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The Conflict for Compromise: An Analysis of South Africa's Post-Apartheid Transition Period.

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Abstract

For South African a country that had been embroiled in decades of conflict, the 1990 end of Apartheid and the release of ANC (African National Congress) leader Nelson Mandela hailed a new dawn filled with hope and change for not only mending the country's frayed social fabric, but, creating a social and political system that all South Africans could participate in. However, for South Africa moving past the dark days of Apartheid proved to be no easy feat, for those on all sides of the spectrum, social and political change was met with a myriad of negative sentiments ranging from mistrust to resentment. South Africa needed compromise and for all involved, there was no immediate desire to do so. This paper explores this conflict for compromise by explicating and analyzing the social and political issues South Africa faced during its transition from Apartheid to a free and democratic society. This exploration and analysis is done by using the conflict analysis tool SPITCEROW (Sources, Parties, Issues, Tactics, Change, Enlargment, Role, Outcome, Winners).

Introduction:-

In the days after the official end of Apartheid, it appeared that South Africa was headed in a new direction. In fact, on the front pages of the newspapers across the world Nelson Mandela and South African President Frederik W. de Klerk stood side by side like old friends smiling broadly, appearing ready to lead their countrymen out of the dark years of apartheid and now into the new South Africa (Ottaway, 1993, p.1).On December 20, 1991 the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) opened in Johannesburg. Delegations of nineteen political organizations, supported by teams of advisers, prepared to negotiate the future of the country. At the end of the first day, they listened in stunned silence as Mandela delivered a scathing attack on President de Klerk, accusing him of behavior despicable even by the standards of the illegitimate and discredited apartheid regime (Ottaway,1993,p.1).The new South Africa, it was clear, would not emerge from a friendly agreement between the two leaders after all and the political movements they represented, but from a protracted, difficult, and strained negotiations among many political organizations (Ottaway, 1993, p.1). The two men and their perspective partiers had two totally different ideas as to what the New South Africa would look like which laid the found for the conflict for compromise that is discussed throughout this paper.

Sources:-

According to Pruitt & Kim (2004) conflict is defined as "perceived divergence of interest" .In terms of this case study, this statement could not be truer. In the background information provided above in the introduction, there is a lot of emphasis put on the disharmony and lack of cooperation between the two political parties, who have two totally different ideas as to what the new South Africa should look like. However, obviously these political parties and their wants and needs are driven by race and racial discord. So of course identity a major source of conflict in the post-apartheid negotiating period. Identity is a key factor in a country that had been divided along ethnic lines now had to create a new social identity which was inclusive of all South Africans.

Feigenblatt (2008) notes that the most important event in the history of the South African conflict was when the Afrikaner National Party took power in 1948. At the time the Afrikaner population was economically repressed and was not as powerful or as educated as English speaking whites (p.51). The National Party soon used its control of the state to distribute jobs and subsidies to Afrikaners. Most of the bureaucracy came to be filled with Afrikaners and their farms received subsidies from the central government (Feigenblatt, 2008, p.51). Over time, the National Party literally merged with the state and became a party state with complete control over the security forces and the bureaucracy. It goes without saying that most state funds benefitted the white minority while the vast majority of blacks and colored South Africans lived in extreme poverty (Feigenblatt,2008). "From 1917 to 1980 whites made more than 10 times more in per capita GDP than blacks and 5 times more than Asians and Coloreds" (Feigenblatt,2008,p.51). The wealthy and the poor coexisted next to each other. The divisions between the two worlds were secured by the laws of apartheid, which divided the country into regions for different statutory racial groups (Feigenblatt, 2008). Blacks were banned from moving from their townships or their homelands into white settled areas except with a special permission to work there. "Education and health care were also segregated and the disparity between the services provided to whites and those provided to blacks was stark. It is important to note that black townships and the homelands were so undeveloped that they had to be subsidized by white taxpayers through the central government" (Feigenblatt, 2008, pp.51-52). Apartheid denied blacks any political or legal representation since they were supposed to be given independence through the creation of homelands. Other groups like Asians and Coloreds who did not have traditional homelands were given representation in a tricameral parliament with the constitution of 1983 (Feigenblatt,2008).

There are two theories that can be applied to understanding the source of conflict better (a) Structural violence, (b) relative deprivation. Gultang (1969) coined the theory of structural violence to explain harmful factors in societal structures that may disenfranchise or repress. There may not be any person who directly harms another person in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances (Galtung,1969, p.171).Resources are unevenly distributed, as when income distributions are heavily skewed, literacy/education unevenly distributed, medical services existent in some districts and for some groups only, and so on(Galtung,1969, p.171).

Above all, Gultang (1969) maintains that the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed. The situation is aggravated further if the persons low on income are also low in education, low on health, and low on power - as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together(p.171).When we connect Galtung's theory with a lot of what was discussed above about what happened in Apartheid South Africa, we can see why the ANC(African National Congress) representing black south Africans are reluctant to make any comprehensive deals with the National Party, who clearly do not want to lose total power or influence in the country's affairs. Of course the group who lived under such an unfair and repressive system would most likely do anything to not return to that system. The conditions for blacks and people of color under Apartheid were brutal with no limits and often appeared to have no end in sight. The economic disenfranchisement, repression, and violence were something that ANC and many others involved in the negotiations simply could overlook. It is needless to feelings of mistrust were present during the CODESA talks and may have even been heightened further. After all, the resentment most Black South Africans and other minorities felt towards their repressor was not going to dissipate with the release of Mandela or the official end of Apartheid.

Having discussed structural violence let us move to our second theory relative deprivation. Pruitt and Kim (2004) argue that divergence of interest is often discovered as a result of harsh experience in which party fails to achieve what it considers to be reasonable aspirations. Such an experience is called relative deprivation. Such deprivation is relative because Party feels deprived relative to a reasonable standard (p.19).Furthermore, relative deprivation has two effects. First, it alerts Party to the existence of incompatible interest. In searching for the source of the deprivation, party learns whose interest are incompatible with its own (Pruitt and Kim, 2004, p.19) .Second the frustration and indignation associated with relative deprivation are a source of energy that increases the likelihood and vigor or efforts to cope with the deprivation. This energy is especially high when the deprivation is illegitimate (Pruitt and Kim, 2004, p.19)

When we apply relative deprivation to situation of black South Africans we can better understand their position at the negotiating table. Black South Africans were they majority; whose heritage predated any settlement by Europeans. So of course they thought rightfully they should govern and rule by the majority, whereas under the Apartheid system they were treated as if they were minorities. Some of the political violence leading up to the end of

Apartheid was indicative of how frustrated and fed up blacks with white minority rule and much more be oppressive. After all, as Pruitt and Kim (2004) note above, the frustrations of deprivation are more intensely fueled when the deprivation is illegitimate and in South Africa this is very much true, many black South Africans were angry at the repression of whites, because their rule were seen as illegitimate. Also, when we think in the context of Africa as a whole at that this particular time period, colonialism was being thwarted all over Africa, ripping the power and resources from the hands of European and putting it into the hands of the natives. Black South Africans internalized these examples and decided to fight in the streets and at the negotiating table for what they believed was rightfully and justly theirs.

Parties:-

The parties largely involved in the negotiation process where the ANC and National Party. But, there were also other parties that aimed to have a stake in what the new South Africa might look like. According to Feigenblatt (2008) Parties can be divided into those supporting the liberation movement, those supporting the status quo, and other concerned parties i.e.(Asian minorities and the South Africa Communist Party) (p.52). Talks between the ANC and the NP run government threatened other political organizations, which feared exclusion from the negotiations and perhaps eventual political impotence. As other partied tried to for their way into the process and gain recognition as autonomous players-something other simply of one of the other side-new lines of cleavage emerged (Ottaway, 1993, p.9)

Historically, the conflict Apartheid pitted five million whites, who controlled 87 percent of the land and most other assets, against the black majority, which consisted of twenty-nine million Africans, three million, colored, and one million Indians, largely disenfranchised and very poor. As noted above, it was the whites who had the majority of the political power and economic resources, but, the population and historical precedence on the side of Africans (Ottaway, 1993).It is also important to note that not all blacks, nor were all whites united in the same front. There were far more factions that were involved than can be included in this relatively short case study.

Issues:-

In post-Apartheid South Africa we see issues of power and a struggle for resources. In addition to this there is a struggle countering the past and moving on from the divisiveness of Apartheid. The two main parties in this conflict want to grasp and maintain power. However, each groups quest for power is opposite of the others. Those supporting the status quo want to maintain the power and authority they possess. And those seeking to change the status quo want the proper and adequate power ceded to them to be able to create transformational social change. However, in the particular context of South Africa, while Apartheid may be over, that does not mean power dynamics will shift. The power dynamics are important in any conflict, because, those who have the most power are able to accomplish their goals and or obtain resources. The struggle to reach consensus at the first and second round of the CODESA talks and the different visions on how the interim government would work, are indicative of a power struggle. Over this 2 year period the ANC and the National party, as well as other parties negotiated to create a new political system. But, increasingly debates about apartheid and its policies got in the way, fueling competition for power by all involved even more (Ottaway, 1993).

Finally, the ANC and National Party superficially, agreed on the need to form an interim government, which would be regulated by an interim constitution while a constituent assembly carried out its task. In reality, they envisaged totally different processes and outcomes. For the National Party, the so-called interim government should stay in power for years and the interim constitution should be a full-fledged charter, which the NP hoped would turn into the permanent one (Ottaway,1993). . This enhanced the importance of CODESA and the small parties represented in it. For the ANC, the interim government and constitution should have a very short life, simply providing a bridge between the rule of the National Party and the majority. In this vision, the elected constituent assembly, not CODESA would be major negotiating forum, enhancing the power of the ANC and reducing that of the other parties (Ottaway, 1993) . When the ANC finally understood the government's intentions on the eve of CODESA II, the negotiations broke down (Ottaway, 1993).

Burton's (1990) Human Needs Theory can be applied to understand each side's issues. His theory argues that there are There are human development needs that must be satisfied and catered for by institutions (p.23) Among these are recognition, valued relations, distributive justice, identity, autonomy, dignity, belonging, security, physical needs and perhaps personal development (Ross, 2000, p.1013). In this case of South Africa both sides of the conflict are

worried that if the other assumes total power and control, their basic human needs will not be met. Of course the Black South Africans and other minorities already experienced this under Apartheid. The fear of white South African is having the same kind of treatment reciprocated, and forced to live under inequality and repression .So in essence, their grasps for power is tasked for protecting their basic human needs.

It is this fear of mistreatment and revenge that hampered anything productive from happening at the negotiating table and deepened feelings of mistrust. Furthermore, at this stage in the game the truth and reconciliation commission had not yet been formally established. However, during negotiations the ANC and NP agreed that something did need to happen to address the crimes of the past which then lead to the idea of the Truth and Reconcilitation process,which wasn't established informally until 1995 and formally by The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995.So the rebuilding and creating a new political process was even more difficult, how could a new political identity have been forged, when a new social one had not? After all South Africa at this point was an immediate post conflict society and the rebuilding of post-conflict communities is a process that embodies a series of elements. Social reconstruction and renewal, writes Adjukovic (as stated in Weinstein and Stover,2004) is a process within a community, which returns the community's damaged social functioning to a normal level of its inhabitants interpersonal and group relationships in a way that renews the social tissue of the community (p.152).The term "normal" in this definition does not imply "the way it was before," but refers to the needs of community members; thus the pace of social reconstruction is set by them, and it cannot and should not be rushed(Weinstein and Stover,2004).And at this point it seemed that South Africa was not ready to define what should be normal politically, socially, and otherwise.

Tactics:-

In the conflict for compromise, we see many different tactics that are driven by different conflict styles. Mayer (2000) defines styles of conflict as an approach to conflict that is determined by each party's degree of flexibility in responding to conflict situations. During the transition period, we see a quite a few different tactics on all sides of the conflict, contentious and not. We see negotiation taking place throughout the comprise, we see movements to mobilize people to put pressure on the government, but, we also see contentious tactics such as hidden agendas as well, etc. Each party operated with different levels of flexibility at different times in the conflict.

 To further understand conflict styles let us look at Pruitt and Kim's (2004) Theory of Social Identity. According to this theory, groups are more contentious than individuals, because its members believe that their group is better than other groups (p.133), thus provoking "intergroup competitive and discriminatory responses on the part of the in group" (p.29).We see this intergroup competitiveness, as each side struggles to gain power, the tactics involved are driven by social identity as well. Social identity informs individuals of a particular group of collective memories, ideas, and values that are central to aiding the group in maintain or achieving its goals. As discussed above in the "Issues" section, both sides wanted to grasp and maintain power that worked in their favor, so their tactics were reflective of this. The power they sought was imperative also reflective of their social identity.

Change:-
Throughout the conflict we see constant shifts and constant changes. The three main shifts, we see are (a) that the ANC and National Party Government agree to work together,(b) neither side wants to work with the other and ,(c) we see changes after the end of the A partied government. We see change after the first CODESA and in between the second, both parties realized that they needed an interim government. While, they could not agree on either what form of interim process, they wanted, this was still a pretty big feat. However, it is important to note that while many laws and policies changed from the Apartheid era, many things still stayed the same especially along the lines of socio-economics. Ottaway (1993) gives us some insight into this, she maintains:

"While, yes, major laws had been repealed, outside of the larger cities, life went on unchanged except for mounting violence. Most blacks did not have the money to take advantage of the new opportunities theoretically open to them. Most whites tried to ignore the inevitability of change. 'Whites' only signs had largely disappeared, but different population groups continued to live in separate and very different worlds. In the townships, streets remained unpaved; water taps scarce, sewer systems non-existent. In the white suburbs, the council works armed with watering cans sprinkled herbicide on the crack between lest weed should grow"(p.9).

It is this lack of change that Ottaway (1993) argues, is why the ANC wanting total power is no surprise, and why the National Party wants to hold onto it.

Enlargement:-

The conflict continued to enlarge, increasing as each side realized that their goals were incompatible with the others. Also, the conflict began continued to enlarge as acts of violence were perpetrated. We can use the conflict spiral model to better explain how this enlargement took place. Pruitt and Kim (2004) define the Conflict Spiral Model is a bilateral reaction model where the response of party depends on the reaction of other which will then evoke a reaction party and on and on and on. The authors also note that one of the greatest weaknesses of the spiral is the human cost (Pruitt and Kim, 2004.p.99). This cost can come in many forms, cost of dignity, cost of power, cost of time, cost of energy and cost of human life. If we apply this to the conflict in creating a new South Africa, we can see why it became difficult for the two main parties to reach any consensus. Each time the ANC or the National party run government aimed agree one thing or another would cause setbacks, sending the conflict into a spiral, making things worse. As was noted above, the violence made things worse, especially if it was government perpetrated violence. Also, each party didn't like the others tactics, which also halted progress and exacerbated the conflict. And see the cost costliness of them continuing on in this conflict, it cost lives, time, money, energy, etc.

Roles:-

One could say that the National Party run government played the role Antagonist in this conflict. However, that would be unfair and out of scope with the bigger picture, because the ANC too antagonized. If we look at the conflict from both angles and in the eyes of most South Africans, black or white, both probably thought of the other as the antagonist while they thought of themselves as protagonist. Both roles are incredibly important in this case study, because looking at the conflict from both the perspective of the protagonist and the antagonist we see why the conflict continues to escalate on both sides. The ANC antagonized the National Party, as a means of changing the status quo. Meanwhile, the National Party run government was the protagonist trying to hold onto what they saw was rightfully theirs, in one way or another. And when we look at it from the position of the ANC it is vice versa.

Outcome:-

Despite all the political violence and negotiation shut downs the transition of a majority ruled South Africa took place. In 1994 shortly after Apartheid officially ended, Nelson Mandela was elected the first black president of South Africa. One might say this is a major hurdle from where the conflict came from in the beginning of the case study, which of course is true and admirable. Feigenblatt (2008) maintains that is important to note that it was one of the most successful peaceful transitions in African history. The ANC attained power while sharing it with third and the National Party (p.65). In addition to that, the armed forces were successfully integrated with the armed wing of the ANC. The resulting constitution provided for proportional representation and provided for considerable local autonomy for the provinces (Feigenblatt, 2008, p.65).

Winners:-

From the "Outcome" section we can see that the parties eventually reached an agreement on a new political order and structure. However, the core sources and issues in this conflict, such as structural violence and struggle for power have not disappeared in South Africa. Although the outcome eventually, led to majority rule, there's still a lot of resentment and mistrust in South Africa. Of course, when we look at any society that has emerged from conflict, where there has been repression, oppression, violence, we see that change and healing are a difficult process.

Aside from recreating a new political structure, South Africa had to and still is working to create a new national identity that is inclusive of all South Africans, when Mandela took power in 1994, he drew upon South Africa's multi-ethnic society as a means of political capital nicknaming the country the "Rainbow" nation. Mandela and his government also sanctioned a multi-colored national flag that sanctioned those sentiments. However, despite the unification efforts of the Mandela era, race and equality still remain contentious issues in South Africa. Some whites to now complain of structural violence as a result of the Black majority run government. While blacks are still vocal about some of the socioeconomic realities in South Africa related to the economic disenfranchisement during Apartheid.

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