



Does Cultural Studies have anything to offer African Studies? Introducing a Cultural Studies perspective by considering Afrikaner and South African Black Nationalism.

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Cultural Studies is concerned with the relationship between power and culture. For Stuart Hall national identity would be regarded as the outcome of a process of contextually-bound semiosis, and nations viewed as linguistic representations, arising as people relate to each other within a matrix of power-relations. From this point of view we continually construct-&-reconstruct ourselves as we live our lives – attaching ourselves to the available discursively-constructed ‘subject-positions’. Hall’s method provides a way of conceptualizing nation-building projects as a set of relationships between ethnicity, class and power – relationships rooted in particular contexts. It foregrounds the way “beliefs” and identity-construction are shaped by our historical material contexts, power-relations and narratives from the past. These beliefs/identities/narratives then shape contemporary political behaviour, policy-formations, and the next round of identity-formation etcetera.

Cultural Studies provides a method for examining this identity-construction and hence for examining the identities and cultures underpinning Africa’s political processes. In short, Cultural Studies provides another perspective on nation building from the perspective of the (contextually-bound) ideologies, narratives and discourses that people use to construct their identities and guide their behaviours.

Constructing identity

Individuals are “made social” (socialized) by having linguistically-constructed ‘pictures’ put into their heads. Wilhelm Dilthey’s notion of a ‘worldview’ (*Weltanschauung*) encapsulates how people come to ‘see’ the world through acquiring knowledge, beliefs and language. A *Weltanschauung* provides an individual with a fulcrum around which to construct a ‘map’ for guiding his/her life. A worldview mixes ‘belief’ (rational and emotional) and ‘lived experience’ (action-in-the-world) – a mix of discourse and practice. Over the years, many concepts have been developed to describe the phenomenon of how people ‘see’ the world and ‘act ‘ in accordance with these visions. Hall (1977: 330) used the term “maps of meaning”; Rokeach (1960: 18-19) referred to “belief systems”; George (1969) called them “operational codes”; and Boulding (1956) said people develop “an image” of the world. Dilthey’s “*Weltanschauung*” or worldview encapsulates all of these.

So where do worldviews come from? What is the mechanism by which political socialization takes place? Effectively, humans become embedded within sets of discourses and practices. Each individual is born into a context where pre-existing meanings and practices exists – these are internalized as individuals imbibe and internalize the signs, codes and practices of their social environment. Hence, the discourses and practices of liberal democracy are now simply taken-for-granted in places like USA and Australia. At heart, socialization is the acquisition of language as mediated by the family, media and schooling. The socialization process positions



individuals into sets of social relationships, some of which are political. So the acquisition of political worldviews is related to the process of interpellation (Althusser, 1971: 162-163). Humans are embedded into, and embed themselves into, belief systems as they interact with their linguistic environment. We come to 'know' who we 'are' because our identities (who we think we are) and status are embedded within representational systems – we are positioned within a system of language.

Effectively, acquiring worldviews is the acquisition of ideology. By internalizing representations around us (especially in the media and school), we embed ourselves into those 'pictures of the world' made available to us. Hence, ideology is not imposed upon us – we actively participate in interpellating ourselves, through engaging with our cultural environment. For Althusserians, ideology is a system of *coding* reality – ideology emerges from a system of signification (signs and codes) (See Heck, 1980). This Althusserian conceptualization of ideology emphasizes the 'subjective' dimension of socialization – i.e. the language (signs and codes) we internalize provides us with the material from which to construct our 'visions' of the world, and of our relationship to this world. This constitutes the mechanism for positioning citizens into sets of "imaginary lived relations" (Hall, 1977: 329). But ideology is not merely 'subjective'. It also has an 'objective' dimension – i.e. we also learn to interact with a material world by learning practices, e.g. the 'appropriate' use of cultural objects (furniture, work-place tools, roads, 'private property', etcetera). Volosinov (1973) pointed to ideology's dual subjective-objective dimension. Deploying Volosinov offers a semiotic approach to ideological-analysis (see Louw & Tomaselli, 1991) that corrects the Althusserians overly subjectivist-view.

Worldviews are a curious phenomenon – each individual actively constructs his/her own worldview through a process of engaging with and drawing upon linguistic material in his/her environment. Individuals actively construct their own worldviews using pre-existing discourses and practices as 'representational resources'. So worldviews are not predetermined or static. Humans are not encoded-automatons, trapped inside a 'prison house of language' because humans are capable of struggling over the encoding possibilities of meaning. But, worldviews are significantly 'guided' by existing 'pools of meaning' and existing encoding rules. In all societies, it is possible to identify a pool of meaning that has become hegemonically dominant at any point in time, e.g. liberal-secularism is dominant in contemporary US, British and Australian society. Because existing signification systems are the raw material from which individuals construct worldviews, the scope to influence people is great – i.e. people can be steered by manipulating the available encoding possibilities. Effectively, those staffing key meaning-making sites (like media and schools) are worldview 'agenda setters', because they influence the pool of signs and codes from which the next wave of worldviews will be constructed. Not surprisingly, ruling elites pay considerable attention to this agenda setting function.

Using Cultural Studies to deconstruct South African political behaviour

Gavin Kitching suggests African Studies has not been up to the task of explaining what was happening in Africa and why it is happening. Perhaps the reason is that African Studies scholars have failed to get "into the heads" of Africans and examine



the discourses and narratives underpinning their identity-constructions (and hence their behaviors).

Cultural Studies provides a method for examining the identities and cultures underpinning Africa's political processes and attempts (successful and failed) at nation building. Cultural Studies directs us to focus on:

- How ideologies, narratives and discourses are constructed (by intellectuals) and circulated (by teachers and journalists, etcetera).
- How ideas/worldviews (in the form of textuality and intertextuality) are encoded and decoded within specific contextual frameworks & power-relationships.
- How these ideas/worldviews underpin ruling elites and the hegemonies these elites construct.
- The relationship between ideologies, narratives and discourses and the building (and maintenance) of concrete infrastructures (e.g. economies, patronage-networks, service-delivery, etcetera).

This Cultural Studies approach can be applied to South Africa to deconstruct the contextually-bound worldviews and behaviours of those political actors who shaped the three models of nation building and modernization that characterized twentieth century South Africa, namely Anglo settler-capitalism; Afrikaner nationalism; black nationalism.

The Milner model of settler capitalism

After the Boer War, Lord Milner and his 'Kindergarten' were responsible for the post-war reconstruction of South Africa. (Nimocks, 1968). Milner's kindergarten was a small tight-knit group of Oxford University graduates, drawn from the heart of the Anglo-establishment, who were committed to the task of Empire-building. They were sent out to Africa to build British hegemony. This 'kindergarten' effectively created the basic political-economic outlines of a new modern state – South Africa. The Milner model – which has underpinned the South African social formation ever since – encoded the dominant discourses and narratives underpinning British colonialism. Milner's own notes and correspondence are infused with this British colonial & imperial discourse (Headlam, 1933).

Milner's kindergarten laid the foundations for a British Southern African hegemony by:

- Creating the conditions for a new modern state. South Africa and South African-ness thereafter emerged within the boundaries of a new administrative entity – which conveniently served the needs of a modern (Anglo-dominated) capitalist economy. (This necessarily also served the Empire's economic interests). For the kindergarten modernity, in the form of Anglo-liberal capitalism, represented 'progress' over the lower forms of socio-economic organization represented by Afrikaners and black-Africans.
- Constructing of a new civil service, police, judiciary and local government infrastructure as a fulcrum within which modern capitalism could grow. Anglos were imported for the purpose of staffing these new infrastructures.



- Laying the foundations for South Africa's twentieth century labour arrangements.
- Constructing a new framework for an integrated Southern African capitalist economy, with Witwatersrand gold-mining lying at the center of this new economic-order.
- Dividing the country into areas for white settlement and black reserves.
- Building an education and media infrastructure that serviced the needs of Britain's hegemony over South Africa, i.e. Anglo cultural hegemony was entrenched. Anglo teachers and educational-administrators were imported for the purpose of circulating discourses appropriate to the needs of British-hegemony and Anglo-dominated capitalism.
- Laying the foundations for racial-capitalism, i.e. a class-race hierarchy which underpinned the new socio-economic order.
- Entrenching white supremacy.

However, Milner never succeeded in fully implementing his original model of British hegemony, primarily because he was unable to attract enough Anglo settlers to South Africa to achieve a fully-fledged Anglo-settler society of the Australian type. Instead, the kindergarten restructured the original Milner model so as to rely upon "moderate" Afrikaners administering the new British dominion. This involved converting Afrikaner leaders like Louis Botha and Jan Smuts to Anglo discourses and practices. These leaders built Anglo-Afrikaner alliance-politics which ultimately serviced the needs of Anglo mining-capital (i.e. the economic heart underpinning British hegemony over Southern Africa).

The three most significant effects of the establishment of early twentieth century Anglo hegemony over Southern Africa was (1) the creation of a new modernizing state; and (2) the reconfiguration of the socio-economic order in accordance with the (modernizing) principles of racial-capitalism. Associated with this reordering was the (3) naturalization of an ethnic-ranking discourse which underpinned the modernizing-capitalist project of twentieth century South Africa. This ethnic-ranking discourse had profound repercussions in twentieth century South Africa, because this ranking was to spawn the 'catch-up nationalisms' of Afrikaner and South African black nationalism.

A feature of the British Empire was an ethnic-ranking system that Donald Horowitz has called 'positional psychology' (Horowitz, 1985: 184). In other words, ethnic ranking allocated group worth. Within the colonial system there were what Horowitz called 'backward' and advanced' groups. One's worth as an individual was ascribed according to the ethnic group one was born into. An Empire-wide colonial ethnic-ranking system existed – a worldview that justified English-rule over an Empire of lesser human-types. A unified British South Africa was established in 1910 as a white oligarchy in which Anglos were dominant. Racial oligarchy was encoded into South Africa's very origins as a unified capitalist state and has remained a feature of the South African state ever since.

As Horowitz said, 'the colonialists thus set in motion a comparative process by which aptitudes and disabilities imputed to ethnic groups were to be evaluated...[and] .. the



evaluations took hold ...[so that] ... no one emerged from colonial rule untouched by the new standards of group evaluation' (Horowitz, 1985: 154). To be born a white Anglo was to see oneself and be seen by others as automatically superior and 'advanced'. To be born a black South African was to be automatically 'backward'. To be born Afrikaans was to be allocated to an intermediary position – not as 'advanced' as Anglos, but not as 'backward' as blacks. Anglos saw Afrikaners as 'honorary Europeans'; slightly 'better than blacks', but somehow tainted by their long association with Africa. This Anglo-manufactured ascribed ranking affected not only one's economic life chances, but also affected one's perceived self-worth. It was a social-order in which non-Anglos could never feel fully 'worthy'. This produced a sense of inferiority because being in a 'backward' (or intermediary) position produced a feeling of being 'weak and helpless' vis-à-vis the 'advanced' group (Horowitz, 1985: 170). It also produced a form of self-stereotyping in which members of the 'backward' groups adopted compliant personalities characterized by unassertiveness, an unambitious demeanour and the assumption that others were more intelligent, better educated and more worthwhile (Horowitz, 1985: 170-171). Besides being psychologically unsettling, exclusion from the 'advanced' group produced feelings of envy, insecurity and deprivation (Jesudason, 1995: 7). This envy, insecurity and deprivation had profound effects on subsequent socio-political developments in South Africa because it produced 'catch-up nationalism' – i.e. Afrikaner nationalism and South African black nationalism. These two catch-up nationalisms (with their policies of apartheid, and black empowerment) are attempts by groups 'psychologically damaged' by the Anglo-colonial ranking system to re-arrange the ranking order and so achieve the 'same recognition' accorded to the 'advanced' group (Horowitz, 1985: 165). They are nationalisms triggered by 'pain'.

Ultimately, one of the great unintended consequences of Milner's model was apartheid which emerged from the profound impact the Milner model had on the Afrikaner psyche. In particular, Milner's policy of attempting to Anglicize Afrikaners by banning the use of Afrikaans in schools had profound consequences. This led to the founding of Afrikaner schools organized by parent committees and *dominees* (Calvinist ministers of religion). These were called CNO-schools (*Christelik Nasionale Onderwys*/Christian National Education). From these CNO-schools emerged the ideology of "Christian Nationalism". And from this grew the Afrikaner nationalist notion of "*eiesoortigheid*" ("own-ness"), which mutated into apartheid.

Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid

Afrikaner nationalism was a by-product of Milner's post-Boer war reconstruction. This reconstruction turned Johannesburg into a sub-metropole of capitalism. South Africa's formerly agricultural-based (largely pastoral) economy was transformed into a predominantly urban-economy (centered upon mining). Whites, in particular were rapidly urbanized as capitalization of the agriculture drove surplus populations into the cities. The urbanization of Afrikaners after the Boer War saw impoverished Afrikaners congregate in shackland slums. The first quarter of the twentieth century saw these working class and lumpenproletariat Afrikaners turn to the SA Communist Party in large numbers. This culminated in the 1922 declaration of a people's republic in Johannesburg/Witwatersrand (Herd, 1966). The military was mobilized to



crush this uprising. Ultimately the struggle between the National Party/NP (led by middle class Afrikaners) and Communist Party over this Afrikaner constituency left a long-lasting legacy of Afrikaner middle class fear of communism – a legacy that became enmeshed with apartheid.

Milner's modernizing state also created a small urban Afrikaner middle class. This middle class experienced not only the dislocation of rapid urbanization (de-pastoralization), but also experienced the trauma of having to function in an Anglicized urban environment. Within Milner's ethnic-ranking structure they found themselves to be second-class citizens. This middle class – especially its intellectuals, *dominees*, teachers and social workers – already resentful about Anglicization, came to blame Anglo-capitalism for the impoverishment of their fellow-Afrikaners in the slums, and the rise of communism. The *dominees* were, in particular, concerned about the latter because it was seen to threaten their "Christian values". It was these middle class Afrikaners who led the NP. The NP promoted Christian Nationalism as a means for Afrikaners to deliver themselves from the poverty, dislocation, pain and second-class-ness of Anglo-capitalist hegemony (i.e. Afrikaner Nationalism was presented as an alternative to the communist solution to Anglo-capitalism).

In this regard, Jesudason has noted that 'deprived individuals and their leaders, especially if they possess strong cultural and affective ties, are prone to using the state to ... modify the opportunity structure of society' (Jesudason, 1995: 7). The British created the ethnic ranking-system and the pain associated with being ranked badly. Having done this, the conditions were created (in the many multi-ethnic societies created by the British Empire) for one or other ethnic group to seize state power in order to use the state for a group-based socio-economic catch-up policy. The earliest such nationalist catch-up project was undertaken by an intermediary-ranked South African group, namely Afrikaner nationalists. Apartheid was an enormous ethnic re-ranking and 'affirmative action' project designed by the NP to upgrade Afrikaners who had been impoverished by British capitalization/modernization of South Africa after the Boer War. This upgrade-program was imbued by the spirit of what has been dubbed *volkskapitalisme* ("people's capitalism") (O'Meara, 1983) which involved building a parallel Afrikaner economy. To achieve this, the NP focused its energy on capturing the state which was used as a vehicle to create opportunities for Afrikaner advancement. Afrikaner poverty was to be eliminated not through charity, but by using the state to rearrange opportunity-structures. The result was the creation of an ethnic-patronage system. The NP used its control of the state to dispense patronage to its ethnic constituency. Apartheid became, in effect, a huge affirmative action program for Afrikaners – the NP dispensed public service jobs and built a huge education system of Afrikaner schools, colleges and universities in order to upgrade their constituency. An interesting feature of this Afrikaner affirmative action program was that the NP created *separate* structures alongside and parallel to the Anglo-structures. Initially 'standards' were not as high in the parallel Afrikaner institutions -- i.e. Afrikaners were effectively 'protected' from Anglo competition while standards were raised over a twenty-year period until they reached the same level as the Anglo institutions. This parallel infrastructure was paid for by taxing businesses in South Africa (which were generally Anglo-owned). The trade-off for these businesses was, as O'Meara (1983: 247) argues, that the state facilitated the exploitation of black



workers by the business-sector. Apartheid meant businesses could – even after paying tax – generate substantive profits (from exploiting black people), and not be 'damaged' by having less competent people forced on them by affirmative action. Hence the Anglo business sector was left unscathed by Afrikaner affirmative action during the up-grade/transition period.

At the heart of the process of creating Afrikaner Nationalism was a group of radical intellectuals (De Klerk, 1975) who successfully fashioned, popularized and naturalized a set of narratives which by 1948 was able to mobilize and unify a diversity of Afrikaners previously separated by regional differences, class differences, urban-rural cleavages, and hostilities dating back to the Boer War (when Afrikanerdom was divided between those who capitulated to the British and those who fought to the bitter end). These early Afrikaner nationalists invested considerable energy into building up an Afrikaans-language print media to popularize their ideas. Further, they created an organization (similar to the Masons) called the Broederbond to promote their nationalism and geared to placing as many “*Broeders*” (Brothers) as possible into key positions in society. Much effort was expended in winning over teachers and journalists. The career-trajectory of the man often credited with “inventing” apartheid – Hendrik Verwoerd – reveals much about the way Afrikaner nationalism emerged and grew. Verwoerd was a social work professor (concerned about Afrikaner poverty). He then became the founding editor of a newspaper created to promote Afrikaner nationalism in the Transvaal. Thereafter he moved to a Parliamentary career.

Effectively, intellectuals like Verwoerd created a new set of ‘subject positions’ for Afrikaners to occupy. A new identity and/or “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) was forged. At its heart, this new identity stressed “*eiesoortigheid*” (“own-ness”), a notion based upon the Dutch principle of *verzuiling* (the pillarization of society). Using “own-ness” as its justification, the NP demanded the right for Afrikaners to have their own “cultural space” separate from Anglos and from blacks. They convinced their newly mobilized constituency that this was the way to prevent Afrikaners from being “swamped” by both Anglo cultural imperialism and black majoritarianism. These intellectuals adeptly used the 1938 Voortrekker centenary celebrations to mobilize a sense of “own-ness” and opposition to Anglo-hegemony. Then, during the Second World War, black migrants began streaming into the cities to staff the new factories producing munitions for Britain. The Afrikaner nationalist intelligentsia was able to use this as further evidence of the need for the NP to gain control of the state in order to create the conditions necessary for “own-ness” (i.e. “separate development”) and stop this black migration. From this, the notion of apartheid was born.

Early apartheid was constructed around the following nationalists discourses:

1. Afrikaner resistance to Anglicization – i.e. the notion of “*eiesoortigheid*” and a language-struggle (as outlined in Steyn, 1987).
2. The NP responded to the growth of an Afrikaner working class/ lumpenproletariat by (i) formulating affirmative action for the “volk” (which was offered to Afrikaners as an alternative to communism); (ii) opposing Smuts and the United Party (who represented South African capitalist interests and Milner’s racial-



capitalism); and (iii) formulated policies which retained the basic outlines of racial-capitalism, but pushed Afrikaners up the ethic-class scale. Effectively, although the basic outline of Milner's modernization project was retained, the NP produced a modified modernization and nation building program.

3. Middle class *dominees* within the NP were concerned about the lumpenproletariat Afrikaners living in shackland slums. (It is worth noting that the first NP apartheid Prime Minister, D.F. Malan was a *dominee*).
4. A sense of "minority-ness" led to a fear black majoritarianism. Much of apartheid was about trying to find mechanisms for geographically delineating 'white SA' and keeping blacks out of this 'white' territory.
5. A sense of "minority-ness" also caused the NP to oppose Anglo migration into SA because of a fear of being culturally 'swamped'.
6. Afrikaner nationalism encoded a powerful sense of "African-ness", (of being African, although they had a Western culture). Hence, the invention of "Afrikanerness" encoded a narrative beginning with seventeenth century rebellions against Dutch rule (so as to define a 'break with Europe').

Ultimately, the group of radical intellectuals who lay at the heart of Afrikaner Nationalism succeeded in interpellating a previously disparate group of people (divided by regionalism, class, and historical conflicts) into a new imaginary lived relationship called 'Afrikaner-ness'. A strong sense of 'own-ness' (around the notion of "*die volk*"/the people) was created and naturalized. This was linked to an 'us-them' dichotomy in which the 'them' (Anglos, blacks and communists) were defined as threatening to *die volk*. Encoded into *die volk* was a strong sense of 'uniqueness' – a group self-defined by its narrative as 'different' from all around them because they were:

- Africans with European roots
- Speaking a language spoken no-where else
- Culturally Western-European and Christian (rather than African animists), and
- Racially distinct.

The narrative that was naturalized further defined this group as having a God-given right for self-defence/preservation (traceable back to the Battle of Blood River mythology of a 'pact with God').

On coming to power in 1948 the NP actioned these discourses in the following ways:

1. They banned the Communist Party.
2. White supremacy (adopted from the Milner model) and the ethnic/class-ranking model of racial capitalism were taken for granted, but was pushed further by taking the vote away from Cape coloureds.
3. They moved to halt Anglicization, promote the use of Afrikaans, and create cultural spaces for "own-ness". In particular, the NP institutionalized ethnic-education, primarily to establish an Afrikaner "own" cultural-space (schools, colleges, universities). Simultaneously, separate education departments were established for coloureds, Indians, urban blacks and for each black homeland.
4. The NP moved quickly to demolish the shackland slums (e.g. Langlaagte, Lady Selbourne, Sophiatown, Cato Manor, and District Six), and resettle people into new racially-defined suburbs. From this was born South Africa's race-based urban planning model.



5. A de facto affirmative action program for Afrikaners was operated during the 1950s and 1960s (although it was never called this). The objective was to re-rank Afrikaners upwards within the Milner ethnic-ranking model; and to upgrade the Afrikaner lumpenproletariat. To achieve this, the NP provided jobs (for example on the railways), and began building an extensive education infrastructure of Afrikaans-language schools, technical colleges, teachers' training colleges and universities. This was paid for by taxing South African capitalists (who tended to Anglos). As a sweetener to these capitalists, the apartheid state facilitated the enhanced exploitation of black labour in order to facilitate higher profits. This affirmative action program was so successful that it eventually changed the NP's constituency. Hence, by the 1980/90s, the dramatically expanded Afrikaner middle classes no longer needed affirmative action or apartheid to 'upgrade/protect' them; and had lost their hostility towards Anglos.
6. For intellectuals like Verwoerd, apartheid was also a response to the Atlantic Charter which threatened to bring majoritarian liberal-democracy to South Africa. This impending threat saw apartheid re-conceptualized as a form of internal decolonization – i.e. each 'black nation' in South Africa would be given its own independent state as a means to ensure that one part of South Africa remained as a territorial-base for the Afrikaner nation. "Own-ness" was to be territorialized and institutionalized as a series of nation-building projects. This necessarily involved abandoning the Milner white supremacy model (where whites would rule over blacks indefinitely), and replacing it with the idea that South Africa consisted of 11 separate nations. Ten of these 'nations' were black; and they were to be granted self-rule and then independence (i.e. blacks would no longer be ruled by whites). This shift was to produce an ever-expanding 'industry' of apartheid bureaucrats to set-up and administer the 'homeland policy' – an 'industry' that eventually became an important player in actually formulating policy.
7. A system of "influx control" (using internal passports) was created to control black migration to the cities. The 'grand apartheid' vision was to actually reverse black migration through push-pull policies geared to shifting blacks out of the so-called 'white cities' and into the black homelands. A migrant labour system was institutionalized to allow contracted black workers into 'white' South Africa for limited periods of time. Under this policy, homeland blacks were deemed 'foreigners' in ('white') South Africa – with the NP arguing they were equivalent to Turkish 'guest-workers' in Germany. Supporters of apartheid used this logic to make apartheid more palatable to themselves – i.e. it was a means to avoid confronting the pain such policies caused in other people's lives.

In the process of implementing apartheid, the NP created a *verzuil*-ed South Africa – a country divided into ethnic compartments. The modernization, industrialization and process of racial-capitalist accumulation, initiated by Milner, continued apace under the NP, but it was not an Anglo or liberal-democratic modernization process. Instead, it was a modernization-program based upon high levels of state interventionism, and state planning based upon nationalist-socialist principles. This program specifically sought (to use state funding) to intervene to promote the "own-ness" of thirteen language/cultural groups against the pressures of Anglo-modernization (as a way to justify protecting an Afrikaner national "space").



The central failing of this model was its failure to accommodate South African (urban-based) Westernized blacks, especially those who had been substantively Anglicized in the highly industrialized Gauteng province. Under apartheid these people were defined as citizens of the black homelands, and were expected to return to these homelands (thereby ceasing to be South Africans). Anti-apartheid resistance – centered upon the ANC – emerged from the failure to accommodate this black middle class. This produced ANC leaders like Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki and Tambo. The apartheid state's response to the demands by Westernized blacks for political rights was militarization and repression. Ironically, this militarization generated further industrialization, which actually increased the flow of black people into South Africa's cities and so built a huge working class constituency for the ANC to mobilize.

Black nationalism and black empowerment

Contemporary South African black nationalism is a by-product of racial-capitalism and its ethnic-ranking system. Just as Afrikaner nationalism was a form of 'catch-up nationalism' geared to re-arranging the order of the Anglo-colonial ranking system, so too is the black nationalism espoused by the ANC. These ANC's policies of 'black empowerment', 'corrective action' & 'affirmative action' are derivative of the fact that ethnicity & race have always served as powerful makers of status, life chances and identity in South Africa. In both British and apartheid South Africa, a racial ranking system placed whites at the top, Indians and coloureds in the middle and blacks at the bottom. A core feature of ANC policy has been state-intervention to undo the former "racial hierarchy" and actively elevate the "African majority" upwards (Jordan, 1997:3) through black empowerment initiatives (Mbeki, 1999: 2-3).

Contemporary South African black nationalism bears many resemblances to Afrikaner nationalism. Both Afrikaner and black nationalism share a similar set of contextual roots:

- The dislocation of urbanization and modernization triggered by the introduction of modernizing capitalism. Afrikaners underwent this dislocating process of urbanization following the Boer War; whereas black South Africans experienced these dislocations following World War II.
- The deprivations of poverty caused by being rural migrants into an urban environment for which one does not have the skills. Just as Afrikaners were poverty-stricken shackland dwellers in the first half of the twentieth century, so were black South Africans in the second half. Where Afrikaners perceived Anglo-capitalists and British imperialism as their tormentors, black South Africans came to see capitalism and Afrikaner nationalists as their tormentors.
- The experience of being ranked badly within the (Empire-derived) ethnic-ranking structure created the same sense of resentment amongst first Afrikaners, and later blacks. Both were made to feel like a foreigner and/or a second-class citizen in their own country.

This experiential bundle of dislocation, deprivation and second-classness was to generate both Afrikaner and black nationalism – both triggered by 'pain'.

This 'pain' can be clearly perceived in President Thabo Mbeki's lament that South Africa remains "a country of two nations" (Mbeki, 2000: 8). Mbeki referred to whites



as the “oppressor nation” (2000:6), “colonialists” (2000: 2) and “the arrogant ...[who] ... believe themselves to be superior” (2000: 2). He reproached whites as “the beneficiaries of racism [who] consider it their duty to discourage the victims of racism from reflecting and acting on the pain they feel” (Mbeki, 2000: 8). He noted that, unlike other colonial situations, in South Africa “our own ‘oppressor nation’ and ‘ruling class’ ceased to be foreign” Mbeki, 2000: 3) and so remained within the country. This created the challenge for black people to destroy the old order while having to continue to live within the same state as the ‘oppressor nation’. Mbeki’s first public airing of the notion that South Africa is a country of two nations was made in 1998 when Mbeki proposed the notion of reconciliation needed to be reappraised because South Africa was “not becoming one nation” and would not become one nation until substantive progress was made in upgrading the black nation’s socio-economic position (Mbeki, 1998).

Not surprisingly – given that their contextual roots are so similar – both Afrikaner and SA black nationalists have developed similar policies to try and rectify the situations they found intolerable. Essentially, as Jesudason has noted, they have sought to capture the state and then use this state to “modify the opportunity structure of society” (Jesudason, 1995: 7). In South Africa, black empowerment, corrective action and affirmative action represent the policies adopted by black people who have used the ANC to successfully take control of the state. Black South Africans, previously ranked “backwards” (Horowitz, 1985: 174) under racial capitalism (in both its Milnerite and apartheid forms) now demand that they be granted preferential treatment relative to those formally deemed to belong to the “advanced” group. The objective is to ensure that those previously ranked “backwards” now take charge politically so as to facilitate state-led upward-ranking initiatives (Jordan, 1997: 3). Hence, from the 1990s, South African black people (referring to themselves as “the majority” or “the previously disadvantaged”) have demanded preferential employment opportunities, university placements, etcetera; while whites (pejoratively referred to as “the elite” or “the minority”) were ‘penalized’. Businesses whose ownership and staffing structures were seen to be ‘too white’ were not given government contracts, and have been legislatively forced to meet race quotas. The ANC-government has also re-staffed the civil service and state-owned enterprises (by retrenching whites and replacing them with blacks).

The apartheid state built a military-industrial complex as part of its attempts to defend itself. This undermined a core feature of apartheid, namely ‘influx control’ because as the military-industrial complex expanded, so the urbanization and modernization of black people increased. The apartheid state also needed ever-growing numbers of black people to staff its bureaucratic and security apparatus. Hence, the apartheid state expanded the urban black middle class and built an enormous black working class. These people experienced not only the dislocation of rapid urbanization, but also the trauma of having to function in an urban environment where they were treated as second-class within apartheid’s ethnic-ranking structure. This produced the conditions for the growth of a highly aspirational black petit bourgeoisie, highly motivated to ethnically re-ranking South Africa. To achieve this they needed to build precisely the ‘imagined community’ apartheid was trying to stop emerging, namely a unified ‘black South Africa’ – this involved interpellating disparate and divided group



of people into a new set of imaginary lived relationship. During the 1980s this was achieved by mobilizing a creative mix of black nationalist and socialist discourses. In the 1990s the socialist discourses were dropped in favour of an unbridled black nationalism geared to building a “patriotic black bourgeoisie” (Malala, 1996).

Those driving the policy of black empowerment are the black petit bourgeoisie who have the most to gain from its implementation. The largest concentration of South Africa's black petit bourgeoisie is found in the Gauteng Province (the Johannesburg, Witwatersrand, Pretoria, and Vereeniging area). Gauteng's black community had roots in every ethnic and tribal group in Southern Africa - it was a community born of an enormous urban cultural melting pot. The result was the growth of a new cultural form – particularly in Johannesburg, from the 1950s onwards – which could be termed 'Gauteng culture'. The Gauteng petit bourgeoisie are Westernized Africans who are increasingly bringing up their children with English as their first language. They constitute the new elite of compradors who have stepped into the shoes of the whites they have displaced in the government and business sectors. In this respect there are some strong resemblances to the so-called “Wabenzi” elite in East Africa. Ultimately, this comprador elite is the outcome of a liberal-reform agenda driven by the Urban Foundation (and funded by SA-capitalists) from the 1970s onwards. This reformist program sought to build a strong black middle class in order to stabilize South African capitalism. During the anti-apartheid struggle this emergent black petit bourgeoisie aligned themselves with the black working class (institutionalized within the ANC-SA Communist Party-Congress of South African Trade Unions alliance). This alliance deployed a socialist discourses (with many features of cut-&-paste marxism) to mobilize the black working class which grew rapidly during the 1970s-1980s as the apartheid state built its industrial-military complex. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this ANC-led alliance pragmatically modified its discourse. For example, whereas in the 1980s ethnic re-ranking was couched in terms of a socialist re-distribution of wealth; from the early 1990s it was re-couched in terms of “affirmative action”, borrowed from the USA's equal employment opportunities (EEO) discourse (Holloway, 1989: 10) – and hence made more palatable to Washington. Overall, the way the ANC has shifted its worldview and narratives over time is highly instructive of how South Africa's black middle class intelligentsia has pragmatically adjusted its discourses to fit changing political circumstances – i.e.:

1. In the 1950s an Atlantic Charter discourse was used (for example, in the ANC's Freedom Charter). Deploying the discourse of “majoritarianism” – borrowed from US Atlantic Charter thinking – served as a powerful rhetorical weapon to fight the NP while evoking Western sympathy.
2. From the 1960s to 1980s, Soviet patronage, and efforts to build working class support for the ANC, saw the adoption of a ‘socialist redistribution’ discourse.
3. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought a shift during the early 1990s to US-liberal discourses like ‘affirmative action’ and (capitalist) ‘economic growth’. This shift has created some tensions within the ANC-led alliance.
4. During the interregnum period (when Afrikaners still dominated the civil service and security apparatus), the ANC replaced ‘affirmative action’ with ‘corrective action’ – because this was a terminology that resonated with Afrikaner nationalist understandings of their own struggle against Anglo-domination.



5. Once the ANC felt securely in power, 'corrective action' was replaced with the more powerful nationalist term of 'black empowerment'.

Each of the above five effectively describes ethnic re-ranking of the sort described by Jesudason.

One of the consequences of South Africa's 1990s affirmative action/corrective action programs was the rapid enlargement of South Africa's black middle class – a group that now effectively controls the ANC and/or the ruling (Mbeki) faction of the government. This black middle class has effectively been co-opted into a corporatist alliance with SA capital, such that SA capitalism has been stabilized in accordance with the original Urban Foundation plans. In fact, this comprador elite has moved into those suburbs previously associated with the Anglo-business sector, and adopted the same lifestyle as these Anglos. The resultant assimilation into SA Anglo culture has served as a powerful mechanism to 'tame' many former radical ANC activists into so-called 'Gucci comrades'. But this black middle class now finds itself occupying a set of contradictory positions. Foremost of these is a growing gap between this comprador elite and South Africa's black underclass who still effectively live at the bottom of the socio-economic system originally introduced by Milner's kindergarten. For the black middle class beneficiaries of affirmative action/black empowerment this creates tensions. On the one hand, they still mobilize a discourse of ethnic re-ranking that claims to be uplifting the entire 'black nation'. However, the majority of the black masses cannot be upgraded because the corporatist deal with South Africa-capital precludes this possibility, as do the 'globalization rules' imposed by the Pax Americana. The result has been the promotion of black nationalist discourses (e.g. 'African renaissance') by the new ruling group, who ANC politician, Jabu Moleketi has described as a 'patriotic black bourgeoisie' (Malala, 1996). This shift to black nationalism has generated for the 'patriotic bourgeoisie' one seemingly irresolvable 'identity' contradiction/tension – i.e. that associated with advocating "Afrocentric" values and practices on the one hand, while, on the other hand, being centrally involved in administering a de facto Westernization process.

So what are the key discourses being deployed by South Africa's contemporary ruling elite? The following characterize their worldview:

1. Gauteng's demographically dominate this middle class. Because this Gauteng middle class is the product of a modernization process that occurred under apartheid (Louw, 1998: 151-152), this is a modern group of people unsympathetic to traditional African (pre-modern) values – because such "tribal" values are associated with apartheid. The Gauteng middle class staunchly advocate enhanced modernization, and so have become the contemporary heirs of Milner's South African modernization project.
2. Under apartheid this urban group were designated as 'foreign' guest labourers. Being made to feel like underdogs and foreigners in their own country has generated pain and grievances that have translated into Jesudason's ethnic re-ranking response, seen most clearly in the policy of black empowerment.
3. Because apartheid promoted "own-ness", this group is opposed to any hint of *verzuiling*-logic. Their discourses and policies effectively promote assimilation into Gauteng culture as well as the de facto Anglicization of South Africa.



4. Although this group widely deployed a socialist discourse during the anti-apartheid struggle, they have (in the process of pragmatically accommodating themselves to both the Pax Americana, plus a corporatist alliance with SA capital) become compradors for global-capitalism. The discomfort that many feel about this has translated itself in anti-Eurocentric-speak and/or an advocacy of Afrocentricism (which in South Africa means 'Gauteng culture'). This nationalist rhetoric appears to serve as a self-denial (?) safety valve to release tension in the face of having been de facto co-opted and tamed by SA capital.
5. The ANC is now dominated by a 'patriotic black bourgeoisie' who are using their control of government to enrich themselves, while at the same time failing to deliver the promised post-apartheid nirvana to the country's huge black underclass. To remain in power, this black bourgeoisie needs to invent and popularize narratives that convince the black working class, lumpenproletariat and rural poor to follow them. To do this, they have invented the 'subject position' of 'blackness' as black nationalism has come to underpin their new project of 'nation building'. Essentially a single 'black nation' has been invented that fudges over the divisions of class; the cleavages between Western-urbanites and rural pre-moderns; linguistic and tribal divisions; and the divisions between blacks who fought for and against apartheid. The 'patriotic black bourgeoisie' has effectively deployed a set of discourses that invites all 'blacks' to become part of an "us" within an us-them ("two nations") dichotomy. This dichotomy under-writes 'black empowerment' which in turn further enriches the black middle classes.

After coming to power in 1994, the ANC's central policy-agenda became affirmative action (which subsequently mutated into corrective action and then black empowerment). Out of this has emerged an ever-expanding black middle class tied to a patronage-system that relies on the state to enforce the transfer of resources and opportunities into black hands. In some respects the ANC's black empowerment program appears to simply replicate the NP's ethnic patronage system. However, there are some significant differences from the NP's model because the ANC program is not based upon building a separate and parallel set of infrastructures. Instead, it is based upon taking control of *existent* socio-economic structures in order to promote black (middle class) interests. Significantly, the NP's affirmative action program (because it was based on "own-ness") created *separate* parallel Afrikaner structures, where initially 'standards' were not as high (i.e. Afrikaners were effectively 'protected' from Anglo competition while standards were raised over a twenty-year period). This meant the business sector was not 'damaged' by having less competent people forced on them by Afrikaner affirmative action. Aside from increased taxation and having to comply with 'influx control' regulations, the Anglo business sector was left largely unscathed by Afrikaner nationalism during the affirmative action-up-grade/transition period, i.e. Afrikaner nationalism succeeded in modifying societies opportunity structures in ways that did not damage the Anglo-dominated economy created by Milner. This left the state's tax-base unscathed, and did not generate a major exodus of skilled & entrepreneurial Anglos. The same is not true of the ANC's current black empowerment policies, which are far more interventionist because they seek direct and immediate access to *existent* socio-economic infrastructures. However, despite the disruptions this nationalist interventionism is causing, SA capital continues to treat the patriotic black bourgeoisie as a valuable post-apartheid corporatist-alliance partner



– because the ANC (dominated by this patriotic bourgeois faction) serves to stabilize capitalism by managing the huge black underclass. Essentially the basic outlines of Milner’s modern capitalist state can only be preserved if this black middle class can successfully continue to ‘buy off’ the black underclass through ‘symbolic-delivery’ (i.e. black nationalist narratives instead of economic-delivery). In return for managing the underclasses, the parasitic nature of the patriotic black bourgeoisie (and even its tendencies towards crony-capitalism) will be tolerated as preferable to the alternative of having to seriously re-design the socio-economic system (originally built by the kindergarten).

So, for the moment, South Africa’s future looks strangely like its past – with the basic outlines of the Milner model remaining intact, while nationalism and ethnic re-ranking continue as the dominant discourses (albeit that ‘black’ rather than ‘Afrikaner’ nationalism is now dominant). Understanding the continuities and similarities between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa is made possible by getting “into the heads” of Afrikaner and black nationalists and examining how their discourses and narratives are ultimately rooted in similar experiences of the modernizing racial-capitalist state originally brought to Southern Africa by Milner and his kindergarten.

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