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#PEOPLE'S INAUGURATION

EFF leader Julius Malema has warned Cyril Ramaphosa that he and his Cabinet needed to respect the Constitution and that no one was above the law. Malema spoke on the sidelines of Ramaphosa's inauguration. | IOL

IEC provided free and fair elections

SA has come a long way since its first democratic elections of 1994 with fewer incidents of violence

MARY DE HAAS

IN THE watershed elections of April 1994, for the first time in South Africa's history, people of all races queued to exercise their democratic right to vote.

How do our recent May 8 elections compare with those of a quarter of a century ago and others which followed them in terms of being "free and fair"?

Did the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) behave in a non-partisan, professional manner? Were political parties able to campaign freely? Were voters able to vote for the party of their choice without fear of intimidation or retribution if they were deemed to have voted for the "wrong" party.

Comparisons between 1994 and this year and the years in between show that we have indeed made tremendous progress in the past 25 years.

The four-year negotiation ride to the 1994 elections was a bumpy one. As the election date approached, the IFP, which, together with right-wing allies, had been demanding an increased devolution of powers to provinces, was refusing to participate, and warned that it was entering a stage of "resistance politics".

The political violence of the 1980s and early 1990s escalated to unprecedented levels and the threat of civil war loomed.

By the end of March 1994, a minimum of 1 149 people had died, mainly in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and, to a lesser extent, in what is now Gauteng in the first three months of the year. When the IFP announced, on April 19, that it would participate in the country heaved a collective sigh of relief.

Although the vast majority of the 300-plus April deaths in KZN occurred before that announcement, and despite the introduction of a state of emergency, attacks, including on party agents who were canvassing, continued until the 11th hour.

For logistical reasons, the elections in KZN were run over three days and, relative to the mayhem that had preceded them and despite a great deal of intimidation, they were reasonably peaceful.

However, there were glaring irregularities and a great deal of evidence of rigging.

Prince Sifiso Zulu, who was acting in a co-ordinating, administrative capacity for the IEC in Empangeni, found himself under siege and fled to Durban with a large pile of documents. An internal IEC memorandum recommending that



ANC supporters gather for the swearing-in ceremony of President Cyril Ramaphosa at Loftus Versfeld stadium yesterday. The country has come a long way with free and fair elections since the first democratic exercise, according to De Haas. | JEROME DELAY AP African News Agency (ANA)

the elections in the northern part of the province be declared null and void was ignored. It is known that the votes in some areas were not even tallied and it was widely believed that the outcome of the election stemmed from a political settlement.

The violence continued post-election, especially in northern and lower South Coast areas, leading to the first local government elections, held in most parts of the country in 1995, being scheduled for 1996 in KZN.

These elections proceeded relatively peacefully, due mainly to saturation deployment of security forces, including the SANDF. However, large numbers of people were unable to participate because they had been displaced from their homes by the violence.

Amid numerous allegations of voting irregularities and gross

intimidation, especially in rural areas, the elections appeared more free and fair in some areas than in others.

These patterns of widespread intimidation and violence, including deaths, in the run-up to the elections, were to continue through the 1999 (another violent year) and 2004 national, and 2000 and 2006 local government elections.

Allegations of voter fraud generally decreased with successive elections. Rural areas remained extremely vulnerable to violence. Election days, while not incident-free, were largely peaceful.

Amid allegations of partisan and inadequate policing, party agents in rural areas were also vulnerable, fearful to remain at their stations after dark unless there was increased police presence.

KZN Monitor reports for these

periods detail a litany of complaints of threats and intimidation, and numerous calls for police intervention.

A consistently dangerous area was Macambini (near Mandeni), where a notorious traditional leader and gross human rights violator continued to threaten and intimidate opposition party candidates (one obtained an interdict) and even IEC officials.

In the 2006 local government elections, ANC candidate Sibongile Zungu was threatened with death, and allegations of voting irregularity in her ward were documented in four affidavits.

The ANC declined to act or to offer any protection to Zungu. Her home was razed. The family miraculously escaped death, but lost everything.

By 2009 the situation leading up to, and during, the national elections had improved, but there were still

numerous documented incidents of threats and intimidation, including against Cope members after its split from the ANC.

The year 2011 saw the emergence of the National Freedom Party (NFP), which split from the IFP, and a period of conflict between the two parties continued for a few years.

In the run-up to the local government elections that year, two prominent ANC eThekweni councillors – Sibusiso Sibiba and Wiseman Mshibe – were assassinated and the elections themselves were marked by intra-ANC conflict over nominations and the alleged manipulation of party lists.

Those irregularly nominated included the mayor of Durban, Zandile Gumede.

The 2014 national elections saw further improvement. However, there were at least 20 murders (excluding

Glebelands deaths) in the seven months preceding the August 2016 local government elections.

Fourteen of these deaths appeared linked to contestation along factional lines in the ANC and government corruption. Prior to these elections, protest actions had become increasingly violent and destructive.

Although politically linked murders have continued, canvassing by party officials in the run-up to the recent elections proceeded smoothly.

One exception was a brawl between IFP and ANC representatives in the Lindelani area near Shakaville township in KwaDukuza, a historically volatile site where an ANC supporter was killed on 2014 election day.

There was one reported death during the recent elections, that of an IFP supporter in eMatimato (another closely contested area), who was allegedly shot by an ANC supporter. An NFP supporter was injured.

Violent and destructive protest action replaced inter-party tensions and conflict during the recent elections and was sufficiently disruptive to interfere with voting in some areas because of damage to infrastructure and road blocking.

Minor glitches were reported, but the IEC must be congratulated for running substantially free and fair elections. Good planning around police deployment also played an important role, with one seasoned South Coast election monitor reporting that they had handled a stand-off between EFF and ANC supporters at one station well.

There were, however, complaints about insufficient numbers being deployed at eMpembeni (Richards Bay) where people had been scared to vote after an alleged murderer was released on bail. Two days after voting, four people, including a young child and a high school pupil, were murdered in that area.

Another crucial factor in the success of these elections was the presence of well-trained observers, many of whom were deployed by churches.

We have good reason to be proud of progress made in the past quarter-century. However, the real test for the incoming government will be whether, when the 2021 elections take place, protests will still dominate the polls – or whether we shall see a steady decline in their number and severity because of improved service delivery.

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TECHNOLOGY

India, Vietnam set to win as Google halts links with Huawei

KANTHAN PILLAY

ON MAY 19, news broke that Alphabet Inc, owners of Google, had suspended business with Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei.

The ban extended to all of Google's hardware, software and technical services except those publicly available via open source licensing. The announcement did not have much impact until people began to realise that this included the Android operating system and Google Play Store. This triggered a substantial amount of outrage, mainly directed at Google.

After Samsung, Huawei is the world's biggest manufacturer of cellphones by volume. Hundreds of millions of Huawei phone users around the world will probably soon be wondering what to do next when they cannot run Google apps like Maps or Gmail, or get security updates. Before we get into what's going on, let's make the specific point that this was not Google's decision.

On May 16, the Trump administration added Huawei-affiliated companies to the Commerce Department's "Entity List". Any company on this list

is restricted from doing business with any US company without explicit US government approval. Google has no choice but to comply.

I expect every major US tech company which sells to Huawei, including Intel, Qualcomm, ARM will make similar announcements within days once their lawyers have worked out the legalities of cancelling such contracts.

A lot of the ensuing media commentary has fallen into two broad categories: Item One, "Trump is an idiot", Item Two "US Tech giants are picking on the Chinese".

Let's start with Item Two. What most commentators fail to mention is the fact that Google is excluded from the world's biggest economic ecosystem – the China market.

The entire internet in mainland China is subject to Beijing's control – for those of us who play in the technology space, we refer to it as "The Great Firewall of China".

So a lot of the Google ecosystem which I use every day – search, Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, Google Maps – is not available in mainland China. Want to use YouTube, Twitter,

Facebook, WhatsApp, or Wikipedia? Those are also illegal, and access to them is blocked.

So to play in the China internet ecosystem, one is forced to use its tools: Tencent Video (instead of YouTube), Weibo (instead of Twitter), Qzone (instead of Facebook), WeChat (instead of WhatsApp) and so on. Huawei's own phones in China use its own home-grown operating system.

Naturally, these tools are owned by Chinese companies, and few would argue against the benefit this brings to China's economy. But crucially, all these platforms have built in surveillance feeding information back to the Chinese government. As part of this "Golden Shield project" as Beijing refers to it, artificial intelligence automatically filters and censors suspicious content, such as politically sensitive language or calls to protest.

My blunt assessment of this scenario is that for the longest time now, Beijing has treated Silicon Valley with disdain.

Chinese tech companies, of which Huawei is the foremost, reap huge profit from licenced US technology in the rest of the world, but deny Google, Face-

book, Twitter such access to their own market in China.

Apple reached a Faustian pact with Beijing to get access to that market. Apple's laudable privacy standards are non-existent in mainland China in order to comply with the regime's surveillance requirements which insist that Apple's iCloud data – including the encryption keys to such data – are stored on Chinese data servers.

No doubt, this situation would have continued unchecked, because no sensible business turns away revenue in one territory because of unfair practice in another. Donald Trump drove a truck through that reasoning. Blacklisting Huawei is going to impact the bottom line of Google, Facebook and so on, and there's nothing those companies can do about this.

So this brings us back to Item One, or why I don't believe Trump is an idiot. Trump has cited security concerns as the main reason for acting against Huawei.

Huawei is the world leader in 5G technology which brings gigabit speeds to mobile networks. As far as I have observed, most telcos around the world rolling out 5G networks (including

South Africa's RAIN) have been building using Huawei infrastructure.

There are many who say that Trump is trying to give an unfair advantage to the US tech companies who are currently playing catch-up with Huawei. There might be some truth to this.

But from where I sit, the security concerns are real. Mobile network infrastructure relies on software provided by vendors, and much like our mobilephones, such software needs to be updated from time to time.

If Huawei provides 5G infrastructure in the US, nothing stops them from introducing spyware into the software from time to time. (If you think I'm paranoid, remember that China built the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa as a "gift" to us Africans, and then built spyware into the computer networks to ship confidential information to Shanghai every night.)

That's a lot of information I've given you to digest, so let me close off with the most crucial piece of this puzzle: the trade war.

The US/China monthly trade deficit has consistently averaged more than

\$35 billion (R504bn) per month. In January, Trump imposed tariffs of 25% on many Chinese imports. The Chinese responded by doing the same with US imports. Almost everyone thinks this is a bad idea.

But consider this: if a 25% tax on trade (which is what a tariff is) is now the norm, this means that the US government is benefiting from 25% of the trade deficit as new revenue. This translates to about \$80bn per year (which can subsidise a lot of industries such as soybean producers who are being hit by China's tariffs).

Winners in this war in the short term will be high-skill low-wage countries like India and Vietnam who stand poised to become new labour-intensive manufacturing hubs for US tech companies.

Personally, I believe with advances in robotics we see in assembly line technology, many of those jobs in China are going to move back to the US – which is what Trump wants.

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