

*development  
dialogues*



\* monograph **13**



isandla  
institute



Open Society Foundation For South Africa

POSITIONING POWER:  
ALLIANCE POLITICS AT PLAY

\*monograph 13

ISANDLA INSTITUTE / OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION

**About Development Dialogues**

*Development Dialogues* is a joint initiative of Isandla Institute and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa. The aim of the public dialogue series is to create a space for critical reflection and dialogue among key development stakeholders in South Africa. In doing so, the organisers seek to make a (rather modest) contribution to enhancing the quality of debate in the development sector. Through *Development Dialogues*, Isandla Institute and the Open Society Foundation intend to bring about creative and constructive multi-stakeholder meeting opportunities that push stakeholders to think beyond the confines of their immediate interests and theoretical paradigms.

This monograph captures the speakers' inputs and discussions at the *Development Dialogue* on 'Positioning power: Alliance politics at play', which took place on 29 November 2007 at the Centre for the Book in Cape Town.

Published in 2008



Isandla Institute  
PO Box 12263  
Mill Street, Gardens 8010  
South Africa  
Email: [admin@isandla.org.za](mailto:admin@isandla.org.za)  
Website: [www.isandla.org.za](http://www.isandla.org.za)



Open Society Foundation for South Africa  
PO Box 23161  
Claremont 7735  
South Africa  
Email: [admin@ct.osf.org.za](mailto:admin@ct.osf.org.za)  
Website: [www.osf.org.za](http://www.osf.org.za)



To begin, let me thank Isandla Institute for inviting me to participate in this important debate. It is a subject that imposes some constraints on analysts and researchers, as the issue at hand is currently increasingly shapeless and fluid, necessitating a level of speculation as to the permutations relating to and flowing from the significant power realignment currently in play through the ANC's National Conference, and our fourth National Democratic Elections.

This presentation will focus on structural aspects of the debate. What shape does the alliance take? What direct influence, if any, does the Alliance have on ANC and ultimately government Policy? What are the prospects for the future? And what balance of forces is at play for Left Power in South Africa?

The Tripartite Alliance since the advent of the democratic breakthrough in South Africa is, as so much of our polity remains, the step-child of the transition, subject to, and influenced by our developing democratic culture, the waxing and waning power blocs, and a society in transition. The relationship of the alliance partners to the senior partner, the ANC, is changing, and will continue to change, as will the internal dynamics of all three partners themselves, as the organisations develop, absorbing, incorporating or rejecting constituencies in line with the social and material transformation of the country.

The Tripartite Alliance was formed in the aftermath of the unbanning of liberation organisations in the early 1990's, forging a "broad church" between the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU as a means of

achieving political power through democratic ends.

In the aftermath of Bush's second election victory, the old adage that "issues don't win elections, constituencies do", washed the broad sheet rhetoric. This old touchstone of analysts and the fact that not one of the existing opposition parties has sufficient legitimacy to challenge the incumbency of the ANC, is the secret of the alliance debate, and presages the perennial question of when, or rather whether the Alliance will split.

This presentation will not dwell on this question. Suffice to say, it is my opinion that circumstances in the medium term mitigate against such a radical realignment, and it remains in the interests of all three parties to the alliance to continue to negotiate its function and impact, as opposed to rejecting it in toto and striking out in new directions.

What influence if any does the Alliance have on the ANC, and government in practice?

It is an interesting point that the constitution of the ANC refers only once to the Alliance. This reference does not frame any sort of relationship, or dynamics of influence between partners. In fact it merely references the SACP and COSATU as traditional allies, to differentiate the organisations from others potentially opposed to the work of the ANC, and the mass democratic movement more generally.

It is also important to note under the weight of current events, that neither the Party nor COSATU will have any voting rights at the ANC's national





**Alliance partners do not** have direct influence over the ANC or government policies. However there are interstices within debates, institutions and structures, that allow COSATU and the SACP to influence indirectly the trajectory of both the ANC, and perhaps, government.

conference. Both organisations will send observer delegations to the NC, but will have no direct bearing on the voting outcomes of the conference, or the policy positions arising from resolutions.

It is my argument, in the spirit of this debate, that the alliance partners do not have direct influence over the ANC or government policies. However there are interstices within debates, institutions and structures, that allow COSATU and the SACP to influence indirectly the trajectory of both the ANC, and perhaps, government.

Given the systemic and practical obstacles to direct participation in succession, policy outcomes and the election of the broad ANC leadership, alliance partners can only influence the outcomes of these processes through the extent to which their members participate in ANC structures, and the extent to which their policy positions resonate within the mainstream of debate within the ANC itself. The extent to which the positions of the SACP and COSATU resonate with the rank and file of the ANC, is the key to influence. Shifting the

middle ground of these debates to favour left power, and to increase the power of the alliance, is in turn a key strategic objective.

In this context COSATU and the SACP, and to a lesser extent the ANC Leagues, could be characterised as concession-seeking actors vis-à-vis the ANC. The ANC itself, in order to manage its proverbial “broad church”, is a consensus-seeking organisation, coordinating and managing its extensive support and sometimes contradictory constituencies through debate and ultimately discipline. The intersections of these imperatives presages the complexity of alliance engagement.

One of the key grievances of alliance partners since the adoption of GEAR in 1996, a grievance more forcibly articulated since the anti-privatisation strikes of 2000, has been the issue of accountability, or, in more lay terms: Who drives who? Where does government policy come from? How does the ANC-led government relate to the constitutional structures of the ANC and the alliance more generally? When government is perceived to waver from the ANC or alliance line, what mechanisms of accountability are in place?

A superficial, but telling statistic, is that currently the Presidential Policy Coordination and Advisory Services has 77 posts, and a salary bill of R35 million. By contrast Luthuli house, to my knowledge, employs 2 policy researchers, and presumably has an infinitesimally smaller budget. In addition, the Presidency retained the services of 28 consultants in the year 06/07. The Presidency as a whole contains 622 posts. The capacity disjuncture for both research and oversight is glaring.

This broad, and important democratic debate relating to policy accountability and organisational





oversight articulated by alliance partners through the early years of Mbeki's state ascendancy, and Presidential incumbency, has in more recent years found fertile resonance within the broad base of the ANC. The frustrations underpinning the issues of internal debate, consensus seeking, consultation and democratic decision making have been a characteristic of provincial ANC politics since the early years of the democratic project. Their dominance of national debates, however, is a more recent phenomenon.

The most vivid incarnation of the national incarnation of this debate was on display in crude form through the mass rebellion of delegates at the NGC of the ANC in 2005. In that context grievances against Mbeki and his perceived ideologues manifested itself in an alliance of disaffection that focussed most visibly on restoring the dignity of the leadership of Jacob Zuma, but also manifested itself in other forums, vetoing the extensive proposals for reform of the ANC as a party, the labour market, and what was perceived as further erosion of alliance influence.

Mbeki's presidency is increasingly perceived rightly or wrongly as adrift, insufficiently accountable, overly bureaucratic, technocratic, patronising and powerful. The rise of the presidency since 1999 has been affected in the context of the conscious or unconscious alienation and atrophy of ANC structures, especially at the grassroots, and a general excavation of capacity away from ANC constitutional structures and toward the state. This has had the concurrent effect of the introduction of potentially unhealthy practices of patronage and clientalism within the ANC at its most basic unit – the branch.

It is in this context that the debates and conspiracy theories relating to the "abuse of state power" and "institutions" have found fertile resonance within the mainstream of the ANC, coalescing around the "victimhood" and potentially "vindicating" personality of Jacob Zuma – who, the popular imagination projects in opposition to Mbeki as empathetic, open, consultative and in touch with the mass base of the party.

Aspects of the SACP and COSATU, but, importantly its principle leadership, have thrown in their lot with the so-called Zuma camp of disaffected ANC constituencies. Both the SACP and COSATU have played important roles in Zuma's campaign by advancing key debates of grievance, and providing him with forums in which to address a

## Debates and conspiracy theories relating to the 'abuse of state power' and 'institutions' have found fertile resonance within the mainstream of the ANC.

sympathetic constituency in the full glare of the media. It also appears that Zuma may have received funds from Alliance partners in order to further this "campaign" and assist with his numerous legal travails.

What prospects now for the Alliance and the Left? Is Zuma a cul de sac? Notwithstanding the fact that Jacob Zuma is yet to win election at the December conference, and the ongoing legal cloud hovering over his head, a crude synopsis of the balance of forces within the ANC at the current





juncture would suggest he has a very good chance of ascending to the office of the President of the ANC in December. In line with the ANC policy conference recommendation that the President of the ANC should “preferably” be the party’s state presidential candidate in 2009, a Zuma presidency is very a significant reality.

As citizens perhaps sympathetic or antithetic to the ANC, but not active within its structures or the factional debates that have framed the current malaise, we are not privy to agreements that may have been brokered to procure votes. We do know that Zuma has projected himself as an individual sympathetic to the concerns and grievances of the alliance partners, and has assiduously projected himself as consultative in the shadow of Mbeki’s perceived top down decision making. What this will mean in practice with regard to the ongoing functioning of the alliance and its impact on policy is open to question.

Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Policy conference to establish internal policy formulation and political educational structures within the ANC, the party does not have the funding to rectify the imbalance of policy capacity vis-à-vis the state in the short term. Moreover, if the provincial nominations outcomes are an accurate reflection of voting intention for the NC, it is debatable whether Zuma still needs non-voting left support going forward. The key constituencies uneasy with the prospect of a Zuma presidency remain outside of the ANC, but will be key to the relative success or failure of a potential Zuma stewardship of the state. Zuma

**The left is potentially caught in a set of circumstances in the medium to long term that make them more open to alienation and marginalisation, than at any point since the ultra left attacks of 2001/2.**

will need to assiduously court and convince international and domestic capital that their long term interests in the SA economy remain in tact, and that continuity in macroeconomic policy rather than rupture will characterise his tenure.

The alliance, despite its internal contradictions, and equally factional politics has thrown in its lot with Zuma. If he ultimately loses, or chooses to merely consult, but not actively implement alliance policy recommendations, what comeback do they have? It is my opinion that the left is potentially caught in a set of circumstances in the medium to long term that make them more open to alienation and marginalisation, than at any point since the ultra left attacks of 2001/2. Sentiment and tradition, unfortunately are not enough in the rough and tumble of real politics, and the permutations of power arising from Zuma’s ascendance are not necessarily as cosy for the alliance as some left optimists and capitalist doomsayers predict. ■



**S**ociety has moved forward through contradictions. I think the contradictions within the ANC and the tripartite alliance allow us to imagine a different future. After this decade of Mbekism South Africa does not need another technocratic leader. What we need is a leader and a collective leadership with a vision that can reinvigorate society and galvanise the broader section of people to make South Africa a better place.

If President Mbeki gets re-elected it will be business as usual. The jury is out on whether Jacob Zuma will be able to usher in any renewal and must depend on how he wins and comes to power within the ANC. However, objectively I think there are three areas where there is opportunity for renewal within the tripartite alliance: with respect to policy, political culture and leadership.

Before we discuss those things, it is important to locate both the SACP and Cosatu within the context of state power. The most interesting thing for me about those organisations is that they have an ambiguous relationship with state power. They are in a ruling alliance with the ANC, but as we have seen, certainly since the sacking of Jacob Zuma as Deputy President, what I call 'the Zuma phenomenon' has illustrated that some of the sharpest criticism of government policy has come from within this ruling alliance. I think therein lies the challenge of left.

There is ambiguity, because on the one hand the alliance shares with the ANC the responsibility

**If President Mbeki  
gets re-elected it will be  
business as usual.**

The 'Zuma phenomenon' has illustrated that some of the sharpest criticism of government policy has come from within this ruling alliance. Therein lies the challenge of the left.

for broad policy and strategic objectives. And on the other hand, the alliance constantly has to fight for a place at the table. We have seen the outcomes of that fight, and we have seen how the Zuma phenomenon has acted as a valve and has been able to galvanise opposition to being excluded.

Another thing that we need to understand is that we are not dealing with a situation where you have a united ANC versus a united SACP and a united Cosatu on the matters that divide the tripartite alliance. Divisions cut across these three organisations.

We have seen that very clearly especially in the last two years, certainly since 2005. At the same time there is no Chinese wall between ANC members and Cosatu members or SACP members. Many people occupy positions and hold different titles. This is an important issue to understand, particularly because as we move to the ANC's conference one wants to assess the quality and quantitative presence of the left within the ANC to be able to effect change.

Jonathan mentioned the fact that neither allies have voting power at the ANC. But I think it is instructive to note that in 2002 at the ANC's last elective conference in Stellenbosch some left candidates like the current SACP chairperson



Gwede Mantashe were nominated for the NEC but could not muster the support within the ANC to actually get elected. And just two days ago, the ANC Women's League endorsed Mantashe as a candidate for Secretary General of the ANC. We need to understand how we got from 2002 in Stellenbosch to where we are now and to look at how someone like Mantashe, who could not get past the first nominations to get elected at the time, is now endorsed by very powerful ANC forces in the run up to Polokwane. If we look at how that happened, we will be able to understand what exactly has begun to happen in the tripartite alliance since the sacking of Jacob Zuma.

**I think that the perception under the Mbeki administration is that the allies have been marginalised from policy formulation around key issues.**

It is often said that politics is as much about power as it is about perception. I think that the perception under the Mbeki administration is certainly that the allies have been marginalised from policy formulation around key issues. At the same time it is also important to recognise that the ANC's left allies have made quite a few inroads if you look at the battle around privatisation for example. There have been quite a number of advances.

What needs to happen now is that the left needs to see whether putting all their eggs in one basket is going to be able to move them forward qualitatively. Personally, I do not think it is correct

but then again, politics is also about the art of what is possible. I think for the first time since 1996 we have circumstances that enable certainly the left within the alliance to push forward in a strategic way like never before.

In terms of whether Zuma is a left candidate, I do not see that as the answer to the left. But what he does do is present an opportunity for a movement forward. Much depends on how he wins. If we have a situation where Zuma gets elected at the ANC conference, the problems in the alliance are not going to disappear overnight. The issue of marginalisation, the issue of influence and so on are not going to disappear. What you will possibly get is a better set of circumstances for engagement. Certainly, Jacob Zuma's style allows for consensus and for interaction, which is a lot different from President Mbeki. But I think the political and the strategic questions for the alliance will remain.

Both the SACP and Cosatu have important conferences coming up where they are going to look at the reconfigured alliance and whether they are going to continue to give the ANC electoral support in 2009. What we saw at the ANC conference in June is going to give us a good indication of what kind of discussion is going to come from those two conferences. My opinion is that whilst the left made advances at the policy conference in June, some of the key debates on macroeconomics policy have actually been postponed.

It is unfortunate that people look at questions of policy outside the question of leadership. Perhaps the rule of President Mbeki demonstrates very clearly that the two are inextricably linked. The adoption of GEAR, for example, was stage







managed into adoption within the ANC and had a lot to do with the kind of factional battles that were going on in the ANC at the time. What we have seen is that policy direction can be bent to the will of whatever faction is on the ascendance. Those things are going to remain relevant in a situation where you have someone other than President Mbeki assuming the leadership of the ANC.

On issues of policy, the ANC has signalled broadly and within the alliance as well, that there are likely to be changes around education, there are likely to be changes around health, there are likely to be changes around rural development. The left will have to assess to what extent those changes are going to fit in with an economic accumulation path that supports the vision of a more expansionist state.

On the issue of political culture, I was speaking at a debate a few nights ago and one of the speakers said that he would like to know how we got to a situation where one of the leading candidates for the ANC presidency is a man who is precluded by the Constitution of the country to run for a third term as president and the other is someone who could possibly go to prison. What does that say about where the ANC is at and where the alliance is at and how they have handled the question of leadership and contestation and succession?

For me what is clear about the ANC's political culture, particularly under Mbeki, is that the ANC leadership has failed dismally to deal with the question of succession. Even the very latest documents on the political overview show the ANC has

not prepared for an actual electoral contest between real candidates within its organisation. I think that probably what we are going to see is a first real contest between two candidates since the 1950s. What that says is that whilst the ANC might have dropped its rhetoric around socialism, it certainly retained its centralism and a Stalinist way of conducting political discussion and debate within internal ranks.

One would have thought that an ANC that faces no discernable threat from the left or the right would want more, not less democracy. Interestingly up until almost three weeks ago President Mbeki was still saying that there is no tradition of campaigning in the ANC whilst he was busy campaigning by telling everybody that he is available for re-election. There is space to re-look at issues of political culture. In terms of Tokyo Sexwale, in as much as he will not make it, history will have to be kind and recognise that he was one of the few ANC leaders beginning to speak to another impulse being raised in the party, and that is the question of open contestation and open lobbying. I think this is something that we are going to see in the future.

On the issue of the leadership, many analysts still think there is going to be a compromise candidate, even when five provinces, the ANC Women's League and the Youth League have nominated Jacob Zuma. Of course, it is one thing to get nominated and quite another to get elected. We know how in ANC processes things can always change. But South Africans need to begin to prepare themselves for the possibility of a Jacob Zuma presidency and what that means. ■



**T**he two previous speakers have suggested that it is a very uncertain and challenging time. Karima Brown absolutely captures the picture when she talks about what somebody said at a debate some nights ago in which she participated. But I think it is reasonable to suggest, unlike Karima, that whether it is Mbeki or Zuma, it seems to me that the terms have changed for a president of the ANC.

It seems to me that President Mbeki, if he were to return, will have no choice too. The difference this time will be the terms that will be secured by the SACP and Cosatu in their alliance with the ANC. The fact is that the SACP has taken a decision that in July next year we are going to decide what approach we will take to the 2009 elections. We have taken the following decision in this regard: "The alliance will be reconfigured and the SACP should contest elections in the context of a reconfigured alliance." Essentially what we are saying here is that the Central Committee has to look into the different modalities of an SACP electoral campaign in 2009. This could mean an electoral pact, which will be secured with the ANC and Cosatu, which should actually set out the rights of the SACP to certain quotas – maybe 10% or 20% of the public representatives with SACP mandates? The party will choose them and would have the right to recall them. We also want a more independent face for our members who are Members of Parliament, the legislatures and the councils.

**It seems to me that the terms have changed for a president of the ANC.**

If that does not work, the other option is to actually have an independent slate for the SACP in the 2009 elections, and we will then see what the outcome of the election results are, and then seek to secure a coalition, if necessary.

Cosatu too has agreed that in the second half of next year it will look at what direction it will take. If I am correct, they have taken a decision that they will wait for the SACP to make its decision before they will decide. So whether Mbeki or Zuma want to do what we want them to do or not, we have faith in the constituencies that are making these demands on us.

It is interesting that the newspapers have been focussing on the paper that Joel Netshitenzhe prepared for the ANC's National Executive Committee. There was a remarkable other paper reflecting the ANC's initial response to the proposal for a reconfigured alliance. For some reason, no one has covered this paper in depth. It actually deals with how the ANC would respond to the SACP and Cosatu for a pact or a reconfigured alliance – and it is very conciliatory in tone. Whether it carries in the ANC or not is difficult to say, but for the first time there is an acknowledgement by a senior, very influential leader of the ANC that there is in fact a fundamental change in the terrain.

As the SACP we argue that if you are a Marxist, the issue of state power is key. But the state is not the only site of power. The party has identified at least five other spheres: the economy, the workplace, the community, the ideological sphere, and, increasingly, in the international sphere, to the extent that we are able to shape the contours of international relations, at least on this continent and collaborate with forces globally.



# development dialogues

So our approach to the issue of state power is part of our overall approach to power and our approach in fact to the elections has to be situated in this context. We must stress too that if we are talking of state power, elections constitute just one site. There are other aspects of power, other key aspects of the state, the judiciary, the executive, the security apparatus, state enterprises and so on.

We have stressed that in so far as elections are concerned, that as public representatives, wherever we are deployed, obviously we are supposed to abide by the overall mandate of the ANC. But we have to act in a way that shows our allegiance primarily to the SACP, that in our conduct we act in terms of the principles, the values and the policies of the SACP. So presumably if you are a minister and you are a member of the central committee and politburo or an ordinary member of the party and a particular state service is being privatised, you are meant to present the point of view of the party and possibly present an alternative to privatisation of public services.

Defeat on such issues is fine – but the SACP view on these issues must be expressed. As ministers, chairpersons of committees, whips and ordinary Members of Parliament, councils and provincial legislatures, we cannot win debates within those terrains that we have not won in the broader alliance. This comes back to a point, that fundamentally, what we are looking for is not just a stronger influence of the SACP over government, but the ANC too having greater influence on the government. We note acutely, excruciatingly, what Jonathan is saying, by suggesting that in one little unit as powerful as the Presidency they have 77

people and in the party we only have one. The problem in fact is the balance of power. Actually, even if we get what we wanted, it would take a very long time to realise in practice significant influence by the Alliance on the government. We would have to draw people away from the state, because the pool of people to draw on is not very big. And if you draw people from the state to the party, it raises issues around the capacity of a really challenged state. Then you also have to have salaries that are equal to, if not better than what the state offers.

Even the most senior people in the Communist Party or Cosatu, having vigorously supported comrade Zuma, do not necessarily think that it is inevitable that there will be a swing to the left. I think that people are hoping that a space opens up – but whether, in fact, we are able to explore that space as the left depends on a multi-pronged strategy. There is no guarantee – because Comrade Zuma, needless to say, has to balance the needs of traditional leaders with those of feminists, the needs of workers with those of the private sector and so on. And that is understandable given that the ANC has a broad church constituency.

The issue for the left is that when we seek to achieve what we want to, we have to take into account other constituencies. So if you are going to have working-class hegemony, we have to carry with us the middle classes and we have to carry with us the traditional leaders. There is no other project for socialism, at least in my view, and this is a strong current within the SACP.

If you look fundamentally at power relations, even in the SACP and Cosatu, one of the striking





things is the shift from the leadership to the rank and file. You can see it for example in the decision that Luthuli House has to be a strong political centre and in the proposal that there should be a policy institute within the ANC.

Take also the developmental state approach that the party has been arguing for since 1996. Jeremy Cronin has been doing this for years now. Now the ANC and government are. It is also happening in respect of industrial policy, partly as an outcome of the pressure of the party, even though the ANC leadership may not acknowledge it. On the issue of state-owned enterprises, consider where we have come to now compared to where we were.

So the key thing is - that there is a change in the balance of power in the relationship between leaders and the masses. But the masses are not inherently revolutionary, as we in the left have found so many times. There is no guarantee therefore that there will be a return to the left. But the fact of the matter is that the space is opening up. Even if President Mbeki were to be re-elected, he does not have the power to undo this.

We are entering a significantly new era. Where we are going is really difficult to say. The key issue is whether we use the space on the left that is opening up. I think one should avoid being romantic about what is happening if you are on the left. At the same time, we should also avoid being full of doom and gloom. At the end of the day this ANC with all its idiosyncracies, for all the surrealism that envelops us, is remarkable. Show me a party in the developed world, let alone the developing world, that produces 12 or 13 papers a year ahead of its congress and has a policy conference of some 900

## The masses are not inherently revolutionary.

delegates and 400 or 500 other people, six months before its five-yearly congress. It is the outcome of the deliberations of those delegates and those participating in the policy conferences that we now have resolutions that go to the branches. The ANC has had at least two workshops in each region throughout the country. I go to them - and I know it is quite tiresome because you go through the same things over and over. But the fact of the matter is that the Labour Party in Britain does not do it and the Democrats in the US do not exist as a party.

For all that we say, there is resilience of the state institutions: the deputy president of the ANC faced trial, when he stood accused of rape, and he is possibly going to face trial again. Despite the erratic nature of these state institutions, they are remarkably resilient. Name any other developing society and, given the stakes, people would have been bumped off. In this country, I do not expect it to happen - and that is remarkable. That is the durability of our transition at one level.

Of course, we cannot look into the future. Right now, it is correct to say that for all the difficulties and the challenges facing both the ANC and the alliance as a whole, the state is relatively resilient. In my view, it is not just us who are in political structures, but all of civil society that have a role to play. No one can sit back, because it is not about the ANC president, but about the country, and the national democratic project. So we all have a responsibility. ■



### AFTER THE INPUTS THE FLOOR WAS OPEN FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS. ISSUES THAT WERE RAISED INCLUDED:

- If political space was opening up in South Africa, why did a third candidate not emerge in the ANC succession contest?
- What are the areas of real contestation if space is opening up in South African politics?
- Is the SACP practically able to make some kind of break with the alliance?
- We need to apply the same principles and yardsticks to all political structures, including the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu. While the SACP is very critical of what is underway within the ANC, there is a need also for the SACP to act with integrity and be held to account, particularly in light of recent allegations that a bag of money was handed over to the General Secretary.

### IN RESPONSE THE SPEAKERS MADE SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS:

#### Jonathan Faull

On why a third candidate has not emerged, it is certainly not out of the question as yet. But it is also important to recognise that when one looks at the balance of forces, even in Cosatu and SACP, we are not talking about monolithic entities. There are people who support Mbeki for a range of reasons and people who support Zuma for a range of reasons. I think the current politics is predisposed to that particular interaction. That does not mean that a third candidate may not emerge still, but it is increasingly unlikely.

On areas of contestation and policy, I agree with Karima about education and rural development. With regard to other areas, there is consensus that policy is not working or is not being implemented fast enough. One of the biggest areas of contestation, which I presume everyone will agree on, is the way policy is formulated in the first place, any policy and the relationship of accountability, capacity and oversight that exists between the state, the ANC, the tripartite alliance and civil society more broadly.

As far as the bag of money is concerned, regulation and transparency of party political funding is key to putting these kinds of issues to bed. The one thing that is obvious is that the struggles of the past three to five years have left no one untouched. At the Cosatu congress last year this was clearly visible. The camps, the plotting, the scheming, the denigration of personalities, the floating of completely irrational evidence and conspiracy theories in order to malign

personalities and try and purge them from positions was everywhere and there was active lobbying of the press and civil society and analysts. You could see certain people retire everyday to a particular restaurant, to a particular table to plot and scheme over red wine. It was everywhere to see and that is not good.

Everybody in the ANC is going to be doing a lot of soul searching we hope in the next 18 months and as an ongoing political exercise. The SACP and the unions also need to do likewise. There are some incredibly unhealthy practices that have emerged systemically through the alliance and within each alliance partner in the recent period. It is not in the interests of the organisations, and more importantly not in the interests of the citizens of South Africa, for this foothold of political craziness to become an established culture of politics in South Africa.

#### Karima Brown

The question that you are raising as to why another candidate has not emerged is perhaps something that the ANC needs to look at. One of the big issues is the inability of the ANC to deal with internal reform and democracy, and the biggest issue is clearly the fact that historically leaders in the ANC have always been anointed. I think that is part of the problem.

The other reason why we do not see more candidates is the insistence of the incumbent to run again. I think that President Mbeki strategically could have dictated the terms of his exit a lot better if he had removed himself from the race, put himself above the race and allowed the ANC to use his wisdom and to come to him for advice. But because he is partisan, because he is involved, his ability to lead the organisation has been severely compromised. Until perhaps the sacking of Vusi Pikoli, many ordinary South Africans could not see that the president was not someone who stood outside of the battle for power. But he has been part of it for a long time. What is it that drives him to stay in the race? If you look at the rest of the continent for example, you can see the logic of why outgoing leaders often want to anoint their successors, and South Africa is not immune from those issues.

We do have unsavoury political experiences. Our arms deal is also an unresolved matter, not just for Jacob Zuma, but also for the ANC and for President Mbeki. It is a matter that hangs very heavily over the entire leadership battle. I think we also need to begin to deconstruct Zuma because there has been a lot of demonisation around him as an individual, particularly if you look at the issue of the ANC and its own political morality. You have a situation where people, for example, who were found guilty in the Travelgate scam found





themselves back on lists for elected representatives in the 2004 local government election. You have people who have actually been convicted, gone to jail, retaining their seats on executive committees. So if you look at that, if you look at the pattern in the ANC, it is very difficult to then say: should you not be thinking that maybe this man has a cloud over his head? The truth of the matter is there are clouds hanging over a lot of ANC people's heads. We have lived with that for a long time as South Africans have lived with the fact that our president is a denialist around HIV. Jacob Zuma is part of a bigger phenomenon and that is the ANC.

In terms of policy questions, and if you look at Cosatu's discussions around things like monetary policy, inflation targeting and so on, we are definitely going to be heading for some serious discussions around those things. What is going to be different is that perhaps under a new leader you will have the basis for a conversation, which is what you do not have at the moment. But I do not think we are going to resolve the strategic issues in the short term.

#### **Yunus Carrim**

On the issue of the third candidate, partly I think that objective conditions produce leaders and it may well be that the terrain is not conducive to a left-wing project. Secondly, I think it has to do with the traditions of the ANC, the sort of things Karima said. We have always argued that leaders of the ANC are thrown out through consensus. Also I think people want space. Not so much a left-wing leader getting the space to wage a project that is left wing, but recognising that the terrain is multi-class and multi strata oriented. Even as the left we would have to win over the conservative forces that constitute our country and the constituency of the ANC.

With regard to the ANC's Deputy President Zuma, he has many strengths that do not surface necessarily in the public domain. This is about people's feelings that they are being heard, where the outcome is less important than the space. He is a man who is going to give space and he is genuine about that. There is something fundamentally African about his approach and it is deep rooted in his imbizos and maybe even the notions of traditional leadership.

I think what the left really wants subconsciously is the space. I think subconsciously we know that socialism is not around the corner, but we want to have the space to be heard, to have our views aired and to be respected in some sort of way. What has happened over the last three to five years, before this fight between Zuma and Mbeki, is that the terrain was beginning to slip away from any project. In some senses also, these two people have been able to do what they do – hold the country to ransom in

some sort of way – because the terrain itself allowed it. And we are all equally responsible, including civil society.

On the second issue, it is about what is a developmental state. Many people use the term, but they may mean different things. In the SACP's view, it is a national democratic developmental state, not a simple repetition of the South East Asian tigers. We are saying monetary and fiscal policy must be subordinate to the means of employment and development of the country. We are saying the Reserve Bank can be independent, but it has to change and take some cues from the electoral mandate. We need to change its composition, the way it is structured and so on. With regards to industrial policy there are similar arguments. Yes, we want the state-owned enterprises to make a commercial profit, but they also need to have a much more developmental orientation. The balance can be secured without these companies becoming financially bankrupt. On unemployment we are stressing the need for a sustained public works programme. We will obviously take up much more stride with the HIV/AIDS campaign and around the international relations focus on Zimbabwe in particular. The issue for us though, is to do it incrementally, taking into account the global and domestic balance of forces. And to seek not to alienate the middle classes, the intelligentsia and other strata, including progressive traditional leaders.

To deal specifically with the bag of money, the SACP set up a committee of three people, including the treasurer. The committee's report says there is no evidence that the money existed. They are not saying it did not exist, but there is no evidence that it existed and secondly, there is no evidence that Blade Nzimande received it. He volunteered that his accounts and his partner's accounts be looked at for that period and right up to now. As the General Secretary, he does have access to a campaign account, which is not unusual in this country and many other countries, for political purposes in the broader political struggle. Funds out of this account are usually used to hire buses to get people to a rally and so on. These are resources that they are not using it for themselves. The issue that arises is whether that money is used for their personal needs. That is immoral and that is wrong.

One of the decisions that the SACP has taken is to set up a register similar to the one in Parliament, presumably with a public side and a confidential side, because we recognise that senior leaders of the party also have business interests. That is being worked on. We agreed also that there would be a monthly presentation of all accounts and that no member of the politburo or officer bearer is allowed to have a separate fund that is not accountable to the party. ■





## POSITIONING POWER: ALLIANCE POLITICS AT PLAY

29 NOVEMBER 2007

CENTRE FOR THE BOOK, CAPE TOWN

### ABOUT THE PANEL:

**Yunus Carrim** has been a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly since 1994. He has served on various committees, including as chairperson, and is currently the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development. He serves in branch and regional structures of the African National Congress and is a member of the Central Committee and Politburo of the South African Communist Party.

**Karima Brown** is the political editor of the Business Day. She also writes a weekly column and has followed the ANC presidential succession race with keen interest and has written extensively on the issue. Before that she worked as a political correspondent for Independent Newspapers covering the presidency and the tripartite alliance. However the bulk of her journalism career was at the SABC where she was the executive producer of SAfm current affairs. Together with John Perlman she introduced the popular After Eight Debate which became a premier forum for discussions on politics and current affairs.

**Jonathan Faull** is Political Researcher at the Political Information and Monitoring Service of Idasa. He has worked for Idasa since 2004. His research interests include party politics, the politics of the tripartite alliance, Western Cape politics, and social justice and political and economic inequality.



POSITIONING POWER:  
ALLIANCE POLITICS AT PLAY



isandla  
institute

[www.isandla.org.za](http://www.isandla.org.za)



Open Society Foundation For South Africa

[www.osf.org.za](http://www.osf.org.za)