
In short, strong as South Africa appears, it is a state riddled with contradictions. This has always been the case, but it is increasingly so today. Every step taken by the white supremacy system to relieve the tensions within its boundaries creates another contradiction. Curbing the influx of job-seeking Africans into urban areas adds to the population pressures in the homelands, which it is government policy to develop into viable systems. Greater dependence by white industry on *migratory* labor means increasing the flow of relatively unskilled workers but rapid economic growth demands more skilled manpower. Providing the homelands with their own African political institutions as alternatives to a voice in white institutions creates a new challenge from a black power base—whether from the independent Transkei, or from Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of the Zulus and other black leaders—which may be reinforced by fresh protest in the black urban townships. As time goes on, the contradictions and tensions will surely grow.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

by Colin Legum

South Africa is completely different from any other country on the continent. It is rich and powerfully armed. Even more important, it is a country where the process of economic (if not yet social) integration of the races has already gone so far as to lock the races into interdependence. The refusal of the architects of apartheid to acknowledge the extent of this integration has resulted not only in a total failure to separate the races (except into residential zones) in the industrial cities and white rural areas but has also sharpened the internal contradictions to the point where they have now actually become a more serious threat to the present system than an armed struggle.

Another major difference between South Africa and the former African colonial territories is that it ceased being a colony almost 70 years ago; South Africa does not depend on decisions

taken by a faraway metropolitan power that, like Portugal, can decide to give up an empire and withdraw its citizens. The size of its white community (more than 4 million) is greater than the combined white communities in the rest of Africa in the heyday of colonialism. White South Africans, especially the Afrikaners, whose families have been rooted in African soil for over three centuries, have no other home where they might hope to find refuge. These millions of whites still find it unthinkable that they will not continue to live in the country of their birth whatever the circumstances at the time of the transfer, or redistribution, of political power. And no black leader of any consequence has ever publicly suggested that the whites should be "driven into the sea." Quite the contrary: the blacks have always insisted on the right of the whites to remain, demanding only that they abandon their *herrenvolk* ideas.

Yet, today, there is little prospect of white South Africans—and especially of Afrikaners—yielding to such a demand, at least not before they see effective power slipping from their hands. There are signs that this possibility has begun to flicker through some minds; but most Afrikaners believe, like Mao Tse-tung, that power springs from the muzzle of a gun. And the whites have the guns. There seems to be no reasonable hope of white South Africans agreeing to meaningful negotiations with the black majority while they still remain sufficiently confident of their own strength.

Is there, then, no reasonable hope that white South Africans will consent to a peaceful process of political change? Could a nonracial society exist in which they would share a common home and destiny with blacks, through a federal system or other appropriate arrangements? Any answer to these questions must be heavily qualified. It is most unlikely that fundamental political change will come peacefully, but it could come without a totally ruinous conflagration. The idea of a federal or confederal solution might figure more urgently on the nation's agenda once the ex-

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periment of creating separate black states—the Bantustans—has proved to be a failure, and if Western policies are altered to exert a positive influence.

For more than a decade, most white South Africans have been led to believe that the current policies of “separate development,” culminating in the creation of eight or nine black, independent, economically viable republics and one white republic is the *only way* to safeguard their way of life. If this Bantustan experiment fails, as is likely, on economic grounds alone, white hopes will be dashed and a desperate search will begin for some new, perhaps more realistic alternative. Whatever it is—whether federal or confederal—its success can be assured only if South African blacks and whites sit down together at a conference table for the first time in their history. The longer this negotiation is delayed, the surer the prospect of widespread violence and of irreconcilable racial bitterness, and the fewer the chances of mutual accommodation.

One strong possibility is that the entrenched whites will resist to the bitter end, rather than accept black majority rule. The other possibility is that after three to five years more of considerable resistance, they will come to accept the necessity of negotiating a new constitution settlement with representative black leaders to replace the 1910 Act of Union.

Thus, it is extremely unlikely that any serious white attempt to negotiate will come before the situation becomes more violent and the economic system is manifestly threatened with paralysis and even collapse. This conclusion must follow any analysis of South Africa’s white political society. None of its leaders, or groups of leaders, is now able to make the kind of autocratic decision which General de Gaulle made to end the 1954–62 war in Algeria. In South Africa, political power lies exclusively with the white electorate, the majority of them Afrikaners. This electorate is still predominantly composed of diehard believers in white supremacy, even under siege conditions. If Prime Minister Vorster and his Cabinet were now to decide for practical reasons that a radical readjustment of power were urgently necessary (as some leading Afrikaner moderates already believe) they would likely be rebuffed by their own Nationalist parliamentary caucus, which faithfully reflects Afrikaner voters’ hard-line attitudes.

Some of the most powerful Afrikaner leaders in the past have had this humiliating experience. For example, General Jan Christiaan Smuts decided during World War II that racial segregation was at odds with the reality of the country’s increased economic integration; his cautious attempt to edge the electorate towards

softening segregation helped bring on his defeat and the election of the Nationalists' apartheid regime in 1948. Even such a commanding figure as the late Hendrik F. Verwoerd was unable, at the pinnacle of his power as prime minister, to get his parliamentary supporters to accept his more radical proposals to give greater substance to the idea of the Bantu homelands, of which he was the principal architect. Today, even if Mr. Vorster were to throw his own authority behind a more realistic approach to race relations, it is unlikely that he would succeed.

A Necessary Trauma

The critical factor is timing: to move too far ahead of the white electorate's perceptions would destroy Mr. Vorster's leadership as completely as it did General Smuts's; to move too slowly, in terms of the blacks' perception of their own growing power, could destroy any hope of a relatively peaceful settlement. If this analysis is correct, then the conclusion must be that the white electorate will not be ready to yield before they have suffered an extremely serious trauma. The white Rhodesians experienced such a trauma when they found themselves faced not only with a black guerrilla movement and economic strangulation, but also with open disavowals of support from South Africa, the United States, and Britain.

In white South Africa such a trauma might occur in the following way:

Urban black violence (such as that in Soweto) increases and becomes more difficult to repress. This persistent unrest erodes the whites' confidence in the effectiveness of their military-police power. The newly "independent" Transkei and other homelands become new bases of black power and serve to sharpen the confrontation between black South Africans and the white Republic.

Since the whites' basic assumption has been that the "independent" homelands will serve to *diminish* racial confrontation, this development comes as a profoundly disillusioning shock and leads to a fresh search for alternative policies. Meanwhile, black majority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia isolates the white Republic in the continent and further heightens the expectations of black South Africans, who become more defiant, and more insistent on early change. All these related developments make the Republic's basic instability more visible.

Earlier Western assumptions about South Africa being a safe place for investment are revised, and the Republic finds it increasingly difficult—and expensive—to raise new investment

ABSOLOM VILAKAZI: A WORD OF CAUTION

Anthropologist Absalom Vilakazi, 63, has taught at American University since 1965. He left his native South Africa in 1958 but has returned as recently as last year on research trips. At a seminar early this year with other Africanists at the Wilson Center, he commented on current talk of the impending "liberation" of South Africa:

The only external pressure for change that I can see as important would come from the United States, Great Britain, and the Western powers. There is a whole range of things that could happen there, but I would not want to be overly optimistic. South African whites can be pushed so far and no farther.

Insofar as black Africa is concerned, I'm afraid I am rather pessimistic. As a matter of fact, I discount all the rhetoric you hear in the U.S. from black African diplomats. It is all sound and fury, signifying nothing. Ask them, "How many troops are you going to commit to liberating South Africa?" None of them is going to commit anything.

South Africa is to Southern Africa what the United States is to the Western Hemisphere. It's like expecting Latin America to penetrate the United States.

The South African black movements—the African National Con-

gress and the Pan-Africanist Congress—have existed outside South Africa for 10 to 15 years. They make quite a lot of noise in London and New York and Washington—very safe distances. The nearest group is in Lusaka, Zambia, but again that is a very safe distance. I would pin my hopes much more on the struggle inside South Africa.

The assumption that there are no black leaders inside the country is absolutely nonsensical. They have a lot of problems because they are right there, face to face with Vorster. But the students, for instance, have done something. They are disorganized, but they have been much more effective than the people outside. My own view is that the scenario, the kind of model which was presented by Mozambique and Angola, just doesn't apply to South Africa. We don't even approximate the Rhodesian model; our blacks are not fighting like the Rhodesian blacks. South Africa is different.

capital (currently, South Africa needs \$1.5 billion of new capital for its homeland development programs alone). New investment slows down, leading to increased black unemployment. This development not only contributes further to instability but leads to a major policy reappraisal by the United States and by the nations of Western Europe.

Then, like Rhodesia in 1975–76, South Africa finds itself isolated, not only within the continent but more than ever in the Western community, its lifeline for economic support and defense against the “communist enemy.” The Communist nations increase their aid to the black challengers and to their allies in Mozambique. The Western nations are then faced with the choice of either buttressing South Africa at a time when white power has already begun to slip badly, or identifying their national interests with the black and white forces demanding majority rule. The likelihood is that Washington and London will “tilt the balance to the blacks,” as the Ford administration did in Rhodesia and Namibia.

Another more hopeful but unfortunately less likely prospect would be for the Vorster regime to react with the same kind of realism to its own situation at home as it displayed toward Mozambique and Rhodesia after the collapse of the Portuguese empire. White leaders respond to demands for a new constitutional conference, trying at first to confine black representation to the homeland leaders. But they are soon compelled to bring in the urban black leaders as well, while excluding the young militants and the leaders of the banned African National Congress. The white willingness to begin negotiations helps to defuse the more militant black opposition and wins strong Western backing. The fact that white and black leaders are negotiating the country’s future helps to condition white South Africans to accept the inevitability of a “shared society”—as has already happened in Namibia. It also strongly assists the cause of those white and black South Africans who believe that the country’s future lies in agreement on a new federal or confederal constitution.

Faced with such possibilities, what policy might one expect from the major Western nations if they hope to help avert the violent disintegration of South Africa and, in terms of their own particular national interests, to prevent the collapse of South Africa’s economy and minimize the chances of anti-Western forces gaining power with the help of external communist support? Such a policy should include:

¶ A joint U.S.–European approach to prevent the Pretoria regime from further exploiting Western differences (e.g., using the French as their major supplier of sophisticated weapons);

¶ An unequivocal commitment to the principle of majority rule in South Africa;

¶ A collective Western policy in support of the idea of a national convention, open to white and black representatives,

freely chosen for the purpose of negotiating a new constitution, with no outside dictation as to what form such a constitution should take (that is a decision for South Africans themselves);

¶ Discouragement by the West of any new capital investment before the South African whites show a willingness to call a national convention (other forms of economic disengagement should also be considered);

¶ Effective enforcement of the UN Security Council's arms embargo.

Once such a policy has been agreed upon in Washington, London, Bonn, and Paris, it would become possible to mount a concerted, carefully calculated drive to induce South Africa to seek a negotiated domestic settlement. By ending their present ambiguous policies toward South Africa, the Western nations would put themselves in a much stronger position to encourage proper change and to appear in a more convincing role as champions of "the struggle for independence, for racial equality, for economic progress, for human dignity," as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger put it in Lusaka in April 1976.

