

DISCIPLINE OF ANC LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL FOR PLANNING COMMISSION SUCCESS

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The preoccupation of five year regime change within the ruling party (ANC) is the biggest challenge to the success of the Planning Commission (PC). There is a symbiotic relationship between Planning Commissions, and political leadership. The essence of the Planning Commission is long term planning. That is, determine a long term vision and programme to achieve such a vision. This requires a political leadership that is capable of developing long term visions and plans and provides leadership in the implementation of such programmes.

The current tendency within the ANC is more concerned on the set of individuals who must assume the leadership reigns from the next elective conference. Whilst the ANC has moved for the institutionalization of the Planning Commission, there is every possible danger that the very same ruling party maybe the utmost danger for the success and sustenance of the Planning Commission. This is the case because of the dominant preoccupation with internal five year regime change. In the main, this comes at the expense of long term policies and development programmes.

In less than a year after President Jacob Zuma assumed office, debates had already started within the ANC and its alliance partners whether he should serve a second term. Such considerations were not based on the policies and programmes of the ANC in government, but merely opportunistic. One of the common discourse in the ANC is “projects”. There is talk of “project 2014”; “project 2019”; and so on. These are considerations of individuals who should assume leadership positions both within the ruling party, and state. They are not based on some society vision, ideal, policies and programmes that must be pursued. They are largely based on individuals’ or factional self interest.

These “project” pursuits also manifest themselves on the current “2012” ANC’s elective conference. Even debates are stifled by individual quest to appease certain leaders so that they can be supported at the 2012 elective conference. A good example is the nationalization “debate” within the ruling party. It is so intrinsically linked to 2012 succession such that the essence of the debate has lost substance.

Policy debates that are linked to leadership succession as incentives or disincentive for those that agree or disagree with the mover respectively are counterproductive to the essence of the PC. The substantive work of the PC goes beyond five year political terms. In fact, this is partly the reason PC have come into existence. To ensure that an objective scientific research and analysis of socio – economic conditions is the bases for planning. The PC ensures that regardless of the leadership regime at any given moment, society has a credible long term plan and resource allocation that enjoys support of all major stakeholders in the country.

Hence, Planning Commissions succeed and are sustained by a political leadership that understands the essence of long term planning, and long term programme implementation. In this regard, it is crucial to have a ruling party that embraces and advances long term plans and programmes. It is imperative for

the leadership of the ruling party to be the key drivers of long term plans. Thus far, the ANC leadership is not doing so well in this regard. There is a tendency for every new minister to start things anew in his or her ministry as if nothing was happening in the past. The number of new strategies that have come with each and every minister of education in the first ten years of democracy is an example in point.

Recently, the publicly reported altercations between the current ministers of Human Settlement with his predecessor are another example in point. It must also be indicated they both belong to the very same ruling party.

In the last few years of the last political administration, the ANC government unveiled the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA). One would be forgiven to ask what happened to Asgisa in the new administration. The point is, policies and programmes of the ruling party must be implemented regardless of who is in the government executive.

The nature of the relationship between the party at the organizational level, and the party at the cabinet executive level, is largely dependent on the discipline at the party level. Currently, the discipline at the organizational level is weak. There is little commitment to party principles and long term strategies and programmes as the biding element of conduct by the leadership.

In the final analysis, the ruling party needs a cadre of leadership of men and women whose integrity is not necessarily dependent on being elected within the party leadership. That is, they must command respect simply based on their knowledge and ability to take both the organization and the cabinet to a higher level.

Without leadership sustainability within the ruling party, there are dangers that every emerging ANC five year leadership might undo the work of the PC and therefore hampering a sustainable drive to fulfill long term plans.

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