

## Development

From Page 13

whatever administration eventually emerges.

• Finally, there is a danger that an interim government will not constitute a sufficiently legitimate structure to negotiate development policy. For practical reasons, it is possible that during this period most economic functions will continue to rest with the current government. Thus, the condition of legitimacy may only be met once a new democratic government takes power. To suspend development initiatives (or even to reduce the proportion of resources devoted towards such initiatives) until such a state of affairs exists is courting sure disaster.

For these reasons we must create sufficiently credible structures to, at least, map development options and initiate pilot development projects during an interim government period. One possibility is to use the various national, regional and issue-specific development forums that are currently mushrooming throughout the country. Although not perfect, these institutions represent the most inclusive, participative institutions currently available. To enable these bodies to perform this function, however, two conditions will have to be met: first, the investment of substantial resources to overcome present capacity and skill constraints and ineffective national co-ordination; second, all stakeholders must unconditionally commit themselves to the forums and the state must find mechanisms to give these forums direct access to and influence over legislative decisions.

Of course development forums cannot plan, guide and implement an entire economic restructuring process; they may however, serve to establish a solid base for future development in a number of ways. They may help to generate a culture of participative development which will stand us in good stead in the future. Pilot projects will provide important guidelines and positive examples for future initiatives. Active engagement in development will help expose future practitioners to the practicalities, management and institutional requirements of project management. Clear guidelines as to future economic policy will begin to coax investment to return. At the very least negotiations in development forums may instill a sense of urgency which will help the economic settlement keep pace with and support a political settlement.

*(An expanded version of this paper is available from Idasa, 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700.)*

# Confusion of options

**The federalism/regionalism debate has become something of a political football. RICHARD HUMPHRIES argues that the discussion is too simplistic and calls for a closer look at the implications of these options.**

**T**HE average South African might be forgiven for being confused about the meaning and interpretation of regionalism and federalism, especially since these concepts seem to have surfaced from nowhere in the last year or so to dominate political debate.

This confusion must be all the greater since the deadlocked Codesa 2 convention. Before the convention it was widely, if uncritically, argued that the National Party and the ANC were moving closer to one another on regionalism, even if they disagreed on federalism.

Now in the wake of Codesa 2 the media bombard their audiences with analyses pointing out the major differences between regionalism and federalism and how the major political parties and movements stand on these issues.

In its most simple form their positions could be captured in the following way. The Democratic Party is probably the only unqualified, and long-standing advocate of federalism; the National Party is a little more coy, arguing for "regionalism based on sound federal principles"; The IFP seems to be approaching the stage where it will die defending federalism (perhaps even confederalism) for KwaZulu while the ANC accepts the existence of regions but it is still not certain how much political power should be vested in regional authorities.

The differences between regionalism and federalism are important in their own right. Yet the debate takes on an added significance at this stage of the negotiations process since fundamental constitutional questions about the distribution of political power between contending tiers of government are involved. Thus a choice, either way, between regionalism or federalism will have long term consequences for the way South Africa is to be governed.

Put another way, the differences between the ANC and the NP cannot be equated, at this stage, with the policy differences between, say the Tories and Labour in the United Kingdom. There, both parties accept the constitutional parameters within which politics takes place; what is at issue is policy differences and emphasis within an accepted overarching constitutional order.

Here we have still to decide on the shape of our constitution. This explains why President De Klerk, at the opening of the recent short session of parliament reiterated the NP's determination to bind a future constitutional drafting body to principles which would guarantee regional authorities substantial political power.

The ANC rejects this because it, in effect, gives the present minority-based government and the interests it represents undue power over a constitution-drafting body elected by all South Africans.

**I**N a sense the NP refuses to countenance suggestions that one way out of the regionalism/federalism deadlock would be to let the issue play itself out through process politics over a defined period. If a majority of voters came to accept that regional powers were important to their daily existence then this ought to be sufficient to ensure that authorities would be instituted.

For the NP the problem or dilemma is that the regional fissures or pressures which it thinks exist might be contained by other dynamics during such a period. The ANC might also be uncomfortable about such a suggestion given its historic opposition to homeland balkanisation.

It might be argued that both regionalism and federalism share a common point of departure - that power should be vested in the regions - which makes the differences between them rather irrelevant. This is not



so. At its weakest regionalism refers only to the granting of either executive or political capacity to the regions, as an intermediate tier of government between central and local government. Regionalism could be categorised as a decentralised unitary state. It does not necessarily imply that these powers and functions will create powerful regional authorities which undercut the capacity of the central government.

Federalism, at its most basic, however, ensures that the regions (normally called states) have substantial political capacity. This power cannot be taken away by the federal (central) government without recourse to procedures laid down in the constitution which are designed to protect the powers of the regions. The central government has to respect the state governments as almost being its equal in those matters which are the jurisdiction of the component states.

Besides political powers, federalism often grants fiscal capacity to the states to raise their own revenue, independent of any revenue-sharing programmes between the central government and the states.

In a nutshell the difference between regionalism and federalism amounts to the extent to which the powers of the central state are mitigated by powers granted to the states or regions on specific issues.

Part of the problem of adjudicating between the competing claims of regional-

ism or federalism is that they both potentially hold a number of advantages, often the flip-side of each other: regionalism's positive virtues are the negative side to federalism's and vice versa. The chief advantage of regionalism or a decentralised state is that it would allow a new government to undertake the type of macro planning in social, physical or economic fields which are sorely needed to overcome the legacy of the past. The possible downside of this is that such planning would take place without an awareness of regional or local needs and differences and that it would create a centralised bureaucratic leviathan equal to the excesses of the apartheid machine.

Federalism's chief advantage must be its dispersal of power away from the central state to smaller units. In the South African context this could translate into allowing regional minorities the ability to decide on important matters without what might be seen as the dominance granted to a majority in a unitary state. Against this might be argued that stressing regional peculiarities of any sort undermines a sense of unity and nationhood after the divisions of apartheid.

Related to the above point is that far too much of the comment and analysis either for or against federalism consists of overstating the opposition's motives for favouring or opposing federalism. Little detailed analysis has taken place.

For example, some opponents of federalism insist on arguing that federalism is an attempt by the NP (and it follows the DP) to entrench white privilege. How this is to happen given racial and demographic profiles in virtually all the regions that have been proposed is not stated.

Another common argument against federalism is that it will allow the NP to establish an anti-ANC alliance by using essentially homeland based political groupings. What is politically or morally wrong with this is never actually explained except the suggestion that these parties might survive in such a system, when they ought not to.

The numerous constraints that face this option from getting off the ground are also not analysed with any rigour. For example, will the NP be able to maintain its coherence as a national force if its regional parties have to strike alliances with differing political forces?

For their part federalists often accuse parties in favour of a unitary state of being intent on ensuring excessive centralisation and uniformity. This critique ignores the extent to which many of these actors favour mechanisms to increase voter participation in structures of government. It also overestimates, it seems to me, the ability of such a future government to control regional dynamics through over-centralised policies.

It would be foolish to ignore the extent to which regional interests do exist in South Africa, even if these interests are defined purely on the basis of geographic distance from Pretoria, or wherever a future capital might be based. If one adds ethnic and socio-economic interests (poor versus rich regions) to that of distance, then a potentially troubling problem could face such a centralised government.

South Africa will clearly get a political system which embodies regional powers, since all political actors, including the ANC, are in favour of some sort of regional powers. The question then becomes one of whether these regional powers will increase or decrease in importance over time. If a government of national unity was to rule South Africa for any length of time it seems likely that regional powers will be seen as less important. Conventional competitive politics will almost certainly lead to the regional question increasing in importance.

Richard Humphries is a researcher based at the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg. His paper, *A Delicate Balance: Restructuring Regionalism in South Africa*, co-authored with Khehla Shubane, is available from CPS at 011-4024308.