
Risk of conflict over

The IFP's stance on negotiations:

The prospects for meaningful negotiations which would set the scene for a multi-party democracy in South Africa remain uncertain because of the insistence by the ANC/SACP alliance on an interim government and a constituent assembly to oversee a new constitution. In firmly rejecting this route, the Inkatha Freedom Party remains committed to the negotiation process, but believes in a dual approach. The first concerns itself with formulating the constitution itself. The second deals with negotiating democratic change now and implementing it without any unnecessary delay....

The IFP views negotiations over South Africa's future as a complex interplay between two quite separate processes.

*** The formal, high-profile, multi-party bargaining that is charged with formulating a new constitution, and;**

*** The means by which apartheid is abolished and new democratic alternatives are implemented.**

This second process - less dramatic but just as important - is what the IFP refers to as legislating the new constitution into being.

The IFP believes it is important that the talks be properly constituted. We believe the focus should now be on the transition stage from apartheid to a new non-racial democracy.

This is where the obstacles begin to present themselves. The process is being hindered because there are two major negotiating formats being proposed - both contradictory.

* Format One: A national convention in

the form of a multi-party conference which would thrash out a new constitution through give-and-take and consensus. The IFP firmly belongs to this camp.

* Format Two: An interim government to be followed by a Constituent Assembly, elected on a winner-takes-all basis, which would play midwife to a new constitution, without any obligation to take dissenting viewpoints into account. The ANC/SACP alliance, and other radical parties of the left, belong to this camp.

Conflict

Simply put, South Africa has to make a choice between elections after negotiations, or elections before negotiations. If unresolved, this conflict has the potential to wreck negotiations.

As Inkatha President, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, told the National Print Media in New York on his recent visit to the United States: "The approach which says to the Government: 'Hand over power to an interim government which will run the country and organise an election to choose people to write a constitution' is a ridiculous approach. It is a recipe for disaster."

For the IFP, a constituent assembly contradicts the whole idea of negotiations - as compromise, give-and-take bargaining. It limits the need to find consensus and the end result is a winner-takes-all victory for one party.

Those who favour this format presume - wrongly - that it is the only democratic option because it "comes from the ground." The fact that the majority is constitutionally illiterate ought to warn us of the dangers of claiming legitimacy through this means only.

The prime danger of a constituent assembly has been chillingly underlined by Dr Buthelezi. He points out that with its insistence on elections before negotiations,

over constituent assembly

Consensus politics is the key

the constituent assembly route would dramatically escalate the likelihood of conflict and violence. It could even precipitate a civil war.

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There is a sound precedent for the consensus approach. The Natal/KwaZulu Indaba experience shows us that there are perfectly acceptable alternatives to a constituent assembly. Here some 95 percent of the ideologically-diverse participants found consensus on a detailed constitutional model. In 1991, the actual model is not the issue. What counts is the mechanism - and its ability to nurture genuine negotiations.

Why then does the ANC/SACP alliance consistently turn its back on consensus politics?

Dr Buthelezi explains: "Like others, the IFP sees occasional signs of realism in the ANC. But like others, our hopes are dashed each time the militants regain the initiative. We believe the realists under ANC President, Dr Nelson Mandela, are trying to go about things in a sensible fashion, but are trapped within an organisation whose internal power struggles make movement forward very difficult.

"In the final analysis, however, we trust that even the militants must face reality. The only option we really have is for a constitution to be formulated at a round-table national convention, comprising all parties with a significant basis of support - whose largely consensus-based decision is subsequently ratified in a national referendum."

This brings us to the parallel negotiation process which tends to be forgotten, or relegated to second place.

The IFP is totally against a big-bang or one-off transformation from the old to the new. Not only will it not occur, but it is undesirable. We oppose the idea of apartheid remaining in force until negotiations are finalised - at which stage the new South Africa springs into being.

Rather, we believe that what will happen is a process whereby the government, with input from the people, abolishes apartheid step by step, while at the same time implementing new policies and programmes. Although some of these decisions will pre-empt the new constitution, we do not believe we can sit and wait for a mythical Nirvana. We should legislate the new, non-racial South Africa into being now.

This does not apply to the entire constitution. But we can take action in certain areas now. We need to develop an across-the-board, non-racial and democratic approach. For instance, we can anticipate most of what a future Bill of Rights will enshrine. We can restore freedom of speech, movement, political association and other civil liberties.

Again, having abolished racial discrimination in land ownership, there is nothing to prevent the present government adopting a pro-active approach towards assisting Black farmers.

The IFP opposes the ANC/SACP's demands for an interim government as unrealistic.

We believe in recognising political realities and respecting constitutional change.

The IFP accepts that this is a transitional government - a caretaker administration that will fall away after the first democratic general election is held under a new constitution.

Our view is that the present government should continue in power - but with input from other political parties. In this way, the changes that are implemented are negotiated into being, rather than being introduced by decree.

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