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THE ANC AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA QUO VADIS:

One Hundred Years Going On Twenty

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In 2010, the Africa Program and the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity initiated an occasional Policy Brief series. The intention is twofold: first, to give the Wilson Center community thoughtful insights into issues that are pertinent and urgent, but not always receiving attention in the mainstream press or media; second, to offer an outlet for the wide-ranging network of intellectual resources with whom we interact from day-to-day. Sometimes these briefs will be generated by our own staff or resident scholars, sometimes we will feature outside experts, as we do today. I invited the contributions from Francis Kornegay, an American who has resided in South Africa for the last 18 years, and is currently at the Institute for Global Dialogue, and Aubrey Matsbiqui, a South African with a background in journalism and teaching, who is currently at the Centre for Policy Studies. Both are widely published in South Africa and elsewhere. They are taking an analytical look at the South African Government, whether the ANC has delivered on its promises to the population as well as the broader global role South Africa is assuming. This is to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the ANC and the coming 20th anniversary of its ascendance to power in South Africa.

- Steve McDonald, Consulting Director of the Africa Program



AS WE ENTER THE SECOND decade of the 21st century, South Africa is three years away from celebrating twenty years of freedom. The likelihood is that the African National Congress (ANC) will be celebrating twenty years in power.

What have those twenty years meant to South Africa?

- Has freedom delivered a better life for all South Africans?
- Is a developmental state that effectively delivers on a social and economic transformation agenda linked to making the country competitive as an emerging power within the realm of possibility in South Africa?
- Is there a future for the ANC-COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions)-SACP (South African Communist Party) alliance?
- What is South Africa's position in the changing balance of global forces?

The advent of democracy in 1994 came with the promise of a society whose race, political, economic and social relations would be the antithesis of what they had been under apartheid. The post-apartheid order would deliver what the ANC calls “a better life for all.” What has happened since the ANC came to power can best be summarized in three ways: First, there has been some improvement in the political, social and economic conditions of the majority. Second, democratic, policy and delivery deficits have emerged. Thirdly, there are objective factors in the global and domestic domains, which continue to militate against the optimal delivery of “a better life for all.”

With regard to policy and delivery deficits, the ANC is faced with the challenge of bridging the gap between the procedural and substantive dimensions of democracy. The fact that many poor communities in South Africa have engaged in protest

action against poor socio-economic conditions may be indicative of the extent to which the gap between the procedural and the substantive has become the defining feature of their social and economic reality. The gap must also be understood in terms of economic inequality, as well as the unsatisfactory pace and scope of delivery. The inequalities seem worse, because unlike their exclusively inter-racial nature during apartheid, now have an additional dimension of intra-racial class cleavages. Perceptions of the gap between the procedural and the substantive are informed also by the perception that changes in the relationship between the ANC and state power have created a class of corrupt political elites who have subordinated the national interest to their business interests. The degree to which this is

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grounded in truth is, of course, debatable. What is indubitable, however, is the fact that, because of South Africa's political reality of single-party dominance, a loss of confidence in the ability of the ANC to deliver may one day coincide with a loss of confidence in democracy. In addition, it does not help that South Africans have tended to reduce democracy to the party-political space at the expense of the non-party political space. Those who recognize the need for a dynamic non-party political space have themselves tended to reduce this space to that of civil society at the expense of nurturing forms of political expression and engagement that



are more diverse. This should be the antidote to the failure of opposition parties to exploit another gap – the gap between the political legitimacy of the ANC and its ability to govern effectively. The deepening

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of the democratic project and the creation of conditions that will lead to a better life for all will, therefore, depend on the strengthening of opposition politics and the development of an effective non-party political space. However, there are those who argue that, in the foreseeable future, the answer lies in arresting the political and moral decline of the ANC.

Those who conceive of the solution in this manner include COSATU, a labour federation aligned with the ANC and SACP. At one level, this view is pragmatic since it takes into account the fact that the ANC will remain the dominant party in South Africa for some time. This means that many of the policy and political decisions that matter will still be taken within the structures of the ruling party. For COSATU, arresting the moral and political decline of the ANC is also about ensuring that its alliance with the ruling party leads to the amelioration of the social and economic conditions of the working class. But, managing the conflicting policy expectations of the three components of the alliance in a post-apartheid setting has, so far, proved more difficult than managing the unity of the alliance

under apartheid. Sections of the left (COSATU and the SACP) are even questioning the role of the ANC as leader of the alliance. Their argument is that it is the alliance, not the ANC, which must constitute the “strategic center” that determines the content of government policy. At the mid-term conference of the ANC in September last year, president Jacob Zuma – in his capacity as president of the ANC – argued strongly against this view, and insisted that the ANC’s leadership function in the alliance is part of its historic mission.

In the short to medium term, the alliance will remain intact despite deepening differences over economic policy and the sharpening of political differences between COSATU and the ANC. Moreover, the alliance will remain intact whether or not Zuma is re-elected at the ANC’s 2012 centennial national conference. With his election as ANC president in December 2007, at the expense of Thabo Mbeki,

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Zuma benefitted from the continuum of internal tensions and divisions which started peaking around June 2005, but it is this same continuum that is making his job as president of party and country difficult. He has failed to unite the ANC and the alliance around a common policy agenda, and some of those who supported him in the battle against Mbeki are now his political opponents. Furthermore, he has been trying to assert his authority and independence from elements of the coalition which supported his presidential ambitions in 2007. When he reshuffled his cabinet in late-2010, the victims



included a staunch ally. Even so, some of the replacement appointments betrayed a desire to avoid the further fracturing of his coalition.

As president, Zuma is faced with the challenges of legacy and self-preservation, which include the imperatives of providing effective leadership to the ANC, the alliance and the country. If he wins a second term as president of the ANC in 2012, and that of the country in 2014, the likelihood is that the Legacy Project, as it relates to governance and international relations, will take center stage. This means that it is during his second term that he will focus more on the creation of a developmental state. Yet, the policy and operational content of this developmental state will probably not be in concert with the left-wing rhetoric of COSATU and the SACP. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see how he will shape South Africa's response to the changing balance of global economic forces. If that changing balance results in shifts in soft power, how will South Africa position itself, and how will Zuma navigate the relationship between the domestic and the global?

The problem is that, as yet, politics is very much in command at the expense of governance, wherein governance and its professionalization should very much be the stuff of delivery. In other words, at a bare minimum, a developmental state must be a "delivery state" in terms of "a better life for all" aspirations of the poor. As it is, a factionalized and distracted elite within the ruling alliance seems more concerned about the health of alliance structures than about the health of government and its operational-delivery performance. In short, the tension between the values of politics and the values of delivery is one of the causes of institutional, policy and implementation deficits. It is in this context that we should read the unseemly tussle between COSATU and the SACP over whether SACP leader, Blade Nzimande, should resign as a government minister.

Meanwhile, the ANC is in a tizzy over COSATU's engagement with other civil society formations sans the ANC. The ANC is afraid that this may lead to a Zimbabwean or Zambian scenario with a labour federation formally allied to a liberation movement forming an opposition party that may confront it somewhere down the electoral road, should the alliance dissolve. Hence, there is the possibility of

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an alliance of convenience between the ANC and ZANU-PF running counter to each movements' pre-liberation relationship. Could herein lie the paranoid basis of South Africa and the Southern African Development Community's indulgence of ZANU-PF at the expense of the Movement for Democratic Change (imperfect as it is), while the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, leading the way in opposing the attempted coup by Laurent Gbagbo in Cote d'Ivoire? This is no idle matter. The stakes are high.

Both Nigeria and South Africa will share non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council in 2011. This may reveal much about how South Africa positions itself within the current dynamic of a shifting balance of forces globally – and whether or not it assumes a decisively credible leadership role on issues that come before the Security Council, especially if these are African issues. If South Africa



fashions itself as the regional power it should be, both the P5 – US, UK, France, Russia and China as well as the emerging powers of India and Brazil- will be looking to Pretoria to see how it manages the African agenda singularly, and in conjunction with Nigeria. Both Pretoria and Abuja are aspirants for the African permanent seat on the Security Council. Yet, the problem with how South Africa navigates such diplomatic minefields in 2011 may relate to the strategic challenge of how Zuma navigates the relationship between the domestic and the global. Once again, this is a question of governance of the state which seems to get short shrift these days partly because of internal contradictions within the ANC and the alliance.

In short, how will South Africa construct a developmental state that can effectively navigate the inter-relationship between domestic social and economic policy on the one hand, and the international cooperation-security-trade cluster of priorities on the other? Very much to the Zuma administration's benefit, different departments within government are grappling with how to make themselves more effective in delivering on their mandates. As such, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) is busy taking itself through an exhaustive foreign policy White Paper exercise while the Department of Public Service and Administration has embarked on a 'Repositioning of the State' initiative with government-wide implications in terms of how the state functions.

Ultimately, however, much will rest on leadership at the very top of government and on how the presidency is organized to take control of the reins of coordinating the state machinery. At present, decision-making and policy planning is disjointed and split between Pretoria, Luthuli House and other centers of power. What South Africa needs is the enhancement of the institutional capacity of the presidency. The Policy Coordination and Advisory

Services Unit, which despite its weaknesses would have been the embryo of a more robust apparatus, has been disbanded.

The National Planning Commission commanded by former Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, was essentially neutered before it became operational because of the very personalized intra-Alliance power-struggles that continue to bedevil the ANC and its partners. The Planning Commission and the monitoring and evaluation function should have been part of a more elaborated and centralized coordinating mechanism under the President and the Deputy President. On the other hand, a more robust Cabinet secretariat system, or something akin to a human security and development council is worth considering. In the final analysis, the party-state separation in South Africa is largely fictional and this has implications for policy – making and service delivery architecture. Furthermore, the repositioning of government for purposes of a delivery – let alone a developmental state – will have to result from a society-wide dialogue between government and various formations representing the diverse interests of citizens about how South Africa's developmental agenda and the much-contested 'New Growth Path' should be taken forward. But, can this be achieved through a divided ruling party and alliance? Not if the ANC and the alliance remain the only game in town, and South Africans fail to abandon their almost total reliance on the party-political space.



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FRANCIS KORNEGAY is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD). He is a political analyst on a range of foreign affairs and international relations, and widely published in the following areas: South Africa's foreign policy and its African agenda; African continental and regional integration; U.S. foreign policy and U.S.-African/South African relations; South-South cooperation and emerging power alliances (IBSA, BRIC, BASIC) and global geopolitical dynamics. Kornegay, a graduate of the University of Michigan, holds Master's degrees in African Studies from Howard University and in International Public Policy from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, in Washington, DC.



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