

ECONOMIC COMMENTARY

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TURNING VICTIMS INTO VICTORS

A victim can never be a victor unless they change themselves into one. Consequently, a country stuck in a prevailing ideology of victim mentality cannot create sustainable, inclusive economic growth. Put differently, it cannot create wealth, which includes skills, jobs, and opportunities.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing sense of victim mentality among South Africans. It also seems as if it is not just the younger generation stuck on misguided ideologies like wokeism but many benefactors of government redistributive policies, including employment schemes, grants, and tenders. Victims, like pessimists, hold on to the past. They are unable to take responsibility for their own lives, despite the environment, and are unable to work toward the creation of a brighter future for not only themselves but also those around them. Victims, therefore, often have a strong sense of entitlement and self-enrichment.

In South Africa (SA), victims look for a hero leader or hero party to save them. They are not looking for someone who can change them. They look for someone who speaks to their mentality and entitled wants, not their needs. They also often hold on to empty promises and are unable to make tough choices by discerning and accepting truth objectively. The end of this three-decade-long process is a downward spiralling poverty trap: An increasing number of individuals who are dependent on redistributive policies that are insufficient in producing enough wealth or, put differently, sustainable, inclusive economic growth to meet the unending wants of victims.

What is more concerning is the current choice around which government must lead our country that is stuck in a victim mentality. Most of the options that voters have in SA give them what they want and not what they need; they give them more dependency (grants, tenders, employment schemes, etc.) and not more freedom (skills, opportunities, etc.). Instead of having accountable leaders who can inspire victims towards a victor mindset - as we have seen in countries like Singapore, Mauritius, maybe even Botswana, Latvia, and Estonia - most leaders in SA put politics ahead of the country.

For this reason, after the election in May, we will, most likely, see more of the same type of results that we have seen in the past decade of ANC rule. Unless some unexpected, positive external shock occurs, economic growth will remain too slow to create jobs, and unemployment will continue to increase. Standards will continue to deteriorate, including those at schools. Infrastructure will worsen, state-owned enterprises will fail, and we will maybe have a slightly improved electricity supply but only if the private sector (including households) starts to produce more of their own electricity. And so, the list goes on.

That being said, there is another ideology, albeit only among a handful of individuals currently. Individuals who are action-oriented optimists. A remnant of individuals who do not seek redistribution but opportunities to create wealth. Individuals who take responsibility for their own lives, despite the faltering macro-economic environment. From this mindset, we expect to see another type of party emerge or become more prevalent in the years to come. A party that has the wisdom to deliver budget surpluses and the integrity to execute effectively. A party that has the courage to make tough strategic trade-offs and who can, therefore, win the rural vote but also the urban vote. A party that understands the nuances of victim mentality and how to change it, slowly, over time, into a victor mindset.

So, instead of abstaining from your responsibility to vote, we encourage you to vote. Every vote has the potential to steward this ship towards the change that we need to get SA out of its yesterday into the fullness of what it can be.