



CONFERENCE UPDATE /5

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INFORMATION ON THE ANC 51ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 16-20 DECEMBER 2002

►► STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE ANC

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ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE

DRAFT PREFACE TO THE 2002 EDITION

The 51st Conference of the African National Congress, 2002 confirmed the Strategy and Tactics adopted at the 50th Conference as a guide to action for the coming period. Conference also resolved that an explanatory note should be appended to the document, in the form of this *Preface to the 2002 edition of the Strategy and Tactics of the ANC*.

The Preface aims at assisting in the interpretation of our Strategy and Tactics in the light of new developments and experience gained in this period.

Objectives and methods of struggle

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The Strategy and Tactics of the ANC define the broad objectives of the struggle: the kind of society we seek to create. The document identifies the forces that are the main drivers of that struggle and those opposed to them.

In the circumstances characterised primarily by the attainment of political freedom in 1994, the Strategy and Tactics identify the variety of methods at the disposal of revolutionaries to achieve a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist society.

At the core of these tactics is the creative use of instruments of state power, steadily but surely resorting to the hands of the motive forces of fundamental change. For the first time African people and blacks in general are taking charge of their destiny and, together with all other democrats, they command the authority of

a state legitimately and popularly at the helm of the management of social change.

This complements in a decisive way the instruments of mass organisation and mobilisation that we have historically commanded.

The significance of this new situation will take years to clarify itself in the mind of all the social forces in our country and beyond our borders. In some instances, practice will march ahead of the theory required to illuminate this. In others, theoretical guidelines will float in the realm of abstract logic, easy for the mind to grasp but difficult for the organisational collective practically to realise.

Characterisation of an epoch

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The Strategy and Tactics document raises some of the complex of issues thrown up by this new situation. As its title itself suggests, we had by 1997 moved from building the foundation to building on the foundation for a better life. In a sense, the 51st Conference in 2002 takes us further along this road, by asserting this as a phase in which we have started to experience **people's power in action**.

The definition of what that better life means as outlined in these Strategy and Tactics remains unchanged, guided by the ideals contained in the Freedom Charter. While, since 1994, the instruments to implement change remain broadly the same, how we

wield them and set them to work, will continually change as the circumstances of struggle themselves change.

The 50th Conference signalled the challenges of the post-1994 epoch, which include: how the motive forces wield state power without glorifying its significance at the expense of mass organisation; the dangers of social distance that may develop between the cadres operating in government and the mass of the people who should continue to be the drivers of change; as well as the opportunities and challenges of an emergent array of class forces within the ranks of the motive forces.

The Strategy and Tactics document also seeks to integrate gender theory and practice into the interpretation of history, the definition of the present and mapping out the future. Much improvement is still required in this regard.

It also interprets the new global situation in a balanced, realistic and optimistic way. The end of the Cold War marked the end of the previous period characterised by rivalry between two competing power blocs. The Strategy and Tactics further argues that, with the advent of a unipolar world, has come real difficulties of rapacious and uncaring social relations imposed across the globe in a system that operates virtually as one unit.

However, precisely because of this deepening integration, globalisation also results in growing interdependency. This creates space for Africa, the developing world and the poor across the globe to advance progressive demands and perspectives for new forms of global partnership, co-operation and solidarity. As such, the Strategy and Tactics document argues that opportunities exist for the transformation of a system that relies for its sustenance on the resources, markets and labour-power of developing countries; a system that, at the same time, destroys our shared global environment, marginalizes whole continents, regions and cultures, and impoverishes millions.

In the overall, the continuing relevance of any set of Strategy and Tactics depends not merely on the correctness of their propositions. It relies, above all, on the capacity of the revolutionary practitioners to apply these broad propositions to the concrete circumstances of struggle.

In which respects do the propositions of the Strategy and Tactics document require clarification? What has changed, and how has our understanding of the environment improved?

Character of the NDR

The Strategy and Tactics document defines in clear terms the character of the National Democratic Revolution in relation to apartheid socio-political

relations that democracy is meant to eliminate. This character plays itself out in both class and national terms, in the intersection between national oppression and capitalist exploitation.

The document correctly argues that national liberation should be accompanied by programmes to improve the quality of life of especially the poor. However, it does not adequately elaborate on how these processes relate to economic power relations prevalent in our society.

A critical element of the programme for national emancipation should be the elimination of apartheid property relations. This requires: the de-racialisation of ownership and control of wealth; equity and affirmative action in the provision of skills and access to positions of management; consolidation and pooling of the power of state capital and institutional and social capital in the hands of the motive forces; encouragement of the co-operative sector; as well as systematic and intelligent ways of working in partnership with private capital in a relationship that will be defined by both unity and struggle, co-operative engagement and contestation on fundamental issues.

This is a continuing struggle which, as a matter of historical necessity, will loom ever larger as we proceed along the path of fundamental change. Because property relations are at the core of all social systems, the tensions that decisive application to this objective will generate will require dexterity in tact and firmness to principle.

The ideological struggle

Emphasis in the Strategy and Tactics on the challenges of material transformation – political, social and economic – is correct and speaks to the urgency of dealing with the human tragedy that apartheid exacted on our society.

Yet, a critical element of social transformation requires emphasis:

Fundamental change also demands the redefinition of the outlook, cultural values and moral attributes that characterise South African society. This is the realm of ideology – the battle of ideas – in which new values and mores that place humanism above greed and individual selfish interest need to be strongly asserted.

Without such broad cultural transformation, even the efforts aimed at changing material conditions will in the long run, but certainly, wilt in the friction between lofty ideal and the gravitational pull of greed, self-centredness and vice.

In this ideological struggle, the ANC needs clearly to define itself in relation to modern expressions of class and sectoral interests. The principal ideological currents in terms of which we need to contrast our own positions are neo-liberalism and modern ultra-leftism.

On the one extreme is the ideology of rampant capitalism, a system in which, as the Strategy and Tactics explains, formal democracy should be underpinned “by market forces to which all should kneel in the prayer: ‘everyone for himself and the Devil takes the hindmost!’” This is at the core of the ideology of neo-liberalism and other such worldviews, which dare the democratic state to emasculate itself.

On the other extreme are ultra-left practices, assumptions and ideologies. A common feature of ultra-leftism is subjectivism – a confusion of what is “desirable” with what is actually and immediately possible. This results in all manner of voluntaristic adventures, including the advocacy of impossible and dangerous great leaps forward, which reflects a systematic inability to understand the dynamic complexity of objective factors.

In our South African conditions, ultra-leftism has historically been impatient with the national grievance of the oppressed and dismissive of national democratic struggle. It fails to understand the national question as being a profoundly objective reality, shaped by centuries of colonial domination. As such, it advocates class struggle that should be waged purely and only in “direct” pursuit of a system without exploitation. This would be achieved in a linear reversal of the capitalist market with the state increasingly becoming the owner of the means of production. This is at the core of the ideology of ultra-leftism which relates to the democratic state as the main target of its critique and action.

The ANC rejects both approaches. In our situation, positions that either advance the dictates of rapacious global social relations, or propagate the irrelevance of the national question and an adventurist struggle against these global relations, are a sure recipe for the defeat of the National Democratic Revolution.

To us, and indeed to all genuine revolutionaries, the historical task of national liberation is not a fleeting convenience or an ephemeral tactic. It is an objective requirement to eliminate the historical contradictions arising out of a system constructed over centuries of colonial domination.

But ours is more than just a national liberation struggle because it places the interests of the poor and the role of the working class at the centre of its theory and practice. The ANC, as the leader of the national democratic struggle, is a disciplined force of the left, organised to conduct consistent struggle in pursuit of the interests of the poor.

Motive forces of the NDR

The Strategy and Tactics document defines the motive forces as those classes and strata that objectively and systemically stand to gain from the victory and

consolidation of the national democratic revolution. It identifies the working class and the poor as the core of these forces, the sectors whose material conditions impel them consistently to pursue thorough-going change.

These motive forces include the black, emergent capitalist class, whose interests are served not only by formal political democracy; but also by the programme to change apartheid property relations. This class, as with other motive forces, needs to be organised and mobilised to serve the interests of reconstruction and development.

At the same time, the ANC needs to win over to the cause of transformation all other sections of South African society, including white workers, the middle strata and the bourgeoisie. They should consistently be persuaded to appreciate that their long-term interests reside in joint patriotic efforts to build a better life for all.

The changing nature of the environment in which the struggle is waged should over time redefine the alignment of all these forces, creating the possibility for the national democratic project incrementally to represent the broad interests of all the people. Such realignment may bring about a situation in which class antagonisms as such, emerge as the primary engine of the locomotive of further change. Yet the time is long off when such alignment will be shorn of an apartheid colonial legacy in which a disproportionate number of the poor and marginalized are black.

Character of the ANC

The challenge of utilising terrains of political power and mass mobilisation imposes new demands on the ANC. The Strategy and Tactics document identifies some of these challenges.

In addition to these, the movement needs continually to sharpen its structures and systems in order to give effective leadership to all terrains of struggle, including government. This calls for observance of broad mandates, encouragement of initiative on matters of tactical detail, and the building of requisite capacity within the ANC for purposes of policy formulation.

In actual struggle, many issues need to be attended to in very specific terms. This in part gives rise to social movements that are issue-based. Their pursuits may not necessarily coincide with those of the other motive forces, their understanding of the relationship between the sectoral and the general may not be optimal, and some of their tactics may not necessarily be along the general line of march of the liberation movement.

Though conditions may have changed, and though some of these tendencies express themselves in new ways, the experience itself is not new. As history has

shown, the leader of the revolution has to find creative ways of giving leadership to such structures and activities of civil society. This requires theoretical acumen, leadership skills and organisational capacity.

On an on-going basis the ANC should master the art and science of managing secondary contradictions (“contradictions among the people”), and unite all who aspire for progressive change around minimum objectives that take the revolutionary process forward.

Character of the international situation

Since the adoption of the Strategy and Tactics document in 1997, new opportunities have emerged in the global arena to pursue the interests of the poor and marginalized. These include the formation of the African Union (AU) and adoption of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and increased articulation by a number of multilateral bodies of the developmental interests of the South.

This has not happened by accident. It confirms the optimism in the Strategy and Tactics which informed the injunction that “it is the task of revolutionary democrats and humanists everywhere to recognise dangers; but more critically, to identify opportunities in the search for a just, humane and equitable world order”.

It is in this context that the standing of South Africa has been enhanced, at the core of the efforts of developing countries and Africa in particular to reverse the unequal power relations that define global politics and economics today.

In the midst of this, the system of global capitalism has witnessed many crises, exposing its incapacity to address in a lasting and comprehensive way, the plight of the world’s poor.

The recent period has also witnessed attempts by leading circles in some developed countries to heighten international tension and insecurity. This includes the pursuit of a militarised global agenda that detracts from the key challenges of sustainable development, and fudges the real fault lines in global society.

Contained in this tendency is a grave danger of a global conflagration in which the poor, as always, will be the main losers.

The recent period has also brought to the fore the issue of terrorism – the deliberate targeting of civilians in armed conflict, which the ANC unreservedly condemns. Terrorism by anyone, in pursuit of whatever cause, is not only inhuman. It can also have the effect of encouraging militarism and global insecurity. The main losers, similarly, are the poor of the world.

In this context, the injunction in the Strategy and Tactics that the ANC should “aim to contribute to the restructuring of international relations in the interest of the poor” remains as relevant as ever. “We are moved in this regard by the conviction that, as long as injustice, poverty and conflict exist anywhere on the globe, so long will humanity find within itself the individuals, movements and governments to co-operate in their eradication. The ANC is a proud part of these international forces.”

Programme of National Democratic Transformation

The transformation agenda outlined in this Strategy and Tactics document summarises the core challenges of implementing the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The main elements of this programme are: deepening democracy, good governance and the culture of human rights; transformation of the state; economic transformation; meeting social needs and consolidating people’s safety and security.

As indicated earlier, the Strategy and Tactics document does not pay sufficient attention to the ideological struggle as a critical area of contestation, a centre of power in its own right. This relates to such matters as culture, media discourse, moral regeneration of society as well as the content of academic and civic education.

An important element of the programme for transformation is the development and preservation of the country’s human resources. This includes the development of skills which are geared towards the needs of the economy and of society at large, and comprehensive strategies to address the challenge of unemployment.

Given the progression of the AIDS epidemic, and the evolution of weapons to combat it, our programme of transformation should not only acknowledge this danger; but it must also put the campaign against it at the top of our agenda.

As we enter the Second Decade of Freedom (2004 – 2014), and the period leading to the Centenary of the founding of the ANC (2012), the detailed programmes of the movement need to outline the expectations, possibilities and broad targets being pursued in this period. This demands a clearer understanding of the sequencing of policy actions and the time lags between policy determination, implementation and actual impact.

Conclusion

As the 51st Conference has resolved, this Strategy and Tactics document charts the path we should follow in the coming period.

Many of the changes since the 50th Conference in 1997 in fact confirm the basic conclusions reached in this document. The central challenge remains that of intensifying the struggle in line with the five pillars.

The clarification contained in this Preface should further sharpen both our understanding of the challenges we face and the implementation of the programmes to meet this challenge.

In the period since the 50th National Conference, the balance of forces has shifted in favour of the movement for fundamental change. This includes the ANC victory in the 1999 elections with an increased majority.

Further, while opponents of change may still occupy strategic positions in a number of centres of power, they have failed to muster any significant force against the revolution.

It is our task, in the coming period, further to shift this balance in the interest of faster transformation. In the words of the Strategy and Tactics document:

“We call on all South Africans to join us in this march to a better future. We are keenly aware that it will take time to realise the strategic objective of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. But the foundation has been laid, and the building has begun.”