

**Between the Impossible and the Ineffective: the IFP campaign of election 2004**

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## Introduction

From the perspective of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) election 2004 was remarkable in two ways. Firstly, the IFP fared worse than ever. Formed by Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi in 1975 and rooted in rural Zulu people of the KwaZulu-Natal province, the IFP was the only party in the KwaZulu government during the apartheid era. After 1994 it was the leading party in KwaZulu-Natal, and a partner with the ANC at national level. Election 2004 saw the IFP lose its thirty years of dominance in KwaZulu-Natal to the ANC, and with it, much of its stake in national government too.

Secondly, election 2004 was notably for the comparative lack of violence and intimidation between IFP and ANC supporters, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. A consistent feature of the rivalry for popular support between the two parties since 1980, violence marred the 1999 but especially the 1994 election. In 2004 an estimated 15 people were killed in election related violence in KwaZulu-Natal. In 1999 the figure was 82 and in 1994 over 1000.<sup>1</sup> The relative absence of violence and intimidation in 2004 is all the more remarkable as all parties knew this would be the closest race ever.

To my mind these outcomes are mostly the result of the IFP's attempt to adopt a new strategy since 1994 by jettisoning the militant Zulu nationalism of the 1980s and early 1990s in favour of a more inclusive liberal-democratic politics. However, this strategic movement has been incomplete. Partly this is because the history of the IFP makes re-invention difficult as most people think of the IFP as the party for traditionalist Zulus. Mostly however, re-invention has been hampered by the nature of the IFP as an organisation. Increasingly based around the personality of Buthelezi and a politics of courtly intrigue, there is little space for the kind of debate, discussion and leadership required to pursue liberal-democratic politics effectively.

Consequently, the IFP's post-apartheid politics has not so much transformed from militant Zulu nationalism to an inclusive conservative-liberalism as become trapped between the two. What this means is that the party continues to rely on rural Zulu people for support, but is less and less able to use traditional leaders and old tactics of coercion combined with appeals to Zuluness. At the same time its efforts to reach out to new constituencies have not worked because the party has not developed the required leaders, policies or record in government.

In the following section I will unpack this characterisation of the IFP's post-apartheid politics more substantially in terms of a rivalry with the ANC which dates back some 25 years. Now however, I want to outline how the IFP's post-apartheid strategic malaise was manifest in election 2004. To begin with it must be noted that the IFP's campaign in 2004 had its good points, not least the significant effort put in by many in the party, including Buthelezi. However, the campaign fell short in getting out the party's core support and in winning over new voters. Add to this an aggressive and effective ANC campaign in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal and in Durban and the IFP lost ground in 2004.

To my mind there are three main reasons why the IFP's campaign was sub-optimal. First, the party put disproportionate emphasis on a national campaign aimed at potential new voters instead of consolidating its core support in KwaZulu-Natal. Of particular importance here was the use of scarce resources on tactics like rallies instead of the more personal one-to-one engagement that characterised the ANC's campaign. Second, the national campaign was ineffective, not least because of a misplaced reliance on the alleged 'cross-over' statesman appeal of Buthelezi. Lastly, while the Coalition

for Change did bring some benefits, they came at some cost both to the IFP's national image and, possibly, its core support.

The other half of the story of the IFP's decline in 2004 was an effective ANC campaign, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. Notably, the only reason the IFP entered the Coalition for Change in the first place was because the ANC decided to forego a ten year approach of 'pragmatic co-operation' in favour of a return to direct confrontation. In my view, the ANC victory in KwaZulu-Natal in election 2004 means that the party has finally and irreversibly gained ascendancy over the IFP. Why? Because the IFP is organisationally paralysed between an old strategy which is increasingly untenable, and a new strategy which is insufficiently supported. Shedding core support whilst failing to attract new votes, the IFP is slowly but steadily haemorrhaging to death.

### **IFP post-apartheid politics**

Prior to 1994 IFP politics was associated with a militant Zulu nationalism. This was a defensive politics where, at the mass level, the IFP turned to the traditional elite of the KwaZulu homeland and a militaristic and patriarchal Zuluness to defend its constituency against ANC incursions, often using coercive tactics. My view is that this was a strategy prompted by the IFP's perceived fortunes in relation to the ANC. Indeed the ANC-IFP rivalry has been the most important influence on KwaZulu-Natal politics for some 25 years: an uneasy fraternity in the late 1970s gave way to competition and conflict in the 1980s and early 1990s. This was followed by pragmatic co-operation post-election 1994 until the final 'defeat' of the IFP by the ANC today. Importantly, this has been a history between organisations of the oppressed, and this intimacy has imbued ANC-IFP relations with the emotive register of sibling rivalry. This helps explain *both* the early sympathies between Inkatha and the ANC as well as the talk of merger in recent years, *and* the betrayal both sides felt during the long years of violent confrontation. What both believed ought to have been an organic unity somehow dissipated into violence and discord.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1980s the basic features of Inkatha's politics of the transition were established. When things went well in relation to the ANC then Inkatha presented itself as a black, national, conservative-liberal, anti-apartheid organisation using peaceful tactics to bring about change. When things went badly it embraced a defensive Zulu nationalist and provincial pose alongside militant and sometimes violent tactics on the ground. This is why it is usually better to speak of emphasis in IFP politics, for both expansive and defensive moments co-existed in party strategy for twenty years, with one dominant over the other. The reason most people think of the IFP as Zulu nationalist is because for most of this time the party was faring poorly in competition with the ANC. However, there were moments like the commencement of negotiations in 1990 and May 1994 when the party was in buoyant mood and presented its inclusive, national, and conservative-liberal face.

The basic shape of ANC-IFP relations of the 1980s continued into the 1990s when the rivalry over leadership of the oppressed transformed into a rivalry over the process to, and content of, the post-apartheid state. Indeed, as election 1994 drew nearer, the IFP turned increasingly to Zulu nationalism, eventually endorsing the Zulu King's calls for a sovereign Zulu state. Conversely, the ANC and its allies behaved in a manner similar to the IFP, especially during the 1980s when ideological and practical confrontation ruled party relations. During the 1990s though the ANC in KwaZulu-

Natal underwent something of a strategic shift at the ideological level, embracing Zuluness as part of a multicultural South African nationalism to rival the IFP's. In short, the IFP's Zulu nationalism of the 1980s broadened and deepened into the politics of Zuluness of the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

With the advent of democracy in 1994 all this changed. The IFP-ANC rivalry took on new forms in response to changed political conditions, and by the 1996 local government elections things could barely have been more different. The province of KwaZulu-Natal, home to the 'Zulu kingdom', was peaceably part of South Africa. King Zwelithini no longer advocated an independent Zulu kingdom and IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi was a senior minister in national government. Zulu nationalist rhetoric had all but disappeared from the public language of the IFP in favour of a conservative liberalism for people of all races and ethnic groups. The IFP was presenting itself in terms similar to the early years: as an inclusive, conservative-liberal alternative to the ANC. Political violence had dropped and the IFP and ANC were co-operating closely in both national government and in KwaZulu-Natal.

What brought about this change? Partly the IFP had no choice, it was compelled to drop old strategies, and partly it was charmed into a more constructive orientation. In terms of compulsion the IFP's narrow victory at the polls in KwaZulu-Natal made the use of confrontation counter-productive, as it learned the hard way in the provincial constitution-making process of 1995/1996.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the slow but steady return of law and order, and the surveillance of civil society, made the use of coercive tactics increasingly difficult. Further, the Zulu king publicly defected from the IFP after 1994, undermining the IFP's claims to represent the Zulu nation.

At the same time, the results of election 1994 and 1999 gave the IFP a stake in the new order, enabling it to reproduce itself reasonably successfully according to liberal-democratic rules, and giving access to national power and status for Buthelezi. In this regard it is notable that Buthelezi's ambition since the launch of Inkatha in 1976 has been to lead South Africa and not just a 'Zulu kingdom' or the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The periodic embrace by Inkatha and the IFP of the Zulu nation and provincial elites were more strategic (often defensive) responses to the frustration of this chief goal.

Perhaps as important though, was the ANC's 'charm offensive' which centred on constructively engaging and including the IFP in government rather than confronting and excluding it. A lesson learnt from the transition years, the charm offensive was deployed with some success first with the Zulu king and then with Buthelezi. Driven by the ANC nationally with Jacob Zuma as the point man, the charm offensive proved extremely effective, not least as it acknowledged Buthelezi's desire for national recognition. Not only was peace the obvious dividend, but with militant Zulu nationalism gone, the ANC-IFP rivalry could only be articulated in terms of policy, delivery and effectiveness, a terrain advantageous to the ANC as it was in power.

Importantly, the IFP's strategic shift post-1994 was incomplete. The party has been unable to develop the leaders, policies and performance required to re-invent itself as a credible alternative to the ANC. Mostly this is because the IFP is simply not an organisation conducive to liberal-democratic politics. Increasingly based around the personality of Buthelezi, there is little space for the kind of debate, discussion and tiers of leadership required to become an effective conservative liberal party. Rather internal politics takes the form of competing networks of patronage and courtly intrigue. Consequently, the people who do the liberal-democratic work of the party either depart

or are pushed, leaving behind (often traditionalist) 'yes-men'. This is pretty consistently the view of those who have left the party, but is also born out by the a brief comparison of the leadership characteristics of those who have left the party over the years, compared to many, if not all, of those who have stayed.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, while ANC-IFP rivalry has continued in post-apartheid South Africa, it has taken a new form. The outcome in KwaZulu-Natal was a period of 'pragmatic co-operation' between the two since about 1996 until 2002, best represented in the decision to share Pietermaritzburg and Ulundi as capitals. That the period of pragmatic co-operation was not the end of ANC-IFP rivalry was clearly demonstrated when, in mid-2002, the ANC and other minority parties in KwaZulu-Natal outvoted the IFP on the location of the legislative capital, deciding that it should be Pietermaritzburg. While the IFP's Lionel Mtshali used his discretion as Premier to declare Ulundi the home of provincial administration, the new functional division of capitals symbolised the end of pragmatic co-operation.<sup>6</sup> This was confirmed in early 2003 when the KwaZulu-Natal ANC looked to use floor-crossing legislation to win defectors from the IFP and challenge for the premiership. In response Lionel Mtshali threatened to use his Premier's prerogative to call an early election in KwaZulu-Natal. Concerned about the financial and logistical implications of such a move, the national ANC stepped in and agreed to hold back on floor-crossing until after election 2004, thus maintaining the IFP's leadership of the province.<sup>7</sup>

All this means that the fact that the IFP has embraced a more constructive strategic orientation since 1994 is not because it has been doing better in its rivalry with the ANC, but because new political conditions made it prudent to do so. With old strategies increasingly difficult to pursue, the hope was that the more constructive conservative-liberal approach would win it new support, perhaps allowing it to reinvent itself as the national party Buthelezi always desired it to be. However, the party's organisational culture has made this nigh impossible. Consequently, the IFP has not won new supporters at the same time as steadily shedding old, and thus many in the party entered election 2004 with some anxiety.

### **The IFP Campaign**

In general the IFP seemed positive about its campaign in 2004. This was the view both of the team around Buthelezi,<sup>8</sup> and the national organiser and national election committee chair, Albert Mnwango. Interviewed after the election, Mncwango declared the IFP's campaign 'more comprehensive and better organised than in 1999'. He explained 'more comprehensive' to mean better focussed on 'the people's issues of delivery and development'. Further, he described the IFP's internal organisation as superior to 1999: 'we had more structures in place covering the entire geographical spread of the country and they functioned like a well-oiled machine'. Despite this though, the IFP did worse because of 'a lack of resources' and 'incredible rigging by the ANC', adding that the IFP was experienced growing intolerance in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg townships. When pushed he acknowledged that perhaps the IFP failed to get its voters to the polls, blaming this on the costs of transporting people to voting stations.<sup>9</sup>

It is the latter point which was probably the key one for the IFP in 2004, especially in light of an aggressive ANC campaign in rural KwaZulu-Natal revolving

around personal contact with voters. It is at the heart of the first of what I argue are three main short-comings in the IFP's campaign: its focus, its message and its alliances.

### *The focus*

To my mind the IFP put disproportionate emphasis on a national campaign aimed at potential new voters despite the fact that the party depends heavily on rural Zulu voters in KwaZulu-Natal province. In 1994 the province returned 88.54% of the party's national support and in 1999 it returned 87.27%. Nevertheless, in 2004 the party spent nearly half of its limited budget outside of KwaZulu-Natal (according to one source this was R10 million), and mostly used what it considers its main asset, Buthelezi, to pursue new votes.

Consequently, Buthelezi toured the country following a schedule which would have exhausted someone half his 76 years. Between the launch of the IFP's campaign in Durban on 18 January and the final rally in Nongoma on 12 April, some 12 weeks, Buthelezi attended no fewer than 29 meetings/rallies, three alliance-formation public announcements, 11 walkabouts/meet & greet sessions and six major press conferences. Buthelezi also visited all nine provinces, KwaZulu-Natal 27 times, Gauteng 10 times, the Western Cape five, and every other province at least once. In addition, Buthelezi and Leon campaigned jointly no fewer than five times, twice in KwaZulu-Natal, twice in Gauteng and once in the Western Cape.<sup>10</sup>

That the party recognised there was a shortage of resources was reflected in the fact that almost all Buthelezi's travelling was done by car, with a quick-to-assemble media conference kit in the trailer.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, IFP national spokesperson Musa Zondi publicly lamented the IFP's lack of resources, complaining that the IFP could only afford 60 000 posters nationally in comparison with the ANC's (alleged) 1 000 000 in KwaZulu-Natal alone. Further, the IFP had but a handful of cars in comparison with the ANC's nine election trucks and many cars, and far fewer T-shirts. According to Zondi, 'wealthy parties are buying their way into power'.<sup>12</sup>

To my mind the issue is less that the ANC had more resources than the IFP and more that the IFP did not spend its resources as wisely as it ought. Indeed, in the view of some IFP leaders, the party seemed to take its rural Zulu vote for granted despite aggressive door-to-door campaigning by the ANC in rural KwaZulu-Natal. As explained by one ANC MP this was done by branches, by list candidates in rural areas where the ANC had a foothold, and by national leaders in IFP strongholds.<sup>13</sup> Despite this the IFP spent much of its money on rallies rather than on door-to-door campaigning. As intimated above, an important reason for this was Buthelezi's national ambition. According to one source, at an IFP pre-election meeting the question was asked whether Buthelezi should consider returning to KwaZulu-Natal to secure the premiership. In response the party's national whip Koos van der Merwe denounced the suggestion, declaring Buthelezi 'a leader of national and international standing...a president in waiting'.<sup>14</sup>

All of this is not to say that IFP did nothing amongst its core supporters, but rather that it did not do enough of the right kind. Thus while 50% of the rallies addressed by Buthelezi were in KwaZulu-Natal it was only in the last six weeks of the campaign that he did a significant number of 'meet-and-greet' sessions, and even then these were mostly with potential new voters.<sup>15</sup> In addition, other IFP leaders like Lionel

Mtshali, Narend Singh and Musa Zondi mostly addressed rallies and events, almost all of which were in KwaZulu-Natal.

Perhaps the other significant aspect of the campaign worth mentioning concerned the use of state resources. Notably the Premier and several MECs, including the ANC and DA ones, decided to advertise the achievements of their departments by placing large adverts prominently featuring their faces in the press and on billboards. In related moves many MEC's initiated projects promising great delivery in the weeks preceding the election. Champion here was Narend Singh who, as KwaZulu-Natal Minister of Education, managed to secured excellent coverage for his department's good work, notably a R16 million project in the Ugu municipality. Aptly enough, Singh was the first to complain when the ANC's Mike Mabuyakulu opened a school that his Department of Works had built but which Singh's department had paid for!

However, it was really at the local level that most one on-one-contact occurred. According to Albert Mncwango local structures were central to (i) voter registration, (ii) party information dissemination and (iii) getting people to the polls.<sup>16</sup> Every one of the IFP's 5670 branches was required to meet at least twice a week, and were responsible for finding ways and means to meet their objectives. In this regard it is noticeable that some IFP leaders complained of a lack of organisers to assist local branches in these activities, a problem again attributed to insufficient resources.<sup>17</sup> In short it seems that the ANC put more effort than the IFP into many rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal. Thus one respondent spoke of IFP organisers addressing a meeting in an IFP area where ANC activists had already been and facing 'challenges from our constituency for the first time'. After tackling these, the organiser returned some six weeks later to find that the ANC 'had already been back and taken things a bit further'.

Of course in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal traditional leaders have been central to IFP efforts in the past, and many took part directly in IFP processes in 2004. The difference from previous elections was greater ANC pressure on traditional leaders to play a more politically neutral role and allow access. According to ANC provincial election campaign head Senzo Mchunu, a key part of ANC strategy was to force access to IFP strongholds where ordinary members could not go by using national leaders like Mbeki, Nqakula and Jacob Zuma.<sup>18</sup> However, it seems that the awareness of allowing access has spread more broadly amongst traditional leadership who, in the words of one respondent, see the ANC as 'an anti-traditional cancer' spreading in their areas 'but there's little they can do about it'.

### *The message*

According to Albert Mncwango the IFP's campaign was conceptualised in late 2003 at three levels: national provincial, local.<sup>19</sup> However, as Musa Zondi explained, while tactics of reaching voters were different, the general message of the campaign was the same.<sup>20</sup> To my mind there were several problems with this. First, the message was one tailored to the new voters targeted in the national campaign and not the party's core support. A close look at the content and style of the manifesto and the party's campaign launch on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2004 in Durban reveal the IFP's intentions to present the party as an inclusive, conservative-liberal and powerful alternative to the ANC.

Stylistically, the cover of the manifesto presented Buthelezi as a benign yet accessible grandfatherly figure, welcoming of women and people of all races. This is suggested by him standing head and shoulders above others in the photograph; his protective and inclusive stance in respect of a group of younger women of all races; and his old world yet funky dress style, as revealed by the words ‘It’s Cool Man’ inscribed on his braces. In addition the manifesto cover also signals the degree to which the IFP intended to base its national campaign on Buthelezi’s person, believing in the words of one of the IFP’s consultants, that he was a ‘statesman who commanded more respect than the party itself’.<sup>21</sup> Hence many IFP election posters have a picture of Buthelezi in a bow tie, repeating the image of an old-world gentleman.



A moment’s reflection reveals how this imagery is precisely the opposite of popular stereotypes of the IFP as Zulu traditionalist. Indeed the party’s concern to distance itself from its Zulu nationalist past was confirmed in the question and answer session at the launch. When asked, ‘What would you say to those who perceived the IFP as a Zulu party?’ Buthelezi’s answer was, ‘Who brought you in here?’, referring to Suzanne Vos, the party’s communications spokesperson who had ushered us into the room. He cited Suzanne as an example of the many women and people of all races who comprised the IFP. Further, when asked about Zulu nationalism of the transition years he explained this as the initiative of the King to which he had responded.<sup>22</sup>

The content of the manifesto was summarised in the slogan ‘Real Development Now’ where the party identified the five major issues picked up by most parties: HIV/AIDS, Corruption, Job Creation and Economic Growth, Poverty and Crime, and Foreign Policy.<sup>23</sup> The manifesto summarised policy proposals in point form, joining these with an overarching depiction of the party as ‘Caring, Capable and Clean’ – the ‘three C’s’. In his speech Buthelezi echoed much of this content, criticising government’s failure to address the major problems of the day, but also framing the IFP as the party with the better policies and leadership to address these issues.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Buthelezi’s speech presented the IFP’s policies in typically conservative terms as based in common-sense and more realistic than the left-leaning views of the ANC. Hence: ‘At heart, I fear the ANC remains committed to socialist interventionism... [Whereas we believe in] a hand up, not a hand down’. Notably, neither the manifesto nor Buthelezi’s speech referred to the Coalition for Change with the DA, and when prompted on the issue by a journalist, Buthelezi’s response was sparse. However, at the rally after the press conference, Buthelezi presented the Coalition for Change as a device ‘initiated by the IFP’, intended to provide voters with a choice between two possible ‘governments of the future’<sup>25</sup>. Not once was the DA mentioned.

The message of the IFP as an inclusive, conservative-liberal alternative to the ANC under auspicious leadership was conveyed by Buthelezi in speech after speech, and press conference after press conference. All that changed was the emphasis and order of issues in accord with the audience.<sup>26</sup> Hence in speaking with business people Buthelezi prioritised economic concerns; with religious leaders he highlighted moral issues; in Indian areas he talked more about corruption; in rural areas he spoke of Zulu history and ANC injustices to the Zulu King and the IFP. While there was some diversity in local events (the IFP Youth Brigade hosted a rally at the University of



KwaZulu-Natal, Westville campus, which seemed a hybrid between a charismatic church meeting and a rave, while other rallies, for example the one in Pietermaritzburg, had a more menacing air with *amabutho* mock fighting and many fire-arms on display), the only real difference in the campaign message was how much IFP pleaders criticised the ANC.

The obvious problem with the campaign message was that it was not directed enough at the IFP's core support, many of whom are the poorest of the poor and concerned with how government can help in the day-to-day struggle for a better quality of life. This is despite the fact that poverty in the rural areas remains high, and despite greater ANC access to these areas. According to one source, the IFP failed to really exploit issues on which the ANC was weak like floor-crossing legislation, the Zuma corruption scandal and even HIV/AIDS. In this regard my investigation of Zulu-medium newspapers *Ilanga* and *Isolezwe* revealed both surprisingly few stories about the election (24 and 12 respectively) and less party advocacy than one might expect, despite *Ilanga* being IFP-owned and *Isolezwe* sympathetic to the ANC.

Perhaps the IFP's focus on potential voters would have been excusable had the campaign been more effective. However, it was not. Not only did the party have insufficient resources to, for example, poster the country properly, but it gained limited national media coverage. Further, relying on Buthelezi's alleged 'statesman' appeal to opposition voters was, in my view, a miscalculation. Certainly Buthelezi used to enjoy significant standing amongst both black and white South Africans but this has waned significantly due to the IFP's unremarkable record in government, and perhaps most importantly, Buthelezi's often truculent public behaviour during the negotiations years. Moreover, there is little that stood out in the IFP message that marked it as unique either in terms of issues or policy suggestions. Further, the party has not developed a national profile through policy development nor a significant number of quality leaders in parliament. In this regard Lionel Mtshali was a distinct liability, described by one IFP source as 'not enjoyed anywhere'.

Finally, the IFP's inclusive and conservative-liberal image was undermined by its actions. As noted above the IFP got little national media coverage, but when it did it was often around the issue of violence. This was no accident. Following Mbeki's comments about the state's enforcement of a free and fair election at the ANC launch, the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal followed up thick and fast with repeated press releases. To be fair many of these were in response to actual incidents, not least the harassment and blockages that Mbeki experienced on his two trips around KwaZulu-Natal, and Jacob Zuma experienced at the Dalton hostel on the Witwatersrand. The point is not that there was no violence and intimidation, but rather that the ANC was determined to make as much mileage as it could out of these incidents. In response IFP leadership, especially Buthelezi and Zondi, repeatedly affirmed peace and urged calm. Notably, after a while the party stopped engaging with the ANC over violence, partly because things calmed down as the election approached, and partly because they realized they were playing into the ANC's hands. Indeed many in the media reinforcing the association between the IFP and violence. A classic example was the TV coverage of the IEC code of conduct. Although signed by all parties contesting the election, SABC and ETV news broadcasts picked out Buthelezi's signing and comments as the significant ones.

*The allies*

If the focus and message of much of the IFP's campaign in 2004 was inadequately designed and often reactive, then at least the Coalition for Change offered some positives. Indeed, whilst mostly the initiative of the DA, the Coalition dovetailed with IFP's attempts to forge public links with parties and organisations rooted in opposition voters. The first event along these lines was the defection of KwaZulu-Natal NNP youth leaders to the IFP on the 16<sup>th</sup> January. (This was less a boon for the IFP than it might appear as the individuals involved had defected from the IFP to the NNP in the first place.) However, relations with other organisations followed quickly. Between January and April 2004 Buthelezi addressed the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion and the Divine Life Society. He met the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, and signed an accord with Solidarity.<sup>27</sup> Last but not least, the IFP secured various agreements with other political parties including the Alliance for Democracy and Prosperity (ADP)<sup>28</sup> and the Freedom Alliance (FA), but the most important was the Coalition of Change with the DA.

Formally constituted in September 2003 but dating back to formal agreements in December 2002,<sup>29</sup> the Coalition for Change was based on an agreement between the DA and IFP to form governments together wherever possible, exchange and share resources to develop policy, deepen democracy, co-operate in government 'even where one party would not need... the other', and campaign jointly to advance the Coalition.<sup>30</sup> However, there seems little doubt that the Coalition for Change was much more the DA's initiative than the IFP's. For one thing, the idea stemmed from the new DA strategy of projecting itself as a party capable of challenging the ANC for power. For another the ANC had ditched the IFP after ten years of coalition government at both national and provincial level. For the first time since 1976 the IFP ran a real risk of not being in government in KwaZulu-Natal and this is what the Coalition seemed to promise.

In addition to providing an alternative route to power, the Coalition had the benefit of strengthening the IFP's hand for likely post-election negotiations with the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the Coalition proved the most significant way that the IFP attracted national media attention. Through being part of a potential 'future government', the Coalition offered the IFP a way to affirm its status as a national player. Lastly, the Coalition helped present the IFP as a party friendly to opposition voters and not just for Zulu traditionalists.

However, the Coalition also had its drawbacks. The very existence of the Coalition was a recognition that the IFP could not take on the ANC nationally by itself, but more importantly, the media portrayed the IFP as a junior partner to the DA not least by talking of Tony Leon as the 'official leader of the opposition'. This could only boost the DA at the expense of the IFP, helping shift opposition support from the IFP to the DA. The Coalition possibly also removed grounds for anti-ANC voters in KwaZulu-Natal to support the IFP rather than the DA. A vote for the DA would count just as much as a vote for the IFP in keeping the ANC out of power. Lastly, there was evidence that many rural voters accidentally spoilt their ballots by voting for both parties on the same ballot sheet.<sup>31</sup>

## **The Aftermath**

On the 17 April 2004 the 2004 national and provincial election ended when the IEC declared the election free and fair. As illustrated by Table 1, the IFP remained the third

largest party in South Africa with just over 1 million votes and 6.97% of the national ballot. However, the 2004 election continued the IFP's downward trend in support after 1994. This means that the IFP has lost 3.58% of all support in South Africa over the last decade, nearly 1 million votes or half its 1994 backing. It also means that the IFP has just 28 seats in the national assembly, 16 down from the 42 of 1994. A similar story is evident in KwaZulu-Natal, as reflected in Table 2, which is not surprising given that the province supplied 88.56% of the IFP's national support. Since 1994 the IFP has dropped some 13.5% of support or some 834 803 votes, bringing its seats in the provincial legislature down from a clear majority of 41 in 1994 to just 30 today. It is now the second largest party in the province behind the ANC with its 36 seats.

**Table 1: IFP support in 1994, 1999 and 2004 National Elections**

Party	1994 National Votes	1994 National %	Seats	1999 National Votes	1999 National %	Seats	2004 National Votes	Seats	2004 National %
IFP	2 058 294	10.54%	43	1 371 477	8.58%	34	1 088 664	28	6.97%

**Table 2: Party support in KwaZulu-Natal: 1994, 1999 and 2004 Provincial Elections**

Party	Votes			Percentage			Seats		
	1994	1999	2004	1994	1999	2004	1994	1999	2004
ACDP	24 690	53 745	48892	0.49	0.67	1.78	1	1	2
ANC	1 181 118	1 167 094	1 287 823	32.23	39.38	46.98	26	32	38
DP/DA	78910	241 779	228 857	2.15	8.16	8.35	2	7	7
IFP	1 844 070	1 241 522	1 009 267	50.32	41.9	36.82	41	34	30
MF	48 951	86 770	71 540	1.34	2.93	2.61	1	2	2
NNP	410 710	97 077	14 218	11.21	3.28	0.52	9	3	0
PAC	26 601	7 654	5 118	0.73	0.26	0.19	1	0	0
UDM	-	34 586	20 546	-	1.17	0.75	-	1	1
<b>Total seats</b>							81	80	80
<b>Valid votes</b>	3 664 324	2 963 358	2 741 265						
<b>Spoilt</b>	39 369	46 141	41 300						
<b>Total ballot</b>	3 703 693	3 009 499	2 782 565						
<b>Registered</b>	4 585 091	3 443 978	3 763 406						
<b>% poll</b>				80.78	87.38	73.94			
<b>Votes per seat</b>	45 725	37 619	34 782						

The political consequences of election 2004 were profound for the IFP. For the first time ever it found itself out of power in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and thus with a radically reduced chance of access to national power. In this context the party publicly threatened to take the IEC to court over alleged irregularities in the election in KwaZulu-Natal. The IFP accused the IEC of declaring the elections as free and fair despite not responding to 42 complaints, most centrally the concern raised over some 371 742 voters who had voted outside of their registered voting district. Whilst legal in terms of section 24(a) of the electoral act, as amended by Act 34 of 2003, the IFP alleged that many of these voters had been bussed in by the ANC from the Eastern

Cape, or illegally registered using IEC registration stickers wrongfully obtained by ANC members.

Some observers characterised this move as an attempt to hold the election result to ransom and so force accommodation by the ANC. Perhaps it was as the IFP did drop the case 'in the interests of national unity', after the various positions in national and provincial government were allocated, but there was also genuine outrage at what was perceived as ANC cheating. On its part the IEC in KwaZulu-Natal denied any wrong doing and argued that the numbers of Section 24(a) voters were similar to other provinces, but did suggest that that the amendment be revisited as it created significant logistical problems.<sup>32</sup>

However, post-election conflict did not end there. Whilst without a clear majority in KwaZulu-Natal the ANC was able to garner enough support from the UDM, ACDP and MF to elect 'Sbu Ndebele the new provincial premier. This left IFP access to power at both national and provincial level in the hands of the ANC. At national level Thabo Mbeki offered the positions of Deputy Public Works Minister and Deputy Sports Minister to the IFP's Musa Zondi and Vincent Ngema respectively. In KwaZulu-Natal 'Sbu Ndebele appointee three IFP MEC's in his Executive Committee. In both cases the IFP equivocated. At regards the cabinet positions the IFP appealed to the President to delay the signing in of cabinet until the party could discuss whether it wanted to go into government with the ANC or remain in opposition. According to one source however the real issue was that the IFP elite did not like the candidates Mbeki and Ndebele had chosen as they were 'too compliant'. Frustrated with waiting for the IFP Mbeki decided to award the positions to others. Shortly thereafter, the IFP entered into negotiations with Ndebele about the KwaZulu-Natal posts and reached agreement on the three IFP MECs to be appointed.

Whatever the reasons for the IFP's behaviour in the immediate aftermath of election 2004 there can be little doubt that the party is in dire straights. A closer look at the results at both national and provincial levels confirms both that the party is not winning new voters, and that it is slowly but steadily shedding its core rural support to the ANC.

The first claim is supported by the fact that the ratio between votes for the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal and the rest of the country has been remarkably consistent since 1994, remaining in a 1.3% range between 87.27% and 88.56%. Given that the vast majority of support for the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal (and perhaps Gauteng) are rural Zulu people and the vast majority outside of the province are not, this shows that the IFP is failing to attract new opposition votes. Indeed the party lost votes in every province other than the Western Cape where it gained a mere 600 more. Overall the IFP became slightly more dependent on KwaZulu-Natal voters in 2004 (by just 1.3%) suggesting that the national campaign achieved even less than in 1999.

The second claim is supported by results from KwaZulu-Natal where the IFP showed a significant loss of 100 000 votes from rural areas all over the province, but especially the north coast and south of Durban. Much of this could be attributed to a lower poll and had registered voters turned out at 1999 levels then the IFP would have been secured virtually the same number of votes. However, the question is why didn't IFP voters turn out? This question is sharpened by the fact that ANC voters did turn out, indeed the ANC was the only major party to get more total votes in KwaZulu-Natal in 2004 than in 1999. Given that outside of Durban IFP losses were greater than ANC gains this suggests a failure by the IFP to mobilise its support.

The IFP's failure to mobilise its core support is only half the story of election 2004 in KwaZulu-Natal. The other half is the ANC's success. As already noted the party made gains across most rural areas, and for the first time is the majority party south of the Tugela. Notably the party made fewer gains in the cities than in the rural areas with one notable exception: Durban. Of the 120 000 more votes the ANC won in 2004, 80 000 or 65% were from Durban. Notably the IFP actually some 6000 votes better in Durban than in 1999 but not nearly as well as the ANC. Key here was the ANC's effort during the registration campaign which saw 44% of all new registrations in KwaZulu-Natal in Durban.

## **Conclusion**

The IFP election campaign in 2004 was not disastrous, indeed some of its 'losses' are better understood as ANC gains, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. However it does seem that the campaign was not optimal. The IFP invested a disproportionate amount in a national campaign aimed at potential new voters instead of first consolidating its core support in KwaZulu-Natal. This was meant that the party did not have the tactics nor the message best suited for its core support. Given the ANC's superior resources and better tactics the IFP found itself perpetually on the defensive. Further, the party was unable to rely on traditional support and old tactics of exclusion and coercion as much as in the past, not least as the ANC explicitly campaigned around these. In addition, the national campaign did not work very well. The party suffered from a significant lack of national profile and failed to sell a distinctive set of issues and policies. Rather it relied on Buthelezi's person and the Coalition for Change with the DA to win over new votes. However, the IFP overestimated Buthelezi's cross-over appeal and, to my mind, affirmed the DA rather than itself as the key opposition force in South Africa.

These two factors meant that the result of election 2004 was the worst yet for the IFP at both national level and in KwaZulu-Natal. At national level party lost opposition voters rather than gained them, and in KwaZulu-Natal it shed significant numbers of its core supporters to the ANC. In so doing the party continued its downward trajectory evident since the 1994 election, an outcome reflective of a strategic impasse which has plagued the IFP's post-apartheid politics. On the one hand, the party has moved away from the militant Zulu nationalism of the transition years, not least as this politics has become increasingly difficult to pursue but, on the other hand, its embrace of inclusive conservative-liberalism has proved ineffective. In my view this is because the internal political culture of the party is not conducive to this politics.

What this means is that the shortcomings of the IFP's 2004 campaign are rooted in a much more fundamental malaise, further evidence of which was the often glum attitude of many IFP leaders during the campaign. While never openly acknowledged, there seemed to be a substantial belief in the inevitability of ANC victory. This malaise is portentous of the IFP's future. There does not seem any way out of the strategic trap it finds itself in as long as Buthelezi is party leader. However, as soon as Buthelezi goes, which will probably be before election 2009, the party loses its major link to the traditional elite and its core supporters. Trapped between the impossible and the ineffective the IFP is slowly but surely haemorrhaging to death.

## **Notes**

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1. Cheryl Goodenough, "KwaZulu-Natal", *Election Update '99*, No 15. (Johannesburg: Electoral Institute of South Africa, 1999): p346.
  2. For a fuller characterisation and history of this relationship see Laurence Piper, *A Minor Miracle: The mysterious disappearance of Zulu nationalism in democratic South Africa*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), forthcoming.
  3. Laurence Piper, "Nationalism without a Nation: The rise and fall of Zulu nationalism in South Africa's transition to democracy, 1975-1999", *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 1 (January 2002): 73-94.
  4. Laurence Piper and Kerry Hampton, "The Decline of 'Militant Zulu Nationalism': the sea-change in IFP politics after 1994," *Politikon* 25, no. 1 (1998): 81-101.
  5. Consider the list of those senior leaders who have left (Sibusiso Bhengu, Oscar Dlomo, Ziba Jiyane, Frank Mdalose, Walter Felgate, Sipo Mzimela, Mike Tarr, Maurice McKenzie, Ben Ngubane and Peter Miller), compared with some who have stayed: Gideon Zulu, Celani Mthetwa, David Ntombela and Thomas Shabalala.
  6. Peter Miller. "Don't be Misled on the Capital Issue", *The Witness*, 19 March 2004.
  7. *The Witness*, 11 January 2003.
  8. Interview with Andrew Smith, consultant to IFP national campaign, 04 April 2004.
  9. Interviewed on 27 May 2004.
  10. Statistics compiled from IFP election email alerts and media coverage.
  11. Interview with Andrew Smith, consultant to IFP national campaign, 04 April 2004.
  12. Interviewed on 19 February 2004.
  13. Interview with John Jeffery, parliamentary advisor to Jacob Zuma, 02 May.
  14. Anonymous source, interviewed on 20 May 2004.
  15. Interview with Andrew Smith, consultant to the IFP national campaign, 04 April 2004.
  16. Interviewed on 19 March 2004.
  17. Comment by Musa Zondi on SABC 2 coverage of election 2004, 16 April 2004.
  18. Interviewed on 24 March 2004.
  19. Interviewed on 19 February 2004.
  20. Interviewed on 19 February 2004.
  21. Interview with Andrew Smith, consultant to IFP national campaign, 04 April 2004.
  22. Interview with Mangosuthu Buthelezi, IFP President, on 18 January 2004.
  23. <http://www.ifp.org.za/IFP%20Manifesto.htm>
  24. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, "Launch of The 2004 IFP Election Campaign Opening Press Conference Speech," Durban, 18 January 2004.

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25. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, "Launch of The IFP 2004 Election Campaign And Presentation Of The IFP Manifesto Address," T.M. Shabalala Stadium, Lindelani, Durban, 18th January, 2004.
  26. Interview with John Cayser, IFP media directorate, 06 March 2004.
  27. A mostly white trade union, the accord spelt out a common position on affirmative action. Notably on the 11 March the DA and Nationale Aksie (NA) also signed the document.
  28. The ADP is a party based in Limpopo, where the IFP agreed not to contest the provincial ballot if the ADP supported it.
  29. "IFP-DA Joint Leadership Retreat Minutes", "The Kingdom", 9 December 2002.
  30. "Joint statement by the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Democratic Alliance," Vinyard Hotel, Cape Town, 15 September 2003.
  31. Interview with Penny Tainton, DA provincial organiser, 10 May 2004.
  32. "IEC official tells of voting nightmare", *The Mercury*, 23 April 2004.