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Author(s): Hermann Giliomee
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Hermann Giliomee

Surrender Without Defeat: Afrikaners and the South African "Miracle"

The future enters into us in order to transform itself in us long before it happens.
—Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

In South Africa the worst never happens.
—popular saying

INTRODUCTION

DURING THE FINAL MONTHS OF THE 1980s one of the last developments that pundits would have predicted for South Africa was that the ruling Afrikaner group would give up power more or less voluntarily, to be replaced by a stable, inclusive democracy. Over the longer run the more common prediction for the country was that of a low-level insurgency ending in a full-scale civil war and a racial conflagration. For the short to medium term most serious analysts anticipated power shifting from the existing Afrikaner monopoly to an Afrikaner-led, multiracial oligarchy ruling as coercively as the apartheid regime. In 1988, Ken Owen, a respected Liberal editor, commented on the white-black struggle: "Barring massive external intervention I would put my money on any alliance dominated by Afrikaners. They have the capacity to devastate the region *and yet to survive.*"[1]

The political supremacy enjoyed by Afrikaners as the 1990s broke was vast in proportion to their numbers. They formed just

Hermann Giliomee is Professor of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town.

over half of the white group but represented only 8 percent of a total population of 40 million. Outwardly there was no indication that they were prepared to abandon power or its spoils. The National Party (NP) as the instrument of Afrikaner ethnic mobilization and of apartheid was then in its forty-second year of power, enjoying a safe majority in a parliament from which the black majority was excluded. Afrikaners were in a predominant position in the cabinet and controlled the top levels of the central state bureaucracy, the state television and radio, and the senior levels of the security forces. The Afrikaner advance into the private sector, which was dominated by white English-speakers, was progressing rapidly. In the late 1970s Afrikaner capital controlled less than 10 percent of the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, but this figure increased to 20 percent by 1990. Managerial positions in the parastatal sector remained largely an Afrikaner preserve.

The NP government was far more responsive to Afrikaner lobbying than to representations from English big business or institutions commanding the support of blacks, who constituted 70 percent of the population. A study conducted in the mid-1980s fittingly described the South African state as a *Boereplaas*—literally an Afrikaner farm. Afrikaner students were alone in speaking approvingly and proprietorially of "our" government and "our" army.[2] This army was considered to be more than a match for anything that any African state or liberation organization could offer. Conscripting all white males, the state could count on loyal foot soldiers, particularly among Afrikaners. Asked in 1989, a few months before the African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned, how they would respond to a government controlled by that movement, 44 percent of Afrikaner students (as opposed to 10 percent of English-speaking white students) said they would resist physically, while a further 32 percent indicated that they would emigrate.[3] Cabinet ministers gave no indication that they entertained the idea of giving up power. A typical statement at the time was that of the most reformist of all ministers, Roedolf F. (Pik) Botha, who said in 1978 that power-sharing with blacks would not be accepted, "not now, not to-morrow, not in a hundred years."[4] Even worse was the statement "one man, one vote within

one political entity." This meant "destruction," a "sort of suicide," which no nation in the world would be prepared to commit.

This Afrikaner state was challenged on several fronts, but nothing suggested its imminent demise. The state was being isolated by way of a dense mesh of sanctions; financial sanctions, taking the form of a refusal to roll over bank loans, made it all but impossible to attract new foreign investment or overcome the burden of a serious problem balancing payments. Nevertheless, trade sanctions were being circumvented, albeit at a cost, as new markets outside Europe and the United States opened up. The economy was projected to continue to grow at a rate of 2 to 3 percent per year. While with brief exceptions the urban centers and white residential suburbs remained calm, the state was severely shaken by a series of civil protests bordering on insurrection in the segregated black townships, leading first to the partial imposition of a state of emergency in 1985 and then to a nationwide one in 1986. The draconian emergency measures failed to stamp out all resistance, but by and large stability had returned by the late 1980s. In 1989 the leadership of the banned African National Congress, which spearheaded the struggle for black liberation, felt compelled to acknowledge to its cadres that it lacked the capacity to escalate the armed struggle in any significant way. Two years earlier Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the main black leader operating within the apartheid structures, had commented scathingly on the absence of any visible signs of the liberation struggle: "After 25 years of endeavor every bridge in the country is still intact. Every system of electricity and water supply is intact and there is not a single factory out of production because of revolutionary activity. The classical circumstances in which an armed struggle wins the day. . .are just not present in South Africa."[5]

The ANC-led resistance also took the form of a mass-based popular revolt consisting of rent and service charge boycotts, political strikes and stay-aways, and marches and demonstrations. These forms of mass action, which took place during the 1980s and after the unbanning of the ANC in February 1990, were far more successful in weakening regime morale than was the guerrilla struggle. But well-placed observers and leaders of the ANC struggle recognized that these actions would not defeat the regime. Chester Crocker, US Assistant Secretary of State in the 1980s, declared in

a study published in 1992 that the resistance "had no hope of forcing the government to capitulate, but the government could no longer hope to regain the legitimacy it had lost in the 1980s."[6] This was confirmed by the ANC's chief strategist, Joe Slovo, who at a critical stage in the negotiations wrote in the ANC mouthpiece *Mayibuye*: "The enemy is not defeated."[7] In November 1996 Nelson Mandela spoke critically of "superficial" black journalists who "assume that we have defeated the whites on a battlefield and that the whites are now lying on the floor helpless and begging for mercy and that we can impose conditions on them."[8]

Yet by the end of 1996, less than ten years after Buthelezi's comment, the Afrikaners had lost all formal political power. The ANC held 62 percent of the parliamentary seats as opposed to 20 percent for the NP, the largest opposition party in a parliament that operated in the classic Westminster mode of majoritarianism. Having had its demand for a constitutionally entrenched, power-sharing cabinet rejected, the NP had withdrawn from the Government of National Unity in which the negotiating parties had agreed to participate for an interim period of five years, ending in 1999. At the senior levels of the bureaucracy and the state television and radio corporation, Afrikaner incumbents were rapidly replaced by ANC supporters, mostly blacks or Indians. While still headed by Afrikaners, the police and defense force showed every sign of being loyal to the new government and the constitution. A new economic advance was taking place, one spearheaded by two black companies financially backed by the largest Afrikaner conglomerate, Sanlam. The black share of companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange looked set to match soon or even surpass that of the Afrikaner.[9]

ORTHODOXY AND REVISION

These developments startled the world and prompted Nelson Mandela to refer to South Africa's transition as a "small miracle." The London *Financial Times* commented that the regime change was one of the most extraordinary political transformations of the twentieth century, where "the people have defied the logic of their past and broken all the rules of social theory."[10] One of the most common theoretical assumptions was that a ruling ethnic minority

with a deep attachment to a "homeland" could neither be forced to give up power nor would it willingly do so. During the apartheid years these two propositions were recurring themes in the political writings of Alan Paton, novelist, foremost Liberal, and lifelong student of the Afrikaner mind. Paton was convinced that if attempts were made to force the Afrikaner to accept majority rule in a unitary state he "would rather be destroyed than yield." Yet Paton also believed that the Afrikaners could turn away from domination and choose what he termed "the common society" within a federal state. His latest biographer neatly captures the essence of his convictions on this issue. "[Change] would come about only when the Afrikaner leaders came to the realization that it must. He did not imagine that they would be forced from power by blacks, or that Liberals by some electoral ju-jitsu might take their place. The initiative, he believed, would remain with the Afrikaner until the Afrikaner chose to give it up."[11]

When the Afrikaners did give up power in the first half of the 1990s analysts tried hard to explain the unanticipated development. One explanation, succumbing to what Bergson called "the illusion of retrospective determinism" (i.e., what actually happened had to happen), deems it to have been inevitable. In this vein a recent study of the NP concludes that the combination of external and internal pressures made it "virtually impossible" for the apartheid government to maintain its existing practices by late 1989.[12] A much stronger case can, however, be made for the view that under President P. W. Botha, who resigned for health reasons in 1989, or under several possible successors other than Frederik W. (F. W.) de Klerk, the NP could and would have dominated the country into the next century, introducing new but quite unworkable policies designed to keep Afrikaner control. The question is, why did the Afrikaner leadership not pursue this course?

Some analysts embrace the explanations of what Walker Connor in a famous critique called the "nation-building school," which he contends generalizes on the basis of First World polities. Connor took issue with this school's central assumption that the wellspring of ethnic discord is not identity needs but economic demands, making it possible for ethnonational groups to be bought off if their material interests are guaranteed.[13] Among analysts studying the Afrikaners' surrender of power there is no shortage of

those who believe that consumerism saved South Africa. One commentator wrote, "[We] avoided a civil war [because] many whites were presented with a choice between their political power and their consumer goods—and quickly chose the latter."[14] In a similar vein a sociological analysis states, "It yet has to be proven anywhere that a BMW-owning bureaucratic bourgeoisie with swimming pools and servants readily sacrifices the good life for psychologically gratifying ethnic affinities."[15] This ignores the fact that perhaps 90 percent of Afrikaners were not in this class and that more than four-fifths of Afrikaners in polls taken in the 1980s indicated that they believed that the income and living standards of whites under black majority rule would suffer. In August 1992, when it began to be clear that the ANC would dominate the next government, two-thirds of whites were "not at all convinced" that their pensions or savings were safe under a new government, against only 12 percent who were.[16] If the NP's constituency, as distinct from its negotiators, was so alarmed about its material prospects, the question that needs to be answered is not whether we are dealing with an effete bourgeoisie but why whites allowed their representatives to put their future at risk.

A third explanation explores the possibility that the Afrikaner surrender was the result not so much of rampant consumerism but of an ideological collapse. According to this view, there was an inherent weakness in the NP's "culture of domination" and a singular lack of moral authority when confronted by a confident ANC leadership extolling human rights and non-racialism—positions all backed by the Western world that the Afrikaners took as their frame of reference.[17] Again the question is: if it was inherently so weak, why did apartheid, as one of the world's most hated systems, last so long? Why were Botha and others prepared to prolong it well beyond 1994?

Finally, one can note a fourth explanation. This argues that the NP simply miscalculated in the negotiations and constitution-making process, which stretched from February 1990 to December 1996. Whereas de Klerk at one stage had openly expressed his conviction that the NP would "have its hands on the tiller for many years to come,"[18] he was reduced at the end of the process to a position of haggling over the perks that would go with the job

of being the official leader of the opposition in a one-party dominant system.

This essay will align itself more closely with the latter two explanations but will discuss the themes and questions within the broader context of the Afrikaner mobilization and its ideology of ethnic survival. The basic argument is that, just as apartheid was based on the idea that it could ensure Afrikaner ethnic survival, the regime change of 1994 was brought about not so much by middle-class interests superseding the emotional identification in Afrikaner thinking but by the belief that apartheid could no longer be sustained by a shrinking white minority. Once the apartheid idea had collapsed there was no alternative ideology that could justify Afrikaner or white supremacy or even significant minority protection as distinct from individual rights.

CONFRONTING THE ETHNIC SURVIVAL CRISES

Early in the 1970s a sociologist and pollster in South Africa observed that, because of popular myths and perceptions, significant proportions of whites in South Africa are oriented towards survival rather than domination and that the latter is an inevitable consequence of the former. He added that any analysis had to contend with what he called "gut-level fears and anxieties."[19] The most prominent theme in Afrikaners' political thinking during the apartheid era was an obsession with the way in which the Afrikaners as a small nation could contend with different survival crises. Afrikaner nationalists commonly believed that survival in a hostile environment could only be secured if they kept the power that they had won in 1948. As an Afrikaner opponent of the NP leaders observed in 1959: "They regard it [political power] as an essential safeguard for their survival as a nation." Any threat to it "instantly calls for resistance which may be stirred to fanatic vehemence by the urge for national self-preservation."[20]

At the most basic level there were Afrikaner fears about physical survival, which must be seen against a backdrop of a settler history, dating back to 1652, when a small Afrikaner population lived among great numbers of indigenous peoples in a vast territory. These fears and anxieties were not idiosyncratic. Explaining the unwillingness of Afrikaners to cede or share power, the histo-

rian Lewis Gann wrote in 1959 that in societies in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Russia there is no underlying harmony on which a democracy could be built—only minorities with conflicting ideals, interests, fears, and grave anxieties. For dominant minorities matters like national identity and political self-determination are not mere abstractions, but a matter of life and death: they know that they can expect rough treatment once they become subject to a nationally distinct majority. As Gann observes: "This will especially be true if the minorities appear to be possessed of more than their fair share of economic wealth; then they are likely to be liquidated altogether."[21] A thought very much along these lines was once expressed by the most respected Afrikaner poet and essayist, N. P. van Wyk Louw. He wrote that if the Afrikaners lost power and become a mere expatriate minority they would be "as helpless as the Jews in Germany."[22]

The Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, the mass evacuation of French settlers from Algeria, and the chaotic Belgian retreat from the Congo were all deeply unsettling to whites in South Africa. Afrikaans newspapers provided full and often lurid accounts of these traumatic events. Fear of an equally violent catastrophe lay close to the core of Afrikaner thought, giving rise to a series of draconian security laws. Liberals like Paton or Helen Suzman rightly criticized these laws but made little effort to come to grips with the descent into disorder and despotism in many other African countries and the realistic fear that these developments could be replicated at the tip of the continent. Despite the fact that not only the state but also private white citizens armed themselves, the fear did not subside. By 1987 four-fifths of Afrikaners stated in a national poll that under black majority rule the physical safety of whites would be threatened and white women would be molested.[23] In 1990, two months after negotiations started, 49 percent of whites agreed with the statement that there was reason to fear for their own safety and that of their family in the future; 43 percent felt otherwise.[24]

Although fears about physical survival were not always openly expressed, concerns over white material survival were always prominent in the public debate. As a result of their late urbanization Afrikaners struggled to make headway in the urban economy. When the NP came to power in 1948 about two-thirds of the

Afrikaners were comprised of blue collar and other manual workers or struggling farmers who soon afterwards had to leave their land. Both classes needed state support to maintain themselves as part of the white dominant group. Apartheid was at heart an attempt to turn the white poor into a state-subsidized petty bourgeoisie, properly housed and clothed, protected from black competition, and socialized in white supremacist behavior. This was not achieved overnight, and white South Africa retained a predominantly working class character for quite some time. Blue collar and other manual workers formed 50 percent of the employed white population in 1971 and 44 percent in 1983.[25] The government could now proceed with more confidence in the field of industrial desegregation. In the meantime, however, increasing numbers of Afrikaners found employment in the state sector. By 1968, twice as many Afrikaners were in public-sector jobs than before 1948. Ten years later more than a third of Afrikaners were employed in this sector as compared to only a quarter of other whites. A great concentration of white middle-class workers in the state sector developed. By 1990, 46 percent of all white middle-class employment outside the primary sectors was in the state sector.

It is sometimes argued that South Africa's democratization in the 1990s was made possible by the success of both apartheid and capitalism in turning the white electorate into an independent middle class with a diminishing need for the state. This perspective must be questioned. White state employees would inevitably be threatened by any shift to black majority rule. Furthermore, the distribution of wealth within white society had become quite unequal, with the top quintile controlling four-fifths of the wealth at the end of the 1970s. While the incomes of the top three quintiles in the white group had stagnated between 1975 and 1991, those of the lowest two had declined by a staggering 40 percent in the same period. These figures hardly present us with a profile of the white community as independently wealthy and able to prosper in the face of a hostile or indifferent black regime.[26]

If political domination advanced white material interests, its longer-term effect on Afrikaner cultural survival was more ambiguous. To paraphrase Milan Kundera on the Czech struggle, the fact that the Afrikaner people as a distinctive ethnic group has survived during the past century has less to do with political

cunning or armed force than with the huge intellectual effort that went into a small nation developing Afrikaans as a high-culture language, to use Ernest Gellner's term.[27] Afrikaans originated in the first of two centuries of settlement as a Dutch-based vernacular spoken by settlers, slaves, and indigenous peoples. Turning away from both Dutch and English to build up Afrikaans constituted a choice, a project, or, to use Pascal's term, a wager. Originally branded a "kitchen language," Afrikaans was deliberately turned into a "white man's" or "civilized" language. Furthermore—and this was ultimately of paramount importance—the white Afrikaner nation came to see its distinctive identity as expressed by that language. In 1925 Afrikaans became an official language, and the Afrikaner nationalist movement now concentrated much of its efforts on ensuring that Afrikaans assumed an equal role alongside English as the medium of public discourse. A surprisingly vibrant literature soon developed, and Afrikaans took its place in science, technology, and the marketplace. In nationalist thinking, the people's very existence was manifested in the "living language" of Afrikaans.

After the NP came to power in 1948, it enforced the principle of mother-tongue education at the school level, while five universities catered to Afrikaners on the tertiary level. The government constantly emphasized the constitutional provision that Afrikaans and English be treated on an equal footing, but it used this provision flexibly in the schools. The fear gradually developed that the future of Afrikaans was in jeopardy if the subordinate population spurned it. When the government embarked on a massive extension in the provision of education to blacks in the early 1970s, it also attempted to impose the equality principle in black schools in townships around Johannesburg and other towns in the Transvaal province. It stipulated that all black pupils in these areas had to take Afrikaans as a subject and be taught mathematics and social science with Afrikaans as the only language of instruction. This was the fateful precipitant that caused the so-called Soweto Riots of 1976, by far the most serious black uprising by that point against apartheid.

By now Afrikaans had widely become identified as the language of the oppressor—the medium used when policemen arrested blacks or when officials instructed blacks to show their "pass," which

was the most effective check on black urbanization. Black resistance was expressed in a rejection of Afrikaans and Afrikaners. The more apartheid in its own terms "succeeded" by getting blacks to accept "self-government" in their own "homelands," the more Afrikaans as a language failed. One after another "homeland" governments chose English and an indigenous language as their official languages. The future of Afrikaans was threatened from two sides. Its close association with domination was sitting like an albatross on its shoulder. At the same time, however, there was every prospect that a black government would elevate English to the status of being the sole official language, spelling the end of Afrikaans and the Afrikaans culture—and with it the demise of the Afrikaner people.[28] The demographic picture was ominous. The best possible Afrikaner ally was the colored people, a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking group almost as large as the Afrikaners. Apartheid had alienated their elite, who were now turning to English. Whereas 18 percent of the South African people spoke Afrikaans as their mother tongue in 1970, only 15 percent was projected to do so in 2000.

There was lastly also a question about the ethical quality of survival. Prominent intellectuals pursued the chimera of a just solution, or less ambitiously counseled against a patently unjust one, to the country's racial problem. The most eloquent and lasting contribution was a 1952 essay by van Wyk Louw, which analyzed the different survival crises that conceivably confronted a small people like the Afrikaners. These included military defeat, mass immigration, and absorption by an Anglo-Saxon or Bantu-speaking (African) nation. For intellectuals, however, the greatest of these crises would occur "when a large number of our people comes to believe that we need not live together *in justice* [his emphasis] with other ethnic groups; when they come to believe that mere survival is the chief issue, not a just existence." Succumbing to this "final temptation" could have grave consequences since it could lead to a critical number of intellectuals withdrawing their allegiance (something Louw never did). Louw posed the question: "Is it possible for a small people to survive for long if it becomes hateful or something evil for the best in—or outside—its ranks?" He believed that it was possible for his people one day to

emerge from the "dark night of the soul" and say, "I would rather go down than survive in injustice."[29]

A sociopolitical order and a justificatory framework were needed that dealt with the threats and challenges on all the different levels—political, physical, material, cultural, and ethical. Afrikaner nationalists believed they had found the answer in apartheid. This was not only an ideology but also an ethnic survival system that fostered and concealed Afrikaner domination. It was comprised of two parts: an ethnonationalism as the base and apartheid as a body of operating principles. The nationalist part of the system was an assembly of loosely formulated beliefs, values, and fears. On one level there was a special claim to the land based on the spurious assumption that the greatest part of the land was empty when the settlement was founded in the mid-seventeenth century. On another level the claim was made that Afrikaner political power and cultural identity rested on a covenant or contract with an all-knowing God.[30] This was soon extended to an argument stressing the centrality of nations in God's creation and their God-given separate destinies.

A nationalist ideology, however, rarely has clear and coherent ideas about a proper political and social order. Apartheid developed as an action-related system of ideas taking the Afrikaner historical experience as its point of departure and projecting that onto other peoples in the country. Just as the Afrikaners had thrown off British cultural hegemony, so the black people, according to the ideology, had to realize their own separate ethnic identity and build up their own ethnic power base. Apartheid, however, was not the rationale or the end of the system of rule. Already in the late 1960s John Vorster, who had become prime minister in 1966, said that apartheid was merely the means by which an Afrikaner identity could be retained, maintained, and be kept "immortal" within a white sovereign state. He added: "If there were better means to achieve the same end they had to be found."[31] This was an approach to which all his successors subscribed.

Until the final decade of its rule the NP leadership continued to believe that conceptually apartheid was an ethically justifiable system that enabled all the "nations" in South Africa to survive. However, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile the contra-

diction between the ideal and the harsh reality, consisting as it did of black "homelands" that economically were not viable, the annual arrest of hundreds of thousands of pass-law offenders seeking work in the cities, the prosecution of those who transgressed the racial sex laws, and so on. Whereas the apartheid system in the 1950s and 1960s almost unthinkingly exploited an uneducated, poorly trained labor force, of whom a large complement were migrants, the realization dawned in the early 1970s that this super-exploitation was bad not only for economic growth but for future white security. In 1971 a cabinet minister warned about the huge racial wage gap, declaring that "such gigantic differences in living standards. . .would lead to murder and violence." After a wave of industrial strikes by extremely poorly paid black workers in 1973, Prime Minister John Vorster exhorted employers to treat blacks not "as labor units, but as human beings with souls." The government took the lead by narrowing the racial wage gap in the public sector, but vast inequities remained. The Soweto uprising imparted a greater urgency, particularly after P. W. Botha came to power in 1978. He told party followers: "We are moving into a changing world. We must adapt, otherwise we shall die." He also urged them to learn the lessons of their own history: "the moment you start oppressing people. . .they fight back. We must acknowledge people's rights and. . .make ourselves free by giving to others in a spirit of justice what we demand for ourselves."[32]

At the same time the leadership gave the assurance that white security remained of paramount importance. The government claimed that the country was confronted with a "total onslaught," which assailed the entire sociopolitical order. According to government spokesmen, the overriding consideration was "survival." But there was no real moral basis for the Afrikaner and the larger white minority to appeal for support in their struggle. The harsh reality was that the world backed minorities only when they expressed moral and political principles that the outside world felt should not be suppressed. To the world the white minority embodied, above all, crass materialism. While smarting under this world, and particularly Western, condemnation, the NP had no intention of giving up power as they entered the 1980s. However, fatal sys-

temic weaknesses persuaded a new leadership to find a different solution to the crisis.[33]

THE UNDERMINING OF A SYSTEM

While obnoxious to the world, the system of Afrikaner domination was quite stable at the beginning of the 1980s, resting as it did on three pillars: vastly superior state power, white unity, and black political fragmentation. Over the next decade this system disintegrated until it finally was abolished in the mid-1990s. The system was undermined on the one hand by long-term demographic and economic trends and on the other hand by swelling black resistance. This produced such ideological and political disarray in the Afrikaner leadership ranks that they decided to risk the unbanning of the liberation movements, followed by negotiations for a power-sharing system. A lack of any strategic vision on the leadership's part, coupled with tough bargaining by the African National Congress negotiators, produced the outcome very few had expected and many feared: largely untrammeled majority rule in a unitary state.

The changing demographic equation, and more specifically the rapidly shrinking white minority, distinguishes the South African conflict most strikingly from all other ethnic conflicts. Seen against the broad sweep of South Africa's history, one of a handful of really important facts is that until the mid-twentieth century the proportion of whites relative to the total population was always sufficient to occupy all the strategic positions in the political, economic, and administrative systems in the country. Unlike, say, the colonizers in the northeastern parts of colonial Brazil, whites in South Africa never needed to establish a free, semi-skilled mulatto class to occupy the intermediate positions in the system of domination. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, a vital change had begun to make itself felt. Between 1910 and 1960 whites constituted 20 percent of the total population, but by 1960 the white demographic base began to shrink. By 1985 the white segment had fallen to 15 percent, and it is projected to fall to 11 percent by 2010. An acute shortage of white manpower began to develop in both the public and private sectors. This shortage increasingly forced employers in the private sector to breach the

industrial color bar to meet the need for skilled and semi-skilled manpower. The state had overreached itself in both spending and administrative capacities in trying to control blacks. The mammoth Department of Bantu Administration and Development found itself incapable of stemming the flow of blacks to the cities. "Voting with their feet," urbanizing blacks brought about a "silent revolution." While blacks accounted for only half of all the city dwellers in the mid-1980s, they were projected to outnumber all other groups three to one by 2000. Blacks became homeowners and entrepreneurs and started to dominate vital segments of consumer spending.[34]

South Africa's economy began to stagnate in the mid-1970s after fifty years of impressively growing at about 5 percent per year. Between 1975 and 1991 the annual rate of growth fell to only 1.6 percent, well below the 3 percent annual population increase.[35] Real per capita income in the period slumped by about 25 percent. Some of the decline in the growth rate was due to factors over which the state had little control, such as the rise in energy prices after 1973 and the weaker market for South African commodities. Behind the country's economic woes, however, there also lay a long story of economic mismanagement. Ironically, the economic malaise sprang mostly from the determination to make white South Africa economically self-sufficient and capable of repulsing any threat to its political autonomy. South Africa could afford to do so since its economy was largely built around gold, which was assured of a market, albeit at a fixed price until the early 1970s. There was, however, a serious downside. First, gold is a finite and declining resource. As the mining industry was forced to increase wages in the early 1970s, its share of the Western world's gold production began to decline steadily. Secondly, the white demand for security, coupled with the luxury of having gold as a major export earner, produced a quite uncompetitive manufacturing sector. The drive towards import-substitution dates back to the 1920s, when the government started to build high tariff walls and established the Iron and Steel Corporation. Little effort went into becoming efficient enough to export. By the early 1990s manufacturing exports per capita were lower than any upper-middle-income country except Brazil.

The state also introduced other policies designed to make the ruling group invulnerable. After World War II massive plants to extract oil from coal were built as part of a plan to bring the country's oil production up to one half of its domestic requirements. State aid to agriculture by 1970 provided on average one-fifth of a white farmer's income. To prevent the black migration to the cities, the state put numerous obstacles in the way of black employment, with the result that production became increasingly capital intensive and labor saving—this in a country with abundant sources of labor. To placate white workers, the training of blacks for more skilled work was a low priority. Labor productivity stopped growing in 1980 and capital productivity declined by over 30 percent between 1970 and 1991. Employment in the private sector dropped by forty-seven thousand jobs during the 1980s. By 1990 fewer than ten out of one hundred new entrants could find work in the job market of the formal sector of the economy. Between a quarter and a third of the economically active black labor force could not find regular employment. This greatly aggravated the incidence of both political violence and crime.

The economy had already started to shed black labor in the early 1970s. Realizing the security threat this posed, the government made two fateful decisions in order to promote economic growth. The first was to expand greatly the provision of black education and, with that, the productivity of black labor. In 1960 there were only 717 blacks in the most advanced classes in school. By the mid-1980s there were just over fifty thousand black and fifty thousand white university matriculants, but by 2000 it is predicted that seven out of ten matriculants will be black. By the end of the 1980s the urban black population was far better educated and trained—and much more radicalized than before. Surveys consistently showed that the higher the level of education of blacks the more acute their political discontent and the more pressing their demands. It was schoolchildren and students with little hope of finding acceptable jobs who spearheaded the successful ANC-led efforts of the 1980s to disrupt the black educational system and make the black townships ungovernable.

The other fateful decision was in 1979 when the government scrapped statutory job reservation and all other impediments to the advancement and training of black workers. It also allowed

black trade unions to participate in the statutory industrial relations system. Blacks now enjoyed effective industrial civil rights without any meaningful political rights. The government's expectation that the black trade union movement would not become politicized quickly proved to be quite misguided. In fact, it became the best organized part of the liberation movement, arranging strikes and "rolling mass action" at critical points to back up black demands and weaken the will of NP negotiators. In an effort by employers to buy off militant black workers, wage increases were granted, but they were unaccompanied by any commensurate improvement in productivity. The labor market became ever more rigid, worsening the unemployment crisis. Confronted with such a hostile environment, investors took fright. Gross fixed investment plummeted from 26 percent of the GDP in 1983 to 16 percent in 1991—a level at which it was impossible for the economy to grow, since a 14 percent level was needed simply to replace the capital equipment that was wearing out. At the same time government consumer spending rose sharply from 15 to 21 percent. This was partly the result of an effort to mollify white civil servants but also in order to provide services to the rapidly growing black population and to narrow racial pay differentials. To fund this increased spending the government heavily taxed the middle and upper income sectors and borrowed so much that its debt rose from 5 to 19 percent of the budget between 1975 and 1992.

The NP government realized that the country needed a more legitimate political framework in order to attract new investments. Taking the first step in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, it started a process leading in 1984 to the incorporation of the colored and Indian groups, forming 8 and 3 percent of the population respectively, into a Tricameral Parliament. Although the "other two" chambers had little power, the new Parliament irrevocably undermined the symbolism of white supremacy. Unexpectedly it also materially contributed to the destruction of two of the three pillars of the Afrikaners' power: their own unity and black political fragmentation.

Afrikaner political unity was finally shattered when the Conservative Party (CP) was founded in 1982 after eighteen parliamentary representatives of the NP had broken away over the issue of "power-sharing" with Coloreds and Indians. It managed to win

over 40 to 50 percent of the Afrikaners in the next ten years. Although there were class dimensions to the split, with the CP based more strongly on lower income Afrikaners than the NP, the real line of division concerned the different ways of securing Afrikaner political survival. The split ended the life of the NP as a purely ethnic party. Government policy was no longer the tortuous outcome of several battles fought on different sites in the nationalist movement. The party had become a catchall (white) party, with the votes of English-speakers constituting more than 42 percent of its support in the 1987 election. The political leadership increasingly assumed a vanguard role. There was a major reduction of accountability as the NP parliamentary caucus was marginalized with leaders strengthening technocratic forms of decision-making. No longer constrained in the same way by the checks on power a nationalist movement traditionally imposes on its leadership, the NP leaders began to resemble free-floating political entrepreneurs, guided less by loyalty to the ethnic cause than by calculations about their place in the future centers of power. F. W. de Klerk and his future chief negotiator, Roelf Meyer, who as ethnic politicians strongly opposed reforms of the apartheid order (de Klerk did so until 1987), would as negotiators be more willing to retreat in the face of ANC demands than their NP colleagues, who earlier had been considered much more liberal.

The state had turned into a multiracial state that relied on racially mixed security forces to impose order and on black homeland leaders like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to counter the ANC-led movement to isolate South Africa economically and internationally. The NP now rested on a broader base, but it had lost almost all ideological cohesion. In two polls, one undertaken in 1977 and the other in 1992, Afrikaners were asked to give a rating of what they considered to be the most important policy of their party. The responses were largely identical; at 27 percent in both polls white security was the highest priority, while language and culture rated seventh in 1977 at 1 percent. Fifteen years later it was eighth at 3 percent. One could argue that language and culture were so well protected that there was little reason to be worried, but the result still is a remarkable testimony to the waning of specifically Afrikaans cultural concerns during the apartheid era.[36] The dream of an exclusive white land had vanished as streams of impoverished

blacks flowed to the outskirts of the cities and trickled into the white suburbs, raising fears about a collapse of "First World" standards. White voters were persuaded that the old order of black exclusion from power finally had come to an end. They were prepared to accept blacks in government provided a new political order guaranteed security, predictable politicians, competent bureaucrats, a strong economy, and secure property rights. Afrikaners and the larger white community still strongly insisted on what Walker Connor calls the freedom from domination by nonmembers, which in practical terms meant separate white political representation and a white veto. In Africa, however, that constituted white privilege and that was what the ANC's struggle was about.

Such had been the outrage of blacks over their exclusion from the Tricameral Parliament that another pillar of white power, namely the lack of black unity, had disappeared. All government efforts to attract moderate black leaders with demonstrable support into talks about drafting a new constitution failed. For the first time in a century sufficient black unity existed in the greatest part of the country to prevent the government from using black moderates as a shield in a form of indirect rule. The uprising of 1984–1986 all but eliminated the credibility of black councilors elected in the 1980s to run the black townships, none of which had a proper revenue base. Reluctant to devolve any power to the Natal region for fear of losing control, the government by the mid-1980s had alienated Chief Buthelezi, the only internal leader with a mass base. Except in rural Natal, where Buthelezi held sway, the ANC or its proxies were able to prevent any black movement not under its control from becoming a significant force. The state had established a large degree of control by the end of 1986, but it had become clear that the popular resistance could not be crushed altogether. At the end of the 1980s the security forces had begun to give up on winning the hearts-and-minds battle. Mike Louw, who was a senior officer in the National Intelligence Service (he became its head in 1992), remembers the situation in the late 1980s as follows: "Nowhere was the situation out of hand, but it was clear that politically and morally we were losing. Everywhere in the black townships we encountered intimidation and a strong political consciousness. The political system had become obsolete

and a long, bloody struggle lay ahead. It had become clear that the sooner we negotiated a new system the better."[37]

In a perceptive article on South Africa, published in 1981, Samuel Huntington made the point that revolutionary violence does not have to be successful to be effective. It simply has to create sufficient trouble in the dominant group about ways to deal with it. Once the leadership is no longer able to apply its instruments of coercion ruthlessly, a crucial pillar of the system of domination disintegrates.[38] This was what started to happen by the second half of the 1980s. The government's inability to find a moderate black leadership with whom to negotiate had produced a deadlock in government. An account of the meeting of a special cabinet committee held in March 1986 shows how fundamental the differences in the power elite were. President Botha remarked that he did not favor one man, one vote in a unitary or federal state, adding: "I thought. . .we had clarity, but I do not think we have it anymore, because you want me to say we stand for a unitary South Africa. You allow me to say it, you write it in my speeches and I accept it, but what do we mean by that?" F. W. de Klerk commented that he could live with a rotating presidency, but "somewhere there must be somebody who had enough power in his hands, somewhere in a good government there must be a P. W. Botha who had the power and authority to ensure that things went right in the country."[39] As will be seen, de Klerk's hope that there would be white representation in a mixed cabinet, underpinned by some formal form of power, became his main negotiating goal in the early 1990s.

The Afrikaner elite recognized that remaining at an impasse was also dangerous. In mid-1986 the Afrikaner Broederbond, the secret communication channel between the government and the elite, issued a circular to that effect entitled "Political Values for the Survival of the Afrikaner." It declared that "the greatest risk that we are taking today is not taking any risks." The abolition of statutory discrimination had become a "prerequisite for survival" while black exclusion from politics "had become a threat to survival." It concluded that the state president did not have to be white and that ultimately the future of the Afrikaners depended on their will to survive and their faith and energy.[40] Also in 1986, the Dutch Reformed Church, by far the largest of the Afrikaner churches,

finally abandoned its support for apartheid as a system that it had long justified theologically. It decided to follow the New rather than the Old Testament, pointing out that the idea of race plays no part whatsoever in the New Testament while the idea of the diversity of peoples is always presented within the context of unity. The church also abandoned some other cherished ideas: that it was as one with the Afrikaner people, that it was the moral conscience of the *Volk* and state, and that the Scriptures presented any specific model for race relations. For the first time it specifically stated that racism was a sin. Implicitly this meant that the vaunting of any group was racism and hence a sin. Afrikaners could no longer think of themselves as a chosen people; the idea of the covenant was dead.[41]

TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC UNCERTAINTY

While ethnic groups only relinquish power in exceptional circumstances, they almost always seek allies. This is particularly true of the Afrikaners, a small and basically insecure group. The apartheid system, which appropriated a monopoly of power, was something of an anomaly in Afrikaner history: The more than three centuries of settlement are studded with totally unexpected Afrikaner alliances or proposed alliances with unlikely partners ranging from African chiefs to imperialists to socialists. When the government confronted the deep impasse in the white-black power struggle at the end of the 1980s, it knew its constituency would welcome any major black partner that could assist it in dealing with the intractable problems of massive black poverty, unemployment, and crime. The dominant political question now had become not whether to take a black party into government—to that all except the right wing agreed—but whether the ANC constituted such a partner.

A more important question, however, was whether this black-white cooperation should occur in a democratic context. Some analysts argued in the mid-1980s that the introduction of universal franchise had become possible because little cultural distance characterized white-black relations. They largely shared the Christian religion and had become economically interdependent.[42] Roelf Meyer, the chief NP negotiator in the latter half of the negotiations, endorsed this view when visiting Belfast in mid-1996 with

his ANC counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa. Meyer indicated that he believed it to be wrong to compare the South African experience to that of Northern Ireland because "we [in South Africa] basically had no fundamental differences to resolve." He continued, "It was almost as simple as a matter of color or race that separated us. We had to remove the problem to reach out to each other, and to discover each other as human beings."[43]

Meyer's reference to the "simple matter" of race and color that separated whites and blacks can be seen as a collapse of both the ideology of apartheid and of Afrikaner ethnonationalism and the historic and political claims and status associations attached to that. This statement can be read as a testimony to the unqualified ideological victory of the anti-apartheid movement worldwide and of modernization theory, which postulates the eradication of ethnic and racial differences within a common society. There was one problem: it was not shared by the constituency that Meyer and his party represented. In successive polls in the final years of the 1980s, only a third of whites agreed that whites and Africans had enough common values to create a future democratic government. After the ANC's unbanning the figure increased and reached 59 percent in mid-1992, but after a series of attacks on whites it dropped again to a third by the end of 1992. Once questions became more specific dramatic differences were revealed. In a 1992 poll the following statement was made: "South Africa is an African country where others have to take second place." Of blacks 56 percent agreed with this statement against only 5 percent of whites. In a 1986 poll only 3 percent of Afrikaners (and 8 percent of English-speakers) were prepared to accept a unitary state with one parliament and one vote for every person.[44]

In such a context the government was increasingly attracted to the paradigm of consociationalism or power-sharing as an alternative to the Westminster form of majority rule. It had billed the Tricameral Parliament (incorrectly) as power-sharing, and its constituency considered that nonthreatening. Why not try it with blacks? In discussions between 1971 and 1990 with NP politicians, Arend Lijphart, the internationally renowned proponent of consociationalism, argued that they were making a big mistake if they thought that their choice was between a broad sharing of power and exclusive white (and Afrikaner) power. He told them

their only real choice was between sharing power and losing power.[45] In the end they accepted this argument, strongly believing that negotiations did not entail bargaining over only the transfer of power.

There were several factors that facilitated the pursuit of a *power-sharing settlement* with the ANC. First there was Nelson Mandela, then still in jail and having informal, secret talks with government officials. Almost without exception NP leaders considered him a "godsend," a man whose stature and integrity they immediately recognized. He was no moderate in NP terms but consistently argued that majority rule, which he considered non-negotiable, had to be balanced by guarantees that ensured that white domination would not be replaced by black domination. Second, de Klerk was a democrat and civilian politician. He viewed with distaste the sidelining of the cabinet under the state of emergency, which saw the State Security Council, comprised of politicians and security officials, making the most important decisions. When de Klerk assumed control in 1989 he was assured of conservative backing in the party caucus, but the reformists were suspicious of him. Polls showed that the NP's support among white voters was being seriously eroded on both the Left and the Right while it remained paralyzed about its future direction. De Klerk had no wish for security officials to be further involved in political decisions. That meant he had only one option for shoring up his base: he had to seek a political solution, which meant that he had to move to the Left. Since the party fought for the election in 1989 on the premise that the polling constituted the last one from which blacks were excluded, he had no more than five years to find that solution.

Third, whites had enjoyed the franchise in South Africa for nearly 150 years, and there was little prospect of them supporting a solution in which they had to sacrifice their democratic rights. An important comparative article recently argued that the consolidation of a democracy in Africa occurred in settler societies because there had been a tradition of electoral competition, unlike patrimonial regimes where competition previously had been outlawed.[46] Of course the settlers long blocked the extension of democracy or used a partial extension to thwart popular democracy. When the NP in the early 1980s incorporated the colored people and Indians in the democratic process, its chief propagandist pri-

vately presented it as "[broadening] our own power base and thus avoid turning them [Coloreds] over to a black power situation."[47] It was only when the leadership in the late 1980s was confronted with a stark choice between extending democracy to blacks and a costly battle of attrition that the democratic tradition of whites became an important variable. Having made the choice for democracy, the leadership could claim that black enfranchisement was not a break or denial of history but actually in line with the political tradition of whites and their interests. Gerrit Viljoen, initially the government's chief negotiator, defended a negotiated democracy as indispensable for the survival of whites as a shrinking minority. He said in early 1990: "[We] who want change want it exactly because we realize that our survival depends on orderly change. . . . The whole approach of government is to shift the emphasis from race to the quality of government and the broadening of democracy in spite of the risks."[48]

The fall of the Berlin Wall two months after de Klerk became State President presented the NP with a large window of opportunity. De Klerk could now tell his constituency that without Soviet backing the ANC was no longer a threat. With the entire world moving away from the socialist experiment the ANC would be forced to respect private property and follow other investment-friendly policies. De Klerk began to use to great effect the argument that time would not be on the side of whites, and Afrikaners in particular. He argued that the settlement Ian Smith and the white Rhodesians were forced to accept constituted a classic case of negotiations that had been delayed too long. Two months after his February 2, 1990 speech, he declared to a meeting held in the offices of *Die Burger*: "We have not waited until the position of power dominance turned against us before we decided to negotiate a peaceful settlement. The initiative is in our hands. We have the means to ensure that the process develops peacefully and in an orderly way."[49] In the period that followed, de Klerk and his senior ministers consistently spelled out the message that whites had a stark choice between being driven back into a corner in the next ten years or staging an outflanking movement that could yield to them and their representatives a strategic position in a new, legitimate political system.

The NP entered the negotiations in 1990 from a position of strength and with a reasonably confident assumption that it could engineer a constitution that would severely restrict the power of the majority and thus diminish democratic uncertainty. Its negotiating proposals made a provision for a rotating presidency as the kingpin of an intricate scheme that would carefully limit the power of the majority and that of the minority (or minorities). The NP ended the negotiations in 1996, having failed to secure any of its major political and cultural objectives. Instead of nonelected negotiating parties drawing up the constitution over a prolonged period of time (as the NP proposed), an elected constituent assembly did so (as was the ANC's position). Instead of a power-sharing cabinet and rotating presidency within a federal system (NP) there would be a largely unitary state and majority decision-making in both the executive and legislative branches. These branches would effectively be fused and dominated by the largest party in the typical Westminster style (ANC). Drawing more than 80 percent of the black vote in the 1994 election, the ANC is assured to remain the dominant party for quite some time. Economically the NP got its way when the ANC accepted the market system and property rights, but in cultural affairs it has little reason for satisfaction. The recognition of eleven languages looks like a barely concealed formula for English to become the sole official language, and the ANC refused to grant either mother-tongue education or single-medium schools as rights. The cultural autonomy of Afrikaans schools and universities is heavily qualified by the insistence that English streams be introduced in these institutions to provide greater access to blacks.

We are left with two main questions: Why did the NP concede so much in the negotiations, ending up not with power-sharing but with majority rule? Why did its white constituency accept majority rule, which more than 90 percent firmly rejected in polls taken in the late 1980s?

The following explanations seem plausible. First, apartheid had used or debased all the available capital that normally goes with the demands ethnonational minorities make to ensure their survival. In the negotiations the NP was unable to argue convincingly that the Afrikaners or the larger white group as a whole constituted a minority rather than a replaced dominant group. It was

impossible to demand that the NP as a white party be given a veto and at the same time pretend that it had made a decisive break with apartheid, which, by its own admission, had failed. The NP could make no territorial or federal claims since Afrikaners lived dispersed all over the country and since neither they nor the larger white group commanded a majority in any region. The formal acceptance of "Western standards" across racial lines made it impossible for the NP to argue that there were unique cultural values that had to be specially protected.

As a result of all this the NP decided to pursue a nonracial position and make the party the articulator of values and interests. Apart from its traditional middle-class white base, the NP also attracted lower-income colored people, middle-class Indians, and a small section of conservative blacks across the class spectrum. It also claimed to be the representative of the specific interests of business, civil servants, and the security forces. All this strengthened the ANC's argument that the country's politics was about interests and not race, making an "ordinary" (Mandela's word) liberal democracy feasible. To counter this the NP had to make the obvious point that the comparative evidence showed that in deeply divided societies there is normally no significant floating vote, which gives liberal democracies their vitality. Instead, race and ethnic affinities decisively determine voters' preferences. Hence, power-sharing was necessary to avoid the alienation of minorities and to provide a safe basis for investment. But the NP was unable to stand up to the ANC position that race and ethnicity had been tainted by apartheid and that no formal recognition should be given to these identities.

Secondly, the ANC retreat from nationalization as a main plank of its platform made it more difficult for the NP to claim that its presence in government was indispensable for the protection of free enterprise. The NP had come to the free market position very late in the day, and the very state of the economy testified to its violation of some cardinal principles of neo-liberal economic management. There was a huge debt, the civil service was bloated, the tariff walls were high, and corruption and white collar crime were rife. Apart from de Klerk and one or two others, the top echelons of the NP were far from impressive as politicians outside their traditional Afrikaner context. It was difficult to make the argu-

ment that the NP added much value to the governing process or that its administrative talents were indispensable.

Thirdly, the end of the Cold War weakened the NP position. There was now no reason for the West to back a conservative government. Mandela's stature and the ANC's long struggle for black liberation made it seem the natural successor to the NP. The US government started leaning towards the view that as long as the ANC subscribed to a market system its political demands could be considered reasonable. At a critical point in the negotiations the US Under Secretary of State for African Affairs declared that all sides had to recognize "the right of the majority to govern." No side could insist on "overly complex arrangements intended to guarantee a share of power to particular groups which will frustrate effective government. Minorities have the right to safeguards; they cannot expect a veto."[50] The ANC itself could not have formulated it better.

Finally—and there is no other word for it—de Klerk lacked the necessary toughness to face down the ANC on critical points to ensure that his bottom-line demands were met. His great strength as a debater was also his weakness: He believed that he could persuade everyone of the reasonableness of his case or that some legalistic formula could always be found to paper over irreconcilable differences. When the ANC broke off negotiations in mid-1992 to embark on two months of rolling mass action, he was unable to sit this out. He believed that any security clampdown would destroy the chances of the remaining sanctions being lifted soon. He also thought that there was a risk of an economic meltdown if there was a refusal to resume negotiations on the part of the ANC leadership, who had endured long periods in jail or had lived on low salaries in exile and might be prepared to continue to do so to clinch victory. Only by sitting out the difficult period between July and September 1992 could de Klerk test the ANC leadership's resolve. However, as a man who in white politics was known as essentially a peacemaker and a centrist, he lacked the will to do so. In the end de Klerk set no conditions for a resumption of the negotiations and met almost all the ANC demands. The ANC had seized the upper hand. With increasing confidence Mandela rejected de Klerk's demands for formal power-sharing in the cabinet, treating it as an attempt to cling to the

vestiges of white power. All de Klerk could get was Mandela's verbal assurance that he needed him and that he had a role to play. That, however, was subordinate to Mandela's insistence on having the power to make the final decisions. The final deal was so far from the NP's original demands that when the cabinet met to ratify it an outraged minister shouted at de Klerk: "What have you done?! You have given South Africa away!!"[51]

The NP was now squarely confronted with majority rule, precisely what it had promised its constituency it would prevent. De Klerk still hoped to retain more than a marginal influence by a good NP performance in the election. When the NP received 20 percent of the vote instead of the 30 to 35 percent de Klerk had expected, the hope of influence based on electoral strength was dashed. The other hope was that the NP would exert influence by acting as the gatekeeper to three powerful sectors: the business community, civil servants, and the security forces. But all three had given up on the NP as it began to backtrack in the negotiations and as the ANC moved swiftly to give assurances. Civil servants were promised their jobs or satisfactory retirement packages; the security forces were promised amnesty instead of a repeat of the Nuremberg trials; and the business community was assured that the new government considered private-sector investment as a top priority. Business quickly decided that a dominant party that comes to power through an election, tolerates an opposition, and respects civil rights constituted a sound platform for stability.

The puzzle remains: why did whites not revolt against a deal or overthrow de Klerk, given their resistance to majority rule? De Klerk as the scion of a political family and former conservative enjoyed an extraordinary measure of trust. No member of the caucus could ever believe that he would betray that trust or his people. Every time resistance surfaced in caucus he argued that, short of security action, no alternatives existed. He could assure all the members of his caucus, of whom a great majority were professional politicians, that there was an excellent chance that they would continue their political careers in the new structures. He dealt with the white electorate by holding an all-white referendum asking only for an endorsement of the negotiations well before serious negotiations started. As details of the unthinkable emerged, whites were gripped by a mood of resignation. The dismantling of

the apartheid system had started in the early 1970s, and every time the electorate quickly adjusted to the new situation. This time, it was true, the matter was far more serious, but after almost seventy years of depending on an interventionist state, no white class—whether it be business, workers, or civil servants—had retained the capacity to organize separately to challenge the political leadership.

The military formed a possible source of resistance. However, it was small (fewer than seventy thousand full-time soldiers, of whom half were nonwhite) and had a long tradition of subservience to the political leadership. Moreover, de Klerk, probably sensing trouble, refused ANC demands for a multiparty aggregation of the security forces and carried out a small purge of officers suspected of backing or instigating third force activities. General Constand Viljoen, a widely respected former head of the Defense Force, at one stage threatened to mobilize right-wing forces of resistance and seize sufficient land to carve out a future Afrikaner *Volkstaat*. The undisciplined conduct of right-wing paramilitary organizations made effective action impossible. Viljoen and his movement were drawn into the election by a promise that the new government would consider a *Volkstaat* and would appoint a *Volkstaat* council comprised of right-wingers to research and deliberate on such a plan.

Election day was peaceful. Afrikaners were split almost down the middle between the right-wing parties and the NP. Ironically, the NP's electoral support base was much more nonracial than the ANC's. It drew half its votes from people who were not white, while only 6 percent of the ANC's support was not black. But the most important fact was that power had passed to blacks. Afrikaners with cultural concerns now had to fend for themselves under a new dominant party that did not have much patience for subnational identities or anything but an increasingly English-based, individualistic culture.

CONCLUSION

It would be tempting, though wrong, to consider what happened to the Afrikaners as evidence for the assumption that the emotional power of ethnicity is exaggerated and that material interests

are decisive when the chips are down.[52] The situation was exceptional in South Africa in that the small, shrinking Afrikaner minority was facing severe economic and political problems and was hopelessly overextended in the political and administrative system. It had to make tough decisions about their future political survival as a group. De Klerk made his decisions in the spirit of Edmund Burke's dictum that leaders have to take their followers not where they want but ought to be. He knew that a shrinking white minority clinging to a monopoly of power offered no guarantee for the survival of his people. He was also confident that he could convince the ANC than an effective ANC-NP coalition was the best platform for realizing the economic potential of South Africa. De Klerk was able to persuade his party, his constituency, and the security forces to give up exclusive power and accept a new vision.

Where de Klerk failed was in his management of the negotiating process and in his strategy towards realizing his goal of power-sharing or of achieving an effective coalition government. He never signaled to the ANC in any serious way that this was his bottom line, nor did he try to understand the ANC's real agenda behind the bland assurances the movement's negotiators offered him that the ANC would continue to consult and work with de Klerk and his party. The ANC succeeded in getting what its spokespeople called an ordinary system of majority rule by flatly refusing to have the principle of power-sharing written into the constitution. It did approve, however, of a vaguely worded provision for a Government of National Unity in the interim constitution to assuage white voters' fears. Once the ANC had settled in the cushions of power, it was confident that the NP had no real power to constrain it. It rejected the inclusion of any sort of government of national unity in the final constitution, which came into force on February 4, 1997. Three weeks earlier de Klerk stated:

> The decision to surrender the right to national sovereignty is certainly one of the most painful that any leader can ever be asked to take. Most nations are prepared to risk total war and catastrophe rather than to surrender this right. Yet this was the decision that we had to take. We had to accept the necessity of giving up the ideal on which we have been nurtured and the dream for which so many generations of our forefathers had struggled and for which so many of our people had died.[53]

The Afrikaner leadership handed over power because it had miscalculated that it was indispensable to the ANC.

Whites did not mount much resistance once the prospect of majority rule began to take shape. Part of the reason was that the process remained shrouded in ambiguity for quite some time. But there were also deep-seated reasons. There was little that a people in a modern state could do to roll back the process, and this is particularly true if they are as outnumbered as whites in South Africa were. Moreover, whites had become convinced of the failure of apartheid in the 1980s and saw no easy alternative. The electoral link between the NP and the white constituency had effectively been removed in 1989, well before the start of the negotiations. Constitutionally there was no course of action available to resist de Klerk. All that those who were prepared to take arms could do was to embark on random terrorism; alternatively, they could contemplate establishing by force an ethnic state in one of the regions. But for most whites that held little attraction.

Had someone other than de Klerk been elected as leader in 1989 a prolonged stalemate could have ensued, or South Africa may have witnessed a different leader pursuing a different strategy with a different outcome. If the particular events that did unfold demonstrate anything, it is that leaders do make a difference, particularly if they have the ability to take the party and their people with them into uncharted territory. What makes de Klerk different from a Gorbachev is that he is still the leader of his party and has managed to retain a following and a considerable degree of respect despite failing in his high-risk gamble. It says much for de Klerk, but even more about the Afrikaner people—their pragmatism, their fatalism, and perhaps also their resilience.

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[26]Most of these figures are derived from a series of publications by Mike McGrath, whose work is based on analyses of the 1975 and 1991 censuses. See also my chapter on the Afrikaner economic advance in Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: Can South Africa Change?* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 145–176.

[27]Milan Kundera, "The Czech Wager," *New York Review of Books,* 22 January 1981, 21.

[28]For a perceptive article on this issue by an Afrikaans journalist see Ton Vosloo, "Is die Afrikaner die dodo van Suid-Afrika?," *Buurman,* September-November 1981, 7–8.

[29]Louw, *Versamelde Prosa,* 457–458.

[30]Donal Harman Akenson, *God's Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel and Ulster* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[31]Hermann Giliomee, "'*Broedertwis*': Intra-Afrikaner Conflicts in the Transition from Apartheid," *African Affairs* 91 (1992): 347.

[32]Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910–1986* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1986), 51–61.

[33]For an extended discussion see Hermann Giliomee, "'Survival in Justice': An Afrikaner Debate over Apartheid," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (3) (1994): 527–548.

[34]John Kane-Berman, *The Silent Revolution* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990).

[35]For a succinct overview see Patrick McGowan, "The 'New' South Africa: Ascent or Descent in the World System," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 1 (1) (1993): 35–61.

[36]Lawrence Schlemmer, South Africa's National Party Government, Peter Berger, and Bobby Godsell, *A Future South Africa* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1988), 27–28.

[37]Mike Louw, interview, 21 November 1994.

[38]Samuel Huntington, "Reform and Stability in a Modernizing, Multi-Ethnic Society," *Politikon* 8 (1981): 11.

[39]*Sunday Times,* 28 August 1994, 26.

[40]Unpublished document of the Afrikaner Broederbond, ca. July 1986.

[41]Akenson, *God's Peoples,* 385–386.

[42]See, for instance, Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley, *South Africa Without Apartheid* (Cape Town: Maskew Millar Longman, 1986).

[43]Padraig O'Malley, ed., "Ramaphosa and Meyer in Belfast" (Boston, Mass.: McCormack Institute, University of Massachusetts, 1996, mimeo).

[44]De Kock, "Movements in South African Mass Opinion," 39–40; Hermann Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), 156–157; and unpublished research by Schlemmer.

[45]Arend Lijphart, "Prospects for Power-Sharing in the New South Africa," in Andrew Reynolds, *Election 1994: South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), 229.

[46]Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Competition in Africa," *World Politics* 46 (1) (1994): 454–489.

[47]Alf Ries and Ebbe Dommisse, *Broedertwis* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1982), 111–112.

[48]*Sunday Star,* 17 March 1990.

[49]*Die Burger,* 31 March 1990.

[50]Steven Friedman, *The Long Journey: South Africa's Quest for a Negotiated Settlement* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1993), 157.

[51]I am basing this on the forthcoming study of Patti Waldmer, "Anatomy of a Miracle."

[52]For an extended critique of this school see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) and Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

[53]F. W. de Klerk, 21 January 1997; copy issued by his office.