



ANC

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Focus on Regions

Issues relating to the powers, functions and boundaries of regions in a future South Africa have been under discussion within ANC circles for some time.

The ANC held a national conference on regions in March 1993. This conference followed lengthy discussions at local and regional levels of a discussion document which was widely circulated.

The decision of this Conference on the number of regions was that there should be '10 regions or less', and that the four provinces as defined by the 1910 boundaries should form the basis of the elections for a Constituent Assembly.

The mandate given by Conference was that should we not be successful in our insistence that there be four regions in the transitional period, that we should define the regions for the elections in terms of the longer vision for regions in a future South Africa.

This Conference also called for a Delimitation Commission to be established.

A Commission for Delimitation on regions has now been established by the Multi-Party Negotiations Process (MPNP). The following is the basis of the submission made by the ANC to this Commission.

Delimitation Criteria

In defining future regions for a democratic South Africa, the ANC assumed:

- * all bantustans must be reincorporated into South Africa and a united country created. There is a need for active movement away from apartheid, overcoming: the enormous fragmentation and inequalities, the harmful ethnic divisions, and the regional imbalances;
- * there will be provision in the future constitution for three levels of government: central, regional and local;
- * that principles such as the following should guide the process which demarcates the future regions:-

1. ***The regions should be economically and socially functional.*** The regions should be large enough to incorporate those areas which are functionally interdependent with each other, but small enough to

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ensure coherent planning and administration can occur. Communication links are important here. In terms of the latter, care should be exercised to try and ensure the regions are inclusive of linguistic, ethnic, and other community related groups so as to give effect to more appropriate planning for the needs of such groups.

2. ***The regions should allow for balanced urban and rural development.*** This point relates to the fact that the regions should be large enough to include the widely divergent, but contiguous, areas presently existing in South Africa.
3. ***The regions should be compact.*** The gerrymandering in South Africa has reinforced a tendency for regions to be disjointed, elongated, etc. Instead, regions should be as compact as is practicable.
4. ***The regional boundaries should take into account population size and geographic product.*** While this principle is less significant, a strong case may be made for trying to ensure regions are approximately equal in size and geographic product. However, this is very difficult to achieve in practice, particularly as one moves towards more regions.
5. ***The regional boundaries should, wherever possible, take into account existing boundaries.*** While this is the least important principle, there are many reasons why we should be cognisant of existing boundaries.
6. ***Popular acceptance and a sense of rightness should be taken into account.*** While this might be a rather subjective criterion, quite a high degree of national consensus has already been achieved.

Overall, the ANC argued for a multiplicity of regions, without this leading to greater bureaucracy. Areas need to be grouped on an integrative, non-racial basis in a way that encourages accountability, local initiative, efficiency in the provision of services and facilities, and a more equitable distribution of the social surplus.

The Number of Regions

1. The Border-Kei/Eastern Cape

The question as to whether the Border-Kei should be joined to the Eastern Cape require intensive debate. Those supporting such a fusion point out that the economic indicators for Border-Kei are such that this region is not economically viable, and would have a problem in terms of the poverty of its industrial and tax base were it to be a separate region.

Those supporting a separate Border-Kei region, on the other hand, have argued that, even if not viable in terms of its tax base, the region is economically functional in relation to the flow of labour, goods and services, and is functional in terms of development planning. They argued further that responsibility for ensuring the adequate distribution of resources to poorer regions should be a function of central government, and should not have to rely too heavily on their own tax base. Clearly the question of whether these regions should be separated or not is linked to the question of what powers of taxation are exercised by the regions as opposed to the centre in a future dispensation.

Our considered view is that as least for the purposes of elections, there should be a single Eastern Cape-Border-Ciskei-Transkei region.

2. The North-Western Region

A similar set of arguments exist in considering the Northern Cape and Western Transvaal. Not only are both of these regions quite small, but their separation raises more problems than it

contains. These include not only the debates over whether or not Mafekeng should be in the Northern Cape, but the reintegration of Bophuthatswana would be facilitated if most of its regions constitute part of a larger whole. But more importantly, the regions are functionally interlinked. Also, the regions are small, and through combining them would mean that no region would be smaller than 2 million people in size. One could list a number of economic, social, administration and political reasons for creating a single region.

3. Natal

There is general acceptance that Natal should be a single regional unit, although the question of its southern boundary with the Border-Kei remains unresolved. The ANC position until now has been that the 1910 provincial boundary between the Cape and Natal should be used. This would see East Griqualand-Umzimkulu falling into the Border-Kei. There are arguments, however, to the effect that this area has greater economic linkages with Natal than does towards the present Transkei, and the post-1977 provincial boundary should be used in order that East Griqualand/Umzimkulu should go to Natal. A possible solution to this issue would be a local referendum among the residents of this area to determine their preference.

4. Orange Free State

The acceptance of the OFS as a single regions, following the boundaries as per 1910 form part of our proposal.

5. Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging

The economic dominance of the PWV region has been acknowledged in all our debates. The cutting up of the PWV region would violate all key principles of delimitation and could create more problems that it solves. Our proposal would leave the PWV region intact.

6. Northern Transvaal and Eastern Transvaal

In our discussions the Northern Transvaal and Eastern Transvaal have always been accepted as distinct regions, although the economic indicators for Northern Transvaal are as bad as those for Border-Kei.

Our proposal nevertheless would reflect the predominant view that these should be distinct regions, a combining them does not address the economic functionality need.

While the Northern Transvaal might be economically disadvantaged, it is economically functional and quite distinct from the Eastern Transvaal. In addition, each region is relatively large (both in terms of population and size).

7. Western Cape

The concept of a Western Cape region has not been questioned, except for the proposal for smaller regions, which would have seen a separate Cape Town metropolitan region, and a Namaqualand region. This proposal was, however, rejected at the national conference, and our proposal to the Commission would contain a single large W. Cape region.

For purposes of the present delimitation, the ANC proposes eight regions: Western Cape; Northwest region: Northern Cape/Western Transvaal; Eastern Cape/Border/Ciskei/Transkei; Natal; Orange Free State; Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging; Northern Transvaal; Eastern Transvaal.

At the same time, we must urge that:-

- * the Constituent Assembly should be the vehicle to act on any recommendations in respect of proposed regional delimitations;
- * In cases where some of the regions could be combined or in areas where there is some controversy (e.g. Eastern Cape combined with Border-Kei), the actual boundaries should be determined through both a

delimitation commission receiving inputs from affected communities and/or through local referendums;

- * there should be de-linking of the electoral regions for the Constituent Assembly from the possible future regions for a democratic South Africa.

In short, the boundaries of the electoral regions should be flexible until finally adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The Delimitation Commission will need to hear both written and oral evidence from people in areas where boundaries are in dispute.

Concerns in Respect of the Process Being Followed

The ANC has, in its submission, noted various concerns to the Commission.

1. Substantial international research has shown that delimitation should preferably not be undertaken during periods of social and political upheaval.
2. The Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP) is not a democratically elected forum. A delimitation which is its product could constrain enormously the democratic state likely to emerge after elections. Therefore, the boundaries determined by the MPNP must be soft and flexible.
3. Boundaries do not exist in the abstract; they are defined by the social, economic and political context.
4. The time limit given to the Commission is too short to produce a coherent report.
5. Most of the disadvantaged and dispossessed are unaware of the process and have therefore not requested an opportunity to be heard.
6. The present information and data sources necessary to make informed decisions are unreliable and unrepresentative.

7. Boundaries should never cut through densely populated or highly urbanised areas. This would negatively affect local government and administration.
8. City states should be avoided because: they are historical products and live at the expense of surrounding areas;
9. Delimitation is fundamentally a political process. There is no technically correct region.
10. The regionalisation process must recognise that apartheid has created an artificial regional base. This process must therefore consider the significant inter-regional differences in racial composition; the effects of the migrant labour system and the settlement patterns.

Conclusion

Because the question of regions affect all communities, especially in the rural areas, there are many submissions expected to be made to the Commission. This is also a very controversial and difficult process.

Nevertheless, an initial report is expected to be tabled by the Commission in the next few weeks to the Negotiating Council.

Notice

This Bulletin is intended merely to inform and stimulate discussion. The views contained herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the NEC of the ANC.