# Chapter 8

# Resisting Ethnicity from Above: Social Identities and Democracy in South Africa*

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## Introduction

The relationship between social identity and ethnicity is a thorny issue. The commitment to democracy in South African society requires every sector of society to claim authority, rights and responsibilities. The new South African Constitution enacted in 1996 further underpins these claims. These claims should, however, not be vested in ethnic antagonism, cultural supremacy or any other form of social exclusivity.

Given that ethnicity, language and colour have determined membership of state and society in the recently abolished apartheid system,[1] how can formerly excluded communities be recognised without perpetuating apartheid categorisations? This chapter addresses this question by focusing on South Africa's transition to democracy.

After being on the brink of a full-scale civil war for several years, South Africa has experienced relative stability in the last years of the 20th century as a consequence of almost ten years of transition-directed negotiations, ounding elections, compromises and reforms on various levels. Even contemporary "urban terrorism" (such as in the Western Cape) is

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expected to be contained by an appropriate crime prevention policy and its implementation.[2]

However, South Africa remains a deeply divided society. Culture, race, historical background, language and religion have all served to reinforce this segmentation (Bekker, 1996, p. 8).[3] Furthermore, ethnic, cultural, racial and religious differences often coincide with class differences.[4]

In addition, South African society still suffers from the legacy of colonialism and racial segregation imposed by continual minority governments.[5] The apartheid government, in particular, was a powerful allocator of identity (Singh, 1997). According to Pieterse (1992, p. 106), apartheid was a matter of "ethnicity from above" as the government used legislation and other sanctions to enforce acceptance of the most impoverished definitions of identity. It also suppressed and distorted identity to the extent that it excluded and suppressed all constituents of identity except race and ethnicity.

The struggle against apartheid—which resulted in nearly two decades of low-profile war and later mass mobilisation—served to facilitate identity formation by unifying opponents to apartheid in a common assertion of non-racialism and anti-racism. To an extent it also unified South Africans around anti-colonialism and perhaps a common "Africanness". The varied social and political movements that participated in the anti-apartheid struggle created a new identity by jointly and actively undermining apartheid notions of whiteness as representing political superiority and non-whiteness as representing political inferiority. *Thus anti-apartheid organisations and movements were important agents of identity construction*—and to an extent this legacy remains.

The radical inclusive definition of identity created by these movements formed the basis for many citizen-based checks on governmental authority in the new democratic dispensation. In short, some anti-apartheid movements fostered links between groups in civil society and legitimised citizens' expectations to the extent that the prevailing citizen identity became quite complex.

There were, on the other hand, anti-apartheid organisations that continued to base identity on race and ethnicity. Such exclusionist notions

of identity are still operative in the relative stability of the new democratic dispensation.

## Parameters of Identity Formation in South Africa

This chapter explores the ramifications of social identity for South African society. Fundamentally, we are interested in definitions of identity that do not openly set "self" against "other".[6] One such definition describes identity as being open-ended, fluid and constantly in a process of being constructed and reconstructed as the subject moves from one social situation to another, resulting in a self that is highly fragmented and context-dependent.

The notion of fluidity and context-dependence is particularly apt. After all, conflicting racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexual, religious and national identities are a reality. Hence members of a particular group do not all have the same concerns and viewpoints. The policies that have emerged from the "rainbow nation" philosophy must have taken cognisance of this fluidity as they embrace the multiplicity and dynamism of groups and discard the notion of the "natural", static and unchanging "group" or groups as expounded by apartheid.

Lipton (1985, pp. 14-15) summarises this contrast by listing the following defining characteristics of apartheid:

- The hierarchical ordering of the economic, political and social structures on the basis of race, identified by physical characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture and so on.
- Exclusion of "non-Europeans" from many of the civil, political and economic rights enjoyed by "Europeans", such as the right to vote, to move freely, to be full citizens of South Africa, and to own property and work anywhere in South Africa.
- Confining "non-Europeans" to inferior housing, schools, universities, hospitals and transport; and prohibiting sexual relations and intermarriage across the colour bar. This discrimination insinuated that "non-European" cultures were inferior to that of the Europeans.

- Institutionalising this hierarchical, discriminatory and segregated system in law, enabling the government to enforce it through various measures.[7]

Moreover, the above characteristics came to be underpinned by a *civil religion* that conferred "Christianity" on apartheid and "apartheid" on Christianity (Bosch, 1984; De Klerk, 1975; Du Preez, 1983).

The policy of apartheid then became pervasive in that it aimed at the "separate development" of different race and ethnic groups to the extent that some were defined out of South African national politics altogether. Each group would exercise the right to develop, in its own area, its own culture, heritage, language and concept of "nationhood". Thus, apartheid involved the institutionalisation of categorisations emanating from colonial anthropology. Socialisation was structured by the separation of people along racial as well as, in many cases, ethnic lines. Racial and ethnic segregation emphasised cultural "differences", often translated into stereotypes (Malan, 1995).

The most significant piece of legislation underlying the apartheid policy was the Population Registration Act of 1950[8] that classified the South African population into four racial groups—white, black, Indian and coloured. A white person was defined as someone who "in appearance obviously is a white person and who is not generally accepted as a coloured person; or is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person". A black was seen as any person who "is, or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe". A coloured person was defined as any person "who is not a white person or a black" sub-classified under the Malay, Griqua (*Griekwa*), Chinese (*Sjinese*) and Indian groups and two residual groups, the "other Asiatic group" and the "other coloured group".

These categories were distinguished from one another on the basis of descent, that is, classification of the natural father, and/or social acceptance as members of a particular sub-group (Du Toit & Theron, 1988, pp. 136-137; Horrel, 1982).

Apartheid, and the material interest and prejudice which informed it, generated privilege and status for Europeans and displaced and disadvan-

taged "non-Europeans". The best evidence of this is the pattern of population movement. Blacks were forced to live in "homelands", which were generally rural areas with scant opportunities for employment. The homelands acted as labour reserves for a migratory black South African workforce, allowing the enforcement of low wages and the neglect of working conditions.

Ever since the discovery of major mineral deposits in the 19th century, white entrepreneurs had entered into exploitative labour contracts with "non-whites" to maximise capital gains from the mineral resources of the country. "Non-whites" could enter into such contracts only if they relocated to the urbanising and industrialising regions of the country. However, they were prohibited from bringing their families to the economic cores with them.[9]

The political construction of "communities" through residential and social segregation was perhaps the most significant factor in creating collective racialised identities. This was complemented by the homeland policy which aimed to divide the African population by entrenching ethnoregional identities. The government proclaimed that "South Africa was not a multiracial society, but consisted of many 'nations', each of which should have the right to control its destiny and preserve its identity" (Lipton, 1985, p. 30).

Before the colonial penetration of the region, South Africa, like many other parts of Africa, had what Ake (1993, p. 1) terms 'ethnic politics—political societies with governmental institutions in a local space where territoriality and ethnic identity roughly coincided'. In an attempt to reinforce ethnic identity, the apartheid government, following colonial tradition, identified eight African tribes or "nations", each of which would eventually be given "independence" in its own "homeland". All Africans were to be linked politically with their homeland, which would have as its citizens "its *de facto* population, plus members of its tribe in 'white' South Africa, its *de jure* citizens" (Lipton, 1985, pp. 23 and 30).

Ethnic mobilisation played a significant role in the development of apartheid and its programmes. In the process, Afrikaner social identity, the National Party (NP) and the state became inextricably intertwined (Adam

& Giliomee, 1978; O'Meara, 1983; Moodie, 1975). Afrikaner nationalism went beyond culture to include a close emotional attachment with the state and national symbols and values (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989). Indeed, because Afrikaner leaders used their political power to underwrite Afrikaner culture, state politics became infused with Afrikaner cultural considerations, including national symbols and values (Munro, 1995).

The Afrikaner image was forged by ideologues. To be an Afrikaner entailed having a sense of belonging to that group, and birth into the *Volk* (i.e. a group of racially similar people) superseded identification with the state. Thus, race, as opposed to the symbols and icons of cultural inclusiveness, remained the ultimate test of membership of the group (Adam, 1994; Bosch, 1984; Munro, 1995). The systematic repetition of certain key notions—such as that whites were superior and blacks inferior; South Africa belonged to the Afrikaner; the Afrikaner had a special relationship with God; Afrikaners constituted the (*Boere*)*volk*;[10] the Afrikaner was threatened; and the Afrikaner had a God-given task in Africa—reinforced Afrikaner identity. The Afrikaans language also became a cornerstone of Afrikaner identity (Cloete, 1992; Bosch, 1984). *But there were other identities calling for space in South Africa.*

The first Indians arrived in Natal in the 1860s as indentured labourers, followed by traders in the 1870s. Because their village, city or caste served as the basis for identification, a common group identity did not exist at the time (Ericksen, 1993; Desai & Maharaj, 1996). However, throughout the 19th century, "the construction of a broader collective Indian identity was fostered by the South African state", a process which became more pronounced during the apartheid era (Desai & Maharaj, 1996, p. 121).[11]

According to Minter (1986, p. 95), the antagonism of Afrikaners was first directed against Indian South Africans who, with their retail chains, were their closest economic competitors. Other processes also encouraged a collective Indian group identity. For the Indian community, "religion, music, customs, traditions and distinctive food tastes formed part of a womblike structure to act as a bulwark against a hostile environment" (Moodley, 1986, p. 234). The antagonism of the white minority and the hostility of the Zulu majority fostered a collective identity based on these

common cultural traits. The brand of Zulu nationalism under the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its anti-Indian sentiments consolidated this identity (Maré & Hamilton, 1987; Desai & Maharaj, 1996).

A conscious effort was also made by progressive Indian organisations to draw the Indian community as a coherent bloc into the anti-apartheid struggle. Thus, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) acknowledged the differences—heritage, culture, language, customs and traditions—between the four "national groups" (Desai & Maharaj, 1996, p. 121). Earlier on, the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) had moulded itself very much along the same lines.

Perhaps the most significant political construction of "community" and a collective identity is evident in the case of the coloureds. As a result of the systematic separation induced by apartheid, the coloured community was forged from heterogeneous elements (or at least understood themselves to be "coloureds" by historical coincidence). Slaves originating from Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Madagascar, East Africa and West Africa formed the early core of the coloured population in South Africa. By 1838, this heterogeneous group had one common feature—they were of mixed parentage, that is, descendants of European pioneers and Khoi-San women, settlers and slaves, and former "free blacks" (i.e. political prisoners deported from the East Indies or African slaves who had bought their freedom from Cape colonial masters). They constituted all those people who could be considered neither as whites nor as indigenous Africans (Martin, 1998). Crudely put, they were seen to be neither European nor "*Abantu*" or "native Africans".[12]

Despite being subject to discriminatory measures, coloureds at the beginning of this century could vote, were elected into political office and formed political organisations. The coloured elite struggled to demonstrate their level of civilisation by internalising the very codes and values used by the white elite to classify them. Class differentiation in the course of the century generated differences in attitudes and political strategies, and a political rift between collaborationists and anti-apartheid activists developed. Many of them were also subject to political fatalism and alienation

from black South Africans as a result of National Party propaganda which instilled a fear of black South Africans (Martin, 1998, p. 533).

The Inkatha Freedom Party was the most notable black organisation in South Africa to use ethnicity and regionalism as mobilising factors. Inkatha Freedom Party, a cultural movement with political undertones—much like the Afrikaner Broederbond—was established in 1922. It fell into inactivity during the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s along with other political organisations such as the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU). When the organisation was reactivated in 1975, membership was determined through acceptance of the notion of a Zulu cultural solidarity and linked to a common territory, namely the KwaZulu homeland (Maré, 1995).

This "national cultural movement" declared its aims to be the liberation of Africans from cultural domination by whites; eradication of socialism, neocolonialism and imperialism; eradication of all forms of racial discrimination and segregation; and upholding the "inalienable rights" of Zulus to self-determination and national independence (Davies et al., 1988). Being a black Zulu speaker and a resident of KwaZulu was no longer enough for people to "qualify" as Zulu. People had to show allegiance to the KwaZulu "state", the Zulu monarchy and the Inkatha Freedom Party. This entailed participating in Inkatha Freedom Party's political and cultural activities such as Shaka Day (Dlamini, 1998, p. 482).

While portraying itself to Africans as a political organisation following the tradition of the ANC, Inkatha Freedom Party was thus also a Zulu nationalist movement, often displaying extreme Zulu chauvinism. The organisation solicited adherents on the basis of two themes. On the one hand, it exhibited aggressive anti-apartheid reformism (initially), maintained a critical distance from the state, appealed to the traditions of the ANC and the liberation struggle and asserted a broad African nationalism. On the other hand, it appealed to traditionalism, ethnic loyalties, patriarchal and hierarchical values, discipline and a Zulu nationalism (McCaul, 1988).

Inkatha Freedom Party was entrenched in the power structures of the KwaZulu homeland, with all members of the KwaZulu Legislative

Assembly being Inkatha Freedom Party members. Thus, Inkatha Freedom Party wielded power in a regional appendage of the South African state as a one-party administration. It tended to portray the Zulu nation and itself as synonymous and mobilised ethnicity by means of the proclaimed distinctiveness of the Zulu nation and its history. The extent to which this history was distorted by colonial ethnography has largely been overlooked. By virtue of its primary cultural orientation and non-boycott approach, Inkatha Freedom Party later became an easy target for partial co-option by the apartheid and tricameral regime (see Maré, 1992; Liebenberg & Duvenage, 1996; Liebenberg et al., 1994, Introduction).

Segregation came to play a significant role in the formation of collective racial identities in South Africa and in a strong out-group aversion. Residential segregation was firmly entrenched by the 1980s, and by the early 1990s very few urban dwellers lived in racially and ethnically integrated areas (Christopher, 1994; Desai & Maharaj, 1996). This led to the development of politically constructed "communities", in which people defined as members of the same race group lived together, worshipped together and went to school together. Social segregation allowed very little social interaction between people of the different race groups. Besides, coloureds, Indians and poor whites were misrepresented as being beneficiaries of apartheid.

The economic differentiation emerging from residential and social segregation resulted in separate schools and universities and separate newspapers, television and radio stations; and these in turn facilitated the reification of group identities (Desai & Maharaj, 1996).[13]

Nevertheless, common interests were shaped in the struggle against white domination and, in particular, apartheid. For instance, opposition to the policies of various white governments from the last decade of the 19th century generated a sense of unity among the various (ethnic) groups in the African population. Pixley ka Isaka Seme, in calling for the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC)—renamed the African National Congress in 1925—argued that the lack of unity among the indigenous people was the greatest obstacle to progress (Karis & Carter, 1972, VI, p. 72. Cited in Greenstein, 1995, p. 9).

It is clear that a common African identity did not exist at the time but had to be constructed to develop the unity so necessary for success. The SANNC focused on African unity and regarded fragmentation on the basis of clan and tribe as a serious danger (Greenstein, 1995).

At the same time as Afrikaner nationalists were building their nation through sentimental calls for devotion to their national cause and the *Volk*, "non-Europeans" were also experimenting with nation building. Nationalism seemed to be the preferred political option of the time. Ethnic identification was not simply a danger in itself. It was part and parcel of an imperialist tendency that seriously debilitated many African groups and contributed to the carnage of the liberation struggle. Pixley ka Isaka Seme praised the leaders of the many African communities in the hope of engendering unity among them. But ethnicity did not necessarily obstruct the development of a broad African identity. Instead, when not constructed as a force opposing African nationalism, ethnicity strengthened the African identity by promoting pride in African history. Seme often invoked the images of Shaka Zulu, Sobhuza of Swaziland and the Xhosa prophet Ntsikane when appealing for African national unity (Greenstein, 1995).

In the late 1960s a new movement emerged in South Africa as a result of disenchantment among African intellectuals with liberal and multiracial resistance against apartheid. This was to be referred to as the "Black Consciousness Movement" (BCM),[14] which can partially be traced back to dissatisfaction among students with the white-led, multiracial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). The dissatisfied BCM students felt that the predominantly white leadership was unable to reflect the concerns of African students (Lodge, 1983) and therefore sought the psychological liberation of blacks (including coloureds and Indians) in an attempt to eradicate dependency on white leadership in the liberation struggle and to shape the post-apartheid society. Underlying this was a group response to oppression and a reliance on indigenous cultural traditions. Psychological liberation would lead to solidarity among black people, thus paving the way for their mobilisation towards liberation.[15]

During the early 1980s black opposition in South Africa underwent a radical transformation. This was informed by the replacement of the

exclusionist black nationalism of some members of the BCM and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) by a commitment to non-racialism. This was justified by the need to "isolate the regime" and to draw the widest possible number of people into the anti-apartheid struggle, that is, *strategic populism*. All South Africans who shared a commitment to the ideals of a non-racial, democratic country were encouraged to join the "national democratic struggle" against apartheid (Marx, 1992, p. 126). The United Democratic Front (UDF), a multiclass, multiracial organisation formed in August 1983 to oppose the apartheid system, included among its principles "an adherence to the need for unity in struggle through which all democrats, regardless of race, religion or colour, shall take part together". [16]

The UDF (later to become the Mass Democratic Movement or MDM) called for the unity of all oppressed groups (Africans, Indians and coloureds) but also for participation by individual white democrats. It argued that in order to elicit immediate and long-term advantages, whites had to be included in the liberation struggle (Marx, 1992).

The experience of political domination and economic exploitation among blacks and the commitment to a non-racial democracy among whites resulted in the formation of an umbrella organisation for members from every race and ethnic group and virtually every class in the country and moved beyond religious affiliation. The UDF drew together close to 700 organisations, the most important being youth and student organisations, women's organisations, civic associations and trade unions. Many of these organisations drew their membership from the different race, religious and ethnic groups in South Africa, leading to the construction of a collective identity across racial and ethnic lines.

The tricameral Constitution introduced in 1984 included coloureds and Indians in the highest decision-making organs. This created divisions within both the coloured and the Indian communities. Some members of these communities opted to support group politics by participating in elections for the racial assemblies. Others were strongly opposed to the tricameral Parliament. Indeed, voter turnout in the coloured election was 30% and in the Indian election 20% of registered voters.

Coloured ethnic politics underwent another dramatic change in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the majority of MPs in the House of Representatives crossed the floor to join the NP. This led to the ultimate dissolution of the political party which had led "institutionalised" coloured politics for much of the preceding two decades, namely the Labour Party.

Although the leading Indian political party in the tricameral Parliament, Amichand Rajbansi's Minority Front, continued to exist after the 1994 election, defections to the NP, Democratic Party (DP) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (and to a lesser extent the ANC) from then dramatically reduced its support in this community.

All these events coincided with the technocratic "reforms" initiated by P.W. Botha in the early 1980s. Though the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion within the polity shifted under the tricameral Parliament, continued segregation and a top-down approach marked the reforms. Selective "co-optation" combined with repression and top-down restructuring led some critics to refer to this as an era of an imperial presidency or "domination through reform" (Van Vuuren, 1985).

At the same time that a shared identity was being created among anti-apartheid activists, Afrikanerdom became divided. The first significant break followed the emergence of ideological differences between two camps in Afrikaner politics, the *verligte* (enlightened/liberal) and *verkrampte* (conservative) groups, in the 1970s. The two groups clashed on the question of introducing certain reforms to apartheid, including the recognition of African trade unions and the permanence of the urban African population, as well as the introduction of a new constitutional dispensation which would extend political rights to coloureds and Indians. This led to the establishment of the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) that chose to maintain Verwoerdian principles. The Broederbond as an "ethnic vanguard" drove the HNP, led by Dr Albert Hertzog and later Jaap Marais, out of Afrikaner politics during John Vorster's rule.

A second break occurred when P.W. Botha mooted the idea of parliamentary representation for Indian and coloured South Africans (see Giliomee, 1982 for more detail). The ascendancy of the "verligte" camp led to the breakaway of another group in 1982 and the formation of the

right-wing Conservative Party (CP) under Andries Treurnicht. The CP based its political appeal on the language of ethnic solidarity, group identity and cultural cohesion, invoking Afrikaner "tradition" as the wellspring of identity politics. It claimed that the NP regime had betrayed the Afrikaner culturally, politically and materially (Munro, 1995). The fragmentation of Afrikaner unity that followed led to a plethora of right-wing fringe groups.[17]

Afrikaner self-concepts thus moved from a "constructed Afrikaner homogeneity" to "pieces of broken images" (Cloete, 1992, p. 42). As Serfontein (1990, p. 19) points out:

> Afrikanerdom or the *Afrikanervolk* or the Afrikaners simply do not exist as a separate, identifiable group any longer. There are, however, different groups or fragments of Afrikaners, or Afrikaans-speaking whites. Some regard themselves as the *Afrikanervolk*, others simply as Boere, others as South Africans and others again as Afrikaans-speaking Africans (cited in Cloete, 1992, pp. 42-43).[18]

Similarly, individual self-perceptions among coloureds and Indians indicated a variety of identities. Some regarded themselves as belonging to a distinct "racial group", separate from other apartheid-defined racial groups, while others saw themselves as "blacks", a collective identity which included all non-whites. Still others embraced the non-racialism of the ANC by defining themselves as South Africans.

Indeed, broad collective practices and historical circumstances made some members of these groups more receptive to ethnocentrism and others more receptive to an all-inclusive and non-racial identity.

In late 1996, a survey of primary social identities carried out by Gibson and Gouws (1998) found that nearly one-third (32%) of those interviewed identified most strongly with the label "African", while 19% of the respondents identified themselves as "South African", 14% as "black", and the rest in terms of the various ethnic (33%) or religious (3%) groups. Most of the whites (28%), coloureds (30%) and Indians (31%) thought of themselves as just "South Africans", and only a few whites

thought of themselves as "white" (5%). "Afrikaner" still formed a significant (24%) term of self-identification among whites. Among the coloureds interviewed, almost 29% identified themselves as "coloured" and 3% as "brown", while 16% of Indians identified themselves as "Indian" (in addition to 17% and 12% who gave their primary social identity as Hindu and Asian respectively). Only 3% and 0,4% of coloureds and Indians respectively gave "black" as their primary identity. This can be compared with 4% of coloureds, 2% of Indians and 0,8% of whites that identified strongly with the label "African".

But, as Adam (1994, p. 25) puts it:

> Apartheid ideology had institutionalised group differences. They were imposed and therefore rejected. Hence, the ground was laid for democratic inclusivism rather than counter-racism. At the same time, the historical racial and ethnic perceptions of difference—partially invented, reinforced and entrenched by Apartheid, but, above all, underscored by material inequality—did not psychologically homogenise the population, the ideology of colour-blind non-racialism notwithstanding. This legacy of Apartheid lives on in everyday racial and ethnic consciousness. Even if blacks as political rulers have modified ethnic hierarchy, racism as the everyday false consciousness of socially constructed difference has not disappeared with the repeal of racial legislation.

As the Gibson and Gouws study (1998) shows, most South Africans use racial or ethnic terms to describe themselves, with nearly 40% of the respondents selecting a general racial term and another 30% using a more specific sub-racial or ethnic term as their primary identity. Only slightly more than 20% of the respondents claim a national identity as their primary means of describing themselves. The study shows a strong sense of group identification in South Africa, with the overwhelming majority of respondents attaching great political significance to their primary group.[19]

To deny this is to repeat the common mistake, especially on the part of the "left", to underestimate ontological commitments[20] to racial and

ethnic identities and their role in shaping historical struggles (Robinson, 1982, pp. 23, 243-245 and 447-451).

South African researchers thus far have tended in most cases to investigate shifting identities without taking cognisance of identity markers such as gender, age, family, religion, economic position (class) and physical environment, despite the greater acknowledgement of these markers in the democratic South Africa. Therefore, ontological commitments to race or ethnicity, far from being denied, should be placed in the richer context of these identity markers. Moreover, "ethnicity cannot be divorced from other changes of the twentieth century: urbanisation, communication networks, new relationships of production ..., the increase in migratory and commercial movements" (Maxted & Zegeye, 1997b, p. 66). Despite its apparent fixedness, ethnicity in Africa is constantly changing in response to changes in the form of the state (and notions of civil society, one might add).

## Accommodating Identity and a Deepening of Democratic Processes—the Civil Community

According to Calhoun (1994), a major problem facing heterogeneous states is identification with distinct sub-cultures, groups or regions. Hence, many governments in diverse societies regard nation building as an essential strategy to develop a common culture and patriotism towards the state. However, strategies of nation building differ in the extent to which they recognise sub-groups. In some cases, loyalty to the state is regarded as much more important than loyalty to sub-groups. In other cases, ethnic, racial and other groupings are regarded as important building blocks of the state.

The current wave of democratisation across Africa has provoked a defence of the authoritarian state among certain African leaders. This defence has been built on the Huntingtonian ideal of "order amid change". This notion of "order" has been carried into para-ideological discourses such as "democratic order". Following Huntington's endorsement of the authoritarian state in Africa, President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya argued that the liberties of democracy would unleash ethnic rivalry and destroy

the fragile unity of his country. Zambia's head of state, Kenneth Kaunda, argued that the adoption of a multiparty system would bring "chaos, bloodshed and death".[21] President Paul Biya of Cameroon defended the power monopoly of his political party by arguing that it ensured a "united Cameroon devoid of ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages" (Ake, 1993, p. 5). In Namibia, the party-dominant system under President Sam Nujoma seems to be moving towards greater centralisation and intolerance towards the Lozi-speaking people in Caprivi after nearly a decade of peace and tolerance.

The majority of states emerging from colonialism dealt with diversity by subordinating diversity to "nation building". Diversity was vilified on account of its relatedness to colonial divisions of regions, leaders, groups and communities, which divisions were aimed at delineating spheres of influence. Post-colonial leaders, in order to justify the one-party state, used these very divisions in doing so. These one-party states created a comprehensive apparatus of hegemony, co-opting within their structures all the important organs of civil society, including amongst others trade unions, student and youth organisations.

In 1965-66 a wave of military interventions—in Algeria, Nigeria, Zaire, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso (Upper-Volta), Benin and Ghana—led to the spread of the one-party system on the continent. This system was justified by asserting that opening the political system to competition and opposition would inevitably lead to ethnic mobilisation and political conflict (Young, 1997). Thus in these multi-ethnic societies public expression of ethnic or tribal claims was banished and ethnic associations were prohibited.

Yet the first step towards accommodating diversity in multicultural constitutional democracies (or even non-racial polities?) would be to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the society. This must be coupled with an assurance that different groups (and individuals) will not be harassed, discriminated against or persecuted on account of their sub-group membership. The highest priority must be the outlawing of discrimination. State officials and citizens must be prevented from and penalised for discriminating against their fellow citizens. The political framework

should include constitutional guarantees, a Bill of Rights or laws that safeguard language, cultural, religious, gender and individual rights. *These prescriptions are a tall order but, if successfully instituted, will contribute significantly to the maintenance of a working democracy.*

## Possible Impediments to Democratic Consolidation

Some scholars argue that the most significant aspect of identity politics in the late 20th century is ethnic struggle. They point out that "conflict between language, religion, physical appearance, beliefs, and customs of people from different ethnic groups has been—and probably will continue to be—a primary source of unrest in the world" (Landis & Boucher, 1987, p. 18; Ismagilova, 1997a, pp. 298-299). With the exception of class struggles, such as the rise of Nazism and Fascism (the latter two attempting to "indigenise" class power bases), the majority of 20th century social conflicts have been either "ethnic" or "religious". Ethnic conflicts occur when political struggles become ethnicised or when various cultural traditions become racialised and mobilised for political ends (Adam, 1994).

The essential problem in heterogeneous societies is the potential for sub-groups based on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, racial, religious, regional, class or caste identities to feel excluded. For example, they feel that they do not participate fully in the political system and/or that the government constantly acts in opposition to their preferences. Therefore many scholars are sceptical about the prospect of creating a common democratic culture or consolidating a democracy in a heterogeneous society. Some scholars even suggest the maintenance of separate groups within a polity through pillar-like structures, one example being the consociational theory advanced by Lijphart (1977). However, accommodating sub-groups—and especially ethnic consciousness, ethnocultural claims, and ethnic political behaviour—is widely considered to obstruct democratic consolidation as well as modernisation, industrial development, nation building, institutional and socio-economic pluralism and the promotion of individual liberties (Safran, 1991).

Conflicts over language in heterogeneous societies represent a fundamental threat to democracy for these theorists. They conclude that simply

being multilingual, for example, makes people eschew democracy. They repeat the appalling reductiveness of the ideology of nation-statism, as Maxted and Zegeye (1997a, p. 390) point out, by asserting that "the wealth of cultures [is] really an impoverishment". Language policies may spark conflict because language represents culture, recognition, legitimacy and autonomy. In a like manner, ethnicity and religion, too, often give rise to enmity. Thus they should be neutralised before they become justifications for nationalism.

This perspective contends that when an ethnic group struggles to achieve political power, freedom and self-determination in an autonomous region or nation-state, the group pulls apart the fabric of multicultural societies. However, this argument is unhelpful in South Africa. There is a danger in understanding all conflicts engaged in by states during the 20th century as fundamentally *ethnic*. The danger is that struggles against undemocratic regimes—military-ruled or rule by ethnic (class?) majorities or minorities—that fundamentally sought to undermine the "nation-state" are equated with the struggles to build the state (i.e. in South Africa) even though they are not the same kind of struggle. This is because the "nation-state" underminers did not have the kind of material, military or capital base that the nation-state builders had, which makes them categorically different. So the problem is not simply that ethnicity, in the broadest possible sense, can be mobilised by the regime, but more importantly that ethnicity can be mobilised by groups of people seeking to undo the state and its priorities. The legacy of such a cycle of "ultimate" rule and resistance to the ruler may last for many years to come.

So far we have discussed the ways in which the state can utilise identity. We have yet to discuss the ways in which identities formerly excluded by the state can create a different kind of state.

The position of the newly enfranchised is quite problematic. They must ensure a number of crucially important things: that the new laws and policies protect them; that administrators at all levels of government are responsive to their interests; that their organisations become lobbying instruments with as much clout as other groups. They must also secure their ability to constantly develop social capital and to plug into the existing

networks in civil society, as well as create new ones. While they have much to gain by supporting their government, they also have much to lose.

Unlike those who may be able to invest offshore or live the "good life", the newly enfranchised must prove to their fellow citizens that their acknowledgement as full members of the society will promote democracy. More important, in joining institutions in formal politics they may have to loosen their former ties and focus on social and political mass movements. Thus, during democratic consolidation, the newly enfranchised face particular disadvantages. They must reconstitute constituencies and establish organisations based on different principles. Critically put: To conclude that the newly enfranchised will threaten democracy smacks of the same sort of justifications used to deny them the franchise.

We concede that sharp differences may prevent a society from sustaining democracy because such differences may be used to justify non-conciliation, non-reparation or the outright punishment of members in the society. *But we take umbrage at the insistence in the debate on democratic consolidation that the newly enfranchised are more likely to use their social identities as a basis for oppressing their fellow citizens than others*. Rather, we submit that a consolidated democracy will be characterised by the absence of fear about difference. This does not mean that differences can be resolved by pretending that they do not exist, nor that we promote the liberal view of equality wherein personal habits and customs are confined to the private sphere. We suggest that the hysteria surrounding what the newly enfranchised may do with identity, culture or civil society be diffused. And perhaps the most effective way to reveal the baselessness of this fear of difference is to reveal how societies cope with difference.

Perhaps we can begin with the indigenous understanding that the landscape of democracy is already known and can be mapped. Identification with subgroups is not at all dysfunctional, since people can (and do) have multiple identities. In fact, if people are not forced to rank their identities they can bring more of themselves and more crosscutting cleavages into democracy (Spivak & Lorde, 1992). If democratic political systems cannot accommodate identification with sub-groups then something else

will be necessary to guarantee participation in electoral and constitutional politics for excluded groups.

We contend that forcing people to rank their identities resembles the hegemony created by apartheid. The people who fought against apartheid achieved their identity by varied identity entry points. They mobilised distinctly as socialists, democrats, women's rights activists, artists, traditional leaders, cultural nationalists, anarchists, farmers or rural dwellers, and so on. And yet the overarching ideology of anti-apartheid did not eradicate their local identities. In fact, they were encouraged to see their local identities as resources that could enhance the anti-apartheid movement.

A politics of erasure underlies some of the debate on the dysfunctional nature of ethnicity. Moreover, a level of confusion has crept into the debate on democratic consolidation. The fear that ethnicity will rip societies apart is not grounded on the historical reality that nation-sized communities are ethnically, linguistically or religiously heterogeneous. *We claim that the debate on democratic consolidation by means of the denial of ethnicity is in fact based on the authoritarian and not the democratic approach to identity.*

A democratic political system consists, then, of any variety of measures which ensure, firstly, that citizens with their various identities participate fully in the political system in their country and, secondly, that the government acts in accordance with the preferences of its citizens.

## The Process of Democratic Consolidation in South Africa

A number of issues relating to social identity became prominent during the negotiations for a democratic South Africa.[22] The first was the ruling National Party's constitutional proposals which emphasised group rights and protection for minorities. The second was the issue of federalism and regional autonomy for KwaZulu-Natal. And the third issue was the right-wing demand for a "homeland" (*Volkstaat* ) for the Afrikaner nation.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the NP through its prominent spokespersons shifted away from its emphasis on statutory group rights. This was clearly stated in 1991 by the former NP leader, F.W. de Klerk, in

the following statement: "We commit ourselves to the creation of a free and democratic political system ... in which ... the rights of all individuals and minorities defined on a non-racial basis shall be adequately protected in the Constitution and in a constitutionally guaranteed and justifiable Bill of Rights" (cited in Kotze, 1994, p. 61).

The NP's Charter of Fundamental Rights (1993), however, set out to protect certain rights of apartheid-defined groups. In particular, it stipulated that every state-aided educational institution (as well as the parent community of every state or state-aided school) should have the right to determine the medium of instruction (read: Afrikaans) and the religious and general character (read: Christian and white) of such an educational institution or school. The Charter also called for the protection of the right to free association, which, in the absence of the application of a non-discrimination clause, would enable walls of privilege to be built around nearly all social institutions (Asmal, 1993).

The NP's proposals in its *Constitutional rule in a participatory democracy* (1991) as well as its submissions to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) at the end of 1991 called for a system of power sharing which would guarantee minority participation in government. The NP argued that "the political party is the most effective means of furthering the interests" of groups and therefore proposed a form of "participatory democracy" 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". Such a system was necessary because it "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" (cited in Asmal, 1993, p. 56).

For the NP government, minority participation was to be ensured through the participation of minority political parties in both the executive and the legislative organs of the state. Executive authority was to rest in a presidency constituted on a multiparty basis, with the leaders of the three to five leading parties sharing the chairmanship of the presidency on a rotational basis. All decisions of the presidency were to be taken by con-

sensus, thus effectively providing a veto on all executive functions. The leading political parties were to be allocated an equal number of seats in a second house with the same powers as a first house, elected by proportional representation. The principles of "participatory democracy" and power sharing for the leading political parties and "effective measures for minority protection" were also to be extended to the regions (Asmal, 1993, pp. 56-57).

KwaZulu-Natal was the first provincial government to draft a provincial Constitution. Underlying this eagerness was the Inkatha Freedom Party's (IFP's) quest for a federal system with strong regional powers. The party identified a strong central government in a unitary system as an obstacle to democratisation because it would inevitably lead to an authoritarian system. A federal Constitution which conferred on the regions their own legislative, administrative, judicial and executive powers within a broad unifying framework would be intrinsically more democratic. As the IFP's power base was in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, it was important for the party to strengthen provincial autonomy. However, the IFP notion was declined by the Multiparty Negotiating Party (MPNP)[23] which drew up the interim Constitution in late 1993. After 1994, the Western Cape followed suit in writing a provincial Constitution.

The IFP only agreed to participate in South Africa's first election after the ANC and the NP signed the Agreement for Reconciliation and Peace on 19 April 1994. The ANC and NP consented to international mediation on provincial powers, the role of traditional leaders, and the constitutional role of the Zulu king. The IFP contended that these issues were not dealt with adequately in the interim Constitution. Above all else, the IFP was concerned with constitutional issues relating to the powers of the provinces (Smith, 1995), and since then has consistently pointed out that the new Constitution, adopted in 1996, does not deal adequately with these issues. Part of this relates to—apart from identity issues—the fact that the IFP adhered to a rather classical (obsolete?) notion of federalism at the time.

The Afrikaner right wing, organised into the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) under the leadership of General Constand Viljoen, demanded that

freedom for the Afrikaner be accommodated through the formation of a *volkstaat*. The AVF consisted of 21 right-wing parties and organisations, including the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) and the Conservative Party (CP). The AVF rejected a unitary state and said that Afrikaners wanted a *volkstaat*, which would be part of a future confederation of states. It aimed to unite all Afrikaners behind this ideal and to embark on a three-phase programme to achieve the *Volkstaat*: political pressure; popular resistance, including mass action, boycotts and strikes; and, as a last resort, secession from South Africa by an Afrikaner state.

This ethno-nationalist ideal was temporarily accommodated in the negotiation process by amendments to the interim Constitution which made constitutional provision for the right to self-determination by any community sharing a common cultural and language heritage, whether in a territorial entity within the Republic or in any other recognised way. It also provided for the establishment of a *volkstaat* council (*Volkstaatsraad*) to enable the proponents of the idea of a *volkstaat* to constitutionally pursue its establishment.

These issues reflected a concern for minority group rights, a resurgence of ethnic separateness, and the manifestation of cultural exclusivity.[24]

The results of the first democratic election in April 1994 were another demonstration of the salience of group identity in South African politics. The election results reflected a racial census although considerable cross-racial voting took place with all major parties drawing support from every race group. The NP was supported by 65% of the coloured and Indian voters nationally, with 60% to 70% of coloured voters in the Western Cape voting for the party (Reynolds, 1994). Apartheid-indoctrinated fears of African domination and distrust of African administrative competence, loss of relative status in the racial hierarchy, and competition for jobs and housing were in large part responsible for this support (Finnegan, 1994; Adam, 1994). The IFP was supported by over 50% of the voters of KwaZulu-Natal in the provincial election, while almost 85% of the IFP's national total came from this region. The Freedom Front achieved 2,17% (400 000 white votes) of the national voters. The ANC gained 94% of its

support from the African community, and predominantly from speakers of Xhosa, Sotho, Venda, Ndebele, Tswana and Tsonga, although one-third of its supporters were Zulu speaking (Reynolds, 1994).

After its victory in 1994, the ANC adopted the approach followed by most post-colonial governments, namely emphasising nation building in non-ethnic and non-racial terms. The ANC is overtly non-racial in terms of its core ideology and seeks to decrease the barriers between different identities, language groups and cultures. In this regard Adam (1994, p. 17) observes:

> The ideology of non-racialism rejects an ethnic nation in favour of a civic nation, based on equal individual rights, regardless of origin, and equal recognition of all cultural traditions in the public sphere. The civic nation is based on consent rather than descent. Citizenry in ethnic nationalism on the other hand is based on blood and ancestry.

The ANC's *Constitutional guidelines for a democratic South Africa* (1989) advocated a unitary, democratic and non-racial state in which sovereignty was to be exercised through a central legislature, executive, judiciary and administration. Provision was made, however, for delegation of the powers of the central authority to subordinate administrative units (Welsh, 1989). The guidelines posited the need for a national identity in the following terms:

> It shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide material for free linguistic and cultural development.[25]

The ANC identified a Bill of Rights as the means of guaranteeing the fundamental rights of all citizens. The legal right of parties to exist was based on a prohibition on the advocacy or practice of racism, Fascism, Nazism or the incitement of ethnic or regional exclusiveness or hatred (Welsh, 1989). The ANC's major policy document, *Ready to govern*

(presented in 1992), provided further references to the nature of the constitutional order. The ANC rejected the association of political power with race or ethnicity as well as the protection of group rights or the representation of racial interests through political parties. It was argued that this approach would promote racial conflict rather than harmony and was not in the ultimate interest of minorities. Asmal (1993) pointed out that minority protection became necessary when the minority was in a position of sub-ordination to a majority, which would clearly not be the case in a democratic South Africa.

Basic citizenship rights and constitutionalism were thus presented as an antidote to authoritarian ethnic and racial group rights.[26] The nation was to be constituted on the basis of a "community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values" (Ignatieff, 1993, pp. 3-4).

The ANC's Revised Draft Bill of Rights (1992), which stated that language, cultural and religious rights should be protected in a new Constitution, was in line with the internationally recognised method of protecting minority rights contained in Article 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. This convention provides that, "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 practice their own religion, or to use their own language" (cited in Asmal, 1993, p. 56).[27]

There was, however, according to Asmal (1993), a difference in emphasis as to the extent to which the equality principle, especially that prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, should apply to the exercise of these rights. Putting it another way, the right to associate should not allow persons the right to exclude others from participation in activities associated with schooling, sports, hospitals, etc.

One way of exploring minority rights vis-à-vis equality in the new South Africa is to examine the ANC's conception of culture and its place in the country. The ANC's driving policy, the RDP, pointed to the depoliticisation of ethnicity by affirming cultural unity at the national level

and cultural diversity at the personal but not the community level (Venter, 1996). Furthermore, culture is conceived of as art, not as lifestyle-of-an-ethnic-group, and as such must be incorporated into the national culture. Thus, ethnic association and exclusion, particularly in schools, sports, etc., are counteracted by the demand for non-discrimination, which underpins the ideology of non-racialism as espoused by the ANC until 1997. This seemingly paradoxical notion may well imply some social tensions—but more about this later.

The new South African Constitution made provision for the establishment of a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (Chapter 9, sections 185 and 186). Its primary objectives were to promote respect for the rights of these communities; to foster and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance and national unity among cultural, religious and linguistic communities on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and free association; and to recommend the establishment or recognition of cultural or other councils for any communities in South Africa (see Chapter 9 in this book). The commission was potentially empowered to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities (Dlamini, 1998).

The four-year negotiation process in South Africa culminated in the acceptance of a consensus-based Government of National Unity (GNU), a cabinet staffed on a proportional basis by members of the majority party and the two leading opposition parties, the NP and IFP. Proportional representation ensured the participation of smaller parties in the legislature, while the GNU was extended to the provinces whose executive committees were also staffed on a proportional basis. Minority participation in government was also guaranteed by the so-called "sunset clause", which guaranteed the jobs of civil servants and members of the security forces (both comprising largely white Afrikaner males, but including civil servants of the former homeland and tricameral administrations) for five years. Nine African languages were added to the list of official languages (in the previous era Afrikaans and English were the only official

languages), thus demonstrating a commitment to equal recognition of the rights of the different language communities.

The negotiating parties also agreed to entrench the powers of the regions in a new Constitution, and that a special majority would be required for any change in the powers, structure and competence of regional government. At the centre of the debate around the nature and functions of the provinces was the question of federalism.

Support for federalism in South Africa at the time came largely from the Democratic Party (DP) and the IFP, while the NP called for regionalism with strong federal elements. The ANC's regional policy of 1993, on the other hand, opposed the formation of political groupings on racial, ethnic or linguistic bases. The ANC aimed to discourage "political mobilisation on the basis of race, ethnicity or language and to prevent state power at any level from being used for purposes of ethnic domination, intolerance and forced removals of population" (cited in Venter, 1996, p. 13).

De Haas (1993) outlines three preconditions for the establishment of a federal system. First, a federal Constitution should be predicated upon specific communal identities or building blocks; second, communal identities should operate within a definable geographic base; and third, either the said geographical base is economically viable, or the central political organ is willing to subsidise the federal constituents through fiscal transfers. However, the conglomerations of subgroups sharing the same living space in South Africa made it virtually impossible to demarcate ethnically homogeneous or economically viable units (Hislop, 1998, p. 83).

In July 1997 the ANC released a discussion document entitled *National formation and nation building* which dealt with the national question and the nature of the nation. The document reaffirmed the ANC's non-racial stance and commitment to deracialising South African society. However, the ANC emphasised that the liberation of Black people in general and Africans in particular should be the main content of the national democratic revolution. The document acknowledged the reality of diversity and the persistence of cultural, religious and other identities in South Africa (Filatova, 1997).

Over the years the ANC has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the Charterist ideal of the South African nation as a union built on cultural diversity and equality while seeking to promote the growth of a single national identity (Filatova, 1997, p. 49).[28]

Another ANC discussion policy document entitled *Building the foundation for a better life* released simultaneously with the *National formation and nation building* document, mentions an "African nation" and "the affirmation of our Africanness as a nation" but also stresses "equality among the racial, ethnic, language, cultural and religious communities" within "a united nation", "multiple identities" in "the melting pot of broad South Africanism", and the importance of "an over-arching identity of being South African" (cited in Filatova, 1997, p. 55). The central thrust of ANC policy has been to encourage the development of a *national identity based on unity-in-diversity*.[29]

It is also important to note here two contrasting ways in which the ANC government responded to the apartheid-constructed group identities. On the one hand it retained certain apartheid identities as a means of addressing imbalances of the past, for instance through affirmative action and black empowerment. On the other hand, overarching identities which cut across race and ethnicity were encouraged in a variety of ways. For example, group identification across racial and ethnic boundaries was promoted in labour, business, sport, youth, rural and women's affairs and the affairs of the disabled. This was done in order to make group identification as inclusive as possible and to make participation in institutions and processes, including consultative bodies, parliamentary public hearings, and consultative conferences and workshops, as representative as possible.

However, as Grobbelaar (1998) points out, there are dangers in both strategies. Strategies that aim at equitable and affirming outcomes for all groups could reinforce racial identification in certain ways and be used to solicit group support for political parties. On the one hand, addressing racial imbalances implies a drastic reduction of white and in particular Afrikaner access to the socio-political system, wealth and opportunities. The danger then exists that "people will not only fall back into the organic or laager-like comfort of group-mobilising identities like Afrikaner

nationalism, but also that the loss of self-esteem and dignity experienced would contribute radically towards undermining a vision and strategy of equity across the board" (Grobbelaar, 1998).

On the other hand, affirming strategies could reinforce racial identities within the black population if they are seen to apply only (or largely) to the African segment of this group. For instance, coloured people may experience relative deprivation vis-à-vis the African population because the black majority government is seen to adopt policies which reaffirm the former "second class" status that coloureds held under apartheid. Indeed, such a perception recently led to the formation of coloured political and cultural movements in the Western Cape and Gauteng. Within the Indian communities the same problem has surfaced.[30]

Group identity as a driving force in South African politics can be seen in the efforts of some coloureds to use the term "coloured" as a symbol of collective identity against other groups, in particular whites and Africans (Maré, 1995). The appeal to this sense of identity lies in their perception of marginalisation, which, it could be argued, has continued into the democratic South Africa.

Affirmative action has also brought claims of new forms of racial discrimination from whites as well as Indians and coloureds—although these complaints must be scrutinised since in most parts of the country "black" empowerment is understood by many policy implementers as "non-Europeans" empowerment. The new non-racial democracy has been criticised for undermining the contingent "benefits" of the tricameral Parliament (in terms of jobs, houses and education) during the 1980s (Maré, 1995, p. 7). It is perhaps here that the role of civil society as pointed out by Liebenberg and Zegeye (1998) could be nurturing a culture of democracy, human rights and (communal) tolerance.

Attempts to include stakeholders take many forms. The new government embarked on various strategies to attempt inclusion. The National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a statutory consultative body, for example, was formed in 1995 to consider all matters relating to economic and social issues before they are placed before Parliament or implemented. Nedlac includes representatives of organised labour

and business, as well as women's organisations, rural dwellers, young people and the disabled. These constituencies are organised on a non-racial basis, and participate in Nedlac as units in their respective categories.

This national institution has contributed to a growth in the organisation and co-operation of these categories across racial and ethnic barriers. It is here that the democratic government is moving towards establishing overarching identities—for workers, youth, women, rural dwellers, disabled people, and businessmen—which are not based on racial or ethnic identities.[31]

The South African case has the potential to inform our understanding of diversity and democracy. The politicised nature of communities and individuals in this country under apartheid has set the stage for democracy and thus a choice in terms of the kind of society communities wanted for themselves. The African majority was not to be satisfied with simple autonomy for their group. Rather, they insisted that the economic inequalities of the past be remedied for everybody disadvantaged by apartheid.

## Conclusion

Shortly after the transformation process towards the new South Africa started in all seriousness, Taylor (1992, Foreword) posed the question: "Can a democratic society treat all its members as equals and also recognise their specific cultural identities?" The answer is yes if culture is defined as the "common core of humanity" and "practices that all human beings engage in" (Alexander, 1989). When culture includes the tangible beliefs and philosophies that are reflected in how we recreate our humanity, culture can play a decisive role in democracy.

The South African Constitution seeks to foster a single political community while respecting the existence and worth of cultural communities. The resolution of the language question offered by the Constitution and the incorporation of traditional leaders and customary law are the outgrowths of respect for culture. We suggest that the art of "complex mapping" be applied in order to understand the role of culture in consolidating the South African democratic polity. Thereafter the lessons

learned from this "mapping" of identity in South Africa can be used to enrich democratic theory elsewhere.

The prospect of creating a common democratic culture or consolidating working democracy is realisable in heterogeneous communities (Liebenberg & Duvenage, 1996). In South Africa, the very existence of multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multiclass communities reveals the major flaw in theories of democracy that presume that homogeneity of society or community is a prerequisite for a working democracy.

Some democratic theorists further presuppose that diverse communities make social identity less of a contest and more of an amicable necessity. While not following exactly the same route as the multiculturalists, we assert that heterogeneity is not necessarily a threat to political order. We utilise the metaphor of mapping to illustrate that the cultural, linguistic, racial, religious and ethnic groups in the new South Africa indeed know how to sustain a heterogeneous community without resorting to the rigid measures of the previous minority regime. They provide evidence for the fact that heterogeneity does not preclude harmony, sympathy for others or commiseration, which are the bases for sustaining a community. In fact, the assumption that communities are automatically uniform has proven to be the Achilles heel of authoritarian schemes time and again.

We concede that societies attempting to consolidate democracy usually politicise some social category so that people can become citizens or non-citizens. However, we disagree that stable democracies use this overarching category in ways that exclude other crosscutting and overlapping identities that residents may claim or create. Hence the metaphor of mapping gives credence to our assertion that the South African society can avail itself of knowledge of how to achieve equity despite its multiracial, multiclass and multilingual composition.

Civil society—*societé civile* in Francophone literature—is no new concept in the analysis of democratic systems (Gorus, 1996). Camerer (1992 and 1996) sees civil society as an inherently pluralistic realm, distinct from yet interacting with the state, and consisting of numerous associations organised around specific issues and seeking to form links

with other interest groups without seeking to become an alternative to the institutionalised state. Using the social capital generated through association and organisation around policy concerns and interests, civil society sustains negotiations and bargaining with the state.

However, lately civil society is claimed to be the invention of theorists in favour of multiparty democracy. As a matter of course, these theorists accept that civil society should be distinct from the state, and if possible exercise its activities peacefully. The debate on civil society and its role today in South Africa can contribute to establishing rules about who governs and under what conditions—and may turn out to develop differently from manifestations of civil society elsewhere.

Bekker (1996: 32) argues that "in civil society South Africans are free to choose from a menu of identities ... at many levels". To put this into practice may be more problematic given our historic legacy. We argue here that civil society need not be strictly a liberal or "one-community" construct. It embodies both the potential and reality of a flux of identities within the broader community of self-chosen citizens.[32]

Civil society (or the civil community) is the arena in which democratic attitudes, including tolerance, have to be developed. Civil society can be fostered by government but it is, in turn, part of its cultural basis (Maxted, 1999). The following are some important questions to help evaluate the role of civil society in an emerging democracy: How does civil society contribute to good governance, accountability and sound opposition politics amid balanced reconstruction? How can civil society maintain such a role during the growth of the state? What lasting role can it have and under what conditions? Can (or should) it counteract tendencies towards one-party dominance? What should its role be—strengthening government or opposing it, strengthening the state or weakening it, strengthening elite pacts and/or political parties or weakening them?

We are concerned with how interpretations of and allegiance to the concept of identity will influence civil societies because these determine the nature of checks on the state. Identity creates the requisite social capital to mobilise interest groups. We want to know how identity and identity issues (as reflected by civil society) impact on local government,

regional/provincial government, national government, intergovernmental relations/management, civil-military relations, foreign affairs and international economic integration/globalisation (or resistance to it), democratic opposition and one-party dominance. Civil society organisations participate in debates at each level of government. Such organisations provide critical security against the over-extension of governmental powers (Foley & Edwards, 1996).

The very fact that group identities are associated with volatile social issues and concerns about redistribution should not be seen as an automatic threat to the consolidation of democracy. As new players are brought into government, parastatals, education and the public service in South Africa today, the right to freedom of speech and assembly allows civil society to actively investigate and change government policy. For example, the 1999 ISCOR case against affirmative action policies, the replacement of the RDP by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR), and nationwide criticism of the unemployment crisis and the prevalence of anti-crime strategies reflect that civil society is rather effective at challenging government. Moreover, these challenges did not come from homogeneous groups of people but from conglomerates of citizens "agglutinated" by their common concerns.

Within the new democracy, heterogeneity and unity have to be negotiated and reconciled more or less continually. South Africans furthermore have to reflect on the extent to which they want cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic and racial identities to shape the reconstruction of national, community and individual identity (Singh, 1997). In addition, identity is complicated by the fact that the new government has embarked on reconciliation and nation building simultaneously (see Liebenberg & Zegeye, 1998).

The apartheid system cemented a division of labour and citizenship on a racial and ethnic basis, which resulted in the development of ontological commitments to racialised and ethnic identities. The current government aims at de-emphasising the apartheid-constructed divisions through its policy of non-racialism and the construction of a national identity. This should not be done in a way that subordinates the immediate interests of

subgroups to a given national undifferentiated interest. It should begin from the point of departure that *people are what they are by virtue of how they actually live, produce and reproduce themselves; how they actually shape and reshape their everyday world*. The theoretical and practical issue is whether there is sufficient commonality in our sufferings and our hopes, in the modes and sources of our oppressions and expressions, and in the creation of a social order to eliminate destructive divisions and forge a concrete unity in diversity.

The continuous excursion through a "rainbow" of differences involves more than a concern on the part of people to tell their own stories and in so doing reaffirm themselves. It involves a thorough consideration of why their histories and culture—the modalities of being in the life-world—are meaningful and important, and of why they have an integrity worth preserving while subjecting it to progressive refinement. It involves commitment to the ideal of maintaining our own integrity without encroaching upon the integrity and well-being of others.

## Notes

[1] This was a system inherited from earlier colonialist rule, pragmatically maintained by colonial white political entrepreneurs and later refined by apartheid rulers. One may, or may not, venture to refer to it as colonialism of a special type.

[2] The deteriorating crime situation in South Africa led to community-driven anti-crime activities. One such strategy led to the establishment of People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) mainly based in the Western Cape province. The actions taken by PAGAD and anti-PAGAD members and sympathisers over the past three years are bordering on "urban terrorism" that includes car-bomb attacks, attacks on people representing pro- or anti-factions, assassinations, intimidation and so on. While some see anti-crime sentiments in PAGAD activities, other see some tendencies towards Muslim fundamen-

talism or a struggle about control over syndicate (and drug) terri tory. But this is a topic for another article.

[3] Religion played an important part in South Africa's history by providing justification for colonisation and apartheid as well as for resistance to colonial and apartheid oppression. See *inter alia* Boesak (1977), De Gruchy (1979), Hope and Young (1981), Mosala and Tlhagale (1986), Villa -Vicencio (1994) and Nel (1989 and 1997).

[4] Bekker (1996) argues that a theory of identity should encompass constructivist conceptualisations and primordial elements, and be i nstrumental. However, South Africa has, apart from past ideological divisions, also been deeply divided on a class basis. For instance, fewer than 1,5 million South Africans earned more than R3 500 per month in 1996. Furthermore, unemployment totalled approximately 49% in the Eastern Cape, 46% in the Northern Province, 39% in KwaZulu-Natal, 38% in North West, 32% in Mpumalanga, 30% in the Free State, 28% in Gauteng, 18% in the Western Cape and 34% in the country as a whole. In addition, those who were employed at less than R500 per month in 1996 totalled approximately 42% in the Northern Cape, 41% in the Northern Province, 38% in the Free State, 36% in Mpumalanga, 32% in the Eastern Cape, 30% in North West and 27% in KwaZulu -Natal. See Statistics South Africa (1998, pp 46-48). The impact of all these figures on current and future class differences is immense.

[5] See Kruger (1969: 3ff) on the heritage of the past. See also De Klerk (1975, p 50ff) and Magubane (1996) on the earlier roots of a racist state in South Africa. For some insight into the impact on historiography and collective memory, see Wright (1977).

[6] The concept of "identity" has become a primary medium for understanding the relationship between the personal (subjective) and the social, the individual and the group, the cultural and the political, as well as the group and the state. "Identity" can refer to forms of (individual) personhood as well as collectivities or groups (Rousse, 1995). On the individual level, identity as a definition of personhood refers to uniqueness, that is, differentiation from other people or the whole of mankind, as well as sameness or continuity of the self across time and space (Baumeister, 1986; Erikson, 1968; Murgufa, Padilla & Pavel, 1991; Rousse, 1995). In addition, identity also incorporates the emotional attachment that individuals often have to group membership (Tajfel, 1978). Being a member of a group influences the way in which individuals see

themselves, especially if certain social categories are reviled or hated. These definitions of identity are fundamental to understanding the link between the individual and personal experience and large-scale cultural, social and political processes.

[7] Du Preez (1983) had earlier pointed out many of these underlying characteristics identified by Lipton in a study on master symbols in South African school textbooks.

[8] The other contending acts that enforced "apartheid" from earlier times were the Land Act of 1913, the "Native Reserves Act" and pass-carrying (a Dutch-British invention that started in the times of Colonial Rule and became entrenched by the 1800s).

[9] The impact of enforced "internal migration" due to apartheid laws and the use of surplus black labour from rural areas (non-economic core areas) is well described by Davenport (1977), a South African historian. See also Davenport (n.d.), pp. 13-18.

[10] The *Boerevolk* were seen to be descendants of the whites who settled in the interior of the Cape from the 17th century, relocated to areas further north in order to gain political freedom from British control, engaged in the Anglo-Boer Wars against Britain and established themselves anew after their defeat (1910 onwards).

[11] That Indian people, no doubt well meaning, chose to act as members of an Indian medical corps (sometimes referred to as "the Indian stretcher bearers") during the Anglo-Boer War or South African War also played a role in worsening relations. Whether intended or not, the Indian people by sheer "war-geographics" were seen to be mostly assisting the British forces against the Boers and their supporters. This aspect and the effect it had on later relationships have been under-researched and deserve more academic attention.

[12] A South African poet, Breyten Breytenbach (1999, p. 3), provides a description: "Afrikaan (inclusive of whites/Europeans) deur ondertroue en die verkragting van inheems Khoisan-mense, dalk met 'n stroopseltjie swart daarby; Oosters weens die inname van ambagslui en ballinge uit Maleisië en Indonesië en die Indiese kuste …". Ironically this "bastard" image/status applies equally to modern-day "white" South Africans (inclusive of Afrika-

ners), so-called "coloured people" and the majority of "black" South Africans. In a way this deconstructs any argument around South African identities.

[13] On the role of radio and television under apartheid, see Martinis (1996).

[14] The influence on the South African Black Consciousness Movement of similar intellectual streams in the United States has been under-researched. Sono (1993), Alexander (1985), Nel (1989 and 1997) and Motlhabi (1985) were some of the few who dealt with this topic—albeit from different angles.

[15] See Maphai in Liebenberg et al. (1994, pp. 125-137).

[16] Statement by the "Commission on the feasibility of a united front against the constitutional reform proposals", at the Transvaal anti-SAIC conference. Cited in Barrell (1984, p. 10). See also Houston (1999) on the national liberation struggle in South Africa with specific reference to the UDF.

[17] English-speaking South Africans mostly stayed aloof from these debates. The Afrikaner-dominated state provided enough security for other "whites" to continue their daily lives (i.e. in the economic sphere) without getting embroiled in Afrikaner politics. The state provided the needed social and economic security and stability, which rendered political risks on any side unnecessary. The gradual militarisation of politics was a major contributor to this security and stability. Under the State Security Council (again dominated by Afrikaners and some carefully selected entrepreneurs) praetorian tendencies developed. The military, however, did not step in of their own accord. Rather, they were invited into politics on a piecemeal basis, as the government became ever more vulnerable due to international isolation and internal resistance. Ironically, the co-option of the military to maintain state hegemony neutralised the threat of a right-wing coup and delayed profound reforms.

[18] For some reason Serfontein does not refer to Afrikaans-speaking Pan-Africans.

[19] A similar finding is reached by Roefs and Liebenberg (1999), though they are tentatively more optimistic about non-racialism.

[20] Ontological commitments or ontological identities point to how an individual or group is structured in terms of practical historical being. Moreover, ontological consciousness is not a shadowy feature of consciousness juxtaposed with the "real" world. In contrast, ontological commitments inform day-to-day norms and perceptions of what it is to belong to a community, nation or

racialised group. Indeed, according to Hall and Held (1990, p. 175), "from the ancient world to the present day, citizenship has entailed a discussion, and a struggle, over the meaning and scope of membership of the community in which one lives". Consider the Aztec, Egyptian, later Phoenician, Judaeo-Christian, Muslim and other empires during the past few millennia.

[21] Kaunda's successor, Frederick Chiluba, asserted that the end of the Kaunda regime would bring about a "new" Zambia. However, the "new" Zambia did not materialise.

[22] For background on the negotiations, see Rantete (1998), Sisk (1995, pp. 88ff, 166ff and 249ff) and Tjonneland (1990).

[23] See, among others, Liebenberg (1996, p. 43). Note that the IFP's notion to write a "provincial" Constitution started earlier, between 1986 and 1988, with the "Indaba" experiment.

[24] The "Far Right" later split into many minor groups, with the AVF becoming the Freedom Front (Vryheidsfront).

[25] For a more detailed discussion of the ANC's Harare Declaration and subsequent release of the Constitutional guidelines, see Liebenberg (1990).

[26] For an earlier argument along these lines see Liebenberg and Duvenage (1996, pp. 48-64).

[27] This idea found itself eventually espoused in the South African Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), Chapter 9, sections 185 and 186 on the protection and promotion of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities.

[28] The national democratic revolution and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) have been jettisoned in favour of "state-building" and GEAR.

[29] Interesting to note that in the month of Ramadan, South Africa's vice-president, Jacob Zuma, chose in his national address not to mention the terms "non-racialism" and "non-sexism" (SABC News, 9 December 1999). The terms "nation building", "peace" and "ubuntu", "reconciliation" and "self-sacrifice" came up, however.

[30] A Hindu leader quoted by Singh (1999, p. 45) for example stated: "To the Indians in this country the struggle goes on, as democracy unveiled new trends such as affirmative action."

[31] On the counterside it remains to be said that Nedlac has succeeded in various agreements but failed in solving the tensions between the current government and worker-oriented organisations/trade unions and labourers (Marais, 1998, pp. 234 and 266-267).

[32] In an earlier article Liebenberg (1990) has pointed out that civil society or what he terms the "civil community" need not be restricted to type-specific polities such as multiparty systems or societies with liberal economies.

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