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ARTICLE FOR DIE SUID AFRIKAANTHE POLITICAL AGENDA FOR A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN SADR F VAN ZYL SLABBERT6 January 1993**INTRODUCTION:**

One can either look at the political agenda of South Africa in a comparative analytical manner: in other words, within the context of some framework of democratization currently in use and then judge the transition in South Africa against that background. In this way one could compare structural constraints i.e.: the distribution of economic opportunity and infrastructure; the composition of the population and social characteristics such as age, literacy, health, skills etc. On a more voluntaristic basis one can also then look at elites and their supporters, strategic interest groups like the military, business, unions etc and see how they respond to these structural features and in terms of them interact with each other. Having done this one can then begin to calculate at what stage in the agenda of political transition South Africa finds itself and then speculate on further developments and prospects. Such an exercise

would then add or contribute to a particular analytical paradigm for understanding democratic transition. There are a host of such research programmes being conducted all over the world, also in South Africa.

This is not the procedure I wish to follow in this short article. I assume that South Africa like many other countries is involved in a process of democratization. I also assume that there are some general comparative features to this process that makes it sensible to talk of a process of democratization. Like many other analysts, I do not assume that this process is inevitable or possible of prescription. One can identify trends and options and then plausibly calculate the likely outcome of the process in a particular situation. In order to do that, the attitude, actions and decisions of political elites and their supporters have a direct bearing on the process of democratic transition and its outcome.

Research indicates that such political groupings can commit themselves to mass mobilization, unilateral imposition or repression, revolutionary seizure of power or negotiations. Or even a combination of them. Whatever the particular transition, they have entirely different consequences for democratic transition.

In South Africa there seems to be an acceptance on the part of a significant section of political leaders and their supporters that unilateral domination or revolutionary seizure of power is

not going to bring about democratic transition. Although within the ranks of those who oppose the incumbent regime, there are elements who would like to give preference to mass action, even insurrection, the dominant mode of transition between the incumbent government and some of its major opponents is that of negotiation. There are flanking parties who reject negotiations, on the left and the right, and prefer more militant political strategies, but for the moment they are the exception which prove the general rule that negotiation has become the dominant mode of transition between the major political groupings and their supporters.

The purpose of this article is to identify and present the political agenda for transition to democracy that seems to be emerging from the negotiations between these political groupings; to speculate on a time frame and to identify factors that may prolong or shorten it.

SOUTH AFRICA 1992 - THE EMERGENCE OF AN AGENDA

Politically speaking 1992 was a year of disillusionment with, and in South Africa. It was also a year in which many preferred positions were abandoned by the different parties; common problems were recognised and a growing awareness that agreement had to be reached about the rules of the game for transition. Precisely as these rules became more articulated between some of the major players, others became more volatile and recalcitrant.

The year started with both the ANC and the Government approaching negotiations as if they could pull off democratic transition on their own respective terms. For the ANC it was largely a question of creating the appropriate circumstances for the NP government to abandon political power and transfer it to a democratic constitution in which they were fairly confident that they would be the majority party. For the incumbent government it was a matter of exploiting the dynamics of transition in such a manner that the ANC would have no choice but to come on board as junior partners and accept responsibility for managing an almost indefinite transition to a democratic constitution.

These attitudes set the stage for a period of political interaction between these two and all other political parties in which there was a great deal of second guessing; playing hidden agendas; one upmanship and scapegoating. Nowhere did it come to the fore more than on the issue of violence. No one was prepared to accept responsibility and everyone else except themselves were to blame. This created fertile ground for violence to escalate; for those with sinister intent to further destabilise negotiations and even for supporting groups to pursue their own agendas which contradicted the public pronouncements and commitments of their leaders.

These basic attitudes eventually led to the breakdown of CODESA as a negotiating forum. For a short while in fact negotiations as a mode of transition appeared to be dead. This was the time

when mass mobilization and mass action took hold of the ANC as the preferred mode of change. This was done partly to re-establish contact with grassroots support, but also to test the possibility of insurrection as a mode of transition. All of this simply served to underline the preference for negotiations as the dominant mode of transition.

In the meantime the economy was stagnating and unemployment and poverty escalated. The most important political signs of this came from the unions who increasingly became more concerned with job security than wage increases in their negotiations. But particularly within the leadership of the ANC the realisation developed that if they were to govern in the near future they would inherit an economic wasteland which would put them under an impossible performance crisis towards their followers. This was also heavily underlined by frequent visits abroad and from visits to South Africa by foreign business interests, the World Bank and the IMF. Political deadlock was reacting on economic stagnation and compounding it.

Instead of CODESA reviving , bilateral talks began between protagonists, initially the ANC and the Government, to iron out specific difficulties. Other political formations began to feel the pressure to participate in negotiations: the Conservative Party shed some support and leadership to the Afrikaner Volks Unie who were prepared to negotiate; the PAC entered into tentative negotiations. Inkatha began to feel left out and with the announcement of the Accord of Understanding between the ANC

and the Government, announced that it was pulling out of negotiations and pursuing its own line of action. This resulted in COSAG (Concerned South Africans Group), which consisted of Inkatha, Brigadier Ghosa of Ciskei, the Conservative Party, President Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana and the Afrikaner Volksunie: Ironically they came together not because they were against negotiations but because they felt left out of it.

An emerging consensus between the ANC and the Government on an agenda for democratic transition was developing: This was given a great impetus by a discussion document written by Joe Slovo which stated that powersharing or a Government of National Unity between the ANC and the incumbent government may be necessary for a number of years to safeguard democracy. Although this created a great deal of controversy and debate within the ANC it was accepted as the "strategic perspective" of the ANC. Particularly significant was the statement that "strategic forces which had to be considered now are the SADF, SAP and the Civil Service in general". They had the capacity to "delay transition for a lengthy period of time or even more serious attempts to subvert transition". The ANC document even said it may be necessary to consider "job security, pensions and a general amnesty as part of a negotiated settlement".

This new direction towards negotiations had hardly set in when Justice Goldstone raided Military Intelligence Quarters and seized documents which clearly showed SADF collusion in undermining the ANC as negotiating partners. De Klerk appointed

a top SADF investigator together with Goldstone to cut the matter to the bone and expose any wrongdoing. Although one suspects that even now there is more to it than meets the eye, De Klerk did announce the early retirement of top SADF personnel who may have "undermined negotiations" and promised further enquiry.

It is my view that this was done in the way it was to protect a fragile agenda for democratic transition that had been agreed upon between the ANC and the Government, and which they had agreed to sell to other relevant parties. These preceding events help to shape the coming into being of this agenda.

THE AGENDA

Both the Government and the ANC have published their separate agendas for transition in which the different phases largely correspond and where there are some, although not major, time differences. I am not going to put them separately, but give my own schematic presentation of them which is a synthetic interpretation:

PHASE	AGENDA	TIME		
		GOVT	ANC	MINE
NOW	Breakdown of CODESA	*	*	*
		March	March	Jun
I	From Bilateral - Multilateral Talks	93	93	93
II	Level the Playing Fields	June	June	Oct
		93	93	93
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Media Council</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Regional</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Electoral Committee</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Security</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>TEC</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Trans.Const.</p> </div> </div>			
III	Elections	March	Sept	Nov
		94	93	94
IV	Interim Govt of Nat Unity	April	Oct	Jan
	↓	94	93	95
	Parliament Const. Assembly			
	↓			
	Executive			
V	First Democratic Elections	?	?	2000

The three columns under Time on the right hand give different time interpretations to the implementation of the different phases. This is simply to indicate that there are differing views about how the problems in each phase can be overcome. A brief word about each phase will illustrate this:

PHASE ONE

Moving from bilateral to multilateral talks could turn out to be the most difficult and time consuming phase. In a sense the parties have to 'buy' the agenda agreed upon between the ANC and Government for the other phases to be realistic. It is here where the position of Inkatha in particular and other parties such as Homeland Governments, 'Independent Homelands', Conservative Party, PAC, AZAPO and others are to be sorted out. It is in this phase where some of the major parties may decide to go it alone. This may result in a coalescing centre with militant fringe parties trying to destabilize the newfound consensus. It could heighten the possibility of a clampdown.

PHASE TWO

The task of the Transitional Executive Council is to 'level the playing fields' between the different competing parties. They have to do so in conjunction with a newly established Media Council to look at the role of TV, Radio and Newspapers during elections and an Electoral Commission to hammer out the conditions for voting, monitoring and determining the results of the elections. The task of the TEC is to appoint sub-councils

to go into matters such as : Regional Government and its boundaries; rationalizing the SEcurity Forces and Interim Constitutional Principles to guide the Interim Constitution of a newly elected Government of National Unity.

These are at present highly unresolved issues, if not between the ANC and the Government, then certainly between them and the other parties such as Inkatha, CP, PAC etc. Resolving them could postpone elections for quite a while and may give rise to the temptation to form an 'interim-interim' Government more quickly and along different routes.

PHASE THREE

If South Africa has reached this stage an important milestone in democratic transition will have been passed. By then we will not only know how well parties have performed, but also who stayed out and with what broad support the outcome has been accepted. These elections can be a watershed event in solving problems of political legitimacy and can enable a subsequent government, whether one of national unity or not, to engage in programmes which at present are not feasible.

PHASE FOUR

An Interim Government of National Unity will consist of two components : A Parliament with an Executive that has to administer transition and a Constituent Assembly which will have to negotiate the first fully democratic constitution under which the first elections will be held. Most likely negotiating such

a constitution may prove to be much easier than governing the interim period. It is precisely in this period when the idea of 'power sharing' between the ANC and the Government may become relevant. During this period we may see the gradual transformation of the civil service, including the rationalisation of the SADF, SAP and other security structures. Also, the initiation of a number of development programmes in health, job training, housing, land reform, etc. During this period the Government of National Unity will be under a 'performance crisis' to deliver and most vulnerable to its more militant even populist outbidders. That is why I suggest that the final phase of truly democratic elections could be postponed for as long as five years.

CONCLUSION

Most important to realise is that this emerging agenda for democratic transition in South Africa does not cast the process in stone. It is at this stage a rather fragile consensus between some of the major parties on how they would like to see the process move forward. But it does reflect a common recognition of some of the major problems which they have thus far encountered as well as some of those that have to be confronted.

Together with the emergence of this agenda, we have seen a proliferation of forums addressing specific issues, e.g. the Economic Forum, National Housing Forum, Electricity Forum. There is talk of an Education and Local Government Forum. These forums indicate an awareness that transition is not only about the formal transfer of political power, but also about economic restructuring and problems of inequality and poverty and they also draw in a wide range of expertise that helps to raise their resolution from partisan political manipulation.

Finally, the strengthening of the Goldstone Commission and the NPA as well as increased involvement of the international community in an advisory and monitoring capacity shows an awareness of the need for transitional stability during negotiations and the period of interim government. Perhaps the most encouraging aspects of the emerging political agenda for democratic transition is twofold : a continuing declared commitment to a democratic outcome and a deepening respect for the complexity of the process.