

SOUTH AFRICA OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS : A PROBABLE OVERVIEW

3 September 1990

F VAN ZYL SLABBERT

INTRODUCTION

1. The central issue of political conflict is continued white minority domination. All parties, including the white right, accept this to be the case. The Regime and some of its major challengers are attempting to solve this problem through a process of negotiated transition. Political domination is not new, nor is white minority domination, but to negotiate it away through a process of bargained transition certainly is. This has never been done before. The major players are the Regime itself and its challengers in favour of transition toward an integrated state, e.g. ANC (African National Congress), SACP (South African Communist Party), COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), PAC (Pan Africanist Congress), BCM (Black Consciousness Movement), Inkatha and Homeland Governments, as well as Parliamentary parties to the left of Government. Inside and outside Parliament are also challengers who resist transition toward an integrated state, such as the CP (Conservative Party) HNP (Herstigte Nasionale Party), AWB (Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging) etc.

2. There are two major clusters of problems which have to be dealt with in negotiated transition :

(a) Problems that have to do with the normalisation of politics, e.g. unbanning organisations, restoring rights and privileges to opponents of the regime; allowing for party formation and party political competition; creating a non-partisan security system, etc.

(b) Problems that have to do with the democratisation of politics i.e. involving groups and individuals to become part of accountable political decision-making. Problems of democratisation have to do with negotiating a new constitution; a new civil service; a new budget and getting rid of structural racial inequality in the economy.

3. The goal of transition which is beginning to emerge between the major parties in favour of negotiated transition is :

(a) to escape the consequences of continued white domination;

(b) jointly manage the process of transition;

- (c) to attempt to establish a non-racial and democratic society as an alternative to domination.
4. Some of the major imponderables that could decisively affect the course and tempo of negotiated transition :
- (a) an unresolved security situation;
 - (b) organisational unreadiness of major parties, e.g. ANC, PAC to negotiate.
 - (c) Politically unchannelled urbanised black youth;
 - (d) whether business abandons transition or actively helps to shape a more conducive political environment.

Given the above trends the following developments in South Africa over the next five years seem probable :

A BROADER BASED NON-RACIAL GOVERNMENT

1. Non-racial does not necessarily mean fully democratic; nor that race is of no consequence in the composition of government. Precisely because of socio-economic and political racial inequalities of the past it will become established public policy to :-
- (a) Deliberately avoid government representing only one racial group.

(b) Undercut racial representation and interest group formation in political competition.

This does not mean that de facto there will not be racial and ethnic mobilization for political purposes, but given the legacy of racial domination and domestic and international pressure to get rid of it, a political culture of non-racialism will prevail.

2. Current parties and movements will experience significant realignment and changing of constituencies. Already the NP is moving towards non-racial membership; Inkatha has moved from a cultural movement to a non-racial party; the SACP is developing a distinct electoral identity from the ANC etc. A new political establishment will emerge servicing a national rather than sectional arena of politics. There will be trade-offs between political leaders, regions and parties and South Africa will begin to experience the beginning of democratic mediation of political conflict, rather than continued intimidation and confrontation.

3. Initially (over the next 18 months) elements of the NP, ANC, Inkatha, Homeland Government and even the CP will be involved in jointly managing transition. It is doubtful whether a fully non-racial constitution will have been finalised over the next five years and there may still be problems of constitutional legitimacy, but there will be

stable government and at least one referendum would have been held on a national basis to establish a popular mandate for (a) interim political arrangements and (b) explore how to finalise constitutional arrangements.

LAW AND ORDER

1. Initially this will remain an area of controversy as organisations and institutions relating to social order and stability interact in the new climate. As the regime and its challengers consolidate to manage transition, the new political establishment will generate the capacity to integrate a new security system of a more non-partisan nature. This will require major adjustments for bodies like the SA Police, SA Defence Force, Homeland Armies, MK (ANC armed struggle), etc. and there will quite likely be tension and volatility at the outset. Sanitizing the maintenance of law and order is absolutely critical for progress in transition and both De Klerk and Mandela have repeatedly shown how sensitive they are to this problem.
2. As the security system normalises, the major stability problem will not be political violence, but criminal violence and the development of effective law enforcement agencies to deal with urban crime. Pockets of militant discontent and revolt may continue, but will be marginalised. Given (a) the disastrous impact of Apartheid on black urban community life; (b) accelerating urbanisation; (c) and lack of social infrastructure,

maintaining reasonable law and order will be one of the major problems over the next five years. Increasingly blacks themselves will take over responsibility for social control and black judges, magistrates and senior Police Officers will be appointed. There may very well be a third force developing between the SA Police and the SA Defence Force to deal with community violence and riots - similar to the National Guard in the USA.

THE RIGHT WING

A great deal of white anxiety which is currently being exploited by the CP in white electoral competition will have been placated by demonstrable progress in normalisation. Right-wing militancy and violence will have been marginalised and will not be a force for popular mobilisation. Ideological right-wing concerns for a "white Homeland" will have been drawn into the process of negotiation and accommodated. There will be one or two final and major attempts to force an all white general election, but as it becomes clear that the process of transition makes this irrelevant, "the Right" will begin to change its style away from electoral confrontation to participating in negotiation. This change will effectively marginalise right-wing militancy and revolt. There is no prospect of a right wing coup that can take over the administration of the South African State, but there certainly is the capacity for localised violence and terror - however, this will be confined and marginal.

SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION

1. Sanctions will have become obsolete. Although there will be no massive inflow of capital because of it, at least the following can be expected :-

(a) significant inflow of aid for social upliftment. Increasingly South Africa will be seen as the "only hope" to save the region.

(b) improved trading between South Africa and the "outside world", particularly Africa.

(c) the end of sports and cultural isolation.

(d) re-established air-space and landing rights.

(e) greater freedom of travel on South African passports.

(f) greater regional economic and political integration. South Africa will be a member of the OAU and a fully functioning member of UNO.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORM

1. Because of a broader based non-racial political establishment there will be a much larger political constituency demanding social spending. The business of Government will be concerned with problems of Housing, Education, Health, Employment and establishing effective systems of local government. Considerable time and

resources will be devoted to improve the living conditions of the poor by providing adequate energy, water and reasonably sanitary living conditions.

2. Economic privilege will become more non-racial in appearance and a non-racial and initially, small, middle and upper middle class will be demonstrably better off in areas such as housing and education. Absolute poverty may decrease significantly. However, inequality will continue but will be less overtly racial.

THE ECONOMY

1. There is no prospect of spectacular economic growth over the next five years. Usually the kind of transition South Africa is going through is inflationary, induces capital flight and investment apathy because of uncertainty. The impact and consequences of transition will first have to settle down, before and if, serious new investment and economic activity will take off.
2. Much more energy will be devoted to stimulate domestic growth and decreasing our dependance on the export of primary products. Fundamental changes in land-use patterns for residential and industrial/commercial purposes can be expected, as well as major reforms in agricultural production.

ORGANISED LABOUR

1. Because of escalating demands on Government for socio-economic intervention and reform, and the sluggish response (at least initially) of the economy, an uneasy relationship between the new political establishment and organised labour may develop, particularly if strike action and inflationary wage demands continue. Unions are increasingly becoming a labour aristocracy in an expanding pool of unemployment and it will have to decide whether it is going to be hostile to the demands of social spending resulting from transition or align itself with it and temper its own demands. Either way, organised labour is going to experience a fundamental redefinition of its political role.

CONCLUSION

At the end of five years, the political divide will be along the lines of those being responsible for Government and those who stand outside of it. Joint responsibility for transition will lead to surprising new party formations and realignments. A slightly left of centre Government with a strong State structure will emerge at the end of five years. Given the demographic realities, South Africa may not be black dominated but she certainly will be black run.