

Hope for the best and prepare for the worst



**POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE
BY DR JAN VENTER**

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While I desperately want to write a column on the DA, especially regarding the goings on in Cape Town and the party infighting, the ANC keeps grabbing the headlines.

In 2014, the *Daily Maverick* reported that while addressing ANC supporters in KaNyamazane, then president Jacob Zuma said that the ANC needed a “huge majority” to change “certain things” in the Constitution, because there were “certain hurdles” in the Constitution. The former president was, of course, referring to the expropriation of land without compensation, which would require an amendment to the Constitution. Understandably, there was a public outcry in response to Zuma’s statement.

After the election of Cyril Ramaphosa in February as president of South Africa, the nation was swept up in a wave of euphoria. However, just weeks after his election, South Africa is stuck back in 2014!

SOUTH AFRICA’S FUTURE

At the moment, there are two possible scenarios for the country that I have developed after engaging in discussions with various businesspeople who deal with government at high level. According to these sources, the Constitution will not be changed, but we should prepare ourselves for the unlikely event that it will occur.

The first scenario involves the slow and steady revival of the country’s economy.

It would seem that Ramaphosa came into power significantly weaker than previously believed. Because of this, he had to make serious concessions to the factions loyal to the previous president and the current deputy president, David Mabuza.

He does not have an iron grip on the ANC, and the party is wavering in the polls. The party also fears the impact of Julius Malema’s EFF, which is increasingly ‘stealing’ the votes of the rapidly radicalising youth (young people under the age of 40), regardless of whether these voters are privileged (university students and scholars) or underprivileged (those who have never participated in economic activity).

While still president, Zuma started tapping into these support bases by blaming the ANC’s lack of service delivery, poor performance, lack of economic integration, and the effects of corruption on white people, through the narrative of ‘white monopoly capital’.

At the start of 2018, with the 2019 general election looming, Ramaphosa does not have the power to radically turn the ship. Therefore, he is picking his battles and compromising by recalling ministers such as Nhlanhla Nene and Pravin Gordhan to strengthen the economic cluster on the one hand, and investigating expropriation without compensation on the other. Following the election in 2019, he may consolidate his power and a more moderate, pro-business ANC will rule. This scenario, however, is beginning to look less and less likely.

THE SECOND SCENARIO

The second scenario begins in much the same way: Ramaphosa is trying to ride the wave of left-wing populism, and one of two things occurs.

First, he cannot control the EFF and its populist rhetoric, and the corrupt within the ANC dominate and defeat his faction. African nationalism and socialism thus triumph and the Constitution is amended.

Should the Constitution change, it will not only be farmland that will be targeted. Firearms, art collections, and stock portfolios will also be within the state’s grasp. Moreover, banks will fold, and international capital will flee.

The second possibility is that Malema rejoins the ANC. This is the favoured strategy of the ANC: co-option and absorption. Ramaphosa cannot shut the door on left-wing populism, but concessions are made on both sides, and Malema and some of his party members may thus re-join the ANC. The EFF will then disappear, and the ANC, now a leftist party, continues its onslaught on the Constitution and people in “positions of privilege”, with Malema again bound by the rules and hierarchy of the ANC.