



Global Implications of the Local Governmental Elections in South Africa

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African National Congress remains dominate party over two decades after democratic transformation

Perhaps the most observed local elections in decades were held in the Republic of South Africa on August 3.

In final results of this poll the ruling African National Congress (ANC) gained 54 percent of the vote to the opposition party the Democratic Alliance (DA) 26 percent. In actual percentages the ANC won twice as many votes as the DA and many more times as the putative ultra-left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which garnered approximately eight percent.

With 100% of results transmitted, the official breakdown from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is follows:

Africa National Congress (ANC)

Councils won = 175

Seats = 5,124

Votes = over 16 million (53.91% support)

Democratic Alliance (DA)

Councils won = 23

Seats = 1,729

Votes = over 8 million (26.89% support)

Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)

Councils won = 0

Seats = 731

Votes = over 2.4 million (8.2% support)

In a statement issued on August 5 with 94 percent of the vote already tallied, the ANC said

“As results from municipal elections continue to come in to the IEC National Results Center in Pretoria, an unprecedented 14 million South Africans have cast their ballots in favor of the African National Congress (ANC) in this election. This translates to 54% of the national vote, and dramatically exceeds numbers recorded in the previous municipal election. In 2011, the ANC secured 8.1 million votes. Whilst we have received overwhelming support from our people, we will reflect and introspect where our support has dropped.”

The same statement goes on emphasizing “As results continue to come in, ANC votes are expected to increase even further. They are a ringing endorsement of the ANC’s service delivery program by the citizens of South Africa. These figures come at a time of intense speculation around voter apathy and citizen’s alleged lack of interest in political processes.”

Jackson Mthembu, the ANC Chief Whip in Parliament noted: “We are quite humbled and very happy that people of South Africa still trust the African National Congress. Of course we have had setbacks in areas like the Nelson Mandela Bay but we are magnanimous in victory and also magnanimous in defeat because we are democrats. At the national level, the people of South Africa have — in their majority — still voted for the African National Congress. As you can see, we are standing at over 50 percent. We are now at over 54 percent nationally and that amounts to over 13 million votes that people of South Africa have given to the ANC – out of the 26 million voters we have in the country.” (Aug. 5)

The Role of the Corporate and Bourgeois Governmental Media

Much speculation about the outcome was the pre-occupation of many corporate and governmental media outlets from South Africa itself to Europe and North America. Predictions that the African National Congress (ANC) would suffer catastrophic losses in its governing status in municipalities, townships and rural areas was much anticipated by opposition parties inside the country as well as others who have for years predicted that the non-racial democratic political system was unsustainable.

This same outlook has guided the reporting of the results and their significance for one of the world’s youngest nations which has been subjected to white minority-rule for centuries where during 1652 to 1994, the European population and ruling class sought to eradicate all forms of resistance by the African people. These elections in South Africa took place within the broader regional and international context of intensified warfare and destabilization campaigns against all states and parties which are considered part of the so-called “emerging economies.”

South Africa along with the entire sub-continent has been suffering from an economic downturn due to several factors including a drought, the sharp decline in commodity prices, and its concomitant impact on the generation of foreign exchange needed to purchase industrial goods and services. The value of the South African national currency, the rand, has declined to nearly 15-1 against the U.S. dollar.

Since the ascendancy of the ANC government in 1994 there has been a systematic disinvestment of private capital from the nation with other countries such as Mexico and Ghana now ahead of South Africa in gold production. Even the price of the much-needed platinum resources has declined in the aftermath of the international slump in commodity values. The mine owners have steadfastly resisted the demands of labor unions both those allied with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and others such as AMCU which has challenged COSATU, a close ally of the ANC, for the membership of the workers.

Nonetheless, these issues are usually not taken into consideration by media agencies and commentators many of whom have never been favorable to the ANC. Since 2015, the ANC-dominated government has been at loggerheads with the United States administration of President Barack Obama over South African participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) as well as charges by the ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe who has accused the U.S. embassy of fostering a regime-change strategy inside the country.

Privately-owned media firms which constitute the overwhelming number of news outlets inside South Africa failed to account for the general trends prevailing internationally. The losses of the ANC in Nelson Mandela Bay around Port Elizabeth and in the Municipality of Tshwane, encompassing the capital of Pretoria, were never attributed to the decline in foreign exchange revenues and the large-scale unemployment stemming from the downsizing in industrial employment and its peripheral effects in the commercial and service sectors.

Imperialism Seeks to Destabilize Independent and Anti-Imperialist States

South Africa and the Southern Africa region are not standing alone in the current international crisis of economic underdevelopment. Since the decline in oil and other commodities prices over the last two years, states such as Russia, China, Venezuela, Brazil, Zimbabwe, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, among others, have seen a precipitous drop in economic performance.

With specific reference to states such as South Africa which are governed by former national liberation movements turned political parties, the traditional opposition to such organizations have never ceased. This must be taken into consideration in light of the actual program of the Democratic Alliance in South Africa which encompasses a heavier reliance on international finance capital as part of its platform to ostensibly improve the economy.

The EFF says that it supports the nationalization of mining and land to the benefit of the African majority inside the country. Nevertheless, the strongest political rhetoric relayed by the EFF inside and outside of parliament where it holds over twenty seats in Cape Town, is directed not against the still white-dominated ruling class interests but the ANC. The EFF blocked with the DA in a failed impeachment resolution submitted to parliament earlier in the year saying the President Jacob Zuma had violated the constitution.

This is the same constitution that ANC and other revolutionary organizations and trade unions fought for over a period of decades. These struggles between the ANC, COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the western-backed opposition groups will continue over the next three years when national elections are to be held for the presidency and the legislative structures.

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