

VOLUME TEN NUMBER THREE

WINTER 1993

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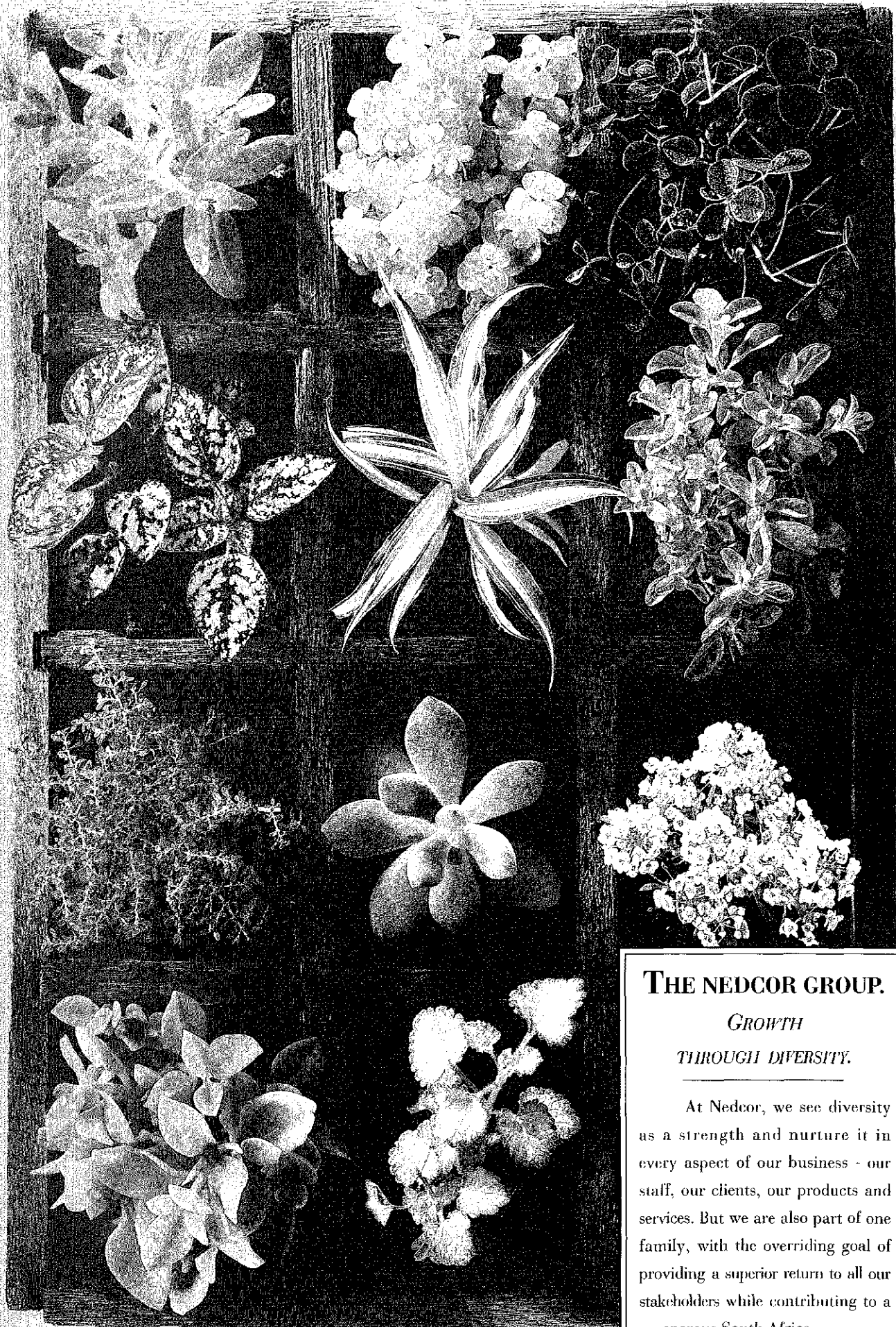
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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We would like to thank the Royal Netherlands Embassy for their sponsorship of this special edition.*

PRINTING *The Natal Witness*

REPRODUCTION

*MultiGraphics*

ISSN 0259-188x

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'Indicator SA is an informative, non-propagandistic and jargon-free quarterly monitor of South African trends. A good source for up-to-date statistics and pithy analyses.  
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# VOL. 10 NO. 3

W I N T E R

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## POII A MONITOR

Overview: The Ethnic Taboo	<i>Patrick McAllister &amp; John Sharp</i>	7
No Sizwe: The Myth of the Nation	<i>Johan Degenaar</i>	11
Nation-Building: A Post-Apartheid Super Glue?	<i>Mark Simpson</i>	17

## ECONOMIC MONITOR

Attitudes in Transition: Elites on Economy	<i>Hennie Kotze</i>	23
Affirmative Action in Namibia	<i>Andre du Pisani</i>	29
Economic Outlook	<i>Mike McGrath &amp; Merle Holden</i>	32

## DEVELOPMENT MONITOR

Narratives of Power: The Choices of Identity	<i>Denis-Constant Martin</i>	37
Collective Obsessions: Self and Society	<i>Len Bloom</i>	40
The Beginnings of Zulu Identity: The Image of Shaka	<i>Carolyn Hamilton &amp; John Wright</i>	43
Ethnic Mobilisation: KwaZulu's Politics of Secession	<i>Mary de Haas &amp; Paulus Zulu</i>	47

## URBAN MONITOR

Neighbourhood Laager: The Devolution of White Power	<i>KaderAsmal</i>	55
Within City Limits: New Local Options	<i>Steven Friedman</i>	59
War and Peace: Resolving Local Conflict	<i>Mark Shaw</i>	63

## >ARATIVE MONITOR

The Uses and Abuses of Ethnicity	<i>Joseph Manyoni</i>	71
South Asia's Tapestry: Lessons from Multi-Ethnic Societies	<i>Yash Ghai</i>	75
Conclusion: The Politics of Ethnicity	<i>Simon Bekker</i>	81
Epilogue: The Owl of Minerva	<i>Maiusi Balintulo</i>	84

# THE ETHNIC TAPESTRY

Apartheid has given ethnicity a bad name. Many South Africans have come to associate "group identity", "minority rights", "multi-culturalism" and "multi-racialism" with the racist policies of the ancien regime. Constitutional formulae from federalism to devolution are regarded with suspicion as ethnic power-sharing mechanisms intended to preserve minority rule and white privilege.

The democratic panacea is "non-racialism" and "nation-building". A magical cloak of common values, shared beliefs, new traditions and national symbols is thrown over our racially fragmented society. The advocates of non-racialism aim to nurture an inclusive South Africanism, based on a unitary state and society which will aim to overcome rather than reinforce apartheid's divisions.

Are these objectives overly idealistic in our divided society which is riven by violent inter-group conflict? Does ethnicity continue to play a significant role in the South African tapestry? Are the politics of ethnic mobilisation re-emerging in the transitional period? Or are they an apartheid dinosaur, an endangered species destined for extinction?

The real challenge may lie in building a new civil society which reconciles interests and identities at the local and regional level with a new South Africanism at the national level. In other words, a constitutional settlement which neither exaggerates nor suppresses these identities and aspirations to the extent of preventing the emergence of a vibrant new "civic nation". Such a compromise will require realism and pragmatism from the politicians.

For a start, we have to break *the ethnic taboo*. We will have to shift from our skewed understanding of ethnicity in terms of the apartheid legacy. We need to explore, define and shape anew the contours of ethnicity in contemporary South African politics. We must heed Peter Vales's warning, that, "We ignore ethnicity at our peril - if our society fails to engage it, it may rise to engulf us".

More than two hundred scholar's from around the world gathered at a prestigious conference held in Grahamstown in April to debate these critical issues. Discussion on the challenges facing South Africa drew on the comparative experiences of diverse multi-ethnic societies, from Australia to Yugoslavia. The global backdrop sketched by many delegates depicted the dramatic collapse of the nation-state and the resurgence of ethnic nationalism and strife with the end of the Cold War.

The conference themes, "Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives", attracted some of the world's pre-eminent social scientists. Insights into these vital issues were deepened by the inter-disciplinary nature of debate. Anthropologists revealed ethnic rituals, philosophers pondered on definitions of ethnicity, psychologists delved into collective obsessions, sociologists theorised on communal conflict, political analysts analysed ethnic mobilisation, constitutional lawyers defended ethnic legal mechanisms....

In this edition of *Indicator SA*, we are delighted to be able to publish an abridged selection of those conference papers with a South African theme. The organisers kindly have granted us first publication rights in order to publicise the conference debates and to generate further national discussion. We also acknowledge the contribution of one of the sponsors of the conference, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, towards the production costs of this special edition.

Patrick McAllister, John Sharp and Simon Bekker, all members of the steering committee, present our readers with overviews of the conference which summarise the different models and debates on the ethnic factor. International contributors from Canada, France, Hong Kong, Namibia and the United Kingdom *inter alia* comment on the lessons of conflict management in multi-ethnic societies. Closer to home, contributors analyse white and black power, Afrikaner and Zulu ethnicity, and the prospects for nation-building in South Africa.

Alongside the conference articles, *Indicator SA* presents reports on related topics from affirmative action to local devolution. Our readers will probably notice that we have held over the usual *industrial monitor*, which is replaced by a concluding series of articles on comparative perspectives on ethnicity. The next edition of *Indicator SA* will return to the usual five monitor format.

We hope you enjoy the artwork on our covers as well as the ethnic graphics. We would like to thank the artists and Jo Thorpe from the African Art Centre in Durban for enriching this edition.

Finally, a special request to all of our readers. We have enclosed a two-page readership survey with this edition - please take a few minutes to complete and return it in the pre-paid envelope provided. Your feedback is vital to assist us in improving the quality of our publications. Why not fill in the survey now before you become engrossed in our new edition?

M O N I T O R



William Zulu

'Peace Now'

*Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa:  
Comparative Perspectives*

A conference held at  
the 1820 Settler's Monument  
Grahamstown

20 - 24 April 1993

The Organisers

The Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown  
in collaboration with the Centre for Social and Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban.

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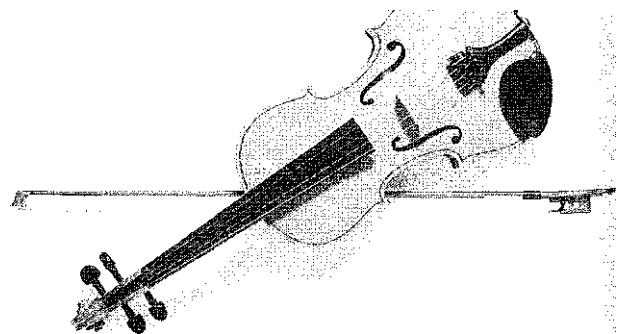
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# ETHNIC TABOO

*Patrick McAllister, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University  
and John Sharp, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town*

*Between 20-24 April 1993, more than two hundred pre-eminent scholars from around the world gathered at a prestigious conference in Grahamstown convened by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University. In interdisciplinary debates, anthropologists, historians, political analysts, psychologists and sociologists inter alia discussed the conference themes of Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives'. A small selection of the 70 papers presented is published in abridged form in the five monitors of this special edition of Indicator SA.*

tortuous path towards national unity, or are we heading for ethno-regional conflict and partition? Should we be trying to foster the one and forestall the other? Can the experiences of other countries help us?

In trying to answer such questions, some argue, we have to acknowledge with many who are already doing so, the reality of ethnic and other forms of particularistic identities, and to ask whether these can coexist with a sense of a wider, national unity. This, in turn, involves a series of questions concerning the desirability or otherwise of a federal system, the nature of territorial divisions or regions which coincide with ethnic groups, the wisdom of having a single official language, and so on.

*Can ethnic identities coexist with a sense of a wider, national unity?*

Recent years have witnessed an amazing range of expressions of ethnic identity, ethnic nationalism and ethnic conflict in many parts of the world. These expressions are of vital interest to South Africans, divided as they are along linguistic, racial and ideological lines. The country is on the verge of important social, political and constitutional changes, as well as on the brink of intensified violent conflict which is often regarded as 'ethnic' in nature.

Ethnicity as a growing worldwide phenomenon comes as something of a surprise to social scientists, some of whom had predicted a decline in particularistic identities, in the face of increasing modernity and globalisation.

In South Africa too, the question arises: why should there be an ever-increasing threat of ethnic division at the very moment when we are about to cast off the shackles

of Voersterian ideology, which took Minnie de la Rive and separation as its very aim? Are we treading a slow though

( b © m p

The conference, because of its international and its comparative character, provided a potentially fruitful vehicle for answering some of the difficult questions posed above. Just a few years ago it would have been impossible to hold a conference of this kind in South Africa, or even to address the kinds of questions and issues which it raised. Not only was there a boycott which prevented intellectuals from other countries from visiting our shores, but within South Africa itself the feeling was that ethnicity was purely a creation of the apartheid state.

To discuss ethnicity was somehow to legitimate its existence, and thus to legitimate apartheid. It was not politically correct to make it the object of academic scrutiny. There are still South Africans who feel this way, but the tide has turned.

The conference avoided the trap of attempting to define ethnicity, but the implicit understanding was that ethnicity is always *political* in the sense that it provides a common sense of identity for the

*To discuss ethnicity was somehow to legitimate apartheid*

*Ethnicity is always political in the sense that it provides a common sense of identity for the members of a group*

members of a group, and therefore enables groups to distinguish themselves from each other. The two articles on individual and group identity in this edition by Denis-Constant Martin and Len Bloom, argue that ethnicity always implies a contrast, a we/they distinction. Thus it is both unifying and divisive in the minds of men and women. The material that makes this possible lies in the details of culture - language, values, religion, and the like. This does not mean that the differences between groups are more numerous or more significant than the similarities. Nor does it imply some gross uniformity within groups. What it means is that human beings focus on what they have in common with each other in the process of group identity formation, and on the differences between them when it comes to the process of differentiation within a larger national or international population.

Ethnicity is relatively neutral in the first sense of the word 'political', i.e. as a distinct part of the social system made up of a connected set of institutions, structures and practices concerned with the orderly maintenance of society and the regulation of relationships between members. In this sense, politics involves maintaining cohesion in society, decision-making, resolving conflict, allocating resources and maintaining order.

*Ethnicity may become the basis of conflict and division in society, but it does not necessarily do so*

In practice, of course, ethnicity often becomes 'politicised' in the second sense of the word 'political'. The mental construction of difference comes to receive practical expression in one form or another. It becomes the basis on which resources are allocated, land divided, wars fought, laws made, etc, etc. In this edition, Joseph Manyoni demonstrates the uses and abuses of ethnicity by contrasting the positive nurturing of a multi-cultural society in Canada with the negative social engineering of apartheid in South Africa.

Thus ethnicity may become the basis of conflict and division in society, but it does not necessarily do so. In many parts of the world, ethnicity is politicised in another way, through the creation of legislation or constitutional provisions which seek to protect the rights of ethnic groups, define the nature of the relationship between groups, and ensure that ethnic divisions do not disrupt the social order. In another contribution to this special edition, Yash Ghai evaluates the efficacy of constitutional and policy instruments in five multi-ethnic societies in South East Asia.

Many of the conference papers, especially the case studies, dealt with the various ways in which the two forms of politicisation take place. What this implies is an implicit recognition of a continuum, with extreme ethnic conflict of the kind that is happening in Bosnia, or of the kind that erupts from time to time in parts of Africa and Asia (Rwanda, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Timor are some examples) at the one end, and harmonious inter-ethnic relations and the recognition of a sense of national unity which transcends ethnic divisions (e.g. in Namibia at the present time, or in countries like Australia) at the other end.

It is in an examination of situations at different points on this continuum that the usefulness of a conference such as this lies. What this does is to provide a context for the manifestation of ethnic division in South Africa, and an analytical framework through which to account for the forms and consequences of such division. In this context, the two articles by Hamilton & Wright and de Haas & Zulu explore the role of ethnic mobilisation in contemporary South African politics.

One current of thought at the conference questioned the idea that we have to accept ethnic divisions (however these are manifested) as inevitable. Rupert Taylor argued that if we are to take non-racialism seriously then we have to banish the very idea of race from our vocabulary, and to stop talking and thinking in terms such as 'white' and 'black', English and French, Basque and Catalan. Len Bloom stressed the formation of individual identity as being of greater importance, in some ways, than group affiliation. Others pointed to the non-scientific status of the concept of 'race', and reminded us that there are in fact no such things as different races.

But most participants seemed to accept that it is, as Claude Levi-Strauss and other structuralists would have argued, a universal feature of human mental activity to differentiate and to categorise, to distinguish and to label. Others were mindful of Ernesto Laclau's warning on the dangers of universalism and the disappearance of difference. And some participants (such as Mark Simpson and David Turton) argued that activities such as warfare between groups could be partly explained in terms of the boundary reinforcing properties of such activity.

Of course, the key question, which can only be answered (if at all) in comparative terms, is why ethnic differences become

Processes of ethnic identity formation and ethnic politicisation vary by geographical and historical context. Several of the case studies - on Ghana, on Quebec - showed that manifestations of ethnicity can change dramatically over time in one place.

This was an important lesson for South African participants, given the local tendency to view ethnicity as monolithic. This is one of the dangers of intense concentration on the home country, and on a couple of high-profile instances such as the formation and politicisation of Afrikaner and Zulu ethnicities. For South Africans these have become benchmark examples, instances that establish what ethnicity 'really means' in this country. But the implication that these cases are unchanging, and that all other manifestations of ethnicity are bound to conform to the patterns they have set, is seriously misleading.

Some of the most useful contributions to the conference attempted to explore the diversity of ethnicities and ethnic groups in the contemporary world. In a wide-ranging paper, the Dutch anthropologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse discussed two aspects of the process of ethnicisation - ethnic identity formation and group politicisation. Ethnic identities are formed, he argued, when people who share one or more cultural traits become conscious of internal cohesion and difference from others.

The list of possible ethnic markers that can be relevant in this regard is endless, as are the reasons why they should become salient - it is clear that one should avoid a narrow, instrumentalist interpretation of the factors behind ethnic identity formation. Ethnic communities become politicised, on the other hand, when some of their members pursue political goals - a defense of power and privilege, a struggle to acquire them - in the name of, and supposedly on behalf of, the communities in question.

This two-stage formulation is not new, but Pieterse showed that it is a potentially powerful analytical tool. It allows one to address, for instance, the question of the role of elites in the process of ethnicisation. This is a central issue, because there is a common tendency to inflate the part they play.

Elites are usually crucial in the process of ethnic politicisation, since they stand at the intersection between the state and the mass of the population. But the part that elites play in the process of ethnic identity

Why do ethnic differences become politicised, in the sense of becoming the basis for group rivalry and competition?

Constitutional provisions are important in multi-ethnic societies, along with things such as language and educational policy

## and Everyr

The (irahamstown conference attracted scholars who work in many different parts of the world. This focused attention on the diversity of processes of ethnicisation.

pipers on Australasia, Canada, the United States, the Far East, and many other places  
 addition to South Africa made it abundantly clear that 'Ethnicity' is a portmanteau word - it does not refer to a single, homogeneous phenomenon.

Changes can lead to an intensification of the authority of ethnic elites and to bloody struggles for self-determination and secession

They may also, however, lead to greater respect for the plurality of interpretations of ethnic identities, and of what it should mean to belong to an ethnic community

formation is often less decisive. Elites imagine ethnic communities, but they are not the only people who do so. The forms of community that elites imagine are not simply transferred wholesale to a passive mass of people who fit the cultural categories with which the elites conjure. Pieterse, along with many others, stressed the importance of 'subaltern agency' - the active participation of ordinary people in the construction of ethnic identities. A corollary of popular participation in this process is the existence of diverse understandings of what a given ethnic identity means. The ways in which an ethnic identity is constructed are shaped by other forms of difference - of class, gender, age, place and ideology - amongst the people involved. There is no single, necessary version of what it means to be Quebécois, or Sinhalese, or Zulu.

An ethnic elite may attempt to privilege one version of the imagined community in the course of ethnic politicisation, but one should not assume that all who share in the broad discourse about community will readily consent to the privileged version. Ethnic politicisation may involve the use of force *within* the group, as well as active subaltern resistance to the attempt to fix an authoritative definition of what it means to be a member.

American anthropologist Bill Roseberry, from the New School for Social Research, pursued a similar theme in a thought-provoking paper on ethnicisation and hegemony. He contended that hegemony is not a state, or condition, in which an elite has successfully engineered the consent of a subaltern population; it is, rather, a fragile process - one in which the distribution of power to make authoritative definitions is continually contested, and in which subaltern adoption of elite discourse may signal no more than a desperate demand to be heard.

These, and many other, contributions emphasised the need to subject instances of ethnic identity formation and ethnic politicisation to close sociological analysis. Too many accounts of ethnicity - in particular those which advocate constitutional and policy-orientated solutions which pander to the 'ethnic problem' - buy into elitist discourses of ethnic assertion, without looking beneath the surfaces of the 'communities' and 'groups' that are claimed to exist, or attempting to situate these claims in their political, economic and cultural contexts.

The papers delivered at the conference stressed the diversity of these contexts, and hence the diversity of the processes of *identity formation* and *politicisation*.

In his masterly overview of the conference debates, John Comaroff from the University of Chicago emphasised that there is no general theory which encompasses and explains all manifestations of the process of ethnicisation. Since ethnicities are constructed and reconstructed under the influence of changing power relations, we may expect the contours of the phenomena to continue to shift.

Some aspects of these shifts are apparent. Comaroff suggested, in the current global context of the weakening of state boundaries (and of the idea of the nation-state itself) as a consequence of the internationalisation of financial markets, the spread of technologies of mass communication, and unprecedented international population movements. These changes involve a disjuncture in old relationships and a profound restructuring of the distribution of power within states.

The implications for the process of ethnicisation are by no means uniform or clear. There are instances in which these changes appear to lead to an intensification of the authority of ethnic elites and to bloody struggles for self-determination and secession. They may also, however, lead to greater respect for the plurality of interpretations of ethnic identities, and to a decentering of supposedly authoritative versions of what it should mean to belong to an ethnic community.

Many of the conference papers mentioned the implications of globalisation for processes of identity formation and group politicisation in different parts of the world. They provided many stimulating pointers to local scholars who are beginning the process of reinstating the study of ethnicity, identity and nationalism in South Africa into the international context.

It is hoped that the publication of a selection of conference papers in this special edition of *Indicator SA* will contribute to building this intellectual bridge while bringing home the comparative lessons from other multi-ethnic societies to South Africa's scholars, politicians and decision-makers.

Johan Degenaar,  
Department of Philosophy,  
University of Stellenbosch

*In this article I intend looking critically at concepts of nation and nation-building with the purpose of constructing a frame of reference for nation-building in South Africa. There is a tendency to use the term nation as if only one meaning can be ascribed to the word, as if the meaning is not controversial and as if nation-building is the type of activity loyal citizens should unquestionably be involved in. I would like to challenge these assumptions of conventional wisdom.*

**I t is possible** that the awareness of the .•.historical and ideological dimensions of the term 'nation' might lead to the insight that the notion of nation-building is a product of the 19th Century and that it is incapable of coping with the complexity of modern politic- and the challenges of the 21st Century.

The first problem related to the concept of nation is the definition of the term 'nation'. At least four uses of the term can be distinguished:

- an ethnic use which refers to common ancestry;
- a legal use which refers to statehood;
- a political use which links ethnic culture and political power; and,
- a second political use which is based on a common loyalty which transcends ethnicity.

For the purpose of my analysis I concentrate on the last two meanings of the term nation. In both cases the term nation signifies a people politically constituted, mobilised and legitimised in terms of the congruence of culture and power, the main difference being the nature of the culture involved. The one emphasises a homogeneous ethnic culture, the other a transcendent common culture. I shall refer to nation in the sense of ethnic nationalism, aspiring to a nation-state, as *Nation One* and to nation in the sense of state nationalism, aspiring to a state nation, as *Million Two*.

Within the context of *Nation One* - the congruence of culture and power - many proposals have been made regarding the national question in South Africa, which can also be seen as a question about the most suitable way of structuring the relationship between society and state. According to nationalism the best way to achieve this is by means of the identification of culture and power which gives legitimacy to the state and to the manner in which the government uses its power.

Afrikaner nationalism is, of course, the prime example of ethnic nationalism in the South African context, but outside the confines of Afrikaner nationalism we find a variety of approaches which make use of a nationalist paradigm. These approaches can be divided into points of view making use of the following nationalist theses:

- multi-nations thesis
- four-nations thesis
- two-nations thesis
- one-nation thesis.

First, there is the *multi-nations thesis* which is based on ethnic nationalism: one culture, one nation, one state. It is expected of each ethnic group to find its fulfilment in a national state. This nationalist idiom favours the organic images of birth, awakening, and growth of a nation. The metaphor of the birth of a nation entails the highest form of exclusivism and is the hallmark of primordialism. The National Party was not only an exponent of the multi-nations thesis but tried to enforce it on the country. The oppression and misery entailed by this experiment is common knowledge.

Second, there is the *four-nations thesis* which refers to the four (former) population registration groups - black, white, Coloured and Indian - as four 'nationalities' or 'national groups' and not as nations (cf. Alexander, 1985:15). Since the ideal is a single nation, it is not clear why it has been introduced as an example of a four-nations thesis. I propose that we rather refer to it as the four nationalities thesis.

Third, there are various versions of the *two-nations thesis*, but the main area of agreement is the choice for the distinction between black and white as the basis for the description of the so-called nations. The most sophisticated variant of the

*I love my country too much to be a nationalist'*  
Albert Camus

*'Nationalism is politicised ethnicity'*  
Heribert Adam

*'Nationalism is an alibi for genocide'*  
Pierre van den Berghe

'A nation is a politically conscious ethnic group'

Pierre van den Berghe

two-nations thesis is formulated by Giliomee in terms of his theory of bi-nationalism or bi-communalism (1989; Giliomee and Schlemmer, 1989a).

According to this theory, the conflict potential of South African politics is such that the best way to describe (and prescribe) the complexity is by accepting the reality of two antagonistic communities based on white nationalism and black nationalism, depicted as a white oriented (capitalist) community and a black majority (socialist) community. This theory overcomes the dangers of racism and ethnicism by allowing blacks and whites membership in both communities. While the long-term aim is the building of one nation the reality of South African politics forces us to allow for the co-existence of two nations or communities in the short term.

Giliomee and Schlemmer (1989b) base their choice for bi-nationalism on the fact that in divided societies conflict is fundamentally not only about (material) interests but also about (spiritual) needs and values such as security and identity. Because of the conflicting values in the South African society we are confronted by *two major competing conceptions of the nation in South Africa - a white-led multi-racial nation under National Party domination which builds on the four statutory groups, or the ANC's conception of an African-led, non-racial nation which demands the elimination of all forms of political ethnicity (Ibid: 209).*

Many critical issues can be raised with regard to bi-nationalism. I mention only one crucial issue: the extent to which the notion of dual nationhood encourages polarisation rather than pluralisation. Reducing complexity to duality, and plurality to polarity is not only a mistake but it can actually transform a conflict into an unsolvable problem.

Fourth, three examples of the exclusivist *one-nation thesis* can be distinguished: Afrikaner nationalism, white nationalism, and black nationalism. All three nationalisms are examples of *Nation One* based on the congruence of culture and power. In each case the term culture is ascribed to a different referent: Afrikaner culture, white culture or black culture. In the multi-cultural situation of South Africa *Nation One*, in all its manifestations, disqualifies itself by excluding citizens. The possibility remains, however, that a broader concept of nation might succeed in accommodating all citizens.

'The nation exists before all, it is the origin of everything. Its will is always legal, it is the law itself.'

Sieyes

'I want to love my country but I also want to love justice'

Albert Camus

Nation was defined as congruence of culture and power, and this definition became the hallmark of *Nation One*. This definition of nation can also be applied to *Nation Two* if we allow a shift in the meaning of culture. Instead of referring to the culture of a community within society it now refers to a transcendent culture, the culture of society as a whole which is assumed to constitute the 'national' culture.

The term nation is also used here to refer to a multi-cultural situation in which the nation is constituted by a common loyalty to a transcendent factor - transcendent with regard to a particular ethnic culture. Candidates for transcendence are the following:

- \*\* a common culture assumed by the dominant group for political purposes;
- a universal culture of modernisation which is assumed to be able to depoliticise particular ethnic claims;
- a classless society which overcomes the conflictual nature of ethnicity; and,
- ® a constitution conjointly decided on by all groups.

In a multi-cultural society one can raise two questions about this way of speaking. First: what is the nature of this overarching culture of society? And second: what is the relationship between the culture of a particular community and the broader culture of society which now claims congruence with state power whereby legitimacy for political rule is acquired?

Culture can be defined as the form of life or life-style of a community. A community refers to any group of people who have certain characteristics in common. A community can be small or large, and it covers cases such as a community of scholars, an ethnic community, the South African community, and the world community. I intend looking at some of the proposals regarding the building of a nation through the mobilisation and application of the values of a transcendent culture:

- **common culture**

The liberal tradition introduces the notion of a transcendent culture and proposes that, rather than developing a particular communal culture into a nation, one should build a nation on the basis of a common culture. In some cases the term patriotism is used in contra-distinction to nationalism. Patriotism is defined as 'an ideology that promotes loyalty to a society that is territorially and politically defined

II or the cultural background of its  
S ^! o - K - c l b y A d a m , 1 9 9 0 a : 1 3 ) .

a i 11090a: I) admits that ethnic  
JS Mnis a divisive force in  
, i-elhnic societies and, m choosing foi  
! si ve **patriotism** rather than exclusive

•tiics can no\er be nations m the strict  
pi the term but only modern civic  
S)- es" U is a ureal advance in our thinking  
**on** the concept of nation to admit that the  
*term* nafon is historically obsolete and that  
we should rather speak of civic states.  
Compare for example the use of the term  
constitutional patriotism  
(1 u>r<issm>Aspuuiiotisnius) in Germany.

**The use of the term patriotism** rather than  
**nationalism in tte** liberal tradition is an  
**advance in our** political thinking but this  
**shift does not** solve the problem of the  
**account odal'nm** of a plurality of cultures in  
**multi-cultural** situations.

**The liberal** tradition succeeds in giving  
**content to the** common culture, for  
**example, a common** constitution, economic  
**interdependence**, shared religious beliefs,  
**and a common** consumer culture. But the  
**tendency is in** underestimate the role of  
**communal cultures** in divided societies, and  
**to helie\c** that the problem of ethnic  
**minorities is** >n!vcd in terms of assimilation  
**in the majority** culture on the basis of a  
**constitution v**, hich protects individual  
**rights.**

The myth of a constitutional nation does  
not. howe\ cr. solve the problem of conflict  
between cultures in the same society.

**J modernisation culture**  
Gel Iner (1986:53-58) proposes as a  
definition of nation the congruence of  
culture and power. The culture he has in  
mind is brought about by the process of  
industrialisation which is said to succeed in  
overcoming particular loyalties to folk  
cultures in favour of a common loyalty to a  
shared culture which converges with  
political power. The achievement of this  
impersonal culture brought about by  
modernisation is that it is described in terms  
of transcendence of folk cultures and  
therefore succeeds in constituting a  
transcendent nation.

Gellner interprets nationalism in terms of  
its social roots in industrial society. The  
functioning of this society depends on  
economic growth and a unitary system. In  
order to achieve this the principle of 'one  
state, one culture' is applied which means

that the state has to identify itself with one  
culture and impose it on the whole of  
society. The principle of 'one state, one  
culture' situates Gellner in the context of  
the model of Jacobinism which calls for the  
imposition of a homogeneous culture with  
the purpose of building a nation.

The crucial question with regard to the  
modernisation thesis with regard to South  
Africa is whether the impersonal culture of  
industrialisation indeed can assimilate  
communal cultures. According to Phadnis  
(1989:18) it in actual fact stimulates ethnic  
consciousness: The processes of  
modernisation and development are caught  
up in the dialectics of their own dynamics;  
combating ethnic loyalty on the one hand  
and stimulating ethnic consciousness on the  
other.

- **socialist culture**

A third form of nation as social construct in  
opposition to nation as politicised ethnicity  
is the socialist view of nation.

According to this view, a nation is either  
constituted by capitalist power relations or  
reconstituted by overcoming class  
antagonisms. This reconstructed nation is  
brought about by the workers and by a  
common loyalty to a classless society  
which transcends the sphere of ethnicity  
and therefore succeeds in overcoming  
ethnic conflict. It is argued that it is only the  
working class which can constitute the  
nation for the working class is not only in  
possession of the true definition of what  
constitutes a nation, but it also has the  
inevitable historical role of representing the  
real interests of all citizens (Alexander,  
1985:12).

Some of the questions that have to be raised  
in this connection are the following:

- \* Will the transition from capitalism to  
socialism be democratic?
- ® Does the revolutionary idiom of the  
socialist entail respect for the  
evolutionary democratic processes of  
negotiation, bargaining and compromise?
- \* If one allows for a plurality of  
competing pressure groups in society,  
that is, if one allows civil society to  
operate freely, can one hold on to the  
view that the working class constitutes  
itself as the nation?
- \* Can socialism pay respect to the  
principles of a pluralist democracy  
which calls for a multi-party system,  
for the acceptance of autonomous  
organisations, and for the  
constitutional accommodation of  
communal cultures?

*'A nation is an  
historically  
evolved, stable  
community  
arising on the  
basis of a  
common  
language,  
territory,  
economic life  
and  
psychological  
make-up  
manifested in a  
community of  
culture'  
Stalin*

*'South Africa is a  
colonial situation  
of a special type  
in which two  
nations, an  
oppressing  
nation and an  
oppressed  
nation, live side  
by side within  
the same  
territory...'  
Molapo*

•Much of the political debate 'in South Africa is taken up by the effort to deny or obscure the essential reality of the conflict, namely that it is primarily a struggle between Afrikaner and African nationalists'  
Hermann Giliomee

### *j democratic culture*

The fourth candidate for a transcendent nation is the theory of democracy according to which the democratisation of society by the state creates a loyalty to the state which can perhaps form the basis of nationhood. Before we ask the crucial question about democracy's ability to accommodate a diversity of cultures, we need more clarity about the model of democracy proposed for a multi-cultural society.

The term democracy refers to the ideal of a free society and to the democratic procedures to create and maintain such a society. The combination of ideal and procedure is present in the following definition: 'Democracy is government by the people according to well-known constitutional rules to ensure representative and responsible government, to promote political parties and to protect the rights of citizens and their freedoms to the greatest extent possible' (Wiechers, 1989: 59).

Du Toit (1990:9-10) discusses a variety of meanings of the term democracy:

*It is not enough that we all agree on the goal of a democratic South Africa. Having agreed on that, we are still faced with hard and basic choices. We must not only choose for democracy; we will also have to choose between democracies. This is where the real argument and debate must start, in interpreting democracy in the South African context. We must learn to reason together and educate each other as to the meaning of democracy in South Africa today and tomorrow.*

To reduce a complex issue to a clear-cut choice, I propose that we unpack the word *democracy* in terms of the positive qualities of liberal, pluralist and social democracies:'

- Liberal democracy entails respect for the constitution, the law and the rights of the individual.
- Pluralist democracy accommodates a plurality of parties, and organisations, and communities. Its purpose is to keep civil society alive.
- Social democracy emphasises the role of, *inter alia*, the state in providing the material infrastructure for a democratic dispensation, and encourages citizens to participate in decision-making processes on all levels.

One should not be so naive as to think that the democratic ideal would be easy to achieve. It is much easier to write a constitution based on democratic principles than create a society in which tolerance - a precondition for democracy - prevails.

In South Africa we are in need of both the material and value infrastructure of a democratic culture. Of prime importance in this context is therefore both the provision of material conditions which enable all citizens indeed to take part in democratic processes, and the provision of a value infrastructure which entails the cultivation of a culture of tolerance of differences. Closely related to this is the problem of the extent of imposition by the state which would be needed to help create this material and value infrastructure of a democratic culture.

The ideal solution would be to bring about a broad basis of enforcement by all segments of civil society rather than a monopolistic imposition by the state. The important point is that a democratic culm re cannot be assumed. It has to be created in all spheres of society, for example, the spheres of the family, education, sport, an. religion, economy and politics. Indeed, the road to a democratic culture will be a long and difficult one.

### **Plural**

With regard to the concept of nation I can state that my argument in favour of a democratic culture has undermined the concept of nation based on the congruence of culture and power. *Nation One* is unacceptable since it absolutises a communal culture and breeds intolerance. *Nation Two* is problematic since, while proposing a transcendent culture, it has difficulty in accommodating a plurality of communal cultures.

The ideal of a democratic culture succeeds in accommodating a plurality of cultures but thereby undermines its possible status as foundation of nation-building, since, in a multi-cultural set-up it consists of not one culture, but of many cultures. For this reason it becomes the foundation, not of a nation, but of a civil society which accommodates various cultures but limits them in terms of the principles of democracy. The task of democracy is precisely to depoliticise communal culture in the sense that this culture does not claim sovereignty, that is, the absolute power of the state, but relativises itself on behalf of constitutionalism. Pluralist democracy thus enhances the quality of democracy.

Pluralist democracy prescribes the way of negotiation, bargaining and compromise. Disputes on the basis of material interests and communal values are inevitable and

'Polyethnic societies can never be nations in the strict sense of the term but only modern civic states'  
Heribert Adam



therefore the need for a commitment to  
 He conflicts by means of negotiation. In  
 to cultivate This style of politics  
 i l N l democracy is pluralist in three  
 Senses- firstly, allowing a multiparty  
 democracy; secondly, promoting the  
 ("presence of a plurality of autonomous  
 organisations such as church, university,  
 business associations and trade unions; and  
 thirdly, accommodating a plurality of  
 communal cultures and fostering a  
 tolerance for a plurality.

The goal of a democratic culture, Albie  
 Sachs rightly states, should not be to  
 promote "identikit citizens", that is, 'not to  
 create a model culture into which everyone  
 has to assimilate, but to acknowledge and  
 take pride in the cultural variety of our  
 people' (Quoted by Adam, 1990b:236).

In order to grasp the importance of pluralist  
 democracy we need some clarity on the  
 notions of society and state. The word  
 society is an umbrella term which embraces  
 the totality of groups, associations,  
 structures and processes in a country. The  
 state should not be viewed as existing  
 outside society but as comprising the triad  
 of legislature, judiciary and executive  
 responsible for -citing the parameters of  
 rule making in society and for the  
 maintenance of order and justice through  
 the enforcement of rules.

In choosing for a democratic culture rather  
 than for nation building, I argue in favour  
 of a relationship between state and society  
 in which the state does not usurp all power  
 by claiming identity with the nation but  
 allows for the distribution of power in  
 society. A government should not be  
 allowed to misuse the concepts of nation,  
 nation-building or national interest for  
 authoritarian purposes and for legitimating  
 the enforcement of homogeneity onto a  
 heterogeneous situation.

Protagonists of the notion of a civil society  
 link the idea of democracy with the  
 'resurrection of civil society'. A civil  
 society comprises social formations  
 relatively independent from the state, e.g.,  
 churches, universities, cultural  
 organisations, ethnic associations, trade  
 unions, etc. It is distinguished from political  
 society which includes the state and  
 Political parties, who contest for the control  
 of the state.

This is typical pluralist discourse, namely,  
 the emphasis placed on the importance of a  
 plurality of associations in society which  
 includes political society and civil society.

Pluralism claims that democratisation of  
 society entails democracy for both domains  
 of society. Political society and civil  
 society, although autonomous, are  
 interdependent: 'Although state and civil  
 society limit one another with regard to the  
 exercise of power, the state plays an  
 important role in enabling civil society and  
 its necessary liberties' (Shils, 1991:9).

The distinction between political and civil  
 society enables one to say that citizenship is  
 constituted not only in the state but in  
 society as a whole. It also follows that the  
 state should not be identified with the  
 national interest or the public good. To  
 ascertain the public good a broader frame of  
 reference has to be introduced, namely  
 society itself and the plurality of groups and  
 associations that express all of society's  
 interests.

We need a new discourse on nation and  
 state. By introducing a new discourse we  
 can direct the expectations of citizens in a  
 positive way, away from mystifications  
 related to the concept of nation towards the  
 difficult ideals of freedom and  
 responsibility entailed by the notions of  
 democracy and civil society. Instead of  
 engaging ourselves in the building of a  
 nation we should rather set our minds on  
 building a strong and accountable state as  
 well as a strong and accountable civil  
 society which in conjunction could produce  
 a functioning democracy.

Ethnicity should be viewed as a social  
 construct which consists of various  
 components. The objective aspect of  
 ethnicity includes the characteristics of  
 culture, descent and language as well as the  
 material context of society, economics,  
 politics and history in which it functions.  
 The subjective aspect of ethnicity refers to  
 the way in which the objective aspects are  
 internalised and to the sense of belonging  
 experienced by members of the ethnic  
 group.

The state should cultivate a strong civil  
 society comprised of not only a plurality of  
 private organisations such as churches,  
 trade unions and cultural associations but  
 also of ethnicities. Ethnicity should be  
 viewed as a cultural identity which belongs  
 to civil society and not to the state. If the  
 state is in favour of democracy it follows it  
 must be in favour of a strong civil society  
 which can accommodate a plurality of  
 ethnicities. It is in this connection that

*'Patriotism is an  
 ideology that  
 promotes loyalty  
 to a society that  
 is territorially  
 and politically  
 defined'*

*regardless of the  
 cultural  
 background of  
 its members'*  
 Heribert Adam

*'Ethnic  
 identification  
 gives meaning  
 to the lives of  
 many men and  
 women, but it  
 has nothing to  
 do with their  
 standing as  
 citizens'*  
 Michael Walzer

'We must not only choose for democracy: we will also have to choose between democracies'  
 Andre du Toit

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Keane (1992:11) speaks of the necessity of 'the development of a plural mosaic of identities within civil society'.

The state should be viewed in a relative way as constituting but one association in society and it should not misuse its status as the executor of legitimate power with regard to order and justice to impose nationhood, whether in the form of *Nation One* or *Nation Two*, onto society. The relationship between state and society is a complex and dynamic relationship and should not be reduced to the myth of nationhood. The state should therefore cope with ethnicity in a democratic manner and not in terms of nationalism.

Within a democratic culture the role of the state is, firstly, to provide for ethnicity as a space of cultural belonging; secondly, to see to it that ethnicity is not misused to promote social, economic and political inequality, and thirdly, to prevent ethnicity from becoming a basis of national feeling claiming congruence of ethnic culture and political power.

The aim of politics should not be to build a South African nation but to create a just society. Since nationalism is politicised ethnicity, nationalism is the enemy of a democratic society. Ethnicity should not be politicised but neither should it be ignored. On the contrary it should be protected in a Bill of Rights in an appropriate way in order to guarantee a cultural diversity which does not lead to chaos, since the participants are encouraged to view communal cultures as part of civil society which, by definition, do not vie for political power.

In a sense one can say that a democratic state should provide its citizens with a double sense of belonging: it should accommodate common citizenship as well as communal identities. It has to cater for a sense of communal belonging which makes it easier for communities to commit themselves to powersharing arrangements, thereby containing the possibility of them becoming flashpoints of discontent.

Walzer (1980:28) makes a similar point: *The primary function of the state, and of politics generally, is to do justice to individuals, and in a pluralist society, ethnicity is simply one of the background conditions of the effort. Ethnic identification gives meaning to the lives of many men and women, but it has nothing to do with their standing as citizens.*

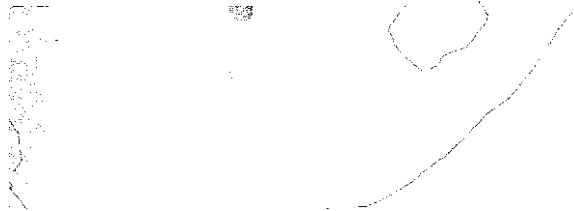
Nation is a term which represents one of the ways in which the relationship between society and state can be defined. If the culture of the people in a society is viewed as congruent with state power, the people is described as constituting a nation. According to nationalism - the ideology of the congruence of culture and power - this identification gives legitimacy to the state and to the way in which the government uses its power.

Historically, this ideology played a dominant role in structuring politics. However, today it is of crucial importance to realise that this is but one way of defining the relationship between state and society and by far not the best way of doing it, especially if we take into account the way in which popular sovereignty is taken by nationalism to be absolute. I propose that we view the relationship between state and society in terms of a democratic culture, functioning as foundation, not of a nation, but of a vibrant civil society.

To conclude, I reject the notion of *Nation One*, based on congruence of communal culture and power, for being exclusivist in a multi-cultural set-up. I criticise the notion of *Nation Two* based on congruence of a supposed transcendent culture and power, in as far as it is incapable of accommodating communal cultures. I argue that democracy (liberal, pluralist and social) is capable of overcoming these limitations.

In turning down the myth of the nation, I make a deliberate choice against the mistake of the French Revolution in so far as it ascribes sovereignty to the nation in such a way that popular sovereignty is taken to be absolute.

In so far as this controversial notion of sovereignty has to be used, I propose we use it in a pluralist context, namely, as the sovereignty of justice. This entails that the highest political loyalty of the citizen is not owed to the nation but to justice. In this manner, political responsibility is distributed over the whole of society which includes, along with the state, all the associations in which individuals are involved. All the associations of political society and of civil society are mobilised to challenge the state when it seeks to monopolise power, mobilised to share responsibility for social justice, and mobilised to help make politics the life-enhancing activity it can be if it becomes the site of struggle for democratic values. OS3&



Mark Simpson, Department of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand

*The global record of nation-building makes for sobering reading, while that of alternative schemes to solve the problem of nation-building in deeply divided societies is also less than encouraging. Unfortunately, the lessons for South Africa are largely negative ones, namely what not to do rather than which model to follow.*

It is now commonplace that the end of the Cold War has unleashed new forces of dissident sub-nationalism and given a second wind to older ones, and taken the political map out of the deep-freeze to which it had been consigned. We are now witnessing the return, with a vengeance, of that oldest of dynamics in the international system, namely the fission and fusion of states. At present, with the exception of the unification of Germany and the tentative moves towards the resolution of the problem of a divided Korea, the emphasis is clearly more on centrifugalism rather than on centripetalism.

One significant result has been to demonstrate that the model Western nation-state is as vulnerable to dissident sub-nationalism as any in the Third World or, more recently, Eastern Europe. The autonomist movements in the West, always rumbling in the background, have now moved to the forefront, raising serious doubts in regards to the unquestioned assumption that the nation-building project in the West was completed, even after centuries of independent statehood. The renewed vigour of autonomist movements in Quebec, Corsica, the Basque country, Catalonia, Scotland, Wales, renewed tensions in the always uneasy truce between Flems and Waloons in Belgium, all indicate that much had been kept under wraps in the

West, and that the illusion of nation-statehood also held sway there.

Third World states are therefore not any longer to be seen in a class of their own, and are in good company as far as their shortfalls in the field of nation-building are concerned. The West may have had a head start of many centuries, and even the states of Eastern Europe born out of the Versailles dispensation were ahead chronologically when compared to the new states of Asia and Africa, but there is clearly no guarantee that the longevity of one's project ensures success, let alone its irreversibility.

Contrary to the modernisation thesis, nation-building is far from an unproblematic, unilinear, irreversible process. Furthermore, the Western states upon which it is based are, in many cases, still far from constituting nation-states, and therefore not a model which Third World states should emulate unquestioningly.

The conditions which led to the rise of states in Western Europe and the growing sense of identification with these states on the part of populations who found themselves entrapped within their frontiers are unique and unlikely to be repeated in Africa. Foremost amongst these factors is the role played by centuries of warfare in Europe which help to consolidate the state

*The end of the Cold War has unleashed new forces of dissident sub-nationalism and taken the political map out of the deep-freeze*

*Western states are, in many cases, still far from constituting nation-states, and therefore not a model which Third World states should emulate unquestioningly*

by forcing it to improve its extractive and administrative capabilities in the face of competitors, weaned out the weaker ones, and maybe most importantly as far as internal consolidation was concerned, served to unite populations and create bonds both amongst themselves and with their states in the face of external threats (Tilly, 1975). The notion is essentially the Jacobin one of the nation at arms, warfare being used to entrench the 'we-they' dynamics.

Given the relatively low incidence of inter-state wars in Africa since decolonisation, this path of nation-state building through the medium of external threats is not an option. While one scholar in particular (Herbst, 1990) has argued that the primary cause of the weakness of the state in Africa lies in the absence of inter-state conflict since 'fundamental changes in economic structures and societal beliefs are difficult, if not impossible, to bring about when countries are not being disrupted or under severe external threat', the possibility of Africa repeating the experience of early modern Europe is too horrifying to contemplate. The human costs involved would far outweigh the potential benefits in terms of the end-result of fewer but more stable states.

*While the record of nation-building is far from an unqualified success, one should not then fall back into the easy trap of treating ethnicity as primordial*

In the specific case of South Africa, while successive Nationalist governments did utilise the process of confrontation and warfare with the country's black neighbours to build up a sense of white nationalism and identification with the apartheid state, its mythologies and symbols, a future black majority government will not have this option.

At the same time, the option of consociationalism is a non-starter as far as South Africa is concerned. The model is a compromise, an attempt to buy time in the hope that sometime in the distant future the links between the diverse populations within a country will have strengthened sufficiently to put the legitimacy of the state beyond question, and that in the short term the shared interests will be strong enough to hold the polity together.

The vast majority of South Africa's peoples still have a bitter taste in their mouths as a result of the bastardised version of the model that was applied by the PW Botha government in 1984 through the establishment of the tricameral parliament. In any case, as has been pointed out by Smooha and Hanf (1992), consociationalism would not work in South

Africa because it is based on the notion of balance of power between groups of "roughly equal size, whereas whites in South Africa constitute a small minority of the total population so that the granting of veto powers to them would be deeply resented by the rest of the population.

Additional objections would include the fact that a white veto would obstruct the process of reconstruction, redistribution and redress so necessary for long-term political stability. The current regime, thankful to realise that even a revamped consociationalism is not on the cards, though there are real fears that it will attempt to constrain a future democratically elected government's room for manoeuvre by diluting its powers through the back door, namely through the introduction of a very loose federal system with entrenched powers for the constituent units.

## TIL@ LE

So where does this leave South Africa, and more specifically what options are available to a future black majority government?

That nation-building will be embarked upon is a certainty. The pressures for it to do so will come from various sources. Firstly, in the era of nationalism in which we live states are legitimised internationally either in terms of the fact that they represent nations or are at least engaged in nation-building. In addition, a future government will feel a strong compulsion to heal the rifts created by decades of apartheid. Finally, there are the instrumentalist reasons such as the need to legitimate the new state domestically, transforming it into the focus and source of national unity in order both to strengthen its capacity to implement policies as well as to pre-empt any ethnically-based challenges to its position.

While the record of nation-building is far from an unqualified success, one should not then fall back into the easy trap of treating ethnicity, as would a primordialist or ethnicist, as being in the blood and according it the role of primary determinant of a person's identity and outlook on life. Numerous studies have shown that ethnic identity is, to a large extent, a situational phenomenon and therefore highly malleable.

Inter-ethnic divisions have always been arbitrary in practice, as one can see in the case of those whites who, joining the

...doin Party, now characterise  
 I 's IS White Zulus and identify with  
 ^-tory and myths of the Zulu  
 nkrfulthiethione- loyalty to one's ethnic  
 Kp \*111,1 necessarily incompatible with  
 loyalty to Il^ sUlle one fnd s one f lfm> nor  
 JEs it preclude the possibility of  
 iflrntification ^ith one's fellow citizens  
 "en if they "re not of the same ethnic  
 ,ri<in What is i mportant for the stability of  
 iheslate is that the latter set of allegiances  
 overrides the former. War with another  
 state is the most common situation in which  
 this takes place, but this is an unlikely nor  
 viable allernative for South Africa.

A national sentiment may take on a  
 classical form v. hereby it is the dominant  
 private feeling in certain situations,  
 irrespective of place of birth, ethnicity, or  
 confessional allegiance. While many Scots  
 and Welshmen may entertain particularist  
 feelings, a sense of pride in the respective  
 histories and cultures of their ethnic groups,  
 this is o\crridden by their sense of  
 belonging to the wider British nation and  
 loyalty to the state. But such national  
 sentiments arc the product of specific  
 historical conditions which do not apply in  
 the case of Si uii li Africa.

In the case of those European states that  
 succceded 10 a »reater or lesser extent in  
 creating .such a national sentiment and  
 attenuating particularistic attachments, the  
 existence of what has been called an 'ethnic  
 cores' which absorbed through peaceful  
 means or through conquest peripheral  
 ethnic groups into the state they controlled,  
 was vital.

Illustrative examples would include the  
 English crown's absorption of first Wales  
 under Henry VIII and then later Scotland  
 under James I, and the moves towards  
 linguistic and educational standardisation  
 which ensued within the context of the  
 development of a British (or more correctly  
 expanded English) nationalism. The same  
 would apply in the case of France, the  
 origins of ihe modern French territorial  
 state being traceable to the absorption by a  
 medieval Frankish core of the different  
 ethnic groups which inhabited areas such as  
 the Languedoc, Brittany and the Basque  
 country, through the imposition of French  
 as the language of the state.

the problem in South Africa is the lack of  
 an ethnic core around whose values  
 i language, history, mythology) a nation  
 could be constructed. Or more correctly, the  
 problem for South Africa is the existence of  
 a number of competing strong ethnic cores

around which a sense of nationhood could  
 be constructed, a problem shared with many  
 other states in Africa and Asia.

As Anthony Smith (1986: 275) has argued  
 in relation to states such as Nigeria, Zaire  
 and Ghana:  
*Such states lacked the 'ethnic tranquillity'  
 which conies from knowing that the bulk of  
 one's (the state's)population, especially at  
 the political centre, share a single culture  
 and history, which in turn furnishes the  
 myths, values, symbols and memories which  
 the emerging state may 'take-for-granted'  
 and promote in the efforts by state elites to  
 maximise their control over manpower and  
 resources within their territorial domains.*

Needless to say, in the case of South Africa  
 the National Party attempted to solve this  
 problem of 'ethnic tranquillity' through  
 spatial separation of the country's ethnic  
 groups. Capitalising on the malleability of  
 the concept of ethnicity, and for the sake of  
 political expediency, this meant the various  
 ethnic groups which made up the white  
 sector of the population were collapsed into  
 a macro-white *ethnie* - though it was the  
 Afrikaners which provided the national  
 mythology the other groups were socialised  
 into and which constituted the official state  
 nationalism - while great efforts were made  
 to split the black population into as many  
 different groups as possible along putative  
 ethnic lines.

Nevertheless, it is precisely in the reasons  
 for the failure of the apartheid project that  
 one may see hope for the nation- building  
 process in South Africa. Nation-building as  
 a policy of assimilating other ethnic groups  
 to a dominant one will fail in South Africa  
 both because there is no obvious single  
 contender for the role, as well as the fact  
 that this would only serve to entrench the  
 ethnic consciousness of target groups with  
 profound destabilising political effects on  
 the state. The problem of the illegitimacy of  
 the South African state would simply be  
 perpetuated in a new form.

The history of the struggle against apartheid  
 is much less a history of the desire of  
 subordinate ethnic groups to contest the  
 dominance of another one (as has been the  
 case in much of Asia and Africa), than of  
 the struggle of those disenfranchised to gain  
 the rights of citizenship within a united  
 South Africa. The sense of belonging to  
 South Africa on the part of all ethnic groups  
 in the country, despite the best efforts on

*Loyalty to one's  
 ethnic group is  
 not necessarily  
 incompatible  
 with loyalty to  
 the state one  
 finds oneself in*

*The problem in  
 South Africa is  
 the lack of an  
 ethnic core  
 around whose  
 values  
 (language,  
 history,  
 mythology) a  
 nation could be  
 constructed*

The sense of belonging to South Africa on the part of all ethnic groups provides an alternative basis for nation-building

the part of Pretoria to convince black groups otherwise, provides an alternative basis for nation-building.

The mass pressures emanating from the TBVC 'homelands' (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei) for reincorporation into South Africa, despite their ethnic diversity, indicates that the question of the restitution of the citizenship of which they were stripped is the primary driving force behind these centripetal forces rather than a desire to be part of either a black, or even Xhosa, Zulu or Tswana nation-building project in the post-apartheid era.

Furthermore, it is also clear that amongst black ethnic groups there is a recognition, despite their ties with others outside South Africa's borders, that they are part of South Africa. The Shangaan in Gazankulu know very well that they are South Africans, and that their brothers and sisters on the other side are Mozambicans, the same applying to the Tswana in Bophuthatswana in relation to their brethren across the border in Botswana, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The overwhelming majority therefore recognise the state of South Africa in territorial terms while rejecting its present bureaucratic and administrative wings. In this light, a new democratic government will start with a distinct advantage over many states in Asia and Africa, where it is the territorial state that has often been contested. This feeling of belonging to a greater whole, and the struggle to be included in it despite particularist ethnic feelings, is unique because it runs against the general international trend towards disaggregation along ethnic lines. This widely shared sense of citizenship may serve to fill the vacuum left by the absence of a feeling of shared nationhood, and may serve as the glue to hold a post-apartheid polity together.

Embedded within the struggle for citizenship is also the struggle for political rights, and here we may have another clue as to the model which a non-racial South Africa should pursue. The policy advocated by the African National Congress holds the most promise since it strengthens an existing favourable situation in terms of popular identification with the territorial South African state. A non-racial democracy backed up by a strong bill of rights, will elevate the idea of citizenship, in the full liberal sense of the term, to the position of prime depoliticiser of racial and

ethnic divisions in the country. Of course the ANC's historical principled stance on non-racialism throughout its struggle is an added positive factor in this regard.

#### Oivl

There is no obvious ethnic core around whose history, language and culture a South African nationalism in the classical sense could be constructed, leaving aside the very real threats to the territorial integrity of the state in the form of centrifugalism if this were to be even attempted. The compromise is the establishment of a 'civic nation' wherein notions of the rights and duties of citizens within a liberal democracy play the unifying role normally assigned to national myths, a *praxis* which over time may itself lead to a common sense of nationhood.

This is, of course, the liberal compromise. It in no way pre-empts the possibility of secessionist tendencies on the part of ethnic groups who, in a new dispensation, feel themselves to be permanently unassimilable within the state (and in the case of South Africa one immediately thinks of the small groups of Afrikaner secessionists).

Yet if there is one lesson to be learnt from the experience of nation-building in the West it is surely that their political systems founded on liberal democratic principles have proved themselves to be better equipped to deal with these sorts of demands than authoritarian ones. Through the establishment of a political culture of compromise these political systems are able to contain such pressures, and to deal with them peacefully.

In *extremis*, better compromises such as a Meech Lake Accord, even if they are forever under discussion, or when implemented constantly under pressure and a permanent source of political friction, than a Biafra or Katanga. QStffl

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In a 'civic nation', notions of the rights and duties of citizens within a liberal democracy play the unifying role normally assigned to national myths

M O N I T O R



Trevor Makhoba

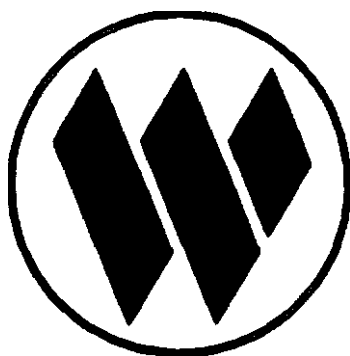
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# Indicators HI TransitionPart U ELITES On economy

*Hennie Kotze, Centre for International and Comparative Politics, University of Stellenbosch*

*In Indicator SA Vol10/No2 (March 1993), the author presented the findings of a longitudinal survey being conducted between 1991-93 on changing elite attitudes on a political settlement in South Africa. In this sequel. Professor Kotze interprets the shifts in attitudes on economic policy of leading supporters of the major political parties, with particular emphasis on the trade-off between economic growth and equity. Changing positions on economic models, progressive taxation and affirmative action are also discussed.*

One of the most important problems which any new government is going to face in the transition phase or after a democratically chosen government has been installed in South Africa is that there are going to be very strong demands to 'deliver the goods' - housing, education, health and job opportunities. The goods and services which any government can provide are determined by the level of the country's economic development. Even if the limitations which the level of economic development places on the state are perceivable, the government will still be blamed if it does not solve the social problems.

To scale down the aspirations of the poor in the hope that structural changes and stability can create a growing economy will be one of the most important tasks of any post-apartheid government - that is, they must be able to sell the concept of 'delayed gratification' to voters.

One of the driving forces compelling the MP government to initiate the transition was the enormous social challenges which could not be dealt with without a growing economy. It became increasingly clear in the 1980s that these challenges not only required sufficient capital but also a legitimate government. Sufficient capital could not be generated locally and foreign investment and loans could not be raised unless there was a stable political and economic system in South Africa.

These requirements have not changed since the beginning of the transition process in February 1990. On the contrary, the worldwide climate of democratisation and

the domination of the Western capitalist states have as a consequence that even higher requirements are set for a new South African political and economic system.

Socio-economic challenges and the way they are handled are seen as important factors in the democratisation process - some writers think that structural factors such as economic growth are the major prerequisites for successful democratisation. Some of these challenges are formidable. The unequal distribution of opportunities, the state's skewed allocation of resources, inconsistent monetary policy and the uncompetitiveness of the economy provide a bleak picture as far as the structural underpinnings for a stable transition to democracy in South Africa in the 1990s are concerned.

There are no instant solutions to create the kind of economic growth which is going to meet the large-scale expectations in South Africa of the benefits of a democratic dispensation.

In South Africa, the elite is confronted with the conflict between growth and equity or, in the words of Williamson (1979:231), '... The classic correlation between accumulation and inequality'. In the economic and political debate in South Africa, opinion-formers are compelled to arrange their development priorities along two 'separate and difficult-to-reconcile axes', one involving a trade-off between growth and equity and the other between order and liberty.

*Some writers think that structural factors such as economic growth are the major prerequisites for successful democratisation*

*There is little doubt that economic development, improved social well-being and political objectives are of great importance for South Africa. In your opinion, which of the three objectives should receive, over the next five years, the first priority, the second priority and the third priority?*

**Table 1: Economic, social and political development  
First policy priority by political party support**

Party	Economic development	Social development	Political development
CP	53%	4%	43%
NP	74%	5%	19%
DP	61%	6%	32%
Indian parties	82%	9%	14%
IFP	77%	6%	16%
ANC-SACP	35%	14%	50%
PAC	40%	2%	49%

A survey of the views of the South African opinion-formers on these two dimensions can give us a sense of their priorities for development. In a 1992 survey (see Table 1), 50% of respondents who support the ANC-SACP and 49% of the PAC, which have a populist tendency, placed political development as their first priority - they believe that political empowerment must be used to bring about social development.

*The increase in ANC-SACP and PAC support for economic growth could reflect a shift away from views favouring radical redistribution policies*

Table 1 shows strong support for economic development from respondents who support the parties which advocate primarily a market economy: 74% of the NP supporters, 61% of DP supporters and 77% of IFP supporters. This could reflect their belief that an economic take-off is necessary before social development can really be considered; on the other hand, it could also express their fear of losing privileged positions in a democratic dispensation.

In a 1991 survey, a so-called 'growth index' was used in order to determine elite commitment to economic growth. In the 1991 survey, 30% of ANC-SACP supporters and 30% of PAC supporters supported economic growth as a first policy priority. In the 1992 survey, this support increased to 35% of the ANC/SACP and 40% of the PAC. Thus there is supporting evidence for the view that these organisations are possibly beginning to place greater emphasis on economic development than on political development.

McDonough (1981:131) thinks that the development priorities of elites reflect their fundamental values: 'They represent...

basic commitments to options implying gains and losses for specific interests as well as the nation as a whole'. If this assumption is correct, the increase in ANC-SACP and PAC support for economic growth could reflect a shift away from views favouring radical redistribution policies which could only be implemented through state political control.

Probed on the dilemma of economic growth, versus political freedom in the survey, a black businessman succinctly commented: 'There will be no economic growth without freedom; and there will be no freedom without economic growth'.

For a long time the economic debate in South Africa centred on the preference for socialism or capitalism. To a greater or lesser extent, the policy of the ANC-SACP as well as the PAC supported socialist values, such as a state-controlled economy, nationalisation of industries and redistribution of wealth. On the other side, the NP, DP and IFP preferred a free market economy, which included policy aspects such as deregulation, privatisation and commercialisation.

These differences in leadership views, basically amounted to one group wanting to keep the state out of the economic sphere and give market forces free rein in the economy; the other group felt that an interventionist state was necessary to encourage developments and exports, to break up or regulate the concentrated nature of the economy and to dismantle the structures built up by apartheid.

There have been shifts on both sides since 1990. The economy is the subject which is most often discussed in a politically inclusive way at conferences, scenario discussions, workshops and indabas. New views in position papers are heard and debated in both camps. Although political polarisation after Codesa II delayed the progress of a National Economic Forum, now that it has been established this forum enables the views of the economic stakeholders to be exchanged. The various economic forums which have already been created on the regional level already serve a useful function in this regard.

The survey respondents were tested on several of the key aspects of economic policy in order to determine the extent of shifts or overlapping of attitudes.

From Table 2 that most respondents ascribe themselves as 'Ariel's 1) a free enterprise or mixed economy. The overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) who support the free market place themselves in the free Enterprise system category; they are the supporters of the NP (78%), the IFP (26%) and the Indian parties (60%).

Only a small minority of supporters of these parties describe themselves as in favour of state control of the economy (2%); most of the remaining respondents indicate that they support a mixed economy (13-18%). This pattern correlates very clearly with the economic policies of the above parties - (they are all supporters of a free market system).

A large number of CP and other right-wing supporters indicate that they support a mixed economy (36%) or a free market system (41%). In the case of the HNP and, to a lesser extent, the CP, prescriptions in the parties' policies for state intervention in the economy explain the relatively weaker support for a free market economy among their supporters.

Only the PAC supporters show relatively strong support for a policy of state control - 41% support this policy while 34% favour a mixed economy. Supporters of the ANC-SACP predominantly opt for a mixed economy (55%), with the same number who indicate that they prefer state control and free enterprise (18% in each case). Among supporters of the ANC-SACP, the weak support for state control represents a considerable shift from the original socialist policies of the ANC.

Table 2 shows that a large percentage of respondents across the party spectrum may be able to reach consensus on a mixed economy. It is of course difficult to know exactly what a 'mixed economy' means for these opinion-leaders. When one talks of a mixed economy one is actually referring to the role the state must play in the economy. In other words, 'mixed' refers to the relationship between 'state control' and 'free market' elements found in the political and economic system.

In the 1992 survey, respondents were asked to rank 20 policies ranging from state control to free market measures. The supporters of the NP, CP, DP and Indian parties indicated that 'controlling the rate of

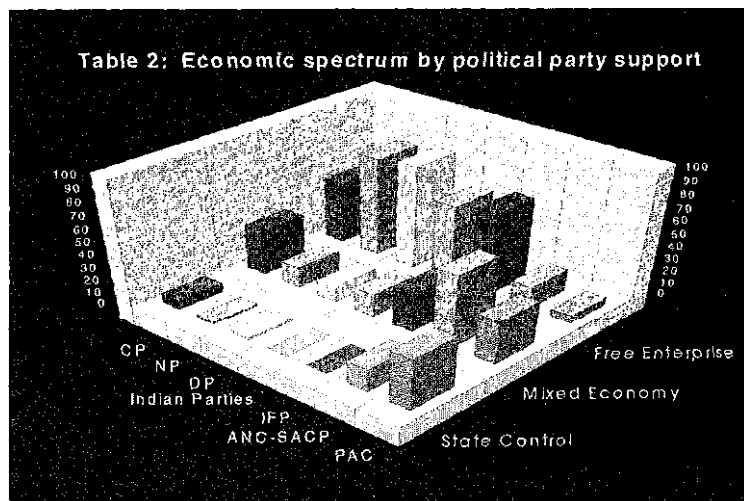
inflation' was the most important policy measure: 51% among the right-wing groups, 39% of the NP as well as the DP, and 27% of the Indian parties listed this as their first choice. Supporters of the IFP (26%) and the ANC-SACP (30%) indicated that 'equal education' was the most important policy measure. Among supporters of the PAC, 31% thought that 'nationalisation of industry providing basic goods and services' is the most important policy measure. Interestingly, 23% of the ANC-SACP respondents also supported 'nationalisation' as their first policy choice.

At this stage, however, nationalisation must be an outmoded policy for the ANC-SACP. South Africa is on the way towards acquiring full membership of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and the ANC-SACP must surely have been part of the negotiations. It would be difficult to give up membership again without destroying a great deal of international investor confidence in the country.

One could not actually make a clear deduction regarding the specific kind of mixed economy envisaged from the policy choices of the NP, CP, DP or Indian parties; the same applies to the ANC-SACP and IFP, except that in the latter instances a clear urgency about the need for social development comes to the fore. The PAC supporters indicate support for state

*It is of course difficult to know exactly what a 'mixed economy' means for these opinion-leaders*

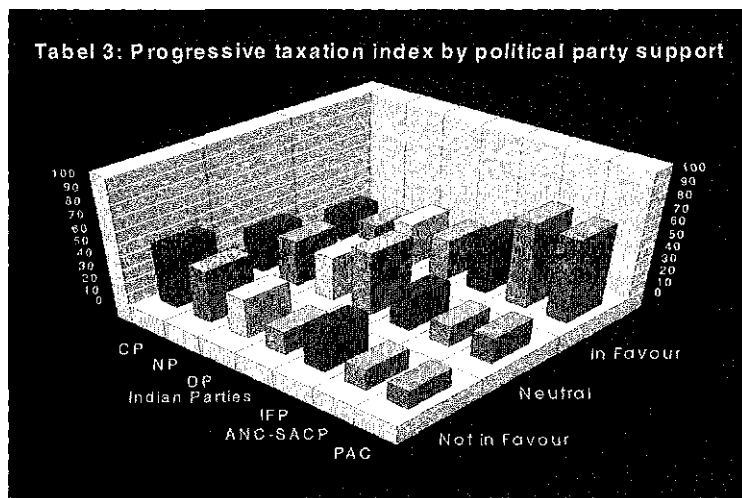
*There are different views on the role of the state regarding the economy. An important aspect is the extent to which the state, in a new constitutional dispensation, should be allowed to control the economy. Views on this issue vary from those who advocate total state control over the economy to completely free enterprise. Please indicate your opinion by marking the scale accordingly.*



In order to make the concept of mixed economy more measurable (or to operationalise it), survey respondents were asked:

*We would like to know how you feel about the different policies that the state could pursue in the 'new' South Africa.*

Included were 20 different policy measures ranging from what can be regarded as state control measures to free market policies. The first choice of the respondents is reflected in Table 3.



intervention in the economy, which correlates with their location on the economic spectrum in Table 2.

In order to reveal further the economic policy preferences of the various organisations, a factor analysis was done of the 20 economic policy items. A four-item factor, 'Progressive Taxation Index', was compiled from the following items:

- taxation of wealth (assets);
- progressive taxation of personal income;
- capital gains tax; and
- progressive taxation of corporate income.

The Tax Index in Table 3 shows that, with the exception of supporters of the ANC-SACP and PAC, a large number of respondents fall into the uncertain category. All the main parliamentary parties are fairly divided on the matter: 47% of the CP are not in favour (31% neutral); 41% of the NP are not in favour (36% neutral); and 31% of the DP are not in favour (35% neutral). Progressive taxation, which is actually a way in which the redistribution of income can be used for social development, receives strong support from the ANC-SACP (68%) and the PAC (66%).

Over 43% of the respondents supporting the IFP and a considerable number of DP supporters (34%) also think progressive taxation will be desirable. The distribution

of attitudes shows that policy measures designed to tax wealth progressively probably will not evoke a great deal of resistance from the ranks of South Africa's opinion-leaders. It appears as if this is one way in which the state can generate income to promote social development which will get wide support in society.

## Affirmative Action

The emphasis which supporters of the ANC-SACP and the IFP give to policy priorities such as equal education indicates that they see the upward mobility of the disadvantaged as an important task of the government. Should equalisation in South Africa take place through formal social and economic policies or through affirmative action programmes?

Table 4 reflects the pattern of views of opinion-leaders on affirmative action in the civil service. Supporters of the right-wing groups are the only respondents (54%) who believe that the state does not have to appoint more black people to the civil service. Although the statement and the reaction to it - 'agree' or 'disagree' - do not test the respondents' approval of such a step, it does test a view on the acceptance of the inevitability of such a step (see box).

Among respondents who agreed that such a step was in fact necessary, support varied from a high 89% from the ANC-SACP to 57% from respondents supporting the NP. In other words, with the exception of the right-wing respondents, there is general consensus that affirmative action will take place in the public sector.

There is a different pattern of attitudes among respondents as far as affirmative action in the private sector is concerned. Table 5 shows that while supporters of the ANC-SACP (81%), PAC (66%) and the IFP (53%) all agree that companies have a duty to appoint black people at all levels, the CP and right-wing parties (99%), the NP (73%), DP (56%) and the Indian parties (55%) do not agree that they should do so.

Closely related to the matter of affirmative action is the gender issue. The approach of women's organisations is, on the one hand, to concentrate on getting greater representation for women on decision-making bodies and, on the other hand, to campaign to ensure that women are able to claim the human rights that will be entrenched in any new South African constitution.

*Should equalisation in South Africa take place through formal social and economic policies or through affirmative action programmes?*

As women's rights are concerned, the main question was put to the sample:

• 30% feel women should have same rights as men in running business, while 44% feel that women's place is in the home. Where do you see yourself?

The overwhelming point of view expressed (by male respondents) was that women should play an equal role with men. This is only in the case of the respondents supporting the right-wing groups, as well as the Indian parties, that the number of respondents who think that a woman's place is in the home reaches double figures. In the case of the CP and the other right-wing groups, a high 44% of the respondents think so, while 14% of the Indian parties' supporters think so.

One can not conclude from this pattern, which can be interpreted very favourably for women's rights, that men will exert themselves to promote the rights of women. Against the background of the under-representation of women in general in society it seems that men will not go out of their way to advance women's rights - this remains a challenge for the various interest groups promoting this cause.

### Environmental Action

Environmental questions and the economy go hand in hand because if poor people compete for scarce resources and have no other alternative, natural resources can very easily be destroyed. Economic growth which can improve the position of the poor can also reduce the pressure on the soil and trees. At the same time, it will be possible to reduce, among other things, air pollution, the use and pollution of water and the denudation of vegetation.

Several questions on the environment were put to survey respondents. In the first place their attitude to the environmental movement was determined with the following question: *Generally speaking, how strongly do you favour or oppose the environmental movement?*

The distribution of attitudes in favour across the party spectrum, which ranges from 59% (CP) to 77% (PAC), shows that the environmental movement is regarded by all parties as being as precious as mother's milk and apple pie. The highest percentage of respondents opposed to the movement comes from the right-wing parties, and even there the figure is only 10%.

Two items were included in the survey to test respondents' attitudes to affirmative action - the one statement was applicable to the civil service and the other to the private sector. These statements read as follows:

- Any future government will have no choice other than to include large additional numbers of blacks at all levels in the civil service.
- Companies have a duty to see that a large number of high-level posts are filled by blacks.

Table 4: Affirmative action in the civil service by party support

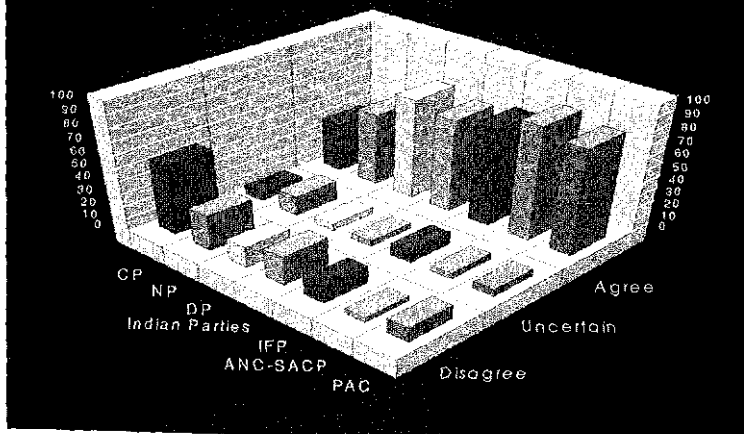
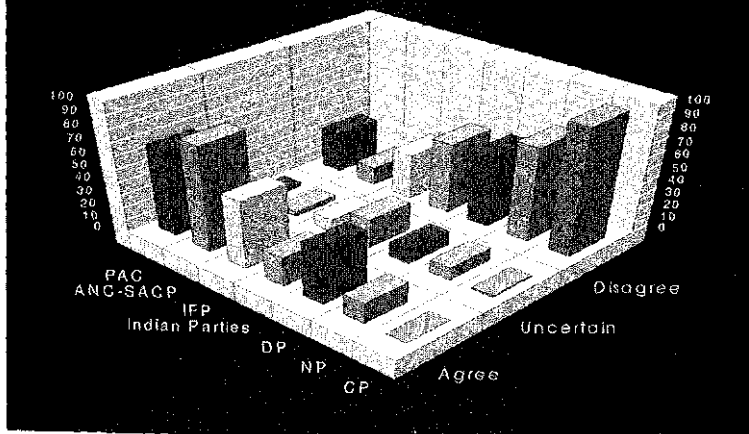


Table 5: Affirmative action in private sector by party support



The next question was: *Some people have suggested that protecting the environment could result in some people losing their jobs. Assuming that we have to settle for higher unemployment in order to protect the environment, is it more important to protect jobs or to protect the environment?*

In responses to the second question, a different pattern emerges. It seems as if respondents are almost equally divided on this moral issue - that is, apart from the right-wing where more than 65% think that the environment must get precedence over

*Affirmative action is going to be one of the major points of conflict in the allocation of socio-economic resources*

job opportunities. Although there is a great deal of uncertainty, only a small majority in the case of all the other parties think that the environment is more important than job creation. In the case of supporters of parties which are closer to the poor, such as the ANC-SACP and PAC, there are smaller minorities who think that the environment should be protected rather than job opportunities.

The environmental issue will still come to a head in some important policy decisions. Those groups which represent large numbers of workers will find it difficult to make a choice between poverty and the environment if certain industries must close down or even be relocated in the interests of environmental management.

Progress has been made already on reaching compromises on substantial matters such as economic policy - one can already talk about informal 'economic pacts' in this regard. Although there is often more emphasis in elite settlements on procedural rather than substantive aspects, in South Africa it is difficult to separate constitutional negotiations from outcomes such as the sharing of material goods. This is possibly why the transition process is proceeding more slowly here than in other cases where there have been elite settlements.

But what is important is that the patterns of attitudes show that the disunified elites which became involved in the transition process in 1990 are systematically developing value consensus on important, substantial policy matters. However, one\* still can not talk about a consensually unified elite because there has not been much progress on the path towards the structural integration of elites - this will probably follow once the 'social pacts' and 'economic pacts' are implemented.

*The disunified elites which became involved in the transition process in 1990 are systematically developing value consensus*

Affirmative action is going to be one of the major points of conflict in the allocation of socio-economic resources in the future. From the general pattern of attitudes in the survey, it seems as if white respondents do not object strongly to redistributive policies if they are not themselves directly affected. There should therefore not be much conflict on policies which deal with job creation, minimum wages and trade union co-determination with management. Aspects which could cause conflict would be matters such as the retrenchment of whites in the civil service, reduced pensions and whites being taxed more highly than other groups to fund social development programmes.

The immediate policy priorities of any government, transitional or permanent, and regardless of its party-political composition, will be to effect political stability and economic reconstruction. In this regard it will probably be necessary to think along the lines of a social contract in the economy. Such a contract must be seen as a device for distributing advantage and allocating efficiencies rather than as 'mutual restraint at the edge of survival'.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

The third wave of this longitudinal attitude survey is being conducted at present. The results will be analysed and published in the third part of the series of articles in a forthcoming issue of *Indicator SA*.

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#### ACRONYMS

CP	Conservative Party
NP	National Party
DP	Democratic Party
Indian Parties	Solidarity, National People's Party, etc.
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
ANC	African National Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress

# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN NAMIBIA

Andre duPisani

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Director, Centre for Public Service Training

**J**hrc years after independence, the corrosive legacies of apartheid are still felt in the poetical life of Namibia.

Profound socio-economic disparity, differential access to resources and social service\* - as well as limited localisation of the civil service. constitute part of the apartheid inheritance. Namibia, it has to be remembered. falls into the Low Human Development (11.1 ID) Category and as the 1992 Human Development Report indicates, rates poorer on the Human Development Index (HDI) than fellow SAIX\* (-countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The composition of the ruling social coalition, as well as the structural and global conditions under which Namibia acceded to independence, favoured the restoration and expansion of political rights over social justice and redistribution. At one level this state of affairs may, as Chris Tapscott (1993:5) correctly argues 'be directly ascribed to the limitations of the Namibian economy, but at another level they may also be attributed to the policies and administrative capacity of the new government'.

The guidelines of the politics of national reconciliation, as set forth in the Zimbabwe chronicle, is a forgiving light when it comes to issues of affirmative action, minimum wages and the question of land redistribution. It is meant to radiate warmth and to build confidence with the local and foreign immigrant community, and as such, it has had some notable success.

While not detracting from the political adroitness that informs the policy of national reconciliation, it is unlikely to lead to deep changes in the socio-political landscape of the country. Critics of this policy assert that it is a decidedly one-sided affair, benefiting the settler community at the expense of the poor and other marginal social formations.

In its application, the policy of national reconciliation (however necessary) could be seen as reinforcing the status quo and as elitist and with a discernible urban bias.

Moreover, those in public sector employment in particular are enjoying the fruits of this policy.

In fairness, it has to be said that the administrative household and the retention of the privilege of the colonial administration in particular, were largely entrenched in the Constitution. Article 141 (1) of the Constitution, in particular, provides for considerable continuity from the old to the new order, by affirming that 'any person holding office under any law in force on the date of Independence shall continue to hold such office unless and until he or she resigned or is retired, transferred or moved from office in accordance with law'.

This provision presented the incoming government with unpalatable choices: whether to introduce a differential system of employment benefits for existing and new civil servants or whether to equalise all employment regimes. On utilitarian and political grounds it was decided to honour the attractive existing system of benefits. Consequently, Namibia now has one of the highest civil service remuneration regimes in Africa.

At independence Namibia inherited 57 000 civil servants, many of whom laboured in apartheid's ethnic garden. The size of the civil service has since grown to 63 000 out of a total population of 1,5 million. It is the government's resolve, however, to reduce public sector employment to a more sustainable level. In view of the recently established regional and local authorities, however, this prospect does not seem immediate.

Whilst the policies of national reconciliation and of national-building are politically, and to some degree economically understandable, they do little to redress one of the most corrosive inequities of the colonial system; that of the skewed allocation of resources on a largely urban elite.

In this respect, Tapscott (1993:52) comments succinctly:

*Unless the Government is able to curtail*

*The politics of national reconciliation obscure issues of affirmative action, minimum wages and land redistribution*

*At independence Namibia inherited 57 000 civil servants, many of whom laboured in apartheid's ethnic garden*

The challenges of both institutional renewal and internalisation have become a political priority for the government

public sector spending and at the same time encourage both high levels of donor aid and foreign investment (neither of which seem likely on a sustained level) with emphasis on rural and low-income areas, this pattern of unequal development is likely to persist for an indefinite period.

The syntax of inequality is evident throughout the social economy, and as such, contains the seeds of discontent and instability.

In attempting to redress the corrosive vulgarities of the past the Swapo government attempts the vexing task of balancing improved production with greater social equity - a special brand of redistribution with growth. Commendable as these efforts are, they are constrained by the country's dependent and narrowly based economy.

Presently, less than 50% of the labour force is in paid employment in the formal sector, with open unemployment estimated to range from 6 to 35%. The immediate prospects for rapid employment generation in this sector, however, remain limited. High capital intensity in mining and commercial agriculture, recessionary pressures and public sector expansion, all militate against comprehensive labour absorption. The position of the public sector, hitherto the largest single employer of wage labour (in excess of 40%, too), is fiscally precarious at present remuneration levels.

The second factor, that of administrative capacity or the lack of it, too, needs to be briefly considered. Within the nascent public sector, administrative and planning capacity is limited in important domains. Institutional autonomy, too, is relatively low, while the civil service and parastatals such as Swawek and TransNamib, encompass competing bureaucratic ideologies and modes of behaviour. The resulting marginalisation of local policy-makers and managers sharply contrasts with the widely held view that the government has the principal responsibility in the areas of development and social policy. Against this background, it is understandable and desirable that the challenges of both institutional renewal and internalisation have become a political priority for the government.

Learning from the misplaced attacks on the 'development state' in post-colonial Africa by the international donor community and by international financial institutions, the

Namibian elite wisely recognises the arterial importance of an effective public sector in the realms of policy formulation and implementation. In-service training, local capacity building are actively supported, also in association with the newly-established university of Namibia's, Centre for Public Service Training.

Wig

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, Article 23 provides the clearest articulation and expression on affirmative action. This important article forms an integral part of Chapter 'Fundamental Rights and Freedoms' and as such, is justiciable and enforceable.

Article 23 (1) outlaws the practice of racial discrimination as well as the practice and ideology of apartheid, rendering both a criminal offence. The following Article 23 (2), is even more specific in its provision and intent: it empowers Parliament to enact legislation providing indirectly or indirectly for the advancement of persons within Namibia who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discrimination laws and practices, or for the implementation of policies and programme aimed at addressing social, economic or educational imbalance in the Namibian society arising out of past discriminatory law or practices, or for achieving a balanced structuring of the public service, the police force, the defence force, and the prison service.

Significantly, Article 23 (2) is not constrained by the provisions contained in Article 10 (1) and (2) that guarantee equality before the law and outlaw discrimination on the ground of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. As such, these provisions contain both a relatively narrow and comprehensive, state-sanctioned, understanding of affirmative action.

Private sector employers, in particular have tended to read ambiguity into the provisions of Articles 10 and 23, inventing it where it does not exist.

Article 23 (3) refers to the fact that women in Namibia have 'traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation'.

Constitutional provisions contain both a relatively narrow and comprehensive, state-sanctioned, understanding of affirmative action





This article on affirmative action is published in the Courts. Other provisions, the Constitution aimed at providing for the well-being of women, notably maternity leave, to protect the health of a woman worker, however, are not enforceable by the Court. In addition, the government has an obligation, set out in Article 91, to actively bring about equal treatment of women.

One needs to consider the actual status of women in Namibia. In the country's political life there is a predominant male orientation. There are a mere seven women out of 79 members of the National Assembly, two of 16 Cabinet Ministers, two of seven members of the Public Service Commission, and an equal number of women serving on the ten-person board of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). (The government has, of all parastatal agencies, travelled furthest on the affirmative action road.)

Considering that women make up in excess of 50 per cent of the total population, they are manifestly under-represented at all levels of state. Political and economic power remain predominantly a male preserve. The position is even worse in the private sector where very few women are employed above the rank of secretary. It is estimated that some 65 per cent of all women in rural areas are illiterate, with an even higher percentage existing below the poverty line.

Since independence the government has demonstrated a willingness to address the issue of women's rights and advancement, with the establishment of a Department of Women's Affairs in the Office of the President. Valuable work is also being done by the Women and Law Committee of the Law Reform and Development Commission and by the Namibian Women's Association, among others.

The gender dimension of affirmative action needs sustained attention. Formal recognition of the equality of women of women is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for their protection and advancement. The existence of a cabinet sub-committee with the Minister of Youth and Sport as chairperson (a woman), too, has not materially improved the position.

The progress that women have made since independence, has mostly not been the fruits of government sanctioned affirmative action. Non-Governmental Organisations

(NGOs) and a small number of activists deserve most of the credit. The Department of Women's Affairs in the Office of the President, however, has had some success, notably in its deliberations with traditional leaders on the rights of women under their jurisdiction. The Courts, too, made a symbolically and legally significant contribution, when they recently ruled in favour of a women plaintiff claiming that she had been raped by her husband.

*Since independence the government has demonstrated a willingness to address the issue of women's rights and advancement*

Both as a constitutional and as a social directive, affirmative action should be seen in the wider context of social empowerment. Social empowerment, in turn, has to be viewed against a holistic understanding of social justice, embedded in a vibrant human rights culture, access to justice and the cultivation of a transnational civil society.

In a post-independent Namibia, it is apparent that successful programmes of affirmative action demand a sustained political will on the part of the governing elite as well as considerable resources and local capacity. The present fiscal constraints dictate that the Namibian government seek outside assistance to enable it to cultivate the national garden. Non-governmental organisations, too, have a special role to play, particularly in relation to the reintegration of returnees.

*Affirmative action should be seen in the wider context of social empowerment, embedded in a vibrant human rights culture*

As a social policy, affirmative action is tied up with the project of national reconciliation and nation-building. The longer-term success of this project, in turn, will have implications for the policy of affirmative action, for it finds its justification in the former.

In a developing context such as that of Namibia, it seems that democracy and affirmative action must have social content and meaning. There is also the need for civic education. Constitutional provisions, however important, are not enough. Reconciliation without social justice is like a tree without roots. Social justice without reconstruction is like a tree that bears no fruit. OPS&

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have also been inspired by the activist writing and ideas of Henning Melber, Heribert Weiland, Nashiongo Sivute and Advocate Bience Gawanas. All of them deserve credit and thanks.

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## RETROSPECT

The prospects of a moderate recovery in 1993 of the South African economy faded during the first quarter. The recovery in consumer spending recorded in the fourth quarter of 1992 was not sustained:

- increases in Value Added Tax (VAT) and other indirect taxes reduced real purchasing power;
- uncertainty about economic growth and political stability undermined consumer confidence;
- consumers were threatened with the possibility of higher real interest rates by the Reserve Bank; and
- capital outflows put pressure on the current account of the balance of payments.

The Group of Seven industrialised economies have not shown signs of strong recovery, depressing expected growth in world trade, and thereby diminishing South Africa's prospects of export-stimulated growth. The fragile state of business confidence was cracked a little more by the assassination of South African Communist Party (SACP) Secretary-General Chris Hani in April 1993, and the resurgence of levels of violence. Major new private sector investment decisions will now be put on hold until an election has taken place, violence has subsided, and a clear direction about future economic policies has been given.

The recent increase in the price of gold has come at a time when capital outflows were threatening the country's holdings of gross gold and foreign exchange reserves which declined by an estimated R1 billion over the first four months of 1993. The current account surplus amounted to approximately R2 billion for the first four months of 1993, but capital outflows of R6 billion over the past six months led to a decline in reserves from R11,5 billion in August 1992 to R8 billion at present, with only 1,7 months of import cover.

These capital outflows are attributed to loan repayments on the foreign debt, and leads and lags in the capital account. Importers have accelerated payments in order to avoid a future continued weakening of the Rand, while exporters have delayed receiving payments. In addition, the decline in domestic interest rates has switched trade finance from offshore sources to domestic finance.

Despite the lack of confidence in South Africa, the obviously high return to investing in the South African stock market has attracted R2 billion in investment by non-residents over the last four months. Uncertainty, nevertheless, has led to **capital flight** on the part of residents, the extent of which **it** has been impossible to estimate. The Governor (if **the** South African Reserve Bank is of the view that **the** financial rand mechanism and exchange control will prevent 'large-scale' capital flight.

The drought has been partially broken and the agricultural sector will contribute positively to economic growth in 1993 as agriculture increases **its** demand for farm inputs and the necessity for **imports** is diminished. Agricultural recovery will also assist the balance of payments. There have however, been suggestions that the 'El Nino' phenomenon has not fully dispersed, with implications for the coming summer rainfall.

In May the international gold price surged from around US\$ 330 to between US\$ 370-380 per ounce. As in the past, a rise in the price of gold, if it is sustained, will prove to be stimulatory for the South African economy.

Although gold has played a decreasingly important role in the South African economy, nevertheless, gold is still the major export. Its role is evidenced by both the mini-booms of 1983 and 1987 which were driven by a rise in the price of gold. If the price of gold remains at present levels it has been estimated that the balance of payments will improve by R1,5 billion. Therefore, with the prospect of a higher gold price, balance of payments problems will not force a tightening of monetary policy, and gold remains, as in the past, our hope for positive growth in 1993.



will population growth at over 2% per annum, and a return to rates of growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) exceeding 3,5% per annum imperative. There is now a fairly general consensus about the ingredients which are needed for attaining sustainable rates of economic growth, as illustrated by the prescriptions of the recently published World Bank Report on South Africa, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) proposals (1992), and the South African government's Normative Economic Model (NEM). Required ingredients are:

- o A resurgence of investment in the private and public sectors, taking the ratio of investment to GDP in the economy to over 24% of GDP, from the present level of 16%.
- s Ensuring that the ratio of government expenditure to GDP does not increase markedly, while reallocating current government expenditure towards the provision of education and health services for blacks, and to social infrastructure. The World Bank is prepared to tolerate a deficit of about 4% of GDP, while the IMF and the NEM aim to eliminate the deficit over time.
- ® Encouraging the reorientation of manufacturing towards exports.
- ® Raising the productivity of capital, and increasing the employment creating capacity of investment.
- ® Upgrading skills in the labour force by education and training.
- 9 Promoting an industrial relations environment which moderates the rate of growth of real wages, and promotes employment growth. The World Bank specifically recommends paying wages for employment on public works projects at 50% of the urban unskilled wage rate.

Many of these policy directions are already being implemented.

The unknowns are:

- o Can the necessary increases in private sector investment be attained? A dramatically improved climate of confidence is needed, and attempts to regulate the ownership of conglomerates may not be conducive to building confidence. Will exports grow rapidly enough to stimulate economic growth and balance the current account of the balance of payments? Will the growth of government expenditure be moderated in a new political regime, while massively reallocating its focus? Will the trade unions moderate the rate of growth of real wages to around 1% per annum, thereby allowing higher rates of economic growth to be attained without accelerating the rate of inflation?

The provision of loans by the World Bank to a new South African government will allow for the stimulation of public sector investment, without encountering the balance of payments constraint. Thereafter a climate conducive to economic growth is needed to sustain the upswing.

The International Monetary Fund's economic model can be used as the basis for showing the benefits of economic growth in terms of employment and income distribution. The baseline scenario, shown in Table 1, generates GDP growth of 3,5% per annum, with employment growth of 3% per annum. After a decade at this rate the under-employment rate has fallen from 41,7% in 1990 to 36,6% in the year 2000. Multi-factor productivity grows at 0,5% per annum for the simulated decade, and employment grows by 3% per annum, which is a dramatic improvement on the 0,7% per annum growth in employment of the past decade.

TABLE 1: ASSUMPTIONS AND PREDICTIONS OF THE IMF MEDIUM-TERM BASELINE SCENARIO

	Ave 1981-90	Ave 1991-2000
Real GDP growth	1,4	3,5
Employment growth	0,7	3,0
Underemployment rate	41,7	36,6
Real wage growth	1,4	0,7
Investment/GDP	23,0	24,8
External current account/GDP	0,4	-1,7
Private savings/GDP	23,6	21,5
Government savings/GDP	-0,2	1,6
Government revenue/GDP	25,5	29,6
Government expenditure/GDP	28,1	30,3
General government balance/GDP	-2,7	-0,7
Current government expenditure per capita, 1990 rand	2 372	2 568
Multifactor productivity growth	-0,4	0,5
Labour income share	65,9	67,4
Population growth	2,2	2,4

Note: Figures are per cent unless otherwise indicated

Source: *Economic policies for a new South Africa*, International Monetary Fund Occasional Paper No 91, 1992.

The IMF does not show the implications which its model has for the black/white income gap in South Africa. However, these implications can be inferred if some reasonable assumptions are introduced. On the assumption that white employment contracts by 1,5% per annum, the earnings of high level manpower rise by a real 3% per annum, informal sector incomes and the output of black agriculture grow rapidly at 4% per annum, and non-labour incomes of whites remain constant in real terms - at the end of the decade the

share of personal income of whites has dropped from 54% to 36%, and the ratio of per capita incomes of whites to blacks is reduced from 5,3:1 to 3,4:1.

Alternative assumptions can be made which are less favourable for the growth of black incomes. As an example, consider a scenario where slower progress is made in black agriculture, where output is assumed to rise by 3% per annum, white entrepreneurs also fare better and their incomes grow by just over 5% per annum thereby increasing the white share of non-labour incomes over the period. Substitution of black workers also proceeds more slowly and white employment contracts by only 0,5% per annum. The result is that the ratio of white to black per capita incomes rises to 5,4:1, although black per capita incomes still grow rapidly at 2,5% per annum.

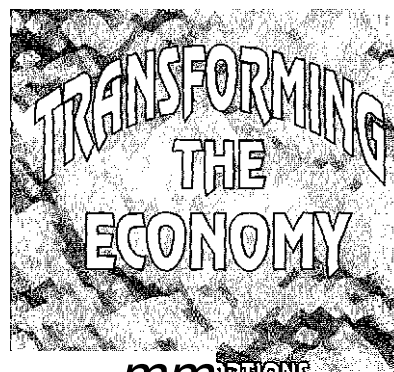
## COMMENT

Recent opinion surveys by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) based on a sample of black people in the metropolitan regions of South Africa has shown that black aspirations are running high: 34% of the sample, encompassing the supporters of all the main political black groupings expressed anti-capitalist sentiments; and 49% responded positively to statements favouring the redistribution of wealth. Whether the growth rates illustrated above will satisfy these aspirations remains to be answered. One positive indication in the HSRC survey was that 57% of respondents indicated support for economic growth, overriding concern with income, admiration of successful wealth accumulation, and support for leadership which manages the country well.

Even if radical policies for redistribution are avoided by the new government, there are dangers in attempting to move to a path of higher rates of economic growth too quickly. Under the new government the South African economy will experience capital inflows which will initially allow the economic growth rate to accelerate, and the exchange rate may appreciate in real terms. Militancy on the part of trade unions as the economic growth rate accelerates will cause wages to increase and inflation to rise. There will be a serious danger of being seduced by these capital inflows.

The real appreciation of the Rand may choke off any stimulus being provided by new policy directions to export-led growth, and firms producing for the domestic market will find themselves having to face increasing competition from abroad. Attempts to liberalise the trade regime will have been derailed. The collapse of attempts at trade liberalisation may lead to an increase in tariffs, a shift away from export orientation and a foreign debt overhang. The South African economy will then be proceeding rapidly along the path of the South American economies in the 1970s, with the inevitable prospect of serious economic instability before reaching stagnation.

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W F o o d I n d u s t r i e s



# PARKA Crves Op de dMes POULIER Op toacy

Denis-Constant Martin, Centre for International Study and Research (CERI),  
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*The flattened common use of identity in political descriptions tends to make it meaningless and even dangerous. A multi-disciplinary exploration of the word, itself relocated in concrete situations where groups of human beings either peacefully coexist or fight, may help understand why it is so frequently used and what underlies its utilisations.*

**hen** it comes to talking or writing **T T** about conflicts in today's world, **identity** is one of the words that is most **frequently** used. Be it apropos of **Yugoslavia**, Czechoslovakia, Africa, Latin America. (Canada ... it seems to have a very **simple** explaining virtue: because of a **particular** history that they supposedly **share**, **some** people are considered to belong **to one** solid, immutable human entity, and **consequently** to be bound to act and react as **a group** whenever treated or threatened.

Whatever descriptive value such a system may have, it: definitely lacks in analytical power. It may be able to report on what actors involved in such conflicts say, or even to relate in very simplistic language what is happening, but it fails to provide an explanation. It does not help understand why actors are making certain utterances or why certain events are happening.

Part of the problem lies with the uses to which the word *identity* is put. As a tool for describing political clashes, it connotes homogeneity and permanence. In the process, many of the meanings of identity are erased, and the complexity of the relationships needed in order to define the concept of identity is diluted.

"or identity implies both uniqueness and uneness. An identity card, for instance, is

a document showing that a particular individual is this one and no other, while it also shows that this individual belongs to one or several groups. One identity cannot be defined in isolation: the only way to circumscribe an identity is by contrasting it against other identities.

Consequently identity is an ambiguous notion. It gets its meaning from what it is not, from *the other*. Like a word in a crossword puzzle, it is located in a place where uniqueness, defined in a negative way (one's identity implies that one is different from the others), meets a sameness which needs an 'elseness' to exist (to get an identity one must be perceived as identical to or to identify with someone else).

If we start by considering the human being in its individuality, there is an agreement on the fact that he/she needs *the other* to exist, not only physically, but also to become a person aware of his/her own existence. Psycho-analysis shows the indissoluble link between the fact that *the other* reveals *the self* and the reality of a multifaceted self (Mannoni, 1969). The life of a human being as a person therefore requires the presence of *the other*, that is the perception of someone different and the establishment of a relationship with him/her/them.

*Identity narratives* - life stories - may be individually uttered. The fact that they are interwoven indicates that what they carry does not come only from the one who speaks or writes. More precisely, it entails that in an individual narrative there is always a part that derives from the re-interpretation of collective schemes. As much as an individual is always attached to groups, a narrative always tells the story of one or several groups. Group identity can be analysed as a narrative, just as individual identity.

*When it comes to talking or writing about conflicts in today's world, identity is one of the words that is most frequently used*

*As a tool for describing political clashes, identity connotes homogeneity and permanence*

*Identity narratives are meant to stir up group awareness and mobilise energies, talk to a rival or a foe, and build up an image for the world at large*

Research confirms the idea that collective identities are built in contrast to the image of *the other*, that they are a way of variably specifying the possible relations with *the others*, and that they are expressed in narratives giving value and meaning to these relations. In *identity narratives*, it is therefore interesting to trace what is meant to stir up group awareness and mobilise energies, what is meant to talk to a rival or a foe, and what is meant to build up an image for the world at large.

The narratives produced by Hindus in India and Quebecois in Canada share several features: strategic syncretism, invention of tradition thanks to a liberating amnesia, and efforts to make changes legitimate. What they also have in common is the relationship between *narrative and power*. In both cases, the narrative is built with the intention of redressing or reversing a balance of power considered to be detrimental to the interests of a 'group'.

The identity narrative aims at mobilising the 'group' by giving us conscience of ourselves and of the situation we endure. The identity narrative, because it is a weapon in a struggle for power appears to be at the same time an instrument for constructing an 'imagined community' and, once it has been imagined, for mobilising this particular community in a power struggle.

This type of mobilisation asks for more than an imagined community: it asks for a political organisation whose banner is painted in the colours of an identity which is globally told in a particular narrative. The narrative must articulate a series of *criteria* which define the group in abstract. It can be language (as in Quebec), religion (as in India), place of living (region, town, neighbourhood, etc.), 'race' (as in the American Black Power movement), occupation and social position (as for the trade unions), age (as in 'young' movements such as the Young Turks or the students' movements of 1968) or a combination of several criteria.

The group thus defined is just, at the beginning, a latent collectivity whose boundaries could appear extremely heterogeneous (a religious movement is most of the times extremely diverse in social terms). To become a community, its members need to acquire the feeling that they share 'something' that makes them

distinct of other groups in society and Hinduism also makes irrelevant other traits which could link them to those other groups: the feeling of belonging together is very often spurred by the perception of a common threat or of an injustice. In order to fight against threats or to combat injustices, an organisation must emerge from the community to organise its members into a movement with its own rules and its own hierarchy as well as to represent the group, to speak in its name (Kastoryano, 1992).

The transition from a group to an organisation endowed with rules and a hierarchy requires the intervention of particular actors who contribute to producing the narrative and become its exponents, thereby placing themselves in the position of speakers for the community. These actors, who really are 'political brokers', harmonise their political strategies with feelings rampant in part of the population living among the political system where they operate.

All examples of political action governed by the claim of an identity demonstrate that a few individuals play a key role in articulating the identity narrative, in 'conscientising' the members of a group, in organising them into a political association. They may be prophets, philosophers or poets, imams or priests, political leaders, union bosses or lawyers: they have answered a call to preach the gospel of identity, to announce that there is a group, deeply rooted in history, gifted with qualities unfound in other groups, and that this history, these gifts, must be defended, must be asserted.

The role these political brokers play in Hinduism does not, however, lead one to think that identity is plainly and wholly a manipulation business. The proclamation of an identity is never automatically followed. Even when it is, not all members of the targeted group adhere to it, and quite often the followers may only be a minority. Identity is not inevitable, even if those who resist becoming members of the organisation are victimised by those who have joined it (as has been the case in Ireland, for instance).

To be effective, the proclamation of an identity must meet fuzzy feelings, belabouring the minds of a number of people: it must make explicit what is largely implicit. It is an exercise in emotive mobilisation (but is far from being the only one (Braud, 1991)) that endeavours to move people by touching what is strongly ingrained in their affectivity. This is the

*Political brokers who articulate the identity narrative, may be prophets, philosophers or poets, imams or priests, political leaders or union bosses*



identity narratives very often  
 persecution: pride and fear.  
 more so, since identity is never  
 reduced only from inside a group.

## N

**Politics** can be assimilated to a marketplace for identity narratives. The *stake* is power. The *vanity* competition for power. In the **competition** organisations try to mobilise the support of people, whatever the rules of the game. Identity narratives are one of the mobilisation mechanisms most often used to provoke the identification to one of the rival groups, to urge joining the organisation which claims to represent it and to instil belief in its goals. In strongly ideological political systems, narratives offered on the 'marketplace' mainly attempt at building communities and organisations by mixing ideals (that is largely ethical values) with social belongings; the weight of primeval group belonging is minimal, although never negligible.

In politics where the party system enjoys great stability and is universally considered as the foundation of politics, although ideological differences between parties are not striking, partisan identifications may still keep primordial identifications at a low level (this is the case in the United Kingdom and in the United States). But where the ideological dimension of politics is limited or absent, mobilisation techniques tend to rely strongly on the generation of political support on the basis of identifications with allegedly primeval groups which some organisations claim to represent and defend. This is apparently what happens in the former Soviet Union and in the case of Yugoslavia.

In situations of crisis - economic and social crises causing a moral crisis - a drift from ideological competition to a fight between supposed groups of origin is possible. The rise of radical rightwing parties advocating racialism more or less openly is an example of this phenomenon in Western Europe, especially in France. The French National front is first of all hostile to 'foreigners' and assimilates 'foreigners' such as the Jews, though for obvious reasons it does not dare shout it too loud).

In the end, the process is the same: to build community and pose as its political voice, leaders tap on the trouble created by a multifaceted crisis, designate a scapegoat and try to rally around them all who feel threatened by the crises, agree to attribute

responsibility to the offered scapegoat, and identify with a community presented as different to the scapegoat's. Leaders and followers, together, write a new identity narrative: e.g. an old one (the 'genuine' French People) under a new guise in the case of the French National Front.

The point is that, in a situation of competition for power, there are always several identity narratives available. Just as an individual is in an area where groups overlap, where consequently he may pick up the ones he/she wants to participate in more strongly, he has the possibility of choosing his/her political identifications.

According to political systems, the cost of exercising this freedom is more or less high. It is still low in France, even in Italy; it was extremely high in Nazi Germany; it is tragically high in today's Rwanda and reaches there a point where, in actual fact, the possibility of choosing is close to nil. But history reminds us that there have always been 'resistants': people who have rejected the injunction to identify exclusively with one group and express this identification by being hostile to others, to the point of wanting to destroy them, or to consent to their elimination. The anti-racist demonstrations which took place in Germany at the beginning of 1993 are evidence of a contemporary spirit of resistance.

Examination of identity narratives in different regions of the world, at different times, show that they are instruments of transformation. Behind the homogeneity and the permanence of groups proclaimed in narratives, we find efforts to imagine communities and to persuade people to identify with it by playing on their affectivity, most often using the idioms of fear and anxiety. Thereby, narratives bring about changes: in the individuals, in their cultures, in the groups they form, in the way they act.

Power being everywhere the stake of protracted struggles, rival identity narratives, of different types, are offered to us and, according to the 'openness' of the system in which we live, we are more or less free to accept or refuse those which are proposed on the political marketplace. When confronted with identity narratives, people always have a choice - a choice to choose between them; or simply a choice to refuse them.


*In politics where the party system enjoys great stability, partisan identifications may still keep primordial identifications at a low level*

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On the other hand, cultural specificities are a reality in a universe where, in spite of everything (distance, misunderstandings, violence, etc.) people end up exchanging what they have and what they know. A tentative figure trying to describe the ensemble of cultural specificities would bring out common features and areas of overlappings. This opens up a new choice of identity in the possibility of choosing to preserve and develop cultural specificities while explicitly relating them to universal knowledges and values.

This does not imply the dilution of cultural specificities in an abstract and monochromatic universal, but on the contrary their affirmation. The result will not be a homogenisation of human cultures, but on the contrary a multiplication of innovations causing the apparition of new - as hybrid as ever - specificities to be presented to *others*. This may sound like a dream or a fairy tale, especially in 1993. But Utopias are useful when they raise questions for the present. And hybridisation of cultures, circulation of knowledges, sharing in ethical values, are as real as wars in the name of identity.

Regarding the role of identity in politics today: what is the most appropriate form of political organisation to foster the peaceful development and exchange of cultural specificities? Political philosophers have suggested many answers. I do not dare pretend to propose one more but I would like to pose another question. Is the state, as we know and maintain it since the 17th and 18th centuries, the best means of answering what seems to be today an intense quest in many parts of the world (Coulon, 1989): the articulation of a politics of proximity with the necessity of wide and distant economic relationships in societies founded on freedom and equal opportunities? 

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The programme of a study group organised under the auspices of CEFIL in Paris was presented during a special session of the International Political Science Association Conference held in Buenos Aires in July 1991 (See 'Des identités en politique' in: *Revue Française de science Politique* Vol42/No4, August 1992 and Vol42/No5, October 1992). A colloquium on identities in politics was also organised in Paris in March 1992 (see *Cartes d'identité, comment dire nous en politique?*, Paris, forthcoming). The present paper owes much to the collective reflection which took place in the study group as well as during the meetings.

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South Africa is an alarming country.

One of its more alarming features is its obsession with ethnicity and nationality. There seems no appreciation, that ethnicity and nationality are invented or constructed by people - and people have their idiosyncratic, often unconscious motives for this obsession.

It is no adequate response to retort that people are not responsible for their society's history, culture and social structures - including ethnic and national institutions. *Someone* makes decisions, rules out alternatives, persuades, cons or bullies. Politicians, administrators ... are themselves people with the usual complement of fantasy and irrationality to bedevil their decision-making.

The collectivist obsession asserts, often cruelly, that children, men and women are no more than units in the Utopian or draconian ethnic or national identity. People, individuals - you and me - are hereby abolished. Although this may be thought - mistakenly - to be administratively convenient, it is an inhuman and wasteful principle on which to base a society.

I do not deny that imposed collective identities are powerful influences on individuals. 'Powerful' is not, of course, identical with 'irresistible'! I wish that I *could* deny it! I do, at least, dare to suggest that even South Africans are more than acculturated elements assimilated to ethnic and national groups; I also maintain that the very nature of ethnic and national beliefs and attitudes are deeply rooted in the unconscious, the fantasies and fears, indeed the narcissistic psycho-pathologies of those who have a driven need to think and feel ethnically or nationally.

I am concerned with the ambiguous, even shifting, boundaries between 'I' and 'other'. There is a paradox lurking here: that there *are* still individuals, distinct, unique, even within the apparently impermeable boundaries of a group. Even if - in some rarely precisely defined way - we are creatures of our society, individuals are remarkably obstinate in devising and maintaining a self-concept that is emotionally satisfying and meaningful, regardless of the constraints and impositions of their society.



# COLLECTIVE OBSESSIONS *sdf an*

for many individuals, life is a long drama of seeking the answers and of dealing with **Uncomfortable** answers that do not fit the **individual's** psychological needs for **self-recognition** and self-esteem. It is **striking** that even when people are **physically** or emotionally locked into **situations** where **their** individuality is **denied or** punished, they are often **ingenious** and persistent in finding their personal answer to the question: 'Who am I. really?'

JVulhaäisler and Harre (1990) have **described** the 'singularity of selfhood': the **mysterious**, powerful and motivating state of **know ing** who one *really* is, sharing **feelings** about one's singularity that are **positive**, reassuring and energising. Even if **we shared** some limited, narrower and **specific** social or cultural experiences, e.g. **the same** family in childhood, the same **prison** cell, even the same ethnic or national **membership**, we tend to cling to our own **individual** feelings of singularity, of 'me-ness', of being not-another person.

In so segmented and intensely collectivised a **society** as South Africa it may be a major **problem** of individual psychological development for children (and then adults) to **establi**sh their personal boundaries. In **such** circumstances, Stephen Frosh (1991) **lias** distinguished three aspects of the **dilemma** of identity:

*I'ii si.* there can be no sense of individual **identity** unless social and cultural **conditions** make it possible for the **individual** to achieve an inner stability and **confident** sense of personal continuity.

*Second,* there must also be stable, supportive and emotionally satisfying personal relationships in early childhood. It is through living these relationships that we acquire our ethnic and other identities. Moreover, we are usually unaware that the relationships that we experience in childhood do not accurately reflect adult cultural norms and relationships.

*riiird,* only by examining the development of identity, of selfhood can we decide if the social world is a benign or harmful influence on the growing children. Frosh (1991: 5) observes that 'the characteristic slate of the self can be used as an index of the psychological adequacy of the cultural order'. It seems highly probable - in South Airica's socially and culturally fragmented

and conflictual society, in which each fragment tends to reduce the autonomy of individuals by striving for a narrow, narcissistic exclusiveness - that individual identity can only with difficulty avoid contradiction and confusion.

Frosh pleads for an approach that analyses the ways that our cultural and personal worlds - or selves - interact to produce an account of the *experience* of what it is to be a modern 'subject', someone living in and struggling with the dilemmas which our uncertain, violent or rapidly, kaleidoscopically changing society generates.

Freud, Winnicott and all psycho-dynamic psychologists agree that human children *develop* identities. We are not born with or into one, unchanging identity that neatly corresponds with what society defines for us. We gradually, sometimes haltingly and painfully acquire fragments of identity that we may - *or* we may not - succeed in combining by adulthood into a more-or-less cohesive and coherent whole identity that is emotionally satisfying.

What is 'emotionally satisfying'? There are three components:

- Ⓡ feelings of self-confidence and of self-esteem, of worthiness;
- Ⓡ a sense of competence, that one is able to control not insignificant parts of one's life; and,
- Ⓡ a conviction of self-continuity.

Individuals should be in no doubt about their identity and should feel satisfied with who one is and that one will not be abolished or destroyed in the future. If I feel that I am me, I don't want to feel that tomorrow I'll be someone else, because of internal or external influences.

The development of identity is active, assertive, a matter of individual opportunity and emotional resonance and choice. At its simplest, children from infancy respond emotionally to significant adults and their lives and adults respond to the children. From the adults, with whom we have affiliative and friendly or hostile and distant relationships, children absorb, interpret and transform into emotionally meaningful relationships, feelings and attitudes about themselves and their relationships with

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*Imposed collective identities are powerful influences upon individuals*

Will the enforced compliance of ethnic, national and racial collective identities take more than one generation to be gradually replaced by true self identity?

other people in the many situations of life. Children, too, form relationships with other children.

This interactive process of absorption, interpretation, acceptance or rejection, has ultimately only one unconscious goal. It is for the individual child to become an individual identity with his or her own needs, wants, urges and goals created out of the fragments of identities of adults and other children.

It is too easy for adults to refuse to accept that the children's images of their peers and adults are as complex, indeed inextricable, a melange of fantasy, misinterpretation and reality as are adults' responses to children and to each other. It is too easy for us to ignore that our socialisation is only achieved at a price. The price is renunciation and repression: there is always a tension between personal desires and social constraints.

In addition, there is also the anxiety and confusion created by our having to create identity for ourselves out of fragments of people. Among these fragments are doubtless, the images of significant and compelling cultural forms - maybe ethnic, national, class or gender; maybe conflicting with each other, maybe conflicting with our own inner needs and self-images. The 'civilisation' or culture into which we grow up 'discontented' or ill at ease, because we inevitably grow up into it frustrated, is then a thing of shreds and patches, and emotionally far from the integrated whole we adults casually assume it to be.

## Th® Fais® S@!f

Winnicott's understanding of identity development complements that of Freud. Freud was more interested in how individuals strove to find *some* way to satisfy their needs in a world of frustrations. Winnicott was more concerned about how individuals strive to 'feel real', to develop a sense of 'personal authenticity'. Both Freud and Winnicott see the roots of adult identity in early childhood.

Winnicott's starting point is the question 'of what life itself is about' (1967). How do individuals come to experience being alive and as a being that exists *in its own right*, and distinct from its early symbiotic existence with and through a mother?

The infant 'needs to react' to its experiences with its mother, gradually or

sometimes with difficulty discovering 'himself within his mother's care', and then combining both feelings of separation and increasing self-sufficiency, of self-isolation and, paradoxically, of union with the mother. The growing individual comes to 'preserve a personal care without becoming isolated'. The role of the mother in the *dyad* (a pair of units treated as one) is to recognise the infant's feelings and how they are initiated and signalled, and then to respond in such a way that the infant's strivings for independence, spontaneity and affiliation are encouraged.

A healthy *dyadic* relationship results in the child developing a *true self* in which spontaneity, feelings of competence, trust and creativity are actively enjoyed, but if the mother (and other adults) fail to respond to the infant's signals, the infant may develop a *false self*, in which compliance replaces spontaneity, conformity replaces trust and feelings of low self-esteem and incompetence replace competence and creativity.

The *false self* is compliance to an imposed, enforced environment. It is a defensive adaptation to an impoverishing and constraining environment, by which the individual is frozen into failure. The *false self* may, moreover, gradually become too powerful to be replaced by the deeply unconscious and repressed *true self*. Indeed, the *false self* may even protect the *true self* from collision with environmental situations that deny a sense of reality to the individual.

Will the enforced compliance of ethnic, national and racial collective identities take more than one generation to be gradually replaced by *true self* identity?

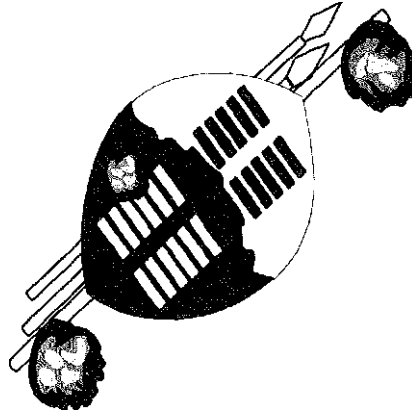
A marked characteristic of present-day South Africa is the pervasiveness of compliance on cognitive, intellectual and emotional levels. The persistence of ethnic, national and racial *false selves* implies a collusion with - or surrender to - an identity that are assumed to be given, immutable and irresistible. It implies a collusion with a view of human differences, as trivial and not worthy of note. It ignores the deeply irrational, narcissistic natures of collective conformities, their tendency to aggression and to justify themselves by rationalisations rather than reason. In all, it *accepts the false self* narcissism of unsatisfactory childhood experiences. False self-conforming adults are only partially adult. **OS&**

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# The Beginnings of Zulu Identity



## The Image of Shaka

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*In this article, we argue that when Zulu ethnicity is analysed historically, it turns out that a broad Zulu identity did not begin to become widespread before the 1920s. In the next part of the article we explain why this was so. In the third part we begin the more complex task of explaining why, by the 1920s, numbers of ordinary people in the Natal region who had never previously thought of themselves as 'Zulu' were for the first time beginning to take on elements of this identity.*

Over the last few years the role played by ethnicity in the political conflicts which are wracking South Africa has become more and more widely discussed, both in the media and in academic circles. Attention has focused particularly on Zulu ethnicity, which is often portrayed as a major factor in the current violence in Natal and on the Witwatersrand.

Among academics and non-academics alike, the idea is very common that Zulu ethnicity today is an expression of a 'primordial' identity which has existed continuously among African people in the Natal region since the emergence of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka in the 1820s. This uncritical way of looking at ethnicity in African societies is widespread.

In recent years, though, numbers of scholars have begun to develop a very different approach to the analysis of ethnicity in Africa. They no longer simply assume that ethnic consciousness, or 'tribalism' as it is often called in its African context, persists largely unchanged over time. Instead they argue that, like all other social phenomena, every manifestation of ethnicity needs to be seen as having its own history, as having been constructed by specific groups of people at specific places and specific times under specific circumstances.

### The Politics of

The Zulu kingdom came into existence in the 1820s and survived until its disintegration in the civil wars which followed its defeat by the British in 1879. There is no evidence to suggest that in the kingdom's lifetime a broad identity as 'Zulu' ever developed among the various different descent-groups which had become subject to the rule of the Zulu.

The kingdom was not, as is commonly thought, a cohesive and united polity. It was an amalgamation of discrete, previously independent chiefdoms, each with its own chief, its own memory of the times before the Zulu conquest, and its own separate identity. Zulu overlordship met sustained resistance, and in 1839-40 and 1856 the kingdom was wracked by civil war.

In the 1860s and 1870s the kingdom began to achieve a greater degree of political unity in the face of external threats from the British in the colony of Natal and the Boers in the Transvaal. But local and regional loyalties remained of prime importance, and the term 'Zulu' remained the designation exclusively of members of the ruling descent-group.

In the face of the British invasion of 1879, the kingdom was able to hold together and

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*It is unlikely that Africans in 19th century Natal had any collective term for themselves; certainly they did not call themselves Zulu*

inflict a crushing defeat on the aggressors at Isandlwana. But once the British had resumed their march into the kingdom, the allegiance of many chiefs to the Zulu king, Cetshwayo kaMpande, began crumbling. The settlement imposed by the British after the defeat of the Zulu armies led to the break-up of the kingdom, and by the end of the 1880s the position of the Zulu royal house as a focus of collective loyalty had been largely destroyed.

For most of the history of the Zulu kingdom, then, few of its members would have regarded themselves as Zulu. Outside the kingdom, though, the term was used quite differently. From the time of their earliest contacts with Shaka's kingdom, numbers of European traders, travellers, officials and missionaries from the neighbouring colonial world were categorising the people of the kingdom as 'Zulu'. By the mid-1830s the word was becoming well established in the literature on southern Africa.

By the 1840s some of the European settlers in the colony of Natal were also using the word Zulu to refer to the African inhabitants of the colony. Others referred to them as 'Natal Kaffirs', as distinct from the Zulu in the kingdom across the Thukela river. Both these usages, it must be stressed, were a product of the images of Africa held by Europeans; they did not at this stage reflect the usages of the people to whom the term was applied.

For their part, people in the Zulu kingdom often referred to Africans in the colony of Natal as *amakhafula*, those 'spat out'. It is unlikely that Africans in the colony had any collective term for themselves; certainly they did not call themselves Zulu. What Africans outside the Zulu kingdom and the colony of Natal called the African inhabitants of the region is a subject that still needs to be researched.

It was not until the very end of the 19th century that the conditions began to be established for the wider spread of a Zulu identity. In 1887 a large part of the old Zulu kingdom was annexed as a British colony, and in 1897 it was incorporated into the colony of Natal. The formerly sharp political, social and economic distinctions between the two territories began to blur. In both areas, African communities in general increasingly felt the weight of oppressive and exploitative rule by white settlers.

By the 1890s a handful of mission-educated African intellectuals in Natal was beginning

to edge towards closer relations with the remnants of the Zulu royal house, then headed by Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo. Members of this group were becoming increasingly frustrated by the obstacles which white officials and settlers were placing in the way of the economic, social and political aspirations of westernised Christian Africans, or *amakholwa*, and were casting round for political allies.

In the process they began to develop an ideology which combined elements of African nationalism with what can be called 'Zuluism', i.e. the notion that the African people of the Natal-Zululand region were all 'Zulus' by virtue of the fact that their forebears had supposedly once all been ruled by the Zulu kings.

At much the same time, it seems, a number of chiefs in Natal south of the Thukela were for the first time beginning to look to the Zulu royal house for leadership against the common colonial oppressor. This development was illustrated when, in the Natal rebellion of 1906, some of the rebel chiefs from south of the Thukela turned to Dinuzulu for support, even though his official status was merely that of an ordinary chief.

The extent to which ordinary Africans in Natal and Zululand were identifying with the Zulu royal house at this time is impossible to say without much more detailed research. Nor is it yet possible to say how far they were actively identifying themselves as 'Zulu'. But it is likely that, as in other areas of Africa, the rapid growth of migrant labour from rural to urban areas at this time was beginning to foster the development of a broad collective identity among African male migrants from the Natal-Zululand region. Numbers of them, at least in their places of work, where they came into contact with Africans from other regions, may have begun to accept being labelled by others as 'Zulu'.

But the degree to which a Zulu identity was developing in the early 20th century should not be exaggerated. In part, its development would have been inhibited by the strong opposition shown since the 1880s by successive Natal governments to the revival of the power and influence of the Zulu royal house. And in Zululand itself, as Nicholas Cope has shown, the hostility of many chiefs to the royal house was still strong. Numbers of influential chiefs pointedly did not attend Dinuzulu's funeral in 1913. Among most Africans in Natal-Zululand, there was as yet no general

*The rapid growth of migrant labour from rural to urban areas was beginning to foster a broad collective identity among African male migrants from the region*

- of political solidarity to serve as the basis for the development of a collective identity, whether 'Zulu' or any other.

Marks and Nicholas Cope have argued that the material conditions for the consolidation of a collective identity did not become firmly established until after 1912. Until then there was no common notion of 'us' versus 'them' among the various different social categories of African in Natal-Zululand. But in the 1910s and 1920s, amcikhohwa intellectuals, chiefs, and commoners were all facing lives of increasing instability and insecurity in the white-dominated South African political and economic order. As a consequence, main members of these groups were more and more feeling the need to enlist the support of a broader community of interests the better to be able to deal with the problems of their own lives.

For main amakhohwa, the passing of laws like the Natives' Land Act of 1913 and the Native Administration Act of 1920 were heavy blows, for they severely limited the ability of members of the African middle class to pursue their economic and political aspirations outside the narrow confines of the African reserves. For their part, rural chiefs were becoming alarmed by the continued erosion of their authority as migrant labour became widespread, and by the growth of working-class radicalism in the lowlands.

For large number of commoner families in the reserves, life was becoming more precarious as the erosion of the old rural order pushed ever-increasing numbers of men into migrant labour. For Africans on white-owned farms, conditions of labour tenancy were becoming more and more onerous. In the towns, most migrants faced strong competition for jobs and accommodation from men from other regions. Working and living conditions were often very poor.

It was under conditions of this kind that, by the 1920s, large numbers of Africans in Natal and Zululand, as in many other areas of southern Africa, were becoming receptive to the idea that they needed to draw closer together in order to protect their own interests.

But to say this does not by itself explain why many people began to draw closer together specifically around a 'Zulu'

identity. Other broad identifications were also becoming available at this time. One was a national identity as 'Africans' which had been propagated by the South African Native National Congress (from 1923 the African National Congress) since its formation in 1912. Another was a class identity as 'workers' which was being propagated, if highly inconsistently, by organisations like the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, founded in 1919, and the Communist Party of South Africa, founded in 1921.

These identifications were not mutually exclusive. A person could at different times regard himself or herself as a Zulu, as an African, and as a worker. But the evidence suggests that for an increasing number of people in the Natal-Zululand region who were feeling the need for broader identifications than they had previously made, an incipiently ethnic identification as a Zulu was more meaningful than a nationalist identification as an African or a class identification as a worker.

To explain this, we need to understand the mobilising power of the symbols which were associated with each kind of identification. Very little research into this wide field has yet been done. A pioneering study is Hamilton's recent work on the history of the image of Shaka Zulu. In the third part of this article we briefly examine some of the significant moments in this history in order to explain the centrality of the symbol of Shaka in the formation of the Zulu identity which was emerging by the 1920s.

Mark

Shaka ruled the Zulu kingdom from its emergence in the late 1810s until his assassination at the hands of his brother Dingane in 1828. During his lifetime, he and his supporters sought to portray his system of rule as one which maintained a system of law and order in the kingdom, in contrast to the chaos and disorder which supposedly existed outside the kingdom's borders. His enemies, on the other hand, sought to portray him as a usurper and tyrant who had brought death and destruction to the region.

After Shaka's death and the succession of Dingane, the latter sought to justify his killing of his brother and his own usurpation of the Zulu kingship by maligning Shaka as a tyrant who had ruled illegitimately. When, in 1840, Mpande

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The word 'Shaka' became a metaphor for the relationship between political power and social order

Powerful symbols like 'Shaka' had the potential for being appropriated for ethnic mobilisation

drove out Dingane with the assistance of the Boers, he in turn was quick to denounce his predecessor as a usurper, to rehabilitate the image of Shaka, and to present himself as the latter's legitimate heir.

For much of the rest of the 19th century, most of the major political conflicts north of the Thukela were argued with the reign of Shaka as a reference point. In the civil war of 1856, the two rivals for the Zulu succession, Mpande's sons Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi, sought to legitimise their claims by asserting their close genealogical links with Shaka. In 1873, when Cetshwayo was installed as the new king after the death of Mpande, his leading supporters invited Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in the colony of Natal, to participate 'as Shaka' in some of the installation ceremonies.

This invitation was extended because Cetshwayo's supporters wished to secure British support against the new king's enemies inside and outside the kingdom. The mantle of Shaka was figuratively conferred on Shepstone in his capacity as the representative of what the Zulu leadership saw as the dominant power in the region. This conferment suggests that by this time the word 'Shaka' referred not only to the persona of the long dead king but also to a conception of a political system in which power legitimated itself by establishing social order in a situation where disorder threatened. The word 'Shaka' had thus by this time become a metaphor for the relationship between political power and social order.

The metaphor was recognised not only in the Zulu kingdom but also, it seems, by numbers of Africans in the colony of Natal. Shepstone sought to justify the authoritarian system of 'indirect rule' which he set up over the colony's African population as similar in important respects to Shaka's system of rule. The principle by which colonial administrations in Natal defined their sovereign power over Africans with reference to Shaka was continued long after the Shepstone era had come to an end.

After the defeat of the Zulu armies in 1879, the British authorities deposed Cetshwayo, sent him into exile, and proceeded to divide up his former kingdom into thirteen chiefdoms. The rationale which they gave for this policy was that they were liberating the people of the Zulu kingdom from the tyranny of the house of Shaka, and returning them to the rule of pre-Shakan

lines of chiefs. By the same token, the struggles waged for pre-eminence by some of the newly elevated chiefs in the 1880s were also framed with reference to Shaka

In the early years of the 20th century, the established rural order in Natal was beginning to break down under the impact of colonial rule and the expansion of capitalism, colonial officials like James Stuart sought to bring about the revival of what they saw as the essential 'Shakyn' core of the Shepstone system. At much the same time, as mentioned in the previous section, some *cimakholwci* intellectuals were beginning to seek the revival of the Zulu royal house, and to propagate a version of history which portrayed Shaka as the great founding figure of a community which embraced all Africans in the Natal-Zululand region.

At a time when life for Africans in the region was becoming more and more insecure, ideas of this sort struck a powerful chord in the minds of increasing numbers of people. By the 1920s, large numbers could identify with the need for a 'Shakan' kind of order to be re-established in Natal-Zululand. Hence they could support the aspirations of the Zulu royal house under Solomon kaDinuzulu to establish the 'house of Shaka' as paramount over all Africans in Natal and Zululand. That 'Zuluist' messages were by this time beginning to be widely accepted, at least in Zululand, was graphically demonstrated when, on a public occasion at Eshowe in 1925, a large crowd of 60 000 acclaimed Solomon as their king.

What made incipient ethnic identifications like this so much more appealing than nationalist or class ones to these people was the much greater resonance which ethnic symbols had than nationalist or class symbols. Among Africans in South Africa, the latter were still in their earliest stages of development, and as yet had very little popular recognition. By contrast, powerful symbols like 'Shaka' had the potential for being appropriated for ethnic mobilisation in Natal and Zululand precisely because they were loaded with meanings, acquired over a hundred years of history, which were widely recognised in the region.

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# ETHNIC MOBILISATION

## KwaZulu's Politics of Secession

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*What are the likely consequences for Natal, and for the country as a whole, of the adoption of a constitution with a high degree of devolution of power to regions? Will such a constitution fuel the present conflict and lead further down a Yugoslavian (or Renamo-type) road - or will it promote the nation-building which is so desperately needed in our country? In this article, two prominent commentators on Natal assess the Constitution for the State of KwaZulu/Natal recently unveiled in Ulundi by the IFP.*

As representatives of a range of X \* . political groupings engage in multi-party negotiations, one of the key issues with which they grapple is the nature of the new South African state, especially whether it will be federal or unitary. It is from Natal that the most strident demands for the adoption of a federal constitution emanate.

Historically the province has seen itself as 'different' to the rest of the country, and its representatives have argued that its differentness should be accommodated in various ways. From pre-Union days, calls for federalism - in opposition to a unitary state and, later, Republican status - have consistently been made by certain sectors of Natal society. The Buthelezi Commission of 1960 and the subsequent KwaZulu/Natal Inhlaba, too, reinforced the supposed distinctiveness of Natal - a distinctiveness which led to the adoption of Joint Services Boards in 1990, as opposed to Regional Services Councils (RSCs) elsewhere in the country.

Whilst by no means the only voices raised in support of federalism at the present time - the Democratic Party, for example, remains a staunch supporter of this system - it is the Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) movement which has thrust this issue in the centre of the negotiating stage. The National Party, having seemingly done an about-turn on its move towards strong centralisation, is currently advocating regionalism with 'strong federal elements',

whilst the African National Congress has published a draft discussion document on regional policy with certain original powers vested in regions. These two major political players have recently suggested that there is a degree of convergence in their positions.

Against this background, the IFP, claiming that there have been 'secret deals' between the NP and ANC, is insisting that consensus be reached about federalism before further multi-party talks can proceed. Towards this end, the IFP has produced a detailed Constitution for the State of KwaZulu/Natal.

Any future constitution will be implemented in a society in which ethnicity has been entrenched as the cornerstone of the present apartheid structures (although, of course, the ethnic gloss has been used to disguise the fundamentally racist nature of South African society). It will also be implemented in a conflict-riven society - conflict in which, although *political* in nature, ethnic variables have become inextricably entwined.

*Any future constitution will be implemented in a society in which ethnicity has been entrenched as the cornerstone of the present apartheid structures*

### Ethnic Stereotypes

Historically, the African population has been both physically and socially distanced from other groupings, particularly whites. The social distance has important implications for the nature of contemporary South African society, and for the type of political dispensations which are envisaged by various parties to the negotiation process.

If one were to extract a common denominator in the perceptions of the overwhelming majority of whites insofar as black South Africans are concerned, it would be a preoccupation with 'differentness' - the differentness of blacks from whites, and of blacks from each other (Zulu/Xhosa, for example). Such perceptions have been shaped over a long period.

It is only comparatively recently, however, that the term 'the Zulu' has become somewhat arbitrarily extended to include all those who speak the Zulu language. The

4 'Zulu nationality' has been imposed on all those to whom it has assigned identity as citizens of the 'national state' of KwaZulu

Politicians have consciously set about making explicit links between Inkatha and the Zulu, and have reinforced the image of the Zulu as a warrior nation

social and political divide between Africans living to the north and the south of the Tugela has long been recognised (van Warmelo, 1937), and recent work by revisionist historians such as Wright and Hamilton (1989) has dispelled myths about social and cultural homogeneity within the Zulu kingdom itself.

The social construction of 'the Zulu' has, in many ways, followed a similar course to that of the creation of such groupings elsewhere in the colonised world. In Natal, the foundations were laid during the 19th century with the system of indirect rule and the administration of 'customary' law through chiefs (many of whom had been newly created), as well as the standardisation and codification of the Zulu language.

The implementation of structures of apartheid post-1948 has, of course, built on, and further refined, the foundations already firmly in place. At an ideological level the policy was legitimised by *ethnos* theory, which posits an *isomorphism* between culture and political grouping (nation), and suggests that members of these groupings share certain psychic traits (Sharp, 1980). Additional factors of importance in shaping ethnic identity, such as mother-tongue education, have been introduced and, most importantly, a 'Zulu nationality' has been imposed on all those to whom it has assigned identity as citizens of the 'national state' of KwaZulu. (Inevitably, these processes have impacted upon perceptions of identity of black persons concerned).

Probably as a result of the ethnic discourse which has accompanied the constitution of the KwaZulu 'homeland' in the 1960s and 1970s, the use of the term *Zulu* has increasingly come to be associated by whites, in general, with all black persons in Natal. Perceptions have been further shaped, and stereotypes of 'the Zulu' - particularly its warrior status - reinforced by coffee table tomes, the media (television series such as *Shaka Zulu*) and a plethora of tourist attractions (e.g. Zulu villages, Shakaland).

Politicians and the apologists for government policy have consciously set about making explicit links between Inkatha and the Zulu, and have reinforced the image of the Zulu as a warrior nation. The skillful use of imagery and symbolism - which serves the purpose of both appealing to the ethnic sentiments of Zulu-speakers themselves, and reinforcing white stereotypes about 'the Zulu' and the

homogeneity of the 'Zulu nation' - is well documented (see e.g. Mare and Hamilton 1987; Harries, 1987). The rhetoric Used including the appeals to warrior blood. U)j)j the inferred isomorphism between Zulu culture and nation - bears a striking resemblance to that of classic ethnos ihL-(rv

The message that the Zulu nation and Inkatha are synonymous has consistently been preached over the years. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ceremonial surrounding events such as Shaka Day. 'invented' traditions such as the Reed" Dance, and the occasional *Imhizo* (royal gathering) called by the Zulu king. At a Shaka's Day rally held in Clermont. Durban, in 1986, a poster appealed to 'all proud Zulus' who formed a 'might;, nation" with a 'glorious heritage' to stand together in the face of enemies who did not 'want the Zulu nation to unite'. The clear message was that Zuluness was equated with Inkatha, and not with opposing political organisations.

There is little doubt that events since the unbanning of the ANC - the clear support for the ANC in Natal which features in numerous opinion polls, and is evidenced in massive attendance at marches and rallies - have challenged the perceptions of u lites about an isomorphism between Inkathia and 'the Zulus'. Increasingly, government spokespeople are pointing out that the Ibl<sup>1</sup> does not represent all Zulus - and e\en Chief Buthelezi has shifted his position in this regard. However, the Zulu/Inkatha overlap remains firmly entrenched for many whites, including recent white defectors to the IFP.

Furthermore, the image of the homogeneous Zulu nation - and, in particular, the warrior status of the **Zulus** - continues to be vigorously promoted in a number of ways, not only in the media, **hut** also through the debate around the 'traditional weapons' issue (de Haas, 1991a) and the strident call for the **Zulu** king to be present at Codesa. The recent appeal by Inkatha to form a 'Bambalha Battalion' for self-defence purposes c\okes yet again the warrior image. Appeals to an ethnic identity associated with a glorious military past may, of course, be particularly powerful (Epstein, 1978).

This, then, is the background - the vigorous efforts to promote a Zulu identity, and the simplistic stereotypes held by whites - against which we now consider the meaning of Zulu identity today. Here we summarise hundreds of interviews and

al discussions with people from  
rrtrriin backgrounds, ages and  
ljo-ecoiomic status, which were  
fined to explore understandings of  
ulure and ethnic identity.

## identity

**Predictably**, varying experiences of ethnic identity are expressed. Many people, including young men and women, describe [hein.seIves as Zulu, and explain this identity primarily in terms of the language they speak or, more rarely, because they live in KwaZulu. Many others see themselves, first and foremost, as *African orblaii* - often linking this identity to oppression. Relatively few see themselves as primarily *South African*, and exclusion from the material benefits of such a nationality is sometimes expressly mentioned.

However, the above identities are not mutually exclusive, and further exploration reveals the well-established *situational* nature of ethnic identity. It is clear that parlic palion in ceremonial rituals may impact upon personal identity in such a way as to promote feelings of ethnic solidarity or differentness; heightened ethnic awareness, for example, is reported when engaging in activities such as 'Zulu dance', or attending overtly political ceremonies such as the Shaka Day rallies.

**Predictably**, respondents also report a sense of **heightened** Zulu (or Xhosa) identity when they are with people whose language and customs differ from their own. Regional differences may also become **conspicuous** under such circumstances - and a clear conceptual divide between people who come from north and south of the Tugela River remains.

bthiic awareness is thus promoted by feelings of differentness to others - the 'symbolic construal of sensations of likeness and difference' as Carter-Bentley (1987) puts it. This differentness is not, for most people, a significant factor in their daily lives. As one middle-aged woman put 'I- when describing her own lack of awareness: 'I work with Xhosas, Sothos, ^e.. and ihey have never made me feel that I am dil lerent from them'. It is this dilfreneness, of course, which cultural L"lrepreneurs seek to exploit for their own Political ends. How successful have they "een - in what extent is there an overlap "elween ethnic and political identities in Natal 7

Our research supports the view (e.g. Bonnin, 1987) that many persons whose core identity is experienced as Zulu are impervious to attempts to woo them into the IFP camp. There are various reasons for Inkatha's lack of appeal: Firstly, there is its close relationship with the KwaZulu government: Not only is the IFP seen as 'part of the system' which places it on the side of the oppressor, but its government arm tends to administer apartheid badly. In recent years its oppressive arm, in the form of the KwaZulu police, has alienated potential supporters, as has the violence generally.

Secondly, there are those who are attracted by the IFP's appeals to Zuluness, yet are alienated by the way in which Chief Buthelezi has appeared to usurp the position historically enjoyed by the Zulu king.

As with any ethnic identity, the emotional appeal of Zuluness does not, of course, operate in a vacuum. There seems little doubt that Inkatha's success in appealing to the ethnic sentiments of many of its supporters is enhanced by its ability to dispense patronage, both through its administrative structures - jobs, housing, franchises for shops and bottle stores, etc. - and sanctioning and facilitating the operations of warlords who preside over what amount to private fiefdoms. Loyal followers and others who are drawn to attendance at rallies are undoubtedly stirred, and their pride reinforced, through the ringing appeals to Zuluness.

But appeals to ethnic identity have clearly not in themselves been able to win overwhelming support for Inkatha as a political movement. In fact, we suspect that there may even be a conscious suppression of Zulu ethnic identity on the part of many, particularly politicised youth, because of the overt association between Zuluness and Inkatha in the recent past. It seems to us quite possible that the ethnic factor could indeed, as Horowitz (1991) contends, assume more salience in the future, given the way in which the structural and ideological factors have operated - and continue to operate - to promote narrow ethnic identities.

*What part, then, does ethnic identity play in the lives of the majority of blacks in Natal?*

Under ordinary circumstances, behaviours associated with being Zulu are confined to the domestic, family domain. There is, in the Zulu language, no equivalent word for

*Inkatha's success in appealing to the ethnic sentiments of many of its supporters is enhanced by its ability to dispense patronage*

*Appeals to ethnic identity have clearly not in themselves been able to win overwhelming support for Inkatha as a political movement*

The IFP's proposed constitution for KwaZulu/Natal has little to do with federalism, and appears designed to facilitate secession

'culture' as understood by anthropologists in either its totalist or mentalist sense (Vivelo, 1978). The word culture is translated as *amasiko*, the English equivalent of which is customs. Customs surrounding the main life cycle events - particularly birth, marriage and death - remain of central importance for the overwhelming majority of Africans, the degree of importance they are accorded being influenced by factors such as class, age and religious affiliation. Whilst there is a general similarity of custom, there is also a degree of variation in the way they are observed, not only from one region to another, but from one family to another.

In ordinary daily life (i.e. when heightened awareness of differentness is not activated) other variables are of far greater significance in social interaction, and manifold cross-cutting ties based on age, gender, neighbourhood and common values (political, religious) and interests (sporting, recreational) unite people across ethnic, regional and, to a far lesser extent, racial divides. Intermarriage is common; e.g. in 1980 and 1981, 24% and 25% of statutory marriages between blacks in Durban were 'inter-ethnic' (de Haas, 1984:79).

Of far greater importance than ethnicity in daily life is the phenomenon of *class*, a pervasive feature of social interaction, especially in urban areas (and clear distinctions between 'urban' and 'rural' lifestyles are also made). In most cases class status is assigned on the basis of socio-economic variables - wealth, education and occupational prestige being, predictively, associated with high class. In urban areas, various groupings sharing a common style of dress, jargon, dance and tastes in music - such as *amaPansulas* and *Cats* - also exist, and attract people of middle-class and working-class backgrounds (de Haas, 1991b). In their lifestyles such groupings exhibit the type of values associated with 'western' or 'capitalist' society.

In other words, black South Africans are very much part of a modern industrial society. Most are caught up in the work and recreational patterns of such a society, and spend most of their lives governed by the norms and values which dominate such a society. Values and behaviours associated with ethnic identity remain generally important but usually find expression in the domestic, family-centred domain. Those who are most cut-off from what we call, for want of a better phrase, the culture of modernity, are rural migrants,

'encapsulated' in hostels which are hundreds of kilometres from their homes. However, as recent research in hostels in Durban indicates (Zulu, 1993) generalisations about hostel dwellers. [OH can be very misleading.

Such, then, is the reality against which negotiations are taking place - and against which any future constitution will be implemented. What are the implications of the 'federalism' envisaged by the IFP?

Perhaps the first point to make is that the IFP's proposed Constitution for the State of KwaZulu/Natal has little to do with federalism, and appears designed to facilitate secession. The functions of the central government are minimal, and the extensive residual powers granted to this constituent unit clearly promote the regional state's identity at the expense of a common federal nationalism (Wessels, 1992:43).

Three levels of government and a huge bureaucracy, all at the regional state level, are envisaged. The fiscal costs of the proposed structure (see box) would clearly be prohibitive, even if secession did not in fact materialise (and, as businessman Tony Ardington has argued, at a recent Idasa forum, a state which cut itself off from the rest of South Africa would not be financially viable). However, financial viability is not the only problem with this constitution. Many of the provisions suggest that such a state would, at best, be highly authoritarian.

The envisaged Judicial Commission is extremely important, since it oversees the judiciary, approves their appointments, and must authorise their removal from office. In terms of the rules set out, it is quite feasible that civil servants could well be in the majority on the body which elects this Commission. So much for the independence of the judiciary! There are a variety of other highly disturbing provisions which concern secrecy in government. For example, in the annual report (to the Judicial Commission) the Director of Public Prosecution may list cases not prosecuted because of "special agreements with the suspected party - whose name may be omitted. The constitution also appears to place political functionaries such as members of the state house above the law in many respects (Clauses 72, 74b). The electoral

The proposals promote the regional state's identity at the expense of a common federal nationalism

# THE KWAZULU/NATAL PROPOSALS

... also, too, has awesome powers, the right to summon state militia, and require private media to give political coverage where existing coverage is deemed inadequate.

As one would expect in documents emanating from the IFP, 'culture' and 'tradition' have not been overlooked. The relevant provisions are, in line with the tone of the Constitution, reactionary and retrogressive. For example, Article 13 deals with the recognition and protection of customary rules - much of which is far from clear: e.g.. "Traditional and customary rules are produced in accordance with the rules governing their production". However, what docs seem clear is that these traditional and customary rules are above the law, except in certain rather obscure circumstances involving 'individuals who do not share in such tradition or custom'. This traditional and customary law is to be collected and published by a committee of the General Assembly, together with 'affected interests'.

Then there are the tribal and customary courts (what the difference is, if any, is not clear): such courts (known as Commissioner's courts), a relic of the colonial version of indirect rule, have been phased out by the South African government. Like the religious courts they are to have concurrent jurisdiction (our italics) over 'cases and controversies ... based on the application of traditional and customary law' (Article 78b). No doubt the question of 'traditional' weapons would be one of the first dealt with in order to overturn the Supreme Court judgment against legalising the carrying of so-called cultural weapons in Natal (see de Haas, Wla). With this Constitution the IFP has made a sudden shift from its earlier advocacy of proportional representation to constituency-based politics.

Territorial control is central to the violence which is currently taking place; together with the patronage it is able to dispense, territorial control would facilitate an IFP victory in rural areas were divided into a large number of constituencies. Given the

... matters there seems little doubt that ethno-nationalism would be the basis of this state's identity. Is the prospect of such a state likely, under the conditions we have outlined above? What are the implications for the future of South Africa itself?

...  
to Sir Bhekezwe called for a referendum on his opinion. Such a move is premised on the assumption that

## SUMMARY OF DRAFT IFP CONSTITUTION

- The sovereignty of the State, which has its own flag and anthem, and which citizens have a 'sacred duty' to defend, is stressed.
- The Supreme Court of the State is the final court of appeal.
- A three-tiered government, consisting of State (the present province of Natal with its KwaZulu homeland), Regions and Municipalities is proposed.
- There are two houses at State level, the House of Delegates (sic) comprised of 350 members and a Senate composed of two members from each regional congress.
- Between 9 and 21 regions are envisaged, each with a Congress and Regional government.
- There is a huge bureaucracy and sundry Commissions, e.g. Civil Service, Electoral and Judicial.
- There is also a proliferation of courts - tribal, customary and religious - as well as military courts.
- There is a State militia which may demand compulsory service, and no federal army may be in the State without its permission.
- Taxes may not be levied by the Federal Government without the permission of the State, and there is an autonomous Central Bank of KwaZulu/Natal.

## HEAD OF STATE

- At the head of the State is a Governor who is elected by a majority of votes cast in a 'state-wide constituency election'.
- He/she may only be removed from office on grounds of treason or mental incapacity, after an absolute majority of a joint sitting of the General Assembly has authorised a Constitutional Court investigation.
- He/she represents the State and may exercise his/her powers independent of the Government. He/she has the right to veto legislative proposals (an absolute majority by the houses is needed to overturn this veto) and may, with the consent of the General Assembly, order the dissolution of Regional congresses.
- He/she appoints the President of the Bank of KwaZulu/Natal, who serves at the Governor's pleasure.
- He/she may declare a state of emergency and may require that discussion with organs of government about the Emergency be kept secret.
- He/she is Chairman of the supreme military committee, and is president of the Judicial Commission.

there appears to be a great deal of sympathy amongst whites and Indians for the IFP, and for the idea of regional autonomy - and on the fact that relatively few blacks in the region (just over 25% of a potential three million voters) are registered to vote (K. Jordaan, MP, personal communication). Since most of those who are not registered are likely to be opposed to 'homeland' government a low percentage poll would count in Inkatha's favour - both in a referendum and, if the proposals were to be implemented, in the new state.

Clearly, in the current situation in Natal - the lack of appeal which politicised Zuluness holds for most people, the polarisation, levels of violence as well as the nature of the constitution itself - any attempt to hold a referendum on it, let alone implement it, would be likely to lead to intensified violence. It goes without saying that such a state is not conducive to the building of a common South Africanism.

A brief analysis of the society, politics and economics of the Natal region demonstrates that the preconditions for federalism have not existed and do not exist

Constitutions are generally predicated either upon natural building blocks or mutually agreed upon units which in the eyes of social engineers will withstand the tests of time. The reason is to legitimate the new state in the eyes of the citizenry.

Specific preconditions have to precede a federal constitution. *Firstly*, a federal constitution is predicated upon specific communal identities or building blocks; *secondly*, communal identities should operate within a definable geographic base; and *thirdly*, either the said geographical base is economically viable, or the central political organ is willing to subsidise the federal constituents through fiscal transfers. A brief analysis of the society, politics and economics of the Natal region demonstrates that these preconditions for federalism have not existed and do not exist in the past or the present.

Firstly, KwaZulu/Natal is an artificial construct of both colonialism and apartheid. In fact the hyphenated version only appeared after the creation of the KwaZulu 'homeland' in 1970. Up until then, the operating reference to the area was the province of Natal. In a sense, proposals for the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba acknowledged this reality in the suggested name, the Province of Natal, in 1985.

Secondly, the IFP's new constitution of KwaZulu/Natal does not stipulate the boundaries of the proposed state. We can only deduce that its fundamental assumptions draw upon the existence of the Zulu ethnic unit as the main building block. If this be so, then the fundamental assumption is fraught with problems in the light of demonstrable empirical evidence. First, the violence has afflicted Natal more than any of the other geo-political regions in the country, thus belying the myth of a politically homogeneous enclave. Second, communal identities at the social level do not necessarily imply identities at the political level. While Natal is ethnically homogeneous, rifts in political culture are so serious that it has become the Lebanon of South Africa.

The proposed formulae for group membership as proposed in the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba in 1986 demonstrate the practical problems of contriving group identities. Besides the political problems of group identities, economic factors subject consociational democracy to even harder tests.

Thirdly, in South Africa political boundaries and economic capabilities do not coincide. At present none of the homelands is economically self-sufficient nor are the provinces for that matter. The uneven distribution of wealth and economic capacity in South Africa places the regions at the mercy of the central state. Any modifications to the central state in favour of the regions would entail sacrifices on the part of the economically stronger regions such as the PWV region which is the golden egg. Coincidentally, the same region makes up the ethnic melting pot where coexistence among the various segments, be these racial or economic, belie territorial separation.

If the social and not political history of the Natal region is anything to go by, tears of ethnic conflict diminish with experience. The present violence has very little to do with ethnic cleavages in spite of the pronounced allegations to this effect, the juxtaposition of individuals as groups is an integrative rather than a centrifugal effect. In Natal, townships have developed a common political culture approximating a common South Africanism rather than a specifically Natal model.

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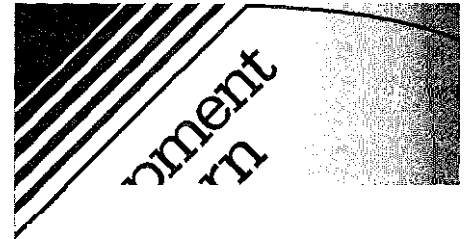
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While Natal is ethnically homogeneous, rifts in political culture are so serious that it has become the Lebanon of South Africa

M O N I T O R



Sandile Goje - Dakawa Art & Craft Project 'Violence'



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# LAAGER

What has happened since 2 February 1990 is an attempt to secure white privileges while conceding the appearance of power to the black community. The local strand of constitutional reform is the one most immediately pressing on the National Party leadership because white concern that die changes to come will affect them adversely is most intensely focused on the very human question of what will happen to their neighbourhoods: to the schools their children attend, to the prices of their houses and to the state of their amenities.

This concern has produced proposals for strong local government units, controlling their own schools, municipal services and even possibly, the police. It is not simply that whites would run their own local affairs, but that they would command resources, from an infinitely wealthier tax base, that would enable them to maintain a separate and privileged way of life. The fact that members of other races, in some numbers, might join whites in these privileged laagers would not weaken the white position.

The concerns about white control over white or white-ish neighbourhoods is likely to mean that negotiations about the federal level of government are going to be less intense and divisive. Older NP ideas about organising federal units in such a way as to maximise white influence - for instance by turning the homelands into federal units, thus leaving whites more powerful in regional states based on the present ones, have been abandoned in the face of intense opposition. The reason is clear: the local protection of the white position is much more practicable.

At Codesn. the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, it was agreed that national, regional and local authorities should be entrenched in the new

constitution, thus accepting one feature of pluralism. Although there is no agreement yet on what the powers of the regional and local authorities should be, the acceptance of the principle of the localisation of power is part of the grand design of diffusing authority to levels where it can be effectively exercised by those most likely to have their privileges affected. Certain

minority rights would receive special protection, under the less offensive label of 'community affiliation' or in relation to schools, the right of the 'parent community' to determine the 'religious and general' character of the school (Art 14, Charter of Fundamental Rights, February 1993).

There is an alternative vision of human relations that is the antithesis of this apartheid heritage. This golden thread of non-racialism found reflection in the Constitutional Guidelines of 1988 and the draft Bill of Rights of November 1990 produced by the African National Congress. The ANC's major policy document of May 1992, *Ready to Govern*, provides further detailed references to the nature of the constitutional order, the need for affirmative action, the nature of the electoral system, the role of regions, etc.

These documents propose a democratic South Africa based on one-person one-vote, a pluralist state where '...a Bill of Rights guarantees fundamental rights and freedom for all on an equal basis, where our people live in an open and tolerant society, where the organs of government are representative, competent and fair in their functioning, and where opportunities are progressively and rapidly expanded to ensure that all may live under conditions of dignity and equality' (ANC, 1988: Para 1).

These proposals reject the association of political power with race or ethnicity and they reject the protection of group rights or the representation of racial interests through political parties, because such approaches promote racial conflict rather than harmony and will not be in the ultimate interests of minorities. The ANC is committed to an active defence of democracy very much in the mode of the German Constitutional Court and which requires a commitment to combat racial, sexist or ethnic discrimination. The NP, on the other hand, accepts racial or ethnic differentiation as a given and attempts to provide a sophisticated protection of such interests in legal and constitutional forms, but freed of overt racial underpinnings. The maintenance of the status quo in discreet forms is what Albie Sachs has called 'hidden or democratic apartheid' (1990: 4).

The ANC's proposals reject the association of political power with race or ethnicity and they reject the protection of group rights

The localisation of power diffuses authority to levels where it can be effectively exercised by those most likely to have their privileges affected

The National Party's constitutional and human rights proposals would build fresh walls of privilege and power, based on race

Minority protection in legal terms has been fraught with difficulties (Whitaker, 1984; Fawcett; Palley). First, there is the problem of identification of minorities. Second, there is the issue of what particular 'rights' should be identified and given legal protection. Third, even if these rights can be identified, should the protection be an individual protection of rights which would be unassailable from any legislative or executive action or should collectivities have rights in the form of group rights?

When do minority rights become privileges? Should the South African situation, where a racial minority has usurped and retained power in security, economic and social matters, be considered as *sui generis* where the majority need the protection of the law and where the demands of reconstruction require the taking of positive and remedial action to overcome the legacy of past race rule, in one of the most unequal societies in the world?

The opposition to apartheid was posited on the basis that there was minority oppression of the majority. True minority protection is required where a discrete minority is in a position of subordination to a majority. This hardly applies to South Africa. In any event the international community, through the Human Rights Commission has established a sub-committee to draft provisions concerning the protection of minorities.

The internationally-recognised method of protecting minority rights is found in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. This provides: *In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.*

Articles of the ANC's Revised Draft Bill of Rights (May 1992) state that language, cultural and religious rights should be protected in a new Constitution. However, there is a difference of emphasis as to the extent to which the equality principle, especially that forbidding discrimination on the ground of race, should apply to the exercise of these rights. In other words, should the right to associate allow persons the right to exclude others from participation in activities associated with schooling, sports, hospitals, etc.?

The National Party's constitutional and human rights proposals would build fresh walls of privilege and power, based on race and allow institutions which **won't** be immune from legal intervention. **In terms of** structures of government, under the -unsc of minority protection and 'no **domination** by any group', approaches and **devices** are being proposed to frustrate majority **rule**.

The most clearly articulated positions are found in the NP's proposals for a **new** democratic South Africa (*Constitutional Rule in a Participatory Democracy*) of September 1991 and the government's proposals on a Charter of Fundamental Rights of February 1993.

The central philosophical approach to all governmental structures rests on **what** termed 'participatory democracy', a **system** of government at national and regional levels in 'which a number of parties effectively participate and in which power-sharing therefore takes place, as contrasted to the Westminster model in which one party exclusively enjoys **power**' (1991:8).

The rationale provided by the NP for conflating a multi-party democracy into a multi-party government is that '[participatory democracy takes into account the diversity of South African society and the reality of the existence of a multiplicity of socio-economic and cultural interest groups'. How do these **groups** arise? The answer provided is that **people naturally and voluntarily associate with one another because they have some Uml <>J interest in common** (my emphasis). Formerly, it seemed that 'race and **colour**' provided the basis on which **groups may** be 'defined for purposes of political participation'; latterly, in the **constitutional** sphere, '... the political party is the **most** effective means of furthering the **interests** of such groups' (1991:9).

The Lower House of Parliament will be elected by proportional representation **but** the Second House (as these proposals **style** it) will be constituted on a unique **basis**. An equal number of seats will be allocated to each region. However, one party **may not**, as in the United States, win all the **seats** from one region. Each political party which has gained a specific amount of **support** in the election in the region's legislative **body** will be allocated an equal number of the seats for that region in the Second **House**. This is a further attack on the majority

Under the guise of minority protection and 'no domination by any group', approaches and devices are being proposed to frustrate majority rule

and as the Second House has effectively the same power, it is proposed, as the Lower House, equality of representation is really weighting the favour of losing parties.

The executive authority, in other words, the presidency, will be compulsorily (instituted on a multi-party basis. The leaders of the major parties shall be entitled to participate in a collectivity known as the presidency. The chairmanship may rotate among the members on an annual basis. There is no question of a President symbolising the emergent nationhood of a non-racial South Africa. Vitally, all decisions of the Presidency must be taken by consensus, thus effectively providing a veto on all executive functions.

**This is a** sure constitutional recipe for the maintenance of the status quo. It is not merely a negotiating gambit. The government has attempted at Codesa to obtain support for the 'principle' of power-sharing as a constitutional principle which will bind the Constituent Assembly when it undertakes the task of drafting the constitution for a free South Africa.

It was agreed by the Codesa parties that the powers of the regions would be constitutionally entrenched and that a special majority would be required for any change in the powers, structure and competence of regional government. The government insists, though, that the principles of 'participatory democracy' and power-sharing for a number of political parties and 'measures for effective minority protection' must also be built into the regional system.

**At the local government level - whose powers must be autonomous, presumably meaning 'not delegated' - participatory democracy '... gains a particular meaning'. Although there is a genuflection in the direction of a non-racial local authority, property qualifications through ownership of property, leases and ratepayers, is countenanced and special decision-making procedures, such as increased majority votes in the city council, in respect of unidentified but 'sensitive' matters are not ruled out.**

It is at the local level that the ethnic version of self-determination is to be practised through the provision of a Neighbourhood Council, over a geographically-determined area, on a voluntary basis, whatever this may mean. Such a Council may be elected by residents of a neighbourhood and

since the group areas legislation has effectively determined who lives where in South Africa, these areas will in effect constitute councils with an exclusive racial composition.

Significantly, the government is silent on whether decision-making in these Councils will be by consensus or whether there will be 'power-sharing'. In fact, the assumption is that the Neighbourhood Council may be the only governmental structure which may arrive at decisions by majority vote!

Their powers, therefore, will be very extensive including that well-known South Africa governmental function, the 'regulation of norms and standards' for the residential environment, licences and permits in regard to use of property (presumably trenching on multi-occupation and maximum occupation numbers), provision of commercial facilities, security matters and civil protection and, possibly, education and welfare.

In this way, the fruits of apartheid will be allowed to be retained and through control over licences for occupation, a discreet form of apartheid will be maintained. This is done in the name of guaranteeing self-determination for local communities.

It is one of the great ironies of our country that within a space of four years, restrictions on the competence of the legislature and the executive have been so readily accepted. This has occurred firstly through the agreement on the need for a written constitution which will be the fundamental law of the land and not easily amendable and, secondly, through the general acceptance of the need for identifying and protecting basic rights through a Bill of Rights which would be enforced by an independent and representative judiciary.

The Law Commission was charged with the duty to provide new insights on this issue, which it duly did through its two reports (Working Paper No 25, 1989; Interim Report, 1991). At Codesa in 1992, the government insisted that there ought to be an interim Bill of Rights while the Constituent Assembly was drafting the constitution. However, it became obvious that the interim Bill of Rights was to be part of an interim constitution. The incongruity and illogicality of an interim Bill of Rights was not adverted to.

*The government has attempted at Codesa to obtain support for the principle of power-sharing as a constitutional principle which will bind the Constituent Assembly*

*It is at the local level that the ethnic version of self-determination is to be practised through the provision of a Neighbourhood Council*

*The discreet recognition in legal terms of ethnicity in a future constitution will perpetuate the idea that our cleavages are so basic that all we can do is to entrench them*

The government's Charter of Fundamental Rights of 1993 is a deeply flawed document and has been heavily criticised for its omissions and for its general approach. While subscribing to the sentiment that it includes internationally accepted provisions concerning the rights which will be protected, it really provides National Party solutions to what it considers to be particularly South African problems.

First, the Charter will only regulate relations between public power and private individuals viz., the state and individuals. It will not be a direct source of rights for individuals in disputes with other individuals so that conflicts with employers, private schools, private hospitals, etc. will be excluded. This restriction of the ambit of the Charter, together with the peculiarly white South African version of free association, will enable the privatisation of apartheid by putting beyond the constitutional protection a whole range of transactions.

While private education is not even referred to in the Charter, there is a significant provision concerning state-aided education. Every state-aided tertiary educational institution shall have the right to determine the medium of instruction and the religious and general character of such educational institutions. In addition, the parent community of every state or state-aided school shall have the right to determine the medium of instruction and *the religious and general character of the school* (Article 14(4) (a) and (b): my emphasis).

There is no precedent for such a human right anywhere. On the contrary, it will put beyond judicial scrutiny 'norms and standards' based on racial factors which should have no place in such a document.

There is a widely drawn and unique provision concerned with 'participation in the economy'. The provisions relating to private property are ultra-rigid and ignore any mechanism to address the dispossession of property, especially land. Taxation policy which makes unreasonable inroads on the enjoyment, use or value of property is forbidden.

The most significant provision in the Charter is the provision relating to *free association*. (This is not a term of art!) In human rights documents, this is referred to as the right to association. 'Free association' is redolent of the concept of 'self-determination' of social groups which, in the absence of the application of the

non-discrimination clause, will enable walls of racial privilege to be built around nearly all social institutions. Most countries have gone through the difficult process of outlawing or combating racial, ethnic or gender discrimination by employers, clubs, schools and hospitals. In the South African government's version of fundamental rights, such discrimination will enjoy constitutional protection by being beyond the reach of the courts.

#### In

Our political culture has emphasised what divides people, be it our ethnic origins or antecedents, skin colour and so on. This has been the bane of South African politics and the source of our ills.

Far from de-emphasising ethnicity and recognising that individuals have multi-faceted loyalties and identities - class, professional, religious, etc. - the government's strategy is to ensure that multi-ethnic rule ('power-sharing') is opposed to majority rule, even with all the restrictions on the power of the majority which proportional representation, a Bill of Rights, a Constitutional Court and regionalism will entail. The success of apartheid in nurturing and strengthening ethnicity cannot be willed away and the constitutional order must protect, therefore, the factors such as language, religion and culture associated with identity.

However, there can, in the government's paradigm, be no attempt at nation-building as the constitution will reify cultural differences as immutable factors and ethnicity is accepted as a constant feature. The government's approach attempts to portray ethnicity, in the guise of 'community interests' as providing the '... most natural, stable basis for national community. By sanctifying ethnicity, such thinking tends to fortify apartheid attitudes and institutions during this critical transition when the overweening need is to establish the mechanism for their dismantlement' (Nixon, 1993: 7).

The discreet recognition in legal terms, directly or indirectly, of ethnicity and differentiation in a future constitutional arrangement will perpetuate the idea that our cleavages are so basic that all we can do is to entrench them. Acknowledgement of the wrongs of the past is vitally necessary in order to build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist society, freed of the virus of racialism and ethnicity. Q88

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*Where should the shape of the future local government system be decided? Not so long ago, one's answer to this question would automatically indicate your place on the political spectrum. If you insisted that cities and towns should work out their own 'local option', you were likely to represent the establishment view. If you demanded a system negotiated at the national level, you would fall in the 'liberation' camp. The local option in our political life has become more complicated of late.*

**f**he Minister of Local Government, Tertius Delpont, repeatedly points out these days that a new local government system must be negotiated nationally at the multiparty constitutional forum. He was also party to the establishment of the National Local Government Forum; while this body is not supposed to negotiate a new local constitutional system, it is a partial recognition that national agreement on local government issues is necessary. The African National Congress (ANC) and the SA National Civic Organisation (SANCO) also remain formally opposed to local constitutional negotiations.

Nevertheless, pressure for a local say over the local government future remains. Now, however, the context is different. And this means that the demand is no longer necessarily a conservative one: indeed, some of its proponents favour more substantial change than the government, which wants a national agreement.

The chief proponents of a local role are the country's seven major cities - Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Pietermaritzburg. They have formed a Major Cities Association (MCA), whose chief rationale is a desire to prevent their interests being ignored by national actors on both sides.

Initially, it was a unilateral move by the government which prompted the MCA's formation - the then Minister of Local Government, Leon Wessels, attempted to invite white municipalities to merge administrations with black local authorities. MCA members echoed ANC and SANCO rhetoric by insisting that Wessels was

trying to 'unilaterally restructure' local government, to impose change without consultation. But they also aired complaints which suggested that they were chiefly concerned to defend their and their ratepayers' immediate interests. They argued that the plan might push rates up by 250%. MCA chairman Ian Davidson (who chairs Johannesburg's management committee) complained that the government also planned to deprive municipalities of their electricity supply powers, a key revenue earner (*Business Day*, 24/9/92). Since then, the terrain has shifted - and so too has the focus of the MCA's concern.

A partial rapprochement between the government and the civic movement culminated in the formation of the National Local Government Forum, a move which enjoyed ANC backing. While the MCA has not publicly criticised the forum, its members are as worried about the prospect that it might impose decisions on them as they were when Wessels tried to do this. They sought and were granted representation on the forum - the MCA is represented by four of the forum's 50 members - which they hope to use to press their concerns.

At first glance, this may seem like another attempt by established interests to limit change which affects their and their constituency's power and pockets. The MCA's seven members do, after all, represent whites only and they are clearly worried about the effect change may have on ratepayers: Johannesburg has agreed to take over control of services in Soweto only if it does not have to pay the tab for the township's administration.

The reality is more complex. While the municipalities are clearly concerned to protect their interests, they no longer define these as those of white ratepayers alone.

Perhaps the clearest example is a recent, unpublicised, MCA decision to endorse unanimously 'strong metropolitan government'. MCA members insist that this means that all seven cities, including conservative ones such as Pretoria and Bloemfontein, have endorsed the principle that metropole-wide authorities, elected by black majorities, will enjoy the power to take decisions which will directly affect the

*While the municipalities are clearly concerned to protect their interests, they no longer define these as those of white ratepayers alone*

*Metropole-wide authorities, elected by black majorities, will take decisions which will directly affect the interests of white ratepayers*

The metropolitan authority's primary concern would be to coordinate crucial development policies, not to administer the metropole

interests of white ratepayers (Interview, MCA member, February 1993).

It is, of course, conceivable that this term means one thing to councils in which liberals hold a majority, another to those in which conservatives do. 'Strong metropolitan government' is still a fairly vague term. But one member of the Major Cities Association has spelled out its vision of what this would mean.

## pc

Cape Town recently became the first 'white' municipality to adopt a detailed local government proposal (Cape Town City Council, *Vision 2000*, April 1993). Cape Town advocates a metropolitan authority which would be elected by all adults. It would be the 'principal taxing authority' in the metropole and would also enjoy power over land use, a potentially sensitive area.

To be sure, the plan does not propose to relegate the council's current white voters to a voiceless minority. 'Primary local authorities' will continue to exist and to enjoy most of the powers they currently wield. They would also be able to offer superior services to residents than those offered by less affluent councils. The metropolitan authority's primary concern would be to 'coordinate crucial development policies', not to administer the metropole.

So the plan does allow the council and its traditional voters a continued existence and a high degree of influence within the more affluent part of the city.

But Cape Town's proposal is far closer to 'liberation' demands than smaller Cape municipalities would like to go - and, crucially, much closer to them than the government's own proposals. The key here is the council's support for unqualified universal franchise which, in the Cape, entails abolishing the province's property-based vote and its extra vote for companies (Cape ordinances extend the white municipal franchise only to owners and occupiers of property and their spouses. 'Fictitious persons' - ratepaying organisations such as companies - also enjoy a vote). Many of the province's smaller municipalities, however, expressed enthusiasm for retaining the property vote at the Cape Province Municipal Association Congress held in April.

More importantly, Minister Delport<sup>1</sup> revealed government proposals v. hiecl mnk Cape Town's seem like a 'people's charter'. These provide for two voters' rolls, one for property owners, the other for individuals: each would elect half the councillors in each local authority, thus giving owners an effective veto (*Financial Mail*, 30/4/93).

Rejection of this idea is not restricted to Cape Town. Johannesburg is a supporter of the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber's local transition plan which provides for a universal franchise, equal vote of equal value, interim metropolitan authority (*The Star*, 1(i/1 IA)2).

So, while some in the 'liberation' camp might object to aspects of the major cities' constitutional visions - and the cities themselves might differ over them - they are not concerned to secure a new constitutional system which will be more conservative than that bargained at the national level: indeed, some of their preferred options might be more favourable to 'liberation' concerns than those which might emerge nationally. Nor are the more 'liberal' major cities necessarily eager to thwart socio-economic change.

Cape Town deputy mayor Clive Keegan recently endorsed low-cost housing development in his council's bailiwick: among the options he floated were allowing the subdivision of suburban stands to encourage higher population densities in the suburbs and building low-cost homes on vacant inner-city land. He also suggested that, since the price of inner-city land is high, there might be a need to ensure that it was acquired at lower than market value (*Housing SA*, March, 1993). a suggestion which would elicit how is of outrage if proposed by an ANC economic planner. Johannesburg has already changed its bylaws to allow subdivisions and has expressed some interest in low-cost housing within its traditional boundaries.

All this contrasts rather sharply with the government's plan - part of Delport's proposal - to establish 'ward councils' which would allow the affluent to set standards which would exclude lower-income groups from their areas.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, some MCA members may not be expressing the local government's vision of white voters alone. The most obvious example here is Johannesburg which is a member of the Metropolitan Chamber. It

The Wits local transition plan provides for a universal franchise, equal vote of equal value, interim metropolitan authority

... | transition model to which it has  
l(Ciil) itself is not its alone - it enjoys  
com"rii" support of civic associations who are  
ihcsupp ort of civic associations who are  
part) lo ilie Chamber.

## ding

**This** raises the most potentially important  
• **snccf of** some MCA reservations about an  
• nproach which confines local government  
foliation to the national level.

Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth are party  
10 relatively advanced local negotiation  
professes which include the civics (in  
Johannesburg) and the ANC (in Port  
**Kli/abcth**) as key actors. Other MCA  
**members** such as Pretoria and  
**pieiennuritzburg** have established forums in  
**which they** seek to negotiate the future with  
**civics or** 'liberation' movements.

MCA municipalities engaged in these  
**processes** say they do not deny that national  
**negotiators** will and should determine the  
**outlines** of a new local government system -  
**indeed**, the Metropolitan Chamber's  
**transition** plan explicitly recognises this.  
**But the\** argue that local forums have  
**provided** the contending interests in their  
**locality** with a means of working out  
**systems**, within national guidelines,  
**appropriate** to their needs.

**The** forums also, they add, provide a means  
**of building** relationships and common  
approaches to issues such as development.  
**This** may be crucial to the success of a new  
**local order**, whatever the actual shape  
**agreed** by national negotiators, since, in any  
concci\ able system, establishment and  
**majority** interests will have to find ways of  
**living w**ith each other. It is this, they fear,  
**which** n may be stymied by the exclusive  
**stress** on national negotiations. The most  
immediate effect may be to ensure that any  
agreements which the parties do reach at  
**the** local level will be blocked by the  
**national** actors - Delporfs local government  
department and the national civic.

This is not an outlandish fear. Both  
Delporfs department and SANCO are  
enthusiastic centralisers. The former, of  
course, tried to impose the amalgamation  
Plan which prompted the MCA's formation;  
Delporfs recently expressed an interest in  
again forcing municipalities to amalgamate.  
The latter has adopted a constitution which,  
'n the view of some critics, seeks to  
obliterate the autonomy of local civic  
associations (see Ben Jacobs, 'Heading for  
Disaster?', *Work In Progress*, December

1992). Neither show any great sympathy for  
local initiatives which might undercut their  
influence.

Nor will the MCA's presence on the local  
government forum necessarily ensure that  
proposals thrashed out at forums such as the  
Metropolitan Chamber will have any  
influence over the new local system, since  
it seems increasingly likely that the shape  
of the new system will indeed be decided  
not here, but by multi-party negotiators at  
the World Trade Centre.

The local government forum has agreed  
that decisions at the constitutional forum  
will automatically override its own where  
they conflict. And Delporfs, who is under  
fire because the local government forum is  
seen by critics to be unrepresentative  
(primarily because SANCO is the only  
party representing the disenfranchised), has  
begun stressing that it will not even  
negotiate interim constitutional  
arrangements, let alone final ones  
(*Citizen*, 23/4/93).

The new system could therefore, be agreed  
in a forum where the major cities have no  
prospect of gaining representation. But who  
is being denied influence? The country's  
metropolises or their white minority? That,  
of course, depends on whether civics or  
local ANC branches who are party to  
forums share their white municipal  
bargaining partners' concern to shape an  
important part of their local future.

There is no definitive answer; these parties  
are firm members of the ANC alliance and  
are unlikely to challenge ANC and SANCO  
strategy or policy publicly. But there is  
some evidence that, in Johannesburg at  
least, civics are eager to press ahead with  
local progress towards non-racial municipal  
government.

Shortly after the assassination of Chris  
Hani, Cas Coovadia, a key Civic  
Associations of Johannesburg delegate at  
the Chamber, delivered an impassioned  
speech in which he urged it to respond to  
grassroots impatience in the wake of the  
killing by pressing ahead with its transition  
plan. Specifically, he wanted it to 'stop  
tinkering' with the existing system and to  
introduce a transitional municipal executive  
which would include civics and would  
assume some of the powers of existing local  
authorities (*The Star*, 22/4/93).

Coovadia's plea was clothed as a demand  
that the establishment speed up change. But  
its effect was, of course, to urge that the

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*At least some major cities, across racial and ideological barriers, have developed a common interest in pressing ahead with change ahead of a national agreement*

parties hasten implementation of a constitutional process agreed at the local, not the national, level. If Coovadia's speech does indeed indicate that civics as well as white municipalities in the major cities want to press ahead, the context of the 'national versus local' debate changes dramatically.

The issue would no longer be whether conservative local authorities are to be allowed to thwart change. It would be that the key contending interests in at least some major cities, across racial and ideological barriers, have developed a common interest in pressing ahead with change ahead of a national agreement.

The key point is that the evidence suggests that agreements reached in the major cities may well be closer to 'liberation' aspirations and far more capable of softening local conflicts than those struck at the national multi-party forum.

Local politics, on both sides of the divide, is more developed in the major cities than in other localities. 'White' local authorities may be just as concerned to protect their constituents' interests in the metropolises as they are in smaller towns. But they are also far more acutely aware that this can only be achieved if genuine compromises are made, rather than by imposing the continuing dominance of established interests. At least part of the reason is that civic associations in the large cities are far stronger than those elsewhere. For a start, they have far greater access to technical and strategic information. They too are, therefore, more capable of negotiating workable agreements.

The result is that, while large city negotiation processes are not without their problems, they seem far more capable of yielding constitutional and socio-economic approaches which are viable because they provide realistic compromises between established interests and majority demands. The conflicts in these metropolises are less intractable, the prospects for political 'give and take' far greater. And the outcome may well be - within obvious limits - one in which the contending actors find common interests which elude them elsewhere, thus softening the edge of conflict during the transition to a new order.

It seems unlikely that national negotiations will produce comparable outcomes, if only

because government negotiators will have to take notice of the concerns of more 'conservative municipalities, a burden which individual metropolitan 'white' local authorities do not share.

Certainly, ANC and perhaps PAC negotiators at the national level are unlikely to compromise on issues such as universal franchise or to concede property votes. But the likeliest outcome of the national bargaining is that it will produce a set of broad 'baseline' principles rather than a detailed system. And the principles negotiators do agree are likely to be those long since agreed in the metropolitan forums.

The effect of an attempt to freeze change in the large cities may, therefore, not lie to prevent more conservative outcomes - the original intention of opposition to 'local option' - but to block attempts to move beyond the minimum conditions likely to be agreed at the national level.

This must be placed in perspective. National negotiators in the 'liberation' camp are unlikely to agree to the adoption of new municipal constitutions, however non-racial and forward-looking they may be. The obvious reason is that, if they agree to these constitutions, they have no valid reason to reject others emerging from areas in which bargaining has been less advanced and whose proposals may not, therefore, meet the minimum standards likely to be agreed nationally.

But they are also unlikely to be asked to approve local constitutions. Major city negotiators are aware that the time for final constitutions has not yet come; at issue is whether they should be able to conclude temporary arrangements which could, in principle, be undone later.

Finally, there is one important possible objection to allowing major city negotiations greater leeway. This **would** accept that political processes **in these** areas are indeed more advanced than elsewhere. It would argue against creating **relative** islands of accommodation and **progress in** the rarefied atmosphere of the **metropolis** while harsher, more adversarial, **conditions** are allowed to persist elsewhere.

But there is no reason why success **stories** in the metropolises would reduce prospects for accommodation outside them. On the contrary, they might provide **models which** would hasten, rather than retard, **progress in** more intractable localities. ffi?3£\

*These agreements may well be closer to liberation aspirations and far more capable of softening local conflicts*





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*No debate has been generated around the question of the long-term influence of the National Peace Accord (NPA), and Local Peace Committees (LPCs) in particular, on the democratisation process in South Africa. Moreover, the activities of what is a unique partnership between various competing bodies in a divided society has not been recorded. What follows is an attempt to remedy the lacuna in the literature.*

/I uch criticism has been levelled IT J. against the Local Peace Committees (LPOs) and their effectiveness. Many of **these** criticisms are unjustified given the **structural** constraints within which local **peace** bodies operate. Indeed, LPCs have **sometimes** made surprising gains under **difficult** conditions. This, it is suggested, **may** bode well for local-level development **initiatives** and electoral monitoring. For the **latter** process to succeed, however, LPCs **must work** towards the institutionalisation **of the** peace processes at the local level.

The provisions of chapter seven of the National Peace Accord (NPA), signed on 14 September 1992, allow for the establishment of a National Peace Secretariat whose function is primarily 'to establish and coordinate Regional Dispute Resolution Committees (RDRCs) and thereby Local [Peace] Committees'. As proscribed by the Accord, RDRCs have been established in eleven regions which spun the country. These are as follows: western, northern and eastern Cape, Bnrder/Ciskei, Free State, Natal/KwaZulu, eastern, western, northern and far northern Transvaal. Bach RDRC consists of at least members drawn from political ""ganisations, churches, business, trade unions, local and tribal authorities and the security forces. Day-to-day matters are usually dealt with by an elected executive council.

'ic I unctions of RDRCs are wide-ranging and include 'attending to any matter Iferred to it by the [Local Peace "iiiiinteel, the National Peace Secretariat 'lie [Goldstone] Commission'; 'guiding'

and monitoring local and other peace initiatives; and, identifying communities within which LPCs should be established.

While both national and regional NPA structures have received widespread attention, it is Local Peace Committees which are designed to be the cutting edge of the peace process. They aim to bring divergent parties together at the micro-level in violence-torn communities across the country in order to create trust and to foster reconciliation. They attempt to involve as many local bodies - including business, church and local government groups - as possible. Thus, chapter seven of the Accord states that '[LPCs] will gain their legitimacy by representing the people and communities they are designed to serve'.

Both regional and local committees aim to settle disputes by negotiating with the parties concerned and/or consulting with the relevant authorities in any area to prevent violence and intimidation. They liaise with local police and magistrates on matters concerning the prevention of violence, the holding of rallies, marches and gatherings and the subsequent monitoring of these events. At the moment, 87 LPCs are operating country-wide.

In the belief that violence has its roots in conditions of dire poverty, local structures are also intended to facilitate development and economic empowerment at grassroots level. Indeed, the National Peace Committee chairman, John Hall, has argued that the strong emphasis on dispute resolution carried out by local and regional peace committees is essentially misdirected: '[LPCs] should be peace and development committees, with greater emphasis on development... the over-arching goal is development, job creation and [the] recovery of [local] mini economies' (*Financial Mail*, 9/3/93).

*The aims of LPCs then are primarily threefold:*

- ® First, to bring local parties together to foster cooperation and a 'culture of tolerance';
- ® second, to establish conditions for and monitor public gatherings which have the potential for violence; and,
- ® third, to ensure that development initiatives are carried out at local level.

*LPCs aim to bring divergent parties together at the micro-level in violence-torn communities in order to create trust and to foster reconciliation*

*Local peace structures are also intended to facilitate development and economic empowerment at grassroots level*

*Peace structures established when warring parties are more committed to violence than peace may taint any agreement from the beginning*

Neither the National Peace Accord nor its structures seem to have drastically reduced internecine conflict in 1992 or 1993. Indeed, the signing of the NPA itself engendered a spiral of violence in late 1991 with another substantial increase in conflict fatalities in mid-1992. Why is this so?

For one, it was unrealistic to expect an Accord, concluded at the national level, to immediately bring peace to local communities. Although theoretically meant to preempt violence, LPCs are often set up only as a reactive measure after substantial violence has already occurred. It may take months to break down mutual suspicion to bring the parties together and discuss the formation of a local body and weeks before it is actually constituted.

What remains crucial, in this regard, is timing. Peace structures established when warring parties are more committed to violence than peace may taint any agreement from the beginning. Mediation and conflict prevention, work best early, right after the first flare of the conflict and as a simple stalemate sets in. Otherwise, there is the danger that parties become accustomed to continuing conflict and may even find it useful: many unrelated decisions and postponements can and have been justified by ongoing violence.

Notwithstanding this, the operational success of the NPA has been difficult to measure at the local level as there exists no objective standard. We simply cannot know what the scale of violence would have been. Moreover, arguments that suggest that even though the Accord has not halted violence altogether, it has had an important, positive influence on political culture in South Africa are equally subjective and troublesome to pin down. Tentative findings, however, suggest that many LPCs have made a substantial difference on the ground.

United Nations and other observer groups have also acted to increase the legitimacy of local structures while promoting accountability from the parties present. Criticisms levelled at UN representatives are unfounded. Far from being gullible and inexperienced, UN observers have played their role skillfully, never seeking to control the meetings but encouraging parties to come to their own decisions and solutions. This is directly within the UN observers' brief which is to provide support to the processes and structures of the NPA.

Indeed, intervention by international observers has prompted conflict involvements in a number of cases. Certain parties to the Accord, however, continue to feel threatened by international involvement. Thus, it is important that international observers do not overplay their hand.

While international monitors have in certain areas borne the brunt of monitoring, this has changed over time as regional and local structures recruit voluntary and permanent personnel. Effective monitoring is now carried out at most mass gatherings and violence has undoubtedly been avoided on a number of occasions. Ironically, an effective on-the-ground Peace Accord presence may have caused the nature of the violence itself to change over time. Conflict now seldom involves large groups of people or entire communities. Instead, perpetrators of violence have been forced underground. Hit-and-run attacks, isolated revenge killings and assassinations have now become common.

Notwithstanding this, LPCs on the Keel Natal and elsewhere have scored a number of successes. Local structures, for example, in the Vosloorus, Benoni, Alexandra, Germiston, Phalaborwa, Empangeni, Pietermaritzburg, George and Uitenhage areas are reputed to be functioning well. Generally, LPCs have for the first time gathered under the same roof parties of various and conflicting political affiliations. Even local Conservative Party town councils have participated, despite the hostility of the national leadership of the party to the Accord, as they perceive that local-level cooperation may foster growth and development in ailing rural towns. Violence because of its multi-causal roots, has ensured that a large number of issues have been brought under the spotlight at LPC meetings. Indeed, committees have resolved a considerable number of diverse issues including taxi wars in the western Cape, consumer boycotts in Pietersburg and Phalaborwa and squatter issues and hospital strikes in the Transvaal.

Development initiatives generated by UN are generally more difficult to trace. Experience, however, suggests that the majority of past development initiatives, although important, are mainly short-term in nature. Installation of water points by local industrial concerns, the making available of venues for school examinations, *ad hoc* feeding schemes and makeshift shelter provision for refugees from violence-torn areas have been carried out through the peace committees.

*There is the danger that parties become accustomed to continuing conflict and may even find it useful*

The (i) ahamstown Local Peace Committee •jliistiates the diversity of issues •onfronting local peace structures, problems relating to inadequate policing, service provision, opposition to rates increases, the poor quality of municipal water. church disputes, taxi disputes, gra/i<sup>11</sup> cattle on municipal commonage, forcedremovals and civic municipal disagreements have been resolved (Midgley, 1993). The Grahamstown LPC is not at\pical, however, and this expansion of issues" may push LPGs into a position of some importance in dismantling the legacy of apartheid at the local-level. Specifically, il lays the foundation for increased cooperation between the 'twin towns' of apartheid planning.

At a regional level, the most notable long-term development achieved has been the "identification and subsequent upgrading of fifty hostels falling under the Witvatersrand/Vaal Regional Dispute Resolution Committee. At a central level, a national executive sub-committee falling under the National Peace Committee has been established to deal with socio-economic development. The intention in the long- to medium-term seems to be the creation of a full-time reconstruction body to work alongside regional and local peace committees.

Understandably, however, the immediacy and ferocity of the violence concentrated all efforts at resolving crucial problems as they arose at the local-level. Hall's call for a shift from negotiation and facilitation to development initiatives (op cit) may thus be premature. While it is true that structural inequalities continue to feed violence, development projects will be impossible to carry out in violence-torn communities. Development initiatives themselves will be in danger if introduced in communities where one party is seen to benefit over the other, [n turn, of course, the very lack of development may promote further violence.

In addition, Local Peace Committees are negotiating with and representing constantly shifting populations. Recent work, for example, shows a continuous jnuvenient of people in and out of the 'Jiirban Functional Region. Moreover, the violence has created its own massive Population shifts, estimated at one million People over the last ten years (Sunday 6/9/92). These in turn often create th<sup>r</sup> k<sup>i</sup> violent conflicts while increasing the number of LPCs to provide housing and maintenance for those displaced by conflict.

The capacity of local peace structures should not then be exaggerated. They cannot alone resolve severe economic inequalities generated over years of differential access to resources. What is clear, however, is that while they can resolve community and political conflict to make development possible, they can also be the framework within which development initiatives are generated and mediated. It is here that LPCs should attempt to emphasise the common aims of all the participating groups.

## Li

While many of the issues that fuel violence are specific to local-level actors, many of the solutions are beyond the scope of individual LPCs. Police, local government and administrative reform, for example, can only be carried out at the national level. These constitute what two observers have termed 'bleeding wounds' which may not prevent the LPC from functioning altogether, but provide continual points of contention (Pretorius and Storey, IMSSA seminar, 1992). In Bmntville near Mooi River, for example, the issue of local government representation remains a stumbling block which can only be resolved at a higher level. In effect, this has generated an ambivalent relationship between LPCs and the regional and national structures of the Peace Accord.

Encouraged to search for local-level solutions independent of nationally determined relationships, LPCs have been hamstrung from the beginning. At the same time, if national reforms are successful, many of the roles that LPCs play may become superfluous. Thus, while local peace structures remain the cutting edge of the Peace Accord, they do not constitute the shaft, nor do they have the ability to swing the axe.

The oft quoted example of Mpumalanga in Natal as representative of a local-level agreement free from restrictions of regional and national influences is misleading. While the Mpumalanga peace accords were successful as they took into account local conditions and grievances, outside development funding, regional and national factors had a significant impact on subsequent levels of violence. While local-level peace agreements may and should be unique, the continued existence of longer term factors conducive to continued violence or resolution are often determined elsewhere.

*Violence because of its multi-causal roots, has ensured that a large number of issues have been brought under the spotlight at LPC meetings*

*Committees have resolved a considerable number of diverse issues including taxi wars, consumer boycotts, squatter issues and hospital strikes*

*Local organisations, weakened by political oppression and violence, lack the resources and commitment to implement the Accord*

Local organisations, weakened by political oppression and violence, lack the resources and commitment to implement the Accord. At the height of the conflict - in the midst of cycles of attack and counter-attack - many community leaders simply did not possess the authority to call off their followers. Those that did found their lives endangered by an unpleasant spate of murders of local community leaders who openly supported the peace process. The deaths of IFP leader Winnington Sabelo in Umlazi and ANC leader S'khumbuzo Ngwena in Pietermaritzburg are cases in point (Collins in Minnaar, 1992). Far from promoting political mobilisation, violence has led to the breakdown of political organisation, often exacerbating the community leadership divide. Both the ANC and IFP have lost substantial numbers of middle and local-level leadership, leaving an organisational vacuum.

In any event, finding willing and competent representatives at the local-level has proved to be difficult. Community leaders are often unsure of the committees' purposes, powers and prospects and are reluctant to be drawn into cooperation with rival political forces for fear of undermining their own fragile political legitimacy. In communities which suffer from socio-economic deprivation, political alignments are often vulnerable to dislocations, coups and power plays (Nossel and Shaer, 1992).

*Both the ANC and IFP have lost substantial numbers of middle and local-level leadership, leaving an organisational vacuum*

But what of those people not represented on Peace Committees at all? Refugees from conflict, for example, being unorganised politically, often have no individual representative in LPC meetings. This is potentially serious as these people, mainly woman and children, are often in desperate need of assistance. In many instances, those displaced by the conflict have moved some distance away and are no longer in the 'jurisdictional' area of the LPC. The effects of violence then are not isolated to communities in which they occur and there may be a need for adjacent LPCs to cooperate more fully (e.g. the LPCs in Mooi River and Escourt).

Refugees are not the only parties which are not represented on local peace structures. The interests of township youth, the unemployed and the dispossessed, of whichever organisation, may change over time dependent on the balance of power in a particular area. If one side is perceived as being weaker, fighting may continue regardless of any peace initiative. There also appears to be a gap in certain instances between on-the-ground membership,

participants in the violence and local leadership. Intra-organisational inlinhtiin, particularly in Natal, is not uncommon.<sup>16</sup> adding a new dimension to conflict resolution at the local-level.

In addition, as noted earlier, violence is taking on the sinister undertones of »uerilla<sub>a</sub> attack and counter attack. This **makes ihe** ' task of LPCs indefinitely more **difficult**, since in most cases the perpetrators of such conflict are unknown and may have **no** contact with or representation at the meeting at all. They, however, ha\ c a **great** capacity for disrupting any peace **that** is negotiated. Criminal gangs who **ma\ claim** allegiance to either party or only **to** themselves, hired gunmen and unscrupulous members of the security forces have acted in the past to derail **peace** initiatives. While evidence of 'Third **Force**' involvement is growing, it seems **likely**, that rather than a coordinated conspiracy, processes of destabilisation emanate **from** not one but many groups both within and outside of the security establishment.

Finally, even when parties to the peace process represent clearly definable organisations their jurisdictions are by no means clear. While LPCs are committed to the long-term upgrading of violence-torn communities, this requires the cooperation of local government and regional authorities. With administrative breakdown and the legacy of apartheid planning, the functions and areas of control of these bodies often overlap. In Natal, in particular, mediators are confronted with a mosaic of authorities ranging from the SAP/KXP, local councillors, Joint Service Boards, the provincial administration, KwaZulu and South African government departments and 'white' town councils.

While millions of rands have been spent on 'peace' adverts, many of the people involved do not read newspapers, particularly not English and Afrikaans ones. Indeed, most people engaged in violence in rural areas simply cannot read. However, these adverts have made more affluent communities aware of the need to participate and support local structures.

There remains a real problem of communicating what is discussed behind closed doors in the **LPC** to the **community** at large. Neither the **IFP** nor the **ANC** have sufficiently developed structures to publicise the substance of agreements

...their grassroots membership. (Irwin's effort is also needed to ensure that people on the ground are aware as to how the Peace Accord functions. The delay in producing Zulu translations and explanations of the NPA has handicapped the Peace Accord at its most crucial level.

Ironically, the expansion of the Peace Accord and its related processes may have hindered the growth of communication networks themselves. The very sophistication and complexity of the NPA may sow the seeds of its own undoing (Limes and Kentridge, 1992: 93). Early evidence shows a lack of understanding about the functioning and roles of local peace structures and actors among all local bodies, including police and Defence Force units. Many people on the ground, far from understanding its provisions, simply did not know that the organisation that they support had signed the Peace Accord.

The lack of effective communication structures has ensured that rumour mongering has influenced the nature and scope of the conflict and limited the ability of LPCs to control outcomes. In various flashpoints across the Reef, rumours have continued to play a role in fostering conflict. With both sides often expectant of attack, clashes occur over reasons that have long since been submerged. Since rumours rely on the credibility of those passing on the message, rather than any factual basis, rumours tend to spread rapidly through groups supportive of one or any side. This is complicated by media reporting.

To counter these factors, the Peace Accord "has the potential to create, on both a local and regional level, a network of individuals who share information, knowledge and experience in attempts to resolve violence and other related issues. Where communication breaks down, peace efforts often falter. The availability of information allows conflicts to be averted by facilitating forward planning. In the absence of strong communication structures, strategies become competitive and encourage conflict, rather than diminishing it.

Local peace structures will become an important factor in holding the claims of opposing groups in check in the run-up to an election. It is essential that the LPCs themselves and the processes they represent be firmly entrenched before the first ballot is cast. Whatever the debate about the

timing of elections and the possibility of free and fair electoral competition, it seems likely that violence will increase as the parties begin to mobilise. Indeed, the intention of formally 'white' parties to campaign in the townships may add a new dimension to local conflict. It is in this period then that LPCs will play their most vital role to date.

Electoral monitoring and violence are closely tied together and it may well be unwise to separate these functions. If LPCs can show that they have the ability to control violence, promote peaceful protest and administer practical problems such as the allocation of venues, then there is no reason why they cannot expand their role to assisting in the monitoring of elections. There is also a greater chance that communities will support and respect monitoring structures if they are made up of local representatives who are accountable to each other and to the community.

South Africa represents a fairly unique case of electoral monitoring in that the country, despite having emerged from a period of racial domination, has the capacity and skills to monitor its own election. (This is of course not to deny the usefulness of national and international monitors.)

It must be borne in mind that election observers and monitors have no juridical authority. Their actions are designed instead to boost confidence in the electoral process by promoting fairness and deterring electoral fraud. The central aim of monitoring bodies is to report to the country's citizens and the international community on the overall integrity of the elections. In addition, observers can mediate disputes between competing political groups in an effort to reduce tensions before, during and after elections.

The ideal monitoring agency is not one that has the power to impose its will on all parties, but has the authority of 'respected impartiality' (Stack et al, 1992). Thus, the very weakness of LPCs - that is, that they lack coercive power to discipline offenders - may well turn out to be their greatest strength. Moreover, access to communities in rural and informal settlements will be essential if all potential voters are to be educated in the electoral process. LPCs, by virtue of their relationship to certain communities will be ideally positioned to coordinate and carry out voter education programmes. Such a process may well encourage participating local community leaders to practice what they preach.

*Neither the IFP nor the ANC have sufficiently developed structures to publicise the substance of agreements among their grassroots membership*

*Observers can mediate disputes between competing political groups in an effort to reduce tensions before, during and after elections*

*Local Peace Committees may furnish important insights for the introduction of democracy at grassroots level not only in South Africa but further afield*

Again, the role and capacity of LPCs should not be exaggerated. While in small integrated communities LPCs may be able to participate closely in the monitoring of elections, this may not be the case in large metropolitan areas where the resources of Peace Committees are thinly spread. The spatial distribution of LPCs, as well as the total number of people involved in the peace process on the ground, mitigate against LPCs monitoring elections alone in their jurisdictional area. Indeed, without a huge resource and personnel injection, this would threaten to overwhelm the existing functions of the structures. Instead, LPCs must *work in conjunction* with representatives from the Electoral Commission or other monitoring bodies in order to facilitate or mediate conflicts as they arise. The relationship between the various monitoring bodies then should be clearly defined before the electoral campaign begins.

What then is the long-term future of the National Peace Accord? Will the structures of the peace process become a permanent feature and continue to foster local-level cooperation or will they begin to fall away as they are eclipsed by national developments?

A number of factors need to be considered. For instance, advancements at the national level, while improving the ability of Local Peace Committees to act may not necessarily end local conflicts. Moreover, it seems unlikely that local-level initiatives and inequalities will be resolved quickly. The Accord itself, through the passage of the Internal Peace Institutions Act of 1992, makes the Peace Secretariat a statutory body for a minimum of three years. This, coupled with the establishment of staff and offices for local and regional peace structures suggest a fairly long-term future (Nossel and Shaer, 1992). Indeed, the possibility must not be ignored that the proliferation of committees, sub-committees and bodies confronting the complexity of issues generated by violence have spawned a 'South African peace industry' which has the potential of developing its own bureaucratic interests.

On the other hand, serious questions as to the ability of the Accord to operate indefinitely at the local-level need to be raised. LPCs may be so busy operating in a reactive and *ad hoc* manner to confront immediate crises that no forward thinking

or planning is done. This begs the question as to whether LPCs sustained by continued violence will be able to transform themselves to face the challenges of the future, or alternatively, whether they will lose momentum. What will be the role of LPCs, if any, if local government reform and restructuring is successful? The answer is simple: while they may assist local-level restructuring, it will, by definition, bring about their own dissolution. In short, when questions of service delivery, policing and development are being catered for in other fora, LPCs may simply be marginalised by the communities in which they operate.

To abandon the peace process now however, no matter what its failings and constraints, would have negative implications. It would be seen across the board as an admission of defeat and would strengthen the hand of those who have always spurned attempts at conciliation. *Rather, a clearer understanding as to what can be achieved at the local level must be developed.* Thus, while LPCs may not single-handedly change the nation, they may at least make it changeable.

It is suggested then that the peace process adopt a transitional or medium-term role. In a sense, all peace institutions are transitional. However, this does not lessen their importance nor the influence they may have in the immediate post-transitional phase in South Africa.

At any rate, events may overtake local-level peace initiatives. The work of peace-building is slow and time consuming and the apparent speeding up of the negotiation process may endanger LPCs not yet fully entrenched. Ironically, the assassination of Chris Hani may have increased the profile of regional and national peace structures with the largest monitoring operations yet undertaken. This trend may be set to continue through the transitional period. As a result, regional and national peace initiatives may sideline the day-to-day functioning of LPCs in the months ahead.

Whatever the final outcome, however, it cannot be doubted that the building of a national network of LPCs represents the most comprehensive community conflict resolution mechanism in South Africa - and appears to be unprecedented among peace-building initiatives worldwide. In retrospect, Local Peace Committees may furnish important insights for the introduction of democracy at grassroots level not only in South Africa but further afield. Q&A

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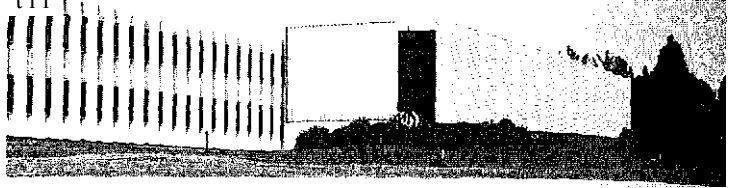
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Trevor Makhoba 'Rest in Peace Xhosa & Zulu Miners'

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forward to the  
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*This article explores the articulation of collective ethnic sentiments as a symbolic idiom for group self-identity, and the role of political entrepreneurs in the mobilisation of community support for the pursuit and legitimisation of political claims. The author argues that in the competition for political and economic entitlements, leaders will resort to mass mobilisation of communal groups by intensifying latent ethno-cultural sentiments to promote ethnic proto-nationalism.*

The 1980s and 1990s have aroused heightened interest in issues of group identity within academic circles and the public at large. The problem of ethnic consciousness and identity has added the chilling phrase, 'ethnic cleansing', to the lexicon of conflict and culture. What is significant about this phenomenon is that it is not 'out of Africa', as anthropological wisdom would lead us to expect, but one of modern industrialised Europe.

There are four main paradigms or approaches to ethnicity. The first conventional wisdom is that ethnicity constitutes a primal identity-label that stems from a recognition of common ancestry, putative kinship affinity, and a sense of peoplehood. This *primordialist* perspective, assumes the presence of some inherent quality shared by all members of the ethnic collectivity. This may include certain external features such as physique, skin colour, hair texture, and physiognomy; in short, what a person acquires at birth. Anthropologists call it 'tribalism'.

The second, *modernisation* paradigm is associated with theories of under-development which treat the ethnic problem as a vestigial property of traditionalism that is doomed to succumb under the relentless onslaught of modernisation and state nationalism. Empirically, this view has had some problems explaining the current resurgence of ethnic politics and persistent conflict in modern nation-states worldwide.

The third, *psycho-cultural* paradigm sees ethnicity as a 'psychical bond' that binds together all individuals who share them by

generating a 'consciousness of kind'. Briefly stated, this paradigm posits that 'ethnicity is a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, consciousness of kind within the group, shared in-group memories and loyalties' (Schermerhorn, 1974:2). The inventory of cultural criteria includes: 'a high degree of loyalty and adherence to certain basic institutions, such as family patterns, religion and language, distinctive folkways and mores, customs of dress, art and ornamentation ... value systems and patterns of recreation' (Berry, 1958:54). These otherwise universal cultural attributes are then treated as if they were *exclusively* 'ethnic'.

The fourth, *conflict* or *survivalist* paradigm views ethnicity as an instrument for strategic mobilisation in group competition, political assertiveness and self-determination. This approach focuses on the manner in which leadership roles in ostensibly ethno-cultural activities are transformed into political entrepreneurship.

The manipulation of ethnicity as an instrument for political, territorial and economic entitlements is appropriately buttressed by emotive rhetoric. Such rhetoric would typically be suffused with images of the group's assumed historic deprivation of its rightful patrimony, its cultural autonomy and perceived threats to its survival. A case in point is the origin and development of the Inkatha Freedom Party and its intensely Zulu-focused cultural and political ideology; and in similar vein, that of the Afrikaner cultural-political movement from the early 1900s.

The re-invention of ethnicity with its distinguishing symbols of peoplehood is strategically utilised as a political instrument towards ultimate goals that have little to do with primordial identity. In a critical analysis of politics and ethnicity in South Africa, focusing on Inkatha, Gerhard Mare (1992:206) points out that 'Ethnic identities ... are frequently manipulated and mobilised in the service of... political interests'.

The appeal of ethnicity as an instrument of political mobilisation is highly seductive

*'Ethnicity is a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, consciousness of kind'*  
Schermerhorn

*'Ethnic identities ... are frequently manipulated and mobilised in the service of political interests'*  
Mare

*'Ethnic leaders may insist that cultural autonomy... is buttressed by political and territorial autonomy along ethnic lines' Rothschild*

because of its emotional content. It renders the imagined deprivations axiomatic and personal, making it easy to identify oneself with the collective plight.

It is analytically useful to discriminate between the sentimental aspect of ethnicity and its instrumental component. On the one hand, a purely cultural promotion of group interests merely identifies the manner in which the group strives to generate a symbolic sense of its peoplehood, that is, as being culturally distinct from others. On the other hand: 'ethnic leaders may insist that cultural autonomy alone would be precarious and ... the group's ultimate survival jeopardised, unless buttressed by political [and] territorial autonomy ... along ethnic lines' (Rothschild, 1981:151).

Ethnic leaders may engage in the deliberate politicisation of issues such as education and language, as well as in manipulating cultural symbols. The current resuscitation of 'primordial' ethnic consciousness as an ideology of proto-nationalism and the increasing scale and intensity of ethnic assertiveness in political conflict, indicate a purposive manipulation of latent ethnic sentiments for political ends.

The manifestation of abuses of ethnic sentiment for group political identity are not hard to find. Black Canadians, for instance, do not constitute an ethnic group. Coming from diverse and heterogeneous socio-cultural backgrounds, they lack any objective cultural attributes of ethnicity other than their socially defined, albeit imprecise, skinship and/or physique. They have seized upon skin-colour symbolism as the rallying attribute of their ascribed identity, and thus utilised it for political mobilisation. The result of this 'consciousness of status ascription' is that black Canadians have subjugated all other objective *differences* in favour of the symbolic identity implied by their colour.

## Strategic Mobilisation

Two sets of contradictions bedevil any group's efforts to promote ethnic exclusiveness within a heterogeneous national setting. First, for the leadership to effectively promote ethnic identity among a community, the members must be persuaded to believe in their singularity and distinctiveness. The leadership will be impelled to arouse or stimulate the sentiments that will cause the group to be cognitively aware of its cultural values, uniqueness, history and the symbolic

elements which express the enduring aspects of their peoplehood. Second, since ethnic categorisation is by definition dependent upon the existence of other opposing groups, it raises the problem of competition, even conflict. Once claims are cast in ethnic terms, the leadership is further impelled to promote ethno-cultural assertiveness and exclusive solidarity.

Ethnicity becomes a problem when ethnic entrepreneurs attempt to utilise the inchoate ethnic sentiments for political goals. It is in the process of political mobilisation that latent ethnic sentiments may be abused by the leaders. Heribert Adam (1979:61) has aptly characterised ethnic mobilisation as a 'process by which mere particularistic interests become common cause' and are then 'embraced by most members [of the group] as their own entitlement against others'.

Even in modern nation-states, ethnic sentiment may be ideologically created, or re-invigorated and redefined in a political context for the promotion of ethno-nationalism, if not hegemony. I-nisi Gellner has extended this process to the idea of nationalism itself as he points out that, 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist' (1983).

Empirical evidence from diverse societies appears to support these observations. Prominent cases that come to mind are the contemporary conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karaback, South Africa, Canada and many others. The endemic and seemingly intractable refugee problem is a resonant testimony to the flagrant abuse of ethnicity for political goals in their countries of origin.

The case of the Serbs in the current conflict in former Yugoslavia provides a stark example of the abuse of ethnicity for political ends. Not only is Serbian identity being vigorously promoted, it is also used to advance claims to self-determination and hegemony over other groups in the erstwhile federated state. To a lesser extent, the Croatian re-assertion of its own separate identity is heavily suffused with the idea of political autonomy. Their ethno-secessionism is cast in the normative democratic principle of self-determination for all people in order to legitimise their asserted claims.

The Islamic Bosnians, on the other hand, have become hapless victims of the

*'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist' Gellner*

multifaceted ethnic conflicts around them. I, js worth noting that at the level of interpersonal relations, Serbian and Islamic Bosnians are not in conflict merely because they are religiously different; their difference is ideologically promoted by the Serbian leadership through its emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness which has spawned the horrific concept of 'ethnic cleansing'.

In the case of Inkatha the re-invigorated cultural consciousness and communal identity has inexorably become an instrument for political claims with territorial and hegemonic ambitions. These claims are further buttressed by an ingenious resort to re-constructed histories, redefined cultural traditions, and asserted rights to political entitlements. Such re-constructed histories are essentially 'not a set of facts about the past but, rather, a set of ideas about the past held in the present' (Wright and Mazel, 1988:1). Thus, historical memory has an instrumental rather than a cultural value.

In a global perspective, the demise of the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has unleashed a flurry of hitherto dormant ethno-nationalisms with devastating consequences. Apart from the secessionist movements of the larger constituent republics of the Ukraine, and Georgia, as well as the smaller Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the classic case of re-invigorated ethnic identity is Nagorno-Karabakh with its hegemonic conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. What began some six years ago as a territorial claim by Azerbaijanis, has now turned into an Armenian assertion of autonomy.

At this point, it is appropriate to consider specific cases in which cultural symbols of ethnic identity have been abused in the interest of political goals. I shall take two situations in which a single cultural marker of group identity has been apotheosised into a defining symbol of ethnic exclusiveness with far-reaching consequences. South Africa and Canada make excellent illustrative cases of two intensely ethnocentric groups - the Afrikaner in South Africa and the French in Canada. At the macro-level, I compare the overall national ideology of social engineering in both countries based on the recognised ethnic heterogeneity of their populations.

In the case of the Afrikaner community, the Afrikaans language defines the boundaries

of inclusion and exclusion among the white segment despite affinities in skin colour and European origins. In Canada, for the French of Quebec, it is also language that has been isolated as the distinguishing symbol of group identity among the white component of the Canadian population. In both cases, the politicisation of language as a powerful strategy for identity-building renders all other cultural markers ancillary to linguistic distinctions.

The persistent and fractious linguistic conflict between French and English Canadians closely parallels the historical cultural conflict between the Afrikaners and the English in South Africa. Powerful national and cultural institutions such as schools and churches were mobilised and pressed into service as agencies for the promotion of group identity and exclusiveness. In Canada at present, the fervent promotion of a parochial French nationalism, with its emphasis on ethnic distinctiveness and linguistic exclusivity, echoes the development of an Afrikaner ethnic consciousness prior to 1948, and the subsequent consolidation of the Afrikaner cultural agenda around language.

There is an uncanny resemblance between the political position of the French Canadians and the Afrikaner in South Africa. Both share a legacy of English domination, and a struggle for ethnic, linguistic and cultural survival within a sea of ethnic heterogeneity at the national level. The proto-nationalism of both groups emerged out of a history of conquest and a perceived threat to cultural assimilation by a dominant English ethos.

The emergent Quebec French nationalism, in pursuit of distinctiveness, concessions and autonomy, strategically promotes an image of injured ethnicity, deprived patrimony, and an imminent demise as a distinct people. The French minority has demanded and gained concessions to be declared a 'distinct society', and to have this designation entrenched constitutionally together with the right to declare Quebec an exclusively Francophone province.

Quebec's immigration policy is also oriented towards Francophone countries which include a number of Third-World former dependent territories of France, such as Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and to a lesser extent Senegal. The perceived erosion of French has elevated language retention to a fetish as the primary bond of French identity and sense of peoplehood superseding all other affinities.

*'Ethnic claims ... not a set of facts about the past but, rather, a set of ideas about the past held in the present'*  
Wright and Mazel

*'Afrikaans mother-language schools... form the basis of our survival as a separate language-cultural national community'*  
Broederbond

'Under apartheid, ethnic categorisation was coercive and mandatory, while in Canada, multiculturalism is voluntary and largely self-ascriptive'  
Manyoni

French-Canadian identity is essentially defined in linguistic terms. One of the most revered of Quebec Nationalists, Rene Levesque, has isolated the linguistic bond as the one essential element defining the French-Canadian personality. 'Everything', he said, 'depends on this one essential element' (1978). From the conquest of Quebec in 1760, which established English dominance over the French minority, up to the end of the 1980s, there were sustained efforts for state intervention in language planning and preservation to sustain French identity.

The linguistic status of French in Canada, and Afrikaans in South Africa inevitably gives salience to language as the expressive symbol of ethnic identity for both groups. In both countries, linguistic policies are inseparable from the notion of ethnic identity, and thus politicised language is seen as an effective instrument for the reversal of collective subordinate status.

For South Africa, the Afrikaner considered language enhancement and preservation as the very foundation of their sense of peoplehood. The Broederbond attached great importance to their achievement in successfully promoting the supremacy of their language through control over education: 'Afrikaans mother-language schools, which, under our Nationalist government, came into their own, indeed form the basis ... of our survival as a separate language- cultural national community' (Wilkins & Strydom, 1978:19).

The preservation of Afrikaans as a symbol of Afrikaner distinctiveness was thus non-negotiable. Other parallels may be drawn between the two groups. Historically, the Afrikaners evolved out of » a melange of European groups whose ethno-cultural identity became symbolically expressed in the common language of Afrikaans. It became imperative to enlist the service of national institutions and the constitution itself in the effort to entrench the dominance of Afrikaans.

A politicised *education* as an instrument for assertive Afrikaner consciousness was implemented in the form of Christian National Education in which the Afrikaans language occupied pride of place. An ideologised *theology* also helped to underpin a self-defined identity of biblical pretensions as a 'chosen people', and a 'community of the Elect'. Even the institution of *national politics* was condensed into a vehicle for ethno-nationalism and hegemony.

Constructions of group identity in both South Africa and Canada are ideologically premised on broad ethnic identifying symbols such as bio-physical features, cultural practices and linguistic differences. The *apartheid* policy was overtly constructed upon the basis of ethnic diversity; in Canada, the policy of *multiculturalism* is similarly founded on ethnic diversity but with a major difference from its South African counterpart.

While the objective of both ideologies is social engineering on the basis of ethnicity, they have produced two diametrically opposed social structures. First, under apartheid, ethnic categorisation was coercive and mandatory, while in Canada, multiculturalism is voluntary and largely self-ascriptive. Second, apartheid, in pursuit of the ideal of ethnic balkanisation, resulted in severe national, political and social disintegration epitomised by endemic ethnic conflict at all levels; whereas multiculturalism in Canada is a web for national integration on the principle of the equality of all ethno-cultural constituent groups.

The singular position of South Africa in its use and abuse of ethnicity lies in the manner in which the whole legal superstructure of the state has been co-opted to impose ethnic balkanisation. Apartheid was built upon state-manipulated and imposed ethnicity together with its explicit politicisation, and was aimed at promoting distinctive and parochial identities rather than supra-communal or national allegiances.

Under apartheid, the state insisted on the primacy of ethnic distinctiveness to the point of ascribing ethnicity on thousands of individuals who did not share the presumed commonality. This abuse of ethnicity has left a permanent legacy in the form of the 'homelands', intractable political conflicts and ethnic fractionalism.

At the present time, one even hesitates to use the past tense to refer to apartheid, judging by the current consistent demand for the recognition of 'group rights' in die on-going constitutional negotiations. I lie contemporary South African dilemma in producing a constitutional arrangement of national proportions superseding parochial group interests adds a sense of urgency to the understanding of divergent ethnic-interests and identities which may render nation-building that more intractable. IK

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This article discusses state responses to ethnicity in five Asian states, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines, all of them multi-national and multi-ethnic states. Ethnicity is used broadly to denote distinctions based on religion, caste, race, language, and region. The histories of these states are embedded in ethnic politics, much of it in modern times taking the form of ethnic strife and conflict.

**E**thnic strife has increased everywhere in recent years. Apart from specific demands, the articulation of ethnic claims in Asia represents a contest over the definition of the essence of a state. Is it to be a secular state or is its mission to serve a particular faith? Is its goal the political modernisation of society and the development of economic rationality or the preservation of oriental culture and values, of deference to authorities and the inculcation of obedience? Is it a nation state (requiring conformity to or at least the dominance of the culture and interests of the majority community) or a multi-ethnic state?

Various answers were given to these questions during the independence struggles and alliances. These answers were provided largely by western educated leaders, imbued on the whole with ideas of liberalism, modernisation and economic rationality, in the context of a common national purpose. These assumptions are being questioned by a new generation living in a much more politicised, fragmented and competitive society, looking to alternative sources of mobilisation and legitimacy. Ethnicity has been woven into this complex and uncertain tapestry.

Ethnic claims have been handled differently in the five states under review: India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Even within a state there has been no uniform stance, as the claims of each community have been seen to raise different issues and have different implications. Some ethnic claims have been resolved through relatively peaceful means and the solutions incorporated into state constitutional and legal systems. Others have eluded simple solutions and have led to long and protracted ethnic conflicts.

The form that the ethnic claims have taken has often been determined by the reaction of the state. Relatively modest claims for a share in or some redistribution of power have escalated into demands of autonomy or secession under an intransigent state. The state's ability to respond in particular ways is itself determined by its own character in, for example, a democracy or military dictatorship.

But it can be said that almost everywhere there are challenges to state sovereignty, assertions of self-determination, and a search for greater degrees and forms of pluralism. The liberal values that underlay the nationalist ideologies and the independence constitutional systems have lost their hold on the imagination of the people.

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The five South Asian countries under review offer many examples of constitutional, legal and policy instruments, as well as differing approaches to ethnicity. They have varied from policies of assimilation (whereby the minority groups have to conform to the dominant culture) to integration through the recognition of the corporate existence of ethnic groups. The approach in a particular state has varied over time, as new political imperatives have arisen or been called into existence.

Nowhere is the state a neutral umpire, holding the balance between different groups. It is actively involved in ethnic competition and struggles. It may have a vested interest in ethnic conflict. Examples are the promotion of (the divisive) Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka by Mr Bandranaike, Mrs Gandhi's divide and rule policy in India (especially in the Punjab, Kashmir and Assam), the constant cultivation of the distinctiveness of Malays by the Malaysian government, and official schemes for resettlement of people which may upset the original populations of areas to which resettlement is encouraged (e.g. Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Malaysia).

Nor have governments been above complicity in the perpetration of communal violence. So the instruments discussed should be seen not merely as devices to contain ethnic tensions, but also as devices to promote particular ethnic balances and

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How broad should the political framework be? How far should it explicitly recognise ethnicity?

configurations even if they lead to social unrest.

The state's responses depend on how ethnicity is viewed; as a progressive force to be nurtured or an evil to be suppressed. On the whole the struggle for independence mobilised a state-wide nationalism; and the leaders of governments at independence were seduced by the image of the nation-state. In these circumstances there was not much sympathy for ethnic claims. However, these claims could not always be ignored, and the constitutions reflect the compromises that were struck at the time. There was more sympathy for groups which had been historically disadvantaged (producing, for example, schemes for preferential treatment).

How broad should the political framework be? How far should it explicitly recognise ethnicity? The purposes of a constitutional instrument vary from providing minimum guarantees to a minority for its physical existence to securing its rights as a cultural entity and meaningful participation in the affairs of the state. On the whole, the constitutions eschewed explicit political recognition of ethnicity. There was nearly universal repudiation of separate electoral roles for ethnic representation, nor was there any formula for ethnic power sharing.

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The broad frameworks were liberal, based, (except in Sri Lanka), on a bill of rights, universal franchise and a parliamentary system (which is not necessarily congenial to minority interests since the majority party acquires all power). The constitutions therefore shifted the burden to political parties and process, and in most countries the parties provided either a general umbrella for ethnic negotiations (as in the 4 Indian Congress) or ethnically based parties formed a coalition for that purpose (as in Malaysia).

One issue central to the liberal order that caused some difficulty concerned citizenship of certain groups (e.g. Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka and Indians and Chinese in Malaysia). The problem in Malaysia, which concerned the status of Chinese and Indians, was resolved by a liberal grant of citizenship, as part of a settlement which recognised the special position of the Malays; but it persisted for a long time in Sri Lanka, where it related to the status of the Indian Tamils (and whose ultimate resolution required the repatriation of a large number to India).

A liberal order, while not making explicit

provision for ethnic groups, nevertheless acknowledges their rights to articulate their demands and to question the policies of government from an ethnic point of view. While most Asian states have accepted a liberal order in not providing a constitutional role for ethnic groups, some of them discourage or ban the articulation of ethnic politics. While the former are willing to allow (and may even initiate) a process of ethnic negotiations and compromises (as India and Sri Lanka in the early post-independence period), others (Singapore and Malaysia; and Sri Lanka in recent years) are fearful of the consequences of democracy for ethnicity. They discourage if not criminalise ethnic discourses of this kind, preferring to control ethnicity from the top down. These perhaps provide the principal distinction in Asian approaches to ethnicity.

Paradoxically, both Singapore and Malaysia recognise the existence of what they call 'races', and base their policies on a considerable separation of these social and folk constructs. Both use ethnicity as an organising concept; in Singapore is a social (but not political) category; in Malaysia, in various forms, as a political or constitutional category. Singapore claims that its races are separate but equal, whereas Malaysia has provided a privileged position for the Malays and other indigenous communities (*bumiputeras*). Singapore's ideology is somewhat mechanist and statist, while Malaysia is based on the cultural symbols and dominance of the Malay culture and there are pressures towards assimilatory policies, particularly through language and educational policies.

The Philippines have historically been highly integrated, through the Church as well as language, and there have been strong assimilatory tendencies. Sri Lanka began its independence with a strong pluralist orientation, with the recognition of the main languages and religions, although the tendency since 1956 has been toward the dominance of Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion, which now enjoy a preferred constitutional status. India has remained secular and pluralistic with a preferred position for no particular community, although its politics, especially in recent years, have been much concerned with assertions of the claims of Hindu dominance.

In general, neither the motivations for nor the outcomes of policy instruments are 'rational'. It is necessary to pay attention to

contexts in which the solutions are worked out. Circumstances are most propitious when some grand settlement is at stake: constitutional negotiations for independence provide one such occasion, especially if there is a neutral referee); nor is a constituent assembly in a later period. The Philippines Constituent Assembly after the downfall of Marcos provided a promising context since its themes were democracy and national reconciliation, while the attitude of the Indian Constituent Assembly was affected by the partition of the sub-continent towards a less than generous disposition towards Muslim claims. In Malaysia some key principles were recommended by a group of outside constitutional experts able to bring more detachment and wider experience than would have been possible through a local mechanism.

On the whole the circumstances are highly charged, when the survival of a group and the stability of the state may appear as alternatives, and choices (and the scope of compromise) are limited by the pressures on the negotiators. What is feasible in these circumstances has of course its own rationality, but it may be far from optimum in solving ethnic disputes.

*UV now turn to specific instruments. It is customary to divide them into two kinds: institutional and policies.*

*Institutional instruments* are concerned with structural arrangements for political representation, division and allocation of power, mechanisms for negotiations and bargaining, bodies with special responsibilities for ensuring the protection of the rights of minorities and dealing with their grievances (e.g., the Council of State in Singapore and the Commission on Backward Castes in India), independent bodies (and objective criteria) for certain executive functions (e.g., recruitment to the public service), judicial review, etc.

*Policy instruments* refer to priorities and preferences for ethnic groups, for example the use of specific languages for the purpose of administration and education, affirmative action, the status of religion, regulation of land and migration, etc. While the analytical distinction is clear, in practice it is hard to understand one without the other, for institutional instruments produce policy outcomes, and policies need reliable structures.

An analysis of the formal legal provisions is of limited value, for some provisions may have been agreed to under various kinds of pressures that are hard to sustain, and there may therefore be no will to implement them. Sometimes the practice may be sharply at variance with the formal provisions (as in Singapore where an ostensibly liberal, non-racial instrument coexists with a social and political system whose organising principle is race). In many cases the law provides a broad framework and how they operate depends on the configuration of political and economic power. One has also to be alert to the changing time frames, as the same provisions have operated in different ways at different times. There is indeed a dialectic about these provisions, for although established to ease ethnic tensions, they may aggravate them because they be perceived as unduly favouring a particular ethnic group.

Wise statesmanship and a mutuality of interests in social stability and the effectiveness of administration may in practice be more important than the legal provisions. Administrative powers may be important in maintaining ethnic policies (like the state control over the housing market in Singapore). In many instances these provisions may be marginal to the management of ethnic tensions, the more potent instruments being the coercive powers under internal security, anti-terrorism and preventive detention legislation.

This article does not attempt to examine all the policies and structures which have been adopted for the management of ethnic tensions. However, some of the principal ones are discussed briefly:

- ***federalism***

Federal arrangements are particularly appropriate for a multi-ethnic state as they enable ethnic communities to exercise a significant degree of autonomy, accommodate diverse cultural and linguistic traditions, provide for parity among ethnic groups and establish a pluralistic basis for their relationship with the centre. Federal arrangements may also diminish the significance of various factors, like religion, equity, etc. which can be deeply disruptive of ethnic harmony in a unitary state.

Short of secession, federal arrangements would constitute the most extensive of ethnic claims, and experience has shown that once they are conceded, they can rapidly defuse much ethnic tension.

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However, this device is only possible if the ethnic groups are geographically concentrated. Even then it is likely that there will be ethnic minorities in that area or they may emerge as a result of the new arrangements, which may limit the applicability of the federal principle or require special provisions for them.

Federalism establishes new dialectics among the ethnic groups, and between them and the centre; and these require constant attention to prevent serious institutional grievances and conflicts (as India has discovered). Furthermore, many states, dominated by one ethnic community at the centre, are suspicious of federal claims, fearing the attenuation of their power and influence, and anxious about the eventual fragmentation of the country. In such circumstances ethnic claims of decentralisation, falling short of constitutionally entrenched division and allocation of powers and within the overall control of the centre, are better candidates.

Nevertheless the federal arrangements have provided a framework for negotiations and compromises; and that is an important task in ethnically divided societies. In both countries, federalism has provided for the settlement of some difficult issues at the state level, which might otherwise have implicated the national government and escalated the gravity of the issues at stake.

Federalism (and its variants) is one form of establishing a measure of political pluralism mirroring cultural diversity. There are other ways of recognising and protecting such diversity. Three of them, political representation, legal pluralism and consociationalism, are discussed below:

- **special representation**

On the whole special forms of representation, like separate seats or electorates, common during the colonial period, are out of favour (except in Pakistan). They were rejected on the basis that they are divisive and retard the political and social integration of the different communities. India expressed strong opposition to these forms of representation (blaming its use during the colonial period for the emergence of her communal problems).

The lack of special representation is aggravated by the electoral rule of single member constituencies won on the principle of plurality. There seems to have been very little attention given to the possibilities of structuring electoral systems

to secure a more equitable representation minority ethnic groups; or once represented, to give its members a special role in the legislative or administrative process. There has also been relatively limited attempt to regulate the formation and operations of political parties (except in Nepal, and marginally in India) to make them more accommodative of ethnic plurality or to minimise ethnic tensions.

- **legal pluralism**

Before the advent of colonialism, depopulations of territories that now constitute these five South Asian states were governed by their personal laws. These were largely the customary laws of the localities where they lived, but they also included important principles of the religious laws of their communities. They thus covered matters like marriage and divorce, relations between children and parents, inheritance and succession, and various religious practices (including, particularly in the case of Muslims, criminal prohibitions and sanctions). The validity of these laws depended on the customs of the people (and not official fiat).

These customary laws (and the application of religious laws to religious property and corporations) ensured a measure of group autonomy, limited the scope of official intervention in the lives of the people of a community, and maintained the values, culture and institutions of the different communities. They ensured a wide measure of religious freedom, for the customs preserved in this scheme were closely connected with religious practices.

The preservation of regimes of personal laws moderated the consequences of foreign invasions or changes of sovereignty. With the striking exception of the Philippines, the colonial authorities recognised personal laws for the most part (although they were now interpreted and enforced in a different and more formal legal and judicial framework which had an important impact on their development). On independence the sources and application of laws as provided in the colonial period were continued. Thus legal pluralism was continued after independence despite the emergence of nationalism and policies to consolidate national unity.

Personal laws, based as they are for the most part on customary practices, do change. They changed in important ways during the colonial period through their adjudication and enforcement in formal courts and by being reduced to writing in

*Very little attention is given to the possibilities of structuring electoral systems to secure a more equitable representation of minority ethnic groups*



many instances. They also responded to changing circumstances. It has therefore been possible to undertake some reforms in this area without unduly offending communal susceptibilities.

### *j consociational schemes*

Consociationalism is another method for the forming of coalitions and the sharing of power. Described by its leading proponent (I jphart) as a scheme for overarching cooperation at the elite level in a culturally fragmented system, it has four major features:

- government by a grand coalition;
- the mutual veto or concurrent majority rule;
- proportionality in recruitment to decision-making bodies and the public services and in the allocation of public funds; and
- a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs.

Consociationalism depends on the cooperation of ethnic elites who may be said to have common interests in maintaining social order. It assumes that the leaders of an ethnic community are united, and that the rank and mass are willing to follow their lead. These conditions obtain seldom. The trend is towards the politicisation of ethnicity, while consociationalism requires a docile public. The trend is also towards inter-ethnic equity, while consociationalism is biased towards conservatism. It is unlikely that it has much of a future in Asia.

### *J preferential policies*

Three Southern Asian states systematically implement policies of preferential treatment of sections of its people (India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka); the Philippines has some ad hoc administrative policies of uncertain reach (and of no particular significance) for this purpose. Singapore claims that it will make no compromise with the principle of meritocracy (even though, given historical factors, that disadvantages its economically weakest community, the Malays, for whose benefit some rudimentary measures do exist).

India and Malaysia (which has the most extensive scheme of preference) adopted these policies at independence, Sri Lanka subsequently. The Indian and Malaysian policies enjoy a constitutional status, while Sri Lanka began its through legislative means, now the policies have constitutional sanction. In India and the Philippines these policies have been adopted to help certain ethnic minorities or economically

disadvantaged communities, while in Malaysia and Sri Lanka they have been established in favour of the majority groups.

In Malaysia, the foundation of preferential policies is article 153 of its Constitution which provides for the reservation for Malays of such proportion as it may think reasonable of positions in the federal public service, scholarships and other educational privileges, and business licenses. There are also provisions for land, language and religion which privilege the Malays. Extensive use has been made of these provisions, especially after 1969 under the New Economic Policy, in employment (public as well as private), loans, licenses, education and training. Since Malaysia has a market economy (and most Malays were rather inexperienced in business) the government set up a large number of state corporations for increasing the role and share of Malays in the economy.

### *• language recognition*

The question of language is fundamental. Language is often a point of ethnic distinction. The use of a particular language as the official language privileges or disadvantages ethnic groups; the designation of a language as an official language has the greatest implications for access to and the distribution of national resources. Language is a powerful social tool, capable of arousing strong emotions. It is intimately connected and intertwined with the culture of a community; and is basic to its survival.

At the same time a multiplicity of languages is seen as an obstacle to national integration. The alternative to recognising indigenous language as an official language is the colonial language, which is regarded as unacceptable both for that reason and because the general populace does not understand it. There is also the question of what to do with local languages that do not qualify for official language status. These issues raise emotions that can tear a state apart.

### *• religious tolerance*

The regulation of religion has been another instrument in inter-ethnic relations. A particular cause of tension is that while all the states under review here are multi-religious states, specific religious ideologies are used for legitimisation or to mark the pre-dominance of a creed. India sought to avoid these tensions by opting for a secular state, so that all religions would be treated equally, and in principle separated from the state. However, the Constitution

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*Ethnic claims constantly push into the public domain matters which liberal theory prefers to treat as purely personal questions*

does not provide a total wall between the state and religions. The secular basis of its policy has been steadily eroding, with a strong movement now seeking to turn it into a Hindu state.

Singapore has opted, with more success, for secularism. For a long time, religion seemed to be irrelevant to politics, even though one of its major communities (the Malays) is defined by its religion. However, extremely energetic and successful Christian proselytisation and the occasional Islamic militancy (in a region dominated by Islamic states) have provoked concern and led Singapore to circumscribe the autonomy of religious bodies.

The Philippines is a largely Christian state, and Christianity is a strong integrative force. But this alienates its indigenous peoples, who still hold on to their traditional beliefs, and the Muslims, who constitute a significant minority. However, there is tolerance for Islam and other religions, and Islamic law is recognised and enforced. There is also religious tolerance in Malaysia, although the Constitution provides a privileged position for Islam as state religion.

*If constitutionalism has to be the framework for the resolution of ethnic demands, then it has to be broadened to accommodate corporate entities*

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There are various lessons which we can draw from the experiences of these institutional and policy instruments. First, each solution has a tendency to create its own problems. The most successful of these devices, spatial devolution of powers, is a little exceptional, but it is also frequently the hardest to negotiate (because of the redistribution of power and anxieties about its potential for secession). Even here one faces the difficulties of new minorities created by these arrangements, and call either for further fragmentation or a supervening role for central authorities.

A further lesson is that there is a dialectical dynamic to ethnic 'solutions'. Claims and demands change over time, and a measure which may have been consensually established previously and has operated with some success may become later a point of contention, rejected either by the minority as insufficient or the majority as excessive (or more frequently both).

Since ethnic situations are shaped by constantly changing social and economic contexts, their configurations change too, necessitating periodic re-negotiations of

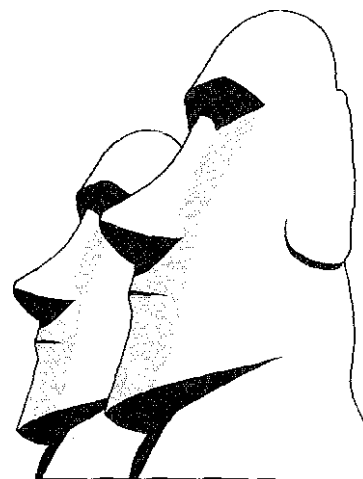
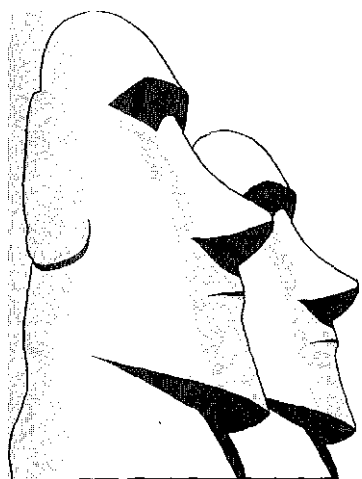
ethnic pacts. On the whole [here are no adequate frameworks for these ' re-negotiations (which accounts ;M n a n occasional ethnic outbursts]. The ' lie ' lr adjustments that the courts can mala- ar> limited; judiciaries on the whole have no played a socio-political role.

It is not only in this respect **that liberal theory fails to come to terms u jih ethniciv** Almost all the solutions I hu\ e examined ' are premised on the existence **of groups and** the legal recognition of a **measure of** inherent collective rights. **They do not sit** comfortably with traditional **notions of** human rights or the rule **of law**. **Similarly** ethnic claims constantly **push into the** public domain matters **which liberal theory** prefers to treat as purely **personal question\*** (or at best to be resolved by **ami through** civil society). If constitutionalism **liaslo he** the framework for the resolution **of ethnic** demands, then it has to be **broadened to** accommodate corporate entities.

Finally, the experience of these instruments raise the question of how to measure their success. They are embedded in a wider matrix of state policies and social control (including a large measure of coercion), and it is not easy to isolate their effect from the impact of these others. In any case, what constitutes a successful handling of ethnicity is problematic. How is one to judge the success of an ethnic policy? Is it ethnic peace? If so, what is the price one is willing to pay for ethnic peace?

India has experienced tremendous difficulties with ethnicity, leading to civil wars, while Singapore and Malaysia have avoided serious ethnic conflict. However, the Indian difficulties have existed side by side with a vibrant democracy and free speech, the full participation of ethnic groups in politics, popular struggles for social justice, government accountability for ethnic policies, and a richly textured nation. Singapore has produced a sterile, highly regulated, regimented and docile society, with the state determining the articulation among ethnic groups by its invasions of civil society (the particular ethnic mix in Malaysia has precluded such a close administration of si >cicty, although many of its assumptions and predilections are similar). Both have used a high degree of coercion or the threat of it, with special draconian laws giving the executive vvic powers of detention without trial and the control of assemblies and the press being an essential part of its strategy of ethnic containment. There are clearly trade-offs here.

# THE POLITICS OF ETHNICITY



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With Africa in its third year of transition and national constitutional negotiations are once again on track, after a traumatic and dramatic break-down. The Grahamstown conference on 'Ethnicity, identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives' produced a number of ideas which are of direct relevance to this continuing process of national transition and political negotiation. Three themes will be discussed here.

Each theme emerged from comparative discussions which covered events in many different countries and regions of the globe, sometimes - in fact - without direct reference to South Africa. The South African challenge nonetheless remained squarely in the minds of conference participants. The preceding selection of conference papers in this special edition of *Indicator SA* highlight the domestic relevance of international debates on nation-building, regional and local identities, ethnic mobilisation and constitutional mechanisms and policies for the management of multi-ethnic societies.

Huan Currin, national director of Lawyers for Human Rights opened the conference and Kader Asmal, Professor of Human Rights Law and member of the African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Committee, spoke during the first session on 'the democratic option' for South Africa. In the last session, immediately before a panel of delegates summarised conference proceedings (see epilogue by Balintulo), an ANC supporter delivered from the floor a passionate appeal for recognition and support for the movement's non-racial national ideology.

In short, for the many foreign delegates with little experience of South Africa, the five days of discussion and argument which

took place in the 1820 Settlers Monument, could not but be interpreted within a South African context, not least since the funerals of national leaders Chris Hani, Oliver Tambo, and Andries Treurnicht coincidentally took place immediately before, and immediately after, the conference.

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The first idea of direct relevance to South Africa's political present is found in the *new international global order*.

The 'importance of world historical moment', in the words of conference delegate Crawford Young from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, cannot be exaggerated. Everywhere, the old order of Western and Eastern blocs, of capitalist and communist ideologies, of Third World countries as pawns caught up in the Cold War, has disappeared. As a consequence, nation-states react defensively as local politics and global politics increasingly articulate similar demands, for human and cultural rights and for equity in access to resources. These demands act as incentives for groups within countries to assert their difference, their uniqueness, in contrast to other groups within the same country (see, for example, Martin and Bloom in this edition).

Group affirmation of this form, whilst increasingly common, is not uniform throughout the world. In the final plenary session of the conference, John Comaroff from the University of Chicago, distinguished between:

- Ⓡ Euronationalism in the Europe of the 1990s;
- Ⓢ Multiculturalism in, *inter alia*, the USA, Canada and Australia; and
- Ⓡ Ethnonationalism in the Third World.

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Experiments in federalism have not been particularly successful since territoriality and ethnicity do not tend to coincide

It was argued that such movements became nationalist movements when group and territorial claims were aimed at sovereignty and full independence. Where the scope of these claims was narrower, focused - for instance - on access to resources rather than on sovereignty, the movements should be viewed as ethnic rather than as national.

In short, as the old order dies, and the old debates over capitalism and communism, over market and command economies, fade, a new world order is emerging within which sub-national group assertions often underpinned by global social values arise. South Africa and South Africans will - in time - find themselves within this new world order.

The second idea of direct relevance to South Africa's political present concerns *national constitutional and legal matters*. A number of conference delegates, including Yash Ghai (University of Hong Kong) and Neelan Tiruchelvam (International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Sri Lanka), discussed the evolution of constitutionalism in a number of post-independence Asian and African countries. In essence, the problem they set out to analyse in each of these countries was the way in which each state had attempted to reconcile itself to its ethnic diversity.

These delegates argued that the evolution of constitutionalism - a legal constitution embedded in the internationally recognised values of human rights, of tolerance, and of equality - was essential in these countries. In multi-cultural societies, however, such an evolution created deep-seated dilemmas: How should such a process be established? Who should be responsible for its establishment? And, critically, which indigenous values and which values borrowed from Western texts should be entrenched? It was agreed that these dilemmas would never be fully resolved; that constitutional challenges would always be present in such multi-cultural societies.

Within this context, some observations made regarding, first, a number of Asian countries, and, second, regarding a number of African countries are appropriate. The conference contributions by Johan Degenaar (University of Stellenbosch) and Mark Simpson (University of the Witwatersrand) on civil society and nation-building also bear relevance (see their articles in this edition).

In the Indian subcontinent, there exists today an admixture of continuing belief in the promise of constitutional processes, and skepticism regarding the way in which" these processes have developed to date. A number of countries manifest ethnic movements - 'ethnopolitism' at local or regional level, as one delegate called the phenomenon - and there is accordingly pressure on governments for more explicit recognition of such 'corporate groups'.

Experiments in federalism along territorial lines have not been particularly successful since territoriality and ethnicity do not tend to coincide in these states. Federalism along language lines has achieved more.

In a brief review of affirmative action programmes (also see articles in economic monitor) - 'the preferential system' introduced by a number of governments • Yash Ghai argued that many had failed as a result of the resentment they engendered in groups - often minority groups - which were not treated preferentially. He also warned that ethnicity changes over time, thereby creating the need to constantly<sup>1</sup> renegotiate state strategies based upon ethnic group membership.

Constitutional developments in Nigeria and Kenya were also analysed. It was argued that the Nigerian state, when it became politically independent, was no more than an administrative superstructure. As a result of subsequent constitutional (and other) changes, Nigeria as a single state has become a real and increasingly strong idea in the minds of Nigerians.

As Jacob Ade Ajayi, from the University of Ibadan, put it, *Policies in Nigeria seem to swing between nationalism and ethnicism, sometimes favouring nationalism at the expense of ethnicity, and sometimes building up ethnicities at the expense of nationalism. In practice, the lesson is becoming obvious that ethnicity and nationalism are not opposing concepts from which to choose, but two levels of group consciousness that need to be reconciled.* (This is what the present Nigerian constitution attempts to do.)

In post-independence Kenya, the history of constitutionalism is less cheerful. Michael Chege from the Ford Foundation identified many lessons to be learnt from mistakes. A new government needs squarely to address the issue of income distribution. The constitution needs to protect the secrecy of the ballot. A fixed limit on the duration of the presidency needs to be entrenched.

Changes over time create the need to constantly renegotiate state strategies based upon ethnic group membership

political power in Kenya, the 'inner core' of government, has become 'ethnicised'. These failures became, and some persist as, major impediments to the development of a democratic form of government. Finally, it was noted that Kenya, at independence, had an exemplary written constitution. Since constitutionalism is rooted in the judicial system, however, government strategies after independence to subvert this constitution succeeded as a result of the weakness of the Kenyan judicial system. Members of the South African legal system should take note of this failure, concluded Yash Ghai.

It became clear that nationalism and ethnicity are important political elements in these Asian and African countries today. Two differences between countries in these two continents need to be recognised. Crawford Young noted, first, how rarely ethnic movements in Africa become national movements. These movements tend to stake claims for better access to resources rather than for territorial independence. In the second place, he pointed to the prohibition, in Africa, not elsewhere, on the use of ethnic labels in politics. The language of political discourse, accordingly, differs in each of the continents.

## Breaking the Taboo

The third idea of direct relevance to contemporary South African politics which emerged from the conference, involves South African intellectuals and politicians directly. To put it bluntly, South Africans, at least in public, *have remained silent on the ethnic question*. They have failed to ask how important ethnic identities are to South Africans, under which conditions these identities become salient, and, subsequently, what measures need to be discussed to address these ethnic identities.

Delegates noted that there was little current public discussion on South African ethnic identities, that the little discussion which did take place referred, almost exclusively, to Afrikaner and Zulu identities (see Hamilton & Wright and de Haas & Zulu in this edition), and that the notion of race was used unproblematically and crudely. Adam Kuper from Brunei University argued, in fact, that South Africans typically used race in its 'official' sense as an outcome, rather than as a 'formation', rather than as a construct in the minds of different South Africans.

As noted by McAllister and Sharp in their introduction to this special edition, a number of reasons may be given for this glaring omission from public political discourse. Until recently, debate on ethnicity in South Africa was perceived to be tantamount to doing the apartheid government's 'dirty work' for it. Most South African political analysts and academics, moreover, are white and have little direct contact with rank-and-file black South Africans. The dominant theories employed by these analysts are rooted in European ideas about class and nationalism.

The few black South African scholars in the country shy away from the ethnic question. (The absence of these scholars from the conference was perhaps the major criticism voiced by foreign delegates.) Finally, particularly since 1990, a widespread culture of 'political correctness' has reigned in many scholarly circles: to put the ethnic question is commonly viewed to insinuate opposition to the African National Congress ideology of non-racial South African nationalism.

Those involved in the South African political discourse of 1993 and beyond may benefit substantially from the outcome of the Grahamstown ethnicity conference. It situated this discourse clearly in a new global context from which South Africa will not be able to hide. It also pointed to important lessons in comparative constitutional arrangements and developments.

Perhaps of most importance, the conference underlined the need for South Africans to put their ethnic question, and to put this question regularly and squarely during their political discourses. Without debate on this question, innocent policies aimed at building a South African nation run huge risks for all South Africans.

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## Conference Info

- Further selections of papers will be published in forthcoming journal and book collections yet to be announced by the conference organisers.
- Q The selection published in this edition of *Indicator SA* are abridged versions of original conference papers by: Johan Degenaar, Mark Simpson, Denis-Constant Martin, Len Bloom, Carolyn Hamilton & John Wright, Mary de Haas & Paulus Zulu, Kader Asmal and Yash Ghai;
- with conference overviews by Patrick McAllister, John Sharp, Simon Bekker and Malusi Balintulo.
- and additional contributions on related themes commissioned by *Indicator SA*.



# The Owl of

*Malusi Balintulo, Department of Sociology, University of Fort Hare*

*The conference on 'Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa: Comparative Perspectives' held in Grahamstown between 20 and 24 April 1993 was a remarkable event in a number of ways. It brought together an array of local and international scholars from a variety of disciplines with diverse orientations. It attracted participants from various walks of life. It was also supported by an impressive list of international sponsors obviously attracted by the urgency of the theme in the context of the unfolding drama of negotiations in South Africa. The following comments represent a personal overview of the event and were made at the closing plenary session.*

*The themes of ethnicity, identity and nationalism were debated amidst the tragic events taking place in Yugoslavia*

**I**f one were to attempt to contextualise the Grahamstown conference in the contemporary world situation the following sketch would provide a rough framework:

The demise of state communism in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe and the subsequent vociferous \* assertion of ethnic nationalism. While these developments have been hailed as marking the 'end of ideology' and the triumph of the logic of the free market in some quarters, this supposed magical panacea has not significantly improved the condition of the majority of human-kind.

- Ⓜ The revival of overt racism in Western Europe in a context of impending unification, continental consolidation and economic recession.
- » The continuing marginalisation of the historically disadvantaged groups in the North American context amidst mega-trade bloc formation in terms of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), and economic recession.
- Ⓜ The ever deepening crisis in the African continent caused by the failed attempts

at meaningful nation-building and the acute problems generated by maldevelopment and authoritarian rule.

- Ⓜ At home in South Africa, the con: used mixture of hope and despair generated in the interregnum between the partial demise of apartheid and the birth of a yet undefined new order.

Against this global backdrop it was perhaps inevitable that an air of both urgency and despondency would pervade much of the conference discussions. The theories and themes of ethnicity, identity and nationalism were debated amidst the tragic events taking place *inter alia* in the former Yugoslavia and in Angola.

There was a sense in which the social and cultural sciences seemed to be performing the ritual of Hegel's 'Owl of Minerva' whose notorious reputation was that of arrival after the event. The implied impotence of academic debate is a far cry from the exhortation of the last thesis of Feuerbach to the effect that 'philosophers have interpreted the world, the point, however, is how to change it'.

Yet, in contemporary South Africa, the conference could be viewed as an attempt to actualise what might be called 'potential late democratisation advantage', in the sense of learning from the many tragic mistakes and failures of other societies.

It should be added, however, that the narrow focus on ethnicity to the exclusion of its erstwhile bedfellow, namely, *race*, and its handmaiden, *gender*, was somewhat incomprehensible. While the inclusion of gender would have broadened the scope of the conference beyond manageable levels, the relegation of race to the status of a ghost at the banquet was surprising. This was especially so, given the fact that the ethnicisation and racialisation projects have operated in tandem at both the discursive and systemic levels in the South African case as strategies of oppression, exploitation and inferiorisation.

•To underline the point, a cursory look at the composition of the list of conference participants reflected the pervasive salience of both race and gender in terms of the predominance of white males.

Be that as it may, what about the overall treatment of the themes? Overall, the impressive range of contributions from highly sophisticated theoretical treatises to detailed ethnographic and historical case studies confirmed one's view of the near perplexing complexity of these phenomena.

Ethnicity and nationalism cannot be treated as isolable 'things' instead of complex and fluid beliefs embedded in asymmetrical power relationships and situations of intergroup conflict. There seemed to be a measure of consensus amongst participants that there could not be an adequate single theory of ethnicity as such.

A useful analytical distinction was suggested between issues of identity formation and assertion on the one hand, and issues of ethnic mobilisation as strategies of inter-group combat, on the other. Perhaps a further refinement of this analytical distinction at two levels might be useful. The *macro-perspective* would bring back both class and gender into focus in examining race and ethnicity whereas the *micro-perspective* would be sensitive to the personal experiences of individual actors which are also significant in shaping attitudes.

A near intractable problem is to reconcile the important function of a critical social science, namely that of debunking common sense conceptions, with the implications of WI Thomas' dictum that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. The complexity of the problem can be illustrated by the following example.

In 1970 in the small island of Trinidad in the West Indies there occurred what came to be called a 'Black Power' rebellion against the black government of Dr Eric Williams. It is generally agreed among commentators that one of the effects of this event was the heightening of 'ethnic' consciousness and solidarity among the Indo-Trinidadian community on the island.

Twenty years later, a storm erupted when the leader of the uprising asserted that it was never about black power but that it had

been a class struggle. This, perhaps more than anything else, illustrates the futility of attempts at conceptual purity in the classification of action (even in ideal-type terms). Perhaps our intellectuals' energies could be better spent pondering over the actual and potential impact of various types of actions on intergroup relations.

In fact the black diaspora may provide an interesting laboratory for the study of these phenomena in all their subtle variations. For instance, explanations of the splintering of political parties are readily explained by reference to ethnicity in Trinidad whereas similar developments in next-door Barbados, which is predominantly African, are explained in terms of ideological or personality differences. Of course, all of these identities are disguised and merged during the annual carnival rituals or superseded by national rituals during sporting encounters against foreign teams!

It will be obvious from the above comments why the importance of comparative work cannot be overemphasised. For instance, a comparison of the relative 'ethnic peace' that has been characteristic of Botswana with the Nigerian variant of 'ethnic rivalry' would be extremely interesting.

The phenomena that we conveniently label 'ethnic' may be of such wide variety at the level of meaning that lumping them together may be an exercise in obfuscation. They may vary from racist conceptions of culture, to healthy assertions of identity that may be a prerequisite for the harnessing of diversity in a culturally plural society as an asset rather than a liability.

It also follows that the assertion of ethnic identities in an ethnocentric and jingoistic manner cannot augur well for peaceful co-existence in a democratic society. It is imperative that a sensitive social science should not only point out the likely consequences of such actions, but should also debunk unscientific conceptions. That is why the spread of the sociological imagination to the largest possible sectors of the citizenry will be a pressing task for any future democratic system of education.

In the transition to a democratic order in South Africa, we have to confront afresh the question raised by Karl Mannheim, namely, why certain kinds of ideas pass as knowledge at particular points in time in the history of societies.

There is no doubt that the whole intellectual process in this country has been adversely

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affected by apartheid. Some of these fears were evident in some puerile actions on the part of some conference participants to accusations of Eurocentric bias. Yet the emergent discourse on Afrocentricity, deserves closer study as an attempt to redress the perceived intellectual iniquities that are seen to be the legacy of western intellectual hegemony as it impacts on the process of identity re-interpretation.

There is also the horrendous scourge of violence which has tragically become an integral part of the fabric of life in South Africa. While this problem has not been theorised in a Fanonist fashion, for instance, there is an underlying, albeit unsubstantiated, current of thought that violence has something to do with ethnicity.

The selective treatment of violence implies that it is a problem of certain ethnic groups only. The human sciences should abandon the bad habits of the past. In other words, the intricacies of identity formation and assertion among, say South Africans of Jewish extraction, should be as much a subject of study as those of Zulus-speaking people.

One of the most pressing problems for South Africa is to find a basis for a measure of cohesion. Unfortunately, the legacy of a racially structured capitalism which has marginalised the majority of the population may well lead to the accentuation of ethnic and racial chauvinism as a defensive mechanism on the part of those who see democratisation as a threat to their politically derived privileges.

A potentially unifying factor would be the development and nurturing of a commitment to a common South African citizenship in the context of a redistributive democracy. This is the only force that could release all the people's creative energies in an environment of mutual respect for all the cultural traditions of South Africa.

South African society should be cleansed of racism and bigotry through a process of bold and honest self-criticism. In this process the role of the social sciences and the education system is a crucial one. Both need to be radically transformed in the most creative and imaginative of fashions to begin to address these arduous and daunting challenges.

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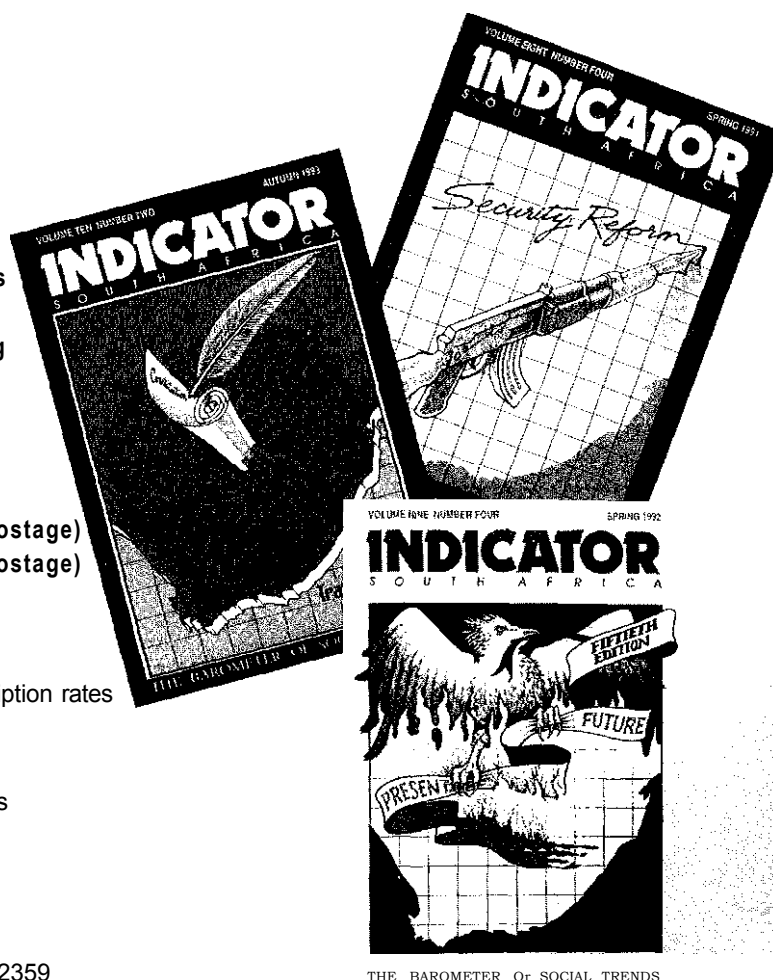
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