

Voters' silent revolution threatens ruling party

BY CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE

An increasing number of "floating voters" are engaged in a silent revolution.

They have opted out of electoral politics, only 12 years into democracy, and are no longer loyal to the ANC.

However, they have not found a new political home even though independent electoral candidates have got the "silent nod" to proceed from the South Africa Communist Party.

Paradoxically, the SACP's and Cosatu's alliance with the ANC is stopping the emergence of politi-

cal alternative to the ruling party, some analysts believe. They represent the poor and worker constituencies where social movements have spawned new leaders.

Several new publications conclude that the time is probably not right for an alternative to the mass-based ruling party.

However, most agree that a number of trends, if sustained, could alter voting patterns and eat into the ANC's overwhelming majority. The academic articles fly in the face of an ANC attack on the media for similar perceptions, published before and after this year's municipal elections.

The ANC, in an online weekly

column, this week lashed out at journalists. It said they did a great disservice to their readers "by claiming political shifts where there are none, or by projecting their prejudices and preconceptions onto the South African electorate".

But in several chapters in two new books, including the Human Sciences Research Council's annual state of the nation publication, an analysis of voting trends and the effects of protests and the independent candidates it spawns, highlights the shifts and the potential for a political realignment.

