



LETSEMA CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

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Leadership Beyond a Decade of Democracy

by Bennitto Motitswe

We've come a long way accedes. The challenge of the next decade is to entrench democratic leadership and construct an effective bridge between political and economic leaders of the country.

April 27 this year was an epoch-making experience, marking as it did the end of the first decade and the start of the second decade of democracy in South Africa. Years ago, at a very inaugural phase of our democracy, commentators across the word warned that the country's stand on political freedom would ring hollow if it was not concretely translated into economic freedom.

Others maintain that the country's enduring democracy is largely owed to the concerted efforts of its democratic leadership in all spheres of human life and at all levels of society. The fundamental task of transformation during and beyond ten years remains without parallel-ensuring democratic leadership. The task is mammoth and encompasses both political and economical change.

In the context of governance, democratic leadership is seen as the umbilical cord of transformation and nation building. It is truly the most compelling reason among the many conditions attached to dealing with the extremes socio-politico-economic and other societal challenges during the first decade of democratic governance.

Its unhesitant nature made the country and the majority of its people much more confident about an enduring democracy into the second decade of broadening democratization. However, the country must still soon engage in a necessary dialogue to unravel the contrasts characterizing the bridging of political and economic freedom.

The challenge beyond the decade of freedom therefore remains how the democratic leadership can become a stairway towards resolving the fundamental contrasts between what is seen as political will on the part of political leadership and what can be argued is a lack thereof on the part of the economic leadership-where the former is reflected through the public sector (government) and the latter through the private sector (big business). The contrasts stem from the historic backgrounds distinguishing these two most important categories of democratic leadership. The framework of change and development is absolutely shared between the political and economic leadership. An example here could be the much discussed black economic empowerment policy of the government.

Big business agrees to it overall, but still sees it as an investment risk. In a healthy democracy, political and economic leaders are expected to demonstrate maturity in playing a leadership role rather than pushing power in an enduring, but fragile democratisation process. Society cannot thrive on permanent change unless there is a mutual understanding between role-playing leadership drawn from both its political and economic players. The importance of these two spheres of human development can clearly be demonstrated through the emergence of the disciplines of political economy-analysing and shaping the theories and practices of societal and developmental change.

The thinking in South Africa is that the country is constituted of two nations determined by two extreme economies-this piece seeks to advance ideas on the resultant dual leadership roles. The »first nation« and its »first economy« remain affluent, whereas the »second nation« and its »second economy« remain poverty stricken. The ideas of transformation presented by the political leadership often contrasts with those held by the economic leadership. There are situations where the economic leadership thinks that the political leadership compromises the investment interest of the country by pushing through what it

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describes the unfriendly investment decisions devoid of business reckoning. The second decade faces the challenge of bridging this misunderstanding. Only a resolute democratic leadership can become a stairway bridging the widening crack threatening democratic governance. The thrust of employing democratic leadership to deal effectively with the contrasts derives from ensuring that the roles are disentangled, but remain complementary to attain the broader goals of transformation.

The social pact sighed between the government, big business and labour towards the end of first decade is an example of creating space for the democratic leadership to think and act together in a more unifying manner in order to resolve common challenges. The leadership challenge in this second decade is, therefore, reflected through the capacity of all the identifiable actors in the two main spheres to move towards change and development co-created by the people they lead. It is fairly objective to state that the capacity to bridge equals the capacity to translate political freedom into economic freedom-and this is keenly expected from a characteristically dual leadership comprising both political and economic sectors. The role of the democratic leadership remains to facilitate a meaningful crossover of shared ideas and responsibilities, thereby resolving the politico-economic contrasts.

Two schools of thoughts could be employed to further deepen this engagement. One school of thought in both theory and practice of political leadership is arguably that it can be defined exclusively with regard to economic leadership; the other is that of seeing political and economic leadership as mutually dependent, complementary and therefore inclusive in their various stages of development.

Clearly there exist many memorable real-life examples, in both developed and developing nations, to either strengthen or weaken the chief discussion. In South Africa, during the first decade already, a sizeable prominent political leadership made inroads in converting itself into prominent economic leadership. While such decisiveness is likely to be justified as intensifying either the affluent or the indigent, the point to pursue here is an analysis of the somewhat distinctive, but intrinsic roles of displaying and breeding new democratic leadership championing the discipline of political economy. The »first nations« and »first economies« in advanced democracies are often seen as economic and not political leadership. These contrasts in democracies and leadership are fascinating to look at relative to change and development. The transformative route is about meaningful transitions from political legitimacies to economic success. The success of transformative discourses remains the responsibility of the democratic leadership in pursuing the broad-based self-interests of both nations using the stairway to bridge economies. The restoration human equality and emancipation depends on defining and working towards national self-interests for all.

The challenges characterizing the second decade of democracy are likely to be more persistent than those of the first decade; they will require more resolute democratic leadership. Such leadership is destined to resolve the issue of joblessness, ill-health and resultant poverty which undermine human dignity. The successes of political and economic leadership are successes of the democratic leadership and, similarly, the successes of democratic leadership are indicative of a successful dialogue amongst two nations about two economies. This can be the best or worst for sustainable democracy in the future South Africa.

The first decade created conducive conditions; the second is awaited with great inspiration and sense of oneness with which to work through the challenge of democratic leadership. Both the first nation and its first economy have to think and act beyond investment risks; equally the second nation and second economy have to think and act beyond willingness.

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