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A last word on elections



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With the elections behind us, South Africans can now breathe a collective sigh of relief as the ‘noise’ that is the run-up to our elections subsides. The accusations, lies and false promises are all part and parcel of the fabric of our political landscape.

The fact that they were largely peaceful, and that according to the HSRC, 95% of us found them free and fair, must not be taken for granted, and must place us way ahead of many emerging markets.

The smaller parties, Action SA, IFP and FF+, will be very happy with their progress and can look forward to building on these gains in the National Elections in 2024. However, there is no doubt that a period of introspection is going to be necessary for both the ANC and the DA, for whom this election must serve as a warning.

The ‘Radical Economic Transformation’ (RET) forces can already smell blood and are going to blame the president, trumpeting the fact that the ANC dropped below 50% for the first time in our democratic history, on his watch. Whilst they are theoretically correct, one can only hope that on closer analysis, they realise that this was not a vote against the president, or against the renewal process. This, very specifically, was a vote against non-delivery at a municipal level.

This is all significant, as the next ANC leadership conference takes place in December next year. Last time Cyril Ramaphosa narrowly defeated Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. A few weeks ago, David Mabuza signalled that he may be prepared to run against the president. The problem the RET forces face is that they don't have a credible alternative candidate to run against Cyril Ramaphosa. In fact, such is the popularity of the president, he is more popular than the party, and replacing him before 2024 could have dire consequences for the party. As the ANC head of elections, Fikile Mbalula, commented on BD Live after the count was finalised: "The reality is that without the president as our arsenal in the campaign, we would have been politically annihilated. Were it not for the kind of president we have, we would be at 30%."

In fact, analysts argue that in the regions controlled by the ANC where a renewal agenda is underway, the ANC held its control. However, in the areas racked by corruption and infighting, it lost.

So, it could therefore be argued that this was a vote in favour of renewal. Let's hope the ruling party sees it that way.

As we stampede into the final six weeks of 2021, SA really feels 'back to normal'. Clearly, every business and social engagement held back for the past 18 months have been crammed into the much predicted three-month gap between our third and fourth wave.

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Our fourth wave, due sometime between December and February, will hopefully be less severe than the third. According to Jonny Myers, epidemiologist from UCT, writing in the Daily Maverick, more than 65% of the over 60s in this country have been vaccinated and over 50% of the 50-60 age group. He urges government therefore to monitor hospitalisations and deaths rather than new infections when the fourth wave comes before proposing lockdowns, as he feels that the more people in that category who get vaccinated by December, the more the likelihood that we have a fourth wave of infections, but not deaths.

Let's hope he is right. With spiralling numbers, Europe has just been declared the epicentre of the pandemic. They are discovering that in a world of Delta, two thirds of your country fully vaccinated is not enough.

By that logic, at one third, we're looking vulnerable. Hopefully, the recent improvement in business and consumer confidence can sustain the negative impact from a potential fourth wave and continued load shedding.

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