

Article

Zuma, Malema and the provinces: factional conflict within the African National Congress

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Abstract

In 2012, the African National Congress (ANC) held its fifty-third national conference at Mangaung. After months of scandal, speculation was rife that president Zuma would be unseated by his deputy, Kgalema Motlanthe. Yet the ANC leader triumphed at Mangaung, taking three-quarters of the vote. This article assesses the extent to which Zuma's victory can be used to explore the changing character of ANC factionalism. Three developments are analysed. First, Zuma's faction has evolved significantly since its victory over president Mbeki in 2007, losing support on the left but gaining ground within the Eastern Cape province. Second, Motlanthe's candidacy demonstrated the extent to which ANC structures have been gripped by a 'spirit of rebellion'. And, finally, fraud, skulduggery and violence, alongside increased recourse to the courts, raise serious questions about the credibility of the ANC's candidate selection processes.

Introduction

On December 18, 2012, African National Congress (ANC) delegates from every corner of South Africa gathered at Mangaung to elect a party leader. As ever, president Jacob Zuma's election campaign had been buffeted by disaster, controversy, and scandal. In February 2010, he had alienated some religious conservatives by acknowledging a child born outside wedlock (Timse 2010). In January 2012, corruption and maladministration in Limpopo Province had forced hundreds of schools to forego textbooks (Nicholson 2012). In August, 34 striking platinum miners had been shot dead at Marikana in the worst police massacre to have occurred in South Africa since democratisation. Then, in November, South Africa's public protector had published an interim report on the use of public funds to construct a

luxurious presidential compound, including swimming pool, cattle kraal and chicken run, at Nkandla in Zuma’s home province of KwaZulu-Natal (*City Press* 2013). Hence when deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe announced in December that he would contest the ANC leadership, observers could have been forgiven for thinking that a significant challenge was at hand. Yet Zuma won the ensuing election by a landslide, taking almost 3,000 votes to Motlanthe’s 900. His personal triumph, which involved an even greater margin of victory than that achieved at the Polokwane conference in 2007, was compounded by the crushing defeat of every Motlanthe ally seeking election as an ANC official (see Table 1), as well as by Motlanthe’s refusal to accept any nomination save the party presidency.

Table 1: Elections to top six officials, Mangaung conference

Slate	President	Deputy President	Chair-person	Secretary-General	Deputy Secretary-General	Treasurer-General
Zuma faction <i>Votes</i>	Jacob Zuma 2983 (75.1%)	Cyril Ramaphosa 3018 (76.4%)	Baleka Mbete 3010 (76.2%)	Gwede Mantashe 3058 (77.2%)	Jesse Duarte <i>Elected un-opposed</i>	Zweli Mkhize 2988 (75.7%)
Motlanthe faction <i>Votes</i>	Kgalema Motlanthe 991 (24.9%)	Mathews Phosa 470 (11.9%) Tokyo Sexwale 463 (11.7%)	Thandi Modise 939 (23.8%)	Fikile Mbalula 901 (22.8%)		Paul Mashatile 961 (24.3%)
Total votes	3974	3951	3949	3959	-	3949

Source: Action for Southern Africa 2012

Zuma’s confirmation as ANC presidential candidate for the 2014 National Assembly elections was to prove, however, a mixed blessing for the ruling party. On the one hand, any other result might have plunged the ANC into a crisis of political authority reminiscent of the Mbeki/Zuma battle in 2007/2008, which ended with the formation of a pro-Mbeki splinter group (Butler 2009). It might also have jeopardised the party’s electoral position in KwaZulu-Natal, where Zuma’s local origins and Zulu traditionalism had endeared him to many voters previously aligned with the opposition. On the other hand, Zuma’s triumph guaranteed that his legal and personal difficulties would continue to overshadow the ruling party’s campaign for a fifth

election victory. Less than a year after defeating Motlanthe, he was forced to deny allegations that a private passenger aircraft carrying 200 wedding guests had landed with his authorisation at the Waterkloof military base (Presence 2013). In December 2013, the president was jeered – apparently by ANC members – at Nelson Mandela’s memorial service (Dolan 2013). And then in March 2013, public protector, Thuli Madonsela, published the results of her investigation into the ‘Nkandlagate’ scandal, accusing Zuma of having ‘improperly benefited’ from the upgrades to his private compound and recommending that a proportion of the cost should be paid back to the state (BBC 2014). These and other calamities represented, at the very least, a considerable distraction from the ANC’s election campaign, as former ANC Youth League (ANCYL) leader Julius Malema and other opponents openly branded the president a ‘thief’ (*City Press*, October 1, 2013).

This article analyses Zuma’s victory at Mangaung to assess the changing nature, drivers and mechanics of ANC factionalism. Three overlapping themes are identified. First, I argue that Zuma’s faction has changed substantially since its victory over president Mbeki in 2007, losing ground on the populist left but gaining some support within Eastern Cape province. When relations between the president and his former ANCYL allies broke down in 2010, however, it was Zuma – not his populist critics, as might have been expected – who instigated the dramatic showdown which followed. Second, I argue that Motlanthe’s candidacy highlights the extent to which ANC structures have been gripped by a ‘spirit of rebellion’. This seismic shift in attitudes towards the party executive is traced to Mbeki’s defeat and recall in 2007/2008, which exercised a powerful demonstration effect on elite and grassroots alike. Finally, I suggest that widespread fraud, intimidation and manipulation, coupled with a growing tendency for defeated factions to seek redress in the courts, raise serious questions about the integrity and credibility of the ANC’s candidate selection procedures. These problems are attributed to increased corruption, particularly at the provincial and municipal levels, where neo-patrimonialism has created a powerful incentive for factional rivals to pursue victory regardless of the wider cost.

The paper is divided into five parts. First, party factionalism is defined and my argument outlined. Second, the evolution of Zuma’s faction is charted and elucidated. Third, the ‘spirit of rebellion’ underpinning Motlanthe’s candidacy is analysed. Fourth, the ANC’s candidate selection process is described and its deterioration explained.

Factionalism

Factionalism is perhaps one of the most widely recognised, but least adequately defined, phenomena in electoral politics. Laswell (1931, cited in Köllner and Basedau 2005: 8), for example, argues that a faction is “‘any constituent group of a larger unit which works for the advancement of particular persons or policies’”, even though such a classificatory system would exclude almost no sub-group type. Key (1949, cited in Köllner and Basedau 2005: 8) takes his diagnosis to the opposite extreme, excluding any sub-group not interested in promoting a particular candidate for office. Köllner and Basedau (2005: 8-9), whose work focuses upon the African experience, regard a faction as any sub-group exhibiting some sense of collective identity, possessing a minimum degree of organisation, pursuing political goals, and representing a discernible bloc within the host party. Beller and Belloni (1978: 419), however, offer perhaps the best combination of precision and flexibility: a faction, they argue, is ‘any relatively organised group that exists within the context of some other group and which (as a political faction) competes with rivals for power advantages within the larger group of which it is part’. This is the definition I adopt here.

Given its longevity, prestige and electoral dominance, the ANC features prominently within the surprisingly small body of literature on factional politics in sub-Saharan Africa. Two distinct but overlapping themes in the study of ANC internal politics have emerged. On the one hand, many authors have sought to disentangle South Africa’s governing Tripartite Alliance, to assess the balance of power between its constituent elements, and to understand its endurance. Stephen Ellis (2012), for example, focuses upon the ANC’s experience in exile, during which time a number of key figures in the South African Communist Party (SACP) – including Joe Slovo, Moses Kotane and Chris Hani – apparently exercised considerable influence over political, diplomatic and military strategy. Brooks (2004: 131), Beinart (2001: 298-306), and McKinley (2001: 192-7) chart the ANC’s assertion of institutional hegemony after 1990, as the SACP and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) progressively lost influence over a nationalist movement defined and legitimised by electoral dominance. Most recently, MacGiollabhui (2013) has shown that South Africa’s tripartite alliance has survived because ANC candidate selection procedures are sufficiently inclusive for prominent communists and trade unionists to secure a seat in parliament.

The second area of scholarly debate relates to ANC succession politics and, in particular, the extraordinary battle for factional supremacy, which developed after 2005 between president Thabo Mbeki and his former deputy, Jacob Zuma. This struggle culminated in Mbeki's defeat at the Polokwane conference, when Zuma's strategy of exploiting widespread discontent over the president's autocratic style finally bore fruit; nine months later the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) 'invited' Mbeki to step down from state office, provoking a split in which many of the president's supporters formed their own party. Much ink has been spilt over the past decade, therefore, in explaining Zuma's appeal to his SACP and Cosatu allies, his remarkable success in overcoming a succession of legal travails, and his attempts to mobilise support around Zulu ethnic identity, as well as in charting president Mbeki's ultimately unsuccessful attempt to harness state resources for his own ends. One of the most important insights to emerge from this literature is, however, that neither faction was defined by any particular ideology or policy orientation (Lodge 2006: 163). Whilst many communists and trade unionists undoubtedly believed sincerely in the need to pursue a pro-poor agenda, their antagonism towards Mbeki was derived as much from his tendency to marginalise and exclude critics as it was from his association with neo-liberal orthodoxy. This tendency also attracted to Zuma's cause many people who made little pretence at advocating a distinct, or even coherent, ideological position. Patronage, rather than policy influence, motivated many of the party officials seeking Mbeki's deposition.

Much of the literature on ANC factionalism is therefore concerned with exploring developments at the national level. Indeed, authors have often focused almost exclusively on the ANC's sometimes troubled relationship with its SACP and Cosatu allies, without considering in depth those factional struggles waged within its sub-national structures, between the ANCYL and the mother body, and within the ANCYL itself. Yet these battles play a decisive role not only in shaping factional outcomes at the ANC's national conference, where 90 per cent of delegates represent branch structures and where many branch delegates hold ANCYL membership, but also in determining the distribution of power, influences and resources at the sub-national level. In 2012, as in 2007, it was Zuma's success in capturing the provincial structures that propelled (or returned) him to the party leadership. This article therefore seeks to build upon the existing literature by shifting attention to the factional battles taking place around the ANCYL and in the provinces.

A leopard changing its spots? The evolution of Zuma's faction

In December 2007, Zuma defeated president Mbeki to take the leadership of South Africa's ruling party. This astounding result represented the culmination of a two-year struggle for factional supremacy in which all of the disparate elements opposed to Mbeki's imperial presidency – socialists, ANCYL populists, Zulu ethno-nationalists and disgraced party apparatchiks – gradually coalesced around Zuma as the man most likely to bring about a change of leadership. From the outset, therefore, Zuma's faction was fluid, dynamic and fractious in nature, its unity based largely upon personal loyalty, promises of patronage or influence, and hostility towards the incumbent president. Once Mbeki's faction had been destroyed and its patronage resources redistributed, as occurred during the 12 months after Polokwane, Zuma would have to work hard at reproducing key elements of his support base, isolating rivals, and replacing groups lost to factional competitors.

Even before his inauguration as state president in May 2009, it was becoming increasingly evident that certain sections of the populist left – led by ANCYL president Julius Malema and Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi – had become a significant threat to the unity and integrity of Zuma's faction (Brkic 2010). Angered by perceived continuities with the conservative fiscal policies pursued under Mbeki, many of these self-styled radicals began to demand a raft of collectivist measures – including land expropriation and state ownership of the mining sector – which Zuma, aware of international realities, regarded as impossible (*Mail & Guardian* 2010). Yet when the break between Zuma and his erstwhile ANCYL allies occurred, it was initiated not by a populist Youth League leadership grown tired of waiting for socialist transformation, but by a president determined to destroy a perceived rival for influence within the tripartite alliance. In April 2010, Zuma held a press conference at which he denounced, *inter alia*, Malema's open support for the Mugabe regime, his rough treatment of a British journalist, and his repeated performance of a controversial struggle-era song, 'Shoot the farmer, shoot the boer', which the courts had condemned as hate speech (Politicsweb 2010). Malema professed himself puzzled at this reprimand – not altogether surprisingly, since one month earlier Zuma had denied that 'Shoot the farmer' represented an incitement to violence (*City Press*, March 12, 2010) – but he then made the mistake of playing straight into the president's hands, denouncing his nemesis as a dictator with little interest in youth issues (*City Press*, March 30, 2012). These outbursts, alongside a demand

for ‘regime change’ in Botswana, provided the excuse needed to charge Malema and five of his ANCYL associates with bringing the party into disrepute. By invoking the ANC’s disciplinary procedures rather than his own prerogative, Zuma guaranteed not only that Malema would be seen to undergo due process, but also that one of the ANCYL leader’s own allies – deputy minister Derek Hanekom – would pronounce the sentence of five years’ suspension from party membership. When Malema appealed this verdict, a disciplinary committee chaired by Cyril Ramaphosa increased the sentence to expulsion.

As Zuma and his associates might reasonably have anticipated, Malema’s downfall ignited a bitter factional battle within the Youth League, where debates raged over the question of whether to accept or to defy the disciplinary outcome. At first, the league’s influential national executive committee (NEC) and provincial structures declared that Malema had done nothing more than implement conference resolutions dating from June 2011, and that any attempt to remove him would be resisted (Molathwa 2012a, *The Herald* 2012). When an ANC appeals committee dismissed Malema’s final petition against expulsion, however, many of his associates began to contemplate the opportunities for career progression that might flow from a change of leadership (Hlongwane 2012). In Limpopo province, where Malema had spent his childhood and previously constructed a formidable political base, the ANCYL hierarchy became so acutely factionalised that supporters and opponents of the ousted leader held separate conferences, elected competing executive committees, and denounced each other as ‘renegades’ (*The Times* 2012a). In KwaZulu-Natal, Malema’s deputy president Ronald Lamola was confronted at the Durban University of Technology by around 100 anti-Malema demonstrators wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan, ‘ANCYL 100% support for Zuma’ (Ngqulunga 2012). In Gauteng, the ANCYL’s anti-Malema provincial executive committee (PEC) disbanded the pro-Malema Johannesburg regional executive committee (REC), before having its decision overturned by the pro-Malema national executive committee (Molathwa 2012b). Finally in November 2012 Malema himself clashed publicly with Lamola, whom he denounced as a ‘sellout’ for endorsing ANC treasurer-general candidate Mathews Phosa and for asserting that ANCYL members should endorse as legitimate any candidate elected at Mangaung (Rampedi 2012).

In 2012, therefore, ANCYL delegates arrived at the Mangaung conference deeply divided over the league’s profession of support for Malema, its

apparent willingness to defy the mother body, and its nomination of Motlanthe as presidential candidate. This disunity did nothing to strengthen the anti-Zuma camp, which demonstrated from the outset an almost comical inability to plan, organise and execute effective strategies for toppling the ANC president. By fomenting ANCYL factionalism, Zuma had divided his most powerful opponents, arrested the process of competitive radicalisation associated with Malema's demands for land expropriation, and thus demonstrated himself once again to be a master of internecine intrigue.

Indeed, Zuma's break with the ANCYL was more than compensated by his remarkable penetration of the mother body's Eastern Cape organisation. In 2007, this bastion of Mbeki loyalism had nominated the incumbent president by a margin of 20 percentage points, circulated a list of 'ultra-leftists' allegedly associated with Zuma's faction, and demanded that 68 pro-Zuma ANCYL delegates be disqualified from participating in the Polokwane conference (Rossouw and Letsaolo 2007). Five years later it nominated Zuma by 392 votes to 211, sweeping aside an 'Anyone but Zuma' campaign mounted by human settlements minister Tokyo Sexwale (Rossouw and Letsaolo 2012) and casting aside local discontent over economic underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment. This remarkable turnaround in fortunes was perhaps facilitated, in part, by an earlier defection of pro-Mbeki party magnates – including former deputy defence minister Mlululeki George – to opposition politics, as well as by intense lobbying during the period preceding the Mangaung conference. But Zuma's successful campaign relied ultimately on the ability of trusted acolytes – such as higher education minister Blade Nzimande, police minister Nathi Mthethwa, and Cosatu president Sdumo Dlamini – to carry his message into local branch structures (Molele et al 2012). By emphasising the need for continuity, loyalty and, above all, unity, these advocates were able simultaneously to portray ANCYL 'insolence' and 'vulgarity' as contrary to ANC tradition, to depict Zuma's candidacy as the only viable means of preventing a rupture along the lines witnessed in 2008, and to invoke activists' instinct for self-preservation (Molele et al 2012). Their message was further strengthened by Motlanthe's failure to declare his hand until the eve of the Mangaung conference (Malala 2012).

To conclude, therefore: Zuma's eclectic faction has evolved significantly since its victory over president Mbeki in 2007/2008, losing ground within some sections of the left but gaining territory elsewhere. Its break with the ANCYL was driven, not by Malema's own radicalism or independence of

spirit, but by Zuma's desire to neutralise a perceived threat to his achievement of a second term in office. By effecting Malema's suspension and then expulsion from the party, Zuma was able to ensure that his principal opponent – the Youth League – would enter the Mangaung conference divided, factionalised, and self-absorbed.

The ANC in revolt

In 2012, Jacob Zuma's position should have been impregnable. A mere three years earlier, he had taken South Africa's ruling party to its third consecutive election victory, corralling 65 per cent of the vote and capturing all but one of the country's nine provincial legislatures. That his re-election as ANC leader should have been contested, and his integrity openly impugned, by former members of his own inner circle was, therefore, remarkable. In this section, I will argue that Motlanthe's candidacy illustrates the extent to which ANC structures have been infused by a 'spirit of rebellion'.

Superficially at least, this argument may appear to have a somewhat dubious evidential basis. As indicated in Table 2, almost 70 per cent of Motlanthe's provincial nominations were obtained in only three of the party's nine sub-national structures and, even here, support for the change faction was far from unanimous. In Gauteng, two factors appear to have motivated opposition to Zuma's candidacy. On the one hand, South Africa's richest and most urbanised province had always been a hotbed of support for Zuma's former nemesis, president Thabo Mbeki, whose black economic empowerment (BEE) strategy was responsible for creating many of the black middle-class households now found in Soweto, the northern suburbs of Johannesburg, and elsewhere. On the other hand, ANC provincial chairperson, Paul Mashatile, was apparently infuriated by his appointment as minister of arts and culture – which the former Zuma ally regarded as beneath his stature – and presumably, therefore, hopeful of achieving advancement under Motlanthe (Adam Habib, personal communication, April 2, 2014). Yet neither of these influences was sufficient to deliver unanimous support for the change faction: the ANC's Johannesburg and Ekurhukeni regions both nominated Zuma, as did the ANC Women's League (ANCWL), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) provincial structures. Clearly, Mashatile's personal influence did not reach far enough, and middle-class activists were not numerous enough, for anti-Zuma activists to carry the province unopposed.

Table 2: Provincial nominations for ANC president

Province	Nominations		Did not vote	Total
	Zuma	Motlanthe		
Eastern Cape	392	211	93	696
Free State	324	0	20	344
Gauteng	173	238	109	520
KwaZulu-Natal	849	5	140	994
Limpopo	7	268	319	594
Mpumalanga	427	17	43	487
Northern Cape	169	25	2	196
North West	162	14	78	254
Western Cape	90	99	9	198
Total	2593 (60.6%)	872 (20.4%)	813 (19.0%)	4278

Source: Joubert 2012

Similar results in the two remaining pro-Motlanthe provinces appear to cast further doubt upon my ‘insurgency thesis’. In Limpopo province, Motlanthe’s overwhelming victory over the Zuma faction was facilitated partly by former ANCYL president Julius Malema’s close relationship with the provincial premier, Cassel Mathale, whose personal influence and powers of patronage permeated the provincial administration (*Daily Maverick*, July 17, 2012); and partly by the Zuma faction’s non-participation in Limpopo’s nomination conference. In the Western Cape, anti-Zuma sentiment was rooted in the NEC’s heavy-handed attempt to impose its hegemony upon this bastion of Mbeki loyalism: provincial premier Ebrahim Rasool had been dismissed, ANC provincial chairperson James Ncgulu reportedly ordered not to stand for re-election, and his successor responsible for provoking a substantial exodus to the ANC’s pro-Mbeki splinter party (*Africa Confidential* 2008). Yet even here Motlanthe carried the nomination conference only by the narrowest of margins, taking 99 votes to Zuma’s 90, with nine abstentions.

To suggest that South Africa’s ruling party has been infused by a spirit of rebellion when only three of its nine provincial conferences nominated Motlanthe might appear, therefore, to ignore a considerable weight of evidence to the contrary. Yet Zuma’s enemies also gained considerable traction in three provinces which resolved ultimately to support the incumbent

president. In the Eastern Cape, Tokyo Sexwale managed to rally the ANC's OR Tambo and Nelson Mandela Bay regions—previously a hotbed of Zuma loyalism—around his 'ABZ' ('Anyone but Zuma') campaign (Mkokeli 2012). In the Free State, ANC provincial treasurer Mxolisi Dukwana, provincial secretary Sibongile Besani and MK veterans' association (MKVA) provincial chairperson Gregory Nthatisi organised a 'Regime change group' dedicated to ousting the pro-Zuma provincial premier, Ace Magashule; many of its members boycotted, or were disqualified from, the party's provincial leadership conference, which then elected a pro-Zuma executive (*The Times* 2012b). In North West province, a 'Forces for change' faction led by ANC provincial secretary Kabelo Mataboge also boycotted the conference at which Zuma was nominated. Thus, six of the ANC's nine provincial structures experienced a significant rebellion against Zuma's leadership, even though Motlanthe's forces were not strong enough in three of these provinces to deliver a significant rebuke to the incumbent leader.

To understand why two-thirds of the ANC's provincial structures joined the ANCYL in debating – at the very least – the merits of 'regime change', it is necessary to consider the manner in which Zuma's predecessor-but-one had left office. Indeed, Mbeki's conference defeat and subsequent recall had no precedent in the organisation's century-old history. For decades, the ANC had cultivated a myth of infallible leadership in which loyalty to the movement, its cause and its principal spokespeople tended to become conflated. After chief Albert Luthuli's death in 1967, his position as party leader was assumed by the exiled deputy president, Oliver Tambo, who served 24 years in office without submitting to election by anything other than a small band of party comrades (Ellis 2012: 124). Many of the purges undertaken during his time in office seem to have been directed primarily at opponents of the the party leadership (Ellis 2012: 185).¹ Once political opposition had been legalised in South Africa and a return from exile effected, these patterns of suppression and control were neither feasible nor desirable; the ANC's former internal wing, external wing, and allied organisations could only be held together if some debate at least was permitted with party ranks. However, Mandela's elevation as party leader in 1991 and subsequent election as state president three years later arguably rendered this opening of political space more complicated than it otherwise might have been, since Mandela himself represented the very personification of charismatic leadership. As Myburgh (2006: 135) has demonstrated, the ANC's 50th national conference in 1997 approved a raft of measures designed

to enhance ‘discipline’, ensure conformity, and centralise control over policymaking activity. As state president, Mbeki endeavoured to extend the reach of executive power into almost every branch of government, introducing mechanisms for the ‘co-ordination’ of ministerial output, intimidating the ANC caucus in parliament, and using a combination of patronage, threats and subterfuge to silence critics (Gumede 2005: 333-4). His defeat by Zuma therefore represented a turning point in ANC history. Not since JS Moroka’s defeat in 1952 had a leader of the nationalist movement been so humiliated by grassroots activism. Mbeki’s recall from office demonstrated that factional mobilisation could shape the outcome of a succession battle even when the incumbent ruler appeared firmly entrenched within the citadels of state power. As such it exerted a powerful demonstration effect at every level of the nationalist movement, convincing elites and grassroots alike that future leaders of the party could also be removed if they failed to meet expectations (personal communication, South African academic, March 14, 2013).

Zuma’s re-election and subsequent purge of suspected opponents may have served to dampen the spirit of rebellion which emerged after his earlier victory over Thabo Mbeki – the ANCYL national executive committee, for example, tried desperately to avoid dissolution by making a pledge of loyalty to the president – but recent events suggest that ANC structures might not remain quiescent forever. In 2013, the party’s Gauteng list conference nominated former president Thabo Mbeki, anti-Zuma Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, and public protector Thuli Madonsela – whose report accused Zuma of ‘unduly benefiting’ from the Nkandla upgrades – to serve in parliament (Molatlhwa and Mabuza 2014). Furthermore, only a short time after Zuma had begun his second term, reports of succession planning and manoeuvre began to emerge. ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe was said to have become estranged from Zuma (*Mail&Guardian* 2014), whilst David Makhura’s appointment as Gauteng premier was interpreted as symptomatic of a broader shift towards party control over cadre deployment (Letsaolo 2014). Much now depends on Zuma’s strategy for managing his own succession. If he allows the party to select a successor without incurring significant interference from the executive branch, it is possible that factional polarisation will subside and internal democracy will be enhanced. But if Zuma emulates Mbeki in trying to impose either himself or a preferred candidate upon the movement, a significant rebellion against his leadership may yet occur.

Nomination processes

All political parties, regardless of ideological orientation, ethnic complexion, or relationship to power, must develop a quasi-legal apparatus for managing leadership succession if their internal coherence is to be maintained. Where presidential and other selection processes are managed in accordance with clearly defined, universally accepted rules designed to facilitate open factional competition, unsuccessful candidates for office are likely to conclude that further opportunities for seeking the party nomination will arise and consequently that defeat should be accepted (MacGiollabhú 2013). Where succession processes are ill-defined, ignored, abused, or marred by violence, however, successful candidates may struggle to convince opponents of their right to rule. In this section, it will be argued that president Zuma's victory at Mangaung highlights the extent to which ANC selection processes have over the past decade fallen into disrepute, with potentially disastrous consequences for the party's future direction and prospects.

In theory, the ANC's procedure for selecting its top six officials is detailed, transparent, and democratic in nature. Six steps are supposed to be taken. First, a national membership audit is undertaken by the secretary-general's office so that only branches in good standing – with at least 100 paid-up members, completed membership forms, and quorate meetings – may participate in the candidate nomination process (Makinana 2012). Second, each accredited branch holds a general meeting at which one candidate is nominated for each of the six senior offices due to become vacant. Where two or more names are submitted for consideration, the branch holds a series of ballots until one candidate achieves an absolute majority of the vote. This nomination is then forwarded to a provincial general council which, in turn, sends the collated branch results to the ANC's electoral commission (EC), an independent body elected by the party's national executive committee. Fourth, a nomination conference is convened by the ANC provincial leadership, managed by the EC, and attended by delegates representing the accredited branches, the ANCYL, Women's League, veterans' association, SACP, and Cosatu. This forum considers the four candidates to have received the most nominations for each office and may, if 25 per cent of delegates agree, add a fifth name to the ballot paper; a secret ballot is then held and the highest-scoring candidate selected as the province's nomination. Fifth, this nomination is forwarded to the electoral commission, which selects the three candidates who received the highest number of votes across all nine provinces and seeks to ascertain

their availability for office. Finally, these three nominations are presented to a national conference comprising approximately 4,000 branch, league, Cosatu and SACP representatives, who may – if 25 per cent of attendees concur – nominate additional candidates from the floor. A voting slip is then drawn up and a secret ballot held to determine the winning candidate.

In practice, the ANC's presidential succession apparatus has never quite functioned in this manner. During the liberation struggle, party leaders were understandably concerned with the need to avoid any kind of competitive election which might expose inner contradictions, strains and conflicts: its 'consultative conference' failed even to meet between 1969 and 1985, leaving Oliver Tambo to be elected president-general by the national executive committee (Ellis 2012: 124). This tradition of elite solidarity persisted long after the ANC's return from exile, with Nelson Mandela elected to the party leadership unopposed in 1991 and Thabo Mbeki's principal rival for the post-apartheid succession, ANC secretary-general Cyril Ramaphosa, persuaded to withdraw from the race six years later. Zuma's own election as ANC president in 2007 therefore marked a significant advance in the direction of grassroots participation, but also featured a number of flaws in the mechanism by which party oligarchs hoped to manage and defuse the explosive centrifugal forces unleashed by the succession. ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe admitted publicly that vote-buying had become 'rampant' during the build-up to Polokwane, with thousands of dollars reportedly changing hands in KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng (BBC 2007). In North West Province, local powerbrokers expelled party members illegally, removed Mbeki loyalists from the voting roll, and bypassed branch meetings, whilst in the Western Cape ANC provincial secretary Mcebisi Skwatsha was stabbed in the neck by Mbeki supporters (*Mail & Guardian*, June 13, 2008). ANC nomination processes have never been as orderly, transparent and participatory, therefore, as party statutes might lead the observer to expect.

Nevertheless, Zuma's re-election as party leader highlighted the extent to which ANC candidate selection processes had deteriorated during his tenure. Reports of vote-rigging, improper delegate accreditation, and other forms of electoral malpractice emerged throughout the country. In the Eastern Cape, Motlanthe supporters alleged that the number of provincial conference delegates (535) had differed from the number of votes cast (602), whilst in Limpopo 65 delegates representing the pro-Zuma Waterberg region were disqualified by the anti-Zuma PEC, before being reinstated by the pro-

Zuma national executive committee (*Daily News*, December 6, 2012). In Gauteng, Motlanthe loyalists accused the deputy provincial secretary of bribing party members to support Zuma (*City Press*, November 26, 2012). Clearly, the ANC's succession apparatus had come to be regarded, not as an impartial mechanism for channelling and managing conflict, but as a contested arena of factional competition.

These dynamics were clearly evident in the Free State, where a pro-Zuma faction led by ANC chairperson Ace Magashule opposed a pro-Motlanthe faction under provincial treasurer Mxolisi Dukwana. At first, neither side appears to have held the upper hand: the provincial government, ANCWL provincial executive, and Fezile Debi region offered support to Magashule, whilst the ANCYL provincial organisation, and the Thabo Mofutsanyana and the Moteo regions supported Dukwana. But then Magashule and his allies chose to encourage, or at least to tolerate, the formation of 'parallel branches' in those wards dominated by the 'regime change' forces (Molele 2012). These shadow structures held their own general meetings, elected their own delegates to conference, and – with regional or provincial support – disenfranchised many of the Dukwana/Motlanthe loyalists participating in 'official' branch structures. Unsurprisingly, Dukwana and his allies responded by lodging a complaint with the national leadership, which despatched two pro-Zuma members of the NEC – justice minister Jeff Radebe and mining minister Susan Shabangu – to investigate the alleged malpractice. This team instructed some 40 branches to reconvene their general meetings, but also became mired in allegations of having conspired with Magashule to produce an outcome acceptable to the Zuma camp (Pietersen 2012).

In June 2012, Dukwana therefore led a 'regime change' boycott of the elective conference convened to select a new ANC provincial leadership, which he claimed to have been fixed in Magashule's favour (Merten 2012b). When Zuma's allies duly emerged triumphant, taking all 20 positions on the provincial executive committee, Dukwana demonstrated his contempt for the ANC's own conflict resolution mechanism by appealing for redress, not to the national leadership, but to the judiciary. South Africa's Constitutional court proceeded to overturn the provincial conference result, declaring that at least three pro-Motlanthe branches had been unjustly disqualified from attending the event (de Vos 2012). All 20 members of the Free State's ANC provincial executive were therefore barred from attending the Mangaung conference, although 324 delegates elected at a subsequent nomination conference were allowed to attend (*News24* 2012). When the provincial

executive election was finally reconvened six months later, the ANC leadership was forced to dissolve 59 parallel branches and to disqualify a further 90 'official' branches on grounds of having failed the membership audit, leaving just 228 branches to return Magashule and his allies to power.

This descent into fraud, manipulation and litigation was by no means unique to the Free State: indeed, parallel nomination conferences were held in Limpopo, the Western Cape, and North West province, where disgruntled Motlanthe loyalists tried to overturn Zuma's nomination in the courts (Marrian 2012). More worryingly still, Zuma's re-election was accompanied by a significant upsurge in factional violence. In North West province, four Motlanthe loyalists were arrested for the murder of a pro-Zuma regional secretary, Obuti Chika, whose death occurred on the eve of his appearance in a court case brought by members of the 'pro-change group' angered by their exclusion from the Mangaung conference; a witness at the subsequent murder trial, former ANC provincial secretary Kabelo Mataboge, had himself survived a gun attack outside his family home (De Waal 2012). Shootings, fistfights and other forms of intimidation were reportedly rife in the Free State, where Magashule and Dukwana supporters repeatedly clashed at branch meetings (Merten 2012a). In Gauteng, an armed gang claiming to represent the MKVA invaded an Ekurhuleni branch meeting and threatened to shoot anyone nominating Motlanthe (*The Times* 2012c). In Limpopo, Zuma supporters disrupted the proceedings of a provincial nomination conference organised by the Motlanthe faction, pelting the venue with rocks and forcing some of the delegates to flee, before two of their number were arrested by police (Joubert 2012). When Zuma came to give the Nelson Mandela centenary lecture at Thohoyandou, ANCYL provincial chairperson Rudzani Ludere was assaulted by members of the audience and eight Malema supporters were arrested outside for attempting to disrupt the event.

As with the proliferation of parallel structures, procedural irregularities, and legal disputes, these problems are fully recognised by most members of the national leadership, none of whom appear to have played any part in encouraging, co-ordinating or directing factional violence. Yet the party's diagnosis and interpretation of its difficulties offer little hope that a cure might be found. Police minister Nathi Mthethwa, for example, told a recent provincial conference that 'corruption, patronage, political killings ... factionalism and ill-discipline' were created by a new generation of party members motivated by self-enrichment (Moloto 2014). ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe told the Mangaung conference that, 'divisions

and factionalism are a source of worry and concern. The determination by [sic] some members of our movement to destabilise the organisation and disrupt meetings ... are clear signs of a revolutionary movement that is being infiltrated' (ANC 2012: 3).

It is probably true that ANC membership has almost doubled since 2005, when the party's national general council instructed then secretary-general, Kgalema Motlanthe, to revive its decaying branch structure. Such exponential growth would undoubtedly place an almost intolerable strain upon any organisation seeking to imbue members with a sense of its historical mission, its mores, ideals and procedures. But to blame the ANC's membership for its problems is, of course, to excuse and absolve its leadership. Indeed, the abuse, circumvention and deterioration of ANC succession processes are arguably symptomatic of a much wider malaise for which the leadership bears both direct and indirect responsibility. In his report to the Mangaung conference, Mantashe frankly admitted that most ANC branches were ephemeral in nature, bursting into life only when conference delegates or candidates for local government office have to be nominated (ANC 2012: 37). Party members, he complained, were not always instructed to take the required oath nor judged to be in poor standing after failing to pay their subscriptions (ANC 2012: 37). More worryingly still, some 620 branches – 14 per cent of the total – had failed the membership audit required to participate in conference proceedings (ANC 2012: 38-39). At best, the NEC's failure to tackle such problems has allowed factional disputes, misunderstandings, and procedural irregularities to flourish. At worst, its willingness to fish in troubled waters – for example, by influencing Malema's disciplinary hearings or by finding against the Motlanthe faction during procedural disputes – has played a significant part in delegitimising the very processes upon which Zuma depends to justify his retention of power.

To understand why the ANC's candidate selection processes have deteriorated, it is necessary to understand why corruption, neo-patrimonialism and cronyism have permeated party structures over the past two decades (Lodge 2014). During the liberation struggle, South Africa's nationalist movement was obliged by intense state repression to develop three supposedly connected, but actually quasi-independent, factions: an exiled wing led by ANC president Oliver Tambo, an imprisoned wing under Nelson Mandela's de facto leadership, and an internal wing allied latterly with the United Democratic Front (UDF). After 1990, however, this configuration was gradually to break down under the competitive pressures

unleashed by affirmative action, black economic empowerment, and other government programmes designed to tackle apartheid's legacy of racial inequality. As public sector jobs and contracts were increasingly distributed on the basis of partisan allegiance or familial association rather than professional merit, ANC leaders seemed to blur the distinction between party, government and state, openly reminding public officials of their need to promote, facilitate and oversee the ANC's 'National Democratic Revolution'. After 1999 president Mbeki was to take this process a step further, appointing loyalist ministers across government, co-opting opponents into the executive, and creating a BEE programme which seemed to reward loyalty to the administration (Seekings 2009: 149). Corruption became particularly marked at the sub-national level, where provincial and municipal representation offered valuable opportunities for middle-ranking ANC officials, not only to secure lucrative salaries for themselves, but also to distribute state contracts amongst relatives, associates, and other clients. ANC factionalism, in other words, had evolved from spatial differentiation to resource competition.

Such practices, not surprisingly, serve to enhance significantly the stakes involved in leadership selection. In 2013/2014, as in 2007/2008, party officials who backed the losing side quite rapidly found themselves suspended from party membership, dismissed from positions of influence and even, in a few cases, under criminal investigation. Moreover, the fruits of victory are sweet. One newspaper report (*Daily Maverick*, July 17, 2012) recently alleged that:

in return for pledging their support to Jacob Zuma as he took on Thabo Mbeki to become ANC president, Cassel Mathale, Julius Malema and a slate of friends took Limpopo on a silver platter. The province wasn't sold to Zimbabwe, but it might have well been. Rumour has it Mathale & Co. purged the province of anyone with ideas of playing things straight.

After abandoning the Zuma camp to declare their support for 'regime change', Mathale – who reportedly held 20 directorships in 2011 (*City Press*, August 13, 2011) – was forced to resign from office, whilst Malema found himself charged with multiple counts of fraud, money laundering and corruption (*The Guardian*, September 21, 2012). For the ANC's national, provincial and regional barons, victory must be achieved in matters of presidential candidate selection almost regardless of the cost. The result has been a significant degradation of the party's internal democracy.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted three important aspects of ANC factional politics as revealed by Jacob Zuma's re-election in 2012. First, the president's own faction has been shown to represent a shifting coalition of financial, ethnic, and clientelistic interests rather than a fixed ideological tendency. Its break with ANCYL president Julius Malema and his supporters in 2011/2012 was instigated, not by a firebrand populist leader frustrated with Zuma's conservatism, but by a wily state president determined to destroy his principal rival for influence within the tripartite alliance. Malema's suspension and later expulsion split his power base down the middle, with some Youth Leaguers pledging to defy the ANC's disciplinary committee and other choosing to manoeuvre for the succession. When Motlanthe finally announced his intention to stand for the party leadership, therefore, his strongest ally was unable to offer the kind of political, logistical, and mobilisational support that had contributed so strongly to Zuma's own victory over Mbeki in 2007/2008.

A second development highlighted by Zuma's re-election is the extent to which ANC structures have been gripped, over recent years, by a 'spirit of rebellion'. Certainly, this assertion should not be pushed too far. In 2012 Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape were alone in nominating Motlanthe for party president, and even here his candidacy attracted far from universal support. But 20 per cent of all provincial conference votes were cast in Motlanthe's favour, with a further 19 per cent either unused or spoiled (see Table 2). 'Regime change' factions mounted a serious challenge for power in North West province, the Free State, and the Eastern Cape, where local disputes over patronage and other resources provided a fertile ground for anti-incumbent mobilisation. These revolts were rooted in Thabo Mbeki's fall from power in 2007, which demonstrated that an unpopular leader could be toppled if he paid insufficient attention to the party's grassroots.

Finally, Zuma's re-election revealed the extent to which ANC candidate selection procedures have deteriorated. As the Mangaung conference approached, hundreds of branch structures failed a national membership audit, dozens of unofficial branches were established, multiple parallel conferences were held, reports of vote-buying activity proliferated, and violence erupted at party meetings in Gauteng, Limpopo, the Free State, and North West province. ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe himself admitted that most branch structures come to life only when important resources – namely, candidacies for elected office – are being distributed.

This deterioration in the ANC's internal democracy has been attributed here to the party's accelerating descent into neo-patrimonial politics, which serves both to intensify internal contestation and to foster an assumption that factional ascendancy must be achieved regardless of the cost.

As the 2014 election result demonstrates, South Africa's ruling party presently has very little reason to fear that an opposition breakthrough will threaten its electoral hegemony. But the ANC's 2017 national conference, at which Zuma's successor as party leader will be chosen, represents a potentially significant source of internal conflict. If the president allows ANC structures to operate relatively free from central interference, it is still possible that factional rivalries will subside and that the party's internal democracy will be enhanced. But if Zuma emulates president Mbeki in trying to impose either himself or a preferred candidate upon the movement, it is equally likely that a significant rebellion against his leadership may yet occur.

Note

1. These purges included the 'Gang of Eight' incident in 1976 and a crackdown of suspected enemy agents in 1981.

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