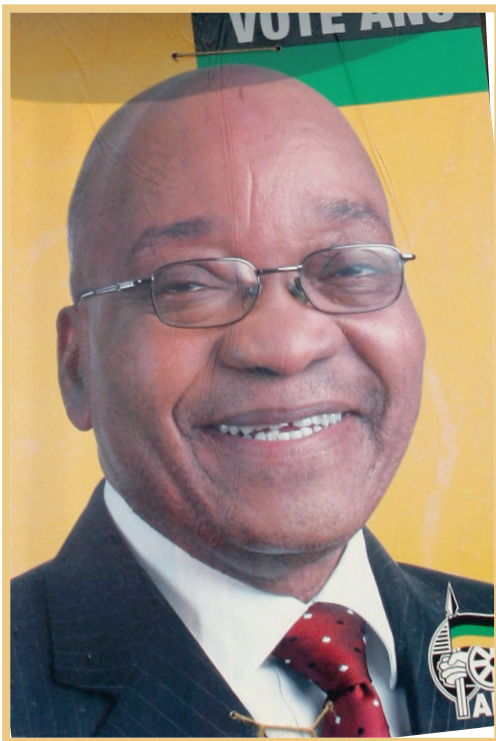


THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE MILITANTS

What exactly attracts the voters: Is it the dance, the beret, the botox, the party history, the posters or the content of manifestos?



+ HE IS popular and charming – a drawcard at ANC rallies. In a country where the voters roll is dominated by the working class and the poor, he is an asset to the organisation. His ascendancy to the top echelons of power in South Africa and the ANC, despite his lack of formal education, has endeared him to millions of party supporters. He has repeatedly demonstrated strength and the ability to withstand and survive political turbulence. His warmth and affable personality disarm opponents.

– SOME IN the ANC believe he is a liability, citing his controversial relationship with the Gupta family and security upgrades at Nkandla as issues that hurt the party's image. Luthuli House's internal research has shown that Zuma is not popular among the urban middle class, especially in Gauteng, the country's economic centre targeted by the opposition. His ascendancy to power has come at the expense of major factional cracks in the party, including the formation of two breakaway political parties within five years. The mysterious and inexplicable manner in which criminal charges against him were dropped fuels perceptions that he cannot be trusted.



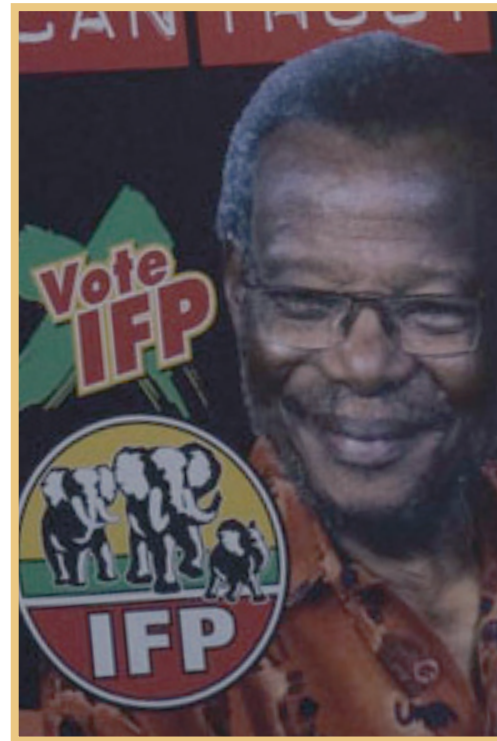
+ SHE HAS rebranded the Democratic Alliance to be a truly non-racial South African entity. She has managed to slightly change its character, making it more visible in the country's townships. Her attempt at speaking isiXhosa and her toyi-toying have – while frowned upon by the likes of Malema – made some black DA members feel welcome. She pushed for the elevation of several of the party's black members into influential leadership positions. Her no-nonsense and vocal stance on corruption and service delivery resonate with the middle class. She is accessible via social networking sites and is willing to engage with average South Africans.

– IRONICALLY, it is her accessibility on social networking site Twitter and her sharp tongue and ever-so-quick thumb that has caused Zille the most harm. Her tweet about Eastern Cape students in Western Cape schools being "education refugees" and her tiff with artist Simphiwe Dana triggered a backlash and accusations of racism. Some in her party privately accuse her of imposing her preferred people on the party. Despite her efforts to rebrand the party, perceptions that it is still lily white remain.



+ LEKOTA gained significant popularity after leading the first major break-away party from the ANC since Robert Sobukwe's PAC. He continues to receive substantial media coverage, largely owing to his parliamentary outbursts. As a former minister and ANC front-bencher, he has outshone his opposition peers in the National Assembly. He is fiery, fearless and tells it like it is.

– LEKOTA is struggling to shake off perceptions that he is a power-hungry politician. He has spent almost the entire period after serving divorce papers on the ANC fighting with fellow leader Mbhazima Shilowa for the presidency of Cope. Like Malema, his temper undermines his emotional intelligence. His resentment of Zuma and the ANC has resulted in him neglecting to build his ailing party.



+ AS AN ex-ANC Youth League member and University of Fort Hare graduate, Buthelezi styles himself as a peer of struggle icons like former president Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, all alumni of the Eastern Cape institution. He is also fashioning himself as a statesman and a voice of reason in the National Assembly. What sets Buthelezi apart from many politicians is probably his longevity. His erstwhile homeland counterparts have long passed their expiry date. He has been in Parliament since 1994. He has the ear of most South African presidents and he has survived numerous scandals, including Inkathagate in the early 90s.

– BEING of royal blood, Buthelezi has led the IFP for almost four decades like a traditional leader, confusing dissent with personal betrayal. For years he had chosen to hear the voices of sycophants who want him to stay on and marginalised those who felt the IFP could survive beyond his tenure. This has cost the party dearly. He has presided over two post-1994 splits. Founders of the National Democratic Convention (Nadeco) and the National Freedom Party (NFP) abandoned the IFP after spats with him. Buthelezi, 84, formed the IFP in 1975, leads a shrinking party, reduced to a tribal outfit confined to KZN and the hostels of migrant workers.



+ HE SAYS what most politicians do not dare to say publicly. He appeals to a constituency the ANC has been able to monopolise for years: the rural, township and squatter camp poor. A gifted orator, Malema's rhetoric resonates with disenfranchised and unemployed youth, who constitute the biggest threat to the stability and cohesion of the country while their challenges are not addressed. Census 2011 revealed South Africa is a young nation, with nearly 60 percent of its 52 million people aged under 39 – and most unemployed. His radical programme of nationalising key sectors of the economy is a game-changer in the political sphere and sets his party apart as a non-mainstream "militant" outfit.

– MALEMA suffers from what is politically called a "credibility crisis". He is facing charges of corruption, fraud, money-laundering and racketeering in connection with how he made his money in his home province of Limpopo. Currently out on bail, after he was accused of making R40 million from corrupt activities, Malema, with a R16m tax bill that raises questions about his business dealings, has earned the "tenderpreneur" title. Politically shallow and arrogant, his temper and foul mouth have always been his Achilles heel. Some in the ANC – who couldn't stand Zuma – didn't want to be associated with Malema before the ANC's conference in Mangaung.



+ LABELLED one of South Africa's most dynamic women, Ramphela – a businesswoman, academic and respected international figure – has the necessary credentials as a veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle, through the Black Consciousness Movement. She is vocal and critical yet regal in her approach to politics. Targeting South Africa's middle class, Ramphela has taken a hard line on government performance, corruption and the lack of good leadership and is well known to the mature and educated voter. She is likely to appeal to the business sector as well. Independent-minded, robust and eloquent, she is still viewed more as an activist than a politician.

– UNLIKE Malema, Zille or Zuma, Ramphela lacks the fire and passion to move the electorate. She is seen as intellectually aloof and status-conscious, which could repel ordinary voters who prefer down-to-earth leaders such as Zuma or populists like Malema.

BRIEFING Political leadership

The brand of party leaders can often dilute the values of the party

The face of the organisation is key to its identity

STAFF REPORTERS

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma is known to his supporters with his song and dance and speaks their language: Julius Malema's rhetoric stirs the crowd while Helen Zille's toyi-toying and Xhosa clicks differentiate her from her predecessors.

Mamphela Ramphela's eloquence and talking-truth-to-power attitude appeal to those disgruntled with the dominance of the two behemoths on South Africa's political stage.

Mangosuthu Buthelezi, on the other hand, could be described as the Dalai Lama of a party which is slowly becoming irrelevant, judging by its electoral performances. While Mosiuoa Lekota has elevated Cope's parliamentary performance, his presence is destroying the party.

Why do leaders matter in a country where voters elect parties?

They matter, a lot. They are the face of their respective parties and their conduct, demeanour and leadership style are easily associated with and give their parties a perceived character.

While the DA was perceived to be straying to the right under Tony Leon, outperforming the FF+, Zille can be credited with making the blue DA T-shirts a political fashion statement in the townships. Under her leadership, liberation slogans – remixed though – are openly sung at DA rallies, with some black DA members feeling more at home than before.

The DA might not have radically changed – and it is still on the centre right – but her personality and style have slightly shifted perceptions about the party.

Political analyst Somadoda Fikeni says Zille is a hard-working leader.

She had also "moved swiftly to affirm young,

black and middle-class leaders", such as DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko and party spokesman Mmusi Maimane, who occupy plum positions in the party.

The party grew further even after a new threat emerged in the form of Cope.

However, the DA's impressive 16.7% of the vote in 2009 is a pittance compared to the ruling party's 65.9%.

The DA's limitation, even under Zille, is the perception that it remains white-led with the aim of preserving minority privileges and rights.

Zille has tried to allay these fears by saying Mangosuthu Buthelezi, on the other hand, could be described as the Dalai Lama of a party which is slowly becoming irrelevant, judging by its electoral performances. While Mosiuoa Lekota has elevated Cope's parliamentary performance, his presence is destroying the party.

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She had also "moved swiftly to affirm young,

Africans as we do about those that affect whites and, second, find a way to bridge the racial divide on 'identity issues'," Coetzee wrote.

His warning means the personality of a leader can be an asset or a liability.

For instance, the ANC under the intellectual Thabo Mbeki was perceived – by its own members – to be elitist and out of touch with the majority of its traditional constituency, the working class.

These were just perceptions because under Mbeki, the party increased its majority – 62.6 percent in 1994, to 68.4 percent in 1999 and 69.7 percent in 2004. The Mbeki administration held more izimbizos to hear ordinary people's concerns than the Zuma administration.

But Mbeki's intellectual aloofness and reserved personality cast him as a president who changed the character of the ANC from its traditional mass-based organisation. His attempt to include elite branches of academics was rejected at the 2005 national general council and fuelled accusations that he was changing the identity of the mass movement even though his intention was to modernise the party. But his reliance on a tight inner circle was his weakness. The alliance leaders pointed to the culture of fear in the party.

Ironically, Julius Malema and his ilk are also saying this culture prevails under Zuma.

But to others, Zuma's down-to-earth, good-humoured personality reinforced views that the ANC was restored to its mass-based character.

So charming and popular has Zuma been that he was accused of cultivating a personality cult.

But Mbeki, too, was accused of the same political sin, his intellect was so infectious to admirers that some even emulated his mannerism.

However, Zuma's cult persona worked. He has increased ANC membership from roughly 600 000 in 2007 to 1 million in 2013 even though the ANC's votes decreased four percentage points



POSTER WARS: Are voters really charmed by the faces on these election posters? PICTURE: AYANDA NDAMANE

when his face was on the party's posters in 2008.

Some blamed the middle class's Zuma-phobia for these results. But the working class are the majority voters. And the party's own researchers fear Zuma's second term as party leader could do more damage to its electoral fortunes next year.

The ANC's brand has managed to remain resilient under different leaders.

This is partly due to its rich history and the sentimental attachment people have to the party.

Its leader – especially when he is weak – is often contrasted with past leaders, something Zuma has endured for most of his term.

South Africans – who hardly read party manifestos – rightly or wrongly tend to judge the party through its leader.

Ramphela's activism, on the other hand, and a high profile as an academic and business leader put her in good stead with the middle class, which is weary of arrogant ANC and "condescending"

DA politicians. She is regarded as a voice of reason, and perhaps presidential material.

But elections are about numbers.

Contrary to Ramphela's contention that she was in touch with ordinary working class folks – who make up the majority on the voters roll – she is hardly seen or recognised in the informal settlements, villages and townships.

Fikeni said Ramphela was most likely to connect with middle class blacks and whites as well as sections of the business sector due to her credibility as a businesswoman.

Ramphela may be making sense to the middle class, but it is Malema who is making the hollow but right noises to the gullible youth.

His populist streak, oratory skills and spitting rhetoric could work for the expelled ANC Youth League leader. He knows how to excite hopeless people desperate for someone with passion to promise them their dreams, even if it means lying to them.

Such reckless populism could, however, catch up with him as desperate voters – who have used violent protests to be heard – see through his fallacies.

Political analyst Steven Friedman was unconvinced that the personalities of political leaders have much influence on the support of parties, especially when it comes to a 100-year-old organisation like the ANC.

According to Friedman, this was only likely to be the case in smaller parties where the very existence of the party was due to the initiative of a particular leader. He said in the case of Agang SA, for example, many people's perceptions were based on how they viewed Mamphela as an individual.

But for the ANC, he said, Zuma's personality could hardly influence the character of the party or electoral support. But what about perceptions?

WINSTON Churchill once said "politics are as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous". In politics, says Thomas Switzer, a US political media adviser, "all the planning and strategy collide at a single place and time. In war, the battlefield is Waterloo or Gettysburg. In politics, the battlefield is the voter's mind."

That's precisely where the battle is being waged this month as the Movement for Democratic Change's Morgan Tsvangirai attempts to wrest power from Zanu-PF's Robert Mugabe, who has led Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

At the same time, in Guinea Bissau parties are battling it out to replace ousted interim President Raimundo Pereira; and in South Africa, Helen Zille of the DA has been waging a vociferous battle against President Jacob Zuma and the ANC in the lead-up to next year's elections.

The parties and the personalities will be relying not just on delivering compelling messages that resonate with the electorate, but on the ability of the messengers – the flag-bearers – to be attractive to voters.

All political campaigns are generally built on three key platforms – leveraging the candidate's personal strengths, ideological or partisan differences, and the situational context. The right approach led an ambitious young Illinois congressman, Barack Obama, to the White House ahead of the establishment's Hillary Clinton, with a "change" message; and put Margaret Thatcher in 10 Downing Street with a bold, anti-establishment, partisan platform: "Labour isn't working".

In Ghana, a charismatic and youthful John Mahama won after only three months of campaigning (the incumbent and flag-bearer,

Atta Mills, died unexpectedly) with an adjusted status quo message that played to his ambition and youth: "Better Ghana – Working for You".

Campaigning in Africa can be seen in three distinct phases – pre-independence, independence and post-independence. In each of them there were always two archetypes of political leadership and campaigning.

In the pre-independence phase, the ruling colonial patriarchs who preyed on minority subjects' fears of the black majority chasing them to the sea.

On the other hand, the majority black, oppressed challengers were led by charismatic and selfless heroes who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the masses – the likes of Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Egypt's Colonel Gamal Abd al-Nasir and Guinea's Sekou Toure. Post-independence, particularly in South Africa, the roles of the liberator and the oppressor have been reversed to an extent. The liberator is now the custodian patriarch and the minority is led by charismatic liberators such as the AWB's late Eugene Terre'blanche.

Zille, a renowned anti-apartheid activist in her own right, is fashioning herself as the new non-racial benevolent unifier, while the ANC champions itself as the custodian of freedom and repositions the DA as a colonial descendant threatening to return South Africa to the dark age of apartheid.

In the rest of the continent, with a growing youthful leadership such as Senegal's Maki Sal, Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta and Ghana's Mahatma, the battle can be seen as a challenge between the new (often youthful) charismatic



Thebe Ikalafeng

liberators and the old patriarchal colonial apologists.

While many arrive with ambitious and sometimes politically naive agendas, such as Obama's change message, they often run into the establishment – the party – scuppering their transformational agendas and bold ambitions. As a result, there's a need for constant balancing between the party and the personality.

African politics, traditionally dominated by the "people's parties", is increasingly becoming dominated by "personality parties" with idealised and idolised leaders who have deliberately crafted public images.

The party is used as a mobilising infrastructure, while the hero – the candidate – is the champion playing to the gallery.

As well articulated in the BBC's *The African Story*, while the cult of personality grew in response to a need to bring people together through oratory and image, the African politician has become a symbolic

heroic personality. Houghpout-Boigny of the Ivory Coast was known as The Ram who defends his People; Kenyatta as the Flaming Spear of Kenya; Nyerere as Mwalimu (teacher); and Malawi's Kamuzu Banda combined a severe European look of trillity and three-piece suit with an extraordinary capacity to play to the crowd.

The reach and appeal of many – such as Kaunda, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and now Mandela – go beyond their own country, championing a pan-African agenda and unity.

As Chido Makunike noted in the Zimbabwe Standard, in the absence of the Western world's hero-worshipped film and music stars, in Africa religious leaders and politicians are the heroes who have amassed enormous wealth (and power) from the throne.

In many countries, challenging the hero-leader often has detrimental repercussions. Adoring songs are written and presidential portraits are hung in the offices of those who seek political favours. Others "join" so they are not seen as being disloyal – or worse, sympathetic to the opposition – counter-revolutionaries.

The leader is the "supreme" commander of all institutions and opportunities.

Others, like Mandela and many of his peers, such as Mozambique's Joaquim Chissano, Botswana's Festus Mogae and Cape Verde's Pedro Pires, recent winner of the Mo Ibrahim award for promoting development, peace and democracy, have grown to be widely regarded as statesmen rather than politicians.

Politicians, says Clinton, think about the next election, while statesmen think about the next generation.

Next year's elections will bring together the formidable campaigning skills of Zille and

Zuma, and the newcomers – the wounded and charismatic Julius Malema of the Economic Freedom Fighters, and academic Mamphela Ramphela of Agang. Joining the fray will be the stalwart authoritarian, the IFP's Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the combative leader of Cope, Mosiuoa Lekota, and the civil Kenneth Meshoe of the African Christian Democratic Party. All will claim to have an agenda to sustain and build on South Africa's democratic gains and improve people's lives.

The battle will be party as well as personality driven – and the implicit or explicit engine will be marketing and branding. It's not unforeseeable that more than R1 billion will be spent on campaigning. In the lead-up, any competitive action is electioneering.

It is therefore not surprising that the ANC reacted animatedly when the DA used "their" Mandela with "their" Helen Suzman in a topical "Know Your DA" campaign that sought to position the DA as central to the struggle for South Africa's independence.

To the ANC, Mandela is their brand – their liberation hero. To the DA, Mandela embodies the unifying values that the DA propagates as ideal for the sustainability of South Africa.

Zille will be betting that her toyi-toying will be more convincing than Zuma's *Azulule umshini uam* (bring me my machine gun) to voters.

Both will be betting that the appeal of the youthful and wounded pre-eminent personality of post-independence South Africa, Malema, to the 58 percent of South Africans under the age of 34, won't produce an unpleasant electoral surprise.

■ Ikalafeng is a global African political branding adviser and author who successfully led the 2008 and 2012 Ghana elections.