

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FREEDOM CHARTER IN THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATES WITHIN THE RULING ANC ALLIANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT

A germane question in contemporary South Africa is why the ruling ANC alliance, a once united liberation movement, which dislodged the apartheid state to assume governmental control, fractured in the post-liberation phase. This paper discusses how the ANC alliance's inherited "revolutionary" language, useful in mobilising the diverse "ideological interests" into a united liberation front to bring down the apartheid state, is most divisive in the post-1994 liberation period. Thus, the 1955 Freedom Charter, the ANC-led alliance's main program encapsulating historical black liberation ideals is explored. Its significance lies in President Jacob Zuma's designation of 2015 as the Year of the Freedom Charter. Yet the 60 year old Freedom Charter is a very controversial document. The paper argues that the inherent ambiguity in the language of the Freedom Charter renders it contestable, thus vulnerable to wide re-interpretation by competing "ideological groups" within the ANC alliance. As a program of liberation ideals, the Freedom Charter is evoked in the post-1994 era by those who advocate a de-racialised pro-capitalist black nationalist trajectory and socialists seeking a working class revolution. Utilising the theoretical perspective of the functions of ideology to unify and divide groups, the ANC alliance's and government policy documents are researched. Further research on how this language continues to be used in current contentious policy debates in the South African political landscape is vital.

Introduction

The traditional January the 8th statement of the National Executive Committee of the ANC delivered by the South African President Jacob Zuma dedicated 2015 to the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter is the most significant political programme in the ANC- led alliance liberation discourse (ANC 2015). The historic popular programme is widely accepted as encapsulating the vision of liberation of the historically oppressed black majority from apartheid domination. Its ideals are expressed in the mobilising language of freedom and equality, the right to land, work, education and health. In marking mark the 25th anniversary of the programme, the then exiled ANC's President, Oliver Reginald Tambo declared 1980 the year of the Freedom Charter. Evoking the Freedom Charter at the height of the anti-

apartheid resistance was a political masterstroke for the exiled ANC alliance. As a broad vision of liberation, the Freedom Charter helped to galvanize the ANC led broad-church into a powerful anti-apartheid resistance movement across different classes and ideological persuasions. In the post-apartheid setting, the Freedom Charter has become contentious within the ruling ANC alliance. This borne by how the Freedom Charter is now a political instrument used to question, challenge and discredit the ANC led government.

Formulated in 1955 in Kliptown, the Freedom Charter is regarded within the ANC alliance as a product of popular participation by ordinary South Africans seeking freedom and equality. It sketched an outline of what a democratic South Africa would look like. The document includes both the first and second generation of rights: the right to nationality, to vote, dignity, health, education, property ownership, land distribution, as well as the democratic culture of regular elections. For over three decades, it inspired the ANC and its communist and trade union allies to wage the struggle for political liberation. It is a pivotal program in the language of the ruling ANC alliance influencing the formulation of its government's policy perspectives.

Importantly, the Freedom Charter “must be understood contextually” as it “evolved under specific conditions at a particular moment in history” (Suttner, 2015). Indeed, its meaning relates to the conditions that people then encountered during the liberation struggle. This is quite different from the present post-apartheid order of ANC political governance (Suttner, 2015). Paradigm shifts in the interpretations of the Freedom Charter are shaped and influenced by existing socio-economic and political conditions. The currency of the Freedom Charter in the ANC alliance political-policy discourse it is how it re-appropriated by its critics such as the “rhetorical left” in its ranks and the sidelined “populist left” and the aspirational black capitalists, attests to the importance of liberation ideals embedded in the document. Contemporary policy contestation within the ruling ANC alliance and in wider political circles is married to myriad interpretations about the true meaning of its economic/property” clauses. Thus, ideological competition revolves on who is the authentic bearer of its vision.

A Perspective on Ideology

To grapple with the significance of ANC alliance disagreements over the Freedom Charter, this paper argues that as opposed to conceiving ideology as a form of a pair of spectacles through which to comprehend the world, it is rather the way we perceive the world using the “special ideology glasses” (Oliver 2015). These “special ideological glasses” enable us to cut through the disguised ideological veneer of the accepted “normal” social reality “held together” by a kind of an “ideological “glue” (Zizek 2012). Another view employs the term “fantasy” in its psychoanalytical sense to denote ideology as belonging to the “imaginary” sphere. In this sense, ideology consists of “bits of fantasy that fill in social reality to “smooth it over”, that is, to make it seem as if everything fits together seamlessly, even if, without the bits of “fantasy glue”, it would not appear to be as palatable at all” (Oliver 2015). These views of ideology belie its alternative functions, which denote it not only as a unifying

medium, but also as a divisive one. This approach is useful in excavating the inherent ambiguity of the Freedom Charter, which functioned to unify and divide its adherents. It has thus been vulnerable to re-interpretation by “factional groups” within the ANC alliance.

Background to the Formulation of the 1955 Freedom Charter

The shift of ANC leadership from the conservatism of the old guard to the militant mass struggle of the Youth League African nationalists precipitated the formation the ANC alliance in the early 1950s. The rise of the militant ANC Youth League to leadership which led to the adoption of the 1949 “Programme of Action” by the ANC marked a turning point from reformist nationalism towards assertive African nationalism. The African nationalists collaborated with Communist, Coloured and Indian organisations (Wesemuller 2005, 63). In 1949, the ANC in conjunction with the Indian Congresses, the Coloured People’s Congress and leaders of the Communist Party embarked on the 1952 “Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign”, through which over 8,000 volunteers of all races were imprisoned for defying Apartheid laws (ANC 1977, 64). Africans, Indians, Coloureds and White communists united against the apartheid state (Karis and Carter 1977, 200).

From 1954 the “Joint Congress Consultative Committee” composed of leaders from the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People’s Organisation and the white Congress of Democrats conducted country-wide consultations on the alternative socio-economic order (Karis and Carter 1977, 205). The “National Action Council” led by Z. K. Matthews used the people’s submissions to draft the Freedom Charter, which was affirmed at the 26 June 1955 “Congress of the People” in Kliptown by 2,884 delegates from all Congress alliance organizations (ANC 1977, 25). The Freedom Charter envisions a free, equal and democratic South Africa. It asserts black socio-economic and political freedoms and “the demands and aspirations of an alliance of class forces” composed of black nationalists, trade unionists and communists (Davis 1991, 2). (Suttner and Cronin 1986, 140). The power of its appeal led to the introduction of repressive measures by the apartheid state in 1948. It was officially adopted by the ANC in 1958 to accommodate the divergent ideological tendencies in the liberation front for decades (Davis 2003).

The ANC alliance regards the Freedom Charter as the basic political programme of the “National Democratic Revolution”, the first of the two stages, theorised to culminate in a second stage of the socialist revolution. The development and the significance of the theory of the “National Democratic Revolution” to the ruling ANC alliance requires a different paper. Suffice to say that the Freedom Charter is widely revered within the ANC movement and outside its ranks as a programme from “which all its other policies and actions derive” (ANCYL 2010, 3). The “poetic language” of the Freedom Charter embodies “political rhetoric” with universal appeal. It thus remains an important ANC alliance document articulating broad policy principles of an ideal post-apartheid society (Burnham 2005, 18;

Peet 2000, 67). An analytical framework of the alternative functions of ideology issued to research the ANC alliance's and government documents on the Freedom Charter.

The Ambiguous “Economic/Property” Clauses of the Freedom Charter

The Freedom Charter's nine clauses articulate a vision of an alternative political and economic system (see Appendix). The third and fourth “economic/property” clauses of the Freedom Charter are the most vital, albeit controversial, stipulating broad policy ideals for the future socio-economic order. As Hudson shows, however, the Freedom Charter is “notoriously ambiguous” (Hudson 1986, 7–8). Suttner (2015, 1) argues that the meaning of the Freedom Charter is not obvious and as such it has no “proper” interpretation.

The main controversy in the clauses is identified by Suttner who argues that while calling for the reduction of inequalities, there is “ambiguity in precisely what the Freedom Charter is advocating in terms of state involvement and the distribution or redistribution of wealth” (Suttner 2004, 21). For example, on one hand, the “economic/property clauses” of the Freedom Charter envision the transfer of the “mineral wealth, the Banks and monopoly industries...to the ownership of the people as whole”, on the other hand, it supports *the right of people to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions*. The phrase “people as a whole” masks the existing social classes. Thus, although, Legassick (2010, 1) argues that the transfer to ‘*the ownership of the people as a whole*’ is a call for changing the capitalist relations of private property ownership, but it can also be interpreted as seeking the de-racialisation of the private ownership of property. As other ANC/Communist Party ideologues concluded that the Freedom Charter is “neither a socialist document nor a conventional bourgeoisie democratic programme” (Jordan 1988b, 3; Wolpe 1988, 62). It is an inherently ambiguous document that sought to accommodate a range of ideological beliefs and interests. The eclectic nature and the ideological elasticity of the language of the Freedom Charter's “economic/property” clauses was shaped by perspectives ranging from “Gandhi's passive resistance, Christianity, socialism, African communalism, indigenous cultural beliefs, and liberal democracy (Burnham 2005, 19). Indeed, former ANC president, Chief Albert Luthuli, argued that, “The Freedom Charter is open to criticism. It is by no means a perfect document” (Luthuli 2006, 142).

Another controversy about the Freedom Charter arose from the initial objections of the Africanists within the ANC. Africanists argued “for the return to the orthodox Lembede stand” as the standard-bearer of Africanism: a racially exclusive brand of African nationalism (Karis and Carter 1977, 320). About 216 delegates voted in favour of adoption the Freedom Charter at the special April 1956 ANC conference. The 16 Africanists delegates had objected to its Preamble that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and derided the language of the “economic/property” clauses as an ideological imposition on Africans by communists (Bunting 1975, 287). In 1959, Africanists broke away from the ANC to establish the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which promoted itself as the standard bearer of “genuine African nationalism” (Ranuga 1990, 10). The PAC journal, “The Africanist”, edited by Sobukwe,

dismissed the Freedom Charter as a product of “vodka cocktail” parties of white left-wing intellectuals (Karis and Carter 1977, 320). These criticisms of the Freedom Charter, particularly the “economic/property” clauses, by the PAC reflect how it was often subjected to conceptual vicissitudes and obfuscations for ideological and class predispositions.

The ambiguous language of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses led to divisions between proponents of a pro-capitalist interpretation and those who held a pro-socialist understanding (Suttner 2004, 16). Although, Jeremy Cronin, South African Communist Party deputy General Secretary, argues that the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses do not specifically use the word “nationalisation”, Suttner and Cronin show how it was generally deduced from reference to the collective noun in the phrase “the *people* shall share...”; that national wealth shall be restored to “the *people*” (Cronin 2009, 16; Suttner and Cronin 1986, 77). Such language developed in the ideological context of the 1950s when the idea of nationalisation was in vogue in post-Second World Western Europe (Cronin 2009, 16). The notion of nationalization was read from the same clauses demanding that the *wealth of South Africa be restored to people through the transfer of its mineral wealth, the Banks and monopoly industry to the ownership of the people* (my emphasis). Although, the “economic/property” clauses have been interpreted within the alliance and by analysts to denote the nationalisation of privately owned economic enterprises by the state, the capitalist connotation of the clauses understood them as advocating the transfer of ownership of state-owned companies through privatisation to the ownership of the people through shareholding.

To resolve the “land question” characterised historically by the forcible dispossession of Africans of their land, the Freedom Charter’s fourth “economic/property” clause envisaged the ending of restrictions of “*land ownership on a racial basis*” and for all the land to be “*re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger.*” Although promoting the rights of the landless, the re-division of land *amongst those who work it*, as proposed does not define the class composition of this group. Thus, the phrase in the clause calling for the redistribution of land amongst those who work it, is open to interpretation hence contentious. Analysis of land distribution and redistribution is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

The Ideological Significance of the Freedom Charter

The Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses capture a complex relationship between the ideals of freedom, democracy and equality. It is a broad vision of liberation from racial oppression and class exploitation in South Africa. However, the universality of its language belies its weakness as an essentially a compromise programme representing a contradictory unity of class aspirations of the black petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat for racial liberation (Jordan 1988b, 3). It contains “simple idealism” and it is, “more notable for its modest content and naive promises than for any revolutionary intent” as it is reflected in its problematic wording (Meredith 1997, 137). Mandela had, for example, captured the expediency of the Freedom Charter for mass political mobilisation of an “alliance of various classes and political groupings amongst the Africans supported by white democratic, Coloured and Indian workers and peasants, traders and merchants, students and teachers,

doctors and lawyers, and various other classes and groupings” (Karis and Carter 1977, 210). It was instrumental in unifying a broad church of different races and classes to wage a struggle for emancipation from apartheid state rule (Neocosmos 2006, 4; Davis 2003, 8).

The Freedom Charter was banned by the apartheid state in the early 1960s. It remerged to be used clandestinely “in the co-ordination of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa”. The then exiled ANC declared 1980 as the “Year of the Charter”, to mark 25 years of its existence (Hudson 1986, 7; ANC 185). It was popularised “through pamphlets and slogans throughout the country”, and published in local newspapers “in the form of advertisements and full page inserts” country wide (Phillips 1991, 69). It became a potent instrument in the intensification of the struggle for black liberation. For example, in 1981, trade unions, youth and community organisations opposed the celebrations of twenty years of the apartheid state by openly distributing the Freedom Charter country-wide to demand a new order (Phillips 1991, 73). The ANC aligned United Democratic Front (UDF), formed in 1983 as a broad front of 700 political civic, worker, student and youth movements, Christian and Islamic groups, trade unions, women’s groups, and sporting and cultural bodies adopted the Freedom Charter (Lodge, et al. 1991-34-37; Maree 1986, 73). The UDF rejected the P. W. Botha government’s racist “divide and rule” Tri-cameral constitutional reforms (Lodge, et al. 1991, 34–37). Almost all internal social and political resistance movements were obliged to “define at some point their position vis-a-vis the Freedom Charter” (Hudson 1986, 7).

The formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985, which became an important ally of the exiled ANC alliance, further popularised the Freedom Charter (Lodge et. al. 1991, 34–37). In 1987 COSATU had adopted the Freedom Charter (ANC, 2000a, 9). By 1987 COSATU and the UDF had defiantly embraced the Freedom Charter as providing an alternative vision to the apartheid system (Lodge et. al. 1991, 131–133). The indispensability of the Freedom Charter for the ANC alliance, was its appeal to masses of the oppressed for liberation and how it continues to be revered by the ANC alliance in the post-1994 period as a programme encapsulating broad socio-economic and political liberation ideals seen as necessary to resolve race and class oppression. Paradoxically, its eclecticism ensured its appeal to a wide range of ideological groups without collapsing its framework.

The inherent ambiguity in the language of the “economic/property” clauses makes it pliable for reappropriation by ANC alliance factions to advance their own ideological perspectives. Competing interpretations of the “economic/property” clauses of the Freedom Charter, drawn from its readings by the various factions within the ANC alliance is evident in the 2002 ANC Youth League’s deduction of the following ideological orientations:

- A nationalist/bourgeois democratic trend
- A socialist trend
- The mainstream national democratic trend which tends to incorporate elements of both of the first two trends (ANC Youth League 2002, 23).

The ANC Youth League's categorisation of the three models above can be empirically reduced to two dominant trends that are influential within the ANC alliance. These trends appear broadly as the pro-capitalist state and pro-socialist readings of the Freedom Charter.

The ambiguous language of the Freedom Charter is mirrored in the competing policy perspectives within the ANC alliance. On one hand, it is shown how the black nationalist elite wielding state power used the Freedom Charter to rationalise a pro-capitalist interpretation of a partially de-racialised inherited capitalist economy. On the other hand, the "rhetorical" left promoted a socialistic view. Thus, the ANC Secretary-General, Gwede Mantashe accused the "populist left" of using the Freedom Charter for its own populist interests (Mantashe 2015). In 2005, the ANC asserted that the Freedom Charter's ideals would be realized during the seven years preceding its centenary in 2012 (ANC 2002, 1). Thus, the ANC Secretary-General, Gwede Mantashe, argues that 80 percent of the ideals of the Freedom Charter have been met by the ANC government (Mantashe 2015). There has been modest distribution of alienated land to the landless out of the thirty percent promised by the ANC alliance at the dawn of liberation in 1994 and wide spread poverty.

The Pro-Capitalist/"Mixed Economy" Interpretation of the Freedom Charter

An early pro-capitalist reading of the Freedom Charter's "economic/property" clauses can be gleaned from Nelson Mandela's June 1956 article entitled "In our lifetime" published in the ANC periodical, "Liberation" in reply to the claims of "The Africanist", the PAC's official mouthpiece, that the Freedom Charter was socialist. Mandela argued the Freedom Charter was "by no means a blueprint for a socialist state" (Karis and Carter 1977, 310). While accepting that the Freedom Charter revolutionary changes, Mandela argued:

...in demanding the nationalisation of banks, the gold mines and the land the Charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold-mining monopolies and farming interests that have for centuries plundered the country and condemned its people to servitude. But such a step is absolutely imperative and necessary because the realisation of the Charter is inconceivable, in fact impossible, unless and until these monopolies are first smashed up and the national wealth of the country turned over to the people. (Karis and Carter 1977, 310).

Mandela's reading calls for the destruction of the financial and gold-mining monopolies and farming interests at the heart of the South African capitalist system. Mandela's radical rhetoric in the above quotation, shrouds the possible class beneficiaries of a slightly deracialised capitalist property ownership structure, thus.

The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open fresh fields for the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeoisie class. For the

first time in the history of the country the Non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mills and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before... the Charter offers immense opportunities for overall movement in the material conditions of all classes and groups that it attracts such wide support (Quoted in Karis and Carter, 1977, 310).

In the above quotation, Mandela's contemplated "nationalisation" of banks, gold mines and land to occur once the white monopolies have been destroyed. Mandela believed that this would not only benefit the "Non-European"/black bourgeois, but will boost the economy as trade and private enterprise would flourish. Thus, Mandela posited "nationalisation" within the capitalist economic system. Michael Harmel, then editor of the "African Communist", the underground Communist Party journal in the late 1950s concurred with Mandela's view in denying that the Freedom Charter advocated the abolition of private enterprise or it had demanded the nationalisation of all industries and/or state control (Turok 2008, 22). Seven years later, Mandela had eschewed any reference to "nationalisation" in his defence against the Apartheid state charge at his 1963 Rivonia treason trial. The state alleged that the Freedom Charter was a Communist conspiracy to overthrow it. Mandela asserted, however, it was not accidental that the clauses made no reference to nationalisation "since there was no single slogan connecting the ANC to the Marxist ideology" (Karis and Carter 1977, 360). Mandela emphasised that the ANC had never called for "revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country" or for a socialist revolution (Carter and Karis, 1977, 360).

The "rhetorical left" in the ANC alliance supported "nationalisation" by the "developmental state" to promote capitalist development. This interpretation is implicit in the South African Communist Party's 1962 Programme which stated that is the Freedom Charter is not a programme for socialism. "It is a common programme for a free, democratic South Africa, agreed by socialists and non-socialists" (SACP 1981q, 285). The programme advocated a developmental state "in order to ensure the rapid development of South Africa as well as a balanced industrial-agricultural country" (SACP 1962, 316). The "developmental state" was to be established in a predominantly capitalist economy¹.

¹ A typical developmental uses direct and indirect intervention in the economy to control the direction and pace of economic development through extensive regulation, long-term planning and often tight political control. The rapid growth of developmental states such as South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan are traditional models of growth as the path to economic power and glory. The 1993 World Bank paper entitled, "The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy" advocated this model in public policy circles of the developing states and governments in the 1980s. It is well known, however, that citizens of East Asian development states endured low wages, non-existent labour laws, human rights violations and minimal civil and political rights (Potter and Lloyd.2009). Proponents of mixed economy aka "developmental state" argue that historically there has never been a completely social or communist state. The profit motive of the capitalist is seen as necessary to drive efficiency and economic growth. The critical role of the "developmental state" is to adopt a strong progressive tax to implement effective and calculated social programs (Potter and Lloyd.2009).

(SACP 1962, 316). It foreshadowed “large-scale, planned development of the economy, controlled and directed by the state” (SACP 1962, 316). The programme sought placing “control of the vital sectors of the economy in the hands of the national democratic state and to correct historic injustice, by demanding the nationalisation of the mining industry, banking and monopolised industrial establishments, thus by laying the foundations for the advance to socialism” (SACP 1981q, 317). It envisaged “the strengthening of the state sector of the economy particularly in the fields of heavy industry, machine tool building and fuel production” (SACP 1981, 314). Slovo, then General Secretary of the South African Communist Party argued that the Freedom Charter “*is not, in itself, a programme for socialism, even though it can provide a basis for uninterrupted advance to a socialist future*” (my emphasis) (Slovo 1984, 6). Thus, Slovo maintained that the Freedom Charter did not project “socialism as the immediate consequence of a people’s victory” (Slovo 1984, 11). The introduction of anti-monopoly provisions by the post-apartheid state would according to Slovo, largely benefit black business, which was considered the victim of apartheid discrimination (Slovo 1988, 10).

The pro-capitalist nationalisation approach interpreted the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses in the context of a “mixed economy” capitalist “developmental state”. This implied the co-existence of the public and private sectors in a de-racialised capitalist economy. The ANC’S 1985 “Strategy and Tactics” envisaged a state-led “mixed-economy” to secure “the interests of the small property-owner, the petty commodity producer, the artisans, traders and professional strata” (ANC 1985, 2). Former President-General of the ANC in exile, Oliver Tambo, interpreted the “economic/property” clauses to suggest that the monopolies such as the mines, the sugar and wine industries would be “transferred to public ownership so that they could be used to uplift the life of the people” (Tambo 1985, 4). Tambo stated, however, that the Freedom Charter “does not even purport to want to destroy the capitalist system” (Tambo 1985, 6). He argued for “a mixed capitalist economy in which part of the economy, some of the industries, would be controlled, and owned by the state and the rest by private ownership” (Tambo 1985, 6).

The 1988 South African Communist Party Programme, “The Path to Power” considered that the achievement of the aims of the Freedom Charter would answer “the pressing and immediate needs of the people and lay the indispensable basis for the advance to socialism” (SACP, 1989). Although incoherent, such a perspective seems to imply support for the introduction of a “mixed economy” “developmental state” that would intervene through nationalisation “to assist the well-being of the people” (Slovo 1988, 12). The ANC’s 1988 “Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa” reiterated the “mixed economy” view which saw the Freedom Charter as a guide for building a free, just and democratic society to replace white political and economic domination (ANC 1988, 10). The ANC’s 1988 Guidelines called for an economic system in which the private sector would be obliged to cooperate with the state to realise the Freedom Charter’s objectives (ANC 1988, 10). Thus, the Guidelines proposed cooperation between the state and the private sector (ANC 1988,

18). In this context, the clauses that demanded that “The people shall share in the country’s wealth” were read as calling for the private ownership of the means of production such as land, the factories and the mills by the people (ANC 2000, 1). The term “the people” is an amorphous phrase which ignores the existence of social classes.

The ANC was committed to “the creation of a democratic mixed economy which will foster cooperation between the state, private companies” (ANC 1991b, 2). It eschewed the “commandist central planning system” and the “unfettered free market system” as unsuitable models for economic growth (ANC 1991b, 45). The ANC’s stated objective of a “mixed economy” was to satisfy “the basic needs of the majority and to empower those who are disadvantaged and deprived” (ANC 1991b, 45). The role of the “developmental state” operating in the context of the “mixed economy” is defined in the May, 1991 Draft ANC Economic Manifesto as “to lead, coordinate, plan and dynamise a national economic strategy” (ANC 1991b, 2). The ANC rationalised its “developmental state”-cum-mixed-capitalist economy view on the principles of democracy as the key framework of its economic policy (ANC 1991b, 45). Thus, the ANC perspective implies the transfer of wealth to people through the state nationalisation of the economy within the existing capitalist system. Such a view of nationalisation as foreseen by Hudson (1986, 32) has not led to “a non-capitalist putatively proto socialist path of development”. Hudson’s assertion that “nothing in the Freedom Charter entailed the elimination of capitalism and the establishment of a transitional social formation”, is also insightful (Hudson 1986, 32).

In 1990, Nelson Mandela repeated his 1950s call for “nationalisation”. On the day of his release from prison, Mandela defined the “economic/property” clauses: “[The] nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industry is the policy of the ANC and the change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable” (Mandela 1990, 3). Mandela later refuted media reports that the ANC was abandoning nationalisation mines, banks and monopoly industries. He also emphasised that, “a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable” (UDF 1990, 2). In 1991, Nelson Mandela justified his interpretation of the “economic/property” clauses as demanding “nationalisation” as necessary in order to address the inequalities of apartheid. Mandela argued then that: “Nationalisation is a demand which is reasonable from our point of view. Where do we get the capital and resources to tackle the national issues facing us?” (Mandela 1991a, 5).

However, Patrick Lekota, then publicity secretary of then banned ANC internal ally, the United Democratic Front, interpreted Mandela’s view of nationalisation in the context of a “mixed economy”: “The Charter says monopolies—the commanding heights of capitalism—will be nationalised—but it also says people will be allowed to trade freely” (UDF 1990, 3). Lekota further declared that, “when an ANC government takes power it will nationalise industries and sectors monopolised by capital” (UDF 1990, 3). Although, sounding radical, Lekota indicated that nationalisation of “industries and sectors monopolised by capital” would exclude “the small shop owned by the ordinary man” (UDF 1990, 4). Lekota characterised a “mixed economy” as the co-existence of nationalised industry and a capitalist

system. He argued that the “ANC has never committed itself to socialism” as, “nationalising certain sectors does not mean socialism” (UDF 1990, 4). Still, some leftists within the 1980s UDF interpreted the “economic/property” clauses variously to mean socialism (Lodge et.al. 1991, 133). The notion of a “mixed economy” is thus, used to rationalise the role of the “developmental state” in a predominantly capitalist economy.

In this context that earlier policy shifts were clouded in the ANC’s ambiguous language, for example it was possible for Nelson Mandela to assure investors in his in December, 1991 address at the University of Pittsburgh: “Contrary to what you might have heard or read, let me assure you that the ANC is not the enemy of private enterprise or the market system” (Mandela 1991, 3). At the January 1992 annual World Economic Forum gathering at Davos, Switzerland, Mandela articulated a pro-capitalist ‘mixed-economy’ developmental state’ model to reassure potential investors and the international financial “markets”, thus:

Nationalisation in our view, does not mean a universal, blanket policy or sticking rigidly to old dogma. It means examining selected major enterprises on a case by case basis. And our starting point would be those bodies and corporations already in state hands. In each case, the first question would be: is their investment and job creation good enough? If not, the case for taking them into public ownership would be considered *prima facie* positive. We would examine their wages policies, their policies to overcome discrimination, their training policies, their actions on health and safety, and their openness to consultation and negotiation (Mandela 1992, 1).

Mandela explained his version of nationalisation then in the following manner:

We visualise a mixed economy, in which the private sector would play a central and critical role to ensure the creation of wealth and jobs. Side by side with this, there will be a public sector perhaps no different from such countries as Germany, France and Italy where public enterprises constitute 9, 11 and 15 per cent of the economy respectively, and in which the state plays an important role in such areas as education, health and welfare (Mandela 1992, 1).

What Mandela envisaged in the above statement was not a wholesale state nationalisation of the economy but argued, for example, that “taking some enterprises into public ownership will itself be a major step towards overcoming the huge inequality in the ownership of our country’s wealth” (Mandela, 1992). Mandela reconceptualised a pro-capitalist “mixed

economy”, in which the state and the private sector would play a complimentary role (Mandela, 1992). Nelson Mandela’s interpretation of nationalisation had shifted as this objective was now to be realised not through a socialist revolution but in the context of a developmental state embedded in a de-racialising capitalist economy.

Furthermore, the 1992 ANC Policy Guidelines document espoused the notion of the developmental state operating in a de-racialised mixed capitalist economy (ANC 1992, 6). For example, while the document made no reference to the previously touted slogan of “growth through redistribution”, it also called for the developmental state to be adjusted to the needs of the national economy in a flexible way in a “mixed-economy” (ANC 1992, 10). It thus envisioned the democratisation of the state and the economy to ameliorate and improve the social conditions created by apartheid oppression through the establishment of redistributive programmes to meet the needs of the people (ANC 1992, 10). The forms of state involvement in the economy proposed ranged from increasing the role of the public sector in strategic areas by utilising, for example, different policy mechanisms such as nationalisation, the purchasing of shareholding in companies, and establishing new public corporations or joint ventures with the private sector (ANC 1992, 11).

The ideological shift to embrace private enterprise system gathered pace in Mandela and Thabo Mbeki controlling the reins of power within the ANC and in the formulation of future government policy perspectives (Southall 2006a, 7). With the strong opposition from the “left” within the alliance, particularly from COSATU, a compromise solution was reached with the adoption of the Policy Guidelines document entitled “Ready to Govern” by the ANC’s May 1992 ANC National Policy Conference. Using liberation platitudes, the Policy Guidelines promoted fundamental “transformation of the South African political and economic landscape” through the implementation of policies “designed to create an enabling environment to empower black people” (ANC 1992, 5). The Policy Guidelines foreshadowed using the following instruments to de-racialise the economy:

Management of both the public and private sectors will have to be de-racialised so that they rapidly and progressively come to reflect the skills of the entire population. Equity ownership will have to be extended so that people from all sectors of the population have a stake in the economy and power to influence economic decisions (ANC 1992, 6).

Acquiring a stake in the economy through equity ownership would depend on the class status determined by one’s access to capital historically denied to black people. With regards to the Freedom Charter’s objective to transfer wealth to the people, the ANC’s 1992 “Ready to Govern” document declared that minerals were a national heritage that should be used to satisfy the people’s socio-economic needs (ANC 1992, 13). It therefore favoured the introduction of a new system of taxation, financing, mineral rights, leasing and emphasised “macro-economic balance, including price stability and balance of payments equilibrium”

(ANC 1992, 12). The document asserted that the “developmental state” had the primary responsibility for the delivery of health care, education and basic social security (ANC 1992, 12). The property rights of the majority systematically violated by apartheid were to be restored with state expropriation of private property according to law and in the public interest. Expropriation of private property would be “subject to just compensation” not solely “based solely on the market value” (ANC 1992, 13). While, the 1992 Policy Guidelines sounded radical, they also retained important features of private enterprise.

The ruling ANC-led alliance is riddled with disagreements on the “developmental state”. For example, the ANC’s paradigm shift from the economic strategy of “growth redistribution” towards “redistribution through growth” was rejected by its trade union ally COSATU in a 1992 document entitled, “Economic Policy in COSATU”, which reaffirmed the strategy of “growth through redistribution” (COSATU 1993, 2). In post-1994 period, COSATU criticised the ANC government for not pursuing nationalisation, but of “handing over key sectors like mining, to a few rich individuals”, which does not benefit the majority of people (COSATU 1998, 10). COSATU called for the establishment of a national company to be “owned by the people through the state in key strategic sectors of the economy” (COSATU 1998, 11). It envisaged that the proceeds of the state company would be used to finance “programmes to deal with socio-economic challenges” facing the poor (COSATU 1998, 11). This mirrored the pro-capitalist tendency that was articulated by nationalists within the ANC leadership.

The “rhetorical left” view was re-articulated by South African Communist Party formulation of an interventionist “developmental state” which is characterised by: “a coherent transformation [that] will require state ownership; policies that influence private investment; changed rights of access to and use of natural resources (e.g., land, water, minerals, forests, marine resources); and a range of regulatory and supervisory dispensations” (SACP 1997a, 17). The Communist Party predicated its notion of a “developmental state” on “a purposive strategy to break out of colonial underdevelopment, structural depression, or war-time ruin” (SACP 1995, 8). Thus, the Communist Party disagreed with the ANC’s view of seeking to confine the role of the state to defence to keeping law and order and government regulation of the inherited capitalist economy (SACP 1997a, 17). The adoption of the “redistribution through growth”, however, predominated policy formulation thence, albeit contended, leading to the partial adoption of the home-grown structural adjustment policy, the Neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy framework.

The concept of the “developmental” state was further refined by the ANC’s 2005 General Council meeting in Tshwane from 29 June to 3 July. It defined the “developmental state” as one “with a programme to mobilise society at large with the capacity to intervene in order to restructure the economy, including through public investment” (ANC 2005a, 6). The “developmental state” was to “engage private capital strategically buttressed and guided by a mass-based democratic liberation movement” (ANC 1998a, 32). Its main task was “to regulate the socio-economic environment in the interest of national development” and to ensure that “development finance institutions act in concert to back our overarching development approach” (ANC 2006a, 6-20). Government was “to direct industrial

development, advance the social wage of the poor, and create space for black people to become independent traders” (ANC 2006a, 6). Such a notion was supportive of the creation of a miniscule black bourgeoisie in cahoots with a capitalist “developmental state”. The ANC alliance envisaged an active “developmental state” in the first stage of the “National Democratic Revolution”, as a stage “de-linked” from the second socialist stage. It located the “developmental state” at the centre of a mixed economy defined as an economy in which the state, private capital, co-operative and other forms of social ownership complement each other in an integrated way to eliminate poverty by increasing economic growth (ANC 2007, 10).

The ANC leading theoretician, Joel Netshitenzhe defined the role of the “developmental state” as being to increase “the public sector in strategic areas through nationalisation by either purchasing a shareholding in companies, establishing new public corporations or by joint venture with the private sector” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 6). On the other hand, Netshitenzhe argues that a reduction of the public sector in certain areas may be necessary to enhance efficiency and to advance affirmative action to empower the historically disadvantaged (Netshitenzhe 2010, 6). Netshitenzhe grounds the different forms of ownership in a “mixed economy” as being to assess “the ability of the economy to address poverty and inequality and to encourage growth and competitiveness” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 5). Such a “mixed economy” would consist of “state, co-operative and other forms of ownership and private control” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 6). The state was to establish “enterprises that provide public goods such as infrastructure and basic services” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 5). The private sector, “including monopoly capital, is treated not as an enemy” to be smashed as the ANC alliance’s 1960s and 1980s language suggested, “but as a potential partner— and yet one that needs to be regulated” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 5).

Although the promulgation of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Amendment Act of 2008, sought to reinforce the interpretation of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses that the mineral wealth beneath the soil shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; it posited this in the context of a “mixed economy”. The Act substituted the private ownership of mineral rights, with state custodianship (RSA 2008, 2). It conferred the allocation of the right to extract minerals to the state and that the ‘State royalty must be determined and levied by the Minister of Finance in terms of the Act of Parliament (RSA 2008, 2). A state mining company was foreshadowed. The Act meant “to expand opportunities for historically disadvantaged persons, including women and communities”, led to minimal redistribution of access to South Africa’s mineral rights to the new black corporate bourgeois (RSA 2008, 2).

The “mixed economy” view of the Freedom Charter as articulated in the post-apartheid period represents a compromise between black nationalists and socialists for a partially deracialised “mixed” capitalist economy. The ANC’s rhetoric of "radical economic transformation" or "nationalisation" shrouded the governments’ adoption and implementation of Neo-liberal macroeconomic policies such as those contained in the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy and in the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP). This model is tantamount to “the shade of the variety of capitalism under a

developmental state banner” (Taljaard 2007, 7). Bond shows how the notion of a “developmental state” by the ANC alliance is more of a rhetorical shift to appease left-wing critics who conceived its economic policies as uniformly tailored according to the demands of global Neo-liberal macroeconomic policy convergence (Bond 2009). The concept of the “mixed-economy” ‘developmental state’” aka the National Democratic Revolution is grafted onto the existing deracialised capitalist economy as opposed to the Chinese model of “developmental state” rising from the ashes of the communist state. A comparison of the two models is subject to further investigation.

The rise of the corporate black bourgeois through the implementation of the current BBEE policy in the post-1994 period has led to the emergence of miniscule “a strong black middle- and upper-class”, which is an “indication of real-life class disconnection with millions unemployable” (Zibi 2015). This raises questions about the benefits of the ANC government’s policy of “Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment” (BBEE), which did not “trickle down” to the majority of black people (Zibi 2015). The quarterly labour force survey from Statistics South Africa shows how the working age group (15-64 years) consisted of 36-million people, of which 15.7-million were employed, while 5.2-million were unemployed. The unemployed are defined as people of working age, not in school or actively looking for a job (Statistics South Africa 2014). This definition of unemployment excludes more than 2.4 million people who have given up looking for work. An expanded definition estimates the real rate of unemployment to be close to half of the national working population. According to the 2013 fourth quarter report of the Household Survey, the rate of unemployment in the black racial group, based on the expanded definition stood at roughly 43.3 per cent of the population. This roughly translated to 24.1 per cent in terms of the narrow definition of unemployment that excluded the so-called discouraged workers’ (Statistics South Africa 2013, vi)

The ANC Youth League’s, then led by Julius Malema, radical reading of the “Economic/Property” clauses is a testament of the contours of the multi-layered meanings of the Freedom Charter. The ANC Youth League’s version of nationalisation, for example, only sought to change the racial ownership of mines, banks and monopoly industries, as it does not entail uprooting the class system upon which it is based. Its 2010 Discussion Document, “Towards the Transfer of Mineral Wealth to the Ownership of the People as a Whole: A Perspective on Nationalisation of Mines”, defined nationalisation of mines to mean “the democratic government ownership and control of mining activities, including exploration, extraction, production, processing, trading and beneficiation of minerals” (ANCYL 2010, 2) The document defined the role of state ownership in the economy as being to “extract, process, beneficiate and trade mineral wealth on behalf of the people” (ANCYL 2010, 3). It suggested models that ranged from “100 per cent public ownership, or 51 per cent or more owned by the state”, and “partnership arrangements with the private sector in which the state assumes greater control” (ANCYL 2010, 3). The then ANC Treasurer, Matthew Phosa, denied, however, that nationalisation was ANC policy (Phosa 2009, 3). President Jacob Zuma reaffirmed this view (Zuma 2010, 6). Netshitenzhe argued that in making the call for nationalisation of mines, the Youth League had misread the Freedom Charter’s

“economic/property” clauses. He attributed the Youth League’s failure to acknowledge shifts “at a conceptual level” in the ANC-led alliance during the different phases of the struggle (Netshitenzhe 2010, 1). Netshitenzhe concluded that the ANC Youth League “cannot answer the fundamental question about the evolution in the formal interpretation of the Freedom Charter during various phases of the struggle” (Netshitenzhe 2010, 1). Netshitenzhe’s discernment of shifts “at a conceptual level” on the question of nationalisation are indicative of the ongoing different interpretations of the ambiguous language of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses in the alliance.

In rebutting criticism that it is doing the bidding of troubled black mine owners seeking state bail-outs, the then Youth League denied that its aim of nationalisation was meant to bail-out the indebted black corporate bourgeois (ANCYL 2010, 3). The Youth League posited the nationalisation of the mines “within the context of the ANC alliance revised concept of “National Democratic Revolution” (ANCYL 2010, 6). Julius Malema, then ANC Youth League leader re-articulated “nationalism in terms of race and nature- the theft by white colonisers of the land and rich mineral resources of South Africa” (Hart 2013, 208). The state nationalisation of mines and the expropriation of white-owned land without compensation was pivotal for the control “the development of the national forces of production” (ANCYL 2010, 6). Thus, the ANC Youth League’s version portrayed is not incompatible with the pro-capitalist nationalist version of state-led nationalisation “mixed economy” model.

Two tendencies in the ANC alliance read the “economic/property” clauses of the Freedom Charter broadly, to imply two “nationalisation” perspectives. Black nationalists envisioned “nationalisation” as part of the “mixed economy” ‘developmental’ “national democratic state” to manage the de-racialisation of the inherited capitalist economy. The “rhetorical left” in the alliance envisaged nationalisation within the socialist policy framework.

The Socialist Perspective of the Freedom Charter

The second interpretation of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses advocates state socialism and working class-led socialist revolution. This view defines the clauses as demanding the socialisation of the means of production through a proletarian revolution. Such a radical version was implicit in Mandela’s late 1950s statement, which saw the Freedom Charter as “more than a mere list of demands for democratic reforms” (Mandela 1977, 380). In Mandela’s view, the changes envisaged in the Freedom Charter could not “be won without breaking up the economic and political set-up of present South Africa” (Mandela 1977, 380). In his radical interpretation of the Freedom Charter, Mandela argued that the “Charter does not only propose merely a reform of the present system, a patching-up of its worst evils, an amelioration of some of its conditions” (Mandela 1977, 380).

In foreshadowing fundamental change of the status quo, Mandela’s view is similar, for example, to the one described in the South African Communist Party 1962 Programme interpretation of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses. The Communist Party

argued that the aims of the “National Democratic Revolution” were defined in the Freedom Charter (SACP 1981q, 314). The programme envisaged profound changes such as drastic agrarian reform to restore land to the people; “wide-spread nationalisation of key industries to break the grip of White monopoly capital (SACP 1981q, 314). It considered “the achievement of its aims will answer the pressing needs of the people and *lay an indispensable basis for the advance of our country along non-capitalist lines to a communist and socialist future*” (my emphasis) (SACP 1981q, 314). Such an interpretation could be understood as supporting the view of an “uninterrupted” revolution between stages.

At the height of the Cold War from the late 1960s, when the ANC alliance was still sponsored by the Eastern European Communist states, it read the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses to mean socialist ownership of property. It adopted this perspective as a necessary step for “paving the way for a gradual and peaceful transition to socialism” (SACP 1981q, 314). Both the “rhetorical left” “populist left” interpreted the “economic/property” clauses as calling for the socialisation of the means of production through a working-class revolution. The latter view “had envisaged the liberation of South Africa as entailing the capture of the commanding heights of the economy and the nationalisation of at least some of the principal means of production” (Southhall 2004, 16).

Such a radical interpretation is documented in the ANC’s 1978 official publication “Sechaba” when it argues, for example, that the struggle for liberation was “not end in itself, but a stage, or one of the stages, to a non-exploitative society, a future without exploitation” (Sechaba 1978, 7). In terms of this view “complete democracy” could “not be accommodated within the existing social order” [inherited capitalist system] (Sechaba 1978, 7–8). Nationalisation, it stated, would occur once “the financial and gold-mining monopolies and farming interests had been smashed” (Sechaba 1978, 8–9). Drawing inspiration from revolutions in the People’s Republics of Angola and Mozambique, Sechaba argued for “the need to differentiate between formal independence and genuine independence”, but did not elaborate on what “genuine independence” entailed (Sechaba 1978, 10).

This socialist reading of the “economic/property” clauses of the Freedom Charter was reiterated during the same period by Thabo Mbeki, then Director of the International Affairs department based in the Lusaka office of the exiled ANC President Oliver Tambo. Mbeki, who was still then a member of the Communist Party, defined blacks in class terms thus:

- We are the producers of wealth
- We produce this wealth for our own benefit to be appropriated by us the producers;
- The aim of this production shall be the satisfaction, at an increasing level, of the material and spiritual needs of the people (Mbeki 1978, 15).

Mbeki then criticised the role of the national bourgeoisie of the colonising countries which he saw as identifying “with the decadence of the bourgeois of the West” by “jumping ahead and beginning at the end, and thus senile” (Mbeki 1978, 16). The interpretation of the “economic/property” clauses as implying the socialisation of the means of production through a working class-led socialist revolution was reiterated in the South African Communist Party’s 1982 Programme. The programme advocated “full popular control over the mines, banks and other monopoly industries” (SACP 1982, 25). It justified its interpretation of the “economic/property” clause as necessary to ensure that the economy begins to be directed towards the needs of the majority not to the profits of a few (SACP 1982, 25). A similarly radical interpretation of the “economic/property” clauses was explicit in the ANC’S 1985 Strategy and Tactics document which argues for the seizure of economic assets owned either by South African capitalist firms or trans-national corporations (ANC 1985, 2). The document identifies the aim of such measures to be the stripping of the “ruling class of the actual substance of its power, by seizing hold of the commanding heights of the economy” (ANC 1985, 2). In the mid-1980s, the UDF had also interpreted the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses as calling for the re-appropriation of the wealth and natural resources owned by white capitalists by the post-apartheid state through measures such as “nationalisation” (Nkululeko 1986, 8). A post-apartheid state would transform the wealth held by the private sector into social property. While, the Communist Party viewed the Freedom Charter as “not inconsistent with an advance towards socialism in the post-liberation period”, it advanced the idea that the realisation of the Freedom Charter’s demands was a prerequisite for socialism (Hudson 1987, 55).

This view of the Freedom Charter was revisited by Slovo who in 1988 had expressed hope of a more revolutionary outcome of the South African liberation struggle that would lead to “social control over the main means of production and redistribution by a political power in which the working class is dominant” (Slovo 1988, 12). Slovo had envisaged the adoption of policies by the post-apartheid state to bring about the “immediate sizeable contraction of the private sector” due to the “severe clipping of the wings of the overwhelming mass of existing private capital” (Slovo 1988, 11). This implied state control of the economy. In his analysis, Slovo maintained, however, that such a measure would not be tantamount to the elimination of the private sector as this would be a “harmful demagogy and a recipe for chaos” (Slovo 1988, 12). Such ambiguity was reflective and demonstrative of the Communist Party’s ambiguous “revolutionary” language that pervaded the ANC alliance documents.

In its 1989 Programme, the South African Communist Party reiterated that the achievement of the objectives of the Freedom Charter would “lay the indispensable basis for the advance to socialism” (SACP 1989, 8). It understood the phrase in the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses demanding “transfer ownership to the people as a whole” to mean the need for the socialisation of the means of production by the working class (Cronin 2009, 11). Furthermore, Slovo elaborated on this radical interpretation of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses when he argued for “a peoples state dedicated to the interests of the majority, who are working people, would move towards a redistribution of wealth, and to social advancement rather than to private profit” (Slovo 1990a, 38). In terms of

this view, profit seeking private business would be precluded. This perhaps, explains why political analyst Lodge argued that communists had “helped draft a Freedom Charter to position the ANC on a non-capitalist path of transition to socialism after the successful conclusion of a “National Democratic Revolution” (Lodge 1996, 192).

In the post-apartheid period Communist Party has shifted from its 1988 interpretation of the “economic/property” clauses as portraying the socialisation of the means of production. Ironically, despite its changing stance, the Communist Party Treasurer, Phillip Dexter still used radical language arguing that the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses could not be fully realised in a capitalist system (Dexter 2008, 1). The Communist Party criticised the ANC Youth League averring that its proposed model of nationalisation, “wittingly or unwittingly advance[d] the narrow class interests of a small Black Economic Empowerment capitalist stratum” (SACP 2010, 1). In rejecting the ANC Youth League’s version of nationalisation, the Communist Party articulated nationalisation premised on a concept of a developmental state operating in capitalist economy. In contextualising the realisation of the “economic/property” clauses as part of the tasks of a developmental state, the Communist Party argued that the phrase: *ownership of the people as a whole* meant state ownership (SACP 2010, 1). For the Communist Party state ownership “should be the means towards the socialised ownership” of the means of production (SACP 2010, 1). The Communist Party envisaged nationalisation through “effective state intervention into the economy”, especially in “the critical minerals sector” (SACP 2010, 1). It suggested a range of modalities that could be used for nationalisation, for example, by either consolidating the existing state owned operations, and/or by the “leveraging of ownership over resources to ensure beneficiation and environmental sustainability” (SACP 2010, 2). According to the Communist Party, an appropriate modality was one that would place “the economy on to a new job-creating and equitable growth path” (SACP 2010, 2). State intervention to transform the economy was to be mindful of “whose class interest a particular policy” is being advanced (SACP 2010, 2). In this version of nationalisation, it was often assumed that workers and the poor, the vast majority in South Africa, would enjoy economic freedom.

The ambiguity of the language of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses led to disagreement between a coalition of pro-nationalisation “left” camp and the anti-nationalisation pro-capitalist camp. The ANC and its allies, has since taking over government been riddled with tensions, which have fragmented the once broadly united front. In 2009, the former defence minister and key Thabo Mbeki ally, Mosisiua Lekota launched his Congress of the People (COPE) on the basis that the ANC has deviated from the Freedom Charter’s provisions. Mbeki’s government’s implemented market-friendly policies. Fast forward to 2013, Julius Malema, expelled from the ANC established the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to pursue radical economic changes as understood in the Freedom Charter.

The “left” camp and the anti-nationalisation pro-capitalist camp are divided between the “rhetorical left” within the ANC alliance represented by the Dlamini-led COSATU, the Blade Nzimande dominated South African Communist Party and the “populist left” outside its ranks. The “rhetorical” left views the ANC’s “developmental state” as a step towards a

socialist economic transformation while the “populist left” argues for a working class led socialist revolution. The pro-capitalist nationalist perspective is premised on state-capitalist cum “mixed-economy “developmental state”, also dressed rhetorically as the “national democratic state”. The current ANC government policy of “developmental state” is based on the pro-capitalist interpretation of the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses. One of its main policies of “black economic empowerment”, however, broad-based it is defined has privileged the new black corporate bourgeoisie. This pro-capitalist version of the Freedom charter is currently explicit in Zuma’s government’s Industrial Policy Action Plan “to achieve transformation by expanding opportunities to black entrepreneurs”, the new black bourgeois, as part of its mission to achieve what is termed radical black socio-economic transformation (Zuma, 2015). President Zuma justified his government’s policy to support the development of black industrialists on the basis of the Freedom Charter (Zuma, 2015) The ANC rationalise its policy as the democratisation of ownership and control of the economy to “empower” the historically oppressed, Africans and the working class in particular to play a leading role in decision-making. Zuma’s policy rationale is for racial restructuring of the economy to meet the basic needs of all South Africa including the poor.

The “populist left” represented by one of COSATU’s largest affiliates, the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) and its biggest financial contributor was expelled from the union federation by the “rhetorical left” leadership aligned to the Zuma led ANC alliance. In April, 2015 former General Secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi was driven out of office. The “populist left” critics such as the EFF and NUMSA accused the ANC and its “rhetorical left” allies of having abandoned the liberation ideals implicit in the Freedom Charter (NUMSA, 2015). The NUMSA cited examples of ANC government plans to privatise some state-owned entities as well its reticence to change the capitalist structure of the inherited economy (NUMSA, 2015). These ideological ructions within COSATU are echoed throughout the post-liberation ANC led alliance. Countrywide discussions by union and political formations led by NUMSA sought the formation of a Workers Party which is rationalised as a “movement for socialism” to articulate the rights of workers and to defend their interests. This constitutes a new a radical departure from the ANC and its “rhetorical left” allies’ such as COSATU and the Communist Party’s views on the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses hence the existential disagreements on government’s policies.

Conclusion

The Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses are sufficiently ambiguous to allow diverse groups to interpret them differently, and some groups to change their interpretation over time. The two countervailing function of the ambiguity in the Freedom Charter’s “economic/property” clauses highlight not only their unifying impact, but how they are also divisive. The incoherence of the Freedom Charter clauses was useful in “bridging” ideological differences to unify disparate tendencies in the ANC alliance to dislodge the apartheid state. The language of the Freedom Charter’s clauses is now a medium used in factional disagreements largely revolving along the pro-capitalist and pro-socialist divides. The ANC has, for example, read the clauses to rationalise a “mixed economy”

‘developmental state’ promoting black capitalist development being crafted onto the existing white controlled economy. Whereas, both the “rhetorical” and “populist” left interpret the “economic/property” clauses as demanding a working class-led socialist revolution. The different interpretations of the “property/economic” clauses by ANC alliance factions are a medium used in government policy debates within the ANC alliance.

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APPENDIX 1

The Freedom Charter

Adopted at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, on 26 June 1955

Preamble

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The People Shall Govern!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers; Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

All Shall be Equal Before the Law!

No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial;

No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

There Shall be Work and Security!

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

A preventative health scheme shall be run by the state; Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right for all;

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed;

South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of other nations (ANC, *ANC SPEAKS*, 1977:12-15).