

IFP.

The peace that descended on KwaZulu/Natal when the Inkatha Freedom Party finally decided to participate in the election is still holding – more or less. It has a chance of enduring – more or less. Political scientist **ALEXANDER JOHNSTON** examines why.

enigma



Picture: SOUTH

IN a sense, the most important results of the election in KwaZulu/Natal are that it took place at all and that the level of endemic violence which has plagued the region for years dropped to almost nothing for the duration of voting and counting. In the light of these facts, it is scarcely surprising that relief is the predominant emotion of both winners and losers in the contest.

This sense of having drawn back from the brink is undercut by the controversy over alleged vote-rigging by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in areas under its control and the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu government. The ANC in the region is clearly divided over the issue, with Midlands leader Harry Gwala and candidate for regional premier Jacob Zuma issuing contradictory statements about the degree of vigour with which the matter should be pursued.

It is certain, however, that Zuma's softer line has the backing of the ANC at national level. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the inference that for the ANC leadership at national level, IFP control of KwaZulu/Natal, obtained by whatever means, is an acceptable price to pay for peace. This may make sense in terms of *realpolitik*, but it is an inauspicious beginning for democracy.

The IFP's achievement of an overall majority in the region poses a number of interesting and difficult political questions. Among them, what will the IFP become?

Those who have studied and written about this movement invariably refer to its hybrid nature. In one respect, the IFP is a party of ethnic mobilisation, making extensive use of history-as-mythology to rally support in the face of real or imagined threats to cultural identity, or even (in the eyes of the IFP's

more extreme leaders) the ethnic group's physical existence.

At the same time, the IFP has always appealed to white interests which saw partnership with a black political movement as a long-term investment in stability. To them, the IFP has offered a foothold in African popular politics without the revolutionary baggage that came with the ANC. In addition, the movement's ethnic personification has always appealed to those whites who are most comfortable with Africans when they are in "traditional" roles, guise and garb.

It has never been easy to line up these differing constituencies into a plausible coalition. To some extent, the sheer fact that the IFP was not the ANC was enough to hold them together, but now some credible synthesis of ideology must be put in place.

The politics of cultural weapons and the monarchy has clearly served well enough through periods of high political tension and low-level civil war. However, they do not make a stable basis for government of an ethnically diverse and politically divided population in a partly modernised economy. On the other hand, it would be dangerous for the IFP to de-emphasise the ethnic pieties altogether and turn itself into a completely secular party of federalism, free enterprise and investment opportunities, since this would risk becoming remote from its popular base.

The IFP's enigmatic nature is emphasised by the increasingly important role played by the Zulu monarchy in its profile and strategies. Indeed, in the later stages of negotiation, the monarchy came to be the IFP's most important asset. The IFP was not alone in its estimation of the king's importance. The ANC conducted a long and elaborate courtship (which must have sorely tried the patience of some of its members) aimed at removing royal issues and influence from direct party political competition.

As befits matters of courtly intrigue, it is difficult to gauge from a distance what mixture of self-interest, kinship and balance of power in private personal relationships the king's undoubted association with the IFP and its leader is owed. But, in a sense, the issue is simple.

As long as the king has a "traditional prime minister", and as long as that courtier combines his privileged access and role as advice-giver with being the leader of a partisan political movement in regional and national politics, the monarchy is inescapably partial. Unless these circumstances change, it is difficult to see how citizens of KwaZulu/Natal who are not members of the IFP can regard King Goodwill Zwelithini as "their" monarch.

A second and closely related question concerns the problem of integrating the two parts of the new region. There is a legacy of much closer collaboration between the "white" province and the homeland. Nevertheless, formidable differences remain. Aside from the stark economic facts that KwaZulu is very much poorer, very much less developed and more populous than Natal, there is the question of political culture.

The political culture of Ulundi is that of a one-party state. Basic political freedoms of organisation and expression for rival political parties are absent; its bureaucracy has been fused with the party; and its security forces, in the form of the KwaZulu Police, cannot with confidence be regarded as impartial.

This political culture could flourish under the benign eye of a collusive central government and on the basis of ethnic appeal to a homogeneous population. But both these props have been removed. The IFP regional government's freedom of manoeuvre will be curtailed by enforced power-sharing, a vigorous opposition, an unsympathetic central government and circumscribed constitutional powers.

These new circumstances, and the demands of governing a more diverse population in a more sophisticated economy, will make themselves felt on the style and strategies of the IFP.

Three possible scenarios suggest themselves:

- the political culture of Ulundi will extend itself over the whole of the new region;
- wider horizons of political freedom and higher standards of public administration will make themselves felt throughout the region as the old homeland political culture is changed by the demands of the new regional order;
- "KwaZulu" and "Natal" will continue to be *de facto* separate entities, with the former continuing as an IFP fief which, by virtue of its numerical preponderance, will provide the basis for continuing IFP electoral victories.

The last of these scenarios is the most likely, at least in the foreseeable future, and it is even possible that pragmatists of all parties will see its utility. On the other hand, the disappearance of *de jure* jurisdictional lines between province and homeland will make this scenario a difficult one to secure. ■

Alexander Johnston is senior lecturer in the Department of Politics University of Natal, Durban



Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Sacred roots of secular IFP

IT IS a little-known fact that the ANC took a strategic decision to encourage the development of Inkatha when it was first launched by Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the 1970s.

Despite deep reservations about working within the bantustan system, and a public stance of refusal to have anything to do with it, the ANC in exile took the decision to encourage all mass democratic organisations within the bantustans - including Inkatha.

Accordingly, the ANC held discussions with Buthelezi and encouraged him to revive Inkatha ka Zulu, a Zulu cultural movement that had been set up in 1922 by the Zulu monarch of the time, King Solomon ka Dinizulu.

This is documented by ANC writer Mzala, who died in exile in London in 1989, in his frank and thought-provoking book *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief With A Double Agenda*.

Mzala wrote: "The ANC felt it was historically bound to build a democratic movement in the countryside that would be directed to the path of revolutionary action by the people. In so far as Chief Buthelezi then displayed what the ANC considered a 'democratic consciousness', however limited, it thought it wise to deal with him."

He quotes then ANC president, the late Oliver Tambo, who realised that the strategy would not work: "Unfortunately, we failed to mobilise our own people to take on the task of resurrecting Inkatha as the kind of organisation that we wanted, owing to the understandable antipathy of many of our comrades towards what they considered as working within the bantustan system.

"The task of reconstituting Inkatha therefore fell on Gatsha Buthelezi himself who then built Inkatha as a personal power base far removed from the kind of organisation we had visualised, as an instrument for the mobilisation of our people in the countryside."

However, the ANC encouraged Buthelezi to scrap the "Zulus only" eligibility clause in Inkatha's original constitution, and Mzala refers to a 1977 survey which found that 50 percent of Inkatha supporters also backed the ANC. ■