

# EISA ELECTION RESOURCE CENTER



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A weekly review of South Africa's 2019 election period

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## **MUDSLINGING SEASON IS UPON US, AGAIN**

**WRITTEN BY MELANIE MEIROTTI**

Mudslinging and baby-kissing feature prominently during any election period. In this weekly review of South Africa's 2019 national and provincial election period, we take a look at some of the tactics and strategies used by political parties to woo potential voters and discredit their opponents. Chido Dzinotyiwei highlights the key campaign messaging employed by the three largest parties, and how they attempt to strike a balance between cutting into competing parties' voter bases while staying relevant to their loyal supporters.

Maite Dithebe explores how citizens use protest action during pre-election periods to draw the attention of politicians to grievances around poor service-delivery. The strategy has proven to be effective, but it has also brought some criticisms to the fore. In her article, Nancy Hakizimana outlines what is perhaps the most prevalent example of a blame game during the 2019 election season – Eskom. The crisis at the state-owned power utility has affected all South Africans and is costing the economy billions. Incidents of corruption and inefficiency that led to this crisis have provided perfect campaign material for opposition parties while the ruling ANC fights to keep the lights on at all costs, until the election.

While holding government accountable for its failure's suits opposition parties in their campaigning, they are often caught

*The pre-election environment*

**HOW THE BIG-THREE CAMPAIGNED**

**WHY SERVICE-DELIVERY PROTESTS INCREASE DURING ELECTIONS**

**ESKOM AND THE 2019 ELECTIONS**

**HOW POLITICAL PARTIES USE TRAGEDIES TO CAMPAIGN**

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**POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL AND THE 2019 ELECTIONS**

straddling the line between pointing out what is right and acting in poor taste. Sizwe Nene and Thembelani Mazibuko explore how the DA and the EFF sought to gain political traction from the Life Healthcare Esidimeni and Marikana tragedies, respectively.

Corruption, inefficiency and tragedies often result in public outcries and demands for answers. In the run-up to the 2019 elections, the answer to these calls, most notably from the ruling party, often comes in the form of commissions of inquiry. Qiqa Nkomo explores the increase of commissions of inquiry this election season and questions whether these commissions lead to accountability or if they serve merely as smokescreens. Politically motivated violence has plagued KwaZulu-Natal for decades, to the extent where the Moerane commission of inquiry has been set up to investigate. Sandile Khuboni delves into the possible causes for violence in this province and draws some interesting observations.

## **HOW THE BIG-THREE CAMPAIGNED**

**WRITTEN BY CHIDO DZINOTYIWEI**

Political parties use election campaigns to mobilise public sentiment and woo voters ahead of elections. As such, parties invest significant resources to ensure that their messages are effectively communicated in a manner that highlights their vision and achievements and details the failings of other parties. This article takes a look at the campaigns of South Africa's three largest political parties – the ANC, the DA and the EFF – with specific attention to how these parties have attempted to address social and economic issues in their campaigns leading up to the 2019 national and provincial elections.

### **Campaigns in 2019**

The ANC has deployed a number of approaches to disseminate its core campaign message, "Let's Grow South Africa Together". These range from traditional stadium rallies to home visits and public engagements across the country. As South African president, ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa has been exposed to the finer details of issues faced by citizens such as crime, unemployment, inadequate service delivery and incompetent leadership (Sicetsha, 2019). This has afforded the ANC the opportunity to offer informed commitments to South Africans through various forms of communication.

The DA, the largest opposition party, has maintained its approach of prioritising the need for change while criticising the ANC's governance record. The party's core message, "One South Africa for All", communicates its vision of delivering services more adequately than the ANC, in alignment with Nelson Mandela's dream of a "rainbow nation" (DA, 2019). Issues such as crime, corruption and unemployment under the ANC are constantly repeated in DA campaigns as factors that have contributed to inequality and disunity among South Africans. The DA has communicated by means of radio, text messages and voice-prompted phone calls that play pre-recorded messages from the party's leader, Mmusi Maimane. The DA's multilingual street posters are indicative of its aim to drive unity.

The EFF has focused its election campaigns in provinces where it secured the most support in the 2014 national elections and the 2016 local government elections: Gauteng, North West and Limpopo (IEC, 2019). The party's core campaign message, "Our Land and Jobs Now", is seen to be directed at South

Africans who feel betrayed by the ANC, in that the party did not deliver its post-apartheid promises. The term “Son of the Soil” is attached to the party’s leader, Julius Malema, on election posters to emphasise that he is in touch with ordinary South Africans. The EFF’s messaging is also designed to communicate a commitment to including historically disadvantaged Africans into the economy.

## Conclusion

While the ANC and DA have cast their nets widely, with the objective of appealing to the broadest possible voter base, at the risk of diluting their messaging in the process, the EFF has employed a campaign strategy that targets a more specific voter base with a simple and repetitive message. Campaigning has proceeded peacefully in all parts of South Africa, with no major incidents recorded as yet. The ANC’s major campaign drawcard remains Ramaphosa, who enjoys notable coverage in his dual role as South African president and ANC leader. Exactly how this assumed advantage of incumbency will boost the ANC’s performance at the polls is now up to voters.

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# WHY SERVICE-DELIVERY PROTESTS INCREASE DURING ELECTIONS

WRITTEN BY MAITE DITHEBE

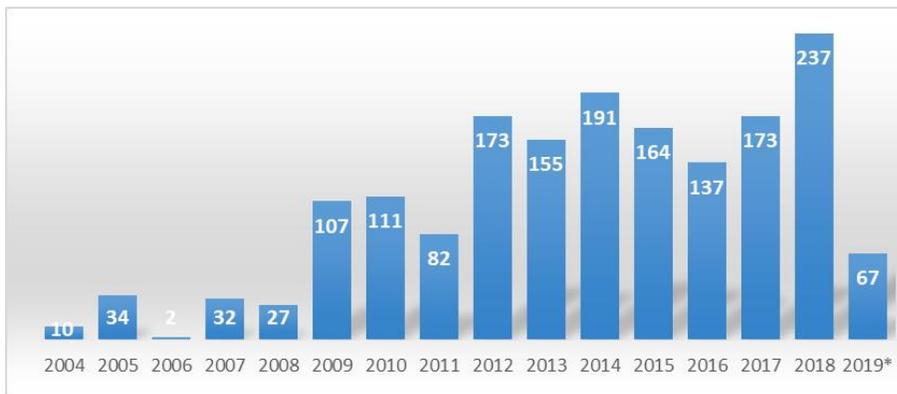
South Africa faces massive backlogs in the delivery of basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation, and housing, particularly in poor areas. The number of service-delivery protests recorded in 2018 increased by 94%, with a record 101 protests taking place in the second quarter of the year alone (Quintal, 2018) (Davis, 2018). These protests are mainly directed at government as it is responsible for providing basic services to all South Africans.

More than two decades since South Africa’s first democratic elections, most South Africans have become impatient with government for failing to provide the basic services guaranteed in the Constitution (Seokoma, 2010). Ahead of the 2014 national and provincial elections, researchers from Columbia University in the United States conducted an online survey that tracked and mapped service-delivery protests in South Africa. The report found that citizens felt that the best way to express their grievances was through protests. According to the report, these protests increased during election periods as there is a perception that political parties are more likely to arrange for faster service delivery and the repair of infrastructure when they are in immediate need of votes (Le Chen *et al*, 2014).

According to a municipal poll, an increasing number of community service-delivery protests took place ahead of the 2016 local government elections (Merten, 2016). Research also suggests that support for a democratic system has declined since 2011, with many citizens now willing to give up democratic elections in favour of a non-elected government that would provide basic services. The latest Afrobarometer findings not only show that fewer South Africans prefer democracy (64% in 2015 compared to 72% in 2011), but there is greater dissatisfaction with the performance of the current democracy (Merten, 2016).

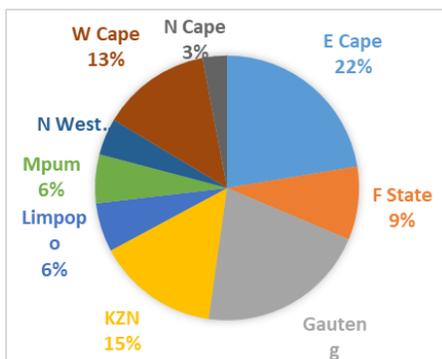
Municipal IQ, a specialised local government data and intelligence organisation, recorded 237 protests in municipalities across South Africa in 2018. This in the context of the 2019 national and provincial elections. Municipal IQ found that although service-delivery protests decreased in Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape were hot spots for protests (Savides, 2019). The decrease in Gauteng could be attributed to the relative success of the “*ntirhisano*” (“war room”) strategy, which has been executed to coordinate intergovernmental service-delivery solutions. Another factor for the decrease in protests in Gauteng could be that coalition governments in the province’s three metros allow for greater debate and representation, thus preventing service-delivery protests.

**Figure 1: Major service-delivery protests, by year (2004 –2019)**



[Source: Municipal IQ municipal hot spots monitor, January 2019-March 2019]

**Figure 2: Service-delivery protests by province, 2019**



[Source: Municipal IQ municipal hot spots monitor, January 2019-March 2019]

## Do political parties capitalise on service delivery protests?

In periods leading up to elections, political parties lobby voters and win their votes in various ways, including by listening to their grievances during protests and acting more decisively. According to the 2015 Good Governance Africa Voter Sentiment Survey, most South Africans would resort to violence to communicate with government (Radebe, 2017). Recently, in Gauteng, residents of Alexandra took to the streets to call for better service delivery. These protests revealed a battle between the DA and the ANC, with Herman Mashaba (DA) and Cyril Ramaphosa (ANC) pointing fingers at each other about the decline of services in the township (Mjo, 2019). The case of Alexandra shows that areas where there are protests during election periods are crucial campaigning sites for political parties.

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## ESKOM AND THE 2019 ELECTIONS

WRITTEN BY NANCY HAKIZIMANA

As chronic power shortages began emerging across South Africa, in early 2008, state-owned power utility Eskom introduced planned rolling blackouts, commonly known as load-shedding, based on a rotating schedule. A decade later, the crisis is yet to be resolved and is seen to have escalated, with repeated cycles of power outages over the years. According to Chris Yelland, a senior energy expert at EE Publishers, load-shedding has cost South Africa R1 billion per stage, per day. In response to loading-shedding, in 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa resolved to increase electricity prices by a cumulative total of 13.8%. This price increase is well above the 4.5% rate of inflation,

and is set to impact households that are already struggling with the rising cost of living. Businesses have also been negatively impacted, having incurred losses due to power outages, resulting in increased pressure on the economy. The ongoing Zondo commission of inquiry has already uncovered maladministration and corruption at Eskom, and the crisis has sparked debate around how load-shedding may impact the 2019 elections.

The crisis reached its peak in February 2019, when Eskom introduced stage-4 load-shedding. The power utility attributed this to a high number of breakdowns at its plants. Within a week of these power outages, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni announced in his Budget speech plans to give Eskom a R69-billion lifeline over the next three years. Mboweni also announced plans to split Eskom into three units: distribution, generation and transmission. This announcement was met with apprehension from ANC-aligned trade unions as well as union federation COSATU. This was due to their view that splitting Eskom would result in job losses. It remains to be seen after the 2019 elections whether the splitting of Eskom will result in retrenchments.

All major political parties contesting the 2019 elections are capitalising on the Eskom crisis in their campaigns. The ANC has reassured voters that it will fix the Eskom issue, and blamed the crisis on state capture, as revealed in the Zondo commission, during the previous government administration. The DA has used load-shedding to discredit the ANC, especially as allegations of corruption at Eskom occurred with the ANC leading government and some current ANC members being directly implicated.

Load-shedding has also brought about concerns for the electoral administration processes itself in terms of its potential to jeopardise the overall integrity of the voting system. Should they occur during elections, power cuts could result in problems with zip-zap machines and the counting of ballot papers at night. The IEC, the body tasked with managing the elections, has assured the public that it is in talks with Eskom and have put together a contingency plan to make sure that voting is not compromised.

Ultimately, the social and economic implications of load-shedding, along with allegations of state capture and corruption, have all caught up with Eskom. This, in turn, has put pressure on the ruling ANC to resolve the crisis. The extent to which load-shedding will affect how South Africans vote in the 2019 elections is unclear, however, it is clear that the Eskom crisis will remain high on the agenda for the next government administration.

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## HOW POLITICAL PARTIES USE TRAGEDIES TO CAMPAIGN

WRITTEN BY SIZWE NENE AND THEMBELANI MAZIBUKO

Political parties often use national tragedies for political gain, especially during election periods. In their campaigns leading up to the 2019 national and provincial elections, the ruling ANC and the EFF have made frequent references to national tragedies such as the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Soweto uprising (Kimmie, 2019). But more recent tragedies have also been used in political campaigning.

### **The DA and the Life Healthcare Esidimeni scandal**

The Life Healthcare Esidimeni incident in Gauteng involved the deaths of 143 people at psychiatric facilities as a result of starvation and neglect. This led the DA to publicly use the names of those who died, a move that received widespread criticism (Merten, 2019). The party landed itself in hot water because it did not seek permission to do so. Political parties have a right to lawfully erect banners, billboards, placards and posters, but this cannot be done in a manner that infringes the rights of other people (IEC, 2019).

The DA's attempt to gain political traction through this tragic incident was seen by many as crass and opportunistic. However, it is also argued that the party was not entirely wrong in using the incident as an example of there being a lack of accountability in government. In general, though, the manner in which the DA went about using the incident is considered to be in poor taste and insensitive.

### **The EFF and Marikana**

The EFF portrays itself as the last vanguard of the interests of South Africa's most vulnerable, which are often affected by national tragedies. The Marikana killings, which happened during an ANC-led government administration, was thus seen as an electoral boon for the EFF. This as EFF leader Julius Malema managed to make his party's name synonymous with mineworkers' struggles to the extent where the party itself was launched in 2013 at the site of the killings. The EFF has subsequently evoked the image of slain Marikana miners in much of its campaigning (Montsho & Ngoepe, 2013).

The EFF has, by and large, used the Marikana killings to double down and strengthen its image. During the early days of the party's formation, the EFF centred its branding around the nationalisation of mines. A mine shaft also features prominently in the party's emblem. In the past, Malema has even called for the jailing of ANC leader, President Cyril Ramaphosa, for the Marikana killings (Du Plessis, 2013).

## Conclusion

All opposition political parties use tragic events to highlight the shortcomings of the ruling ANC. However, the question remains as to whether tragedies are relevant in political messages and campaigning, or if the use of such events is merely opportunistic, hence insincere. While the EFF's use of the Marikana killings is congruent with the party's overall message, the DA's use of the Life Healthcare Esidimeni incident might be seen as insincere.

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# A DECADE OF COMMISSIONS

WRITTEN BY QIQA NKOMO

The overarching objectives of commissions of inquiry are to rally public engagement, provide information on how certain systems work, highlight these systems' shortfalls and identify the parties responsible for these shortfalls (Qukula, 2019). Over the last decade in South Africa, at least 14 commissions of inquiry have been initiated by the presidency. Due to the abundance of commissions of inquiry, a perception among the public has now developed that these commissions serve more as smokescreens – that is, they function as a means to evade accountability and gain political favour – than the resolution and corrective mechanisms they're intended to be. This perception is justified when considering that the number of commissions have increased between 2018 and 2019<sup>1</sup>. Since President Cyril Ramaphosa's inauguration in 2018, he has initiated four commissions of inquiry. This has raised questions, especially in the build-up to the 2019 national and provincial elections.

Commissions of inquiry are supposed to function independently to establish facts. This is done by partially incorporating legal processes to eventually compile reports with non-binding recommendations (Bishop, 2014). Ideally, based on the findings of commissions, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) should

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<sup>1</sup> "In 2014 there were 6 commissions of inquiry that were simultaneously running" (Bishop, 2014).

take matters to court. Civil society should then hold the NPA accountable or action must be taken for resolution (Qukula, 2019). The Commissions Act (1947) gives presidents carte blanche to appoint commissions of inquiry for the purpose of scrutinising matters that are of public concern.

A major criticism of commissions of inquiry is their failure to enforce accountability due to the political interests that they tend to serve (Bishop, 2014). It is also argued that commissions, such as the Zondo commission into state capture, are triggered by public outrage regarding corruption and negligence in state departments and state-owned enterprises. Hence, a commission investigating state capture just before elections may be regarded as means to pacify voters' grievances, and be considered an act of ethical leadership.

This argument gained credibility after the president's recent dismissal of NPA advocates Nomgcobo Jiba and Lawrence Mrwebi, based on recommendations from the Mokgoro commission. (Presidency, 2019). Although this creates a perception that the president is serious about eradicating corruption, it is somewhat negated by inaction from the president on findings from the Zondo commission, which implicate members of the ANC's national executive committee. In addition, the Zondo commission's report is only due after the 2019 election, which implies that the governing party may not be willing to hold implicated and powerful ANC officials accountable during elections.

If executed properly, commissions of inquiry can be used to strengthen democracy. However, their key characteristics, transparency and accountability, are not always guaranteed or upheld. South Africa's history of commissions of inquiry has not translated into holding officials and private entities accountable, irrespective of the action taken by the NPA.

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## **POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL AND THE 2019 ELECTIONS**

**WRITTEN BY SANDILE KHUBONI**

Violence that erupted in KwaZulu-Natal between the ANC and the IFP in the early 1990s threatened to derail the country's first democratic elections in 1994. These tensions were largely related to the IFP's demands for federalism and KwaZulu-Natal as an independent state. While the IFP had threatened to boycott the 1994 elections, it eventually participated. Although elections in South Africa since 1994 have

generally been peaceful, the past two election cycles have seen an increase in political violence in KwaZulu-Natal, though the nature of the violence appears to have shifted predominantly to intra-party conflict.

The ANC has been more prone to internal conflict than other parties, even though other parties may have experienced electoral violence in the form of “rally disruptions, prevention of electioneering in no-go and strong areas, attack on supporters and confrontations between party representatives” (EISA , 2014). Political violence can also occur due to rivalry or factionalism, and contestation for political positions and the control of resources at local levels between the members of the same political organisation. Despite this distinction, the overlap between non-election violence and violence directly related to elections in KwaZulu-Natal has the potential to profoundly affect the democratic processes.

### **Local election violence**

Electoral trends in KwaZulu-Natal suggest that political violence is mostly experienced during local government elections. One view is that local political positions are often viewed as a source of income in themselves but more importantly as entry points for lucrative government contracts. In the 2011 local government elections, Zanele Magwaza-Msibi’s defection from the IFP to form the National Freedom Party (NFP) was marked by violent confrontations involving supporters of the IFP and the new party. The ANC also became more factionalised during the same period, with increased “conflict over nominations and allegations of manipulation of party lists” (DeHass, 2016). Despite the occurrence of political violence in KwaZulu-Natal during the 2011 local government elections, the 2014 national and provincial elections saw a reduced number of cases of political violence, as reported by observer missions (EISA , 2014).

Soon after the 2014 elections, factionalism within the ANC deepened. Those who supported former KwaZulu-Natal premier Senzo Mchunu (who is aligned with current ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa) and current KwaZulu-Natal Premier Willies Mchunu (who is aligned with former ANC president Jacob Zuma) become antagonistic towards each other. The opposing factions competed for local support and local government positions were violently contested. During the 2016 local government elections, the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal faced serious intra-party tension, in which about 20 politically linked individuals were killed and various other attempted murders were reported in Msinga, Harry Gwala, Pietermaritzburg, Newcastle, Ladysmith and Ntshanga (DeHass, 2016).

The killings between 2015 and 2016 compelled the premier to appoint a commission of inquiry, known as the Moerane commission. The commission reported factionalism, intolerance and politicisation of the police as the forces behind the violence in the province. However, the commission was criticised for overlooking key factors that have contributed to the violence such as the proliferation of arms and the involvement of private security companies.

On the eve of the 2019 national and provincial elections, no major cases of political violence have been reported in KwaZulu-Natal. Although three ANC supporters were reported murdered in one incident in Pietermaritzburg in March 2019, it is unclear whether their murders were politically motivated (Hans, 2019). Based on the discussion above, it would seem that less prevalence of political violence in the province does not necessarily mean that the 2019 elections will be free of violent incidents. The

Independent Electoral Commission has declared some parts of the province as a no-go areas (Hans, 2019). These areas include political spaces in which violence is used to restrict political mobilisation of the opposition parties.

Although the outcome of the ANC's 2017 elective conference may have curbed the development of factions within the ANC, the party's supposed unity may still be susceptible to factionalism as individuals implicated in state capture and other corrupt activities are still fighting for political survival within its ranks.

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