

African National Congress

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The **African National Congress** (ANC) has been South Africa's governing party, supported by its tripartite alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), since the establishment of majority rule in May 1994. It defines itself as a "disciplined force of the left".^[1] Members founded the organization as the **South African Native National Congress** (SANNC) on 8 January 1912 in Bloemfontein to increase the rights of the black South African population. John Dube, its first president, and poet and author Sol Plaatje are among its founding members. The organization became the ANC in 1923 and formed a military wing, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) in 1961.

It has been the ruling party of post-apartheid South Africa on the national level since 1994. It gained support in the 1999 elections, and further increased its majority in 2004.

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History

Ideology

The ANC deems itself as a social democratic force of national liberation in the post-apartheid era; it officially defines its umbrella agenda as the National Democratic Revolution, and is a member of the Socialist International. It also sets forth the redressing of socioeconomic differences stemming from colonial- and apartheid-era policies which discriminated against non-whites, such as land, housing and job distributions, as a central focus of ANC policy.

Ties with the SACP

It also holds a historic alliance with the SACP, which fields its candidates through the ANC in government elections, holds governing positions in the ANC and influences party policy and dialogue. However, during Mbeki's presidency of the ANC, the government took a more pro-capitalist stance, often running counter to the demands of the SACP.

Party list

Politicians in the party win a place in parliament by being on the *Party List*, which is drawn up before the elections and enumerates, in order, the party's preferred MPs. The number of seats allocated is proportional to the popular national vote, and this determines the cut-off point.

African National Congress



Leader	Jacob Zuma
Number of Members in the National Assembly	290
Founded	8 January 1912
Headquarters	Luthuli House 54 Sauer Street Johannesburg
Political Ideology	Social democracy
International Affiliation	Socialist International
Colours	Yellow, Green, Black
Website	www.anc.org.za
See also:	Politics & Government
	Constitution
	President
	Deputy President
	Parliament
	Council of Provinces
	National Assembly
	Constitutional Court
	Political parties
	Elections
	Foreign relations

The ANC has also gained members through the controversial floor crossing process.

Criticism

Terrorism and violence

During its days in exile, the ANC was often criticised by western governments who shared the South African government's characterization of the group as a terrorist organization. Several high-profile anti-Apartheid activists such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu criticized the ANC for its willingness to resort to violence, arguing that tactics of non-violent resistance, such as civil disobedience were more productive. The ANC's willingness to ally with Communists was also the subject of both foreign and domestic criticism. A Pentagon report of the late 1980s described the ANC as "*a major terrorist organization*". Several hardline black nationalists were also critical of the ANC's willingness to embrace whites as equals, even allowing them to serve on the group's executive committee.

Party and State conflict

The ANC has been heavily criticized for awarding large state contracts, involving tens of billions of Rands, to its party funding vehicle, Chancellor House. At times, the decision to award the contract was made by the same state employees who sit on the ANC fundraising committee. Chancellor House is named after Mandela's former work premises.

The ANC was also criticized for the setting up of a formal scheme whereby businessmen and members of the public could buy 'face time' with various government ministers, with the costs ranging R3 000 to R7 000 for an individual and R12 500 to R60 000 for businesses. The scheme is run from the ANC headquarters, Shell House, with all money going to the party.

Controversy over corrupt members

Another accusation frequently levelled against the ANC is that they protect their high-ranking members in the face of controversy, and as such are seen as supporting criminal behaviour. Recent issues of this nature include the Schabir Shaik fraud trial linked to former Deputy President Jacob Zuma, the sexual misconduct and criminal charges of Beaufort West municipal manager Truman Prince,^[2] and the Oilgate scandal, in which millions of Rand in funds from a state-owned company were allegedly funneled into ANC coffers.^[3] Links between factions in the ANC, specifically the ANC Youth League leadership, and businessman Brett Kebble gained media attention following Kebble's murder in September 2005.

In December 2007 the ANC elected their new National Executive Committee (NEC), the highest structure in the party. Out of the 80 member committee, 16% are (post-apartheid) convicted criminals. Most of these members have been convicted of fraud, while one member, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, was convicted of the kidnapping of a 14-year old boy (who was also murdered). According to an article in the Mail & Guardian, "by adding those who have been disciplined or moved, and those with dark clouds of unanswered questions hanging over their heads, the figure shifts to 29%."^[4]

The Directorate of Special Operations (also, DSO or Scorpions) is a multidisciplinary agency that investigates and prosecutes organized crime and corruption. It is a unit of The National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa. The staff of 2000 Scorpions consist of the best police, financial, forensic and intelligence experts of South Africa.

After allegations of corruption, the ANC decided to merge the Scorpions with the Police by June 2008, reducing their power. The disbandment was recommended by South Africa's minister of safety and security, Charles Nqakula. This has been opposed by businesses in South Africa.

See also

- Azanian People's Organisation
- Congress of South African Trade Unions
- Pan Africanist Congress
- Socialist Party of Azania
- United Democratic Front (South Africa)

References

- ↑ ANC Party Declaration from the African National Congress, retrieved 15 May 2008
- ↑ Bester, Ronel (5 May 2005). "Action against Prince 'a farce'", Die Burger.
- ↑ "Special Report: Oilgate", Mail & Guardian. Retrieved on 2007-04-27.
- ↑ ANC rogues' gallery : Mail & Guardian Online

External links

- African National Congress official site
- Response by the ANC General Secretary to COSATU's assessment, 2004
- "Today it feels good to be an African" - Thabo Mbeki, Cape Town, 8 May 1996
- Interview with Nimrod Sejake, an ANC dissident, "The ANC has sold out!" Interviewed by Laurence Coates Offensiv 385 (10 February 2000)

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