APPENDIX A

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN SOC.IAL AND

POLITICAL ORGANISATION

1ntroduct ion

In many ways the above issues lie at the heart of, the dynamic

process of political accommodation and constitution building in South Africa today. A very considerable diversity of interests, mostly ethnic interests, is such an outstanding feature of our society that it can hardly be denied. Yet there is a great deal of confusion about these important matters perhaps largely because race and ethnicity have become the target of highly emotional public rhetoric aimed at promoting the negotiating stances of powerful political groupings. It has become necessary, therefore, to distinguish clearly between political strategy, on the one hand, and hard realities on the other.

This Appendix attempts to outline and discuss these realities (rather than perceptions) as objective'/ as possible against the background of modern international research on the issues involved. The'analysis is undertaken in the spirit of addressing the vexed issues of race and ethnicity as openly and frankly but nevertheless as scientifically as possible in order to promote the vitally important process of democratic constitution building in the country in which all South Africans regardless of race, colour or creed must clearly participate.

The significance of the ethnicity issue in plural societies

2. It is now a matter of historical fact that after World War II

and especially since the decolonisation of the Third World, there has been a very considerable increase in conflict situations the cause of which can be directly related to competing ethnic aspirations'^. The rapid escalation and,intensity of this kind of group

1) A Greeley, for example, states that "just as the collapse of the

Austro-Hungarian Empire increased tension in Central Europe, so

the collapse of the old colonial empires has opened up a Pandora's

box of tribal, linguistic, religious and cultural conflicts", in "Ethnicity in the United States. A Preliminary Reconnaissance", New York, Wiley 197^, p.11

conflict came as a surprise to many social scientists and has in con-
sequence led to considerable interest and research activity into so-
called "plural societies" characterised by extensive ethnically
orientated group differentiation within the same national boundaries.
Given the nature of academic research It is perhaps inevitable that
despite a substantial measure of current consensus, differences of
opinion sti 1 1 prevai1s about this complex phenomenon. Such analytical

difficulties, however, do not negate the practical reality and signi-
ficance of ethnicity as a focal point of social organisation and group
differentiation, especially in terms of potential political conflict.
The plain fact is that ethnicity is alive and well and flourishing
all over the world, as confirmed daily by the mass media reporting
on this kind of group conflict in the Middle East^ India, Ulster,
Lebanon, Cyprus, Zimbabwe and South Africa, to mention just a few.

Defin ing ethn ic i ty

2)

3. At the present time most researchers agree that the essential

nature of ethnicity can be related to two major determinants.

In conjunction they give ethnic groups the considerable historical
durability that they have enjoyed all over the world:

(a) a sense of kinship derived from a collective perception
(whether factual or imagined) of common biological
descent, i.e. kinship derived from a substantial degree
of inbreeding

(b) a common and distinctive cultural focus (whether real or
perceived), especially in terms of a common historical
background.

h. It should be noted that biological kinship by itself is not

sufficient to create the collective group behaviour which is
usually described as ethnicity. In addition a kinship group must have

2) See, for example, the recent survey of international research
findings by N J Rhoodie, "Die Moderne Etniese Problematiek",
(The Modern Ethnic Problem), Human Sciences Research Council,
Pretoria, 1985, Sections ^ and 5

a distinctive cultural focus. As a well-known researcher has recently noted "the basis of ethnic classification appears universally to be predicated upon the perception of real cultural differences between peoples who live in proximity to one another"^. Hence both elements of biological kinship and cultural distinctiveness are required to form a socially definable, visible basis for drawing boundaries between "us" and "them" and therefore to define the so-called "identity" of a particular ethnic group.

5. It follows from the above definition that ethnicity is not genetically determined and must therefore be acquired and

learnt by people. The process normally occurs through exposure to parents, schools, churches and a variety of other cultural influences within the particular group. This basic characteristic of ethnicity as essentially acquired and not genetic (about which the individual can, of course, do nothing) is of particular significance for the non-racial political accommodation of this Important form of group d i fferent iat ion.

The external social indicators or markers of ethnicity

6. Whatever the basic determinants and intrinsic nature of ethnicity, society at large will always wish to have visible indicators

or markers of this phenomenon, if only to recognise and be able to deal with it. These socially determined markers of ethnicity have been identified by researchers as

race (primarily skin colour, hair texture and facial

features)

language

religion

d istinctive culture
common historical background

7- In some cases only one of the above elements determine the

highest degree of ethnic visibility, such as language in Belgium

3) CL Keyes, "Ethnic Change", University of Washington Press, 1982, p.7

and Canada or religion in Iran, Lebanon and Northern Ireland. However, to generalise in terms of language or religion alone would be danger-ous. English as mother tongue, for example, is no dependable index of ethnicity in the case of the Ulster Irish or the Welsh and Scottish nationalists in the United Kingdom. Neither can religion by itself distinguish among the many different ethnic groups adhering to either the Islamic or the Christian faith. The historical significance of language and religion together, however, does seem to be rather more meaningful as an index of ethnicity and of ethnic nationalism. A classic example is the joint role of Hebrew and Christianity in esta-blishing Israel as a Jewish national state. In general, however,

ethnic groups can only be identified by some combination of the indi-cators/markers stipulated in para 6, the relevant combination depending on the particular circumstances of each situation.

8. In terms of the basic determinants of ethnicity (i.e. (a) con-

centrated biological kinship, combined with (b) a distinctive cultural/historical focus) and taking into account the social markers of ethnicity as indicated in para 6 above, the major ethnic groups

in South Africa can be designated as follows:

Afrikaners: The clearest example of a pol i tical ly mobi 1 is.ed

ethnic group in the country, if not in the world

Whites: As a whole they are clearly no ethnic group. Whites

would qualify generally in terms of (a) above but
not (b). However, White English speakers of British
descent, Germans, Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, etc.
do qualify as ethnic groups
Indians: In terms of the twin determinants above both the

Hindus and Moslems qualify as separate ethnic
groups

Coloureds: They do not constitute an ethnic group. They
apparently qualify under (a) but the biological
kinship observed could be artificial because of
prolonged legal prohibition of biological relations
across colour boundaries. Coloureds do not qualify
at all under (b) because of no distinctive cultural
focus

Blacks: Many ethnic groups can be distinguished such as
the Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Northern Sotho, etc. but
largely outside the PWV area. The extent to which
ethnicity is still a force among urban Blacks
inside the PWV region is somewhat uncertain.

The essential difference between race and ethnicity

9. In view of the strong emphasis on biological kinship relation-

ships as a major determinant of ethnicity, the question arises
whether there really is any significant difference between a race
group and an ethnic group. Does the drawing of such a distinction
not really amount to little more than dishonest sophistry in terms
of actual social behaviour? Careful analysis indicates that the answer
is no. While there is indeed some overlap, race and ethnicity are in
practice usually two quite distinct forms of group differentiation
which can and do operate and vary independently of each other.

10. To illustrate the differences involved, consider the following.

People belonging to a particular race often exhibit (a) a great

variety of biological kinship relationships and (b) wide cultural
differences. Thus, although they are all Wh i te, Danes, Russians,

Czechs, Afrikaners and Macedonians surely do not in practice represent
an effective inbreeding group. Furthermore, as regards culture, there
are considerable differences in the cultural behaviour patterns of
these people. Even inside South Africa, Whites (as a race group)
are cu1tura11y substantia11y heterogeneous. The cu1tura1/his torica1
focus of Afrikaners clearly differ from that of the English, the
Portuguese, the Jews, and the like. The same situation prevails amongst

Blacks (as a race group) in the country.

11. In summary, while very many people can regard themselves as
belonging to the same race group, far fewer can do so on the

basis of ethnicity. The fact that even today an American negro in
practice experiences more discrimination in his daily life than a
Polish immigrant, illustrates the fundamental difference between race
and ethnicity. Thus it is fundamentally the cultural/historical focus
of ethnicity that distinguishes it, both in principle and in practice,

from the often rigid confines of race. (The South African situation
has not conformed to this general analysis and will be taken up later).

The historical durability of ethnicity

12. Until the last decade or two ethnicity as a form of group
differentiation in society was widely regarded by most reputable

international social scientists as a strictly temporary phenomenon.

It would inevitably be swept aside in the course of time by the power-
ful JI!eJhMj2£_£ot_jFo£ces of industrialisation, urbanisation and mo dern-
ism in general. In consequence, the resurgence and continued viability
of ethnicity as a major force in social organisation, especially since
World War II, (albeit in adapted form), caught most of these scientists

by surprise . As one researcher has put it "the resurgence of

ethnicity around the globe in the last decades has called into question
the hitherto prevailing assumption that ethnicity is an archaic

5)

survival that tapers into oblivion in the course of modernisation" .

In fact, the survival struggle between the Israeli Jews and the
Palestinian Arabs has come to be an unmistakable image of the modern
vitality and deep significance of ethnic forces in political conflict.

13. Today many researchers believe that far from "going out of
fashion" ethnicity has become (at least in Western countries)

an integral part of a larger world-wide resistance to a creeping George
Orwell-like universal ism and centralism which threaten to dehumanise
quite normal and natural social affinities among people. This tendency
is illustrated, inter alia, by the fact that in many plural societies
all over the world the resurgence of ethnicism has gone hand-in-hand
with a desire for greater involvement and a more effective say in the
affairs of local communities and in local government (as opposed to
the larger concerns of the national state). There may well be some
important lessons to learn for South Africa in these global trends.

b) See, for example, the wide range of modern research quotted in
N J Rhoodie, op cit, Chapter 8

5) Light, I, "Ethnic Succession", in Keyes, C F (Ed.) "Ethnic Change",
University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1982

14. The typical ethnic group has a long history which is rooted
in generations of shared historical experience. This is the

essential element that gives it its durability over time. By impli-
cation therefore ethnicity cannot be fashioned in the short-term,
for example, to exploit political and/or economic opportunities that
might possibly be utilised to good advantage. Ethnicity can be mani-
pulated but it cannot be manufactured. It is in this historical sense
that ethnicity differs fundamentally from other interest groups which
often form around issues such as class, political convictions, occu-
pation, income, educational qualifications and the like. In terms
of structural political accommodation, therefore, ethnicity needs to
be taken much more seriously than the relatively ephemeral demands
of pressure groups based on the interests mentioned above, important
as these no doubt are in the day-to-day political affairs of any
count ry.

15. A further reason for the historical durability of ethnicity

lies in the fact that, as opposed to the bas ic determi nants,

change over time in the relatively easily identifiable external social

markers can and does take place. An Afrikaner today, for example, does
not need to wear "velskoene" or play jukskei or refuse to wear modern
clothes made by a fashionable London tailor or castiga'te modern rock
music in order to prove his basic allegiance to the Afrikaner group.

It is, after all, people that determine the content of the social
indicators of ethnicity (race, language, religion and culture) and
people do modernise over time, often substantially so. These changes
can, however, occur without necessarily neutralising or eroding
the basic foundations of ethnicity (the biological kinship relation
and the common cu1tura1/historica1 focus). There has been perhaps
a significant confusion between these two dimensions of ethnicity,
viz. the fundamental core, on the one hand, and the many diverse ways
in which members of any ethnic group can modernise their lives in
terms of the external social markers of ethnicity, on the other, but
without eroding their strong allegiance to the core. In short, ethnic
groups can adapt and modernise and still maintain what is perhaps at
the deepest psychological level their real driving force - a funda-
mental sense of survival. This conclusion is a major finding

of the renewed international scientific Interest in the global resurgence of ethnicity over the past few decades. It has clear implications

âœ" \

for future constitution building in South and Southern Africa .

16. In view of the current ideological conflict in South Africa between liberal and socialist philosophies, it Is perhaps useful

to note that ethnicity as a durable and significant historical factor would be rejected by both. The liberal philosophy regards both ethnicity and racism as archaic, irrational leftovers of pre-industriaI societies which can be expected to yield quite inebitably to the universal ising, melting-pot influences emanating from modern industrialisation arrd urban i sat ion. Socialism again, regards ethnicity as a product of the capitalist mode of production and as misguided forms of "false consciousness" destined to wither away after the advent of socialism. This ideological rejection from both side's has important practical implications If ethnicity (both in White and Black society) is to be effectively accommodated in plural societies in general and In South Africa in particular. Hopefully the development and Increasing international respectability of consociationa1ism as an essentially pragmatic approach towards resolving conflict in "deeply segmented plural societies" will tend to counteract these Ideological perceptions.

The political mobilisation of ethnicity

17. While ethnic differences among groups (as identified by the usual markers of race, language, religion and culture) do not

by themselves necessarily lead to a process of ethnic mobilisation, this is often the case. Such mobilisation of ethnicity in plural societies is usually aimed at obtaining a competitive advantage over

6) It is of some interest to note that this overall conclusion is supported by a very recent study of the polyglot of peoples inhabiting the sub-continent of Southern Africa expressed in "The Peoples of Southern Africa and their Affinities", by G T Nurse, J S Weiner and T Jenkins, Clarendon Press, 1986. In the view of the authors, the likelihood of a predominantly hybrid population developing in the sub-continent fairly soon is more than remote. ..Jn other words, ethnic and/or social group differentiation is likely to prevail in Southern Africa for a very long time to come.

other ethnic groups in respect of effective access to the society's
scarce resources and the opportunities of life. In such competitive
and potential conflict situations the pay-off for each ethnic group
is largely determined by the political bargaining power of the
group concerned. Thus ethnic conflict involves, in the final instance,
power relationships and power structures. This is why the political
mobilisation of ethnicity is so widely prevalent all over the world.

18. There can be little doubt that competition for wealth and
resources structured along ethnic lines is a serious matter

fraught with potential conflict. In practice power elite groups
("political entrepreneurs") politicise ethnicity precisely because
what is involved is a greater and more effective stake in the ordinary
but basically important processes of economic and political develop-
ment in a country. This Is the very stuff of political conflict. It
is. therefore not surprising that many international authorities agree
that politically mobilised ethnicity currently threatens the stability
and legitimacy of many existing states all over the world. Pertinent
examples are Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Mozambique, Zimbabwe

and South Africa. The plain fact is that in deeply divided plural
societies, ethnicity remains a major legitimising force to be reckoned
with. One international authority goes so far as to state that "though
several newer 'isms' have arisen in the twentieth century, ethnic
nationalism or politicised ethnicity remains the world's major
ideological legitimator and delegitimator of states, regimes and govern
ments. A state's legitimacy depends heavily on the population's per-
ception of the political system as reflecting its ethnic and cultural
identity. Indeed, at the margin of choice today most people would
rather be governed poorly by their own ethnic brethren than well by
aliens, occupiers and colonisers (though they hope, of course, to

7)

avoid such a stark dilemma and be well governed by their own people)"
The ethnicity issue in South Africa

19. It was indicated earlier that in terms of group differentiation
in societies in general race and ethnicity are essentially

7) See Rothschild, op cit., pp 14 - 16

separate social phenomena which can and do vary quite independently of each other. Yet it can happen that the dividing lines between race and ethnicity coincide. This has dccurredin South Africa particularly in respect of Afrikaners differentiating themselves from Black ethnic groups (and from non-Whites generally) in terms of both race and ethnicity. To put It differently, race became the predominant marker of ethnicity and socio-cultural markers such as language, religion and distinctive culture were largely ignored. Hence especially vis-5-vis Blacks (which represent much the largest population group in South Africa) the Afrikaner adopted a very narrow racial definition of ethnicity. In terms of other Whi tes, however, the focus shifted and the non-racial markers of ethnicity (language, religion and culture) were utilised in concert to define the boundaries between Afrikaners and other White ethnic groups.

20. The practical results were predictable: Researchers have found

generally that plural societies using race as the predominant

ethnic marker are characterised by much more rigid segmentation and invidious intergroup relations than plural societies in which soc io-cultural markers prevail, such as is currently the case, for example, in the large majority of countries which are members of the United Nat ions.

21. It is this kind of deeply cleaved situation in South Africa that has led some eminent international authorities to conclude that

the chances of introducing real plural democracy in the country are not promising. Others (notably Prof Arndt Lijphart, who was an expert adviser to the Buthelezi Commission) are more optimistic. Two basic factors underlie this point of view:

the various competing power blocks in the country will have to reach some kind of power sharing compromise in thei r own self-interest. Otherwise the alternative of a hugely destructive civil war must ultimately prevail. This- is a powerful incentive for seeking the fundamental legitimacy which only a plural democracy holds out, a legitimacy without which no political dispensation in South Africa has any chance of surival in the course of time

most Blacks are strongly loyal to their country, South Africa.
This broad national sentiment makes democratic accommodation
with Whites, Coloureds and Indians rather more promising.

Conclusions and suggestions

22. The above analysis of the ethnicity issue in an international

context leads to a number of major conclusions and implications
for democratic constitution making in South Africa. These can be
summarised as follows:

(a) Whatever one's judgment on moral grounds, the dominant role
played by politically mobilised Afrikaner nationalism in the
history of South Africa for very many decades cannot be ignored.
The plain fact is that the currently White dominated political
dispensation in South Africa has come about as a result of
Afrikaner ethnic nationalism. From a pragmatic point of view
there is therefore simply no way in which any future political
dispensation in the country can avoid accommodating this patent
and durable ethnic reality. If simple Black (ANC) majority
rule should somehow come about in South Africa, an objective
analysis of the ethnicity issue in a global context indicates
that a very unstable situation is likely to result in which

the legitimacy of the state would be seriously and continuously
threatened by Afrikaner nationalism. In hard practical terms,
this implies that the police and security forces of the new
Black majority government may well be stretched to the limit,
if not beyond, to control "underground" activities emanating
from White ethnic groups and especially from Afrikaners. In
an African context this kind of situation is roughly reflected
in the problems currently experienced by the Mugabe Government
with the minority Matabele ethnic group in Zimbabwe. It hardly
needs to be pointed out that these problems have nothing to
do with race.

(b) It is, on the other hand, also a fact that many Black leaders,
especially those working for fairly straightforward Black
majority rule, feel strongly that any recognition of Black

ethnicity at the present time would be counterproductive to the
fundamental cause of Black liberation. These leaders would
argue, quite understandably, that ethnic divisions in their
own ranks and the potential conflict inherently contained in
such divisions, would deprive Blacks of their most powerful
political bargaining counter viz. their collective numerical
supremacy over V/hites. Hence in current Black politics a very
low priority Is being given to the ethnicity factor. In
historical terms, inter-ethnic solidarity has certainly proved
to be an effective strategy for decolonisation. It should also
be noted, however, that in most cases such solidarity proved
to be shortlived; after independence ethnic divisions asserted
themselves in no uncertain manner as, for example, in India,
Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

It is clear that whatever kind of constitution is agreed upon
in South Africa, discrimination in public affairs and in public
law on the basis of race, cannot be part of it (except perhaps
during an interm, transitional phase). This basic principle
could create problems for all White ethnic groups but especially
for the Afrikaner who has, as indicated above, historically
defined his ethnicity vis-3-vis Blacks (in the broad sense) in
very narrow racial terms. The only way out of this dilemma
for the Afrikaner, if his strongly politicised ethnic nationalism
is to be accommodated in a plural democracy, is to renounce race
entirely as a marker of ethnicity in lieu of the soc i a 1 elements of
language and culture. In a fundamental sense many Afrikaners
have to rediscover the true cornerstones of their entirely

*

legitimate ethnicity and ethnic aspirations. Such an adjust-
ment may well be difficult to achieve but in a plural democracy
there is no other way. Racial discrimination in any govern-
ment institution will simply have to go. The only ultimate
alternative is the notion of a White (Afrikaner) independent
state where the inhabitants/citizens can do as they please
- subject, of course, to whatever pressures may be brought to
bear on such a state by outsiders disapproving of such a regime.

(d) If public law protection of ethnic groups should be adamantly demanded, for example, by some more conservative members of such groups, this would have to be pursued by focussing on the language and cultural dimensions of ethnicity. Basic human rights do not allow any discrimination on the basis of race or religion. Expert legal opinion canvassed suggests that such an approach would be possible provided that the necessary provision for doing so is contained in a Bill of Rights and entrenched in the constitution of the regional or national

ent i ty concerned.

(e) By and large, however, legitimate means of protecting those dimensions of ethnicity about which particular ethnic groups have strong feelings, will have to be sought mainly in the remedies of private rather than of public law. Privately controlled condominiums, schools, hospitals and recreational facilities, with the right of admission reserved, are typical examples. In general, private law has always acknowledged that people are free to associate with whomever they please, as long as they bear the cost of such exclusivity themselves. Public law, on the other hand, are heavily constrained from discriminating among individuals or groups of people.