

Next breakaway from ailing ANC could have wide support

THERE is no longer any doubt that some in the ANC and its alliance partners are looking for an alternative political home.

This comes as many who have been loyal to the ANC for decades fear the prospect of an SA governed after 2019 by an opposition coalition.

As the ANC sinks deeper into paralysis and crisis, attempts to imagine alternatives are fermenting in different quarters. They are happening in parallel to each other, but there is great potential for them to intersect – how and when they will do so depends on the December elective conference.

The first attempt to launch an alternative political party was made at



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NATASHA MARRIAN

the South African Communist Party (SACP) national congress, which ended with a decision to contest elections on its own. Former deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin said this was likely to take place as a “broad front” and not the SACP on its

own.

The parallel process was this week's Conference for the Future of SA, which brought together about 130 civil society organisations in an attempt to channel the United Democratic Front (UDF) of the 1980s.

The UDF's dissolution after the unbanning of the ANC, it is argued, resulted in the growing social distance between the ANC and communities. This contributed to its decline in

support, culminating in the loss of key metros, including Johannesburg, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela Bay.

Insiders caution that the intersection between the SACP process and that of civil society groups requires a “disciplined discussion” in which the question of “what is to be done” will again be asked, should the ANC's December conference yield an “unfavourable result”.

The aim of the UDF was to unite forces as disparate as sports clubs and cultural groups against a common enemy: apartheid. In 2017, the aim is to unite forces against state capture, for now. “It has to be as broad as possible to make it easy for everyone to participate ... it cannot be bogged down by party politics,” says Conference for the Future of SA convenor Mandla Nkomfe.

It is following the UDF's themes of a common foundation, united action through grassroots organisation and

consensus building. Its values include being democratic to allow open debate to flourish, self-criticism, mutual tolerance and unity.

Its first campaign to end state capture will be to tackle its head: trying to ensure that President Jacob Zuma is voted out in August's motion of no confidence in parliament.

Among the resolutions from the conference was from the South African Council of Churches: to have MPs re-commit to their oath of office before their congregations.

They are also calling for a boycott of all Gupta-owned and aligned companies and will demand the removal of Gupta-owned television station ANN7 from the DStv bouquet.

The glaring problem that was apparent in commissions at the conference, and even in the heartfelt plea from ANC MP Makhosi Khoza for Zuma to step down, was that the initiative appeared to be organised by

the elite. In at least two commissions, the question of how to include the “masses” was keenly debated. Without mass support, the initiative will have little effect.

While criticism that the civil society initiative marks yet another coalition of wounded elites rings true, the ANC and SA are in a rapid state of decline. Should Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma succeed in being elected as ANC president in December, there is a strong chance of another breakaway from the ANC. The first led to the formation of the Congress of the People in 2008, the second to the EFF in 2013.

The next breakaway is likely to be led by the SACP, but it will have the support of mounting civil society activity last witnessed two decades ago.

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