with scanners’ flat batteries. This resulted that these scanners could not be used at number of the voting stations and election officers had to resort to checking manually the voters’ roll to check whether or not a person was eligible to cast a vote (*Eastern Province Herald*, 1999; *Die Volksblad*, 21 May 1999:4).

A considerable amount of money was spent on the wages of the personnel at the voting stations. There were five categories of employees at the polling stations and each of them was paid different rates. Of the total number of people recruited 200 000 were employed as general electoral personnel, and the rest were employed as senior officials. Those officials in charge of a voting station underwent two days of extensive training beforehand and were paid R120.00 for this training period. During the four days that they were employed by the EC, they were paid R240.00 per day. Their deputies received similar training and were paid R100.00, and since they were only being employed for one day, they received R200.00 for the day’s work. The general personnel each received R80.00 for the day’s training that they underwent and were paid R160.00 for their efforts on voting day (*Die Volsblad*, 21 May1999:4; *Die Volksblad*, 27 March 1999:4).

The EC did however try to minimise the cost of their operations, and most of the costs incurred were seen as long term investments that would reduce future electoral expenses. The Commission rented as much equipment as possible and used specially designed cardboard tables, chairs and polling booths which were sold for pulping after the elections (Granelli, 1999). The technological infrastructure employed, is a permanent structure and could also be put to other uses (*The Sunday Independent*, 30 May 1999:11).

3.4.2 INDIRECT COSTS:

The hidden costs of the election process amounted to a staggering sum. Apart from the R1.3 billion (the combined amount for the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 financial years) allocated to the EC, the indirect costs, such as the expenditures of the Departments of Home Affairs and of Safety and Security; and the loss to the economy of a day's output, have so far not been calculated. This sum includes: (a) the costs (R86 million) incurred by the Department of Home Affairs for the issuing of bar-coded identity documents, and (b) the costs incurred by the Department of Defence for the deployment of troops during the whole process; the amount of which has never been disclosed, (c) the R47 million (of which R10 million was sponsored by the private sector) for the inauguration party of the President, (d) the R1.28 billion loss to the national economy, according to Azar Jammie of "Econometrix", as a result of this extra holiday and (e) the R10 million spent on granting prisoners the right to vote.

The Department of Safety and Security deployed over 100 000 South African Police Service (SAPS) and South African Defence Force (SANDF) personnel to man polling stations and to patrol the surrounding areas. According to Commissioner Karel Kramer, the Divisional Commissioner for support services, the conservative estimate for policing and rendering assistance to the EC was in the order of R110 million. As for the loss to the national economy, economist Azar Jammie of "Econometrix" estimates the tally to be in the region of R1.28 billion (*The Sunday Independent*, 6 June 1999:4).

The requisite bar-coded identity documents were right from the outset a major source of controversy. Opposition parties, in particular the New National Party and the Democratic Party, fiercely objected to this measure. Judge Kriegler, who at that time was still the Chairman of the EC, added his voice in objecting to the government's plan to make bar-coded identity documents a prerequisite for casting a vote on the day of the elections. Kriegler's main concerns were the extra financial strain this would put on the electoral budget and the many thousands of potential voters that would be disenfranchised by this step (Greybe, 1999; *Beeld*, 30 January 1999). The exercise which saw the Department of Home Affairs embark on a R36.5 million campaign to encourage voters to obtain bar-coded identity documents, in the end resulted in this Department overspending its budget by R50 million (*The Sunday Independent*, 6 June 1999:4).

Table 4: Official Budget Summary of the EC for the 1999 Election

DESCRIPTION	ALLOCATION (R1 000)
Personnel	80 425
Administration	14 892
Stores	10 074
Equipment	15 908
Land and Buildings	8 572
Professional and Special Services	231 361
Miscellaneous Expenditure	35
Voting Operations	352 232
TOTAL	713 500* (US \$114 730 800)
Number of Registered Voters	18 363 300
Average Cost per Vote	R38.82 US \$6.25 (According to the US \$ /Rand exchange rate in June 1999)

(Source: Adapted from EC, 1999)

(*This figure excludes the R202 000 used for contingency planning)

It is evident, in using the official figures presented by the EC, that there was a considerable reduction in the average cost per vote, being almost US \$6.00 per vote less than in 1994. This scenario changes somewhat when the indirect cost is added to these official figures, as illustrated by table 5. The expenses for the Presidential inauguration are omitted from this table since these expenses do not fall under the jurisdiction of the EC. It should also be borne in mind that the cost of the permanent staff of the EC for 1998, which amounted to R51 million (Barrell, 1998), does not form part of the above calculations in table 4.

Table 5: The Accumulated Amount of the total Cost of the 1999 Election

Areas of Expenditure	US \$
IEC Official Budget	114 730 800
Contingency Funds	35 376
Dept. of Home Affairs	13 828 800
Dept. of Defence	17 688 000
1998/1999 Budget	102 912 000
State Funding of Political Parties	8 522 400
Loss to the Economy	205 824 000
TOTAL AMOUNT	463 541 376*
Average cost per Vote	US \$25.24 (R156.74)

(*Calculated at the R/US\$ exchange rate on 1 June 1999)

In trying to assess the value for money of the expenses incurred during the South African electoral process, the direct cost expenses incurred in amongst others India, Israel, Mexico and Australia will be the focus of the next section.

3.5 COMPARING THE CASES OF INDIA, ISRAEL, MEXICO AND AUSTRALIA

3.5.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Roberts (1986:7), the most obvious contention that confronts any researcher, when engaging in comparative studies, is: how can states be best compared? It is an issue of paramount importance since there are so many different features that could be listed about any state. Features relating to its area, geographical location, the size of its population, its economic organisation and social structure, its form of government, matters concerning its electoral procedures and party systems, and also issues relating to its Constitution, are all part of the equation. From this array emanates the need for particular criteria of selection – an issue that has been the concern of political theorists for quite some time, from Plato and Aristotle, Locke and de Tocqueville, to Marx.

In the following section attention will be devoted to the electoral expenditures incurred in other democracies. The states included in the comparison are India, Israel, Australia and Mexico. Since the availability of information is a pre-condition for comparison, the states included in this study were obvious selections with regard to this criterion.

However, the selection of these states needs justification: First and foremost, the availability of information with regard to electoral expenditures motivated the choice of cases. Since the subject matter dealt with in the paper is rarely the concern of scholarly debate and as a result of its nature perceived to be sensitive, the countries referred to above – India, Israel, Australia and Mexico – are those where the relevant information was readily available.

Secondly, with the exception of Mexico, all the other states (South Africa, India, Israel and Australia) are former British colonies or protectorates.

Other reasons for the selection of these states pertain to the difference in size, the mixture of electoral systems and the fact that they are all developing democracies. These selection criteria underlie an attempt to deal with rival hypotheses as to what factors would explain the financial expenses incurred during the election process in all of these states.

With regard to the electoral systems in use, both South Africa and Israel employ the Party List Proportional System (see Garfinkle, 1996; State of Israel, 1998; Peretz and Doron, 1997); India uses the First-Past-The-Post Plurality System (see Thakur, 1995; Mehta, 1997); Mexico employs the Mixed-Member Proportional System (see Centeno, 1994; CSIS, 1994; Weintraub, 1997), and in Australia, the Alternative Vote Majority System is in use (see Farnsworth, 1997). In the case of Israel and South Africa, voters choose from among party lists, and seats are awarded in proportion to the vote received by each party. In India, the candidate that obtains more votes than any other candidate is elected, even if that person may only have won a minority of votes cast. Australian voters indicate an order of preference among the candidates running for election. If no candidate obtains an outright majority, the last placed candidate is removed, and the associated second-choice votes are added to the totals of the remaining candidates. This process is repeated until a candidate secures a majority. In Mexico the legislature consists of a block of seats that are elected by plurality or majority from single-member districts, and another block of seats that are elected in multi-member districts under a proportional system. The proportional seats are awarded in such a way as to compensate for the disproportional effects produced by the single-member district outcomes (Farnsworth, 1997; Peretz and Doron, 1997; Thakur, 1995; Centeno, 1994; De Ville and Steytler, 1996; Faure, 1996).

The focus will now be placed on the cost of elections in different regions of the world and the possible explanations for the costs incurred, before a particular focus will be placed on the countries in question.

Hence, a comparative descriptive analysis of the electoral systems and concurrent cost implications in India, Australia, Israel and Mexico will follow. It should be noted that the tables provided on the vital election statistics of each of these states only reflect

the relevant information which could be obtained from the respective electoral commissions.

It is also imperative that cognisance should be taken with regards to the comparisons drawn between the respective countries' electoral expenditure. The utilisation of the purchasing power parity (PPP) rates of currency, as opposed to mere currency exchange rates, would have provided a more realistic indication of the differences in electoral expenditure between these different countries under discussion. (For a discussion on PPP, see the Economist, 27 April 2000. Also visit the following website for more information on PPP and other related topics: <http://www.econ.iastate.edu/classes/econ102/merrill/fall97/chap6-10/sldo73.htm>.)

3.5.2 INDIA:

3.5.2.1 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

By far the most populous democracy in the world since 1952, India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government, committed to regular, free and fair elections, (Electoral Commission of India, 1998; Reynold, Reilly and Asmal eds. 1997; Thakur, 1995:257). Any Indian citizen may contest the elections, and the only requirement is a deposit of Rs 500.

The Constitution requires that the central parliament and state legislative assemblies are to be elected at least every five years on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Elections in India determine the composition of the government; the membership of the two Houses of Parliament (the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha), the state and union territory legislative assemblies, the Presidency and Vice-Presidency. India is divided into 543 parliamentary constituencies, each of which returns one Member of Parliament to the Lok Sabha (550 elected members and two additional members from the Anglo-Indian community nominated by the President), the Lower House of the Parliament (Electoral Commission of India, 1998).

India's parliamentary government and first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system is a legacy of British colonialism, which ended in 1947. The British introduced self-government in stages and it was only at the end of colonial rule and with the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950 by a Constituent Assembly that universal suffrage was achieved. The choice of electoral system was fiercely debated by the Constituent Assembly, before the first-past-the-post electoral system was chosen. Given the fact that India is an extremely diverse and multi-ethnic society, proportional representation as a possible electoral system attracted many advocates, but the need for stable government and to avoid fragmented legislatures swung the decision in favour of FPTP (Rangarajan & Patidar in Reynolds et al. (eds.), 1997).

An independent delimitation commission – constituted of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Judges from the Supreme or High Court – established by Parliament, determines the shape and size of parliamentary constituencies. The size of constituencies is, however, characterised by huge discrepancies, with the largest having over 25,000,000 voters and the smallest less than 50,000. It is a state of affairs brought about by a constitutional amendment of 1976, suspending delimitation until after the census of 2001 (Electoral Commission of India, 1998). Apart from having to delimit more than 500 parliamentary and over 3,000 state constituencies, the independent Election Commission also has to organise and conduct national and state elections, register all eligible voters, and establish procedures for the nomination of candidates (Thakur, 1995:258).

3.5.2.2 INDIAN ELECTIONS

Since its independence in 1947 India generally had one national party and many opposition parties with core support in only state or region. The Indian National Congress Party (founded in 1885) has been the "power-house" of political parties in Indian politics in terms of its capacity to field candidates in national elections (Thakur, 1995:221-222).

However, the political power map of Indian politics changed drastically after the 1996 elections, during which the political reign of the Congress Party was brought to an abrupt end. The right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the single largest party in parliament for the first time. The long-dominant Congress Party succeeded in collecting a mere 28 percent of the vote and lost 135 seats (from 274 to 139) in the 545-member Lower House, or Lok Sabha. Not only did this mean the end of a one party dominance of Indian politics, but according to Mehta, it also signalled the end of the upper-caste's political dominance of Indian politics (Mehta, 1997:56-57).

The most striking feature of the election process in India is the enormous scale of the exercise (see table 6). According to Thakur (1995:257) in 1989, when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, another 36 million people were added to the electoral role. The organisational complexity and scale that accompany these elections are evident from the fact that in the 1996 elections to the Lok Sabha there were 1 269 candidates from 38 officially recognised national and state political parties, 1 048 candidates from registered political parties – but not personally recognised – and 10 635 independent candidates. The total number of the electorate was 590 257 288 and almost 4 million people were employed by the Electoral Commission of India to run the elections at a cost of approximately US \$600 million (Electoral Commission of India, 1998).

Elections to the Lok Sabha are conducted every five years. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the President may dissolve the Lok Sabha before its term is over (as in 1971) or when the President is convinced, as in 1991, that no stable government can be formed (Rangarajan & Patidar, 1997). The members of the Rajya Sabha, or Upper House, are elected indirectly (233 members and an additional 12 members nominated by the President as representatives of science, art, literature and social services), rather than by the citizens at large. Using the single transferable voting system, Rajya Sabha members are elected by each state's Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) and, unlike most federal systems, the number of members returned by each state is roughly in proportion to its population (Rangarajan and Patidar, 1997).

TABLE 6: Statistics on the 1996 Indian Elections

	US \$ (where indicated)
Total number of Electorate	590 257 288
Number of People Employed by the ECI	4 000 000
Amount of Paper Consumed	25 000 tons
Number of Voting Booths	825 000
Cost of the Election	*US \$600 million
Average Cost per Voter	US \$1.00

(Source: Adapted Electoral Commission of India, 1998)

(*Calculated at INR/US \$ exchange rate in June 1996: 1US \$=35,11 INR)

It is thus clear to see that despite the enormity of the electoral process in India, at an average per capita cost of only US \$1.00, the Indian elections amount to one of the least expensive similar undertakings in the world, including the developed democracies of the world. To a large degree the Indian case demonstrates that legitimacy does not equal expensive. Perhaps a case could be made that in general, the larger the size of the electorate, the cheaper the average cost per vote would be.

3.5.3 AUSTRALIA:

3.5.3.1 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Australia is a parliamentary democracy, comprising a federation of six states in which the legislative powers are divided between the bicameral Australian Federal Parliament. The Australian Federation has a three-tier system of government which is characterised by a separation of powers to provide the necessary checks and balances. At the national level, and under the provisions set out by the Australian Constitution, there are the Legislature, the Executive Government and the Judiciary, which are responsible for all matters of national interest. At the State and Territory level, a Legislature, Executive Government and Judiciary are responsible for matters specifically relevant to the States and the Territories. Lastly, at the city, town and

municipal level are approximately 900 local government bodies (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1994; Jarrett, 1998).

3.5.3.2 AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS

A significant feature of the Australian electoral process is the use of two different electoral systems, unlike in the cases of South Africa, India, Israel and Mexico. Preferential voting, which is relatively exclusive to Australia – since most similar political systems employ the Simple Majority system – is used in elections for the House of Representatives and all other State Lower Houses, apart from the Tasmanian House of Assembly and the A.C.T. Legislative Assembly. Candidates with the fewest preferences at any stage are eliminated from the count in turn, their second or later preferences redistributed, until one candidate secures an overall majority. Each member of the House of Representatives is elected for a Division, and must receive 50 percent plus one of the votes in a Division for election. In contrast, the system of proportional voting (the single transferable vote) is used in the elections for the Australian Senate and candidates do not need an absolute majority of formal votes in order to be elected (Australian Electoral Commission, 1999; Roberts, 1986:54). Representatives of smaller parties or independent candidates have a far better chance of election to the Senate, as a result of the proportional representation system, than in elections for the House of Representatives.

Voting is compulsory and all citizens over the age of 18 must enrol to vote. Australians must ensure that they are enrolled in the electoral division in which they live and computer records are kept of those who voted and failed to vote at federal elections and referendums. A fine of up to \$50 is set for those who fail to enrol and/or vote (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1994).

Voters must indicate their preference for every candidate by marking their preferred candidate with a one, then their second preference, and so on. A failure to do so will result in a spoilt ballot, and thus the particular vote will not be counted. Compulsory voting for federal elections was introduced in 1924 and first used in the 1925 elections

where 91.31% of the electorate went to the polls. Only the following categories of people are not entitled to enrol and vote:

- (a) prisoners serving a sentence of five years or more;
- (b) people who have been convicted of treason and not pardoned; and
- (c) people who are certified as being mentally incapable of comprehending the nature and significance of enrolment and voting (Farnsworth, 1997).

A final expenditure figure for the 1998 Federal Elections is not available at the present time, as not all post-election tasks which will be credited to the elections (such as non-voter action) have been completed (Australian Electoral Commission, 1999). As at 15 June 1999 the expenditure on the Federal elections was Au \$61 737 070, excluding Au \$33 920 787 for public funding (see table 7). Using Close of Rolls enrolment (12 056 625) as the basis, the expenditure to 15 June 1999 per voter equates to Au \$5.06 or Au \$7.87 including public funding. Looking at the constant prices with March 1998 as the base, the average cost per voter has comparatively decreased since 1984 (Au \$5.65); to 1990 (\$4.84) and 1993 (\$4.58) being the only time when the average cost per elector was lower than that in 1998.

The 1998 Federal election expenditure as on 15 June was as follows:

TABLE 7: 1998 Australian Federal Election Expenditure

	Au \$
Sub-Total	Au \$61 737 070
Public Funding	Au \$33 920 787
TOTAL	Au \$95 657 857 *(US \$56 065 069)
Size of the Electorate	12 056 625
Average Cost per Vote	Au \$7.93 *(US \$4.65)

(Source: Adapted from Australian Electoral Commission, 1999)

(*Calculated at US \$/ AUD exchange rate in June 1998: 1US \$=1,7062AUD)

The average cost per vote in the case of Australia (US \$4.65) is on par with that spent on the elections of the State of Israel (US \$6.96). The election expenditure in Australia and Israel both, however, exceed that of India to a ratio of 4:1 and 6:1 respectively. In the case of Australia, the difference in election expenses as compared to those of India, could be attributed to the high cost of the administration, including such items as the allowances and training costs of polling officials, and the operational administration costs.

A common denominator that seems to link the election expenditure of Australia, South Africa and Israel is the high cost involved in the administration of these elections. In particular this is valid of the money spent on the wages of the polling officials and the administrative personnel.

3.5.4 THE STATE OF ISRAEL:

3.5.4.1 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Located on the western shore of the Mediterranean, Israel lies at the crossroads of three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Strangely enough, the State of Israel is a country with no fixed borders. At the end of 1994, Israel's northern and eastern borders were still largely in a state of flux. The issue of the Golan Heights was still unresolved, with Israel occupying its "security zone" in Lebanon, and no decision had been reached regarding the eventual international border between Israel and Palestine. In comparison with its Middle East regional neighbours, Israel is a very small country both area size (28 000 km²) and population (5.3 million in 1994). Although larger than Lebanon, Qatar, and Kuwait, the State of Israel is five times smaller than Jordan, twenty times smaller than Iraq, and over one hundred times smaller than Saudi Arabia. Despite its size, Israel has transformed itself into the principal economic power in the Middle East region, and has traditionally attracted considerable attention from the West since its independence in 1948 (Peretz and Doron, 1997).

The factors that have made Israel the centre of attraction to the West, are specifically vested in: (1) The fact that Israel shares similar values with the West. Apart from

being one of the most democratic countries in the Middle East, most of its political and economic leadership have familial ties with the West, and many of whom are products of the American and British tertiary education system; (2) Its conflict with neighbouring Palestine over the Gaza strip; and, (3) The fact that Israel is the birthplace of both Judaism and Christianity and the considerable importance it holds for Islam too (Peretz and Doron, 1997:1-2; Garfinkle, 1997). The latter factor results in events impacting on Israel are of major interest to the followers of these three dogmas.

Israel is a non-liberal democracy with no written constitution, the basic values and laws of which are deduced from a commitment to the interests of the Jewish people. Its single-chamber parliament, the 120-member Knesset, serves as both a legislature and a constitutional body. Regular laws and acts are drafted through the first function, and basic laws embodied with constitutional status are enacted through the second function. The Knesset also selects, approves, and supervises the operations of the government (Peretz and Doron, 1997; The State of Israel, 1999).

The Israeli multi-party system is part of Israel's pre-state heritage. It evolved from diverse ideological trends and interest groups within the Zionist movement. Until 1977, one party – the Mapai (later Ma'arach and Labour – dominated the system. Since then political competition has been shaped and took place between two blocs: (1) The left camp which controlled the government after the 1992 elections, consisting of two elements, the Zionist parties and the Arab parties; and (2) the right camp, composed of secular and religious elements which include two nationalist parties and one ultra-nationalist party. Although very stable, the party system in Israel is in a constant state of flux, constantly reshaping itself. The major political rivals of the 1930s, although now with different personalities, new institutions and orientations, are still competing for power sixty years later (Peretz and Doron, 1997:70).

Political parties in Israel have become the principal interpreters and articulators of the preferences of the electorate. Whenever groups or individuals want to improve their economic or ethnic position, they will invariably be able to find at least one party with a platform they can support. However, the importance of parties as vehicles to

improve the social conditions of people are on the decrease as a result of the growth of the national economy. As a consequence this is also increasing and fostering the economic independence of the voting public (Peretz and Doron, 1997:71-72).

3.5.4.2 ISRAELI ELECTIONS:

The Israeli electoral system is based on the Basic Law: the Knesset of 1958 and the Knesset Elections Law of 1969. Since the Parties Law of 1992 was passed, only registered parties may present a list of candidates and participate in the elections (Capitanchik, 1996:450). Elections to the Knesset are supposed to take place every four years. However, the Knesset may decide by an simple majority to dissolve itself and call for early elections. Elections to the second (1951), fifth (1961), tenth (1981), eleventh (1984), thirteenth (1992) and fourteenth (1996) Knessets were all held before the due date. As in the case of the delayed elections to the eight Knesset in 1973, because of the Yom Kippur War, the Knesset is also empowered to decide to prolong its term beyond four years (The State of Israel, 1998).

Elections for the Knesset, which are based on a vote for a party rather than for individuals, and the election of the Prime Minister, are held at the same time. As in the case of South Africa, the country constitutes a single electoral constituency and all citizens are eligible to vote from age 18. Since the elections to the 14th Knesset, elections for the Knesset and the Prime Minister are held simultaneously. On election day voters cast two secret ballots; one for the Prime Minister and another for a political party to represent them in the Knesset (The State of Israel, 1999; Peretz and Doron, 1997:118-121).

Knesset seats are assigned, as in the case of South Africa, in proportion to each party's percentage of the total national vote. A party's surplus votes, insufficient for an additional seat, are redistributed among the various parties according to their proportional size, or as agreed between parties prior to the elections. The only limitation is the 1.5% threshold, which means that in order to get elected to the Knesset a party should receive a minimum of 1.5% of the total votes on election day

(Capitanchik, 1996). A Treasury allocation for election campaigns is granted to each party based on its number of seats in the outgoing Knesset. New political parties receive a similar allocation retroactively for each member elected to the Knesset. The State Comptroller reviews the disbursement of all campaign expenditures (The State of Israel, 1999).

Public financing of political parties is a source of constant debate, especially among the smaller parties. The legislation that provides for the financing of the activities of political parties during and between elections, is the Party Financing Law of 1973. The principle underlying this law is very simple: the bigger the party, the more money it receives from the State. This has the effect that large parties and veteran parties are being disproportionately favoured with regard to available financial resources with which to conduct their respective election campaigns. Consequently, veteran parties and large parties are also favoured with regard to the effective application of the free time granted to them by the election law on the national radio and television broadcaster. New political parties receive ten minutes of free television time and twenty-five minutes of free radio time during the last month before an election. (According to the election law, political advertising may only commence during the last month before an election.) On the other hand, veteran parties receive the same amount of radio and television time, plus six minutes for each of their members who are Members of the Knesset. Large and established political parties are thus structurally and legally favoured at the expense of small and new parties (Peretz and Doron, 1997: 129-131).

Election day is a national holiday, and free transportation is available to voters who happen to be outside their polling districts that day. Polling stations are provided for military personnel, hospital patients, and prisoners, as well as for merchant seamen and Israelis on assignment abroad. The Central Election Committee is responsible for conducting the elections. This Committee is headed by a Judge of the Supreme Court and includes representatives of the political parties holding Knesset seats (Peretz and Doron, 1997).

Since a breakdown of the costs incurred in the Israeli elections was not available at the time, a table is provided with other vital statistics on the 1996 elections:

TABLE 8: Statistics on the 1996 Israeli Elections

	US \$ (where indicated)
Number of Eligible Voters	3 933 250
Total Budget of the 1996 Campaign	NIS 86 799 000 *(US \$26 334 816)
Average Cost per Vote	US \$6.69

(Source: Adapted from The State of Israel, 1999)

(*Calculated at US \$/NIS exchange rate in June 1996: 1US \$=3,2956 NIS)

The election amounted to an average of US \$6.69 per vote, and although very expensive in comparison to the Indian case, it is still far less expensive than the South African one. A significant lesser amount (US \$27 962) was spent on allowing Israeli citizens, finding themselves outside of the country on the day of the election to vote, than in the Australian case (US \$2 206 106).

3.5.5 THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES: THE MEXICAN ELECTIONS OF 1994

3.5.5.1 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

It needs to be explained why a focus will be placed on Mexico's 1994 elections. As in the case of India's 1996 elections, the Mexican elections of 1994 marked a watershed in Mexican politics. In both cases the parties that have been obliterating their political opposition and have dominated the politics in these two countries for decades, lost most of their support base. The governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico failed to obtain an outright majority, and India's Congress Party was ousted as the ruling party in Indian politics. Thus the emphasis on the 1994 elections is borne from its political and symbolic significance to the history and future development of politics in Mexico (Centeno, 1994; CSIS, 1994).

Under its 1917 Constitution, Mexico is a federal republic with separation of powers. The bicameral Congress comprises the Senate and a Chamber of Deputies, with the President having sweeping governmental powers in nearly all fields. However, the Constitution forbids a second consecutive term of office for any elected official. The effect is that it compromises the accountability of elected officials to the electorate. Mexico's independence was first proclaimed on September 16, 1810, and the Federal Republic established in 1824. Often called unique or contradictory, the Mexican regime presents something of a hybrid that has always been difficult to categorise within the traditional notions of democracy and authoritarianism. According to Centeno (1994:32-33), Mexico may best be understood as an “electoral-bureaucratic” authoritarian regime. The monopolistic series of electoral victories by the PRI for nearly sixty years is a clear indication of the relatively minor role performed by elections in determining the composition of government. Ultimate political control is exercised within a civilian bureaucracy that employs electoral mechanisms to co-opt opposition and legitimate its continuity in power (Centeno, 1994; “Mexico Index”, 1998; La Botz, 1995).

3.5.5.2 MEXICAN ELECTIONS

The struggle for democracy in Mexico has not been an easy one. For more than 25 years since 1968, peasants, workers, the urban poor, students, feminists and environmentalists built important social movements that fought for democracy and social justice. Not only has the struggle been for free and fair elections, but also for human rights and civil rights, which – according to Dan La Botz (1995) – was highlighted by the Chiapas rebellion of January 1994. The rebellion also signalled the beginning of the end for Mexico's traditional governing party, the PRI. At the centre of this struggle for democracy in Mexico were four movements: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) which led the rebellion in Chiapas; the National Democratic Convention originally convened by the EZLN; the Civic Alliance – the new movement of Mexican civil society – and the opposition party of the Democratic Revolution (PDR) (Radu, 1997:118).

The EZLN has transformed Mexican politics. On 27 January 1994 with the world's attention focused on Mexico, the then President Salinas was forced to sign a formal pact with the opposition parties, conceding a series of much needed electoral reforms for the elections that were due for August in that same year. The agreement called for impartial electoral authorities, media equity, no use of public money for private campaigning, and definite limits on campaign spending (La Botz, 1995:10).

Mexican elections are traditionally described as corrupt and fraudulent, and have been characterised by a genuine lack of conditions for truly free and fair elections (Basanez, 1995:643). According to La Botz, "To win elections, the PRI was prepared to use its political machine, the state's economic resources, the domination of the media, the presence of the military, police violence and massive fraud." (La Botz, 1995:130) Between 1988 and 1994 some 286 political assassinations were documented. The PRI party officials, police, or hired gangsters were directly responsible for many of these 286 murders. Not only did the PRI's use of violence secure elections for the party, it also terrorised the opposition. However, the PRI's shameless use of patronage, fraud and violence to win elections had a paradoxical effect on internal politics within Mexico, causing resentment among many Mexicans and gradually led to a revival of the civil society movement (La Botz, 1995).

The outcome of Mexican elections has never varied for more than sixty years. The PRI invariably won the elections, with modest exceptions in some local elections. This has led Sarmiento (1997:131) to conclude that Mexican elections have for long been a mere theoretical exercise, with no practical value.

After the scandal surrounding the PRI's "abduction" of the 1988 election, constant pressure was exerted on the State for electoral reforms. These pressures had two sources: that which arose from citizens within Mexico, and that which came from the United States Administration. Both the demands of Mexican reformers and the influence of the United States assisted to bring about electoral amendments in Mexico (La Botz, 1995:194).

Firstly, there were reforms in the government structure to increase the role played by minority parties. The Congress doubled the size of the Senate from 64 to 128, and granted the largest minority party in any state one seat. Secondly, no party was permitted to hold more than 63% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. This was implemented to prevent a single party from changing the Constitution. Thirdly, the famous governability law, which gave the largest party an automatic majority, was repealed so that any party with less than a majority would have to form coalitions (La Botz, 1995:198).

In 1990, the PRI passed through Congress a new electoral code (COFIPE). These reforms dealt with a range of issues, from the actual act of voting, to the tabulation of results, and the final adjudication of decisions. The new Mexican Electoral Institute (IFE) was to administer the new reformed system. Theoretically, the state and the district citizen councillors (who also were given the responsibility by the new law to validate the election) – the IFE advisors – were independent, though in practice, according to La Botz, they were often PRI sympathisers (La Botz, 1995).

The Federal Electoral Institute was established as a permanent, autonomous and professional administration, with officials who ought to be non-partisan and independent of the government. According to La Botz (1995), the IFE however tended to resemble the PRI establishment, since many of its staff came from the government service. More strikingly though, IFE also remained under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, which had for decades served the official party as “political enforcer”.

Elections in Mexico are held for President, the Senate (*Cámara de Senadores*), and the Chamber of Deputies (*Cámara de Diputados*), Governors, state legislatures, and municipal councils. Federal elections for the President take place every six years; every three years for the Chamber of Deputies, and Senate elections every three years where half of the Senate is elected for six year terms. State elections for the Governor also take place every six years, every three years for the State Deputies, and every three years for municipal councils (Lindvall-Larson, 1996).

Prior to all elections, the IFE used to spend millions of pesos to conduct a public education campaign. Television public service announcements, newspaper advertisements, billboards, and posters exhorted the electorate to participate in the elections. In January 1994 the General Council decided that the total public funding for the election would be set at US \$67 million, of which approximately US \$33.1 million went to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), US \$9.7 million went to the right-wing populist National Action Party (PAN), and the ex-communist Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) received US \$6.9 million. The rest of the money was divided among the other smaller parties participating in the election (La Botz, 1995:199; "Mexico Index", 1998). Presidential campaign expenditures were also limited and could not exceed US \$42 million. The PRI spent close to the US \$42 million limit on their presidential campaign, between ten and twenty times the size of its nearest competition. As in the case of the 1999 elections in South Africa, where the ANC enjoyed a massive resource advantage over the opposition during the election process, the PRI similarly enjoyed the same advantage.

Political parties were free to spend as much of their budget as they wished on television, radio and newspaper advertising. Reforms were passed requiring the national broadcasting network to give each participating party 15 minutes of free television and radio coverage each month prior to the election. To ensure that the contest was fair, restrictions were placed on advertising for government social welfare programmes. Even with the measures in place to secure a fair contest, irregularities still seemed to plague the Mexican election process. The PRI received 43% of the total air time given to political parties, while the PAN received 14% and the PRD 13%. The results were similar for the Presidential candidates: the PRI candidate received 41% (22% for Colosio before his assassination, and then 19% to his successor Zedillo who, as a result, became known as the "accidental President"), whereas the PAN and PRD presidential candidates only received 19% and 11% of air time respectively (La Botz, 1995:200; Radu, 1997:121).

Two other plaguing problems that used to characterise Mexican elections were polling and ballot box fraud. To prevent them from recurring, the 1990 electoral code provided that polling places would be geographically dispersed. Throughout the

whole of Mexico 95 000 precincts were established in 1994. Restrictions were also placed on campaigning in or near polling stations. Another perennial problem of Mexican elections was repeat voting or the “carousel”. In order to curb this practice a new registration list was drawn up and special voter identification cards issued. The new national voter registration list eventually contained the names of over 45 million persons (see table 9). Before election day, the IFE issued voter identification cards to 45,796,851 citizens (La Botz, 1995:201; “1994 Presidential and Legislative Elections”, 1998).

However, less than a month before the elections were due, the PRD raised a number of objections with the General Council with regard to the integrity of the new voter registration list. These related to potentially fraudulent registrations, illustrated by the high rate of homonyms or voters who had the same first and last two names appearing on the new list. In the Federal District, amongst its 4.3 million registered voters, the list contained over one million homonyms. Further claims insinuated that 17% of the total voting population had been eliminated from the list and that a large number of false registrations appeared on the list. The list, however was approved, with the IFE rejecting all of the PRD’s claims (La Botz, 1995).

Attempts at ridding the elections of potential fraud were taken a step further with the introduction of voter registration cards. The newly issued voter registration cards contained several safety features, including a photograph of the voter, a bar code, a thumbprint, watermarks, signatures, and molecular-fusion card construction. There were also special homonym security codes installed in the cards to deal with this quite distinctive Mexican phenomenon and at the same time to deal with one of the practices characteristic of previous Mexican elections: multiple voting. For this reason too, each voter registration card was punched after its holder had cast his/her vote. A specially formulated indelible ink that was clearly visible and impossible to remove with any solvent, was also used to stain each voter’s thumb when casting a vote. Ballot boxes and booths were redesigned, with party representatives, non-governmental observers, and foreign observers all permitted to witness the opening of the ballot boxes and the counting of the vote (La Botz, 1995).

The post-election debate was characterised by conflicting reports whether or not the process was free and fair. However, it was certain that these were the most free and fair elections in the history of Mexico.

TABLE 9: Statistics on the 1994 Mexican Presidential and Legislative Elections

	US \$ (where indicated)
Size of the Electorate	45 796 817
Voter Turnout	35 552 069
Number of Election Monitors	21 000
Number of Foreign Observers	800
Amount of Public Funding	*US \$67 million 222 105 000 MXP
Total Election Expenditure	*US \$1 billion 3.3150 billion MXP
Estimated Cost per Vote	*US \$22.00 72.93 MXP

(Sources: Adapted from: "1994 Presidential and Legislative Elections", 1998; La Botz, 1995; CSIS, 1994)

(*Calculated at US \$/MXP exchange rate in June 1994: 1US \$=3,3150 MXP)

3.6 CONCLUSION

It was established that inflated election expenditures are the result of mainly two considerations: the administrative and the capacity-building elements.

Originally aimed at reducing the overall costs, the introduction of new technology in the electoral process has proven itself prone to result in the opposite. It is evident, from looking at the 1999 expenditure in the South African elections, that it was a combination of the latter factor and the lack of sufficient administrative planning that greatly inflated the financial costs of the elections.

The little time at the disposal of the Electoral Commission in which to plan and conduct the 1999 elections, also played a major part in the adoption of the technological route taken by the Commission (Personal interview with Deon Du Plooy from the EC, 2000). Perplexing though is that the experience of the 1994 elections, in which the electoral commission also had very little time in which to plan and administer the elections, did not result in better time management and planning for the 1999 elections. The task of the Commission was further complicated by the resignation of Judge Kriegler and the debate regarding the allocation of funds to the activities of the Commission.

With better administrative planning of the electoral process a large percentage of these expenses could have been obviated. Whether one would be erroneous in concluding that the EC was set on making the elections a lavish affair, marked by technological gimmicks, is certainly open to debate. What cannot be denied though is that a close inspection and evaluation of the areas of costs incurred is necessary, and that ways need to be sought to make the electoral and voting process a financially less painful one for the South African taxpayer.

The difference in the *per capita* expenditure between the South African elections and those of Israel, Australia, Mexico and India is not difficult to explain. All of these countries have permanent electoral management bodies (EMBs). In none of these countries have elections been conducted as part of a broader on-going peacekeeping operation. The case of Mexico, however, needs special consideration since it was the first time in the history of Mexican politics that considerable attempts were made to ensure that the elections were conducted in a free and fair manner (CSIS, 1994). The considerable amount of money spent on the Mexican elections was as a direct result of its being the first time ever that electoral reforms and measures were put in place to conduct free and fair elections.

Another difference between these cases is the excessive use of technology in the South African case. According to Baxter (Interview, 6 September 1999), the EC spent millions of rands on its results reporting system, which ultimately did not produce the intended outcome, as it took the EC no less than five to compute the election result.

Evidently, the EC has neglected putting into practice the most important lesson in election administration, namely that the goal should be to deliver an election that meets the needs of the country within the means at its disposal. If the results obtained from using sophisticated technology do not live up to its intended outcome, it would very much appear as if investment in such technology is a waste of money and resources (IFES, UN-DESA and IDEA, 1999). The lesson learned from the election experiences in especially India is quite revealing: simple processes cost less.

Common to all these case studies is the notion whether or not the State should fund political parties during elections. The following chapter highlights the importance of political parties to any democracy and also focuses on the main arguments regarding the issue of funding.

CHAPTER 4

State Funding of Political Parties

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with a number of issues. Firstly, it deals with the pivotal role played by political parties in modern day democratic politics. It concentrates on the funding of political parties by the State in order to enable them to participate in the election process in a competitive framework. Focus is also placed on the types of funding political parties may receive and the implications; and it deals with the contention whether or not it is the responsibility and duty of the national government to fund the operations of political parties with money received from the taxpayer. It is, therefore, with this contention in mind that party funding is seen as part of the election cost.

4.2 PARTY FUNDING

The following discussion on the role of political parties in the democratic political process of a state is important in the context of the recommendations suggested in Chapter 6 with regard to reducing the financial costs of the electoral and voting process. It is from this discussion that the rationale for the funding of political parties will proceed.

According to a report by the South African Committee for Constitutional Affairs, political parties are defined as those organisations “registered in terms of the law addressing a wide appeal and more specific interests, with the objective of securing power or participation within the legislative and administrative organs of government through the electoral process,” and as a consequence they are important participants in any political system, whether the system is democratic, totalitarian or authoritarian.

They fulfil a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of government policy, (Committee for Constitutional Affairs, 1992:7).

According to Ware (1987), political parties have emerged as key political actors in almost every state in the modern world. Their importance in political systems of various kinds since the late nineteenth century contributed to their being a central concern of political analysts. Ware (1987) posits that it is thus "no coincidence that it was on political parties that Lowel, Bryce, Ostrogorski and Michels produced the first books that could be described as genuine political science."

Democracy, according to popular contention, cannot function without political parties. Modern democratic politics equate party politics. Therefore, political parties perform an important role in representing and articulating the demands and wishes of the people. In terms of this contention, representation of the people can only be effected by the election of representatives, which again hinges on the existence of political parties. They are thus major role players in the political system connecting the citizenry and the governmental process (Randall, 1988:190). Political parties turn the demands and wishes of citizens into political issues. They form governments and act as opposition in legislatures (Klingemann; Hoffebert and Budge, 1994:1-5). Political parties are, therefore, indispensable institutions in a democracy.

Although political parties are considered to be key actors/elements in liberal democracies, their role as instruments of popular control and civic orientation is, however, challenged by new social movements, interest groups and the media (Pridham, ed.; 1990). It is thus logical to conclude that the manner in which political parties articulate and orientate themselves would be the product or result of particular historical experiences. The extent to which political parties adjust to the changes and challenges from their particular environment will determine their survival.

Historically, parties came into being because of conflicting interests, namely newly emerging interests versus interests threatened by the forces of democratic change during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Roberts, 1986:72). Political parties, as suggested by the derivation of the word, are partisan. They are committed

to a particular cause or ideology, and are opposed to the programmes and ideologies of rival parties. Parties thus tend to come into being on the basis of some cleavage which society perceives to be politically significant. As a result the differences among modern political parties could be traced to the social cleavages dominant at the time of their inception (Klingemann et al, 1994:5-7).

South Africa's first political party, the Afrikaner Bond, came into being in the then Cape Colony in 1883 under J.H. Hofmeyr. In the Afrikaner Bond both elements of the white population (Afrikaners and English) found a political voice. The subsequent exclusion of black South Africans from the political process at the formation of the Union in 1910, led to the formation of the first black political movement, the South African Native National Congress in 1912. In 1923 the Congress changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC). (See Venter, 1998 regarding the development of political parties in South Africa).

There are three main sources from which political parties could draw their funds. The first way is through State funding. This refers to formal public financial support to political parties by means of legislation with a range of mechanisms devised or built in to ensure accountability, equity and proportionality. The second source of funding is private contributions. These are funds that parties secure through individual membership fees and corporate contributions. Finally, funds could be obtained from foreign sources. These are moneys received by political parties from entities outside the borders of the relevant state.

The funding of political parties in South Africa is entirely unregulated. Private donors may support a political party in secret, and in the same vein so may foreign governments or businesses. Regulations concerning campaign financing could broadly be divided into two categories:

- (a) Regulations concerning expenditure; and
- (b) Regulations concerning contributions and other forms of income.

The first category of regulations are intended to prevent political parties from "buying" voters during elections, whereas the latter category is intended to prevent

those with money from “buying” candidates or parties. These regulations may include some form of limitations or prohibitions on specific or total amounts of expenditure or contributions, or they may merely require disclosure (Katz in LeDuc et al. (eds.), 1996:124-125).

4.2.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SYSTEM OF PARTY FUNDING

Public funding of political parties, as comparative international experience has shown, has been implemented to serve different purposes (The National Democratic Institute For International Affairs, 1998:8). These purposes are twofold. The first serves to focus support on the elections by giving political parties up-front grants or reimbursing them financially for expenses incurred during the electoral process. The second objective is to provide political parties with the necessary resources to participate in parliamentary politics.

Apart from Section 236 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that calls for national legislation to provide for the funding of political parties participating in national and provincial legislatures on an equitable and proportional basis, the funding of political parties is presently entirely unregulated. Many parties thus rely on private funding in order to survive. Furthermore, each Member of Parliament (MP) receives an annual special “constituency fund” to “remain in contact” with voters.

Because of the above Constitutional provision, government bears a constitutional responsibility to provide financial support for political parties on the basis of the dual principles of proportionality and equity. Its main provisions are:

- The establishment of a multi-party democracy fund, that will be credited with money appropriated by Parliament from State coffers, domestic and foreign contributors, and interests derived from the investment of money standing to the credit of the fund;

- The EC will administer the fund and appoint their head of administration as accounting officer to control the fund, keep proper financial records, and prepare annual statements and a balance sheet of its liabilities and assets to Parliament. The Auditor General will audit the accounts and the balance sheets;
- The President may at times intervene to make pay-outs, after consulting the constitutional review committee and the Electoral Commission (Parliamentary Whip, 23 May 1997:5).

The allocations from the fund are to be made and paid out to each of the political parties concerned on the basis of proportionality and equity. Ninety percent of the fund is allocated in proportion to the number of seats held by each party in the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures jointly. The other 10% is allocated, firstly, among the provinces in proportion to the number of members in each province, and secondly, it is divided equally among the participating parties in the legislature of each province (Pottie, 1999:22-23). The implication is that only parties represented in Parliament are financed. This raises some serious questions with regard to the fairness of political party competition in South Africa, and also with regard to the accessibility that smaller parties may have to contest the national elections and who may lack funds in order to compete on a fair basis with other parties.

4.2.2 AMOUNTS RECEIVED BY POLITICAL PARTIES IN 1994

In total R53 million (R44 million was voted from State funds with an additional R10 million by the European Union, of which R1 million was retained pending proof of proper expenditure by political parties) was paid out to political parties in 1994. Payment was done by the IEC in accordance with the provisions set out in Section 74 of the Electoral Act. The money was then distributed in three phases – one half before the elections, based on the party's probable support; one-quarter after, on an equal footing; and a final quarter, based on votes earned during the election, (Parliamentary Whip, 23 May 1997:5-6). The amounts were as follow:

TABLE 10: State Funding of Political Parties in the 1994 National Elections

<i>Party</i>	<i>Amount Received</i>
ANC	R13.5 million
NP	R7.7 million
IFP	R6.6 million
FF	R5.6 million
DP	R5.5 million
PAC	R5.4 million
ACDP	R3.3 million
Africa Muslim Party	R956 000
Federal Party	R682 000
Equal Rights Party	R546 000
Workers' List Party	R546 000
Women's Rights Peace Party	R136 000
Islamic Party	R136 000
African Democratic Movement	R136 000
Dikwankwetla Party	R136 000

(Source: Parliamentary Whip, 23 May 1997:5)

Immediately following the April 1994 elections, in its post-election report to Parliament, the IEC informed government of the “controversy” regarding the funding of political parties. This included mainly two aspects: Whether such funding should be provided by the State and, if so, to what extent should there be public scrutiny of and/or control of public funds (Pottie, 1999).

4.2.3 PARTY FUNDING IN 1999

Since 1994, the legislative context governing party financing has changed to the extent that a shift has taken place from “funding for registered political parties to funding only represented political parties” (Pottie, 1999:22). Thus in 1999 the R53 million from public funds was allocated as follows:

TABLE 11: State Funding of Political Parties in the 1999 National Elections

<i>Party</i>	<i>Amount Allocated (in R)</i>
ANC	30 608 560
NNP	10 145 260
IFP	5 694 850
FF	1 993 330
DP	1 759 600
PAC	1 125 190
ACDP	953 470
Minority Front	719 740

(Source: Pottie, 1999:23)

New political parties raised their objections to this legislation and voiced their objections against the current system of funding of political parties at the “33 New Party Press Conference” on 23 March 1999 in Tsakane, Gauteng. Their objections were unsuccessful in changing the previous decision taken to fund only political parties represented in Parliament. They also used the conference as a platform to launch their various party manifestos (Pottie, 1999). The question of whether or not the current legislative arrangements fulfil the State’s constitutional responsibilities remains open for debate.

4.3 THE REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN 1999

Another issue that met with opposition – in particular from small political parties – were the registration fees political parties had to submit if they wished to participate in the elections. This firstly raised questions as to whether or not so many small political parties would be detrimental to the state of the country’s democracy, and secondly whether or not the payment of a deposit impeded the democratic right of any individual to contest for government power. Weighing up the practical implications to ideological considerations seemed to be the essence of the matter.

By 3 May 1999 all the political parties wishing to enter the elections had to pay the required deposit and submit their candidate lists. Each party had to pay R100 000 to participate in the national elections and R20 000 for every province in which it wished to contest the elections (EISA, 1999:1). The deposits were refundable in the event of the particular party gaining one or more seats in the elections in which it participated.

Of the 26 parties paying the deposit, 16 contested for the National Assembly elections (of these 16 parties, 15 contested for the provincial elections, 10 of which contested for seats in every provincial legislature). Five parties failed to pay the deposits, as required by law and were, therefore, excluded from the final list of parties that contested the June polls. According to Mchunu, the EC had “no option but to exclude these parties from the final order of the ballot... (W)e have no option but to follow the letter of the law...” (EISA, 1999).

As posited earlier, this issue of registration fees for political parties raised certain questions pertaining to the extent that this financial deposit may impede the right of any individual or group of individuals to form a political party and contesting in an election for control over the machinery of the State. Ultimately the practical implications need to be considered of having a myriad of small and insignificant political parties contesting for State power. Extending the right to form and organise a political party without applying certain measures of constraint may just have a paradoxical effect within the South African democratic political context. The proliferation of small political parties might prove to be the very threat to the system it is supposed to uphold.

In essence though, the latter evaluation is indicative of a general bias against smaller political parties in many democratic societies. For, if democracy entails the right to the articulation of the needs of different interest groups in society, and if it requires the expression of a certain degree of tolerance towards differences of opinion, then it is contended that the compulsory requirement of paying registration fees is an undemocratic practice.

4.4 CONCLUSION:

Although their role as the sole articulator of the public's political interests and needs is challenged by other social movements, political parties remain one the defining characteristics of modern democratic politics. Political parties are key political actors in almost every modern state. They fulfil a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of government policy and are, therefore, crucial institutions in any democracy.

Political parties draw their funds from essentially three sources. They obtain these through private contributions, State funding, and foreign sources. In many instances, as is the case in South Africa, the funding of political parties is totally unregulated. Regulations regarding party funding could take the form of prohibitions on specific or total amounts of expenditure, or they could require full disclosure.

The debate about the State funding of political parties during elections is due to remain a contentious issue, generating heated debate on both sides of the spectrum of the debate. There are those who believe that political parties perform an indispensable role within a democracy and as such their survival needs to be secured in some or other way. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the State funding of political parties unfairly benefit those established parties to the detriment of new and smaller political parties. As a consequence they argue for government to cease the funding of political parties altogether.

CHAPTER 5

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions to curb Electoral Expenses

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

It is evident that South Africa cannot afford to spend a disproportionate amount of money on conducting its elections. As posited earlier, the biggest threat to democracy in the country will not arise from conducting cheaper elections, but from the majority of people in whose socio-economic needs the government cannot provide because of certain financial constraints. It is imperative though that the call for conducting cheaper elections should not be interpreted as questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process. The remainder of this chapter, therefore, deals with the ways in which electoral spending could be reduced without negatively impacting on the legitimacy of the voting process.

The following suggestions are intended to be as practical as possible to implement, without compromising the free and fair element of the election process. They are not intended to reflect negatively on any individuals or institutions in particular, but are aimed at saving South Africa much needed funds.

5.2 SCALING DOWN THE FUNCTIONS OF THE EC:

Tom Lodge (1999:18-20) addresses the issue of cost reduction by focusing on the functions of the EC, as set out in the South African Constitution. The Constitution charges the EC to manage national, provincial and local government elections, to calculate their results and to ensure that the elections are free and fair. The EC thus administers, supervises, monitors and evaluates the entire electoral process.

As a consequence the Electoral Commission Act of 1996 authorised the establishment of a substantial bureaucracy to fulfil this mammoth task. According to Lodge (1999),

the EC in its full deployment constitutes an organisation equal in size to most Southern African governments. However, it is only active for between two and three weeks during a year, including registration and election procedures.

Questions pertaining to the EC's independence are often raised, since it is very difficult to draw a distinction between the EC and other organs of the South African government. The majority of the local election officers employed by the EC are civil servants. They are recruited as a result of the lack of persons with the necessary managerial and administrative experience in many of the required areas. These staff members are remunerated by the EC for the duties they undertake on its behalf. From this follows the first suggestion to curb electoral expenses: *The local management of elections should be included among the normal duties of such functionaries (civil servants in local governments), who are in effect paid for by their municipal employers* (Lodge, 1999:18-19).

Similarly, this raises the issue of whether or not the EC really needs to organise the whole of the registration process on its own. The public reacted favourably to the involvement of civil servants during the first round of the 1999 registration process. There was no evidence of any public perception that their involvement "subverted the integrity of the process." Voter registration could, therefore, become a routine government function (Lodge, 1999:19). Much time and money could be saved by making voter registration a formality, which could be completed at official institutions, such as pension offices, schools and colleges, at prisons, at police stations, and at post offices.

The EC should not be undertaking or be paying for the running of the elections. The most critical role of the EC is to serve as a guarantor of electoral fairness and competence, monitoring the performance of public officials responsible for such tasks. Performing these functions does not require a huge bureaucracy. It requires a much smaller, less expensive body with a well-developed capacity for collecting and analysing information (Lodge, 1999). In the final analysis the EC should be "a commission, a watchdog, (and) not a parallel state."

5.3 CEASE STATE FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES:

The primary functions of funding, according to Vicky Randall (1988), are to provide political parties with the necessary resources to participate in the elections, in other words to finance their campaigns, and to maintain their organisation. At issue, however, is whether or not the taxpayer should be the primary supplier of this funding.

In the South African context, this function (with reference to State funding of political parties) only extends to those parties already occupying seats in parliament. The rationale that State funding serves to benefit small parties in competing for State power, therefore, does not completely ring true. As Ware (1987:18) indicated, State funding is indeed only beneficial in maintaining the *status quo* as it primarily serves the interests of big parties. A party such as the United Democratic Movement (UDM) that received absolutely no State funding, gained more than 3% of the national vote. In the process it fared better than some of the parties that received State funding (see tables 12 & 13).

TABLE 12: Funding received by Parties and the Votes obtained at the Polls

Party	Amount Received (in Rand)	Number of Votes	% of Total Votes
*Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)	1 125 190	113 125	0.71
*Freedom Front (FF)	1 993 330	127 217	0.80
*African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)	953 470	228 975	1.43
*Minority Front (MF)	719 740	48 277	0.30
Total	4 791 730	517 594	3.24

(Source: Adapted from IEC, 1999)

TABLE 13: Parties that did not receive State Funding and their Support at the Polls

Party	Amount Received (in Rand)	Number of Votes	% of National Votes
Abolition of Income Tax and Usury Party (AITUP)	None	10 611	0.07
*Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO)	None	27 257	0.17
*Afrikaner EenheidsBeweging (AEB)	None	46 292	0.9
*Freedom Alliance (FA)	None	86 704	0.54
The Government by the People Green Party (GPGP)	None	9 193	0.06
Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA)	None	9 062	0.06
*United Democratic Movement (UDM)	None	546 790	3.42
United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP)	None	125 280	0.78
Total	None	861 189	5.39

(Source: Adapted from IEC, 1999)

(*Parties that secured seats in Parliament)

According to Alan Ware (1987: 18-19), State funding is crucial for a number of reasons:

1. It may free political parties from the grip of special interests;
2. Although not removing interests groups from exerting their influence on politics, it allows political parties to focus their operations on rather different political arenas;
3. It contributes to creating a rough equality between parties in terms of resources with which they have to compete for the people's vote;
4. If this funding is linked to the share of the vote a party receives, as in the South African case, in effect it helps to protect current large political parties; and
5. If political parties could rely on funding from the state, party leaders may afford to be more insulated from the influences of local branches.

The contention of this proposal is that especially the latter "advantage" of State funding leaves little incentive for political parties to really broaden their support base, and party members, as a result, will start to play a less decisive role.

The assertion of this paper is fairly straightforward: cease the state funding of political parties' electoral activities. This contention does not deny that money plays a pivotal role in the political process, and that political parties need money to survive. Political parties are clearly important to representative democracy, and as a consequence money is important in sustaining political parties and also democracy. However, a considerable amount of money could be saved should the State funding of political parties participating in the election process be terminated, with the proviso that legislation be put in place to strictly regulate the external or private sources of party funding.

More than R50 million was spent on financing the election activities of political parties during the 1999 national elections. The issue at hand is thus whether or not the State, or in effect the taxpayer, should be responsible for subsidising the election activities of political parties. Since only those parties with seats in parliament benefit from existing legislation, State funding would make no real decisive difference in recruiting electoral support. This was seen in the June 1999 elections where the minority parties who did not receive any State funding, collectively performed

considerately better than those smaller parties (i.e. the Freedom Front and the PAC) who did benefit from existing legislation regarding the State funding of political parties.

When a focus is placed on the amounts political parties spent on their 1999 election campaigns, one needs to consider who should be primarily responsible for financing the election campaigns of political parties. The ANC is said to have spent more than R100 million from its own resources, the NNP spent in the region of R30 million on its campaign activities, the DP more than R20 million, and the IFP spent more than R30 million from its “own coffers” (*Mail and Guardian*, 5-11 March 1999). Current financing legislation clearly does not benefit small parties, but lends itself to a situation where the “strong becomes stronger” and the weak, being left to their own devices, merely wither away. In abolishing the State funding of the election campaigns of political parties, or rather those parties in parliament, only the “serious” political parties will eventually compete in the electoral process.

5.4 DO NOT EXTEND VOTING RIGHTS TO PRISONERS:

After an initial decision not to allow prisoners to vote, 146 000 prisoners were eventually granted the right to cast their votes during the 1999 elections, of whom a some 20% eventually cast their votes. This exercise, granting criminals the right to vote, cost the taxpayer R10 million; money that could have spent on other more pressing needs, such as voter education programmes.

The EC's objections that this step would further inflate its electoral budget were not accepted by a Constitutional Court ruling in favour of the right of prisoners to vote. The Court stated that neither the EC nor the Court itself had the right to disenfranchise prisoners. According to the ruling, only Parliament had the power to do that, and since Parliament had not sought in any way to do so, prisoners should be granted the right to vote (Pottie, et al., 1999:1-2).

However, law-abiding citizens of the country who happened to be overseas on polling day were denied the right to cast their vote and the implications of this *de facto* disenfranchisement sparked a widespread debate regarding this matter. The implicit contention was that convicted criminals were entitled to more rights than economically active law-abiding citizens.

5.5 THE INTRODUCTION OF INTERNET VOTING:

The aim of this proposal is to make the process of voting a more convenient one and also to encourage young voters (those aged between 18 and 30) to vote. This proposal can be approached as a joint venture by government, big businesses and tertiary education institutions. The excitement that will accompany such an invention would serve as a bait, luring young adults to be part of the electoral process. Previous indications showed that very few young adults cast their votes during the elections (EISA, 1999). The time-consuming exercise of queuing at voting stations may have been exciting in 1994, but it has since lost and will continue to lose much of its "glamour" and appeal.

It should obviously not be forgotten that South Africa is a developing country, but this should not serve as a debilitating factor *en route* to the introduction of internet voting. If government can succeed in letting corporate South Africa buy into this venture, it will prove to be a less costly affair in the long run and the possibilities for further innovations are endless.

The USA is currently considering introducing Internet voting as a measure to increase voter turnout in the elections (Blitzer, 1999). It is in particular aimed at that segment of the American electorate that traditionally does not vote - the American youth. The Pentagon is already in the process of developing a system that would enable overseas military personnel to cast absentee ballots in the 2000 Presidential election. Individual states such as California, Washington, Minnesota, Iowa and Florida are currently also exploring the possibility of online voting.

This idea has sparked a class debate in America. Critics, according to Blitzer (1999), are concerned that online voting may skew an election by making it easier for some groups (middle class, college educated males) to vote at the expense of others (low income, working-class families). For Jim Adler, president of Votehere.net, this is the least of his concerns. He firmly believes that just as television has spread to almost every household in America, computers will soon follow suit.

The question of security is the most vital concern to critics of this proposal: whether or not hackers, fraud, a computer virus or breakdown would be able to upset an election? Supporters, however, are adamant that, given sound and proven computer codes and encryption, special measures would ensure that each vote is secure. This concern though, underlines once again the general scepticism that accompanies technological advances. This sentiment is wonderfully captured by the Renaissance statesman, Machiavelli (1961), in stating that “men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have trusted them by experience.” This is a trait that the authorities should entertain and deal with. Already, the introduction of computer training courses in schools and community centres across South Africa, frequently with the assistance of large business concerns, is contributing a great deal to alleviating this sense of alienation towards technology.

It is obvious that there are many issues that need to be addressed and solved with regard to internet voting. It is still an unexplored field and it seems certain that it would spark some fierce class debate in South Africa. The greatest concern, however, is how the youth of this country could be encouraged to become involved in the governmental decision-making process. They are important actors in the political process, as is evident by their numbers. Approximately 36% of all eligible voters in South Africa fall within the 18-30 year old grouping. Their apathy towards the political process was clearly illustrated by the low registration turnout for the 1999 elections. During the first round of registration only 28.6% of those aged between 18 and 30 registered to vote, whilst a mere 11.65% of those aged between 18 and 20 turned out to register (EISA, 1999).

As to how many of those aged between 18 and 30 eventually cast their votes, is not quite certain. In all fairness it should be borne in mind that the declining rate of participation in the political process by young voters, is not a problem confined to South Africa. According to Pottie, et al. (1999), comparative studies illustrate that the declining rate of political participation among young voters is a worldwide phenomenon. The onus nevertheless still lies with the political authorities to convince young people to come out and cast their votes. The obvious advantages are that this internet voting venture, if applied correctly, would be saving the country time and money. The advancement in technology is also certain to render this a safe and secure way of voting. To a great extent, it also eliminates the physical danger of intimidation at the polling stations, and thereby making voting a physically safe endeavour.

To conclude, the above recommendations aim to be practical solutions to a pressing problem for developing countries: too expensive elections. It is not aimed against any particular group, but rather aimed at contributing to conducting free and fair elections at a reduced price. These recommendations are obviously not the only ones that could be implemented, for surely there are more areas in which the cost of elections could be reduced. The above represents the start of concerted efforts to reduce the cost of the election process.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Whatever the theoretical debates surrounding the importance of elections towards the democratic system, they remain to be of paramount importance to democracy by fulfilling the functions of:

- Recruiting politicians;
- Constituting governments in countries where the political executive is directly elected, as in the USA and France. In parliamentary systems it influences the formation of governments;
- Providing representation, and when they are fair and competitive, demands from the public are channelled through to the government;

- Influencing policy, especially in cases where a single issue dominates the election campaign;
- Educating voters by providing the electorate with an abundance of information on political parties, the political system, etc.;
- Building legitimacy by providing justification for a system of rule, whether it is democratic or not and mobilising active consent through the fact that citizens are participating in politics or encouraged to do so; and
- Strengthening elites by using elections as a vehicle to manipulate the masses, and using it as a means to neutralise political discontent and opposition; giving the people the impression that they are exercising power over the government.

Democracy, however, entails more than just conducting free and fair elections, but it cannot be less. Elections ultimately provide the opportunity for ordinary citizens to express their support of, or dissatisfaction with the governing authorities. Elections, in effect, lend a voice to the demands and wishes of the people.

The crucial role played by the respective electoral commissions in different countries has also been recognised in this study. Their perceived or real bias towards the political incumbents could be detrimental to democratic consolidation in newly democratic countries. Electoral commissions are thus essential in lending legitimacy to the whole electoral process. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that these bodies function independently from government. It has also become clear that methods need to be sought to secure the financial independence of these bodies from the incumbent regime. To a considerable extent this would free these bodies from the “mercy” of the governing authorities.

An important question mark needs to be placed as to the underlying reasons relating to the high cost of the 1999 general South African election. The propositions quoted in this paper hold that the high cost of an election could either be attributed to: (a) it is a country’s first experience with democratic elections or (b) the elections form part of a broader peacekeeping operation. Therefore, one would have expected that the cost of the 1999 elections would have been significantly less than the elections of 1994. It is

apparent that bad electoral administration, especially on the part of the government that was quite sluggish in appointing the new Electoral Commission, and also the budgetary dispute between the Commission and the government, attributed significantly to the relatively high cost of the elections. The time constraints meant that the EC had to resort to costly technology in order to secure that the elections took place on the scheduled date.

Whether government's tardiness in appointing EC Commissioners also reflects its attitude towards elections is surely debatable. One could argue that this episode signals the incumbents' confidence in their electoral strength, to the extent that a matter such as the appointment of the EC was perceived as a mundane matter. Should this be the case, then the implications for the future of a competitive electoral democracy in South Africa would not appear to be good.

In this study it has been established that:

- Free and fair elections are crucial in sustaining democracy, as they lend legitimacy to both the governing authorities and the political system.
- Compared to most developing countries in the world, the South African elections of 1999 were a very expensive undertaking.
- Better planning of the elections could have reduced the cost of the election.
- Where the majority of countries show a dramatic reduction in electoral expenditure following their founding elections, the reverse holds true for South Africa.
- The South African electoral authorities seriously need to evaluate appropriate and inappropriate electoral expenditures.
- Most importantly, expensive elections are not synonymous with equal free and fair ones.

The question regarding electoral expenditure in South Africa should also be viewed in its broader socio-economic context. South Africa is a country marred by high levels of crime and unemployment, a deteriorating health sector, and an equally troubled education system. These issues need to be the government's first priority, because

they constitute the biggest threat to the country's democracy. At the moment, the expectations on the one hand, and the experience on the other hand that many people have of democracy are two contradictory experiences. As a consequence, when pressing social issues are not properly attended to, these could easily open the door to undemocratic forces.

Government is ultimately accountable for its actions and decisions to all its citizens, both to those who voted it into power and to those who did not. Could any government, therefore, justify spending millions of Rands on a single election when it is faced with more pressing social and economic problems? The answer is an unequivocal "no!"

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4. INTERVIEWS

Interview conducted with David Pottie, from EISA, on the 6th of July 1999 in Johannesburg.

Interview conducted with Deon Du Plooy, from the IEC, on the 7th of July 1999 in Pretoria.

Interview conducted (electronic mail exchange) with Joe Baxter, from IFES, on the 6th of September 1999.