

# **THE ROAD TO THE MANGAUNG (BLOEMFONTEIN) NATIONAL ELECTIVE CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS IN DECEMBER 2012: A POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE JACOB ZUMA PRESIDENCY?**

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## *Abstract*

*On 8 January 2012, the African National Congress (ANC) marked the centenary of its existence. Without doubt, this was a remarkable celebration and achievement for any liberation movement. Despite all the challenges which faced the Jacob Zuma presidency during these eventful celebrations, the ANC portrayed a “united front”. The article gives a chronological account of the events leading up to the ANC’s Mangaung Conference in December 2012. In attempts to achieve this, the run-up events to the Conference will be traced from the ANC as a ruling party, as well as a political organisation in the broader South African political landscape. Critical issues confronting the ANC, which include among others, both organisational and leadership renewal, will be discussed. The eventual release of the ANC’s Discussion Document on Organisation Renewal in March 2012 after nine drafts was a measure of just how deep the malaise in the organisation has become, and just how uphill the battle will be to address the sins of incumbency that beset the ANC. The author attempts at weaving together different perspectives of the events, leading to the destabilisation of the Zuma presidency and raises pertinent questions about the role of the media in South African politics. After nearly two decades in power, the organisation still needs to adopt to the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century democratic South Africa or be left behind; a fact acknowledged by Zuma at the ANC’s centenary celebration on 8 January 2012 at its Mangaung birthplace.*

**Keywords:** Mangaung; African National Congress; African National Congress Youth League; political challenge; Polokwane.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Bloemfontein; African National Congress; African National Congress Youth League; politieke uitdagings; Polokwane.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The upcoming December 2012 Mangaung Conference of the ANC has been dubbed by both the press as well as the Jacob Zuma’s rivals as the “Second Polokwane” in reference to what transpired during the organisation’s Polokwane Conference which

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took place in December 2007. It was at this Conference, where Zuma challenged Thabo Mbeki as President of the ANC. With the support of the alliance partners, namely the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), Zuma emerged victorious and became the President of the ANC and later of the country. As happened on the eve of the Polokwane Conference, the recent events developing within the ANC ahead of the Mangaung Conference are an indication that the upcoming Conference will be used as a platform for settling political scores; thus, a repeat of the Polokwane Conference. Interestingly, the SACP and COSATU had not officially pronounced themselves on this matter, and, for obvious reasons, the ANCYL did so. Having reneged on his pledge to serve only one term as President, Zuma plunged the ANC back into a succession struggle, with rivals scheming to unseat him at the Mangaung Conference. The events leading to this Conference were, in one way or another, interpreted as a political challenge to Zuma's presidency. Therefore, it is against this background that the events leading to this Conference are scrutinised.

Furthermore, the author argues in this article that the political developments that took place within the ANC ahead of the Mangaung Conference had the potential to compromise the organisation's legitimacy and create a leadership discourse. For Zuma to be challenged as the President of the organisation in Mangaung could be humiliating, especially in an organisation that had elected its presidents unanimously since 1952, until he (Zuma) broke that tradition in 2007 during the Polokwane Conference, where he challenged Mbeki. Over a century of its existence the ANC had always been led by educated people: doctors, lawyers, priests and economists such as Mbeki. As Xolela Mngcu puts it:

“The second transition began when Jacob Zuma took over the ANC, shaking the very foundations of the taken-for-granted assumption that the educated shall lead... The idea that the ANC could be led by an unschooled individual was a culture shock in another sense. The rebellion against Thabo Mbeki at the ANC's Polokwane Conference in 2007 represented a challenge not just to the elite's prerogative to lead, but also to the decorum of political deliberation.”<sup>2</sup>

One tends to disagree with the above statement in view of the fact that within the ANC, political education and literacy classes were conducted by formally “educated” prisoners at Robben Island where Zuma was incarcerated. These classes also continued in exile during the banning years of the ANC. Therefore, the fact that Zuma held higher positions in the ANC underground and became the National Executive Council (NEC) member furthered his “education” in terms of organisational management, political strategy and tactics of the organisation.<sup>3</sup>

2 X Mngcu, *The democratic moment: South Africa's prospects under Jacob Zuma* (Sunnyside, 2009), pp. 36-37.

3 On the issue of political education in prisons see G Houston (ed.), “Andrew Mandla Masondo”, in G Houston, *The road to democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1 (1950-1970)*

While acknowledging the fact that the ANC is the strategic political centre of power, what militates for this conscious call for organisational and leadership renewal was the question of access to government resources. If the centre has shifted from its historical position, what are the subjective and objective factors that might have brought about such a shift? Similarly, if the answer is a categorical negation of the latter view politically, what are the factors that gave birth to such an idea in the first instance? Is the call for organisational and leadership renewal a sign of a declaration of a vote of no confidence in Zuma's leadership ahead of the Mangaung Conference? As Lawrence Mathae of the ANC argues, whatever the outcome of the above ideological inquiry, what is patently clear is that the primary task of the ANC remains the mobilisation of all classes and strata that objectively stand to benefit from the process of social transformation.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps what triggered the whole ANC's organisational and leadership renewal were the utterances made by Zuma that he would never defy a nomination for a second term as the ANC and South African President. This was contrary to the widely held views that he was to serve only one term as President of the organisation. He was saying this when the issue of the second term was repeatedly asked by the journalists. However, this was interpreted by some of the ANC leaders as sheer manipulation of his leadership position. Consequently, the drive for organisational and leadership renewal ahead of the Conference should aspire for unity within the organisation.

In view of the above arguments, the article attempts to answer the following pertinent questions during the run-up to the Mangaung Conference: Which run-up political events ahead of the Conference have the potential to influence its outcomes? What lessons were learnt from the Polokwane Conference of 2007? Will the ANCYL manage to play the "kingmakers" role in determining the leadership of the ANC as has happened in the past? What is the standpoint of both COSATU and the SACP during the run-up to the Conference? The author acknowledges the fact that many events occurred ahead of the Mangaung Conference, but it is suffice to indicate that the ones discussed in this article are deemed the most important.

Due to the contemporary nature of this study, newspaper articles, journal articles and books were consulted in order to share some light on the events leading to the ANC's Mangaung Conference in December 2012.

## **2. A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE OTHER ANC CONFERENCES**

Like almost all of the ANC's conferences, disagreements prevailed. The two notable ones were the Morogoro and the Kwabe Conferences of the ANC which

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(Hollywood, 2008), pp. 243-263.

4      *The Free State Times*, 18 May 2012.

took place in 1969 and 1985 respectively. As mentioned above, the Polokwane Conference exhibited a fierce leadership contest for the top six positions of the organisation. In 1969 the Morogoro Conference of the ANC showed disagreements amongst the members of the ANC. In the main, the delegates who assembled from 25 April to 1 May 1969 in Morogoro (Tanzania) disagreed on the following issues: opening up membership to other races; and a shift to non-racialism. These issues crafted two factions within the ANC.<sup>5</sup> The above was an indication that the current looming factionalism within the ANC was something which existed in the past and the organisation successfully managed to deal with it.

Another conference which took radical decisions was the Kabwe Conference of June 1985, held in Zambia. It should be noted that the ANC declared 1985 as the “Year of the Cadre”. This reflected the organisation’s acknowledgement of the need to step up its internal organisation strategies. Without doubt, 1985 was a record year for a number of guerrilla attacks. It was within this context that the ANC decided to hold a major conference. The ANC’s proceedings at Kabwe appeared to supply two answers: The war should become more tactically violent and it should be fought on a larger scale. These two injustices were implicit in a modification of the ANC’s embargo on “soft targets” and the adoption of a policy of “people’s war”.<sup>6</sup> Both the Morogoro and the Kabwe Conferences were held outside South Africa because the ANC was banned.

### **3. THE LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE POLOKWANE CONFERENCE**

Much has been written in academic journals, chapters in books<sup>7</sup> and newspaper articles about the Polokwane Conference of the ANC in 2007. Many of the articles published commented on and analysed the conflict between Zuma and Mbeki; several of which offered further insights not only into the personalities and styles of operating, but also into the culture of the ANC as an organisation and its

5 For more information on the Morogoro Conference see N Ndebele and N Nieftagodien, “The Morogoro Conference: A moment of self-reflection”, in B Magubane (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)* (Cape Town, 2004), pp. 573-599; OR Tambo, “Moulding the revolution: The Morogoro Conference of the African National Congress, April 25-May 1, 1969”, *The African Communist* 38(3), 1969, pp. 16-17.

6 T Lodge and B Nasson, *All, here, and now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (Claremont, 1991), p. 181; B Magubane, “The crisis of the garrison state”, in B Magubane (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)* (Cape Town, 2004), pp. 56-57.

7 For example see S Fikeni, “The Polokwane moment and South Africa’s democracy at the crossroads”, in P Kagwanja and K Kondlo (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa* (Cape Town, 2009), pp. 3-34; C Twala, “An historical overview of the 52<sup>nd</sup> conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in Limpopo”, *Journal for Contemporary History* 33(3), December 2008, pp. 156-176.

future prospects.<sup>8</sup> Examples included Mbeki's exclusive and centralised style of governance, the emergence of a rivalry between the two after 2000, and attempts by both sides to use the issue of the arms deal in their favour. Nevertheless, in order to understand the developments leading to the Mangaung Conference, a synopsis of the decisions taken during that Conference needs to be highlighted. The basis for doing this is that within ANC circles there are those who argue that Zuma's ambitions for a second term as the organisation's President should be rejected. If this succeeds, it could be a replay of what transpired in Polokwane.

The ANC's 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference held in Polokwane in 2007 adopted a resolution on the election of the organisation's leadership that affirmed the "Through the eye of the needle" document as the organisational and political basis for the movement's approach to electing leadership, as well as provision in the organisation's Constitution that allows any member of the ANC in good standing to take part in elections and to stand for election to lead at any level of the organisation.<sup>9</sup> Notably, the National Conference instructed the organisation's National Executive Council (NEC) to initiate a review of the "Through the eye of the needle" principle, including guidelines on lobbying and internal practices, learning from the experiences of what happened in the run-up to the Conference and a process of political education to enhance the approaches in the document.

The above resolutions reflected the determination of the Polokwane Conference that the NEC should make it a priority to deal with all the issues that should help restore unity and cohesion in the organisation. The guidelines aimed at bringing about were a greater awareness of the dangers of negative tendencies such as careerism, corruption and opportunism, as well as factional behaviour tendencies that seemed to threaten the existence of the ANC.

The ANC came up with the above resolutions after realising that the rise of Zuma to the office of the organisation's presidency and that of the country was accompanied by some of the most turbulent politics that the organisation had ever experienced since the transitional upheavals of the early 1990s. It was confirmed by Jeremy Gordin that Zuma's personal journey to the state presidency was an extraordinary affair. Ironically, he stated that since Zuma's appointment as President of the ANC and that of the country, he has been a leader with serious political and personal limitations.<sup>10</sup>

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- 8 For more information see F Chikane, *Eight days in September: The removal of Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg, 2012), pp. 1-45.
  - 9 This document was adopted by the ANC in 2001. For more information see ANC, "Through the eye of a needle? Choosing the best cadres to lead transformation: An ANC National Working Committee discussion document", *Umrabulo* 11, June/July 2001.
  - 10 J Gordin, *Zuma: A biography* (Johannesburg, 2008), pp. 210-233. For more information and further reading see A Butler, "The African National Congress under Jacob Zuma", in J Daniel, et al., *New South Africa Review 1: 2010 Development or decline?* (Johannesburg, 2010), pp. 164-

Roger Southall, a sociologist from the University of the Witwatersrand, argued that Zuma emerged as the standard-bearer of the hopes of the alliance partners which had felt marginalised during Mbeki's presidency.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, the camps within the alliance partners indicate different scenarios. For example, the SACP, or at least its Secretary, General Blade Nzimande, seem to be pro-Zuma and yet COSATU's views, drawing from Zwelinzima Vavi's criticisms of Zuma and his administration indicate to be neutral, or perhaps anti-government, and not pro-ANC. Therefore, this was the predicament the ANC and its alliance partners found itself trapped in.

There were also simplistic analyses that Zuma had won because of his appeal to the rural constituencies. This was disputed by Ralph Mathekga, Director of Clear Content Research and Consulting, who stated that Zuma was the product of the "elite" within the ANC. Therefore, it was clear that to remove Zuma during the Mangaung Conference, those who were instrumental in pushing him to the presidency, would again have a bigger role to play.<sup>12</sup> Although Mathekga uses the concept "elite", it is not clear from his assertions as to how one qualifies to be an "elite" within the ANC, or are there different types of "elites" within the ANC?

Susan Booyse of the University of the Witwatersrand wrote: "The story of the 'Polokwane War' relates an enduring message of the nature of the ANC in power and in contest for organisational power. The way in which the 'war' played out is the story of the dominant faction revolting against one leader and his circle *de facto* proclaiming themselves as bigger than the movement, of the ANC's willingness to exorcise those who grant themselves the right to occupy government positions, diminishing their employee status, and of the movement's ability to reinvent and resurrect itself in the wake of excruciating battles."<sup>13</sup>

Despite the different interpretations of the Polokwane Conference and Zuma's ascent to power, there was a significant degree of consensus that the future of governance in South Africa would be more open, competitive, and probably more disorganised and complex. The new Zuma-led ANC was seen as an entity that would operate much more in terms of personality-based politics, with lower levels of organisational discipline and consideration of protocol. This was viewed by scholars such as Raymond Suttner, formerly from the University of South Africa, as a recipe for disaster which could affect the organisation negatively. Suttner, for

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181; W Gumede, "Modernising the African National Congress: The legacy of President Thabo Mbeki", in P Kagwanja and K Kondlo (eds), *State of the Nation ...*, pp. 51-55; B Pottinger, *The Mbeki legacy* (Cape Town, 2008), pp. 315-328.

11 R Southall, "Zunami! The context of the 2009 election", in R Southall and J Daniel (eds), *Zunami! The 2009 South African elections* (Sunnyside, 2009), p. 2.

12 *Sowetan*, 27 March 2012.

13 S Booyse, *The African National Congress and the regeneration of political power* (Johannesburg, 2011), p. 41.

example, held the view that the ascent of Zuma represented the most decisive break from ANC tradition and a fundamental crisis for the organisation.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Suttner wrote: “The results of Polokwane saw the rise of a different ANC leadership from any seen before, some 10 per cent of them being convicted criminals or facing investigations that might lead to conviction. It saw the election of a large number of individuals who had never had grievances against Mbeki, until they fell out of favour and lost their jobs, or were disaffected for other non-political reasons, or saw the turning of the tide towards Zuma.”<sup>15</sup>

In view of the above analysis by political analysts, it was clear that the “Polokwane repeat” was possible because the contestation of political power within the ANC had divided the members into those who support Zuma and the so-called Regime Change.

#### **4. THE CLIMATE OF POLITICAL FLUIDITY AHEAD OF THE MANGAUNG CONFERENCE**

It was interesting to note that after the Polokwane Conference the ANC’s Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe, stated that members of the organisation should not boast about the abnormal situation that characterised that 52<sup>nd</sup> conference and think that that was the ANC’s tradition. However, this was followed by a series of events of the post-Polokwane Conference allowing the above mentioned “tradition” to continue within the ANC. After this Conference, Zuma pledged that members of the ANC should work together, unite and build a stronger organisation. With the above statement Zuma may have argued that he inherited a divided and polarised organisation.

After the Polokwane Conference, Zuma *inter alia* uttered: “Let me emphasise that the leadership collective will serve the entire membership of the ANC, regardless of whether a person voted for Thabo Mbeki or Jacob Zuma or any other member or leader. We cannot have a Zuma camp or a Mbeki camp, there is only one ANC. None among us is above the organisation or bigger than the ANC.”<sup>16</sup> Zuma tried though and accommodated the Mbekites in his cabinet and office, but in most cases his leadership was to a certain extent undermined. One main criticism against him was that he never dealt thoroughly with the growing culture of intolerance within the ANC.<sup>17</sup> Moshoeshoe Monare wrote the following for *The Sunday Independent*: “Regrettably, Zuma’s leadership style, as a consequence, perpetuated

14 R Suttner, “The Zuma era in ANC history: New crisis or new beginning?”, *Concerned Africa Scholars* 84, Winter 2010, p. 22.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *The Sunday Independent*, 15 July 2012.

17 *Ibid.*

the chaotic state of affairs in the party. Zuma listens too much and consults to a point of indecisiveness and gives the likes of Malema too much rope... Zuma's primary obsession is a second term, while some of his colleagues' immediate vision is to stop him. The factional battle lines have been drawn."<sup>18</sup> Ironically, the above statement implicated Zuma as the only individual blamed for the problems engulfing the ANC, whereas the whole leadership had to rescue the organisation. It appeared as if there was little regard for the destruction impact on the organisation, as long as it continues to get a parliamentary majority.

Like it happened prior to the Polokwane Conference, the pronouncement of the "banning" of all public talks about the succession debates by Zuma and Mantashe in their capacities as President and Secretary General respectively, saying that such talks were premature, necessitated some members within the Tripartite Alliance to openly defy them. These were the signs that not all was well within the organisation. The ANCYL members questioned the validity of that statement. They argued that in different circles and structures of the organisation there were debates taking place behind the scenes of the succession debate. Although the so-called "banning" remained, the reality was that there were political manoeuvrings by individuals aiming at influencing the direction of the organisation's leadership election to be held in December 2012 in Mangaung. Elaborating on the developments to the Mangaung Conference, the following events are discussed:

#### **4.1 Allegations on the conspiracy attempts to topple Zuma**

Since Zuma had become the President of the ANC in December 2007, the ANC's most striking characteristic was a lack of a strong political centre. Thus, the contestation for power within the organisation has been intense, characterised by public grandstanding, lobbying, sinister plotting, and ever-shifting alliances between personalities.<sup>19</sup> However, this opened the ANC up to uncharacteristic behaviour by its members. Hopefully, this was caused by personality clashes rather than ideological differences amongst the alliance partners members. Interestingly, immediately after South Africa's general elections of 2009, what perhaps could be termed the "Battle of Mangaung", started. As indicated previously, the start of the political dispute was whether Zuma should be retained as President of the organisation or not. Most obvious among the contesting forces was the ANCYL. Ironically, the ANCYL was initially pro-Zuma and supported the removal of Mbeki from the presidency, and was against him being appointed the President of the ANC for the third time regardless of the fact that the ANC's Constitution allowed him to contest the position.

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18 *Ibid.*

19 *Financial Mail*, 29 July 2011.

It emerged in October 2011 that there was a conspiracy theory to topple Zuma as President of the ANC. It was alleged that high ranking ANC politicians, including Tokyo Sexwale, Zweli Mkhize, Bheki Cele, and others held a meeting in Escourt in the KwaZulu-Natal province where a plot to unseat Zuma was masterminded.<sup>20</sup> However, such a meeting was denied by all these leaders. According to a journalist, Moshoeshoe Monare, potential aspirants to the 2012 crowns as ANC President or Deputy President, such as Motlanthe, Sexwale, Lindiwe Sisulu and Mathews Phosa, were said to have started considering options at that point.<sup>21</sup> It was interesting to note that the issue of political assassination emerged also during Mbeki's presidency. Some of his (Mbeki's) close ANC members, including Sexwale, Phosa and Cyril Ramaphosa were amongst those fingered to be conspiring to assassinate him.

Although Motlanthe's name was branded as Zuma's successor by virtue of him being the organisation's Deputy President, he (Motlanthe) held the traditional ANC view that the nomination of his name should come from the branches of the organisations. Even after his name was submitted by the ANCYL as a presidential candidate, Motlanthe never made his presidential ambitions public. This sent signals that he had no desire to contest Zuma. Motlanthe went on to threaten, with disciplinary action, those who solicited political support for such a campaign in his name. Yet others argued that as a disciplined member of the ANC, Motlanthe respected the ANC's standpoint not to start lobbying and opening debates about leadership succession. As mentioned previously, with this attitude, Motlanthe managed to stick to the "ANC tradition" that leaders should not lobby for positions but wait to be nominated by the branches and serve at their request.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, Motlanthe's constant presence at the side of the ANCYL led to the perception that he was part of the "anti-Zuma project". Even if the ANCYL associated his name with the presidency of the ANC, Motlanthe continued to share public platforms with the league's leadership which had made it clear that they were against Zuma's second term ambitions. However, it was not clear as to whether Motlanthe's office was delegated to deal with the matters arising either from the ANCYL, the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) or the ANC Veterans. Furthermore, the ANCYL also used these gatherings to launch blistering attacks on Zuma's fitness to hold office.<sup>23</sup>

In order to weaken Motlanthe's presidential ambitions, if there were any, newspaper articles linked his partner, Gugu Mtshali, to allegations of bribes, resulting in an inquiry by the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela. This showed that

20 *Times Live*, 13 March 2012.

21 *The Sunday Independent*, 7 August 2011.

22 K Brown, "Motlanthe calculates the cost of his ambitions", *Southern Africa Report* 30(6), 30 March 2012, p. 3.

23 *Ibid.*

Motlanthe, a man who typically kept a low profile, was facing the same pressure as anyone who aspired to high office. The consequence of this probe by Madonsela could be politically and personally devastating for Motlanthe.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4.2 Malema, the ANCYL and the politics of survival**

It is interesting to note that the President of the ANCYL, Julius Malema, who once declared that he was prepared to kill for Zuma, on the eve of the Mangaung Conference, was working hard to kill Zuma's political career. The ANCYL made the need for change in 2012 a central demand on its platforms. No matter what one's views are of Malema, in fairness, if he had supported Zuma's second term as President of the ANC, it was not unlikely that he would be suspended and later expelled from the organisation. Some form of face-saving compromise would have been cobbled together.

There were factors that led to Malema's and the ANCYL's fallout from its mother body (ANC). This started when the ANCYL exhibited its autonomy. Firstly, in early 2010, when the ANC celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its unbanning, as well as the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, Malema decided to resurrect the old struggle song *Dubul'iBhunu*, or "Shoot the Boer". Within weeks of his doing so, the country's right-wing leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), Eugene Terre'Blanche, was assassinated by two of his farm workers. Malema was in Zimbabwe when Terre'Blanche met his death, but that did not stop fingers pointing to him as the instrument to the incitement of the murder. Although the leadership of the ANC temporarily banned the singing of the song, Malema continued.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, Malema and some ANCYL delegates took a four-day trip to Zimbabwe to learn more about the nationalisation of the mines and the expropriation of land without compensation. In Zimbabwe Malema lauded President Robert Mugabe for his leadership, and pledged to breathe political life back into ZANU-PF at the expense of their unity government partners, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Such statements by Malema created discomfort within the ANC. In view of this statement, the MDC was quick to criticise Malema, and argued that as a prominent member of the ANC, he should not be seen taking sides, particularly at a time when the South African government, a supposedly neutral neighbour, was still overseeing the country's fragile transition.<sup>26</sup>

The ANCYL's public adoption of policies on mine nationalisation and uncompensated land seizure was viewed as an attempt to win friends in a battle to

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24 *Ibid.*

25 F Forde, *An inconvenient youth: Julius Malema and the "New" ANC* (Johannesburg, 2011), pp. 179-180.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

unseat Zuma. These policies were adopted at the ANCYL's three-yearly National Conference held on 16 June 2011, at which Malema was re-elected President and ensured that his placemen took all the key positions. Thus Malema put together a broad alliance capable of ousting Zuma at the ANC's Mangaung Conference. During this Conference, the league expressed loyalty to Zuma but was careful not to say anything about supporting him at the Mangaung Conference.<sup>27</sup> The second leg of the ANC's strategy was the takeover of the ANC branches by league cadres, who tended to be the youngest and most energetic members of the organisation's local branches. Malema's aim was to ensure that his league agents became the branch delegates to ANC policy, as well as at the national conferences in December 2012.<sup>28</sup> The ANCYL's campaign for a "generational mix" of leaders and the replacement of ANC Secretary General, Mantashe, by its own candidate and former league President Fikile Mbalula, was an explicit part of the campaign. Adopting this stance, the ANCYL clearly was leading the charge against Zuma's second term ambitions.

Thirdly, when Malema scolded the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) journalist, Jonah Fisher, it was clear that South Africa's relationship with Britain would be compromised. This happened during a media briefing at Luthuli House (the ANC's headquarters in Johannesburg), at which Malema spoke about his four-day trip to Zimbabwe. It was at this press conference that Fisher interjected whilst he was speaking. The humiliating language that he used against Fisher did not augur well for him concerning his relationship with the ANC's leadership. When this drama unfolded, Zuma was scheduled to leave the country for a state visit to the United States, from where he would travel on to Brazil. On the eve of his departure, when South Africans were still reeling from Malema's astonishing conduct, Zuma decided to call a snap press conference during which he publicly humiliated Malema by telling the media that his (Malema's) behaviour was "alien" to the ANC.<sup>29</sup>

The above incidents and others, led to the disciplinary actions taken against Malema and some of the senior members of the ANCYL. It became clear during the disciplinary hearings that Malema was gaining increasing popularity among the country's socially discontented masses for "telling the truth". Demanding nationalisation, he positioned the ANC's government at the centre of the political spectrum. He was also blamed for the ANC's loss of support during the May 2011 local government elections. All the above showed how versatile a political tool Malema was within the ANC. Subsequent to all the above, Malema, Floyd Shivambu and Sindiso Magaqa were found guilty of misconduct. Malema was suspended for five

27 *Financial Mail*, 29 July 2011.

28 K Brown, "The reality behind Malema's 'radicalism' and the cost of failure", *Southern Africa Report* 29(18), 23 June 2011, pp. 1-2.

29 Forde, p. 193.

years and Shivambu, the league's spokesperson, for three years. Malema was later expelled from the ANC. Malema's expulsion so close to the Mangaung Conference could be interpreted as rendering him less relevant in mobilising an anti-Zuma group ahead of the Conference.

The economic freedom march which was organised by the ANCYL and attended by COSATU and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) posed additional threats for the ruling party ahead of the Mangaung Conference. The march was held in October 2011 and directed to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and the Union Buildings. These bodies raised issues such as the provision of free quality education, jobs, houses, land, the nationalisation of mines and water and electricity supply.<sup>30</sup>

Before his expulsion from the ANC, while appealing his five-year suspension, Malema started a campaign to unseat the provincial leaders who were viewed as supporting and sympathetic to Zuma. In November 2011, the youth league leaders stripped the league's Mpumalanga Secretary, John Mkhatswa, of his powers after he allegedly snubbed Malema's call to work towards unseating the Premier, David Mabuza. Half of the Mpumalanga league's provincial Executive Committee protested against the sacking of Mkhatswa.<sup>31</sup> The ANCYL spokeswoman, Magdalene Moonsamy, stated that there was no purge against Mkhatswa, but indicated that the league passed a vote of no confidence on his leadership.<sup>32</sup>

On Thursday, 24 November 2011, Malema visited the Free State and promised to organise a march against Premier Ace Magashule. At the meeting attended by Malema in Bloemfontein, provincial league Chairperson, Kgotso Morapela, endorsed Malema's decision to rally against Magashule. In Bloemfontein Malema stated boldly: "I don't care whether I go or not, I will defend the decisions of the ANC Youth League until I see my grave. Whether I am a member of the ANC or not, in my little corner of the bundus, looking after my cattle, I will convince those who are there looking after the cattle with me about the decisions of the ANC Youth League."<sup>33</sup>

Malema was elected to the Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) during the December 2011 Limpopo Provincial Conference. The Conference took place after the national leadership of the ANC had placed five departments in the province under national administration because it was argued that they were poorly run by the Limpopo government. This was described by ANC provincial spokesperson and Finance MEC, David Masando, as an attempt by Zuma and his allies to humiliate and deal with people who were perceived to be unsupportive of the current national

30 *Sowetan*, 21 October 2011.

31 *City Press*, 27 November 2011.

32 *Business Day*, 28 November 2011.

33 *City Press*, 27 November 2011.

leadership. Furthermore, this was viewed as a tactic and an attempt to dislodge the anti-Zuma group.<sup>34</sup>

It was at this Conference where Malema made the following call to the national leadership of the ANC: “We are calling on the national leadership to open the debate on leadership, towards the centenary of the ANC. It’s already being discussed. It will get messy if the ANC is not involved in guiding the debate. The ANC’s constitution should be amended to provide for rules of engagement on the leadership succession debate.”<sup>35</sup>

During this Conference, the anti-Zuma delegates, including Malema, ridiculed Zuma by singing about *showarawa re sokodisa*, “the shower man is giving us a hard time”. The shower song was a reference to Zuma, who, in his rape trial in 2006, told the High Court in Johannesburg that he had had a shower after having unprotected sex with his HIV-positive accuser. Malema’s antics annoyed Zuma, who was also upset with the *Sunday Times* cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro (also known as Zapiro), for portraying him with a shower extending from the top of his head.<sup>36</sup> Not even the presence in Limpopo of Deputy President Motlanthe could prevent Malema and his supporters from attacking the President, calling for him to be removed and accusing him of a *coup* in Limpopo. This happened after Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan’s strangely timed decision to place five provincial departments under the administration of the central government.

The re-election of Caswell Mathale (Limpopo Province Premier) as Chairperson of the organisation gave the youth league leader a political lifeline to continue with his anti-Zuma campaigns.<sup>37</sup> Mathale won by 601 votes to the 519 secured by Deputy Arts and Culture Minister Joe Phaahla, despite indications that the odds were tilted firmly in Mathale’s favour, with allegations that delegates’ IDs were forged by his supporters to boost the number of people eligible to vote. This accusation was supported by a discrepancy between the numbers of registered delegates and votes cast.<sup>38</sup>

On Wednesday, 29 February 2012, Malema was officially expelled from the ANC consequently worsening the situation. Addressing his supporters after the announcement of his expulsion, Malema said: “My blood remains green, black and gold. We must remain unshaken. They can expel us but our blood is black, green and gold. The struggle continues. They communicate internal issues of the organisation through the media. We are expelled through the media.”<sup>39</sup>

34 *Star*, 21 December 2011.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Sunday Times*, 18 December 2011; *Pretoria News*, 19 December 2011.

37 *Business Day*, 20 December 2011.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *The New Age*, 2 March 2012.

#### **4.3 The role of COSATU and the SACP**

Key differences existed between the alliance of Polokwane and the forces coalescing to oust Zuma before the Mangaung Conference. Importantly, the ANC's partners in the organised left were not united behind the move. Clearly, without the full backing of COSATU and the SACP, it would be difficult to effectively remove a sitting president of the ANC. Both the SACP and COSATU are independent organisations and do not have any right to dictate to the ANC on its activities. The same approach is followed by the ANC when dealing with these organisations. On many occasions, both the SACP and COSATU were reminded that the ANC was leading the alliance and not the other way round. The ANCYL bid and its new-found radical approach was a last ditch attempt to drive a wedge between Zuma and the organised left in the alliance. Therefore, it was unlikely that Zuma or the mainstream in the ANC would be persuaded to support or implement the wholesale nationalisation of the mining industry, or the forcible, uncompensated expropriation of land. Both required the amendment of South Africa's Constitution.<sup>40</sup> Even during Mbeki's presidency when the ANC had a two thirds majority, it never championed the change of the Constitution to suit its needs.

For COSATU and the SACP the picture was more complex. Both had championed land rights for the dispossessed majority and state ownership of key sectors, such as the mines and the banks. This made it difficult for the ANC's allies to dismiss the Youth League's calls for nationalisation and land expropriation. It was this gap that Malema and the ANCYL had identified as fertile ground for cultivating support for their policies. This strategy was to fracture these organisations' support for Zuma and his government.<sup>41</sup> As indicated above, nationalisation has never been the official policy of the ANC.

Devan Pillay noted that in its September 2010 analysis of the post-Polokwane era, COSATU identified three phases of its relationship with the ANC. Firstly, there was what it called the "honeymoon" phase from December 2007 to mid-2009, when both COSATU and the SACP were consulted on the appointment of the new cabinet and won the new post of Economic Development, to coordinate economic policy. Secondly, there was the "fight back and contestation" phase from mid-2009 to 2010, when after the national elections, which brought Zuma to power, it became clear that conservative class forces were still ascendant in the ANC, particularly around macro-economic policy, with the ANC rejecting calls for the alliance to be the political centre. Thirdly, COSATU identified the new "political paralysis" phase, in which the ANC allegedly refused to honour the policy commitments made at Polokwane. Thus, in August/September 2010, COSATU embarked on an extended

40 Brown, *The reality...*, p. 1.

41 *Ibid.*

nationwide strike that saw the union members hurling insults at the President and questioning his sexual morality.<sup>42</sup> One tends to disagree with Pillay on the basis that, from the beginning, both the SACP and COSATU knew that according to the historical agreement of the alliance partners, the ANC remains the vanguard party which has its own policies to adhere to and they have theirs. Therefore, they cannot dictate to the ANC. This position has not changed; hence, when realism afflicts both the SACP and COSATU, they contemplate of contesting elections as independent political parties.

COSATU rejected the government's proposals on how to regulate striking workers, contending that they were an attack on trade unions. The government wanted to put in place special rules for sector strikes and establish a joint trade union and employer committee to oversee strikes. The federation dismissed this, maintaining that the committee's role was never spelt out. The move by the government came after a series of violent strikes, especially those waged by the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) and the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union.<sup>43</sup>

COSATU's General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, blamed the ANC government under Zuma's presidency for the stagnation in the economy, the continued high unemployment and casualisation of work, and the high levels of poverty and inequality. Vavi said Statistics South Africa figures showed that about 60 per cent of all workers employed in the formal economy earned less than R2 000 a month and a staggering 15 per cent earned less than R500 a month. He said millions of the poorest South Africans were kept alive only through access to social grants, which accounts for 58 per cent of household income for the lowest income quintile. He said most casual workers and those employed by labour brokers were deprived of security and access to trade union membership. This was why the battle against casualisation and labour brokers had been a dominant feature of the year 2011.<sup>44</sup>

Secretary General of the SACP, Blade Nzimande, said Zuma's former backers, among them the ANCYL and COSATU, had supported him in order to further their own selfish ends. Nzimande further alleged that Zuma's former backers were seeking to "steal" the ANC for personal enrichment and that those individuals were using money to campaign for leadership elections. He also hinted that money was being used to influence the outcome of the election of the ANC leader at its elective conference in Mangaung.<sup>45</sup>

42 D Pillay, "The Tripartite Alliance and its discontents: Contesting the 'National Democratic Revolution' in the Zuma era", in J Daniel, *et al.*, *New South African Review 2: New paths, old compromises?* (Johannesburg, 2011), p. 38-39.

43 *Sowetan*, 8 December 2011.

44 *Star*, 21 December 2011.

45 *Citizen*, 19 October 2011.

The divisions within the Tripartite Alliance were also manifested when COSATU put Zuma under pressure to act against corrupt ANC members within the organisation and in government. As to whether COSATU as a whole backed him for a second term as President of the ANC, depends mainly on the willingness he would show to reverse the growing culture of corruption and act against the ANC leaders whom the federation had explicitly named as being long overdue for firing. Vavi and Nzimande know that by breaking off from the ANC and contest the elections on their own, or independently, will create problems. Taking such a stance will be political suicide for these leaders and their respective organisations.

The above arguments clearly indicate that the problems which beset the Zuma presidency started with the commitments made by the alliance partners during the Polokwane Conference of December 2009. Therefore, the tensions within the ANC on the eve of the Mangaung Conference can be traced to these issues.

#### **4.4 Operation “discredit Zuma”**

In 2011, a campaign dubbed “Anything but Zuma” came to the fore from those who were against his attempts to get a second term as President of the ANC. The campaign intended to discredit Zuma by exposing all his weaknesses as both the ANC’s and country’s President. In attempts to discredit him, his home life came under scrutiny. The budget, as outlined by the higher offices of the country determining the presidential needs, clearly showed how expensive it is to maintain him and his family. There was an outcry by the anti-Zuma group about the money spent on supporting his three wives, fiancée and children. This was worsened by renovations worth millions of rand at his official homes in Inkandla.

Zuma’s former fiancée (now wife), Gloria Bongi Ngema, was said to have landed a job with the Gupta family. Ngema was the head of the communications and marketing department at JIC Mining Services and the family was known for acquiring business deals from the government. It was also alleged that the Gupta family purchased a house worth R5,2 million for Ngema in a Pretoria suburb. This revelation fuelled public concern about the influence of the Guptas on the President, via their close connections with his family. COSATU called for an independent investigation into whether the Guptas were drawing unfair advantage from their relationship with the Zumas, something that the Gupta family consistently denied.<sup>46</sup>

Not only was Ngema accused of having benefited from deals with the Gupta family, but Zuma’s son, Duduzane, was said to be one of the directors in Mabengela Investments, which owned 26% of JIC. Mabengela was linked to a R9 billion empowerment deal with steel giant Arcelor Mittal, a proposed R500 billion deal with the China Railway Construction Corporation and the Shiva uranium mine. Six

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46 *Mail and Guardian*, 24 March 2011.

months after Zuma's election as ANC President in 2007, Duduzane joined the board of the Guptas' technology company, Sahara Computers. His twin sister, Duduzile, became Sahara's Director at the same time, although she resigned in 2010.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.5 Torn apart by patronage and corruption

Zuma was also criticised for patronage. Furthermore, he was accused of rewarding those who were in support of his second term for presidency with job opportunities. There were calls made for him to act against those who were deemed using their portfolios to consciously or unconsciously promote corrupt acts. It was interesting to note that the ANC government had established state machinery systems to be checks and balances of acts suspected to be corruption aligned. Such state machineries include the Office of the Auditor General, Terrence Nombembe, and the Office of the Public Protector under the leadership of Thuli Madonsela. It remains to be seen as to whether the Zuma administration undermined these state machineries or not. Vavi put pressure on these offices to act with speed in addressing the problem of corruption in the Zuma's administration.

It was gratifying to note that within weeks after Zuma had been criticised for turning a blind-eye to those accused of corruption acts, he had sacked Public Works Minister Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde, and the late co-operative Governance Minister, Sicelo Shiceka, over the police lease debacle and for abusing taxpayers' money respectively.<sup>48</sup> For example, COSATU lashed out at corrupt ANC leaders for "shaming the organisation's tradition of selflessness". On 8 December 2011, at the fourth anti-corruption summit in Sandton, Vavi slammed ANC leaders in public office who had been implicated in corruption and the abuse of taxpayers' money. He said that a strong pro-working class civil society, a strong and transformative judiciary and a diversified and robust media, were needed to combat corruption.<sup>49</sup>

On Tuesday, 13 December 2011, COSATU's members, wearing their traditional T-shirts and carrying innovative messages on placards, marched down the streets of Polokwane. These members, led by Vavi, were marching to Premier Mathale's office demanding that the Premier should fight corruption in his government; one of the issues being that Mathale was accused of awarding tenders to his cronies. This was COSATU's second march to Mathale's office after he had failed to respond to their demands four months previously. The protestors refused to give their memorandum of demands to the MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Pitsi Moloto. Vavi told COSATU members outside Mathale's office that the march was not against the ANC, but was aimed at fighting corruption. He pulled no punches in warning that the toxic mix of money and

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Independent on Saturday*, 3 December 2011.

49 *Citizen*, 9 December 2011.

politics was creating a problem for the ruling party. He stated: “Unless we scale up our campaign against the scourge of corruption, we face the danger that no one will be able to do business with the state without greasing the hands of corrupt gate-keepers who demand bribes, and who, unless they are stopped, may systematically use their power to control large areas of the economy. Factions these days are formed not around different ideologies or political views, but access to government power that brings its leaders closer to state tenders. Talented individuals who cannot play the dirty game of survival of the fittest get sidelined as the politics based on a ‘winner takes all’ mentality imposed the worst, most inefficient and corrupt individuals on South Africans.... The mistake we keep on making over and over again in our politics of divisions is to keep on replacing a corrupt faction with another equally corrupt faction.”<sup>50</sup> In this march COSATU was supported by the SACP Provincial Secretary, Gilbert Kganyago, and the Forum of Limpopo Entrepreneurs Secretary, Xiviko Mabunda.

The above events show the divisions within the alliance partners ahead of the Mangaung Conference. It is interesting to note that Mathale found himself on the receiving end of COSATU after the federation accused him of enriching himself and those close to him, including Malema.

Despite the above criticisms, Zuma was also criticised in the course of proceedings leading up to his appointment of the Constitutional Court Chief Justice, Mogoeng Mogoeng, in September 2011. This occurred after an attempt to extend the term of Justice Sandile Ngcobo. Amid the controversy, Justice Ngcobo declined the nomination, and Justice Mogoeng accepted.<sup>51</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

Similar to the period that preceded the Polokwane Conference, the events leading to Mangaung are also divisive. The ANCYL and some individuals within the ANC revolted against the *status quo* and wanted leadership renewal that would lead to the revival of internal democracy. The revolt was essentially about political accountability, democratisation and the rejection of a culture of patronage and corruption within the higher echelons of the organisation. By rejecting Zuma’s second term option, the ANCYL also opposed the idea of indispensable leaders who possess all the wisdom and know what is best for the organisation. The above emphasis on the ANCYL as kingmaker was perhaps mistaken by Malema who was dismissed from the ANC.<sup>52</sup>

50 Sowetan, 14 December 2011; Star, 14 December 2011.

51 Citizen, 9 December 2011.

52 C Glaser, *The ANC Youth League* (Auckland Park, 2012), pp. 120-151.

The author has attempted to show that whoever emerges from the Mangaung Conference as the President of the ANC will inherit a deeply divided organisation, as some members have become enemies ahead of the Conference. Branches of the ANC seem to be divided and mostly in disarray. At provincial conferences vote-rigging as well as big money, properties and other incentives which change hands in return for votes, have been reported. Ironically, there are some members of the ANC who believe that the divisions are healthy for the organisation. They argue that such events provide the organisation with an opportunity to cleanse itself of “fake members”, or of those who have joined in order to enrich themselves. This cleansing, they maintain, will help the ANC to return to the solid foundations on which the organisation was founded. Furthermore, the author has argued that the ANC should admit that it has a huge problem and perhaps one that is bigger than in 2007, when there were campaigns to unseat Mbeki and replaced him with Zuma. Once such an admission is made, the ANC has to work hard to ensure that it is saved from those who have joined for individual gain.