

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS'S UNPRECEDENTED VICTORY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Spoils of a resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism

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ABSTRACT

This paper probes the ANC's phenomenal performance in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), where the party not only registered a rare outright majority but also experienced a stunning rise in support, while dropping support in the other provinces. Yet the ANC-dominated provincial government in KZN did not perform dramatically differently from other ANC provincial governments. The ANC's rise in KZN can be put down to a resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism that swelled around the party's presidential candidate, Jacob Zuma. Zuma projected himself as a victim of ethnic persecution, a view assisted by the reputation of his rival in the ANC, former president Thabo Mbeki, as a scheming and cunning politician who dealt harshly with his rivals. Zuma's candidature essentially renewed the saliency of Zulu ethno-nationalism in South African politics just as it was waning.

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 elections yielded atypical results. Both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA), for the first time since the birth of the democratic Republic in 1994, won outright majorities, the former in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the latter in the Western Cape. Overall, however, support for the ANC uncharacteristically dropped – by approximately 4 per cent – from

the 70 per cent it received in 2004 to 66 per cent. The party shed support in all provinces except KZN, where it surged by a staggering 17 per cent – from 47 per cent in 2004 to 64 per cent in 2009, an increase of more than double the 7 per cent it registered in the 2004 elections. In other provinces support for the ANC dropped by an average of 6 per cent.

This article explains why the result in KZN bucked the trend in the rest of the country. Essentially, it contends that the ANC benefited from a resurgence of Zulu ethno-nationalism that had been stoked up in the course of a power struggle between Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki for the ANC presidency and during Zuma legal trials, as a result of which his supporters projected him as a victim of a 'Xhosa nostra', an idea that rests on the belief that the ANC is a predominantly Xhosa party and that Xhosa speakers are intent on maintaining control and, through it, dominating state institutions.

The *Xhosa nostra* idea plays on the old ethnic stereotype long peddled by the apartheid government and vigorously exploited in recent history by Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), especially in KZN. The issue even became a subject of intense discussion in the media in the late 1990s and early 2000s. During Zuma's rape trial, using Zulu tradition as his defence, Zuma transformed himself from a mere rape suspect to a cultural figure. The idea of ethnic persecution rallied Zulu-speakers, especially in KZN, where ethno-nationalism had been a strong feature of political life.

The article demonstrates the nexus between Zuma's ANC and the resurgent Zulu ethno-nationalism through empirical findings from the Afrobarometer survey conducted in October-November 2008. Zuma's transformation into a cultural figure, however, the article further argues, predates his legal travails, nor was it a situation solely of his own making. Zuma initially undertook that transformation in pursuit of a political strategy by his organisation to dispel suggestions of a Zulu-hostile ANC. By the time he got into trouble with the law he had already developed a public image as a Zulu cultural figure, but now simply exploited it to escape conviction and for personal political gain.

The article consists of three parts. The first traces how Zulu-ethno-nationalism has historically been harnessed for political gain, especially by the IFP. Thereafter, it homes in on the ANC leadership, showing how the party encouraged the evolution of Zuma's public image as a Zulu cultural figure to counter the stereotype peddled by successive apartheid governments, and recently by the IFP, that the ANC was a Xhosa-dominated organisation. It then looks at the resurgence of Zulu ethno-nationalism, sparked by the political rivalry between Zuma and Thabo Mbeki and by the legal problems Zuma ascribed to a political conspiracy. Here empirical evidence is presented illustrating the affinity of most KZN residents for Zuma, both personally and politically.

ETHNIC POLITICS IN KZN: HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The politicisation of ethnic identity has a long history in South African political life and transcends the provincial boundaries of KwaZulu-Natal. It was implanted by the Union government and perfected over the years by subsequent apartheid governments. A segment of the African elite climbed on the bandwagon, distinguishing themselves as ethnic entrepreneurs in return for patronage and, in some instances, dubious titles.

The Union government officially inaugurated the political manipulation of ethnicity in 1927 through the Native Administration Act, which redefined Africans as subjects, denying them citizenship within the South African state. Africans were declared tribesman by virtue of their African-ness. Where there was no tribe the law empowered the native commissioner to constitute one, find a village to locate it in and assign a chief to rule over it (Mamdani 1996). The African majority was thus reduced to multiple ethnic minorities which were subsequently shoved into what the apartheid government declared 'independent states', each ethnic group with its own. Speaking in 1959 the Minister of Bantu Affairs, M C de Wet Nel, put it thus:

The Zulu is proud to be a Zulu and the Xhosa proud to be a Xhosa and the Venda is proud to be a Venda, just as proud as they were a hundred years ago. The lesson we have learnt from history during the past three hundred years is that these ethnic groups, the whites as well as the Bantu, sought their greatest fulfilment, their greatest happiness and the best mutual relations on the basis of separate and individual development ... the only basis on which peace, happiness and mutual confidence could be built up.

Mare & Hamilton 1987, p 30

The Union and successive apartheid governments used tribalism as a form of political control. Whites kept 'South Africa' to themselves. The creation of multiple Bantustans, therefore, was a pretext for denying Africans the franchise while ensuring white hegemony in 'South Africa'. But African politicians soon joined the fray. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, through the Inkatha Cultural Liberation Movement, which he founded in 1975 (and renamed the Inkatha Freedom Party – IFP – in 1990), emerged in the 1980s as the most distinguished of the African ethnic entrepreneurs. Ironically, Buthelezi had formed the IFP with the encouragement of the then exiled ANC. Thabo Mbeki, then Oliver Tambo's protégé, facilitated the discussions between Buthelezi and the ANC, meeting in London, for instance, in 1972. The ANC advised Buthelezi to establish a political organisation which would

serve as an opposition to King Goodwill Zwelithini, who strongly advocated an independent KwaZulu. The ANC essentially wanted the IFP to be an ANC proxy.

Buthlezi had been a member of the ANC Youth League while studying at Fort Hare University and had even had a stint as a radical, leading to his expulsion from the university in 1950 after he punished a student who had defied a call for a class boycott by pouring water on his bed (Massey 2010). Officialdom initially looked on Buthelezi with suspicion, even subjecting him to some police harassment. A member of Zulu royalty (he is the son of Princess Magogo, daughter of the Zulu King, Cetshwayo KaMpande), the authorities delayed recognising him as a chief between 1953 and 1957, but he was eventually appointed chief minister of the Zulu Territorial Authority in 1970. He initially appeared critical of the apartheid government, opposing the idea that KwaZulu should become an independent state, while Goodwill Zwelithini supported the idea.

Thus, the ANC thought Buthelezi would be pliant. Indeed, he was, initially, but then he proposed forming a cultural organisation and Inkatha was conceived in 1975. The term Inkatha has powerful cultural symbolism. It refers to a thick ring, made up of the many strands of grass, which symbolises Zulu unity in the circle of loyalty to the king. The IFP thus expropriated Zulu cultural symbols, history, songs, dance, praises and heritage, projecting itself as the revival of a defunct Inkatha kaZulu, which had been formed in the 1920s by Zulu intellectuals, businessmen and other influential members of the Zulu community, with the blessing of King Dinizulu, to advance Zulu nationalism (Waetjen & Mare 2008).

Despite the fact that it was projected as a cultural movement Inkatha's association with the ANC was palpable. It adopted ANC colours and claimed descent from ANC icons such as John Dube, Selby Msimang, Pixley Seme and George Champion. At the time of their deaths Msimang and Champion were Inkatha members. But Buthelezi developed ambitions of his own which were quite different from the proxy the ANC had intended him to be. His became an exclusive Zulu ethno-nationalism, not the unitary African nationalism of the ANC. He positioned his party as a proponent and guardian of the Zulu 'nation' and culture. Anybody who considered him/herself a proud Zulu was encouraged, especially through the state-controlled regional media and official rhetoric, to support the IFP. Buthelezi charged that the exiled ANC had betrayed its roots, pointing especially to its pursuit of the armed struggle as a betrayal of Chief Albert Luthuli's ideal of non-violence. That betrayal, according to Buthelezi, stemmed from the fact that the organisation had been hijacked by Xhosa speakers (Harries 1993).

King Goodwill Zwelithini became central to validating the supposed nexus between Zuluness and political support for the IFP. All political organisations that opposed the IFP, especially the ANC and its affiliates, were not just political

rivals but were declared enemies of the Zulu 'nation' itself. For that claim to carry any veneer of truth the king's endorsement was critical. The logic was simple: winning over the king meant winning the Zulu nation. Zwelithini was initially resistant, insisting on the independence of KwaZulu, which Buthelezi opposed, and the royal house distanced itself from Buthelezi. The KwaZulu Legislative Authority retaliated, stripping Zwelithini of his executive powers and rendering him a toothless king. By the early 1980s, as Waetjen & Mare (2008, p 356) put it, 'King Goodwill Zwelithini had emerged a bullied man, and an essential figure in the Inkatha mobilisation of IsiZulu-speakers'. At public gatherings the king sided with Inkatha, denouncing the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) as anti-Zulu. Speaking at one public meeting in 1989, for instance, the king said:

You know that the UDF and Cosatu have come into your midst to turn you against Inkatha. Why? It is because Inkatha is led by a Zulu? I am not being party political ... Does the ANC encourage you to be Zulu, to do your Zulu thing and play your Zulu role ... What does the UDF say about your Zuluness?

De Haas 1994, p 438

Buthelezi was aware of the importance of Zulu traditional attire and often dressed like a 'true' traditional man imbued with Zulu culture and customs. By so doing, he identified with the rank and file of KwaZulu, especially the rural constituency from which Inkatha drew most of its followers. This form of symbolism is well captured in Harries's work:

At public functions, he will often wear the leopard skins and bird feathers associated with royalty. Other traditional symbols of status and power are predominantly on show: a ceremonial axe, a baton containing powerful medicines, a small cowhide shield, and a fertility necklace.

Harries 1993, p 117

It was at these public functions, often held to commemorate Zulu history, that Buthelezi recruited Zulus to form part of Inkatha. Children were inducted into Zulu ethno-nationalism while still at school. Despite the elaborate ideological persuasion, however, IFP membership was not entirely voluntary. In some instances, locals were coerced into supporting the party as membership became a pre-condition for employment in the civil service. Such ideas were also instilled

through recruitment into state/party controlled formations such as the youth brigade and the United Workers' Union of South Africa.

The post-apartheid provincial landscape thus inherited a political culture imbued with a strong dose of Zulu ethno-nationalism. It had been cunningly nurtured by the IFP, but was also forced onto the populace through control of patronage and instruments of violence. The onset of free and competitive politics would test Zulu ethno-nationalism, revealing whether it had an independent life or whether its popular expression was contrived to flatter the political elite, thereby securing employment, while also avoiding victimisation.

PERSPECTIVES ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN KZN AFTER 1994

To what extent, if at all, is ascriptive identity a determining factor in voters' political choices? This question remains pivotal in scholarship on South African elections. It stems partly from the saliency of identity in the history of South African political life but is also a reflection of the persistent association of certain racial or ethnic groups with specific political parties. Some political parties not only retained but renewed their racial or ethnic appeal, with the clear intention of attracting a particular ethnic or racial group. More recently, however, electoral returns have conjured up patterns showing that identification does not presuppose causality; that identity politics does not have an independent life of its own but that its influence wanes in the absence of other supporting factors; and that what appear to be identity-based voting patterns may just as easily be ascribed to other, non-identity factors.

Identity-based analysis of post-apartheid elections first gained prominence after the founding elections in April 1994. Giliomee & Schlemmer (1994) initiated the trend, declaring the results a 'racial census'. Africans had predominantly voted for historically African parties, especially the ANC, IFP and, to a lesser extent, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), whites for white parties – the National Party (NP) and the Democratic Party (DP) and coloureds for the NP. Voters' attraction to these parties was ascribed to cultural and historical affinity. An Afrikaner nationalist party, the NP, not only appealed to Afrikaners, but also resonated with coloureds due to a shared language and religion. Because they were 'brown Afrikaners' coloured voters could not bring themselves to vote for the ANC, a supposedly 'African' party. The underlying point of this argument was that voting was an emotive exercise rather than one that was rationally driven. Voters did not probe whether or not a particular party would advance their material interests but were drawn to parties whose leaders looked and spoke like them.

Taylor & Hoeane (1999) challenged this perspective, pointing instead to a correlation between class interests and the parties' policies. White suburban voters,

they argued, did not necessarily vote for the DP because of its largely liberal English (colonial) background but may equally have been enticed to the party by its advocacy of a free market economy. The ANC's promise of a redistributive agenda, they explained further, appealed to the formerly marginalised African populace that constitutes the bulk of South Africa's poor and unemployed. The results of the 1999 elections, as Cherrel Africa explains elsewhere in this issue, limited the explanatory value of the 'racial census' thesis even further. 'Coloured' voters in the Western Cape shifted from their cultural home, the National (later New National) Party, towards the supposedly 'African' ANC, making it the largest party in the Western Cape. This flew in the face of the identity-based theory of voting.

Voting behaviour in KZN, as Thabisi Hoeane points out elsewhere in this issue, also posed a particular challenge to the identity-based analyses. KZN is largely populated by Zulu-speakers, but they do not all vote the same way, being divided between the IFP and the ANC. If ethnic identity prefigured political choice the IFP should have been the largest, if not the sole recipient of votes cast by Zulu-speakers in KZN and throughout the country. The IFP, after all, as noted above, projected itself as the guardian of Zulu culture and Zulu people.

The intra-ethnic (-group) voting differences simply indicate that what appears to be ethnically determined voting behaviour may not, in fact, be that. To begin with, the parties' support is largely patterned along a rural and urban divided. The IFP's constituency is largely rural, while the ANC's is urban-based. In the Durban metropole¹ alone, in 1994, for instance, the ANC won 41 per cent of the votes cast for the National Assembly and 44 per cent of those cast for the provincial legislature, compared to the IFP's 21 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

The scenario was similar in Pietermaritzburg, where the ANC won 180 824 votes in the provincial election compared to the IFP's 90 621. The situation was reversed in rural areas, where the IFP trounced the ANC, especially in north and central KZN. Most of the ANC's rural votes emanated from the Midlands in the south, among farmworkers and people living in freehold areas. However, subsequent elections saw the ANC reverse the IFP's dominance among rural voters and, consequently, in the province as a whole. In the 1999 elections the ANC's rural support increased to 27.54 per cent from 17 per cent in the 1996 local elections. Conversely, the IFP's rural support dropped from 77 per cent in 1996 to 66 per cent (Johnston & Johnson 1997; Randall 1998; Piper 1999). In 2004, though falling short of an outright majority, the ANC became the largest party in KZN, winning 47 per cent of the vote to the IFP's 37 per cent.

1 The Durban metropole encompassed polling stations in Durban, Chatsworth, Inanda and Pinetown.

The geographic divide related to factors beyond ethnicity that influence voting patterns in KZN. The difference between the two locations was the salience of traditional beliefs and the institution of chieftaincy, which was far more intact in the northern and central parts of the province. As a self-styled guardian of chieftaincy the IFP's leadership overlapped with tribal leadership. At the inaugural local government elections, for instance, chiefs were prominent on speakers' platforms at IFP rallies and in 1996 the IFP successfully warded off a proposal that elected councillors replace chiefs as administrators in villages (Randall 1998).

Chieftaincy has been the bedrock of the IFP and chiefs have influence over their subjects, partly because of their control of patronage, especially land allocation and access to state services. The strategy initially paid off as the IFP outperformed its chief rival in the countryside. The prevalence of no-go areas, enforced by violence, also gave one party the edge over another in political propaganda. And the ever-present threat of violence mobilised the electoral base, bringing supporters out to vote in order to keep out the rival party.

Most analyses ascribe the reversal of the electoral fortunes of both parties to the relative cessation of violence in the province. Three months before the 1994 inaugural non-racial elections, for instance, 1 000 people were killed and throughout 1995 into the first half of 1996 there was a monthly toll of 50 to 80 deaths in the province. But, violence began to wane just before the 1996 local elections and the province would remain relatively peaceful throughout. Peace cost the IFP electoral support. Johnston and Johnson (1997, p 387) explain this as follows:

During the previous trials of strength the IFP had begun by mobilizing hostel-dwellers, then sending them out to canvass support more widely in the township in their customary muscular manner ... This time, IFP critics of party strategy argued, these tactics had not been deployed and the result had been disastrous. The fact that the IFP did extremely poorly in Mpumalanga township, the scene of a famous peace pact with the ANC, was adduced as further evidence for this proposition.

Some scholars, notably Piper (1999), thus construed the relative decline of the IFP to mean that Zulu ethno-nationalism had lost its allure. Why else would KZN supporters desert the ethno-nationalist IFP for the Afro-nationalist ANC? In other words, Zulus did equate 'Zulu-ness' with political support for the IFP. Indeed developments within the IFP pointed to the relative decline of traditionalism as a legitimising force within the party. In 2005, at the insistence of the IFP Youth Brigade, the party's general secretary was elected instead of a being appointed.

Ziba Jiyane, whose candidature was based on reforming the party, won against the leadership choice and the old guard Lionel Mtshali. Party members are presently divided between the choice of Zanele Magwaza-Msibi, a woman, and Musa Zondi, a long-serving leader of the organisation, as successor to Buthelezi. Senior leaders are reportedly in favour of the latter, while the youth brigade supports Magwaza-Msibi (*City Press*, 22 November 2009).

The very fact that the two individuals, especially Magwaza-Msibi, are serious contenders for the presidency of the IFP marks a turning point in the history of the party. Though both are Zulu speaking, neither has the traditional legitimacy of Buthelezi. Both are suave urbanites, and one is a woman. Conservative beliefs have historically been resistant to female leadership. Their nomination, especially that of Magwaza-Msibi, shows that traditional beliefs are no longer the dominant source of legitimation for party leaders. The party is gradually being modernised. But the IFP's decline does not necessarily annul the relative currency of ethnic identity as a determinant of voters' political choices or its manipulation by political parties in KZN.

THE ANC AND ZUMA'S MANIPULATION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnic identity remained politically salient even in the aftermath of the IFP's decline. But it was taken up by a different political actor, the African National Congress, initially through Jacob Zuma on behalf of the organisation. Zuma subsequently harnessed it for personal, political gain.

The ANC's deployment of Zuma in KZN from 1991 to 1999 – making him one of the few leaders with a national profile assigned to a provincial position – was calculated to pander to ethnic sentiment. All his peers, including Thabo Mbeki, Zola Skweyiya, Pallo Jordaan and Joe Nhlanhla, took prominent positions in national politics as ministers in Nelson Mandela's first Cabinet, while Zuma was serving in KZN's provincial government. His assignment to KZN was based on two main considerations: his lifestyle and the ANC's rivalry with the IFP in KZN.

The IFP's electoral advantage over the ANC, especially between 1994 and 1996, as noted above, partly stemmed from its influence over the Zulu monarch, Goodwill Zwelithini, and the portrayal of the ANC as anti-Zulu or Xhosa-dominated. Most worrying to the ANC, however, was the political violence between ANC and IFP supporters that raged through the province (fanned by reactionary elements within the police system), which the ANC partially ascribed to the IFP's vilification of it as anti-Zulu.

In the ANC's view two things had to happen if it was to reverse this trend: the king must be wrested from the IFP and the party must cultivate an image

that resonated with some of the province's ethnically conscious voters. Zuma was instrumental to that strategy succeeding. Though Zulu themselves, none of the local politicians had the profile to pacify the monarch or soften the ANC's image among those who believed it was a Xhosa-dominated party. Other ANC provincial leaders shared the modern and anti-tradition image associated with the ANC and the UDF but Zuma was viewed differently. He represented the traditional elements of the ANC, especially Zulu tradition. He is a polygamist who still keeps a residence at his birthplace, Inkandla, which he visits regularly. Despite numerous years of exile, he has remained eloquent in the vernacular and is fond of singing Zulu folk songs. He was a regular feature at the traditional celebrations, dressed in traditional attire with a spear in his hand, even after he had left provincial politics for the national scene as deputy president of the country (Ndletyana, 2007).

Zuma projected to a suspicious 'Zulu' public and the king the non-threatening face of the ANC. He made regular public appearances alongside the king and made statements drawing close links between the ANC and the Zulu monarch. At a memorial function for one of the Zulu kings, Dinuzulu kaMpande, Zuma said:

The hardships and suffering that King Dinuzulu went through for his people did not go unnoticed by the first liberation movement in Africa, the African National Congress. It was because of his opposition to white rule and his principled stand against colonialism that the ANC, when it was formed in 1912, made him a patron of the organisation, together with other traditional leaders of Southern Africa, like King Sobhuza and Moshoeshoe. The ANC respected the institutions of African traditional leadership as it continues to do so even today. King Dinuzulu supported the ANC and the ANC supported him.

www.gov.za/presidency

One of the results of Zuma's rapprochement, according to Sunday newspaper *City Press* (12 January 2003) was

... ensuring Mandela held one of the first important meetings with the Zulu monarch at the king's KwaKhangela palace near Nongoma in 1996 where Mandela conveyed his desire to see Zwelithini calling an imbizo that would hopefully reconcile rival political parties in the province.

The report continued:

Zuma found himself being embraced not only by Zwelithini but became the only ANC leader who could move around with relative ease between Zulu traditional chiefs and indunas without causing consternation among them ... He would wear Zulu traditional garb without anyone doubting his intentions.

City Press 12 January 2003

As a result of his political interaction with Zuma, King Zwelithini subsequently played an impartial role in the inter-party rivalry between the ANC and IFP, associating equally with the leaders of both parties, thereby reducing the perception that the ANC was less Zulu or was a nemesis of Zulus. The most notable sign of improved relations was the king's presentation of the inaugural King Shaka Award to Nelson Mandela in 2001 in recognition of his sterling efforts to bring about peace and democracy, a far cry from the time when Zwelithini would not even meet Mandela.

Fearing that it was losing the contest over royal influence to the ANC, the IFP, which was the dominant partner in the provincial government, countered, in 2003, by cutting down the budgetary allocation to the royal house and refusing to settle the R93 834 bill for the king's son's school fees, resulting in the school suing the king. The ANC reacted furiously to the incident, denouncing it as a deliberate act of 'humiliation' of the king by the then IFP controlled provincial government (www.anc.org.za).

The ANC's subsequent electoral gains in KNZ were a huge credit to Zuma, who deprived the IFP of one of its major weapons, the claim that the ANC was anti-Zulu. However, once the rivalry between himself and Thabo Mbeki ensued Zuma resorted to manipulating ethnic stereotypes, casting himself as the victim of an ethnic purge. To be sure, the 'ethnic card' was handed to him by the content of e-mail messages that were allegedly fabricated by Mziwamadoda Kunene, an information technology expert allegedly contracted by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA).

According to Kgalema Motlanthe, then secretary-general of the ANC, the e-mails were left outside his office at the ANC's headquarters, in a brown envelope. Allegedly written by Mbeki's close allies, including Bulelani Ngcuka, Sakkie Macozoma and Mzi Khumalo, they detailed a plot to block Zuma's ascendancy to the ANC presidency. The 'conspirators' allegedly referred to Zuma as 'Zulu-boy', a reference to his ethnicity. Macozoma, who later quit the ANC for the Congress of the People, dismissed the e-mails as a 'hoax'. In an interview with a *Mail & Guardian* journalist, Mandy Roussow, Macozoma lamented:

The secretary general, Kgalema [Motlanthe] at that time, put it into the public domain even though his common sense would have told him it was a hoax. And even after repeated attempts to try to defuse the situation, it became very clear to me that there was no room for someone like me in the ANC.

There is a lot of emotion when your comrades turn against you [because] they don't agree with your view. When they concoct hoax emails that are obviously untrue and then use that as evidence against you, that is really painful to go through.

Mail & Guardian 9 March 2009

Zuma's legal defence and campaign for the ANC presidency latched onto the alleged reference to Zuma's ethnic identity, projecting him as the victim of an anti-Zulu campaign, while his strategists argued that his trial on rape allegations was part of a political conspiracy hatched by his opponents. Mbeki had built up some notoriety within the ANC as a scheming, ruthless opponent – a perception on which Zuma's campaign sought to capitalise.² The fact that the alleged rape victim had been advised by Ronnie Kasrils, an Mbeki ally, to lay a charge gave the 'conspiracy theory' a veneer of truth. Zuma's supporters, therefore, saw both the rape trial and the subsequent corruption trial as part of an anti-Zuma campaign driven by anti-Zulu sentiment.

Zuma bolstered the notion of an ethnic attack during his rape trial, explaining some of his actions as stemming from Zulu tradition. Albeit fluent in English, which was evident when he corrected the interpreter during the court proceedings, Zuma elected to speak in IsiZulu. Upon being asked why he had not used a condom despite the fact that he knew the woman was HIV-positive, he responded that to look for one would have meant leaving the woman in a highly aroused state, which was against Zulu tradition (Gordin 2008).

Zuma's 'Zulu-ness' played a prominent role in his trials, a factor which transformed him from a mere accused to a cultural figure persecuted because of his ethnicity. Members of the Zulu-speaking community were mobilised around his person in a number of ways. T-shirts bearing Zuma's face and proclaiming

2 Earlier in 2002, for instance, Mbeki, and Steve Tshwete, then Minister of Safety and Security, went on public television accusing Cyril Ramaphosa, Mathews Phosa and Tokyo Sexwale of plotting to oust Mbeki as president of the country. In doing so, Mbeki disregarded the advice of the then Minister of Intelligence, Lindiwe Sisulu, that the information was false. Most analysts believe Mbeki knew the information was false, but his strategy was geared to forcing the three individuals, all of whom, particularly Ramaphosa, were potential rivals, to deny any aspirations to leadership. They did precisely that but Mbeki was later forced to apologise for having accused them falsely.

'100% Zulu-boy' proliferated and multiple *Maskande* (Zulu traditional songs) were composed in his honour, including the popular *Izintombi Zoma* and *Phuzekhemisi* and became instant hits. *Izintombi Zoma's* song, *Msholoz*, named after Zuma's clan-name in an album similarly titled, goes:

Bonke abantu bathi bafun' uZuma apha, abe nguRhulumente eSouth Africa. Abawaboni amacala agwetshwa ngawona. Amacala anawo makasulwe, uZuma abe nguRulemeni. Epalemente abavumi ukuth' uZuma abe nguRhulumeni. Kanti uzoba lisekela kuze kubenini. Khululan' uZuma azo phatha. Umadiba wathi umakuphuma yena Umsholoz ayophatha.

Everyone says they want Zuma to be president of South Africa. They don't recognise the charges that have been laid against him. Those charges should be withdrawn so that Zuma can become president. But those in parliament don't want Zuma to become president. How long can he remain deputy president? Set Zuma free so that he can become president. Even Mandela said when he leaves the presidency Msholoz [Zuma] should take over.

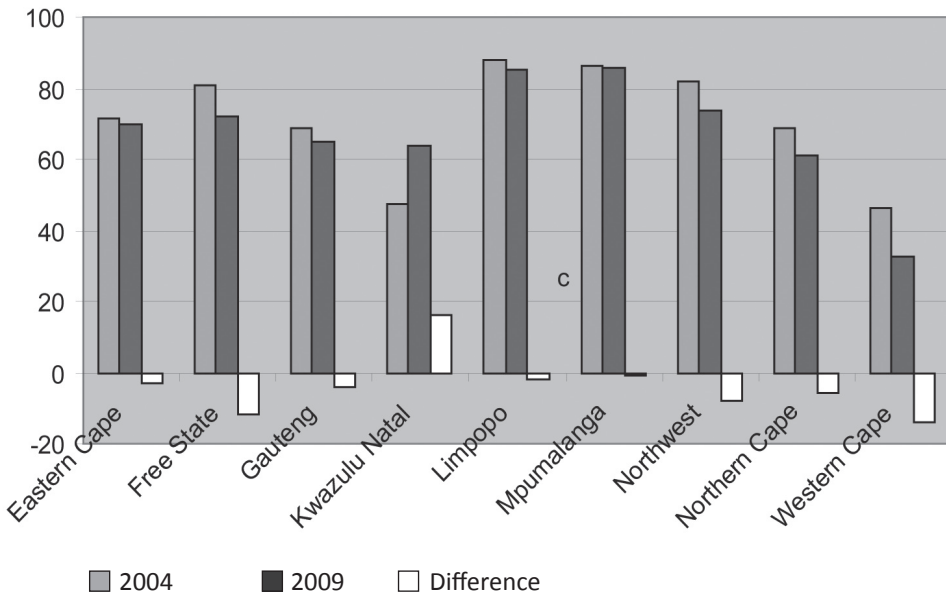
The anti-Zulu conspiracy theory lent credence to the then ongoing public debate about the alleged *Xhosa nostra* within the ANC and state institutions. According to this view, Xhosa-speakers were conspiring to preserve both the party and the public sector as their own domain of employment and influence, excluding other ethnic groups (*Pretoria News* 4, June 2002). The ANC even expressed concern, at its June-July 2005 National General Council meeting, that some of its members were resorting to ethnic mobilisation to gain positions. A discussion document, titled 'The National Question', noted:

Others engage in low-intensity tribal mobilisation, including in order to lobby support for positions in the ANC and in government. During the debate about provincial boundaries, tribal mobilisation took place among supporters of all parties, including the ANC. It was a rude reminder when even some of the most seasoned cadres of the liberation movement took positions on provincial boundaries based on tribal affiliation. Today it has become a habit among some to count the number of amaXhosa in the public service and in government. Accusations are made that many ministers and directors-general tend to appoint their own kind.

The suggestion that Zuma was the victim of an anti-Zulu campaign boosted his candidature for the ANC presidency and subsequently helped the ANC in the general elections, with ANC members and the general populace of KZN rallying around him. Branch nominations for the ANC's 2007 elective conference returned Zuma with a whopping 580 votes to Mbeki's nine (*Mail & Guardian* 30 November 2007). Of a total of 1.6 million new voters registered by the IEC in November 2008, 451 030 were in KZN, contributing to making the registration drive "the most successful ... since 2000", according to IEC chairperson Brigalia Bam (*The Star* 13 November 2008).

In the 2009 elections the ANC won an outright majority in KZN for the first time. Although the party had gradually been gaining electoral support in the province – in 2004 it emerged as the largest party – its 2009 margin was phenomenal. It won the province by an impressive 64 per cent – a gigantic leap from the 47 per cent it had won in 2004. The KZN result was unique in an election in which support for the ANC dropped by an average of 6 per cent in the other eight provinces. Habib (2009) estimated that had it not been for the surge in KZN, the ANC's national support would have dropped below 60 per cent.

Figure 1
Electoral support for the ANC, 2004 and 2009

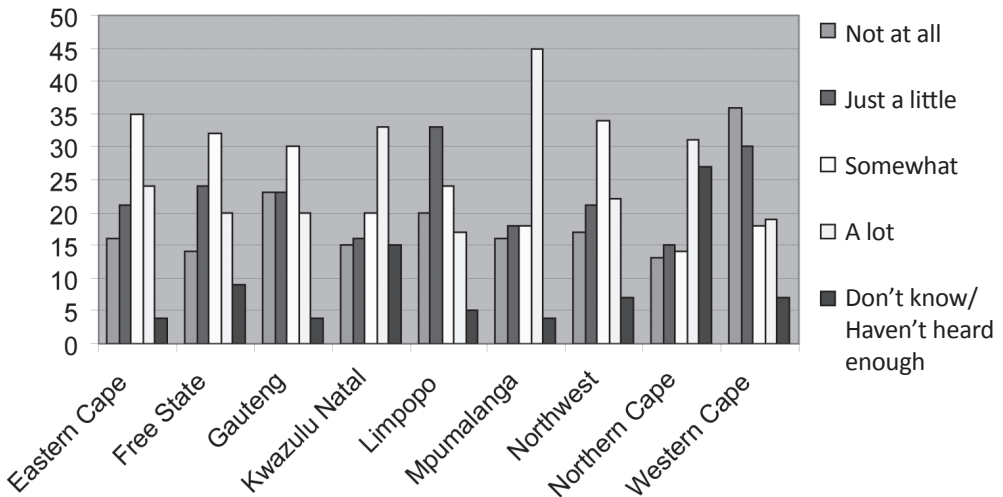


Source: Independent Electoral Commission

These results were obtained despite the fact that the KZN provincial government, which was predominantly ANC, had not performed discernibly differently from or better than other ANC provincial governments. In fact, the Afrobarometer survey revealed that while 60 per cent of respondents in North West province approved of the performance of the ANC premier, Edna Molewa, only 59 per cent of those in KZN approved of the ANC's Sbu Ndebele.³ The ANC's massive spike, therefore, had little, if anything, to do with the way people perceived the party's performance in provincial government.

Rather than relating to the popularity of the party itself, the electoral spike is related to the affinity for Zuma. Seventy per cent of the residents in the province said they trusted Zuma 'somewhat' to 'a lot', compared to 53 per cent who expressed trust in the ANC. KZN and Mpumalanga are the only two provinces where more people trusted Zuma than they did the ANC (See Figure 2). Friedman (2009, p 116) thus concludes: 'Some voters probably vote ANC because Zuma is Zulu'. This partly explains why most residents in the province were sympathetic towards Zuma during his trials.

Figure 2
Levels of trust in the ANC



3 The findings reported here are drawn from the fourth Afrobarometer survey conducted in South Africa in October and November 2008. The survey was based on a nationally representative random sample of 2 400 adult South Africans from all nine provinces. The findings have a margin of sampling error of $\pm 3\%$ at a 95% confidence level. Fieldwork was conducted by Citizen Surveys, with support from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) and the University of Cape Town.

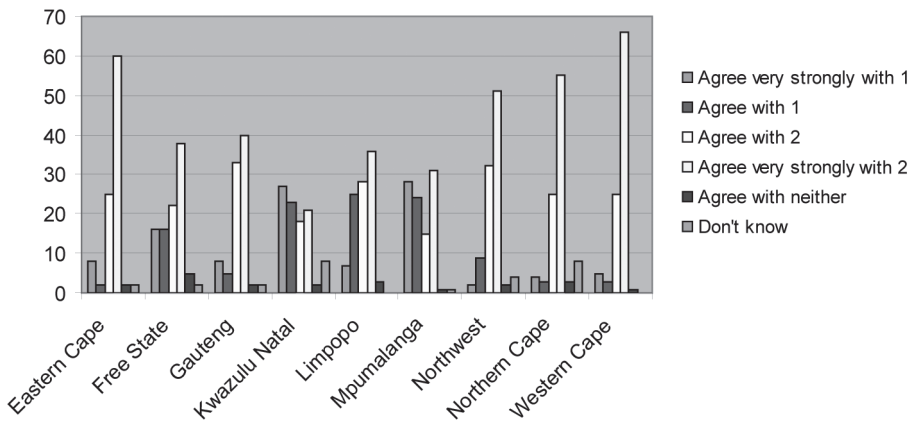
Half the population felt that ‘government should immediately stop the prosecution’, while 39 per cent believed the ‘judicial process should continue and run its course so that we can know whether is innocent or guilty’. The majority in all the other provinces except Mpumalanga felt the trials should continue (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Which of the following statement is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2:

Statement 1: *The government should immediately stop the prosecution of Jacob Zuma.*

Statement 2: *The judicial process should continue and its run its course so that we can know whether Jacob Zuma is innocent or guilty.*



Source: Afrobarometer Survey Round 4 2008

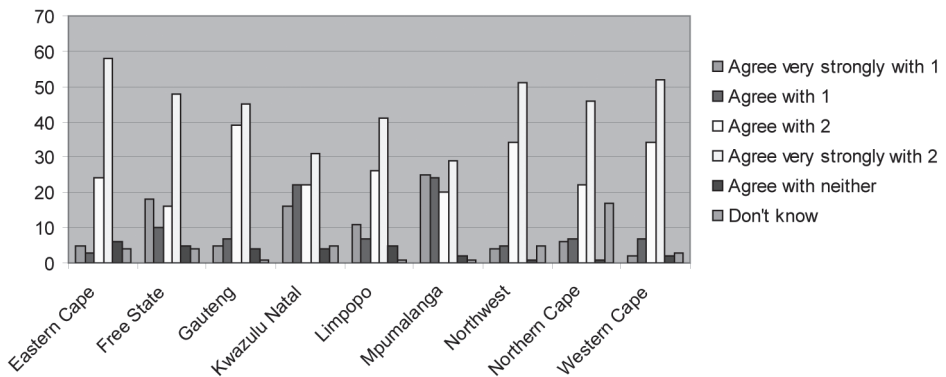
Not surprisingly, a significant number of people in KwaZulu-Natal believed Zuma’s repeated protests that he was the victim of a ‘political conspiracy’. Although a majority (53%) felt that the ‘The Scorpions are an effective tool in the fight against crime and corruption and should be left alone’, that segment was still significantly lower in KZN than in other provinces. In the Western Cape 86 per cent agreed with the statement, in the North West 85 per cent, Gauteng 84 per cent and, nationally, 72 per cent (see Figure 4). In KZN 38 per cent of those surveyed believed the ‘Scorpions have been misused for political purposes and violated people’s rights, and therefore should be disbanded’.

Figure 4

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2

Statement 1: *The Scorpions have been misused for political purposes and violated people’s rights, and therefore should be disbanded.*

Statement 2: *The Scorpions are an effective tool in the fight against crime and corruption and should be left alone.*



Zuma’s supporters pointed to Thabo Mbeki as the source of the ‘political conspiracy’ and only 36 per cent of KZN residents (the lowest percentage in all the provinces) approved of Mbeki’s performance. More people in the province (40%) gave acting president Kgalema Motlanthe a positive rating than gave one to Mbeki, despite the fact that Motlanthe had been in office for less than three months at the time.

CONCLUSION

Ethnic mobilisation was pivotal in getting Zuma elected to the ANC presidency and in the ANC receiving its highest number of votes ever in KZN and performing far better there than in the other provinces. The belief that Zuma had been persecuted because of his ethnicity rallied Zulu-speakers around his person and they were further mobilised by popular music.

Zuma’s candidature obviously renewed the currency of ethnic mobilisation in South Africa’s political life, although it is still not widespread. As Hoeane notes elsewhere in this issue the suggestion that Cope was a Xhosa-driven

party formed in response to Mbeki's defeat at the ANC's 2007 conference and subsequent dismissal as president was not validated by electoral returns. Voters in the predominantly Xhosa-speaking Eastern Cape stuck with the ANC, with more residents there expressing trust in the ANC than had done in KZN, where there was more trust in Zuma than in the party. The fact that Zuma was more popular than his party poses a sharp challenge to the ANC, which risks losing that support should Zuma vacate the presidency.

That fear may even tempt some to argue for a second term for Zuma or to elect another Zulu-speaker in order to retain the support. After all, KZN is the only province where the ANC has experienced electoral gains. Then again, in the absence of any perceived threat, or what may be perceived as ethnically driven persecution, people are unlikely to be mobilised along ethnic lines. Ethnic mobilisation in KZN was not spontaneous but was fuelled by the perception that one of their own was being persecuted because of his ethnicity.

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