

Press Release

For immediate release

30 January 2018



South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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ANC voters want Ramaphosa and “pro-business” policies - IRR report

The latest @Liberty report from the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) – “Ramaphosa and the Strange Workings of ANC Democracy” – provides an “unrivalled picture of the country’s mood on the cusp of a great change”.

Based on a large opinion survey carried out late last year, the report suggests that South Africans are moderate in their thinking, and anxious for policies that will grow jobs and stimulate economic growth. The survey results also suggest that the ruling ANC is out of touch with the true sentiments of its voter base.

Sentiments of ANC supporters – especially on critical issues such as economic policy and race relations – are not reflected in the seemingly contrary positions adopted by delegates and party leaders at the ANC’s national conference at Nasrec in December.

The survey confirms that most ordinary ANC voters back Cyril Ramaphosa, and want more business-friendly policies, not the ‘radical economic transformation’ punted by his main rival, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, nor the ‘expropriation without compensation’ (‘EWC’) option adopted at Nasrec.

Author of the report, distinguished political analyst R W Johnson, writes that the results suggest that “much of the ANC leadership has completely lost contact with what most ANC voters think and may not even be conscious of the huge divide that separates their assumptions from those of their electorate”.

“Ramaphosa and the Strange Workings of ANC Democracy” is based on a comprehensive opinion survey in September 2017. It was conducted for eNCA by MarkData and canvassed the views of a fully representative sample of some 5 000 people, including 2 717 self-declared ANC voters. The results were first released by eNCA in December.

Johnson notes that when these 2 717 ANC voters were asked in September who they would prefer as their new president, 48.4% opted for Ramaphosa, with only 21% supporting Dlamini-Zuma.

When the same question was put to a panel of some 1 198 ANC voters (who had volunteered to be questioned again in November), “the Ramaphosa momentum had continued and he now led Dlamini-Zuma by 64% to 14%”.

The survey results suggest that if the views of ANC voters really counted with the Nasrec delegates, Ramaphosa would have won by a landslide, not a mere 179 votes.

Johnson writes: “It is a peculiar thing to watch a political party nominate by a hair’s breadth a candidate preferred by its voters by a huge majority and then endorse economic policies which are precisely the opposite of what its own party voters want.”

He notes: “One cannot understand the results without realising that the reality of power in today’s ANC is the existence of great regional barons [such as David Mabuza of Mpumalanga, Ace Magashule of Free State and Supra Mahumapelo of North West] who control patronage, jobs, tenders and contracts.”

An equally important context is “the violent reality of power” in the provinces, reflected in the murder of some ANC officials and activists in regional contests.

Key points from the survey are:

- Even in Dlamini-Zuma’s home province of KwaZulu-Natal, 57.2% of ANC voters said they wanted the ANC to ‘adopt more pro-business policies in the hope that business would invest more and create more jobs’. By contrast, only 19.5% wanted the ANC to ‘push on with radical policies aimed at the complete redistribution of all wealth and income’.
- Support among ANC voters for ‘more pro-business policies’ stood at 75.9% in North West, 66.8% in the Eastern Cape, 57.1% in the Northern Cape, 55.9% in Limpopo, and 49.9% in Gauteng. Support for ‘more radical policies/redistribution’ was low in all these provinces – 6.6% in North West, 8.7% in Limpopo, 10.6% in the Eastern Cape, 12.8% in the Northern Cape, and 16.2% in Gauteng.
- ANC voters were almost equally divided on these options in the Western Cape (37.8% wanted more radical policies, whereas 36.5% favoured more pro-business ones), and in Mpumalanga (34.8% preferring more radical policies, against 33.1% wanting more pro-business ones.)
- On race relations, African voters “feel unaffected by the campaign against ‘white monopoly capital’ or the general search to expose white racism of any kind. They are far more optimistic about the state of race relations than any other group (58.2% saying relations are ‘much better’ or ‘a bit better’)”.

Comments Johnson: “Unemployment, which has more than doubled under ANC rule, is overwhelmingly the chief cause of poverty and is by far the leading political issue. Thus far, then, for all its pro-poor rhetoric, the ANC has presided over increasing poverty and unemployment – and almost all the advantages of ANC rule have gone to the better educated and better off, who are able to benefit from higher public sector employment, affirmative action and BEE. This is the chief cause of growing inequality in South Africa. As we have seen, there is a large majority among ANC voters favouring a more pro-business stance by the party in the belief that this would create more jobs – and Ramaphosa benefits from this. Crudely put, his more moderate position is seen as best for jobs – and that is decisive.”

Johnson concludes that, while “the Zuma faction still operates on the assumption that in the last analysis the ANC will accept whichever leader is imposed upon it and that this will be without electoral cost ... (t)hese assumptions seem increasingly fallible.”

Ends.