

AZAPO POSITION SUBMITTED TO THE PARLIAMENT'S AD HOC COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING ON 20 JULY 2017

ON POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

1. INTRODUCTION

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) is stubbornly committed to the principles of Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. We view these principles and the political values that flow from the principles as sacrosanct. In this setup, the people are a supreme and ultimate political force in the determination of the content and character of our Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. The Founding Father of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), Steve Biko, articulates these principles under the concept of freedom as follows:

Freedom is the ability to define oneself with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people over one but only by one's relationship to God and to natural surroundings. On his own, therefore, the black man wishes to explore his surroundings and test his possibilities - in other words to make his freedom real by whatever means he deems fit.

The extent to which our people were determined to fight for a liberated life within the context of National Self-Determination found expression in their willingness to sacrifice their lives to actualise and give meaning to their liberated collective life. Indeed, they died in their thousands and thousands over the decades of the liberation struggle. They faced live bullets and charged forward armed only with stones and dustbin lids as their makeshift shields. AZAPO makes this point to emphasise the reality that South Africa's Sovereignty and National Self-Determination was gained through the spilling of blood and loss of lives of our people in murderous hands of colonialism, and later, white settler-

colonialism. It would therefore be the worst form of betrayal of the spirits of our martyrs if our hard-earned Sovereignty and National Self-Determination could be sacrificed at the altar of any form of recolonisation whatsoever.

In a nutshell, AZAPO views the discussion on Political Party Funding within the context of Sovereignty, National Self-Determination and National Security. In this regard, Political Party Funding should also be viewed as a continuation of the liberation struggle against colonialism of whatever sort.

2. IMPERIALIST ATTACKS ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF NATIONS

The machinations of imperialism in its attempts to undermine the sovereignty of the nations of the world is well documented. We know how India was partitioned by the intervention of foreign powers resulting in two countries, namely, India and Pakistan. We know also that those countries have since not known coexistence and peace. We have seen how Iraq was partitioned by the intervention of foreign power. That partition resulted in Iraq and Kuwait. The sovereignty of these nations was attacked because the foreign powers were interested in the wealth of those nations, while keeping the nations destabilised. Colonialism was the classical method of undermining the Sovereignty and National Self-Determination of nations while plundering their wealth and mineral resources.

It is an established fact of history that the foreign super powers have sponsored the so-called regime change in many other countries with the objective of undermining the Sovereignty and National Self-Determination of the peoples of those country so that the foreign powers could plunder the wealth of those nations. Political organisations and NGOs have been heavily funded to undermine the power of the people who voted to elect the governments of their own choice. Not too far, we know and have witnessed how arbitrary partitioning of countries and nations could result to a genocide of about a million people in Rwanda without the UN and the world super powers raising an

eyebrow. We have seen how NGOs have been heavily funded to undermine the Sovereignty and National Self-Determination of the peoples of Venezuela and Ukraine. The US is not hiding its instruction to the CIA to pause the funding of rebels with ISIL links in Syria. All this funding and the aerial bombing of Syria was not done to bolster the Sovereignty and National Self-Determination of the Syrian people, but to undermine same with the objective of plundering the resources of the country.

AZAPO makes the point above to demonstrate that it is not only through the Represented Political Party Funding that the Sovereignty and National Security of South Africa could be undermined by greedy foreign powers. The country needs to interest itself about the flow of money to extra-parliamentary organisations.

3. POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING AND CORRUPTION

While we have given examples of how the Sovereignty of a nation could be undermined by direct and forceful means, in many instances this is done in the subtlest of manners. Corruption is one of the most vicious enemy of the development states that have just emerged from under the grip of foreign hegemony in the name of colonialism of one sort or the other. Its grand version is known as State Capture. The development state is never able to realise its objective human development because the State Capture divert to itself the public resources that were meant to actualise human development. In that sense, the poor remain in the same state they were before independence despite their continued casting of their votes to choose a government that will govern on basis of their political mandate as a people. Forces of State Capture, which are usually private business interests, avail enormous secret funding to the ruling party or its constituent elements based on the understanding that the ruling party will manipulate the procurement processes to favour their secret funder. Local government, where most of the development projects take place, is the most targeted sphere of government. It is public knowledge that Chancellor House operated as a front company to channel money from the state departments to the ruling party. The ongoing Guptaleaks have left the public

numb with the amount of corruption that comes across as some form of secret political party funding at the expense of human development.

Consider that in the 2009 elections it is on record that political parties spent about R550 million on campaigning, yet less than R93 million came from the IEC and other public funds. In a 2014 a leaked document revealed that the ruling party spent about R429 million just on campaigning, while the party received less than R73 million in that year. We also know that a lot of money is hidden by avoiding any paper trail in these corrupt processes. We should therefore not forget that a campaigns leader of the ruling party boasted that the ruling party spent about R1 billion in the last elections. Where does all this money comes from? Could there be corrupt secret deals behind the heavy secret funding of some of the political parties in South Africa?

A casual look at the elections results in South Africa will confirm that the results are proportionate to money a political party has invested in those elections. On the strength of this observation, AZAPO argues that the will of the people gets distorted through the flow of money from dubious sources to the political parties concerned. The will of the people finds itself eclipsed by the will of corrupt private interests. All this amounts to the undermining of Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. The next casualty is National Security.

The gravity of the injury caused by State Capture to the people and the country is the undermining of Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. The power that the people delegate to the state structures through their votes is rendered redundant because private interests usurp that power and control the levers of governance through underhand means.

Granted this background, it is interesting that the political parties like ANC, DA and IFP opposed the 2015 court bid by My Vote Counts (MVC) for the disclosure of Political Party

Funding in South Africa. In earlier years, these parties were ironically joined by the New National Party in their bid to oppose a similar action by Idasa.

4. OUR PROPOSAL

It is crystal clear that you cannot seriously talk about clean government and the eradication of corruption in our society without tackling the question of Political Party Funding.

Having stated the above, we have to admit that the funding of political parties is not an easy matter, not only for us, but throughout the world. Notwithstanding the complexity of the matter, we have to regulate the role of money in our body politic. Failure to do so would lead us into a cesspit of corruption and manipulation of our national life that would in time be too difficult to correct.

South Africa is a society of gross inequalities and distortions - all based on levels of income. There are Municipal Managers earning more than the President of the Republic; and personal assistants remunerated higher than professionals such as doctors and teachers. Academics at our institutions of higher learning are paid so poorly that many of them opt to move into the civil service, even if they end up just pushing papers. The gap between the low and high earners is so wide that it borders on the obscene.

Of immediate importance to our submission is that this inequality is manifest in Parliament through the formula used to allocate resources and speaking time. The arrangements perpetuate the inequalities among political parties based on past performance at the polls. This makes it almost impossible for those that did not fare well to improve. The funding arrangements trap parties in their past.

The IEC annually allocates millions of rands to political parties based on the proportion of votes a party represented in Parliament received at the polls in the immediate past election. The disparities in these allocations are ridiculously wide and represent another area where inequalities are cemented.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) uses the same principle for its coverage of parties during election campaigns. The sum total of these financial allocations and access to other public services is that it would be very difficult to change a government in South Africa, unless the non-governing parties have access to private funding. And yet it would not be fair to suggest that performance at the polls not be taken into account in allocating these funds or in speaking time in the House. This single-party saturation is yet another form of undermining Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. The people are technically presented with no choice at all. Yet we know that democracy works well where no winner is guaranteed at the elections.

Unfortunately, State Capture thrives where there is chronic hegemony in the sense of a single-party dominated democracy. In this regard, the fight against State Capture is lost before it is even waged because of the structural arrangements.

This notwithstanding, the South African system inadvertently perpetuates a single-party dominated democracy against multiparty democracy as reflected in the Constitution.

Granted this background, AZAPO proposes the following:

- The role of money in elections should be reduced by imposing an upper limit on the private funding that a political party may receive for its electoral campaign.
- Campaign spending must be transparent, subject to audit by a competent public entity.
- The private funding of political parties during elections must be transparent and subject to the upper limit curbing mentioned above.
- During elections, all parties represented in Parliament must be treated equally, accepting the principle that all of them are given an equal chance to participate in that election. It would be absurd, for example, to give the champions preferential treatment in a soccer tournament, or any other sport for that matter, simply because they won the last one. All teams taking part in a tournament are treated exactly the same, giving all of them an equal chance to participate.

- An arrangement must be found to accommodate those political parties that are not represented in Parliament. Failure to do so would lock new entrants out of the democratic process.
- While respecting proportionality in the annual allocation of funds by the IEC to political parties represented in Parliament, the formula must be changed to allow a greater percentage of the money, say 50%, to be divided equally among the parties and the remainder to be distributed on a proportional basis.
- A provision must be made for private funders that may wish to contribute to a pool where the money would be distributed on an equal basis to the political parties.
- Foreign funding of political parties must not be allowed.

5. CONCLUSION

Whatever we do, we should always bear in mind that elections are an important aspect of the expression of the will of the people. That will of the people is codified in terms like Sovereignty and National Self-Determination. Elections and everything that go with them should be organised so as to give expression to the will of the people. The rights of expression and vote will surely gain prominence in this debate. The people will not choose a government for the sake of choosing. They desire the proper political running of the country, the growth of the economy, their human development; all of which point to their total liberation as a people.