

THE TURNOVER OF POWER IN KWAZULU-NATAL

A Growing Commitment to and Engagement with the Democratic Process

By
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ABSTRACT

The 2004 South African election culminated in a turnover of power in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The province, formerly governed by the IFP, was won by the ANC. Various theories have been put forward to explain the IFP's loss and the ANC's consequent victory in KwaZulu-Natal. The IFP believes its loss has to do with the ANC's determination to win the province while the ANC puts its victory down to having been able to permeate IFP strongholds and increase its percentage of the vote in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Other factors, too, may well have contributed to the turnover of power in the province. These include the IFP's inability to shed its Zulu nationalist image, decreased levels of violence, and higher standards of election monitoring. While the ANC's eventual control of all the provinces is viewed in some circles as a sign of a party-dominant democracy, the peaceful turnover of power (albeit at a provincial level) may be interpreted as a positive step towards democratic consolidation in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The 2004 election marked ten years of democracy for South Africa. This places the country well beyond the transition stage and at a point where analysis of democratic consolidation has set in. Samuel Huntington (1991, p 267) contends that a democracy becomes consolidated when an electoral regime is fully entrenched and capable of delivering free and competitive elections and if 'the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election'. While a turnover of power at the national level in South Africa is not imminent, the 2004 election marked a turnover of power at the provincial level for the first time since the transition to democracy.

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) is a case in point. In the first democratic election of 1994 the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) won control of the province with 50,32 per cent of the provincial vote and forty-one seats in the provincial legislature. In the 1999 election the IFP managed to retain control of the province, with 41,90 per cent of the vote and thirty-four seats in the legislature. In the 2004 election, however, the IFP only managed to secure 36,82 per cent of the vote and thirty seats in the legislature, effectively losing control of the province to the African National Congress (ANC) (CPS 2004a).

The IFP's steady decline in KwaZulu-Natal in the past three elections has been concurrent with the ANC's ascendancy. In 1994 the ANC won 32,23 per cent of the vote and twenty-six seats; in 1999 it won 39,38 per cent and thirty-two seats and in 2004 it won 46,98 per cent and thirty-eight seats (CPS 2004a). Much is made of the lack of electoral opposition to the ANC at national level, now, with its victory in KwaZulu-Natal (and in the Western Cape), it seems that provincial level electoral opposition is also diminishing. Notwithstanding the dilemmas and dangers associated with party-dominant democracy, the ANC's eventual victory in KwaZulu-Natal signals a growing commitment to and engagement with democratic processes in the province. The IFP's decline, on the other hand, has much to do with its inability to break away from its image as a Zulu nationalist organisation, its loss of support within its traditional rural stronghold, decreased levels of violence, higher standards of election monitoring, reports of poor governance in the province and the success of the ANC's election campaigning in KwaZulu-Natal.

Table 1
Provincial Legislature Results: KwaZulu-Natal 1994, 1999, 2004

| Party | 1994 | | | 1999 | | | 2004 | | |
|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Votes | % | Seats | Votes | % | Seats | Votes | % | Seats |
| ANC | 1 181 118 | 32,33 | 26 | 1 167 094 | 39,38 | 32 | 1 287 823 | 46,98 | 38 |
| IFP | 1 844 070 | 50,32 | 41 | 1 241 522 | 41,90 | 34 | 1 009 267 | 36,82 | 30 |

SOURCE: CPS 2004b

INKATHA AND ZULU NATIONALISM

Much is made of the IFP being a Zulu nationalist party. Indeed, at its inception in 1975, Inkatha was not marketed as a political party but as a national, cultural liberation movement, Inkatha ye Nkululeko ye Sizwe. According to its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 'all members of the Zulu nation are automatically members of Inkatha if they are Zulus' (Mare and Hamilton 1987, p 57). The other thrust of Inkatha politics, however, was a 'revival' of the ANC (after the ANC had been

banned in 1960 and could no longer operate from within South Africa). Buthelezi, taking a more nationally directed stance, commented that 'We in Inkatha see ourselves as committed to the ideals of the ANC – not as it operates now but to the ideals propagated by the founding fathers in 1912' (Mare 2000, p 67). It has always been difficult to reconcile Inkatha, the Zulu organisation, with Inkatha, a liberation movement. While maintaining, in 1979, that 'Inkatha plainly declares itself to be an instrument of liberation, the business of black liberation is our business' (Mzala 1988, p 120), Buthelezi was also full of Zulu nationalist rhetoric. 'The Zulus are a closely knit political unit which has reached a state of nationhood that no other black group has reached in the whole of South Africa. In fulfilling the destiny of this country for all its people, the importance of Zulu coherence must never be underestimated by anyone' (Mzala 1988, p 121).

Despite Buthelezi's constant invocation of Zulu nationalism in the form of the triumphs of the great Zulu warriors such as Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dingaan, as well as the unwavering authority of the chiefs and the Zulu royal family, it is questionable whether support for Inkatha, and later for the IFP, was really grounded in people's beliefs in their 'Zuluness'.

A study conducted in 1995 on ethnic identity in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that ethnic identity was not 'strongly foregrounded in people's narratives'. People did not seem to be engaging with their 'Zuluness' at the same level of intensity and urgency as they were with gender or age. They showed little interest in or knowledge of Zulu history and no spontaneous invocation of a glorious Zulu past. They also showed little sense of threat to their Zulu group membership, although they did see other groups as threats to them as 'black people' or as 'Africans'. The study concludes that the form of Zulu ethnic identity constructed by Buthelezi is not immediately relevant in the lives of the people interviewed for the study – 'not only does he [Buthelezi] not appeal to the full complexity of their life experiences ... but he emphasizes customs that cannot be practiced as readily as before and a glorious warrior past that cannot be remembered or recaptured' (Campbell, Mare and Walker 1995).

The IFP's election to provincial government has seen it attempt to move away from its Zulu nationalist preoccupations and focus more on issues of governance. Popular belief, however, is that it has been unable to reinvent itself in a manner that the provincial electorate can relate to or identify with (author interview with Maseko 2004).

THE IFP'S RURAL SUPPORT BASE

The use by Inkatha of the Zulu nationalist ideal probably has much to do with Buthelezi also having occupied the position of leader of the KwaZulu homeland (in the province formerly known as Natal) during the apartheid regime. Buthelezi's rationale for agreeing to the homeland concept was that he was 'working within the system in order to change it' (Mare 2000, p 67). Buthelezi's leadership of the

KwaZulu homeland also probably accounts for the fact that the IFP has its stronghold in the rural areas of what is now KwaZulu-Natal.

Lawrence Schlemmer, in 1980, claimed that Inkatha's members were predominantly Zulu and located in the rural areas of the KwaZulu Bantustan – despite its efforts to mobilise outside the Zulu ethnic group and territory 95 per cent of its membership was Zulu and, of its nearly 1 000 branches, only 36 existed outside Natal, while only 203 were in urban areas (Mzala 1988, p 128).

Until recently the IFP's stronghold of support has been in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Many have argued that the decline in its support in the rural areas has to do with increased levels of urbanisation – the 1996 census recorded the rural-urban divide in KwaZulu-Natal as 57 per cent to 43 per cent, while the 2001 census recorded it as 54 per cent to 46 per cent. The IFP's declining support in the rural areas may, however, have more to do with the effects of democratisation on a post-homeland electorate than on the forces of urbanisation.

During the apartheid regime homeland residents were effectively governed without any democratic input and it appears that Inkatha's strong rural support could be attributed to the local traditional chiefs who, as ex officio members of the KwaZulu homeland legislative assembly, had much to gain from mobilising their constituencies to support the party. They did this through a mixture of intimidation and offering incentives. Those most vulnerable to intimidation and coercion by chiefs were women left on their own while their husbands sought migrant work. This would account for what Roger Southall labelled the 'disproportionate amount of females who are members [of Inkatha]' (Mzala 1988, p 130). Incentives were also used as a means of persuasion for Inkatha members. Reports surfaced that chiefs and Inkatha officials had the power to distribute resources. Rank and file members of Inkatha in rural areas knew that it was easier to get land, housing and reference books by joining the party. Migrant workers from KwaZulu had also reported that unless they could display their Inkatha membership card at the labour bureau they would not be given access to jobs in the industrial areas.

In 1978 Buthelezi went so far as to state in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly that Inkatha membership would in the future be taken into account when promoting civil servants. Oscar Dhlomo, KwaZulu Minister of Education made it clear that teachers who were not members of Inkatha would be regarded with suspicion. Buthelezi sanctioned this with the comment that 'It is important for our political survival, the survival of our people and our cultural survival, that headmasters and school inspectors be imbued with the spirit and principles of Inkatha' (Mzala 1988, p 131).

In 1983 *The Star* (19 October) reported that 'tribal authorities are unpopular with the people they control; many allege that they have to pay bribes to get land or pensions'. There were stories about chiefs using their acquired power to extort taxes from peasants before granting permits for, for example, cutting wood or, thatching grass or brewing beer. Large amounts of money, much of it in bribes, were collected by the chiefs from the rural masses (Mzala 1988, p 129). Indeed,

Roger Southall has questioned whether payment of a membership fee to Inkatha is a real indication of support or merely a tribal levy imposed by the chiefs. Southall also argues that Inkatha's popular support was exaggerated and achieved through sheer force of repetition and a well polished propaganda machine rather than through any acquaintance with the situation on the ground (Mzala 1988, p 129).

With the advent of democracy, and if the last three sets of election results are anything to go by, post-homeland rural communities are becoming accustomed to the variety of political visions to which they can subscribe during an election. In short, KwaZulu-Natal's rural electorate is beginning to realise that it can exercise a choice about who governs it.

VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

My main fear is not about who will win the elections. Almost everyone knows that the MC (ANC) will. After all how can it be otherwise after what the chiefs and Inkatha have done to the children? My biggest worry is what they will do to us when they come to learn that they have lost.

You say that a person can walk into that office and put a cross opposite the candidate or party of her choice, what happens if some eye planted up in the roof witnesses where I put the cross and takes my photograph?

Schlemmer and Hirschfield 1994

This testimony from two women in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal just before the 1994 election illustrates the levels of fear of the IFP that existed in the province and which effectively hindered the advent of free and fair elections.

Political violence in KwaZulu has claimed the lives of as many as 20 000 people since 1984. More than half of these deaths occurred after 1990, that is, after the unbanning of the liberation movements. The three-month period that preceded the 1994 election saw the death of 1 000 people and, between 1994 and 2000, a further 2 000 people were killed (Taylor 2002).

That the violence was politically motivated is not in dispute, documentation of the Shobashobane massacre in 1995, in which nineteen ANC supporters were murdered by a group of Inkatha supporters; the Richmond killings, which, from 1988 onwards, saw territorial battles waged between the Inkatha chiefly authority and youth comrades; and the Nongoma assassinations that followed the ANC setting up a branch in Nongoma, an IFP stronghold, in order to attract support for the 1999 election and precipitated serious conflict between the IFP and the ANC, resulting in attacks and the murder of seven IFP and six ANC leaders, clearly show how the conflict between rival political parties culminated in violence.

Apart from the deaths, another major effect of political violence is the intimidation that goes with it and is aimed at increasing and maintaining support. For example, during the Nongoma crisis residents in the suburb of Redhill complained that IFP supporters fenced off their suburb and began demanding that all residents pay them for the 'security service'. Failure to pay resulted in severe beatings (Taylor 2002). Reports indicate that this type of situation was compounded by police, who perpetuated the violence and seemed to have the support of the provincial government. 'Most police, themselves from the Nongoma district, have continued to act as if they were still in the KwaZulu police – when Inkatha political interests overtly dictated the form and content of policing' (Taylor 2002, p 23). Indeed, during the Shobashobane massacre, after which a special investigative team was set up by the Government, the IFP argued that policing in KwaZulu-Natal was a provincial matter. 'We are not saying that the central government should not be involved in security matters in KwaZulu-Natal. But Schedule 6 of the Constitution says policing is also a provincial issue and as long as national intervention is done in a unilateral way this is invariably a partisan approach' (Taylor 2002, p 10).

According to Rupert Taylor (2002) violence in the 1990s had much to do with paramilitary forces from both the ANC and the IFP (Umkhonto We Sizwe and IFP armed and militia wings trained and organised in the 1980s), who continued to drive it. Outside investigative units found it hard to make significant headway and successful prosecutions were few and far between.

So why then was there a marked decline in violence in the run-ups to the 1999 and 2004 elections, and why has this decline coincided with the IFP's loss of support in the province? Many have argued that violence as a means of competing for power is not an option; that the use of violence is rendered less fashionable as democracy matures (Ngwenya and Ndhlela 2004). Indeed, elections in South Africa are usually marked by the signing of a code of conduct by all political party leaders, who commit themselves to upholding free, fair and peaceful elections. Makubetse Sekhonyane of the Institute for Security Studies argues that people in KwaZulu-Natal are 'war weary' and are not as easily stirred to violence as they once were, especially since those who were involved in political killings at the height of the violence have been charged and convicted for their crimes. Sekhonyane argues that people are also beginning to approach government with their problems rather than resorting to violence and that, since being elected to govern the province, the IFP has concerned itself more with service delivery and development than with the pursuit of political hegemony (Mottiar 2004a).

Despite the general consensus that violence in KwaZulu-Natal has declined dramatically there are some who remain critical. Laurence Piper (2004) argues that violence, although largely reduced thanks to a growing political tolerance in the province and commitments by all contesting parties to free and fair elections, still exists in the form of attacks and assassinations in areas beyond the media's gaze and aimed at creating a climate of fear and compliance. He adds that these attacks have reportedly been committed by many of the same people who were involved

in the violence in 1994, drawing on old networks of support which extend into the police and criminal justice system. Piper points out that while this view is often dismissed as alarmist it is a view held by people researching violence.

Piper's warning is given credibility by various KZN Violence Media Reports which contend that political violence has not gone away. 'Simply because incidents of overtly political violence have diminished relative to 1994/1995 does not mean that other types of violence do not serve the same political ends [access to and the regulation of power]' (*Violence Monitor* 2001). The reports go on to outline how political killings are often made to look like common homicides and overlap with taxi violence and are also related to intra-IFP tensions with regard to the selection of office bearers.

The drop in the levels of violence in KwaZulu-Natal effectively has two consequences for an election. Firstly, voters are more inclined either to vote for the party of their choice or to exercise their right not to vote at all. In the 2004 election traditional IFP strongholds recorded an increase in votes for the ANC. Furthermore, it has been suggested by Michael Sachs (2004) that the curtailment of voter intimidation in traditional IFP strongholds has meant a drop in voting in these areas. For example, Ulundi, which had a turnout of what Sachs calls 'uncomfortably close to 100 per cent', that is, 94 per cent, in 1999, had a turnout of 82 per cent in 2004. This, according to Sachs, should be interpreted as voters exercising their freedom as opposed to them being apathetic. The second consequence of the reduction in violence in KwaZulu-Natal is that political parties are able to canvass more freely during campaign periods. This has been the case with the ANC which, in 2004, managed to permeate IFP strongholds in the province, thereby winning increased levels of support in these areas.

Table 2
IFP Strongholds: 1999 and 2004

| | Ulundi | | Nongoma | | Msinga | |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 1999 | 2004 | 1999 | 2004 | 1999 | 2004 |
| Turnout | 94% | 82% | 81% | 77% | 85% | 74% |
| ANC | 1 638 | 2 744 | 829 | 2 052 | 3 018 | 5 433 |
| IFP | 76 542 | 59 606 | 53 715 | 49 253 | 41 426 | 37 490 |

SOURCE: CPS 2004b

ELECTORAL FRAUD

Alongside the violence and intimidation factor the issue of electoral fraud must also be considered. The 1994 election in KwaZulu-Natal was reported by some critics to have been won by fraud in voting stations administered by KwaZulu officials. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) admitted that cheating in polling stations was wide spread. Roger Southall (1994) asserts that confidential reports from foreign observers revealed major electoral irregularities in KwaZulu-Natal such as the establishment of pirate polling stations in Inkatha controlled areas, the stuffing of ballot boxes with bogus votes in favour of Inkatha and the forced removal of IEC officials and ANC agents from counting stations in KwaZulu. Southall argues that, of the options open to it (including declaring the election in KwaZulu-Natal unfair), the ANC's decision to concede the province was offered in exchange for Buthelezi's willingness to participate in and signal his acceptance of the Government of National Unity. (Buthelezi had refused to take part in the 1994 election until the final hour). Tom Lodge (1995) argues, however, that the IFP's margin of victory was large enough for it to have won even if the election had been conducted with complete propriety.

The heavy security force presence in the 2004 election as well as a stronger presence of ANC party agents at polling booths kept electoral fraud of the nature reported in the province in the 1994 election to a minimum. Interestingly enough, though, in the 2004 election it was the IFP that claimed electoral fraud, with specific regard to voting irregularities. The party claimed that 300 000 voters had cast their ballots in voting districts where they were not registered and that the ANC had bused voters in from other provinces to skew the results (Mottiar 2004c).

THE IFP'S POOR DELIVERY VS THE ANC'S STRONG CAMPAIGN *

Much has been made of the IFP's poor service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal. It was reported in Durban's *Mercury* (26 April 2004) that the IFP in the province had offered '10 years of indifferent service delivery and a general churlishness'. The question that should be considered here is whether or not a rural electorate is, at this point, able to distinguish between provincial and national service delivery. In the case of KwaZulu-Natal the provincial government has earned itself a reputation for what is seen as its compliance with traditional leaders (chiefs) in rural areas. The *Financial Mail* (3 September 2004) reported that 'economic actors believe that first time ANC control of eThekweni municipality and provincial government might remove the political impediments to development that have long plagued the province'. This view is reflective of the scandal that broke out over an initiative by the National Department of Social Development to distribute food parcels to needy communities.

* The author is grateful to Steyn Speed of the ANC for his views on this subject.

Apparently the IFP Member of the Executive Committee for Social Development halted the programme in the province after stating that permission had yet to be obtained from the chiefs. The ANC responded angrily (and dexterously) that 'the local opposition holds that the KwaZulu-Natal Premier on several occasions has hampered the province's development and welfare out of respect for the powers of the amakhosi [chiefs]' (*Afrol News* 17 January 2003). Indeed, Michael Sutcliffe, eThekweni municipal manager, has been quoted as saying: 'The IFP thought that the poor were all north of the Tugela. More welfare resources were distributed there than to the whole of Durban, though 30 per cent of the poor live here' (*Financial Mail* 3 September 2004).

Whether or not poor service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal was a factor in the IFP's loss of support in the province, the ANC went all out to canvass on issues of delivery. Indeed, sources within the IFP argue that the ANC's victory in KwaZulu-Natal had more to do with its determination to win the province than with service delivery issues (author interview with Prof Mapalala, IFP). The ANC election manifesto referred generously to ANC achievements in the past decade, with references to the 'millions' of homes that had been built and the 'millions' of water and electricity connections made. The ANC's campaign in KwaZulu-Natal in the run up to the 2004 election was stepped up from its past efforts. Analysts of the 1999 election commented that the campaign 'seemed a little uncoordinated' and raised the question of 'whether the ANC in fact wanted the IFP to win the election' because in several areas within the province 'they have been virtually non-existent' (Lodge 1999, p 158). Commentators on the ANC campaign in KwaZulu-Natal in 2004, however, hailed it as 'vigorous and effective' (Southall 2004).

The ANC launched its national campaign at King's Stadium in Durban, where President Thabo Mbeki spoke of the violence in KZN (effectively reinforcing the association between the IFP and violence). The ANC also favoured person-to-person contact, unlike the IFP, which kept to its rally driven styles of 'years past' (Piper 2004). The ANC also concentrated on penetrating IFP strongholds and former 'no-go' areas such as Ulundi. Its campaigners in KwaZulu-Natal included twenty-five members of its National Executive Committee, led by Thabo Mbeki and Deputy President Jacob Zuma (Mottiar 2004b). John Daniel (2004) has described the ANC campaign as having a 'buzz and an energy' to it and cleverly exploiting cultural nuances, especially those pertaining to the Indian culture.

Indeed, the ANC managed to increase its support in most Indian areas in KwaZulu-Natal, especially in Phoenix and Chatsworth, taking votes that had, in 1999, been cast for the Democratic Alliance (DA). Commentator Adam Habib, Director of Governance and Democracy of the Human Sciences Research Council, suggests that the ANC's gains in Indian areas were a result of the fact that it dealt with issues affecting the Indian community (*Sunday Times* 18 April 2004). The party also attracted some 15 000 votes from white voters in Pietermaritzburg, who switched from the DA in a bid to retain Pietermaritzburg (rather than Ulundi) as the capital of the province.

The IFP campaign, on the other hand, has been described as 'lack-lustre and same-old', with its emphasis on Zulu nationalist issues (Daniel 2004). The IFP manifesto also had a distinctly negative flavour, claiming, as it did, that the IFP 'is not the kind of party that remembers the electorate three months before Election Day making wild promises that are soon forgotten'. The campaign focused quite intensively on the IFP traditional strongholds of power in rural and peri-urban areas. The party attempted to increase its support from the Indian electorate but in this it was not as successful as the ANC. The IFP also exhibited less in the way of election material such as banners and posters than the ANC, for which it blamed a lack of resources (Forrest 2004).

CONCLUSION

Looking beyond Huntington's two-turnover test, the IFP's loss in KwaZulu-Natal is illustrative of the fact that South Africa is moving towards a consolidation of its democracy. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) argue that a democracy can be considered consolidated when democratic processes become internalised behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally. Behaviourally, a democracy is consolidated when no significant political, social or economic actors attempt to achieve their objectives by creating a non-democratic regime. Attitudinally, a democracy is consolidated when a strong body of public opinion believes that democratic procedures and institutions are the best way to govern collective life. Constitutionally, a democracy is consolidated when governmental and non-governmental forces alike become subject to the resolution of conflict within the institutions sanctioned by the democratic process.

The IFP in KwaZulu-Natal, although probably anticipating a loss (opinion polls conducted before the election predicted a tight race in the province, with a likely ANC victory), still competed in the election and brought its complaints of electoral irregularities before the Independent Electoral Commission, signalling its willingness to accept its investigation and final decision. Likewise the KwaZulu-Natal electorate has begun to exhibit a familiarity with the democratic process. Voters are beginning to understand that they have a choice when it comes to elections and that the voting process is conducted to ensure their freedom and independence. To what extent this will become socially consolidated remains to be seen, as, will the general levels of voter apathy. The reduction in electoral fraud in KwaZulu-Natal is particularly heartening because it indicates a growing respect for the institutions of the democratic process and free, fair elections are, after all, the cornerstone with regard to consolidating a democracy.

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