

# OPINION

## EDITORIAL

### LITMUS TEST FOR FEUDING ZULU ROYAL FAMILY

THE raging feud in the Zulu Royal family has pushed the succession battle to another level, with the courts now set to adjudicate on the matters at hand.

The first wife's decision to go to court to challenge the will of the late King Goodwill Zwelithini has deepened divisions and left the Zulu nation in limbo.

It may be a while before the next king is named after the involvement of the courts.

Prince Misuzulu has been touted as the next in line to be named the king, but the bitter battle would force the government not to at this stage be involved.

This is not the first time in the country a royal family has been embroiled in legal disputes over the new king or queen.

Other nations have been rocked by factional disputes and fights and the courts were forced to intervene.

But for the Zulu royal family this may be new territory in over 50 years since the coronation of King Goodwill Zwelithini in December 1971 after the passing of his father King Cyprian Bhekuzulu kaSolomon in 1968.

At the time it had taken the Zulu nation three years before the now late King Zwelithini ascended to the throne.

However, the dispute in the Zulu royal family happens at the time that the nation is mourning the departure of Queen Regent Mantfombi.

The dust had hardly settled after the passing of the Queen Regent when the feud exploded into the public domain after the high court action was launched.

Court matters sometimes take years to be resolved.

This is the litmus test for the royal family and nation on how this will be resolved.

The other big question is how the position of the new king will be quickly filled with the court action hanging despite promises there will be no vacuum.

Let us hope that despite all the troubles facing the family and the nation this would be resolved quickly and amicably.



# Glimpse of freedom fades as poll promises fall by wayside

*Ramaphosa acknowledges that millions continue to suffer from lack of basic services*

## RIGHT ON THE MONEY



MUSHTAK PARKER

AS SOUTH Africa enters its 28th year of democracy following the collapse of apartheid and the country's first non-racial elections on April 27, 1994 – Freedom Day – millions of compatriots are still crying for freedom!

Freedom from poverty, corruption, violence, marginalisation, unemployment, inequality – the list gets bigger like a rainbow of hopelessness towering over the South African nation.

Madiba and his departed cadres must be pondering beyond the pearly gates: "OMG, how long is our march to freedom really going to take? We left them a legacy and look at what they have done!"

Anniversaries are usually a time for rejoicing and reflection.

An occasion to take stock of the state of the nation and its democracy. Unfortunately, for most South Africans, already taking a battering from the economic, health and social impact of Covid-19, there is very little to rejoice about!

The ANC and its SACP coalition partner have ruled the country as a one-party state since 1994, which in three decades nurtured a culture of entitlement, state capture, cronyism, self-enrichment, ideological and policy ambiguity, cadres for life and increasing disdain for the Constitution and rule of law.

South African democracy was flawed from the start, through no fault of its own nor the ANC's. It is a quirk of modern liberal democratic political and civic culture.

No amount of Freedom Charter, "Progressive Constitution" and "Bill of Rights" can mitigate these "flaws". They are only as effective as their enforcement under the rule of law and the respect shown to their provisions by all citizens.

Just look at the disdain Jacob Zuma has shown the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture, Fraud and Corruption!

Just look at the failure of ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule and other criminally-charged senior party members to vacate their offices or step aside by April 30. Instead of suspending them as the party's own Integrity Committee recommended, its NEC is throwing a lifeline to them.

How surreal! A day earlier President Cyril Ramaphosa, appearing before the Zondo Commission, strongly stressed his support for it, welcoming "this scrutiny as a necessary step in tackling corruption in the state and across society".

Even more puzzling is his claim in his Freedom Day address that "we have a Constitution that is a shield and a protection for all".

Mr President, this moral and political ambiguity is part of the problem, and contrary to your sentiments to the commission; it may impede rather than assist the ANC along the path of democratic and constitutional renewal.

Lack of choice is a growing feature of liberal democracies, especially when you have one party dominating the polity. Democracy is not only about free and fair elections. It is also about a strong government and opposition.

State capture has become entrenched partly because of the paucity of a strong opposition. The DA has proved to be ineffectual as much as the EFF is unelectable. The ANC has thrived on exploiting its liberation history. It is time it accounts for its government history.

Following the Zuma Kleptocracy and the current political, economic and social woes besetting the Rainbow



NELSON Mandela must be pondering beyond the Pearly Gates how much longer the walk to freedom is going to take, says the writer. | REUTERS

Nation, is the ANC starting to lose its mojo?

Here voters are partly to blame. One can understand the euphoria after the first two decades of liberation. But it is up to voters to force change.

Nothing in democratic politics is set in stone.

Remember the once powerful BN Coalition that ruled Malaysia since independence in 1963 only to be ejected in 2018. Yes, over the IMDB corruption scandal for which PM Najib Razak was convicted.

The lack of a credible alternative to the ANC has allowed it to ride the electoral wave by default.

Despite the despair, the ANC retains its absolute majority at 52% in most polls. Ramaphosa, for the sake of the country, could explore the German option of a Grand Coalition involving a number of minority parties. There are those on the radical left who would countenance a tie-up with the EFF.

That would be disastrous for the ANC and the country.

I wonder had the urbane Robert Sobukwe, leader of the PAC, lived longer whether South African politics would have been healthier in that it could have served as a credible alternative to the ANC.

Sedick Isaacs, the ANC intellectual who spent 11 years on Robben Island, once told me that "what is needed is the emergence of a strong opposition party that can give an alternative view to the ANC. I was hoping Cope would grow into that role. In a democracy opposition is just as important as the government. Here it is virtually a one-party state".

Democracy has brought de jure rights and dignity, but still de facto despair and inequalities.

Ramaphosa acknowledges that "the promise of 1994 has not yet been fulfilled. Millions of South Africans continue to suffer from lack of basic services like running water; for those living in fear every day from violence and crime; and who have no jobs to support themselves and their families, true freedom remains elusive".

Continuing to blame South Africa's woes on "the legacy of apartheid" is passe.

South Africa, says the IMF, is the most unequal society in the world. Six metrics mark this inequality – very high income inequality; highly skewed income distribution where the top 20% of the population holds over 68% of income; stark regional disparities in income per capita; subdued GDP growth which undermines inclusion; high unemployment and unequal access to opportunities for all.

John Pilger reminded in his book *Freedom Next Time*, true freedom for Madiba's people "remains a distant dream" and how people battling to free themselves often glimpse freedom, only to see it taken away!

*Parker is a writer and economist based in London*

## COMMENT



DR GAWIE BOTMA

### DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE MEANING OF PRESS FREEDOM

THE theme for this year's World Press Freedom Day celebrated today, "Information is a public good", invites the following questions: When does information become journalism? And what is the relationship between journalism and press freedom?

Here we explore South African newspaper history in search of answers. The first paper in (what is today part of) South Africa was The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapse Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berichter, a bilingual weekly, first published in the Cape colony under British occupation in 1800.

Although published by a private firm (whose many commercial dealings included a stake in the lucrative slave trade), the newspaper (Gazette, for short) was "under government sanction" from the start.

The press and newspaper, therefore, was not "free", a fact recognised and lamented by contemporary observers, who were familiar with a growing newspaper industry in Europe and North America, but not in the "colonies" until later in the 19th century.

Current scholars, in liberal constitutional democracies like South Africa, however, often do not consider information generated in repressive political environments – which includes the content of the Gazette – as journalism.

Journalism, as any South African journalism student will tell you, requires independence from government control and censorship, which was obviously not the case with the Gazette. But is political control and influence the only potential disqualifier of journalism? What about commercial interests?

Besides the prominent publication of government proclamations and notices, a major part of the weekly content of the Gazette was taken up by private commercial advertisements.

The Gazette, from the start, had something in common with current models of journalism: it was paid for by advertisers and sponsors, and had a profit motive. But the claim of the Gazette to journalism does not end there, because snippets of international and local news were included regularly, albeit rather randomly.

News content – taken from international newspapers – was included regularly, on which the Gazette would sometimes briefly comment, while local news and occurrences were covered under various headings and according to topics, which vaguely resemble the much later diversification of journalism practice into "beats".

In other words, despite its rudimentary form and shortcomings, the Gazette circulated information for the public good, paid for by advertisers, in a format and manner which is recognisable as a newspaper even today.

Its motivation was not altruistic, but neither is much of what is considered journalism today. Perhaps, therefore, the Gazette deserves more credit from a journalistic perspective?

Even if the contribution of the Gazette to journalism is under-emphasised, as some scholars do, because of its chequered past – a combination of overt government involvement and the connection of its private owners to slavery – it still illustrates the uneasy boundary between the provision of public information and journalism.

It also shows that, from the beginning, journalism, as it struggled to emerge, was situated between the state and the marketplace. As the Gazette indicates, journalism is able to emerge, even from adverse conditions, like the authoritarian regimes of the colonial and apartheid past. It, in fact, illustrates when information becomes journalism. It happens not simply because of a specific ownership structure, financial model or public service motive, but when the content it provides serves society and its citizens.

Relative levels of press freedom, from both political and economic interests, influence the quality of journalism. But journalism is possible, even without a high degree of press freedom, while a press which is considered "free" could provide information which is not in the public interest.

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## LETTERS

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MANY commentators on the Indo/Pak conflict and religious legitimacy defy logic and reality.

Engaging in a futile debate on the emergence of nations and the expansion of religion over the centuries and their influence on the Asian sub-continent is a deadly distraction from the escalating reality on the ground.

India is grimly witnessing miscalculation of the pandemic due critically to political arrogance and the illusion of power. In a similar vein, the conflict between two heavily armed nuclear powers cannot be solved militarily. Both sides possess first and second strike nuclear capabilities.

Both countries are dominated by

### Arguments on Indo/Pak conflict so often defy logic

military strategists who supremely believe that they will emerge intact after a limited or fully fledged nuclear exchange. Denial of reality has led India to become a vast crematorium under the deadly shadow of Covid-19. In a nuclear assault both countries will be reduced to ashes. It is a grim reality that both countries have developed military doctrines and deployed nuclear weapons designed to incinerate their respective forces on land, at sea and in the air.

Pakistan and India could have 400-500 nuclear weapons by 2025, with

and every vestige of civilisation in a flash that took thousands of years to nurture.

Nuclear roulette is a dangerous strategy, one miscalculation could result in an atomic inferno that will be impossible to control. Both India and Pakistan are masters at nuclear brinkmanship. The control of foreign relations by nations creates a pressing demand for belligerents to adhere to civility. The global Covid-19 pandemic has caused catastrophic consequences in every corner of the world. Atomic radiation caused by a war in Asia will envelop the entire world in its tentacles.

Who will attend to the survivors, when in reality today we are unable to provide oxygen for those who are infected with Covid-19? This ultimate folly will in its wake erase all religions

FAROUK ARAIE | Benoni