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POLITICAL STRUCTURES FOR
MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETIES;
BASIC CONCEPTS AND
CONSIDERATIONS

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I. I have taken the title of this paper very seriously and consequently I am going to attempt to focus the analysis specifically on race as a factor in politics, as opposed to culture, ethnicity, class or any other aspect of social difference. This is difficult because race seldom exists in isolation from other differences such as those I have mentioned. It is also difficult because race is a curiously subtle and elusive factor in politics, as I will try to show. For these two reasons I will have to commence the argument with a number of very obvious points and arguments, simply in order to try to give my later remarks some firm basis. I apologise in advance for any tedium.

One other apology needs to be made. Although the title may sound prescriptive, my final remarks will be merely suggestive. I agree fully with Gabriel Almond and Robert Mundt when they say that "choices in politics are constrained but indeterminate".¹⁾ Sociology and political science seldom provide political route-maps; they can only indicate dead-ends, dangerous curves and the condition of roads. Politicians and their supporters and ideologies must choose the destinations.

Intrinsically or *in itself*, race as a factor in the political dynamics of a society means virtually nothing. Here one thinks of race simply as a clustering of biological characteristics. Why should nose shape, hair-texture, skin colour or head-shape mean anything in particular for the political stratification of a society. Socially, race *need not* mean anything more than appearance. To my knowledge nobody has yet advanced any serious theory about the political sociology of complexion or eye-colour and the like. The Nazis, of course, tied certain physical characteristics to their theory of Aryan superiority, but their theory really concerned genetically determined moral character - appearance *in itself* was merely a (inevitable) correlate, index or a label. Some psychologists have produced evidence which they claim to reflect on differences in *average* intelligence between races. It seems, however, that the majority of their colleagues is not convinced that their tests are free of various kinds of bias. But, let us assume for a moment that such differences in average abilities do exist. The argument for a difference

1) Gabriel Almond and Robert Mundt, "Crisis, Choice and Change: Some Tentative Conclusions", in Gabriel Almond, Scott Flanagan and Robert Mundt, eds., *Crisis, Choice and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development*, Boston: Little Brown, 1973.

in average also implies a spread around the average and hence an overlap in scores for groups. What does a different average IQ mean if, say, 30 or 40 per cent of the 'lower' groups have scores *higher* than 30 or 40 percent of the 'higher' groups? If it is one day proved that the South East Asian peoples have higher average basic intellectual abilities than anyone else, would anyone seriously contemplate giving them more votes on the United Nations because of it? It is necessary to belabour these points somewhat simply in order to counter the surprisingly widespread notion that somehow race implies more 'serious' differences between peoples than culture; in fact the opposite is true if these criteria are viewed in their own right.

Racial differences only become important when such differences are associated with other differences. Although this remark is fairly obvious, it is necessary for completeness, perhaps, to list these other, intrinsically more meaningful dimensions of differentiation: power, economic privilege, social status or honour, culture, including language and religion and 'identity'. Particularly the last factor requires elaboration, and will be discussed more in due course. Racial differences, when associated with any one or several of such other factors become the more convenient labels, because of their ready visibility. Race as a social label means a great deal more than it really is. More importantly, however, racial divisions are rigid when physical differences are clear-cut, and hence once race becomes the label for power or culture, the pattern or system of differentiation in a society will tend to become more resistant to change. If popular politics has defined the system of differentiation in terms of race, that differentiation will have acquired a nature significantly different to one in which race has no part.

Race, as I see it then, is a curiously ambiguous factor in politics. While in itself it means virtually nothing, once a meaning is imposed on it, it can become more powerful than all other dimensions of differentiation. Race is a *social construction* only, but where its social meaning exists, it becomes (with apologies to chemistry) a *catalyst* in a mix of other factors and a *solidifying agent*.

This ambiguity of race leads to surprisingly contrasting social outcomes. Egypt or Algeria for example, are almost as 'racially heterogeneous' as South Africa or the Sudan; yet the former societies are not even commonly recognised as multi-racial whereas in the latter race (in coincidence with other differences) has dominated their internal politics.

II. I have suggested then, that race as a factor of differentiation may be of a different order to the other major courses of socio-political division found in society. I will argue later that, in a sense, it is what race does not mean that makes it so problematic. Firstly, however, it might be useful to consider some of the critical features of the other divisive factors in order to help clarify the role of race in some societies.

Power is a very salient factor in its own right. Recently with so much emphasis being placed by critical sociologists on economic determinants of social structure and behaviour, power has perhaps not been accorded sufficient attention in analyses of divided societies. The motive of power and the desire on the part of people to be associated with power has a double basis. As a means of influencing or coercing other individuals or groups to behave in certain ways, power, obviously, is the means to many political ends -- privilege, security, status, preferred life-styles and many other rewards. Power cannot be simply reduced to or equated with these other goals. It contains a component, even if it is only a residue, of its own reward. It is ego-expanding and role-enriching -- in other words it provides the holders of power with a clear sense of efficacy and potency, and earns deference. Cynical as it may sound, the 'big frog in the pond' motive simply cannot be minimised. But, it is a morally suspect motive and hence everyone will deny it and look for convenient reasons for calling it something else. It has been called public service, civic duty, divine mission, and even the 'call' to leadership. Above all it is one of the roots of competitiveness, a basic motive for organisation and a means of rewarding followers, not only by patronage but also by bestowing the delights of reflected glory. Power must seek an arena, a team, an army, a faction, or a social category in order to realise and articulate itself and to promote itself within the political 'marketplace'. Where racial differences exist, virtually meaningless in themselves, but glaringly visible and clear-cut, they can come to represent the defining characteristics of power or powerlessness. Race acquires a social potency well above its intrinsic measure. As said before while power-motives are difficult to justify within a modern framework of political norms and ideals, racial categories have tended to be self-legitimising at a very basic level. Even within a framework of anti-racist norms, where race differentiation is socially manifest, it is seldom denied or overlooked by the society. In post-'civil rights' United States, for example, established institutions may be combating discrimination and prejudice but race, simply as a label -- a social category -- without any necessary implications one way

or the other, persists. This issue requires further attention and I will raise it again in due course.

Everything that I have said about power in relation to race can be said about economic privilege, and about social status and prestige. These motives too -- although all-pervasive and obvious as the basis for social-ordering within all complex societies, are seldom advertised as goals and motives within modern political cultures, except by those classes or status-groups that consider themselves to be deprived of these rewards or at a relative disadvantage. Where these distinctions coincide with racial categories, race becomes the label. One of two processes or both simultaneously can occur. Either the presence of co-incidental race distinctions can facilitate the maintenance of privilege or status in the advantaged group and/or race itself becomes imbued with 'hard' interests and is then perpetuated as the criterion according to which privilege and status is allocated.

One of the reasons why class-confrontation has been avoided in many industrialising states is because growth has allowed class and status movement, thereby softening the social meanings associated with class. Where class and race intertwine, mobility becomes relatively more problematic because of the physical visibility of race, and the 'class society' can become very much more rigid.

Traditions, customs, language and religion are factors in social differentiation which differ significantly from power, privilege and status in at least two respects. Firstly, they do not, by definition, imply social inequality. They can be appreciated or practised in private, non-political spheres and hence need not detract from one another. Theoretically they need not form part of any zero-sum social equation and can all add to the 'social cake'. They need not cause antagonism, therefore, or even be a basis for political mobilisation. Some customs may be seen to impose social costs or have a nuisance-value, but then motorcyclists, the owners of barking dogs, or smokers, etc. are not discriminated against as groups and have not yet formed minority parties. Intrinsically, customs, culture and religion are factors of social differentiation not inequality.

Secondly, unlike the inequality factors, culture and religion are openly acknowledged as values and frequently earn respect from out-groups. They need not be hidden political agendas. The constitutional proposals of the Progressive Federal Party in South Africa, for example, takes both

these propositions very seriously and formally accepts cultural differences as valued and legitimate 'private' social differentiators but without implications of inequality or need for formalised separation.

Unfortunately, however, language, religion and custom are frequently less-benign. Lijphart, in a rigorous analysis of determinants of voting behaviour of the 'crucial experiment' type in four political systems where class, religion and language differences co-exist, concludes: 'it may be likened to a decisive trial of strength in which religion turns out to be victorious, language is a strong runner-up, and class finishes as a distant third'.²⁾ Even in modern, formally secular class societies, religion and language differences have been and are at the very least the focus of political competition, not only as a surrogate for class but as Lijphart shows, superseding class in political strength.

Where religion or language or custom and culture coincide with visible distinctions of race, the resultant compound effect appears to be very powerful indeed. But the interesting question here is why religion and language, which are theoretically non-antagonistic divisions, can produce such powerful conflicts and such coherent political mobilisation. I find this question doubly interesting because it bears upon the critical question one must ask about race. Why, when race is socially a meaningless matter of appearance, does it become so potent a divisive factor when 'activated' by other factors of differentiation with which it coincides?

III. Identity: This problematic concept seems to hold some clues to the two questions posed above. Perhaps the most neglected basic influence on political behaviour of all, the motivations surrounding the concept of identity are at one and the same time both self-evident and elusive. Many sociologists and political scientists feel uneasy about the concept because it smacks of the reduction of analysis to social psychology. Marxists would perhaps relegate it to that intellectual refuse dump of awkward and difficult-to-explain concepts called 'false consciousness'. It is a supremely irrational kind of need and seems to call into question or complicate so many of the oversimple basic images of man that abound in contemporary social science. It is not really compatible with notions of man as being materialistic and reward-maximising or

2) Arend Lijphart, "Religious vs. Linguistic vs Class Voting: The 'Crucial Experiment' of Comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa and Switzerland", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 73, June, 1979, pp. 442-458.

co-operative, collective and fellow-man oriented or self-actualising and transcendent. Because of its neglected status a few very simple basic propositions regarding identity are called for.

Every conscious human being must have some sort of self-concept. We know that it is possible, among mystics and saints, to have a self-concept which is self-negating or self-transcending. Human beings form initial and basic self-concepts as children, however, when abstract or highly indirect reasoning is impossible. There will always be a tendency therefore for the typical ordinary person to emerge as an adult with a self-concept which is self-conscious and ego-centred. Ego maintenance and, if possible, ego-expansion are pervasive and inevitable needs. However subtle its manifestation, social needs must reflect the need among people in society for personally adequate or expanding self-evaluation (societies in situations of dire physical survival anxiety or abject poverty may represent instances where these needs are temporarily suspended). While there may be many ways of achieving adequate self-definition and hence personal dignity, only a few people have the privilege of achievement-based self-actualisation. For most people among the world's populations, denied opportunities for education, self-improvement and creative or aesthetic pursuits, identity becomes very substantially a matter of reference group affiliation. 'My family', 'my lineage', 'my kin', 'my team', 'my neighbourhood' are important localised foundations of identity; 'my culture', 'my religion', 'my nation' and 'my race' the more general. Personal feelings of dignity expand with the status of the group, and status is usually *relative* to other groups. Invidious social ranking is fairly inevitable, and substantial proportions of people everywhere have a personal stake in their groups being better, stronger, cleverer, nobler than others, or if that is manifestly impossible, the group must at least be seen as special in some way.

It is undoubtedly theoretically possible that highly positive criteria like love, generosity, humility become benchmarks of group identity. Remember the small child however, whose task of establishing some inchoate identity is made much easier by the psychologically convenient method of invidious comparison with peers. While anything is possible for mankind, the most 'economical' or straightforward way of self and group evaluation is social ranking. (My own feeling is that Sociology's greatest tasks and challenges lie in this area of study.)

Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils, refer to the root-springs of ethnic

group feeling as the 'primordial' factor.³⁾ Geertz extending his notion of the primordial factor to the political realm points out that after the establishment of nation states, "citizenship became the most broadly negotiable claim to personal significance ..."⁴⁾ Benjamin Akzin,⁵⁾ and many others, see personal investment in group affiliation as inevitable conditions, not caused only by the effects of social structure, mode of production or political organisation, but more basically a consequence of very typical and pervasive ego-needs — human weakness, if you like. Without deep 'inner' resources, the development of which on a mass scale would be utopian in extreme, identity must surely to some extent or another be sought in group identification.

Identity and self-image do not prescribe social forms; they are shared needs which fill social vessels. The vessel can be status honour, cultural group, power, privilege, lifestyle or race. Race, however, has a particular attraction as a focus of identity in multi-racial situations, simply because it denotes appearance — body image. One of the most intimate aspects of identity is body image, however unconscious, and peoples of contrasting colours can experience inarticulate feelings of quite irrational mutual polarisation because of this.

IV. This has been a long digression into very basic concepts but necessary in order to suggest the following propositions:

1) Race as a factor in political divisions has no substantive determining content in its own right. If race has no social recognition in a society it will remain totally irrelevant (as would be the case in some East European societies where caucasoid and people of mixed mongoloid ancestry are largely oblivious of their differences).

2) Where race has become a criterion of social classification, however subtly or informally, various extrinsic meanings can (usually do) become imposed on it. Because it relates to physical appearance it is a possible

3) Clifford Geertz, "Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States" in Geertz (Ed.), *Old Societies and New States*, London: Collier MacMillan, 1963.

4) *Ibid.*, p.108.

5) Benjamin Akzin, *State and Nation*, London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964.

focus of powerful primordial identity needs. Once racial group identification is established other social meanings accrete to it, namely status, social honour, privilege and power.

3) Where race is accompanied by cultural particularities (as is so often the case) cultural differences, which theoretically are not the basis for antagonism, become the most plausible rationalisation or legitimation of racial inequalities.

4) Where racial and cultural differences coincide, with or without other aggravating features, the manifest physical reality of racial differences imparts a rigidity to the structure of differentiation, and this rigidity can be plausibly legitimated by those in superior positions by referring to the commonly accepted values of cultural integrity.

5) Hence race, from being a feature of no substance, through its properties as a social catalyst and visible, facile social label, emerges in history as perhaps the most powerful divisive factor of all.

6) The implications of race for society at the political level are likely to be very different depending on the degree of *race crystallisation*, the extent to which racial categories are distinct, clearly bounded and unambiguous in terms of social criteria. If a society has a continuum of pigmentation, with a large number of slight differences in racial appearance, like Caribbean societies, Brazil, India or Portugal, colour may become associated with prestige and status but it is unlikely that any major political groupings will be based on race. Where some major historical event like invasion and conquest, colonisation, or the importation of slaves brings two or three clearly distinctive groups into contact and where a group with the power to determine social norms perceives itself as distinctive then major political consequences can follow.

7) Where the racial groups in a society are in substantial numerical imbalance and the category of lower political and social status is a small minority then political consequences are likely to be very different from those in a situation where there is greater numerical equality or when the higher status group is a minority. When the 'excluded' group could dominate politics or hold a permanent balance of power, the implications are obviously very different from the more common problem of racial minorities in otherwise homogeneous societies.

V. Much of the popular wisdom concerning the race societies is that non-racial democracy would be possible were it not for the racist motivations and fearfulness, material selfishness and/or power hunger of the white minorities. While these types of diagnoses of white motives may be more or less appropriate, the issue of democracy is not quite so simple. Democracy is a relatively rare political form in the world, although it is a well-nigh universal value. The lip-service that is so commonly paid to it obscures the fact that it is a very delicate political plant indeed. Very broadly, the maintenance of liberal democracy in a unitary state in which there is majority rule of the 'winner-take-all' kind seems to require many, if not most of the following societal features:

- broad consensus among all significant groups regarding national values, symbols and goals;
- an overarching sense of common national identity and loyalty - implying a relatively homogeneous society;
- material interests for which there is some prospect of realisation within the system as it exists;
- political party-affiliation which is reasonably fluid so that parties can compete effectively for support; hence,
- prospects of alteration of power between parties;
- opposition parties which have sufficient support among powerful groups so as to be taken seriously and consulted on important national issues;
- participation by the populace in the political process as individuals or as members of interest-groups and not rigidly as members of sub-nations, races or ethnic factions - hence solidarity and exclusiveness are destructive in a democracy;
- some perceived prospects of upward social mobility for all individuals and prospects for voluntary or achieved membership of privileged classes and interest groupings;
- lines of separation (cleavage) which cut across one another rather than lines of separation which coincide and reinforce one another (e.g., many rich catholics, and many poor protestants in a situation where there is both religious and class cleavage);
- a line-up of major political parties which are all basically opposed to radical changes in the system, whatever the rhetoric - inter-party conflict can become sufficiently ruthless to sacrifice democratic principles if the basic social order is at stake;
- institutions for the resolution of conflict which largely adhere

- to the principles of compromise and negotiation;
- a well-developed network of voluntary and semi-formal organisations in the society which are fairly independent of government and which command influential support. This organisational infrastructure can sanction government action and discourage excesses of power; this would include
 - an independent judiciary and a legal system which has access to the consequences of state action;
 - no substantial pool of severe relative deprivation, hence no requirement on the state to contain or suppress fervent political discontent, thereby avoiding the need for authoritarian maintenance of social order;
 - an independent, critical and confident intellectual elite with non-conformist views and substantial status;
 - a history of non-conformist religious movements among respectable echelons of society.

Societies which have achieved these kinds of basic requirements have generally undergone a gradual historical process of social differentiation and reform, accompanied by expanding affluence and the piecemeal resolution of social conflict. Constitutions and good intentions alone cannot bring about democracy. If democracy has failed in so many parts of the Third World it is not because its politicians are any more corruptible than those of the industrialised West; they have, among other things, been much less-constrained by social forces and freer to implement arbitrary policies and pursue ideosyncratic or dictatorial whims. One-party democracies which abound in the Third World attempt to preserve some democratic procedures by having the single party define and limit the issues of conflict to those which will not threaten the social order. However, they all too easily fall into the trap of equating the social order with the interests of the party elites.

Consociational theorists like Lijphart, Daalder, Rose, Hanf, McRae, Lehbruch and many others⁶⁾ suggest in their analyses that not all

6) For an excellent discussion of these views see Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, and Theodor Hanf *et.al.*, *Südafrika: Friedlicher Wandel?* München/Mainz: Kaiser-Grunewald, 1978, Chapters 1, 12 and 13.

the preconditions of the type mentioned above need be present if competitive democracy is preceded by a period of elite-accommodation or consociationalism.

Culturally cleaved or 'plural' societies need not be characterised by disruptive inter-group conflict and authoritarian rule if the legitimate leaders of the different ethnic segments participate in an 'elite cartel' in a spirit of constructive compromise, so laying the policy foundations for the eventual emergence of a balanced and politically integrated society. In this kind of consociational transition, reforms and social differentiation can take place which will introduce politically relevant conflicts of interest *within* ethnic segments to balance the inter-ethnic conflict.

Lijphart⁷⁾ suggests that the constitutional arrangements appropriate to this period of coalition or compromise would include:

- mutual veto-rights for major ethnic groups;
- proportionality in representation at all levels of government and in the civil service, armed forces etc;
- the over-representation of significant and sensitive minorities, and;
- the encouragement of as much autonomy for the ethnic segments as possible, definitely including control over internal group affairs.

If features such as these are not too rigidly entrenched the resultant system will stand a good chance of warding off threats to stability, and to ethnic group interests and allow for a transition away from ethnicism as tensions and group-identities soften. The essential idea is that the *checks and balances* on government which are in a sense organic in a developed and differentiated modern ethnically homogeneous society are deliberately erected in a consociational system by elite agreement. Consociationalism is not a pretty arrangement and is universally spurned by idealists who believe in the rapid emergence of 'brotherhood' if economic and social structures change. Consociationalism, as Lijphart puts it, is negative rather than positive peace, co-existence rather than brotherhood.

I will argue presently for the appropriateness to race societies

7) See also Arend Lijphart, "Majority rule versus Democracy in Deeply Divided Societies". *Politikon*, Vol. 4, 1977, pp. 113-126.

of some aspects of the type of consociational arrangement described above, but before that some words of caution. Lijphart sees some societies as too deeply divided and inappropriately structured for even consociationalism to work adequately. Consociationalism may require:

- a multiple balance of power in which no single group has overriding potential political strength;
- considerable talent in relation to the size and complexity of the society;
- perceptions of common dangers;
- some society-wide loyalties;
- no extreme socio-economic inequalities;
- prior traditions of compromise and accommodation; and
- a natural or existing economic and geographic separation of groups.

VI. What political structures are appropriate for our crystallised race societies? Is consociationalism the answer, at least as a form of transition? Elsewhere I have raised serious questions about this,⁸⁾ but I will briefly summarise my doubts as follows. Firstly, we must consider that where the basic and most fundamental cleavage is race there is unlikely to be a multiple balance of power, unless the society is fortunate enough to have equal proportions. Above all we must consider that whereas ethnic groups contain often large proportions of people who are only mildly 'ethnic' or indifferent in their feelings, race is an identity which is assumed willy-nilly. If mobilisation is on the basis of race then the stark numbers game must be taken very seriously, at least in potential terms.

Secondly, a multi-racial society is not likely to have regionally separated groups - the type of society we have in mind is typically racially 'layered', with considerable economic integration. Hence perceptions of relative deprivation and invidious comparisons are likely to be more intense than those in regionalised plural societies. South Africa's urban areas and the so-called problem of the 'urban' African is a case in point.

8) L. Schlemmer, "Social Implications of Constitutional Alternatives in South Africa", in John A. Benyon (Ed.), *Constitutional Change in South Africa*. Natal University Press, Pietermaritzburg. pp. 258-275.

Thirdly, regarding the need for a spirit of compromise, we must consider, as Van Zyl Slabbert⁹⁾ has argued, that racial categories do not encourage compromise, particularly when the consciousness has crystallised into Black Consciousness / Power versus white survival. It is very difficult to negotiate around blackness and whiteness unless one is negotiating for radical partition. Racial antagonisms, as I have argued in my earlier remarks, are certainly not the least bitter and polarising of social categories. Not only the issue of a spirit of compromise is problematic but that of some shared loyalties as well. Race societies are societies of enforced segregation, whether formal or informal, and common loyalties are tenuous under a system which is so mutually alienating for the groups involved.

As I have already alluded, however, perhaps the most negative factor of all as regards the prospects for compromise of the consociational type lies in what race is *not*. In cases where political conflict is rooted in cultural, religious or language differences, a political accommodation based on the reality of those groupings stands a good chance of being seen as a legitimate arrangement, in essence. The one religious, cultural or language group might at least understand the other groups desire for autonomy, self-determination, group representation or whatever form of group-based participation in politics is proposed. Race, however, does not have the same legitimacy, and the motives of the race-group desiring a form of dispensation based on racial categories will tend to be seen as simply 'racist'.

Even if one group has defined the group differentiation as 'cultural' the other groups will still be likely to reject whatever arrangements are made for group representation as disguised racism. These difficulties arise fundamentally because race is a *social construction* with no intrinsic validity; its relevance exists only for those who perceive it as important. If differences in privilege exist, the problem is compounded. Only the group with something to lose will see any worth in a political dispensation based on racial categories. Racial identity is rewarding and ego-expanding only for those who occupy the superior racial status in the society. For the rest it is a symbol of victimisation.

9) Sociologist and leader of the white opposition in South Africa.

Over the past decade-and-a-half, in the United States, South Africa and elsewhere blacks suffering the psychological consequences of discrimination have espoused various forms of 'Black Consciousness', and some people might argue that this might provide a basis for constructive inter-group negotiation or for a group-based political participation. This seems to be a dubious hope, however. In the U.S.A. Black Consciousness has in part taken the form of what strikes me as a contrived revival of a synthetic pre-slavery Africanist culture, which is not likely to succeed in engendering the same sort of positive in-group identification as that experienced by immigrant minorities. In South Africa, where attempts have been made for a long time by the black intelligentsia to distantiate themselves from African 'tribal' culture, Black Consciousness is quite evidently a group-based spirit of protest and resistance. Attempts to formulate some form of pan-Africanist cultural expression seem to me to be shallow and unconvincing for the proponents themselves. It is liberation ideology and not culture. It is a positive racial identity only for as long as racial protest and resistance is necessary. (This is not to say that Black Consciousness has not brought great benefits to blacks in their attempts to interact with whites with dignity and self-confidence.)

Race differentiation in the race-societies under discussion has persisted despite widespread Westernisation and cultural change on the part of blacks. No one can expect the urban black political intelligentsia to want political arrangements which will entrench a race-caste identity which has always been its greatest source of woe. South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia have black ethnic groups, to be sure, but the essential conflict has not been between ethnics with white skins and ethnics with black skins — it has been between a multi-ethnic white stratum and a multi-ethnic 'non-white' stratum. Defining the political conflict primarily in ethnic terms in Southern Africa is to accept shallow political rationalisations.

The race-societies of Southern Africa, then, do not appear to conform to some of the most significant requirements for successful consociationalism. Yet, racial identity remains highly salient for the powerful white minorities which have enormous power to resist any change which holds severe threats to their interests; indeed, in South Africa they have the power to resist such change for a long time to come and quite possibly to disrupt the society totally. Meaningful political change is vitally necessary. For reasons outlined earlier, however, both Westminster-type majority rule democracy and consociationalism appear to be

counter-indicated in the short to medium term. Zimbabwe-Rhodesia is undergoing a coerced change as a result of war and is not a model for the other societies particularly in view of the greater relative strength of the white minority in South Africa.

VI. Political solutions are not achieved only by constitutional proposals; planned social change can also be essential in creating the basis for the successful adoption of constitutional arrangements. The analysis I have attempted thus far strongly suggests the need for strategic planned change. In South Africa, for example, virtually no conceivable constitutional arrangement appears to be likely to gain acceptance among both whites and blacks under present social conditions and the government would be well-advised to implement far-reaching reforms which will result in a viable socio-political basis for a negotiated compromise in the fairly near future.

The reforms must include measures which will widen the scope of shared interests across all race groups and encourage society wide loyalties to the system, and above all, *cross-cutting* lines of differentiation, like: rapid improvements in education for blacks, including specialised 'crash-programmes' which will facilitate upward occupational movement for blacks. A high standard of education in a society is not only one important precondition for the successful implementation of democracy, but occupational mobility will reduce the co-incidence between colour and privilege, and in so doing weaken race polarisation; breaking down the stark segregation of racial communities by allowing mixed occupation of certain residential areas, on a controlled basis if deemed necessary. One is mindful of the fact that whites are highly-resistant to residential integration and that no government at this stage can afford to abandon the so-called Group Areas policy, but the carefully planned introduction of 'common areas' to complement group areas will allow voluntary desegregation and weaken racial polarisation; the introduction of full, representative government at the local authority level, with *proportional representation* in order to generate as much of a variety of leadership talent as possible and to mobilise the political energies of the relatively moderate rank-and-file blacks; (In a situation of what one may term 'race-protest' and lack of representative government, spokesmen for the disadvantaged groups would seem to be more militant than their average rank-and-file supporter.)

decentralisation of as much administrative authority as is consistent with the maintenance of order, for all groups;
 the encouragement of cross-racial regional planning and policy-making bodies which will encompass local authorities for different races on largely equal terms;
 a general shift to proportionality as a basis for all elections;
 non-racial elections for an upper-house or Senate but with the proviso that some fixed minimum proportion of support from all race groups is necessary for election.

The co-optation of blacks into positions of high authority would provide a powerful demonstration to the whole population, black and white, of the potential viability of joint rule without the domination of one group by another. I would suggest for South Africa, for example, that long drawn-out and cautious attempts at constitutional reform within the existing formal racial framework are dangerously counter-productive. They are perceived by black and Coloured opinion-leaders as attempts to sugar the pill of Apartheid. The more complex the proposals the more suspicion they arouse, as long as they are based on race. How much simpler and less alienating would it not be to appoint a number of 'non-whites' as assistant or deputy Cabinet Ministers, albeit in a special sort of capacity. In effect this type of 'joint Cabinet' is what the constitutional reforms are likely to lead to in any case, but along a much more dangerous path.

These are the kind of reforms and procedures which are essential to create the kind of climate in which consociationalism could succeed. They are not sufficient, however, simply because the greatest impediment of all in this type of society is the racial imbalance in numbers and the definition of the situation in terms of race, all rhetoric and denials notwithstanding. In Zimbabwe and Namibia the white minorities will ultimately capitulate to the majority in the face of international and military pressures. As I have said, in South Africa, the capacity of white power to coerce and retaliate is so great that an 'organic', internal solution has to be found to the problem of racial imbalance. This is where constitutional changes of a geo-political kind are essential.

One must assume that not all the 'homelands' will take independence (KwaZulu, the largest, is firmly resistant) and that Africans in 'white' urban areas will have to be granted security of status in the common area (government spokesmen have already accepted this principle). The numbers problem can then only be resolved by the creation of 'provinces' or 'states'

in a Federal system, with states having considerable autonomy and disproportional or equal representation in the central federal government. The *only* way that this kind of arrangement (which is clearly a manipulation of the situation) could win approval in the appropriate quarters among blacks and the international community, however, would be if race were to be entirely abandoned as a criterion for political participation within such states — the franchise should be extended to all within the framework of states or provinces. (It is this approach of abandoning race and establishing regionalism as the basis for safeguarding the political interests of minorities that makes the Progressive Federal Party's constitutional proposals the only programme for peaceful and orderly change with any longer-term prospect of winning support on both sides of the racial divide. In my academic role I bear no particular brief for this Party, but other proposals and popular viewpoints, both to the left and right of the Progressive Federal Party plan are strikingly unconstructive about the racial issue. Some simply condemn racial interests, others, either covertly or openly, propose confronting it violently, while among whites racial interests are either accommodated as such or obscured by rationalisations about culture or civilisation, making it impossible for Westernised and urbanised blacks to take the proposals seriously.)

One final point concerning South Africa is that the use of ethnicity and culture to justify racial interests has completely obscured the relevance of ethnicity. Among Afrikaners it would seem that interests are perceived much more in racial terms than in terms of Afrikaans cultural survival.¹⁰⁾ Blacks very understandably play down ethnicity because they suffer political and economic disadvantages as races, not as language or ethnic groups. Although dormant, ethnicity is potentially a very salient factor, as lessons elsewhere have taught us. My earlier analysis would suggest that ethnicity, although highly dangerous, is a more viable basis for political negotiation and accommodation in a divided society than is race. Therefore, where racial distinctions are *in part* a matter of ethnicity, as in South Africa, an intelligent policy would be to cease using ethnicity as a catch-all political rationalisation for race and privilege and develop it in terms of its own merits. This might reduce the salience of race, which would be all to the good. For example, in South Africa language-interests are very

10) L. Schlemmer (1978): "White Voters and Change in South Africa: Constraints and Opportunities." *Optima* V.27 (4) pp. 62-83.

important. It would be appropriate for any ultimate political dispensation to involve representation of language groups *per se* in some central legislature. A start should be made in this direction immediately, however nominally, perhaps by expanding the Senate to include nominated representatives. The representatives should be chosen on a non-racial basis however, to break the connection between ethnicity and race. One Afrikaans representative should be Coloured and one English-language representative should be African or Indian. There also should be representatives of the major African language-groups and the two major Indian religious groups.

In concluding I will restate my major point: race, because it has no essential socio-political implications in its own right, functions in a society with meanings acquired from various other divisions and interests, comes to stand for these other divisions and then creates rigidity and polarisation. Not having any meaning in its own right, it cannot form the basis for a group-based political compromise in a divided society — it will always be espoused by one group and rejected by the other. The race societies of Southern Africa have 'legitimate' ethnic divisions and structural characteristics which make Westminster-style democracy problematic and which call for a consociational or federal political system, at least during a period of transition while the societies develop integrating characteristics. (This is obviously purely theoretical as regards Zimbabwe now.) This, however, will only be possible if race is eliminated systematically as the basis of social and political organisation. In South Africa, unless this happens, no political compromise at all will be possible.



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