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Experience: PhD in ICT focusing on e-voting. Consultant to IEC and UNDP on e-voting and voter registration systems. Delivered lectures/seminars and workshops to African EMB for several years.

I believe that the IEC has the competency to hold a successful free and fair election. The IEC has a structured carefully thought-out logistical operation which can easily be extended to be social distancing and Covid-19 compliant. The need for voter secrecy, in any event, places distances between voter check-in, verification or validation, and ballot casting.

Special Voting Day for commodities

One could have a Special Voting Day for disabled and citizens with severe comorbidities who may be fearful and disinclined to vote. The commodities are an important sector given their significant number and the view that our nation is generally unhealthy. Further there is yet no specific plan to vaccinate this sector as the health department indicated it is too difficult to prioritize people with comorbidities for vaccination.

The purpose ultimately is to reduce the traffic to the voting station through some reasonable check,. IEC will have to think of creative ways to identify them through a medical note, medical script, or even the medicine vial they take. This is simply to serve to prevent an (unlikely) deluge of voters.

Vote by queue cohorts

It could be possible to increase voting hours to allow a cohort of voters at a time to prevent overcrowding and reduce queue size and boredom. Issue ticket to overflows to come in the next cohort.

Social media

The biggest possible threat to the elections is disruption by stakeholders with a vested interest to derail a particular regional or local election for whatever reasons. The leading party is divided into factions. The opposition has not been able to campaign, so they have not been able to seize on the ANCs perceived weakness. The disruption could also derive from stakeholders denied a chance to participate. The disruption will likely be launched through online methods using social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter etc.). Covid-19 provides an opportune tool for disruption with minimal effort.

These individuals will use social media to peddle fake news to entrench division or incite fear or both.

A careful monitoring system should be in place together with constant online analysis of *trending hashtags*. An ear **or mouth friendly endearing hashtag** must be created to be launched to rebut these online attacks. The Christchurch massacre has refence. In the face of an extraordinary act of unprecedented violence with chaotic potential conflict, the Prime Minister leveraged the hashtag **#TheyAreUs** to preach togetherness and to rebut efforts to transform the country into a violent one.

We NEED a hashtag, because this is how the youth communicate.

Allow None of The Above (NOTA) Vote as a candidate

This will reestablish the elections in the mind, and even mitigate social media negativity of the electorate. Here the electorate can exercise their democratic right but reject every candidate (None Of The Above).

This was introduced in India in 2013 because they use electronic vote, and the citizens did not have a right to democratically spoil their ballot. A ballot is spoilt when a voter is upset with the candidate choice or wish to signal other unhappiness.

India anticipated that NOTA could win and changed the law to say that the winner is a physical natural person with the most votes. One imagines that if NOTA won by a landslide, the unfortunate winner would resign anyway, forcing a re-election.

I pray for the appropriate wisdom to be bestowed to the deliberation team headed by our able Deputy Chief Justice Moseneke.

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