



South Africa's voters defy President Zuma's scandals

ANC wins South Africa's Parliamentary and Provincial Elections

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The scandals surrounding President Zuma brought predictions of a rout for the ruling African National Congress, but it seems the controversy has not deterred ANC supporters. The emotional link to the liberation party is still strong and the party still attained a massive 62% of the vote, in spite of some slippage. The Democratic Alliance increased marginally nationwide but significantly in the Western Cape, indicating that race is still a strong determinant of voting behaviour in South Africa, although there has been some increase in support among urban black professionals. Predictions of Zuma's removal as ANC President will not now come to pass. His final term can be used to secure impunity for himself by grooming the most appropriate successor. Meanwhile, industrial relations issues persist and threaten the future of the Tripartite Alliance in the aftermath of the elections.

The 5th Parliamentary and Provincial Elections in South Africa after the political changes in 1994 were conducted freely and fairly. The ANC (African National Congress) won the Parliamentary Elections with a comfortable majority of over 62%, the main opposition party DA (Democratic Alliance) increased its share to over 22% and the populist newcomer, EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters), started its parliamentary debut with over 6%. The ANC gained control in 8 of the 9 provinces while the DA will continue to govern the Western Cape Province. Predictions which saw large losses of the ANC turned out to be wrong. The social milieu which are defined in South Africa by race and its apartheid past change slowly and do not yet allow for large swings in electoral patterns.

The ANC continued to lose votes, but moderately as in past elections: 3.8% from 2004 to 2009 and 3.7% from 2009 to 2014. The scandals surrounding President Zuma and their continuous reflection in the English language press did not deter ANC supporters. The emotional link to the liberation party is still strong. In many township voting stations the ANC achieved more than 75% and even in the township Bekkersdal where this year violent anti-ANC protests took place, the party won 80%. Writes one commentator: "It is an incredible indictment that South Africa's townships would rather disenfranchise themselves than support alternatives to the ANC"¹

The DA increased its support from 16.66% (2009) to 22.23%. But considering that at the local government elections 2011 the party received already 21.97% the gains are not overwhelming. However, the party won convincingly the Western Cape Province with 51.46% where the ANC trailed with 31.55%. This province provides the clearest indication that race is still the determining factor for elections in South Africa. 49% of the Western Cape population describe themselves as coloured, 17% as white, and 33% as black Africans, and these percentages are reflected in the election's result for the province because coloureds and whites tend to vote for the DA. The party according to its own assessment received close to 750,000 or 5 % of the black vote. This means the party still has not made significant inroads into the black electorate. Slight milieu changes take place among the urban black professionals. And that is where the DA received more votes. Gauteng Province with the urban centres Johannesburg and Pretoria can still be ruled by the ANC with 53.59%, but the DA received here 30.2%. This is 8% more than its national average. The success in urban areas nurtures hope within the DA that it could do better at the Local Government Elections 2016.

The EFF, founded by the expelled former president of the ANC's youth league, Julius Malema, achieved at its first election 6.35%. In Malema's home province, Limpopo, the EFF became the second strongest party after the ANC with 10.74%. EFF's popular demands for nationalisation of key industries and expropriation of land without compensation were well received by unemployed and

¹ Vukani Mde: *Election winners and losers* in Sunday Independent, 11.05.2014

disillusioned ANC supporters who are looking for an alternative. COPE, the other breakaway group from the ANC that assembled the ousted Mbeki supporters after Zuma's ascent in 2007, also did well at its first election in 2009 with over 7%. This time the party did not even reach 1%. It is unlikely that the EFF would be hit by a similar fate at the next elections. While COPE was just a non-Zuma ANC, EFF is offering a radical and attractive alternative to black voters – at least verbally. From now on the EFF will be the vocal opposition to ANC's attempts to keep the South African economy in the mainstream of the capitalist world order.

The IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) which was once strong enough to win the province KWA-Zulu Natal at the 1994 elections declined further to 2.4% nationally and 10,17% at the provincial level. The elderly founder and traditional leader Buthelezi refused to step aside for younger party members. This opened the floor to the ANC to expand its control in Zuma's home province of Zulus with 65.1%.

Election Results of 7. May 2014

Party	National Parliament 2009	Local Government 2011	National Parliament 2014	Seats, National Parliament 2014
ANC, African National Congress	65.90%	63.65%	62.15%	249
DA, Democratic Alliance	16.60%	21.97%	22.23%	89
EFF, Economic Freedom Fighters			6.35%	25
IFP, Inkatha Freedom Party	4.55%	3.94%	2.40%	10
9 smaller parties				27

Voter's participation declined slightly from 77.30% to 73.48%. In comparison to other democracies this is still an impressive figure. But these percentages are misleading. South Africa's electoral law requires eligible voters to register first. More and more South African do not bother to do so. Especially disappointing is the fact that only 33.6% of the so called "born free" registered, i.e. those who were born after the changes 1994 and who this year could vote for the first time. If the non-registered are considered the support for the ANC comes down to 36.39% of eligible voters. The increasing alienation from the political system which can also be observed in established Western democracies has become a trend in South Africa as well.

The winner is the ANC and especially President Zuma who will be re-elected State President by the ANC majority in the National Parliament on 21 May. The recent scandal of upgrading his private homestead Nkandla with 25 Million Euro taxpayer's money did not harm the electoral campaign. The rural population which depends mostly on broadcasts of the government controlled SABC learned little about the accusations and the critical report of the Public Protector. And when dissatisfaction with Zuma emerged then obviously the emotional link to the ANC gained the upper

hand. Critics inside the ANC who still believe that he is a liability rather than an asset to the party will not be heard. Many observers before the election (including myself) believed that the ANC would remove him after the election as soon as possible. This will nearly be impossible because of the vast powers bestowed on him as the Executive President of South Africa and President of the ANC. He appoints the cabinet and is the key person in the selection of the premiers in the eight provinces in which the ANC has the majority. He is in control but his actions will be forced by one overriding consideration: because the constitution does not allow him to run for a third term he has to secure impunity for himself during this term and for the rest of his life through the appropriate selection of his successor.

This time Zuma has more room for personal decisions than after the election 2009 when he had to reward those who supported him to become ANC President at the Polokwane congress 2007 which led to a bloated cabinet of more than 30 members. But his task has not become easier. He has to select carefully the ministers of the so called security cluster (Justice, Police, Home Affairs etc) which are important for his personal survival. The Nkandla scandal will haunt him because the opposition in parliament won't drop the report of the Public Protector in which Zuma is asked to refund a considerable amount of the expenses for the building of his homestead to the state. The DA has still a case against him pending the discovery of how the "spy tapes" were used to drop criminal charges against him in connection with the Arms Deal scandal. This could end up in Constitutional Court. Zuma admitted in an interview that he wants to "change the powers of the Constitutional Court" and he questioned the "excessive" powers of the judges.² During the next two years he has the power through replacement of retired judges to form a Constitutional Court in which all judges are executive-friendly.

It will be more difficult for him to balance the forces in the Tripartite Alliance of ANC, Communist Party (SACP) and the trade union federation COSATU than before. While the leadership of the SACP has become a loyal supporter of Zuma, COSATU is divided. The strongest COSATU member NUMSA (Metalworkers) did not support the ANC during the election and announced after the election that the union would set up its own party (Movement for Socialism), which is to compete at the Local Government Elections in 2016. COSATU either has to expel NUMSA or the Tripartite Alliance will become history. Further opposition from the union side will come from Amcu (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union) which is running a strike in its fourth month in the mines of the Rustenburg platinum belt. Neither the government nor the once powerful MUN (Mineworkers Union) of COSATU were able to bring the parties to a settlement. A Bloomberg report hinted that South Africa had failed to ease investor's concerns over how the government would handle labour

² Staff report: *Zuma judges to dominate the Constitutional Court* in Mail and Guardian, 9.-15.5.2014

unrest and unemployment.³ Pressure from the new competitor, EFF, with its call for nationalisation of the mines, will not make it easier for Zuma to create a favourable climate for international investors.

Economic performance will be the key for a successful second term. The economy is at present in a low-growth trap between 2% and 3% instead of the over 5.4% predicted by the National Development Plan. Cyril Ramaphosa was elected Deputy President of the ANC at its Mangaung congress in 2012. Many saw this as a move to cover the weak economic flank of Zuma. But will Zuma actually make him Deputy State President and if yes how much extra executive power and authority will he be given? It is possible that he could head the National Planning Commission and the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. This would give him the power to direct the economy and to control the various ministers. But is Zuma willing to relinquish that much power? Such a strong position would also predestine Ramaphosa to succeed Zuma as the next State President.

Helen Zille, white, leader of the strongest opposition party DA and Premier of the Western Cape Province was not quite satisfied with the outcome for the national parliament. It is obviously more difficult than expected to change the image of the DA as a “white” party and to make it eligible to black voters although the parliamentary group was led by Lindiwe Mazibuko, a young black woman. The relationship between whites and blacks in the party remains difficult. Fearing she would not be reappointed as leader of the opposition Mazibuko resigned after the election to take up a scholarship in the USA. This initiated a controversial discussion in the party about Helen Zille’s leadership style.

The DA’s victory in the Western Cape was convincing. It is important for the political system in South Africa to have an opposition party that governs a province in view of the dominance of the ANC for the last 20 years. The DA is now concentrating on the Local Government Elections 2016 in the hope that its performance at the local level will convince more people to vote for the DA.

The EFF’s performance was impressive. The populist slogans were well received by the “marginalised”, as one commentator observed.⁴ According to a survey⁵ 40% of its supporters are unemployed and 25% are full-time in the blue-collar sector. 44% are so called “born frees” in the 18-24 age bracket. Malema is in full control of the party so that a repetition of the infighting which destroyed COPE is unlikely. But he faces criminal charges for tax evasion which at present could make him open to offers of cooperation from the ANC. The ANC does not have a two third majority

³ Ayanda Mdluli: *Call goes out for inclusivity after election* in Business Report, 13.05.2014

⁴ Fiona Forde: *Marginalised flock to Malema’s party* in iol news, 11.05.2014

⁵ Ipsos poll, quoted in Forde, 2014

in parliament which is needed to change the constitution. Once the dust of electoral slogans has settled one could imagine that the EFF accepts deals with the ANC, and probably quite easy so with a leader like Malema who seems not to be bound by ideological principles.

Zuma's first term was characterized by corruption, by attacks on the free press, on the constitution and on public institutions like the one of the Public Protector and by poor economic performance. Neither has he been brought to justice by the judicial system nor has the electorate punished him. Instead, he emerged from the 5th election stronger than before. The prospects for a country which some commentators characterize as being in a "crisis"⁶ are in these circumstances not very promising.

⁶ Richard Calland: *The Zuma years*, page 425, Cape Town 2013