

Sinister twist in political upheavals

Factions fight over control to benefit from state resources

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POLITICAL analysts in Tshwane have warned of tough electioneering campaigns for the ANC ahead of municipal polls on August 3.

The warning comes as political riots continued to rock various parts of the metro yesterday.

ANC supporters are up in arms over the decision to appoint former public works minister Thoko Didiza as the mayoral candidate instead of the members proposed by the provincial executive committee.

Roland Henwood, a University of Pretoria political scientist, said the ANC could suffer a huge blow in the elections.

Such a possibility could manifest if its supporters stayed away from the polls or voted against the party, he said.

Henwood added that, at the same time, ANC supporters might be reluctant to vote for any other party despite having vowed not to vote for the ANC.

"We have heard ANC members in the past saying they won't vote in the elections, but they had not opted to vote for another party because they were unhappy with the ANC," he said.

If its supporters decided otherwise, he said, there would be a negative impact on the ANC.

The political upheavals could partly be attributed to a fight over control of state resources by both factions, he said.

He expressed concern about the type of democracy characterised by people who supported a leader because they hoped to benefit from his or her appointment to a position of power.



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Henwood likened the ANC's decision to appoint Didiza as a compromise candidate to the one to appoint 2010 Fifa World Cup boss Danny Jordaan as mayor of the Nelson Mandela Bay metro.

Violence broke out because of the dissatisfaction over who should become the mayor of Tshwane if the ANC won the elections.

Amid threats by protesters that there won't be elections if incumbent mayor Kgosientso Ramokgopa could not be retained as mayor, Henwood said the situation posed no immediate threat to preparations for the elections.

"It is an internal political issue, but the IEC (Electoral Commission of SA) will have to take note of it," he added.

If anything, he said, the ANC's internal battles meant the opposition parties might perform better in the elections.

Professor Herbert Maseremule of Tshwane University of Technology warned that if the ANC was not careful, it might "hand over the City of Tshwane to the DA on a silver platter".

He said the manner in which the ANC went about taking a decision about mayoral candidates was puzzling.

"They thought they were salvaging the situation but they actually exacerbated it," Maseremule said.

Party members might be reluctant to campaign for the ANC because of the decision to have a compromise candidate.

Chaos would definitely have an impact on the ANC's election campaign because of the two warring factions, he said.

The deep-rooted problem of factionalism had always existed in Tshwane, he added.

"As the ideal solution, the ANC would have re-engaged the branch members about the possible names of mayoral candidates behind the proposed ones," he said.

He called for the ANC to make a thorough and deeper analysis of the situation.

The IFP in Gauteng expressed shock at the ongoing violent protests.

Party caucus leader Bonginkosi Dhlamini said: "These protests demonstrate a lack of leadership in the ruling party. They are symptomatic of the factions in government that are now compromising service delivery. Also, they are an indication that people have lost trust in the government and the ruling party."

He appealed to people not to be despondent and lose hope. "The destruction of property will not solve their problem, but the real power that is in their hands is their vote, which they should exercise to fire those they don't trust anymore and hire those they trust," Dhlamini said.

The Gauteng Civic Association warned the ANC that its decision to "impose" a mayoral candidate on the Tshwane people may lead to "innocent lives being lost and the burning of schools in townships".

Themba Ncalo, the association's secretary-general, said the violence exposed weaknesses in the police, who were apparently not visible when protesters looted foreign-owned shops.

"The police's invisibility clearly indicates that the police are partisan and they have vested interests in one of the contenders for mayor," he said.

Khumbuza Bavu, the United Democratic Movement's Tshwane convener, said: "It is high time that citizens realise that the ruling party has never taken community protests seriously. We are asking ourselves why they would think they will be taken seriously now."

Absence of police seen as a sign that they are partisan