

# JACOB ZUMA’S “ZULUNESS” APPEAL DURING THE APRIL 2009 ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE IFP’S GRIP ON ZULU SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES?

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## *Abstract*

*The article reflects on the role played by Jacob Zuma as President of the African National Congress (ANC) using his Zuluness to break the Inkatha Freedom Party’s (IFP’s) political control of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province. The rationale for this venture by Zuma elicited an outcry from the IFP, which for long had used the Zuluness appeal in the province to garner votes during the elections. It is therefore argued that the use of the Zuluness appeal by Zuma and the ANC helped the organization in winning the April 2009 elections in the province. The author negates the widely held simplistic viewpoint that in the KZN province, the ANC was mostly voted into power because its President was a Zulu. Therefore, the article scrutinises arguments for and against the usage of Zuluness as an appeal to galvanize support on behalf of the ANC.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The April 2009 elections in South Africa sent some shock waves through the Inkatha Freedom Party’s (IFP’s) electorate when the party was outsmarted by the African National Congress (ANC) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Although the IFP leaders were optimistic about winning the province, the writing was on the wall that the party was faced with a mammoth task in comparison with that of the ANC with its electioneering machinery. A few weeks before the elections, the Ipsos Markinor survey predicted the IFP would get a mere 11,7% of KZN’s 4,4 million votes.<sup>2</sup> This was in essence a devastatingly small percentage that highlighted the party’s challenges to arrest the downward trajectory in its electoral fortunes since 1994, when it garnered 10,54% of the national vote and won KZN with 48,58%.<sup>3</sup>

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2 *Mail and Guardian*, 23 April 2009.

3 It should be noted that in the twilight of apartheid, militant Zulu nationalism threatened a momentous transition in South Africa. Weeks before the milestone April 1994 election, Zulu King G Zwelithini, backed by Chief G Buthelezi’s IFP, urged the “warrior Zulu nation” to do it alone and follow the inspiration of Shaka Zulu, a formidable empire builder. This call for self-determination came amid spiralling unrest fuelled by rogue security forces, which attacked black townships to further divide a country segregated by the apartheid legislations. PW Coetzer, “Opinion polls and opinions on the results of the election of 1994”, *Journal for Contemporary*

Although the ANC got into full swing in the usage of the concept of Zuluness in campaigning for votes when Jacob Zuma became President of the ANC after the Polokwane Conference in December 2007,<sup>4</sup> Hoeane argued that as early as the June 1999 elections, the ANC had started using the concept in an attempt to garner support, but was to a certain extent unsuccessful.<sup>5</sup> This was viewed by the IFP as making inroads by the ANC into its electorate, particularly in the KZN province.

The pervading sense was that, if the IFP remained on its current course, it would eventually disappear from the political landscape. In the April 2009 elections, the ANC got 66% of the vote.<sup>6</sup> Therefore in this article the author draws attention to the effects that Zuma's ascendancy to the ANC presidency and his being Zulu had in turning the IFP's political fortunes downwards in the KZN province. In essence, the author argues that the ANC wrested control of the province from the IFP by beating the latter on its own game of ethnic politics and manipulation. By fielding Zuma as a presidential candidate, a man who was broadly accepted by ordinary Zulu voters for his Zuluness, the ANC, to a certain extent, managed to erase its Xhosa stigma and delivered a devastating blow to the IFP's coherence in the province. In this article, the author does not intend discussing the historical origins of the domination of the ANC by Xhosa speakers. It should also be noted that the first president of the ANC, J.L. Dube, was a Zulu. In the 1950s, Chief Albert Luthuli

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*History* 19(2), September 1994, pp. 257-259; SL Barnard, "The election campaign of the general election in South Africa in 1994", *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(2), September 1994, pp. 113-136; JH Le Roux, "Violence and intimidation during the election campaign – a review", *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(2), September 1994, pp. 82-112; J Seekings, "From the ballot box to the bookshelf: Studies of the 1994 South African general election", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 15(2), 1997, pp. 287-309; B Carton, "Remaking Zulu identity in an era of globalization", *Global Studies Review* 1(1), 2005, p. 7; N Steytler and J Mettler, "Federal arrangements as a peacemaking device during South Africa's transition to democracy", *Publius Journal of Federalism* 31(4), 2001, pp. 93-106; *The Times*, 20 April 2009.

- 4 In an attempt to attach meaning to Zuluness and ethnicity concepts, several history scholars published on the subject. For more information, the following sources might be helpful: B Carton, *et al.*, *Zulu identities being Zulu, past and present* (Pietermaritzburg, 2008); G Mare, *Ethnicity and politics in South Africa* (Pretoria, 1993); J Sithole and S Mkhize, "Truth or lies? Selective memories, imagings, and representations of Chief Albert John Luthuli in recent political discourses", *History and Theory* 39(4), December 2000, pp. 69-85; G Mare and G Hamilton, *An appetite for power Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1987); D Golan, "Inkatha and its use of the Zulu past", *History in Africa* 18, 1991, pp. 113-136; P Forsyth, "The past in the service of the present: The political use of history by Chief M.G. Buthelezi, 1951-1991", *South African Historical Journal* 26, 1992, pp. 74-92; B Temkin, *Buthelezi A biography* (London, 2003) The author is aware that the notion of Zuluness preceded the Polokwane Conference of the ANC and later became an issue in Zuma's rape trial of 2006.
- 5 T Hoeane, A re-interpretation of South African electoral studies: Race, ethnicity and democracy in the 1994 and 1999 elections, unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2002, pp. 60-61. See also R Taylor and T Hoeane, "Interpreting the South African election of June 1999", *Politikon* 26(2), 1999, pp. 133-144.
- 6 R Louw (ed.), "African National Congress takes nearly 66% of vote and DA impresses with 18% but stayaways voters cause for concern", *Southern Africa Report* 27(16), 24 April 2009, pp.1-2.

became the President of the ANC, and he was also a Zulu. It remained to be seen as to what happened to this Zulu domination within the ANC until Zuma came to the fore. During the April 2009 elections there were talks about the Zulufication of the ANC, primarily because of the rise of Zuma as President of the ANC.<sup>7</sup> Although this renewed interest in Zuluness by the ANC under the presidency of Zuma was timely, questions existed about the extent to which ethnic claims in the KZN had widespread support.

Since the June 1999 election,<sup>8</sup> followed by the December 2000 local elections, the IFP has been suffering a steady decrease in terms of its voter support, both provincially and nationally. In the April 2004 national and provincial elections, the IFP was toppled from power through the ballot by the ANC.<sup>9</sup> As if that was not enough, in the December 2005 local government election the IFP lost a number of municipalities to the ANC. That meant a critical IFP voice was lost at executive committee meetings in the key municipalities of Msunduzi and eThekweni, to mention a few.<sup>10</sup>

Without doubt the Zulu card played by Zuma in appealing for votes from the KZN electorate played a huge role in making the ANC win that province by 63%. The IFP received 22% and the Democratic Alliance (DA) 9,8%.<sup>11</sup> The Zuluness issue raised questions about the role played by ethnicity in contemporary politics

7 R Louw (ed.), "President Zuma introduces 'Zulufication' as a counter to the X-factor of the Mandela and Mbeki eras", *Southern Africa Report* 27(32), 14 August 2009, pp. 1-2.

8 For more information see L Piper, "Democracy for a bargain: the 1999 election in KwaZulu-Natal", *Politikon* 26(2), 1999, pp. 145-154. See also L Piper, *The politics of Zuluness in the transition to a democratic South Africa*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1999, pp. 99-122.

9 After the 2009 election, there was a "Zulu factor", as Mbeki offered the deputy presidency to Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a Zulu, who subsequently declined. Mbeki then offered the post to Jacob Zuma, also a Zulu, who made the most of his opportunities, but was fired because of alleged corruption in June 2005. The job thereafter went to Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, another Zulu. The repeatedly asked question was, are the Xhosas the presidents and the Zulus South Africa's perennial deputy presidents? For more information see WJ Breytenbach, "The presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki compared: Implications for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa", *Africa Insight* 36(3/4), September-December 2006, p. 179.

10 *Witness*, 29 April 2009.

11 In KZN, the ANC's proportion of the vote jumped from 47,5% in 2004 to 64,0% in 2009. This was largely a result of the "Zuma factor", the rise to the head of the ANC of a Zulu with deep roots in the province, whose candidacy neutralised the IFP's appeal on grounds of traditionalism and ethnicity. To be sure, even if the ANC had been headed by another candidate, it was likely that it would have increased its majority in KZN. This is consistent with its improvements in showing in the province since 1994, for it has made a major effort regarding "delivery" and emphasising its status as the party of power and patronage. Nonetheless, without Zuma, the ANC's performance in KZN would not have been so convincing and, without it, the ANC's overall percentage majority would have been reduced nationally to the lower 60s. Zuma succeeded in rebranding the party as "home for all". For more information see J Daniel and R Southall, "The national and provincial electoral outcomes: Continuity with change" in R Southall and J Daniel (eds), *Zunami! The 2009 South African elections* (Johannesburg, 2009), pp. 236-237.

and about its place in the process of consolidating democracy under the leadership of the ANC government.<sup>12</sup>

The manipulation of Zuluness for political ends by the ANC and Zuma has not yet been documented, except a brief reference made by Daniel and Southall. They, however, give a synopsis of the "Zuma factor" without really debating the responses of the IFP in this regard and the implication for this in the future prospects of the party.<sup>13</sup> The fact that Zuma is a Zulu should not however be interpreted as if the ANC became a Zulu nationalist project. At the most, in the main the KZN ANC branches embraced and affirmed its Zulu character for political ends. Through its own brand of ethnic mobilization via Zuma with his "100% Zulu boy" slogan, the author argues that the ANC broke the IFP's feudalistic grip on Zulu social structures.<sup>14</sup> In public gatherings in support of Zuma, some people wore "100% Zulu boy" T-shirts. For electoral reasons, in the pre-2009 election period in KZN, Zuma had to place greater emphasis on his Zulu profile for the ANC to make some inroads against the IFP in rural KZN. Furthermore, the article focuses on the ways in which Zuma's Zuluness was constructed in order to gather voter support for the ANC during the 2009 elections.

Although this article is about the usage of Zuluness in promoting either the ANC or IFP, Waetjen further argues that the latter also used the power and limitations of masculinity as a unifying ideology. Claims to a renowned martial history manifested in the legendary deeds of Zulu heroes, kings and chiefs and in the incorporation of symbols and artefacts such as traditional weapons, emphasised masculine cultural practices to such an extent that the idea of "manhood" permeates the vision of the essence of Zuluness.<sup>15</sup> The article argues that the issue of ethnicity, while often denied as a major factor in current political discourse, has been a major factor influencing political behaviour and voters' choices during the 2009 general elections.

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12 For more information on ethnicity, see H Adam and K Moodley, "Political violence, tribalism and Inkatha", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(3), 1992, pp. 484-510; M Szeftel, "Ethnicity and democratization in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy* 60, 1994, pp.185-199.

13 Daniel and Southall, p. 236.

14 J Rossouw, "Throughout modern Mr Zuma", <<http://mondediplo.com/blogs/thoroughly-modern-mr-zuma>>, May 2009 (accessed on 9 April 2010); T Lodge, "The Zuma Tsunami: South Africa's succession politics", *Representation* 45(2), July 2009, pp. 125-141.

15 T Waetjen, "The limits of gender rhetoric for nationalism: A case study from southern Africa", *Theory and Society* 30, 2001, p.126; T Waetjen and G Mare, "Warriors and workers: Inkatha's politics of masculinity in the 1980s", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 17(2), 1999, pp. 197-216. See also A Zegeye *et al.*, "Resisting ethnicity from above: Social identities and democracy in South Africa" in Y Muthien *et al.*, *Democracy and governance review: Mandela's legacy 1994-1999* (Pretoria, 2000), pp. 151-160.

## 2. THE POLITICIZATION OF THE ZULUNESS CONCEPT

The concept of Zuluness cannot be assumed as obvious and the same goes for Zulu culture, traditionalism and identity. The concept has been produced as an ideology that is linked to political action. When the Inkatha National Cultural Movement (Inkatha YeNkululeko Yesizwe) was established in 1975, it rallied behind the concept of Zuluness. Drawing its name from a proto-Zulu nationalist organization of the 1920s, Inkatha was launched as a “national cultural” movement open to Zulu people alone and endorsed by the KwaZulu government. Dlamini argues that even the name Inkatha had specifically Zulu historical and political connotations.<sup>16</sup> For example, the use of Zuluness in KwaZulu was to promote an agenda that was confined to the expression of cultural or linguistic solidarity. It later developed into a political programme with territorial ambitions and nationalism.<sup>17</sup>

In further discussing the IFP and the concept of Zuluness, Peter Maylam of Rhodes University argued:

“Inkatha as a cultural movement emphasized ethnicity and adhered to regionalism in terms of protecting KwaZulu as the ultimate place of the Zulus where they could exercise their cultural activities with ease. During the April 1994 elections the IFP rallied support on the theory of narrow ethnic Nationalism. As early as the 1970s, Buthelezi appealed to Zulu Nationalism to promote ethnic consciousness. Buthelezi appealed to an ethnically-exclusive constituency. Although the ANC tried to rise above tribal and ethnic divisions, it did not entirely turn its back on the tribal past. It also appealed to the Zulus, hence the political violence between the two parties.”<sup>18</sup>

It should also be noted that a variety of forces, historical and social, shaped the form of the appeal made to subjects and the way in which group membership was later defined. Maré of the Department of Sociology at the University of Natal contends that while Inkatha arose out of a specific Zulu history, it soon attempted to give form and direction to the national ambitions of its trading and professional leadership. That direction never really took off, partly because of its strategy of “working within the apartheid system” and partly because of the historical legacy

16 In the Zulu Kingdom the Inkatha was the symbol of Zulu unity and nationhood. It consisted of a grass coil, the circular form of which was believed to have the power of joining together a dispersed people in affiliation to the King. For details, see P Dlamini, *Servant of two kings* (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), p. 29; Anon, “Inkatha Freedom Party”, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inkatha\\_Freedom\\_Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inkatha_Freedom_Party)>, s.a. (accessed 11 November 2009). See also TD Sisk, *Democratization in South Africa - The elusive social contract* (Princeton, 1995), p.144; Leatt *et al.*, *Contending ideology South Africa* (Cape Town, 1986), p. 130.

17 L Piper and S Piper, Hit and myth: Zulu ethnicity and the 1994 elections in KwaZulu-Natal, Paper presented to the South African Political Studies Association Conference, University of Stellenbosch, 27-29 September 1995.

18 P Maylam, “The historical background to the Natal violence” in A Minnaar, *Conflict and violence in Natal/KwaZulu Historical perspectives* (Pretoria, 1991), pp. 68-77. See also G Mare and G Hamilton, *Appetite for power Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1988), p. 3; J Aitchison and J William, *Political violence and unrest in the Natal Midlands A register* (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), pp. 1-21; A Gouws, “Intolerance in KwaZulu-Natal: Illustrating the complexity of tolerance attitudes”, *Politikon* 23(2), December 1996, pp. 23-25.

which allowed an easy option of ethnic consolidation in the early 1980s.<sup>19</sup> While Inkatha drew upon its own earlier existence (in the 1920s) when it was (re)formed in 1975, this was problematic and receded as it attempted to move beyond its Bantustan and ethnic base to claims for the legitimate representation of all black people in South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Inkatha forcefully turned to a Zuluness appeal when it was thoroughly beaten by the ANC and allies, first in respect of the leadership of resistance politics and secondly during the transition period before the 1994 election. Prior to the 1994 general election, Zulu nationalist resistance was organized by the IFP in order to rally against what was known as the "Xhosa-dominated" ANC.<sup>21</sup> Piper and Hampton in their article entitled "The decline of 'militant Zulu Nationalism': IFP politics after 1994" concurs with the above argument when they stated that in the battle to retain at least provincial control in the KZN province, the party adopted a more explicit advocacy of Zulu interests.<sup>22</sup> Campell, Maré and Walker suggest that in mobilizing ethnic sentiment Buthelezi often refers to the glorious Zulu past, symbolized in heroes such as Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dingane, men of mythical wisdom and bravery, supported by a cast of warriors of legendary discipline but capable of an awesome anger when provoked.<sup>23</sup>

To indicate that the party was trapped in its Zulu nationalist stance, in the months preceding the 1994 election the IFP conducted a massive anti-election campaign in the KZN province. Amongst other reasons for this campaign was the fact that the Zulus were not adequately represented within the ANC. In rural areas, which the IFP controlled through its monopoly of the KwaZulu government, this resistance took the form of sequestration from any outside penetration. In urban areas, mostly dominated by the ANC, violence between IFP and ANC supporters flared up dramatically. Frustrated with IFP brinkmanship, the ANC and the National Party (NP) pushed ahead with election preparations, resolving to meet force by force. It was interesting to note that on 19 April 1994, barely a week before that year's democratic election, the IFP acquiesced and decided to take part in

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19 G Mare, "Inkatha and regional control: Policing liberation politics", *Review of African Political Economy* 45/46, 1989, p.184. See also R Greenstein, "Identity, democracy and political rights: South Africa in comparative perspective", *Transformation* 28, 1995, pp. 10-12.

20 G Mare, "Versions of resistance history in South Africa: The ANC strand in Inkatha in the 1970s and 1980s", *Review of African Political Economy* 83, pp. 64, 67.

21 L Piper, "Nationalism without a nation: The rise and fall of Zulu nationalism in South Africa's transition to democracy, 1975-99," *Nations and Nationalism* 8 (1), 2002, p. 73; C Twala, "This was no election, it was a census: The IEC declaration of the April 1994 general election as free and fair in South Africa - a complex process?", *New Contree* 51, May 2006, p. 90; M Szeftel, "Ethnicity and democratization in South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy* 60, 1994, p. 193.

22 L Piper and K Hampton, "The decline of 'militant Zulu Nationalism': IFP politics after 1994", *Politikon* 25(1), 1998, p. 82.

23 C Campell *et al.*, "Evidence for an ethnic identity in the life histories of Zulu-speaking Durban township residents", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(2), June 1995, p. 293.

the election. By participating in the election, Zulu nationalism almost completely dwindled.<sup>24</sup>

Piper observed that when the IFP fared well in the election, it emphasized its national ambition, anti-apartheid politics and black credentials but when it fared poorly it defended its provincial orientation, its participation in KwaZulu and its Zulu credentials. The IFP's turn to Zulu rhetoric was partnered by a greater reliance on traditional leaders, particularly as a result of violence in many rural areas adjacent to cities.<sup>25</sup> The resurgence of Zulu nationalism, which later culminated in the IFP's insistence on greater autonomy for KZN and constitutional recognition of the Zulu King, dramatizes the strength of ethnic populism. The IFP made KZN regionalism, the call for a federal state and containment of ANC authority its primary objectives.<sup>26</sup>

In canvassing for support, on 21 April 2009, Chief Buthelezi urged voters to give change a chance to flourish by voting for the IFP. Addressing supporters of the IFP at Enseleni, outside eMpangeni in KZN, Buthelezi warned:

“Your vote could make a difference between victory and defeat, between providing the chance for hope and change to flourish in South Africa with the IFP, or watching our country stagnates and service delivery decline under the ANC.”<sup>27</sup>

Drawing on the example of Zimbabwe, Buthelezi further indicated:

“It does not take much to destroy even a wonderful a jewel as Zimbabwe was in 1980 and subsequent years. We need to prevent our country from becoming a one-party state with an elective dictatorship.”<sup>28</sup>

The Rev. M Zondi, IFP Secretary General, wrote in the *Mail and Guardian* that his party consistently rejected ethno-nationalism and accused the ANC of referring to the IFP as playing the ethnic card. According to Zondi, it was surprising that in its effort to destabilize the IFP in KZN and galvanize support in the province, the ANC emphasized Zuma's Zulu ethnicity.<sup>29</sup> Mashiqi, a senior associate political analyst at the Centre for Policy Studies, argued that Buthelezi's successes and longevity as a politician depended on his ability to conduct himself as a modern politician while mobilizing Zulu nationalist sentiment to the advantage of the IFP. According to Mashiqi, the irony of this mobilization behind Zulu nationalism by Buthelezi was that Zuma exploited it during the April 2009 elections.<sup>30</sup> The above statement is an

24 Piper, “Nationalism without a nation ....”, p. 75.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

26 R Amato, *Understanding the new Constitution Everyone's guide to the development and implications of the new South African Constitution* (Cape Town, 1994), p.79. See also CRD Hlalisi, “From liberation to citizenship: Identity and innovation in black South African political thought”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, 1997, pp. 83-84.

27 *Sowetan*, 22 April 2009.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Mail and Guardian*, 7 May 2009.

30 *Business Day*, 22 May 2009.

indication of the manner the ethnicity card was being manipulated by both political parties in the province.

### 3. THE CONCEPT OF ZULUNESS AS ADOPTED BY ZUMA DURING THE RUN-UP TO THE ELECTION

It is interesting to note that as early as 1990 the combination of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma played a decisive role in overturning the idea promoted by the IFP and the apartheid regime that the IFP was the sole legitimate custodian of Zulu culture and tradition. During this period Zuma played a significant part in persuading the Zulu King to adopt a neutral political role. After this persuasion, it became clear and generally accepted that the maintenance of Zulu culture was not the sole responsibility of the IFP.<sup>31</sup> Jabulani Sithole, a historian at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, said he did not at first think Zuma's ethnicity was an issue, but was increasingly hearing people saying: "There is going to be a Zulu President."<sup>32</sup> This was a clear indication that Zuma was destined to become the country's President.

As mentioned previously in this article, to a certain extent the KZN ANC branches embraced and affirmed the Zulu character of the organization. This became evident when Zuma and Mkhize (the ANC's Premier candidate for KZN) appeared in many cultural events wearing their traditional Zulu regalia. This in one way or another confirmed that the ANC was embracing the Zulu culture and that perhaps could dispel the myth that it was a Xhosa-dominated party. It may also be disputed that wearing a traditional Zulu regalia makes one a Zulu, but with certainty that could mean identifying with Zuluness. The author is aware that there are questions about the appropriation of the notion of Zuluness in the case of both Zuma (ANC) and Buthelezi (IFP). He is convinced that the concept of Zuma's Zuluness goes beyond him being an ordinary man from Inkandla, his penchant for traditional dress on cultural occasions, and his preference for isiZulu in his conversations with ordinary folks. However, his Zuluness also speaks to a particular conception of traditional leadership, customary law (including views on polygamy) and gender relations. In addressing the adoption of the concept of Zuluness by Zuma, it is important to highlight that there is a thin line in trying to investigate the question: When is a Zuma a Zulu or a Zulu a Zuma?

Before Zuma was elected as President of the ANC he had gone out of his way to reach out to traditional leaders/chiefs (*amakhosi*). Once he was elected the *amakhosi* felt they could relate to him. This also changed the perception that

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31 WM Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC* (Cape Town, 2007), p.406.

32 J Sithole, "Zulus revive tribal pride", <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/zulus-revive-tribal-pride?page=2>>, 2009, (accessed on 3 August 2010).



the ANC was a party for Xhosa-speaking people. Zuma's election, as a Zulu traditionalist, made it all the worse for the IFP and Buthelezi who had appealed to Zulu nationality in the past. In the several meetings held with *amakhosi*, Zuma portrayed himself as one of them. His latest close relationship with King Zwelithini paved his way in having easy access to the *amakhosi* in the region.<sup>33</sup> To a certain extent the above suggested that the IFP would have difficulties in claiming itself as guardian of the Zulu culture. The University of KwaZulu-Natal political science lecturer, Ndlovu, argued that amongst the rural Zulu-speaking people with a high illiteracy rate, Zuma was viewed as a less sophisticated leader. When visiting such areas, including his Inkandla homestead during the electioneering period, Zuma would speak the Zulu language and assure them of service delivery and rural development projects.<sup>34</sup>

This strategy of Zuma and playing the ethnicity card militated against the IFP doing well in KZN. By infiltrating the *amakhosi*, the ANC became aware that they were considered instrumental in how the rural populace voted and, through legislation, like KwaZulu-Natal's Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, they now draw salaries, receive pensions and qualify for houses from the provincial government. This could have been the reason as to why the IFP lost in the elections. Under the ANC's government, Buthelezi is no longer a "big man" as he used to be and could not dispense patronage to his former clients like *amakhosi* anymore. In that sense, then, Zuma's assumption of the ANC's presidency was arguably the last nail in the IFP's coffin in as far as winning the elections was concerned in the KZN. The same *amakhosi*, being the custodians of the land, were vigorously trained in agriculture-related fields to empower and capacitate them to view farming and land ownership through an economy prism. They are no longer beholden to the IFP as was the case in the past. However, the article does not suggest that *amakhosi* were duped and manipulated, and that they do not have a will of their own, rather, they were convinced that Zuma as a Zulu will deliver basic services to the rural population. This was also an indication that *amakhosi* were able to make calculated decisions (often economic and ideological) whether to vote for the ANC or IFP. They were not hapless victims of manipulation by political elites.

Perhaps a few questions need to be asked as to why the IFP neglected the people who used to grant them support, such as the *amakhosi* and the *izinduna* (headmen) in as far as rural development is concerned. Sethene wrote in the *Witness* that Buthelezi presided over a sinking ship during the April 2009 election because it was clear that he was gradually losing the grip on the Zulus' social and political structures. This was due to the fact that Zuma was viewed as one person who

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33 *Mail and Guardian*, 23 April 2009.

34 *Ibid.*

could be trusted with rural development.<sup>35</sup> Through the promises made by Zuma in the ANC's election manifesto, it became clear that the *amakhosi* were gradually distancing themselves from IFP politics and leaning towards the ANC. This became evident in May 2009 when Buthelezi refused to stand for re-election as chairperson of the KZN House of Traditional Leaders after the nomination process had shown that only 24 of the 53 voting *amakhosi* backed him - the others favoured his opponent, *Inkosi* Bhekisisa Felix Bhengu. This came as a shock to Buthelezi who was under the impression that he still had a grip on the *amakhosi*.<sup>36</sup> This was a further indication that Zuma's influence had made some inroads within the *amakhosi*, an institution which was regarded as Buthelezi's stronghold. It should be noted that he did not experience a total rejection from *amakhosi* as there were those who continued supporting him. The *amakhosi* were divided politically with some supporting Buthelezi and others being on Zuma's side. According to the IFP, this situation threatened the entire institution.<sup>37</sup>

A few weeks prior to the elections, Zuma travelled throughout the northern KZN region, drawing huge numbers of supporters to his rallies. Some of the areas he visited included Ingwavuma and Empangeni. These areas were initially viewed as impenetrable IFP strongholds. In these areas, Zuma portrayed himself as the mouthpiece of the Zulus in the ANC-led government. It was surprising to realize that the IFP downplayed the effect that Zuma's Zuluness had on the rural electorate. This was a clear indication that the IFP was in a denial stage. Although the IFP was aware that the ANC was mobilizing, it repeatedly claimed that the electorate in KZN was committed in voting for the IFP.<sup>38</sup>

Political analysts and commentators had for a long time spoken of Zuma's appeal in KZN and that he might attract traditional IFP supporters. Realizing that the ANC was making some inroads into his territory, Buthelezi criticized the ANC and Zuma for turning to what he termed the old politics of ethnicity.<sup>39</sup> For example, Madlala, a political analyst from KZN, argued the following in the *Mail and Guardian* about the role Zuma had played in the province during the electioneering campaign:

"Zuma carried the election campaign in the KZN with a history of service delivery dating back to the province's first coalition government, when ANC ministers such as S Ndebele (Transport) and Z Mkhize (Health) were delivering roads and clinics to the previously marginalized people. The 'Zulu Factor' was decisive in breaking the IFP's electoral hegemony in the rural areas. Zuma, as a Zulu traditionalist from a poor uneducated background, people empathized with him and don't feel alienated by the perception of a Xhosa *nostra*. They felt he knew about their suffering and struggles and that he could

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35 *Witness*, 29 April 2009.

36 *Mail and Guardian*, 17 September 2009.

37 *Cape Times*, 25 May 2009.

38 *Mail and Guardian*, 23 April 2009.

39 *Witness*, 26 March 2009.

do something to address that ... The 'Zuma Factor' was decisive in breaking the IFP's electoral hegemony in rural areas.<sup>340</sup>

Madlala further contends:

"The presence of party president Mangosuthu Buthelezi has been a double-edge sword. The IFP has not come up with a succession plan that has groomed a leader with a profile that can grow the party on a national level. While Buthelezi has held the party together over the years, he is IFP and the IFP is him on some level. He also comes with his own baggage of being an apartheid collaborator."<sup>341</sup>

It might be argued that perhaps as important as Zuma's Zuluness effect on regular voters was, was the effectiveness of his campaign to become ANC President in respect of the organizational structures of the ANC in the province. The ANC in KZN went to the party's national elective conference in Polokwane in 2007 as a unified pro-Zuma bloc. According to Mr Mchunu, ANC Provincial Secretary, it was clear that despite the use of his Zuluness, the seeds of mobilization and ensuring that the party was strong on the ground were planted then. The lessons and experience gained in getting Zuma to the presidency were the most important factors in the ANC's success in KZN. Zuma was portrayed as the champion of the poor. The above factors were an indication that particularly for the KZN province, Zuma was used as an electioneering machine. Not only did his Zuluness appeal play a significant role in the mobilization of the ANC's support in KZN, but his ability to communicate with voters at absolute grass roots in a language understood by the majority of the electorate in the province became the ANC's trump card. Although Madlala argued that using the Zuluness appeal as a political power base by the IFP was a thing of the past,<sup>42</sup> the same could not be said about the ANC under Zuma's presidency because the Zulu culture and Zuluness were used profitably, hence it won the 2009 elections in the KZN. It may be argued that the usage of the isiZulu language to appeal to the grassroots masses cannot be viewed as the sole factor for the ANC winning votes in the KZN, but the language was mostly understood by the majority in the rural areas.

In spite of the above-mentioned factors that contributed to the ANC's success in the province, there were several other ways to explain Zuma's popular profile. First, one might refer to Zuma's "man of the people" character: poor, "uneducated people" find it easy to identify with a man coming from a poor rural area, "unschooled", who was seen as having been treated unjustly during his corruption and rape trials.<sup>43</sup> In attempts to portray Zuma as the "people's person"

40 *Mail and Guardian*, 29 April 2009.

41 *Ibid.*, 23 April 2009.

42 *Sunday Tribune*, 26 April 2009.

43 V Darracq, "Being a 'movement of the people' and a governing party: Study of the African National Congress mass character", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34(2), June 2008, p. 445. Although the concepts "uneducated" and "unschooled" could be contested, Zuma associated himself earnestly with the rural people who in the majority do not have formal education. These

in the province, the ANC organized roadshows accompanied by handshakes and entertainment. In these road-shows Zuma and the provincial leadership of the ANC portrayed themselves as the custodians of the Zulu nation. Zuma addressed the masses about the importance of voting for the ANC government. Mchunu argues the following about Zuma's visibility in the rural areas during the road-shows:

"The ANC resorted into hiring a helicopter to transport Zuma. We thought of getting JZ to come to rallies in a helicopter because it was very difficult and we thought even the people who didn't like him would have to look up to the sides."<sup>44</sup>

In some instances Jacob Zuma's visits to the IFP strongholds did not go off without a hitch. Although Zuma was tolerated as a Zulu, to campaign in KZN on behalf of the ANC did not augur well with the IFP supporters. This led to visible confrontations between the two parties. For example, the IFP Provincial Secretary, Mr B Buthelezi, said about 500 ANC supporters had prevented IFP members, including the mayor of the Umzinyathi District, Mr Yengwa, campaigning in the area when they (the ANC supporters) blockaded the road and stoned their cars. This happened despite the call by the ANC national leadership, which included Zuma, for calm and respect of other parties.<sup>45</sup>

On 26 March 2009, Julius Malema, President of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), defied threats and insults from IFP supporters who tried to block him from entering the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) in Umlazi (Durban) where he was to address ANC students. At the entrance of the hall where Malema delivered his address police stood between ANC and IFP supporters. The IFP youth, clad in IFP T-shirts, called Malema an "uneducated fool with a big mouth". In return, ANC supporters taunted the IFP, saying they were fools for believing in the leadership of one man, namely Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and that after the elections Zuma would be in charge of the country, including the IFP. Addressing the students at the MUT, Malema further labelled the IFP as a cultural group that would be better suited to organise cultural activities.<sup>46</sup> Surprisingly, Zuma did not call Malema to order for such utterances which had the potential to further worsen the tensions between these two parties. Such utterances were directed to the IFP members who were in the majority Zulu-speaking people whom Zuma purported to be representing within the ANC.

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were the qualities which Zuma possessed and which were appreciated by the rural electorate in KZN. The author realizes that although he was "uneducated" in as far as the Western type of education is concerned, for example, that of possessing university degrees, without doubt Zuma appeared to be educated in the university of life. This was exhibited by being trusted with the presidency of the ANC, which was accompanied by the tasks he performed as a political activist irrespective of being in possession of a university degree.

44 *Mail and Guardian*, 29 April 2009.

45 *Daily News*, 8 April 2009.

46 *Witness*, 27 March 2009.

A few months before the elections, Malema further uttered a provocative statement that he would campaign in Buthelezi's backyard. This statement was unfavourably viewed as an insult to Buthelezi and the IFP. A statement such as this one further widened the gap caused by disagreements between the IFP and the ANC. Malema refused to apologize for having uttered such a statement. The fact that Malema continued with such utterances, in one way or the other, compromised Zuma's electioneering campaign. Zuma was accused by the IFP of being lenient in dealing with Malema by failing to reprimand him. After winning the elections in the KZN, Malema continued to say that Buthelezi was a "factory fault". Buthelezi made the significant response: "Whose child is it?", meaning that someone who said such a thing might not have had a mother. The IFP viewed Malema as the monster that Zuma himself created. The IFP again demanded an apology from Malema. His spokesperson, F Shivambu, indicated that Malema would not apologize for speaking the truth.<sup>47</sup> It was again surprising that the ANC's national leadership did not call Malema to order for uttering such derogatory statements about the leadership of another political party.

Addressing the IFP supporters in a Camperdown rally, outside Pietermaritzburg, Chief Buthelezi, as the leader of the IFP, argued that although Zuma was a Zulu, he could not be trusted because of his association with the ANC, which was deemed a corrupt organization. Therefore, according to him, voting for the ANC was tantamount to voting for poverty. He further argued that Zuma had failed to stop his supporters from intimidating and killing other Zulus in the region just because they belonged to the IFP. According to Buthelezi, it was clear that the usage of his Zuluness and the portrayal of Zuma as having an interest in the upliftment of KZN people were one-sided.<sup>48</sup>

Indicating the level of intimidation and intolerance in the region, the provincial head of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Mr M Mosery, said 71 complaints had been received by his institution. The complaints ranged from assaults to damage to posters and disruption of meetings. Although there were such incidents, he argued that none of these incidents were serious enough to have any marked impact on the election outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

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47 *The Times*, 15 October 2009.

48 *Sowetan*, 9 April 2009; *Sunday Tribune*, 3 May 2009.

49 *Sunday Tribune*, 26 April 2009.

#### 4. THE IFP'S RESPONSE TO THE USAGE OF THE CONCEPT OF ZULUNESS BY ZUMA DURING THE ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN AND THE IMPACT THEREOF

It was a surprise to both political analysts and commentators when the IFP cried foul of the usage of his Zuluness by Zuma during the electioneering campaign of April 2009. As mentioned previously this approach was not unique to Zuma, it had also been used by the IFP in the past elections. During the run-up to the election, Buthelezi told his supporters in Nongoma that the IFP policies and ideals mattered. Tackling Zuma's Zuluness head-on, he stated:

"Do not return to the old politics of ethnicity. It is irrelevant if Mr Zuma is a Zulu. In terms of the competition of ideas and policies, ethnicity is irrelevant. It is the policies and ideas we champion which matter. In no discernable way, as far as I can tell, Mr Zuma has spelled out how he will govern differently from his predecessors as President of the ANC. It will be more of the same."<sup>50</sup>

Buthelezi further indicated the following about the reports that some members of the IFP were planning to vote for the ANC in the national ballots and for the IFP provincially:

"I cannot overemphasize that splitting one's ballot paper like this is a disaster. Be in no doubt that a vote for Mr Zuma is a vote for the ANC government. If you want an IFP government put your cross next to the IFP on your ballot paper. We need the largest team in the National Assembly possible as well as here in the provincial legislature in KwaZulu-Natal ... I appeal to you, as well as supporters of the ANC, not to engage in acts of violence. Let us never forget, we have no enemies, only political opponents. Tolerance is the crown of a democratic society."<sup>51</sup>

Rev. Zondi of the IFP also echoed Buthelezi's sentiments on the issue of Zuma's Zuluness. He stated that the IFP was not threatened by Zuma. According to Zondi, the IFP still commanded support because in its manifesto, the party tackles the "bread and butter" issues which the ANC had failed to provide to the electorate.<sup>52</sup> Zondi alluded to the following issues:

"My sense is that people are reading manifestos and looking at localized issues. After 15 years of ANC rule, people are unhappy about many things – from not having proper access to healthcare to a lack of jobs because the local sugar mill has closed down."<sup>53</sup>

At the IFP rally in Harrismith, attended by about 2 000 people a week before the election, an IFP member, Mr J Kubheka, concurred with Zondi on the readiness of the IFP and the fact that it was not threatened by Zuma's use of Zuluness. In addressing the IFP members who attended the rally, Kubheka argued:

"We understand Zuma because he speaks our language, but that doesn't mean I will vote for him. For me, the government has failed. During apartheid they used to build matchbox

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50 *Witness*, 23 March 2009.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Mail and Guardian*, 23 April 2009.

53 *Ibid.*

houses, now they are building half-boxes and quarter boxes for people. How are they supposed to live like that? I want a government that will make education less explosive. We need the government to be stricter with criminals and to start more roadblocks to stop thieves.”<sup>54</sup>

The above-mentioned general statements emanating from the IFP during the election campaign were dismissive of the effect ANC President Zuma would have on swaying the predominately Zulu rural electorate. According to the IFP, the homeboy factor of Zuma’s 100% Zulu-boy persona was a non-issue and ordinary voters were especially tired of the ANC’s inability to develop the rural areas, and were yearning for speedier, more responsive service delivery. The party believed that the voters would vote on issues rather than identity.<sup>55</sup>

After the official announcement of the election results indicating that the ANC would continue governing the province, the IFP cried foul. Koos van der Merwe said the ANC had used the Zulu ethnic card. The fact that the ANC’s President Zuma was from the province counted in the ANC’s favour as it lured many of the IFP’s traditional supporters in voting for him, but not necessarily for the ANC. Van der Merwe further argued that the ANC strategically sent many of its organizers into the province in order to appeal to the Zulu people to vote for a Zulu that could come in and become the President of the country. According to Van der Merwe, both Zuma and the ANC abused Zulu nationalism. Therefore, by so doing, the ANC took a huge slice of the Zulus away from the IFP.<sup>56</sup> Van der Merwe acknowledged that the IFP’s leadership had underestimated the ANC’s mobilization tactics. He further stated that the IFP had known about the ANC’s tactics but made a mistake by not devising a strategy on how to counter them.<sup>57</sup>

The ANC disagreed with the above sentiments by Van der Merwe. Members of the ANC argued that Zulu nationalism does not belong to either the IFP or the ANC. The ANC’s standpoint was that the voters purely voted for the ANC because of its track record on service delivery, despite the protests that had engulfed the country some months before the election. It was also not clear why the IFP lamented the ANC’s strategy because Buthelezi and the leadership of his organization in most cases rallied support on the basis of ethnic solidarity, but never explained why they did so.<sup>58</sup> It may be argued that the fact that the ANC adopted the same tactic was viewed as problematic by the IFP.

Mr Compton, an IFP media consultant, wrote the following in the *Witness* in an attempt to downplay the influence Zuma as a Zulu had in the province:

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54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*, 7 May 2009.

56 *City Press*, 26 April 2009.

57 *Ibid.* Van der Merwe is an IFP-MP.

58 *Ibid.*

"The IFP's premier candidate, Zanele kaMagwaza-Msibi, is becoming a serious political draw-card. For the past three months she has been labelled the IFP's secret weapon, but for many she wasn't exactly a household name, despite her impressive record as the mayor of Zululand ... I have attended eight of her rallies and the crowds get bigger and bigger. For me as an individual and a Zulu-speaking person, this woman is inspiring. She doesn't need notes; she just talks and is so comfortable with the crowd."<sup>59</sup>

The above was an indication that Magwaza-Msibi had gained popularity with the IFP supporters in the province and Buthelezi was viewed as an old and "outdated" leader. To have Magwaza-Msibi as the premier candidate for the IFP was a draw-card for the party. This opportunity was however not fully exploited by the IFP while Zuma was making some serious inroads in the territory. Despite the denials by the IFP, the infiltration of KZN by the ANC and the usage of Zuma as an electioneering machine brought undesirable results for the IFP in the region. Immediately after failing to win the province, a lobby started within the IFP, urging members on to oust Buthelezi as President of the party. Buthelezi was accused of being the sole cause for the party's failure in the elections. The IFP Youth Brigade (IFPYB) was at the forefront of calling Buthelezi to step down as the party's President. Long before Zuma could make some inroads in the province, calls for Buthelezi to step down had been made, particularly by the IFPYB. Mr M Khanyile of B Valley recalls that P Kunene and T Mbatha made similar calls for change of the leadership structure because of their sheer frustration with the leadership and internal processes, and a lack of support for the IFPYB structures. The two were hounded by the party leadership and forced to apologize unreservedly, which they did.<sup>60</sup>

The above does not take away the challenge for the IFP to have to transform itself into a modern political party. After the April 2009 election, the IFPYB continued to demand changes in the leadership of the party. The IFPYB accused the party's leadership of refusing to recognize the independence of the youth structures as a separate structure that could engage in politics and articulate the views of the youth.

Although there was an outcry from the youth brigade for the replacement of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, it was difficult to replace a leader around whom a personality cult had developed and there seemed, in this case, to be no groomed successor. According to the IFPYB, they wanted Magwaza-Msibi to be Buthelezi's successor.<sup>61</sup>

Mr S Zondi, Director: Southern Africa at the Institute for Global Dialogue, argued in the *Witness* that the IFP, rather than criticizing some members of the IFPYB, should have taken advantage of the youthful exuberance of its youth structures and direct their energy towards a deep reform of the party, its leadership

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59 *Witness*, 17 April 2009.

60 *The Times*, 21 August 2009.

61 *Witness*, 20 August 2009.



and conduct. The party should have used the increasing numbers of pro-IFP youth, owing mainly to the good showing of the South African Democratic Students Movement (SADESMO), to project itself as a party of the future.<sup>62</sup> Zondi further contended that during the 2009 elections, the IFP needed somebody like Magwaza-Msibi at the helm of its leadership to contour what he referred to as the “Zuma Tsunami”. According to Zondi, Magwaza-Msibi had been applauded for service delivery projects in the Zululand District Municipality where she was a mayor. The IFP should have capitalized on her successes in that regard and make her the face of the party during the elections; however, this was not the case. She was only made the premier’s candidate. The IFP underestimated the potential that lies in her feminine touch in politics which includes a mixture of empathy and resilience, energy and intelligence. Instead, Chief Buthelezi, facing the Zuma factor, portrayed himself as a man people could trust.<sup>63</sup> Analysts like Zondi opined that the IFP was myopic in not giving Magwaza-Msibi a chance to lead its campaign as that could perhaps have neutralized Zuma’s campaign using his Zuluness trade mark.<sup>64</sup>

After winning the elections in 2009, Jacob Zuma made a call whereby he invited Buthelezi and the IFP to “return home”. Buthelezi unequivocally rejected this invitation from Zuma and the ANC. He stated:

“Though I share the ANC’s and Zuma’s desire for our two parties to enjoy a good functioning relationship befitting our parliamentary democracy, a merger or ‘marriage’ is not on the agenda today, tomorrow or in the future. In short, the IFP will be fighting to win elections as a political competitor, reconciled but distinct from the ANC in word and deed.”<sup>65</sup>

Buthelezi’s response to Zuma’s “come home” invitation raised the question of what Zuma’s reaction would be. One option was not to get involved in a public debate with Buthelezi while pressing on with the ANC’s campaign to win over IFP members to the ANC, or, to put it differently, to appeal over Buthelezi’s head to the IFP membership as a whole.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Buthelezi’s chances of winning a battle for the hearts and minds of the IFP’s dwindling membership do not appear high unless, of course, Zuma’s presidency takes a disastrous course. The IFP’s share of the provincial poll in KZN has more than halved in the past 16 years, falling from 50,3% in the 1994 election to 22,5% in the recent 22 April 2009 election.

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62 *Ibid.*, 15 September 2009.

63 *Ibid.*, 4 May 2009.

64 *Ibid.*

65 R Louw (ed.), “ANC invitation to ‘return home’ rejected by Buthelezi”, *Southern Africa Report* 27(28), 17 July 2009, p. 4.

With 62% of the KZN electorate having voted for the ANC, analysts and opposition party leaders said the critical test was whether the ANC could actually deliver on its promises that underpinned its strong victory in KZN and beyond.<sup>66</sup> It was clear that the expectations for Zuma's presidency were too high. Zuma was expected to meet these hopes by working hard in eliminating all nepotism, cronyism and corruption which were the most common factors driving opposition to the ANC.

Immediately after the 2009 elections, the IFP launched *Operation Vukuzithathe* (Operation Pick Yourself Up) in preparation for the 2011 local government elections. The party believed that its *Vukuzithathe* document would guide it through the local government elections to recapture power and restore its waning influence in the province and countrywide. *Operation Vukuzithathe* pointed to a number of flaws that could have led to the dismal performance of the IFP in the elections. These included poorly functioning branches, failure to keep in touch with community needs and weak leadership. This was emphasized by Mr A Mncwango who stated the following after the launch of *Operation Vukuzithathe*:

"We are now focusing on the future. We can't dwell on the past. We are preparing for 2011. The bulk of the business will concern reviving our structures and making inroads in areas where we previously had no support base."<sup>67</sup>

From the above it was clear that the ANC under the leadership of Jacob Zuma successfully infiltrated the IFP in KZN to the extent of convincingly winning the elections in the province. It should, however, also be noted that the use of Zuluness by Zuma was criticized by the IFP. The criticisms by the IFP did not help the party to convince the majority of the electorate not to vote for the ANC.

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66 In KZN the ANC took 2 190 516 votes (62,9%), followed by the IFP with 780 027 votes (22,40%), the DA with 318 559 votes (9,15%) and the Minority Front with 71 507 votes (2,05%). The remaining 12 parties received under one percent.

67 *City Press*, 28 June 2009.