

Ramaphosa at the helm of the ANC: A cloaked cohabitation

By Abdelhak Bassou

Summary

Cyril Ramaphosa outpassed Dlamini Zuma in the elections for replacing Jacob Zuma at the head of the ANC. Yet, his victory does not allow him to enjoy a huge success given the short gap he has recorded against the Dlamini Zuma but also given the balance of power within the decision-making bodies.

However, we must bear in mind that the current President, notoriously involved in corruption cases, is still being detracted even by his own supporters. Hence, such elements raise the question of assessing the scope of recent elections including the future of Zuma as president of the Republic and hence, the future of the ANC as the dominant party in the South African political scene.

Introduction

Known for his opposition to Jacob Zuma¹, Cyril Ramaphosa was chosen to replace him at the head of the ANC. He won 2,440 votes against 2261 obtained by his rival, Dlamini Zuma, who was supposedly backed by the current President, Jacob Zuma. The more optimistic observers of South Africa's political scene consider that Ramaphosa's election has saved the party from implosion; the more skeptical believe the only question that remains open is whether the ANC will burst before or after its defeat in

1. The ANC is an alliance. On the left side, there is COSATU, South Africa's main trade union federation and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Leading members of COSATU and the Communist Party sit on the governing bodies of the ANC. On the right side, a group of ANC members from diverse backgrounds (traditionalists, African bourgeoisie, etc.) are united around Ramaphosa and his political line. The right/left split in the ANC came to the fore especially in terms of economic policy, with the left emphasizing State interventionism and the right calling for a "deracialization" of the market. During the most recent crisis surrounding the "State capture" case, the rift changed lines, as COSATU and the SACP, traditionally on the left, supported Ramaphosa, who is reputed to belong to the right wing, against Jacob Zuma, a left wing man but whose involvement in corruption cases ended up antagonizing his allies.

2019. If one were to rely on the wisdom of the Chinese Book of Changes, we would say it all hinges on what the leaders of the party will do and how they will act during the next 18 months separating us from the legislative and presidential elections of 2019. What is most likely (the ANC will succeed or fail) does not carry much credibility unless it provides for multiple probabilities (several forms and degrees of failure and several forms and degrees of success depending on actions and conditions). The ANC can indeed reunite and win the elections or reunite and lose the elections. The party can also founder and win the elections or disintegrate and lose the elections. Success certainly depends on the party's unity or splintering, but not necessarily in absolute terms. Allies within the ANC count.

How does the Communist Party feel about Ramaphosa's short victory? Is it satisfied? If not, will it make a move and stand alone in the elections? Will the probable weakening of the ANC benefit competing parties, such as the Democratic Alliance? Will it cause a split within the

ANC and the emergence of a new force that can rally other parties and restructure the landscape? In the current state of things, one cannot anticipate whether the future of the ANC will be good or bad. Wisdom calls for prudence and advises that one limit oneself to hypotheses.

By 2019, and for some 18 months, the ANC's two opposing clans will preside over the party, on the one hand, and the Republic, on the other, in, effectively, a cohabitation, although a cloaked one. This raises the question: "Will Jacob Zuma finish his term, now that the party is headed by the opposite clan?"

Before answering this question, should we not assess Cyril Ramaphosa's victory? While some supporters of the new President of the ANC are already jubilant, others are

qualifying his victory, mainly for two reasons:

- The gap between the two candidates is only 179 votes (the smallest margin since the ANC's creation). This gap does not allow the businessman to cry victory over the former chair of the African Union Commission. In fact, for all six key positions the gap is very small (see table below)
- David Mabuza, an unconditional supporter of the Zuma clan, holds the position of Vice President. The Zumas are therefore keeping a close eye on the new President, especially since more than half of the members of the National Executive Council, the party's decision-making body, belong to the Jacob and Dlamini Zuma clan.

Table of results for the top six posts

Results of the 54 ANC elective conference	Votes for Ramaphosa slate	Votes for NDZ slate	Abstentions	Spoilt	Missing	Total	Result
President	2,440	2,261	4	3	68	4776	Ramaphosa
Deputy President	2,159	2,538	4	7	68	4776	Mabuza
General Secretary	2,336	2,360	8	4	68	4776	Ace Magashule
Deputy General Secretary	2,213	2,474	17	4	68	4776	Jessie Duarte
Treasurer General	2,517	2,178	7	6	68	4776	Paul Mashatile
Chair	2,418	2,269	14	7	68	4776	Gwede Mantashe

Source: <https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/the-missing-votes-fiasco/>

The balance of power within the ANC's decision-making apparatus is still in favor of the Zumas². This is bad news for Cyril Ramaphosa who is unlikely to have a free hand to implement the reforms he seeks.

Some major issues subsist within the party and internal divisions seem to be far from over. However, the party is aware that its energy must be focused on the 2019 elections, to which it must present a unified front, if it is to maintain its dominant position on the South African political scene³-- a difficult, although not impossible mission⁴, which the new ANC boss must fulfill.

Rebuilding the ANC's image in the eyes of South African public opinion is not an easy task however. Several challenges are to be met:

- The legitimacy derived by the party from its struggle against apartheid has faded. South Africans now have growing expectations that go beyond their aspirations during the years of the struggle against white power and focus on ambitions for economic wellbeing, better wealth distribution, and more social justice and equal opportunities⁵.
- Youth unemployment is currently a scourge undermining South African society and generating a social unease that a sluggish South African economy has been unable to stem⁶.
- Crime, a result of socio-economic malaise, is growing at staggering rates.

2. The results of the most recent elections within the ANC seem to reflect a vote that did not seek to sanction a trend within the party, but rather a change at the helm. Delegates to the congress simply expressed their will to get rid of Zuma as the leader of the party. Had a candidate that did not carry the Zuma represented the Jacob Zuma clan, he/she may not have lost.

3. The Vice-President of EFF (Economic freedom fighters), an opposition party, congratulated Ramaphosa, but added: "It will however be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for you to become RSA President. The EFF is ready on the grounds!"

4. Read the article "Cyril Ramaphosa Isn't South Africa's Savior" by EUSEBIUS MCKAISER, December 2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/12/18/cyril-ramaphosa-isnt-south-africas-savior/>

5. "The people of South Africa want action. They do not want words," Ramaphosa stated in his first address as President of the ANC; he added: "They want an ANC that uses public office not to serve vested interests, but to build a truly developmental state and a vibrant, inclusive economy that create jobs and improves lives."

6. Standard & Poor's (S&P) lowered South Africa's sovereign rating to speculative in November due to an alarming slump in growth (From BBB- to BB+ "speculative", with a stable prospects). Moody's, for its part, has decided to place South Africa's economy under supervision while awaiting the ANC congress to be held this December to elect a new president. By the end of 2017, South Africa's GDP growth rate will be 0.7 %; a rate that is acutely insufficient to relieve the pressure of unemployment affecting more than 27 % of the population and poverty that affects almost half of a total population of 56 million. The deterioration of South African's rating will cause a contraction of more than 1% during the first quarter of 2018, according to the investment bank Investec.

- Despite the desire to unite, the risk of a rift is not completely ruled out. Several observers even argue that a new party may possibly be created if Ramaphosa fails to bridge differences.

All these challenges require a synergy of efforts to be exerted by both opposing clans, that of the President of the Republic, who is no longer President of the party, and that of the new President of the party, who is not yet President of the Republic. Will the two clans agree to build such a synergy?

- Will Jacob Zuma be willing to take measures over the next 18 months in order to enhance the image of the ANC and therefore facilitate the election of his opponent --an opponent who does not seem willing to protect him if he is prosecuted for corruption at the end of his term?
- Will Cyril Ramaphosa let go of his right-wing tendencies for the benefit of left-wing allies (COSATU and SACP) and promise some degree of post-mandate immunity to Zuma, in order to maintain party unity and win the 2019 elections?

The post December 2017 election landscape can be depicted as follows:

- The ANC changed its president and avoided the presidency falling into the hands of someone close to its former president. Some even argue that Ramaphosa's election was meant to deprive Jacob Zuma of extending his reign over the ANC by reincarnating himself in a woman's body (his ex-wife).
 - The Jacob Zuma clan does not seem weakened. It retains half of the six most important positions in the party hierarchy, including Vice-President and a relative majority in the National Executive Board.
 - The party seems to be entering in a sort of cohabitation for 18 months between a left leaning President of the Republic, who has been abandoned by the union and Communist party because of his involvement in corruption cases; and a right leaning party President who, in order to pass the milestone of 2019 and be elected to the Presidency of the Republic, must kowtow to left allies (COSATU and SACP), who are currently backing him against Jacob Zuma.

Where does Zuma stand by the 2019 legislative and presidential elections?

If Ramaphosa were to summarize his mission by mid-2019, the date of the legislative and presidential elections in South Africa, he would say nothing more than “to preserve and safeguard the supremacy of the ANC over politics in South Africa.” All the strategies he will be able to develop, programs he will have to outline and initiatives he will or should undertake to improve the lives of South Africans and strengthen South Africa’s economy, will be driven by a single goal: to win the 2019 elections and maintain the ANC’s preeminence over political life in South Africa.

As early as his first speech as new President of the ANC, Cyril Ramaphosa sent a message to all South Africans, whose interests he wants to safeguard as a people.

His discourse had all the hallmarks of a premature electoral campaign speech. Indeed Ramaphosa did not limit himself to addressing all South Africans and to committing a new, responsive ANC to addressing their issues, his speech was also arranged in such a way as to highlight what South Africans as a whole aspire to and to taking action through tangible projects rather than through long political speeches, which remain dead letter. However, by 2019, a topical and priority question arises: How to manage the ANC during this 18-month forced cohabitation so as to ensure that the party is able to keep its unity and alliances, and therefore, win the elections? Among the most damaging setbacks suffered by the party are the scandals erupting around President Jacob Zuma. Should the controversial President finish his term of office or should he resign or be dismissed beforehand? On this question, what is the balance of power between Zuma and Ramaphosa?

A brief summary of the latest crisis to rock the ANC

Clearly losing ground since its setback in the 2016 local elections in which the ANC lost two major cities (Pretoria and Johannesburg), the party is witnessing a growing gap between supporters of Jacob Zuma, a proponent of the “radical transformation” of the economy in favor of the black majority, and a more moderate wing embodied by Parvin Gordan, Finance Minister, and Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa.

During the same year, 2016, revelations about the Guptas’ interference in state affairs, had exacerbated divisions within the ANC:

- On March 14, 2016, Vytjie Mentor, a former ANC MP, stated that members of the Gupta family had offered her the position of Minister of Public Enterprises. In return, she had to forsake the South African Airlines air link to India and transfer it to the Guptas.
- On March 16, 2016, Mcebisi Jonas, Deputy Minister of Finance, accused members of the Gupta family of offering him the post of Minister of Finance, in replacement of the respected Nhlanhla Nene, who was dismissed for no official reason in December 2015.
- Two days later, Zola Tsotsi, Eskom's former president told the Mail and Guardian that his resignation the previous year was orchestrated by the Guptas: “Two months after his appointment they called me and said they would fire me because I wasn’t playing by the rules”.
- The crisis was further exacerbated with the highly contested dismissal of the Minister of Finance on March 31, 2017. A number of ANC MPs joined the opposition in denouncing the involvement of the head of STATE and party in the scandal that was dubbed “State Capture.” The opposition was supported in its decision to file a motion of censure, which was voted in August 2017, and in which Zuma narrowly escaped dismissal by twenty votes only. It was clear that ANC MPs had voted against their president.

This was the backdrop to the ANC’s 54th Congress, which gave a narrow victory to Cyril Ramaphosa. This victory is so slim that it does not grant the new boss a majority within the governing bodies of the party and thus does not shed any light on the future of President Jacob Zuma. Will he complete his mandate? Will he resign or be dismissed beforehand? This question is already at the heart of negotiations and speculations within ANC circles.

1. Will Zuma hold on until the next general elections? Difficult, but not impossible

a. Not easy to dismiss Zuma

The lackluster victory of Cyril Ramaphosa and his supporters at the latest congress could benefit Jacob Zuma who would escape the fate he himself had reserved for his predecessor Thabo Mbeki in 2008⁷. This fate in fact haunts Zuma's supporters. At the end of the congress, several of Jacob Zuma's supporters were convinced that their idol would be immune to all the setbacks. The sacking of the President was not a matter of concern for them. They loudly stated that Zuma is not Thabo Mbeki and that despite the defeat of his candidate for the presidency of the party, Jacob Zuma was far from finished⁸.

Zuma and his clan know that only a majority vote of the members of the ANC's Executive Committee can dismiss a president in office. He also knows that Cyril Ramaphosa does not have such majority. He can, therefore, impose cohabitation on Ramaphosa until the end of his presidential term.

Can Ramaphosa convince the ANC leadership that Jacob Zuma has become an obstacle to the movement? South Africa experts believe that this would be difficult, as he would have to convince them that they are all together in the same boat, and that they must reset the ANC in order to win the 2019 elections. He must also convince them that, in order to succeed, they must get rid of Jacob Zuma quickly, early next year⁹.

b. Zuma clings to power

Jacob Zuma has recently appealed against two court decisions:

- On 8 December, a week before the ANC congress, the High Court of South Africa overturned Jacob Zuma's appointment of someone close to him as Attorney

7. In September 2008, Thabo Mbeki had to agree to resign following the decision of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), then chaired by Zuma (newly elected) to withdraw his mandate because of his interference in the legal troubles of his rival Jacob Zuma, whom he intended to prevent from reaching the presidency. One could surmise that the current situation in the ANC is very similar to that of 2008.

8. See: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/when-will-zuma-go-its-a-matter-of-time-20171224-3>

9. Statement by Richard Calland, Associate Professor, Department of Public Law, University of Cape Town, South Africa, and author of the book 'The Zuma Years'

General, arguing that the president was party to judicial cases, and therefore, was not entitled to make the appointment. This prerogative was granted to Cyril Ramaphosa as Vice-President of the Republic. Jacob Zuma appealed against this decision on December 14th.

- The Mediator of the Republic, Thuli Madonsela, had prepared a report on "State Capture" case, which she was to make public last October. Jacob Zuma had issued a statement asking the Mediator of the Republic not to publish her findings, before he could himself question the witnesses cited in the report. After the case of the dispute between Zuma and Thuli Madonsela was brought to Justice, the court authorized the publication of the report in December. Jacob Zuma immediately appealed to prevent the appointment of a commission of inquiry as required by the report.

In the view of observers, these two appeals to judicial decisions are attempts by Jacob Zuma to delay any action that may end his term as Head of State. The unions, the South African Communist Party, and some local branches of the ANC are shocked by the Head of State's appeals. Jacob Zuma's refusal to comply with Justice is a real problem. All South Africans are coming to the same conclusion: Zuma is clinging to power and has no intention of being removed from office as President of the Republic. In the face of judicial decisions, Zuma is using recourses and appeals to delay any action; and faced with possible votes of no confidence, he hopes to count on his supporters in Parliament.

c. Zuma can go so far as to mobilize tribal allegiance

Without going so far as to grant ethnic chauvinism an important role in South African politics, one must acknowledge that ethnic solidarity can become an instrument when political tools fail. Credit is due to ANC politics for the fact that Ramaphosa, who represents the smallest ethnic group in South Africa, the Vendas, barely a million people, or 2.4% of the population, was able to beat Jacob and Dlamini Zuma, who are from the largest ethnic group in the country, the powerful Zulus (12 million, 24% of the population) in partisan elections. However, many observers believe that, if Zuma intends to cling to power, he may resort to tribal solidarity¹⁰. In an article

10. "The peoples of South Africa are essentially components of the same ethnic group whose large tribal groupings are perceived as nations. Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele belong to the same subgroup while Sotho, Tswana and Pedi form

published on January 4, 2013, on the Liberation website, Sophie Bouillon, correspondent for the newspaper in Johannesburg, emphasized the importance of tribalism in Zuma's politics. The article, "South Africa: the President and all his tribes," begins with a revealing heading: **"Re-elected head of the ANC, Jacob Zuma scores a point towards the 2014 presidential election. In the meantime, the President will have to pamper ethnic groups at the expense of modernity."**¹¹. Threatened with legal action sooner or later, Zuma may use anything that is likely to protect him. Already in the 2014 elections, Zuma had not hesitated to brandish the tribal card.

2. Will Jacob Zuma resign or be removed before the general election? Quite likely

a. Zuma is the real problem

President Jacob Zuma seems to be the only barrier separating the two ANC clans. It is certainly an ideological struggle between the supporters of a hard, left revolutionary line and those holding a more centralist tendency. But neither of the two clans denies the goals of the other. Cyril Ramaphosa does not reject the main objective of the opposing party, which is land expropriation without compensation; but he argues that it should be done carefully to avoid jeopardizing the economy, agricultural production and food security¹². In other words, the two parties differ only on how to achieve this goal. To the revolutionary impulsive, hasty and perhaps chaotic decision advocated by the radical left wing, Ramaphosa opposes and proposes a poised and thought-through course of action. On other points, such as unemployment, the revival of the economy and education, the two ANC clans have only minor differences and do not disagree on the principles.

The only issue for both clans is Jacob Zuma:

- **Zuma's supporters are uncomfortable with his**

another, and Venda and Tsonga are each a subgroup. All these communities are attached to their tribal identity. The Zulu, however, who are the most numerous, are the ones to most aggressively promote their identity". Jean Louis Veyrac, 1994.

11. See: http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2013/01/04/afrique-du-sud-le-president-et-toutes-ses-tribus_871730

12. Ramaphosa's position on this is supported by the Anglican Archbishop Makgoba who sees that: "The ANC's resolution supporting the expropriation of lands without compensation calls for ... a kind of process to negotiate just, rational and widely accepted reforms on land property."

involvement in corruption cases, and would be relieved to see him leave; but they seek to protect him from more serious consequences.

- **His opponents would like to remove him hastily but are befuddled on how to do it so as not to offend his supporters.**

Because of this dilemma, the unity of the party has been taken hostage. All agree that Zuma should leave; the question is how?¹³ The latest figure to call for the swift removal of Zuma at the head of the country is the Anglican Archbishop Makgoba. In the view of this religious authority, if the ANC does not get rid of ZUMA, its fate will be written in history of other liberation movements in the world that failed to adapt: they will lose power¹⁴.

b. The negotiations for Zuma's departure: the search for an honorable exit..

Convinced that the ANC's salvation lies in Zuma's departure, the two clans have started cautious talks about Zuma's departure. According to the South African website News 24¹⁵, immediately after the 54th congress, the new leaders of the ANC entered into discussions on Jacob Zuma's peaceful exit from the post of President of the Republic. According to the same website, a party delegation would even have gone to the President to ask him to resign voluntarily and to allow Ramaphosa to restore the tarnished image of the party.

The anti Zuma side is lobbying for Ramaphosa - who will make the anniversary declaration next January and chair the National Executive Committee - to become President of the Cabinet and deliver the State of the Nation address in February. Those who are less hostile to the current President would prefer that Zuma be allowed to deliver

13. Last June, Winnie Mandela "mother of the nation" joined other figures calling for Zuma's departure: She stated that the ANC had become unrecognizable, that the spread of corruption and state capture had led the party away from the principles of older generations. Winnie Mandela hoped that an antidote would be found to restore these early principles within the movement.

14. On December 25 the Archbishop stated: "I do not see how two centers of power - one centered on the party and the other on the state - can collaborate, when their values seem diametrically opposed to each other. I do not see how the ANC will break with the past and embark on a new path, unless the new leaders elected last week, supported by their MPs, act boldly and quickly to replace Mr. Zuma as President of the country, and follow that with a carefully targeted cabinet reshuffle. If they do not, we will see their fate written in the history of other liberation movements in the world that have failed to adapt: they will lose power."

15. See: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/when-will-zuma-go-its-a-matter-of-time-20171224-3>
Also see: <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/report-secret-talks-underway-for-early-zuma-exit/>

the State of the Nation in which he would announce his resignation and make way for a smooth transfer. In any case, all remain convinced that Zuma must leave.

c. ...Otherwise, some are ready for the worst!

Nevertheless, there still are some hardcore Jacob Zuma supporters in the ANC, who would like to see the President stay in power until the end of his term. They encourage his clinging to power and keep repeating that the solution for the ANC lies elsewhere than in the ousting or resignation of Zuma. Among Zuma’s defenders is his Minister of Water and Sanitation, Nomvula Mokonyane, who sees no reason for the departure of the President.

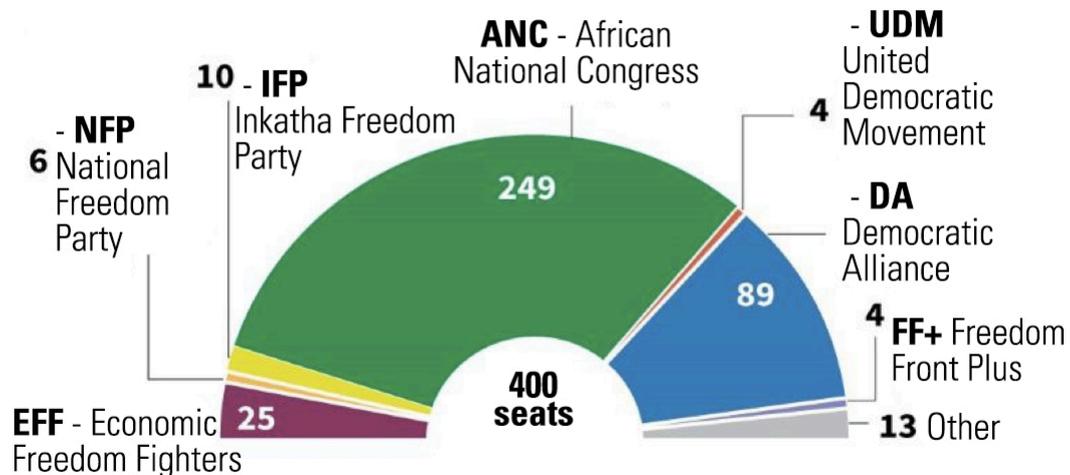
For this category of South Africans, no reason, not even the threat of losing the 2019 elections, deserves to end the President’s term. These followers of Zuma conflate his person and the party. Any attack on the current President’s mandate is an attack on the ANC, and could seriously damage the party. They go so far as to ask citizens to forget the “State capture” case, as they forgot apartheid. There is only one answer to these unconditional Zuma supporters, and it dangerous for Zuma, because it is humiliating. Some critics of Zuma are considering asking an opposition party to introduce a no confidence vote, which, this time, is likely to succeed¹⁶. Half of the ANC MPs, plus the opposition parties will gather more than enough votes to remove Zuma. (see graph below)

¹⁶. In August 2016, Zuma was saved thanks to a tiny difference in votes (about 20).

Graph of the power struggle within the South African Parliament

Parliament of South Africa

Distribution of seats



Source: Parliament of South Africa © AFP

Implications of the new situation for South Africa’s foreign policy

It is difficult for the moment to draw conclusions about South Africa’s foreign policy following the change at the helm of the ANC. The efforts of newly elected members are rather focused on the country’s domestic situation. Very few statements or analyzes have made mention of a

possible change in stance in South Africa’s international relations, as a result of the election a new President to the ANC. Moreover, Cyril Ramaphosa, the new President of the party is not yet Head of State and is only in his first steps at the helm of the ANC. It is therefore no surprise that changes in foreign policy are not on the agenda.¹⁷.

¹⁷. It should be noted that, in his first speech as President of the ANC, Ramaphosa made no reference to foreign policy. The whole speech focused on domestic politics and future domestic measures. To read the speech: <http://www.anc.org.za/content/closing-address-anc-president-cyril-ramaphosa-54th-national-conference-african-national>

The only foreign policy decision made during the 54th ANC Congress was to reduce the diplomatic representation of South Africa in Israel to a mere liaison office. The government has been notified about the decision made by the ANC. The decision does not represent any turning point or change in South African policy towards the issue. South Africa has always supported Palestinian rights, and adopted a policy that while advocating economic relations with the West and the USA, condemns their policies, deemed to be imperialist.

1. Few international reactions

Internationally, domestic elections (within the party) are considered to be internal affairs. As such, foreign governments do not consider it useful to react to a situation that concerns South Africans only, on the one hand, and which harbors struggles for power that have not yet been settled, on the other hand.

However, some reactions seem to indicate the interest with which foreign parties have followed the ANC elections. We note in this regard:

- Some messages from political parties, particularly from the left, such as the one sent by the Cuban Communist Party to the ANC during its 54th Congress, which stressed revolutionary aspects and demonstrated a certain hostility to the West. The Cuban message is a long advocacy speech for “revolutionary movements facing great challenges”, especially in Latin America where, as stated in the message, “the imperialists are attempting to thwart actions led by the left and progressive forces as evidenced by the actions against Bolivia and the Republic of Venezuela, to which the Cuban Communist Party offers its full solidarity”. The Cuban message to the congress draws parallels with the action of the same “imperialists” against African liberation movements, which have been able to retain power and who, according to the same message, “work for the good of their people”.
- The congratulatory message addressed to Ramaphosa by the Brussels-based Burundian opposition platform asking the new ANC President “to help the Burundian people to salvage the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Burundi, a precious legacy of Madiba.
- The Namibian President also sent a congratulatory message to Ramaphosa. However, he is keen to point out that his message is on behalf of SWAPO, the ruling party in Namibia, before stressing that:

“The ANC remains a revolutionary, avant-garde movement with an illustrious history of struggle to liberate Africans from the brutal yoke of colonial oppression and, in modern times, is at the forefront of the struggle for the economic emancipation of those who have remained on the margins of the economy”.

- The reactions of state bodies such as that of British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth, Boris Johnson, who congratulated Ramaphosa in a simple message on Twitter wishing that this election can strengthen relations between the United Kingdom and Africa of South:

“Congratulations to Cyril Ramaphosa on election as new #ANC President, looking forward to working together to boost UK-South Africa relations. Best of luck @Ramaphosa!”

2. What to expect from Cyril Ramaphosa

“Those familiar with the new President of the ANC and South African politics say that, given his good standing at the local and international level, they expect Ramaphosa to pursue a Pan-African foreign policy, continue relations with China, the BRICS and the West and adopt a friendly position on his foreign policy.”¹⁸

In other words, while opening up to emerging powers in the world, Ramaphosa is expected to use more pragmatism and moderation in his relations with the West and free himself from the “all revolutionary” and of “leftward bend” advocated by his predecessor.

Ramaphosa is indeed known for his closeness to Mandela and his political line: a centrist and realistic line aimed more at modernization and development than at remaining constricted by pre-Cold War policies and captive of acrimonious slogans. Some analysts consider that the ANC had been faltering because it sees the world today with instruments dating back sixty years:

18. Statement by Peter Draper, Director General of Tutwa Consulting. See:http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/19/c_136835715.htm

“the party sees the world as static and the tools with which to deal with the world look the same as those that were applicable over six decades ago. The party seems to have sleepwalked through the changes of the 1980s and the 1990s. There is an obsession in the paper with state sovereignty, but nothing of the rights of people against excesses by the very state elites who use the cover of sovereignty against state powers”¹⁹

Several factors suggest that Ramaphosa will break with the principles of the Zuma clan that have led South African politics for the last ten years:

- The country’s economic situation, which needs foreign, and notably Western, investments, to be able to recover after having been through a recession.
- Cyril Ramaphosa’s personality, a man known for being pragmatic and open to dialogue. He was in fact led the negotiations with the Afrikaners (1991-1993) on the issue of democratic transition.

However, one should not expect dramatic and rapid reversals in South Africa’s foreign policy. The country is currently faced with internal priorities, mainly the settlement of the timing of Jacob Zuma’s succession and the fight against corruption and unemployment.

3. Ramaphosa, Morocco and Algeria

The connivance between Algeria and South Africa in the area of African affairs is well established. Should this relationship be seen as an alliance or simply as an ephemeral (contrived) agreement that cannot withstand the test of the reality of international relations?

Relations between Morocco and South Africa have not shown much stability. From normal and almost friendly until 2000, these relations deteriorated, without being severed from 2004 onwards, when South Africa decided to recognize the Saharawi Republic.

The hope of resuscitating relations was offered a few days before the ANC Congress, after King Mohammed VI and President Jacob Zuma decided to exchange ambassadors. Will the change at the head of the ANC and the uncertainties surrounding the future of President

¹⁹. From Chris Landsberg and Mzukisi Qobo from the University of Johannesburg and Francis Kornegay from the Institute for Global Dialogue. See also: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-06-16-iss-today-back-to-the-future-for-anc-foreign-policy/#.Wk00g1ScVao>

Zuma help consolidate the decision made in Abidjan, or will the opposite happen?

a. South Africa and Algeria

A close look at the relationship between these two countries shows that it lies more on revolutionary romance than on economic realism. In fact, these two countries, which seem united by a strong alliance, have only developed meager, if not insignificant, economic and trade relations. In 2016, the main products exported from South Africa to Algeria are processed food, vegetables, machinery, iron and steel products, photographic and medical equipment, for a total amount of about 41 million euros (In 2015, the volume of trade between South Africa and the rest of Africa was 28 billion euros). Trade with Algeria accounts for only 0.16% of the total volume of trade between South Africa and the rest of Africa. For its part, Algeria, during the same period, exported to South Africa for a value of about 261,000 euros. The main Algerian products exported are chemicals, stone and glass as well as other products and machines not listed. Given Cyril Ramaphosa’s pragmatism, only two prospects seem plausible:

- To increase the volume of trade so that it is beneficial to South Africa’s economy; economic development being part of the new President of the ANC platform promises. But for the moment, Algeria does not seem to be in an economic situation that would enable it to participate in such an effort
- To maintain the status quo in terms of commercial relations, in which case, Algeria would no longer have in the eyes of the new rulers of South Africa the same weight it had in the eyes of the Zuma clan, which is well versed in old revolutionary and romantic doctrines.

The new President of the ANC is more interested in economic realism.

b. Reviving relations between Morocco and South Africa

Will the latest developments in relations between Morocco and South Africa, recently begun in Abidjan, be impacted (positively or negatively) by the election of a new leader at the helm of the ANC?

Referring one again to the personality of the new strongman of the ANC, the initiative taken by the King of Morocco

and the South African President during their meeting in Abidjan, should be encouraged given Cyril Ramaphosa's political and economic orientations. Supported by South Africa's business community - of which he is a part - Ramaphosa will not be against fostering relations with Morocco, particularly in the fields of economy and trade.

Cyril Ramaphosa's realism and pragmatism will not, however, at least in the short term, go so far as to revolutionize South Africa's official positions on certain issues, particularly that of the Sahara. Moroccan diplomacy will have to be patient in this regard. The

new President of the ANC, and --barring a major upset-- soon-to-be President of South Africa, is still faced with domestic issues prohibiting any sudden changes that may affect his efforts to rally the opposing clan, that is that of Dlamini Zuma, which is fundamentally hostile to Morocco. If the economic relations between Morocco and South Africa continue to improve in the coming months, political ties will also evolve positively, proportionally to the degree of intensification of future trade between the two countries.

About the author, Abdelhak Bassou

Abdelhak Bassou is Senior Fellow at OCP Policy Center. He occupied several offices within the Directorate General of the Moroccan National Security where he was Borders' Division Chief from 1978 to 1993. He was the former Director of the Royal Institute of Police in 1998. He also served as the Chief of Regional Security (Errachidia 1999-2003, Sidi Kacem 2003-2005) and was also Head of the Central General Intelligence from 2006 to 2009. He also contributed to the output of several international organizations endeavors including the Council of Arab Interior Ministers from 1986 to 1992, where he represented the Directorate General of National Security in several meetings. Abdelhak Bassou holds a Master's Degree in Political Science and International Studies from the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences of Agdal in Rabat.

About OCP Policy Center

OCP Policy Center is a Moroccan think tank whose mission is to promote knowledge sharing and contribute to enhanced thought on economic issues and international relations. Through a Southern perspective on critical issues and major regional and global strategic issues faced by developing and emerging countries, OCP Policy Center provides a veritable value added and seeks to significantly contribute to strategic decision-making through its four research programs: Agriculture, Environment and Food Security; Economic and Social Development; Conservation of Raw Materials and Finance; and Geopolitics and International Relations.

The views expressed in this publication are the views of the author.



OCP Policy Center

Ryad Business Center – South, 4th Floor – Mahaj Erryad - Rabat, Morocco
Email : contact@ocppc.ma / Phone : +212 5 37 27 08 08 / Fax : +212 5 37 71 31 54
Website: www.ocppc.ma