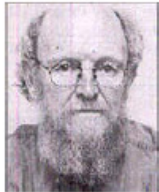


SA's voter profile is changing

COMMENT
PATRICK LAURENCE



The younger generation may be less susceptible to mobilisation by the ANC as the main liberation movement

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma has on more than one occasion declared that the ANC will rule until Jesus comes again, implying that as long as mere men and women determine the affairs of state, the ANC will govern South Africa.

Zuma and those of his lieutenants who share his eschatological vision of ANC rule only being eclipsed by the Second Coming of Jesus might well consider the trajectory of a parabola, the zenith of which simultaneously marks the beginning of its descent.

It is a reminder of the dangers of hubris, of the possibility that the moment of triumph may mark the start of the inexorable descent into dust and ashes that awaits all of us, powerful politicians – and, as often as not, the institutions they create – no less than ordinary citizens.

To recount the parable of the parabola is not to deny that Zuma led the ANC to a decisive victory in the April 22 national election, when it won 65.9 percent of the votes cast.

Even though the Zuma-led ANC garnered 15 fewer National Assembly seats than the ANC did under the leadership of former president Thabo Mbeki in the 2004 election, as well as a smaller share of the votes cast than the Mbeki-led ANC attained in 2004, the ANC victory under Zuma stands out as a credible achievement, particularly as it had to face a challenge from the ANC dissidents who established Cope last December.

But that does not mean the ANC is completely invulnerable to severe losses or even defeat at the polls in the next 10 to 15 years, as shown by several of the contributors to the newly released book: *Zumani – The 2009 South African Elections* (co-edited by Roger Southall, of the University of the Witwatersrand, and Jo n Daniel, of the School of International Training, and jointly published by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Jacana publishing company).

Colette Schultz-Herzenberg of the Institute for Security Studies provides a perspective in her contributing chapter that shows the ANC's victory may not have been as substantial and unequivocal as seemed at first glance.

Though the ANC won 65.9 percent of the 17.7 million votes cast in the national poll, its achievement is markedly less impressive when its tally of votes is expressed as a percentage of the total voting age population (VAP). The slightly more than 11.6 million votes won by the ANC constitute a mere 38.9 percent of the nearly 30 million strong VAP.

Bearing in mind that just over 23 million South Africans registered to vote, it follows



FOLLOWING THEIR LEADER: ANC supporters carry Jacob Zuma posters at a party gathering. The ANC's victory in this year's poll was significant. But it won the support of less than 39 percent of everyone entitled to vote.

PICTURE: BONLIE BAM

that nearly 7 million either chose not to register or, for a variety of reasons, were unable to do so.

As roughly 5.3 million of those who registered to vote failed to turn out on polling day, it follows that more than 12 million (7 million plus 5.3 million) members of the VAP did not vote for the ANC.

Since many of the 12-million plus who did not vote may have been disillusioned former ANC supporters, the ANC's loss constitutes an opportunity for the opposition parties, particularly the Democratic Alliance and Cope, to woo and win their support in the elections to come.

In his introductory overall chapter, Southall looks at the changing profile of the South African population, noting that fully one-third of those who are eligible to vote today were too young to vote in the watershed 1994 election that brought the ANC to power and who, consequently, were first-time voters in 1999.

These voters, and still more those who were born after them, have little or no direct experience of the horrors of apartheid. They may for that reason be less susceptible to mobilisation by the ANC as the main liberation movement. The proportion of the electorate which is young and more interested in cellphones and shopping malls than liberation ideology will grow steadily with the passage of time.

If the ANC takes their loyalty for granted, it will be a fatal mistake for a

simple reason. It will offer the ANC's political opponents a chance to convert them into political legionaries in the quest to oust the ANC government.

The quest is reinforced by the increasing evidence that corruption is spreading in the ranks of government officials and ANC careerists as if it were a metastasising cancer in the ANC-controlled political system.

Another factor that may work against the ANC is the growing inequality in South Africa, in contradistinction to the ANC's egalitarian oratory and repeated pledges to campaign for a better life for all.

As Southall notes, South Africa fares badly in relation to most countries when it comes to inequality. Research conducted by the United Nations Development Programme shows that South Africa has the eighth highest level of inequality of the 177 countries surveyed. Put differently, that means close to 170 of countries recorded better scores than South Africa, notwithstanding the recurring commitments to reduce inequality by successive ANC administrations since 1994.

A table published by the Institute of Race Relations in its latest survey shows that income inequality in the indigenous black community is higher than it is within the white, coloured and Indian communities. The resentment of indigent and unemployed black citizens may thus be directed against their conspicuously rich racial kinsfolk, aka the *wabenzis*, as

much, if not more, than it is focused on members of the generally richer minority communities.

As most members of the new black elite are ANC grandees or politically connected beneficiaries of ANC-sponsored black economic empowerment, growing income inequality in the black community may have serious adverse consequences for the governing party.

The recent clashes between striking workers and police are strangely and disconcertingly reminiscent of the last days of the old white-controlled regime. The same applies to clashes between service delivery protesters and police in municipalities around South Africa.

As the more insightful members of the emerging black elite are aware, when poor blacks rise up, they rise against the rich irrespective of their colour.

Nothing is written in stone, however. Like the once seemingly invincible Kanu in Kenya, Unip in Zambia, BNP in Lesotho and Zanu-PF in Zimbabwe, the ANC is not destined to rule for a long period of time, let alone indefinitely.

Assuming it does not attempt to rule without a legitimate mandate from the electorate, the length of its tenure in office will depend on the political acumen and moral integrity of its leaders.

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Boeke-Beeld

Volledig; ongelyke blik op verkiesing

Jan-Jan Joubert

Zunami! The 2009 South African Elections. Onder redaksie van Roger Southall en John Daniel. Jacana Media (sagteband, 300 bladsye)

Hierdie is die eerste omvattende ontleding van vanjaar se algemene verkiesing wat in boekvorm verskyn.

Dit bestaan uit 14 bydraes deur verskillende akademië oor verskillende aspekte van die verkiesing – van die vertoning van die onderskeie partye tot die mediadekking, geslagskwessies en 'n vooruitskouing.

Hoewel die eindproduk bevredigend is, is die bydraes uiteraard van ongelyke peil, aangesien dit deur verskillende mense geskryf is.

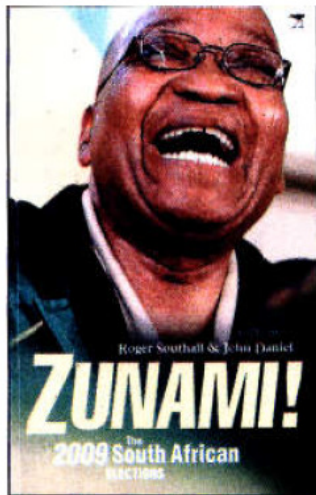
Die drie onbevredigende bydraes is die een oor die ANC, die een oor die IVP en die een oor die rol van die media.

Die gerespekteerde akademië Anthony Butler (oor die ANC) en Suzanne Francis (oor Inkatha) lewer nie werk van hul gewone goeie peil nie. Hulle word die dienaars van die partye wat hulle beskryf. Daar is te min kritiek, te veel vergoeilike aanvaarding van partysienings en uiteindelik te min empiriese ontleding.

Die bydraes oor die ander partye is aansienlik beter – trouens, deur die bank uitstekend.

Die ander swak bydrae is deur Jane Duncan oor die media.

Haar hoofstuk is ongefokus en veralgemenend (klagtes op 'n wye doek met min praktiese voorbeelde of alternatiewe om



die kritiek te stut). Daarbenevens is haar inligting oor Media24 se verkiesingsdekking (soos hoeveel mense ons beskikbaar gehad het, ensovoorts) gewoon verkeerd.

Hierdie het niks te doen met haar menings nie – dis die doodgewone, klipharde feite, nagaanbare logistieke feite. Swak navorsing gegrond op 'n anonieme bron wat sy liefies nie weer moet gebruik nie, wie dit ook al is!

Maar van die ander bydraes is werklik sterk.

Die agtergrondstukke oor die kiesstelsel en die vorige uitslae is feitlik in die kol en plaas gebeur netjies in konteks; die stuk oor geslagskwessies is verrassend toeganklik; en die opsommende hoofstuk oor die provinsiale uitslae is knap aanmekeer gesit.

Op die keper beskou, is die boek absoluut die moeite werd.

■ Joubert is Rapport se politieke redakteur.

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MAUREEN ISAACSON

ZUNAMI! The 2009 South African Elections, edited by Roger Southall and John Daniel (Jacana Media and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung), attempts to place "in context" this year's elections, which, according to Pallo Jordan, "will be remembered for the participation of an opposition formation sprung from the joins of the ANC and led by former ANC leaders".

The quote prefaces an essay on Cope by Susan Booysen, who joins Anthony Butler, Jane Duncan and a host of others in a solid collection.

Shireen Hassim's contribution, *Godzille and the Witches: Gender in the 2009 elections*, makes for an amusing reminder of just how quickly lip service to gender equity falls by the wayside in the face of pressures.

Politically active women are depicted in political discourse "as monstrous (Godzille), as witches (women supporters of Cope) or as benign mamas (leaders of the ANC Women's League)", she writes.

For Hassim, for feminists, "the quality of women's representation leaves much to be desired".

She records the rift that exists between the small number of women in power and the majority of

women on the ground, and the urging of President Jacob Zuma in 2007 for women in the ANC Women's League to return to their roots.

Hassim's detailed reminder of the crass verbal attacks on women in opposition parties is a sober indication that the current talk of gender equality should be taken with a pinch of salt.

For her, ANC Youth League superstars Julius Malema, Floyd Shivambu and Fikile Mbalula's attacks on the DA's Helen Zille during the election campaign depict "male arrogance" that "defies reasoned debate".

Most legal discrimination has been removed in South Africa, writes Hassim, but fairness and equity are yet to be realised.