

Sunday Times

Challenges for 1992

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Time runs out for 1992 and South Africa's politicians conclude it with an "all"-party conference on the country's political future. CODESA could be the start of a good beginning. This beginning is light years away from the grumbling deadlock of the eighties. However, if we look at where the different political competitors say ~~where~~ they would like to be at the end of the process, we still have a long way to go. We can measure progress, one year from now, on how our politicians have managed to respond to, (at least), the following challenges:—

One: The relationship between those who participate or not in negotiations.

This can also be described as the relationship between inclusiveness and "sufficient consensus". The latter concept is the fancy new term for how participants reach a decision on CODESA. Consensus is deemed "sufficient" if, in the opinion of the chairmen, (after consultation), "enough" (?) parties agree about a particular issue. It is not quite clear why the excluded parties were necessary in the first instance. This question becomes very pertinent if one keeps in mind that the current composition of CODESA reflects the absence of right-

wing as well as parties who want to form a new Patriotic Front eg. PAC, AZAPO etc. These two political poles encapsulate what has been the enduring source of political conflict in SA. for most of this century: the demands for "white" self-determination precluding the possibility of "black" self-determination and vice versa. No matter how crude, primitive racist or irrational these demands may be, if these two political poles gather momentum as flanking parties, and by their exclusion, manage to outbid the consensus, ("sufficient" or otherwise), of the centre, negotiations will fail. If, however, these poles to some extent, become part of the process of negotiations, a new look would have to be taken at the concept of "sufficient" consensus. If consensus excludes any party that has the capacity to undermine progress, consensus is meaningless. For better or for worse, this is what the guts of a political compromise is all about. Dissent has to be containable enough not to undermine the consensus necessary for progress.

Two: The Relationship Between Negotiation + Administration

The fact that negotiations begin does not mean that Govt. stops. The politics of negotiation are not the same as the politics of administration and yet transition has to be negotiated as well as administered. Parties at present differ on who should participate in or accept responsibility for either. The PAC wishes to

negotiate the transfer of power but do not want to risk taking responsibility for administering transition. The A.N.C. wants to take this risk for fear that the N.P. government may get too much credit for administering transition and thereby steal a march in the negotiating and electoral states. The N.P. Government is keen to negotiate but not as keen to share responsibility for administration, particularly in the areas of security; i.e. Defence + Police. The dilemma between negotiation and administration highlights the fact that our transition is not an event, (flag-down-flag-up ceremony), but a process. Continuity in this process depends on resolving this dilemma and the sooner clarity is reached on issues such as Interim Govt, Transitional Govt, Govt. of National Unity, Constituent Assembly, National Referendum, the better.

This relationship also underscores the critical role of the Civil Service (State) during transition. Any Govt, whether incumbent, interim, transitional or whatever, that has to contend with a hostile, footdragging civil service, will find itself unable to deliver on the compromises reached through negotiations. Transforming the Civil Service to meet the imperatives of transition is a vital key to the success of the process. Next year will be decisive for Homeland Govts, ("Independent" or not), as well as State Departments - particularly Defence, Police, Finance, Education + Health.

Three: The Relationship Between Stability + Consent.

The process of transition has been plagued with

problems of instability from the outset: violence, crime, destabilization, factional confrontation, etc. Generally speaking, stability in any society depends on a precarious relationship between coercion and consent — and there is usually an inverse relationship between the two: i.e. the more society depends on coercion for stability, the less it can be sure of the consent of those subjected to it, and the more it depends on consent, the less it may need coercion. In SA, the conventional instruments of coercive stability i.e. Defence Force and Police, become part of the process of transition, steeped in controversy. They lack general legitimacy and therefore cannot assume the consent of many of those over whom they exercise coercion. Can COSASA succeed in negotiating the maintenance of stability which is accepted by the participating parties to be sufficiently impartial so that they can proceed with negotiations? The signing of the Peace Accord was, again, a good start but its significance becomes clouded by Mandela, Buthelezi & SeKoroh accusing each other of bad faith on the issue of political violence, and particularly, of some of their supporters observe neither the spirit nor the letter of the accord.

The relationship between stability & consent touches directly also on the legal system, our courts, civil liberties and the maintenance of public order. However, the constraints on coercive stability define the space within which these other instruments of social stability can flourish. Needless to say, the relationship between stability and consent in

transition is closely linked to the relationships between who participates and does not in negotiation, and between negotiation and ^{responsibility for} ~~administration~~ ^{administration} during transition.

Four: The Relationship Between Civil Society and Political Control.

Civil society is that arena in the individual's social life where she or he can participate free from direct party political or government control e.g. communal life, voluntary associations in churches, charities, sports clubs, rate payers associations etc. In an authoritarian society this part of societal life is politically managed. Under Apartheid/Extralegal every aspect of life was politically managed: where we slept, made love, went to school, bought property, went to church, played sport etc. From Feb 2, 1990 the political management of Apartheid began to collapse and we were exposed to the fragile and fractured nature of our civil society, particularly in deprived or oppressed communities. Will the old political management of civil society be replaced by a new political management, or will civil society be allowed to develop its own autonomy? This is a vital question for the creation of a culture of democracy. It is in civil society where values such as tolerance, compromise, limitations on individual and bureaucratic power flourish. Without such values operative in civil society even the most perfect democratic constitution cannot be sustained. At present, civil society in SA, is ravaged by violence.

interethnic strife, crime and political intolerance — it hovers on the threshold of becoming the killing fields of political predators and carpet baggers.

Five: The Relationship Between Democracy + Development.

This is perhaps the most important challenge of all. Development depends on a special relationship between growth (economy) and redistribution (polity) — the one generates wealth; the other improves the quality of life in society. If redistribution takes place at the expense of growth, development dies — if growth is indifferent to the demands of redistribution it generates conflict which undermines growth, and development dies. There is nothing in democracy which guarantees either growth or redistribution and therefore development. However, many who demand democracy expect development and many who resist democracy fear that it will make development impossible. Development without democracy is possible for a while; but democracy without development is short-lived. If COBESA allows political negotiations to outstrip the capacity of the economy to deliver on the expectations which negotiations generate, then all of us can write growth and redistribution on our tummies and wipe them off with our tattered shirts. That is why an economic accord must develop alongside a political one. And such an accord cannot depend only on politicians — it must go wider than the current participants of COBESA and involve commerce,

industry, labour and the state. The sooner issues such as sanctions, rationalization, growth, redistribution, investment, land reform, industrial relations are settled, the more hope that a democratic constitution can unleash our potential to meet the challenges of development.

These five challenges can be restated as five simple questions relating to the individual:

1. Are my political representatives part of the negotiations?
2. Do they share responsibility for administering transition?
3. Can I participate in politics without fear of intimidation, violence or persecution?
4. Can I pursue my personal social life free from direct political interference?
5. Can I expect of transition that it will not drastically reduce, or perhaps even enhance, the quality of my life?

If most ~~the~~ South Africans, next year this time, can answer "yes" to all five, we are through the woods. If "no" to any one of them negotiations can still be derailed at any time: what are our chances? Fifty-fifty. As I said: COSA could be the start of a good beginning.