

DE KLERK REITERATED (OR REVEALED) HIS  
IDEOLOGICAL DOGMATISM

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In the build-up to Pres De Klerk's speech at the opening of Parliament, it was predicted that it will be the last speech of its kind. This prediction will in all probability turn out to be wrong.

The outstanding feature of Mr De Klerk's speech was the one-sided white-orientation of it. He revealed almost exclusive concern for white fears, white interests and white participation (at Codesa) and displayed almost complete indifference for the plight, the expectations and the anger in Black and liberationist circles. It was as if Pres De Klerk deliberately gave a cold shoulder to the ANC and to the cause of the "struggle".

A plausible explanation for neglecting "struggle" politics, can be that Mr De Klerk and the NP have not yet made peace with the humiliating defeat that Pres De Klerk suffered on 20 December during his confrontation with Mr Mandela. The white-orientation of Pres De Klerk's speech can also be explained in terms of the rumours about a "mini revolt" that allegedly took place in the NP caucus last week. If the rumours are true, the reason for it can be either severe dissatisfaction about what happened at Codesa or it can be concerned with the by-election in Potchefstroom - or both.

In the conspicuous absence of any announcement to break new grounds on matters concerning constitutional development, the most relevant aspect of Mr De Klerk's speech was the strict conditions that should, according to him, be met before a new constitution - both a transitional and a permanent constitution - will be acceptable for the Nationalists.

Although these conditions have been spelled out before, Mr De Klerk emphasised the non-negotiable character of at least three such conditions with much greater vigour and kragdadigheid than ever before.



Mr De Klerk gave extensive attention to the role Parliament has to play on behalf of a legal transition from the present to a future constitution. Although there is merit in this commitment towards parliamentary procedures, he underplayed the present parliament's lack of legitimacy and showed little understanding of how difficult it will be to re-unite legality and legitimacy in a new Parliament. Any attempt of the NP towards co-option - something that clearly remains the NP strategy - will never succeed to restore the legitimacy of Parliament.

Secondly, Pres De Klerk also reiterated that he is bound by honour to ask the consent of the white electorate for a new constitution - even if it is a transitional constitution. It is very unlikely that the ANC will ever accept this potential veto of Codesa.

The third condition laid down by Pres De Klerk has a distinctly ideological nature. He emphasised on at least four occasions during his speech that a new constitution - both the transitional and the final one - will only be acceptable for the NP if it is based on the principle of "power-sharing without domination". He went out of his way to emphasise that "domination in whatever form has to be prevented effectively". He emphasised that "proposals for cosmetic guarantees for minorities are totally unacceptable".

It becomes clear that Pres De Klerk does not regard Codesa as a vehicle to reach democracy but only as a vehicle to reach "broad consensus" on the "power-sharing" constitutional model of the NP. He clearly underestimates the momentum Codesa has already attained.

The NP rhetoric about "power-sharing without domination" is inherently so undemocratic and unattainable that people cannot be blamed if they dismiss it as meaningless and as typically Nat-speak claptrap. But Mr De Klerk and the NP are far too adamant about its "non-domination" principle and they reiterate it too consistently to discard it as vain propagandistic tattle.



The idea of "power-sharing without domination" was originally put forward by the Botha/Heunis-government as the slogan for the 1987-election. The fact that Pres De Klerk and the NP persisted with it and elevated it to a non-negotiable principle, is an indication that on substantive constitutional matters Mr De Klerk and the NP have made little - if any - progress during the last five years!

In maintaining his obsession against any form of "domination" - by any group or party - in a future constitutional dispensation, Mr De Klerk reveals a very twisted and an alarmingly superficial idea about the essence of multi-party democracy, about the decision-making procedures in governing a modern country effectively, and especially about the nature of the structural reform needed in South Africa. It is high time for Mr De Klerk and the NP to realise that reform from apartheid to democracy cannot be about power-sharing but should inevitably be about the transfer of power.

It is purely ideological escapism on the side of Mr De Klerk and the NP to think that it is possible to discover or to design a "miraculous equilibrium" and to enact this "equilibrium" in a "rechtstaat" in which none of the (say) 8 participating parties will ever be in a position to dominate another or will ever be dominated by any other party or group of parties. This kind of "miraculous equilibrium" can only be attained and maintained in heaven but luckily there will be - thank heavens - no need for politics in heaven!

If the principle of "power-sharing without domination" should remain a condition on which the NP is not prepared to make compromises, then there is, from an ideological and constitutional perspective, very little difference between the NP and the CP. The NP's constitutional principle of "non-domination" is as unattainable as the CP's constitutional principle of "self-determination", and both are typical examples of the Afrikaners' traditional inclination towards ideological escapism. The main difference between the NP and the CP then only boils down to a difference in style. While the NP is prepared to negotiate to get "agreement" about it's "non-domination" constitution, the CP wants to attain "self-determination" without negotiations.



Mr De Klerk's <sup>two</sup>~~pro~~-pronged approach transpired more clearly on Friday than ever before. On the one hand he displayed great reasonableness and flexibility on matters pertaining negotiations, but on the other hand he revealed great ideological dogmatism on the substantive nature of the future constitutional dispensation. This two-pronged approach is contradictory. It is as if Mr De Klerk reveals a politically "dual personality". According to the one personality he epitomises sweet-reasonableness about negotiations as the process that will "produce" miracles. According to the other personality he impersonates the unbendable ideological approach typical of the Afrikaner tradition.

The immediate future of the negotiation process depends critically on the degree to which these two political personalities can be reconciled - if possible. In the meantime Mr De Klerk and the NP should not be unaware of the fact that his sweet reasonableness about negotiations has created very high expectations in liberationist and foreign circles. These expectations can become disenchanted in a rather dangerous manner if Mr De Klerk is to persist with his principle of "power-sharing without domination".