

which when individual incidents are aggregated is able to plot the trajectory of trends in the war. It is however far from being a simple "number-crunching" exercise for it involves a detailed sifting of data that provides a rich source of information on what is happening.

Analysis by researchers of the Natal conflict is still in its infancy and all the interpretations of the violence need exploration. The remainder of this paper offers one such minor exploration.

Early signs of the attrition of Inkatha's support base

A key contention in the UDF and Cosatu arguments on the Natal Midlands violence is that Inkatha had considerably less support than it claimed to have in the region. Alternatively, if it had once had support it was in the process of losing it. (The contention is then used to back up the argument that when Inkatha tried to recruit members in 1987 it had to resort to violence. More recently it would see the dramatic attacks of late March this year as an attempt to counter the massive support given to the now unbanned ANC.)

In more normal and democratic society such a contention would have been tested by free elections for various levels of government. Bereft of such opportunities, indications of support for various political groupings have to be gleaned from market and other surveys and from the observations of reporters on attendances at political rallies (this latter method, of dubious accuracy as it is at the best of times, being rendered totally unreliable for most of the post 1986 emergency period because the UDF and Cosatu could not hold rallies).

The evidence of surveys

There have been a number of surveys in recent years in which questions of political affiliation or support have been asked in addition to other questions more directly related to the purpose of the survey (which have often been about support and opposition to disinvestment and sanctions as means of changing South African state policies).-

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What illumination, if any, is shed by surveys and opinion polls on black political tendencies in the Natal Midlands? In a direct way very little because most surveys tend to have their samples located in or heavily weighted towards metropolitan areas. Nationally, surveys tend to reflect tendencies in the Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging complex and if Natal people are sampled, they are usually found in the Durban area. However, indirectly and with obvious qualifications, survey results may show tendencies that have developed in the Natal Midlands as well.

Orkin (1989) in a survey of polls showing the support for the African National Congress, the United Democratic Front, and Inkatha for the period 1982 to 1988 says it is clear that the ANC and UDF are gathering more and more support and that Inkatha is tending towards a level

of
terminal decline as a national political force. However most of these surveys were conducted in
the PWV area and hence will inevitably underestimate support for Inkatha in Natal]. Yet it
is a
important not to underestimate the import of these more national trends and it is quite legitimate to
hypothesize that similar trends were at work in the Natal Midlands over this period.

The negative factor

An important issue, even if the trends reflected in national surveys hold true in the Natal Midlands.
is the base from which Inkatha support rises or falls. A number of the journalistic accounts speak
fairly assuredly of Inkatha having undisputed dominance of the region prior to the rise of the UDF
in 1983. Gwaia (1988a, 1988b, 1988c) though disputing that Inkatha controlled the Edendale area,
makes no clear finding on the wider region.

many Of the Inkatha combatants who are often mature men. A further point is that this material and social deprivation thesis does not explain why some of the most violent areas have been relatively better off materially.

Also, oddly enough, this interpretation contradicts the explanation, essentially a conspiracy theory one, frequently enunciated by Chief M. G. Buthelezi, namely that the violence is the result of an ANC drive, part of its "armed struggle" to render South Africa "ungovernable" and more specifically, to smash Inkatha. Even more odd is Woods' tendency, when pressed, to in fact argue in conspiracy theory mode. This is clearly illustrated in the full transcript of the 'debate' between Aitchison and Woods that was subsequently published in an edited form in Leadership magazine and in the Natal Witness in May this year. Can one conclude from this that Woods does not in fact really believe in the socio-economic material deprivation theory he publicly espouses. Several of Woods' papers are schizophrenic because interwoven with the socio-economic interpretation is indeed a thinly disguised and highly political conspiracy theory as held by Chief Buthelezi. I might add that there is a continuity between the social deprivation thesis (which sees poor people as incapable of understanding their own predicament and dealing with it) and the conspiracy theory of bad outsiders misusing these ignorant people).

The political interpretation

Reconstructing a picture of what happened in Natal through the pinhole lens of the official police unrest report or by listening to the gut wrenching yet often tendentious testimony of a victim or bereaved relative is not a precise scientific activity nor politically neutral. We enter such activity with pre-existing mental constructs and assumptions. Personally, as a "monitor", a documenter of what has happened, the only interpretation of the conflict that makes sense to me as a whole (though necessarily informed by aspects of the other interpretations) is the political one. I do make the assumption that there are discrete "sides" or "parties" and that one can identify sides and that it is meaningful to say for example that there is clear evidence that Inkatha supporters killed 128 people in the Pietermaritzburg area in 1987 and UDF supporters killed 65. It is certainly true that most influential actors in the region also make the assumption that there are clearly identifiable sides (and indeed aggressors). Of course the exact identity of the aggressor varies - for the UDF and Cosatu it is Inkatha, for the Minister of Law and Order it is (or was) "radicals" and for Chief Buthelezi it is the African National Congress and the UDF. Most monitoring and human rights groups identify both Inkatha vigilantes (othelweni) and the UDF comrades (amaqabane) as involved in the violence but tend to place more blame on Inkatha.

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It has perhaps been inevitable that participants in and observers and reporters of the conflict have seen the sides as clearly delineated. Journalists enhance the polarities for effect and servants of the state, whether they be ministers of police or riot police about to go into action, are natural believers in there being a side that is "the enemy".

The evidence for this political or ideological interpretation is multiple, but four points can be noted:

Firstly, invariably the people one has spoken to from the affected areas identify sides and key actors within them (whom they can distinguish from hooligans). This common sense view is shared by both UDF and Inkatha supporters.

Secondly, commentators and witnesses from the Pietermaritzburg region - journalists, clergy men, policemen, witnesses in interdict applications - have testified that political allegiances have been crucial in deciding who should live and die. Whilst some of these accounts have been extremely anecdotal (one thinks particularly of a number of articles by Khaba Mkhize, the editor of the Natal Echo, on the conflict) they have the feel of honest and accurate reflections of reality.

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Interpreting violence:
the struggle to understand the Natal conĩ-\202ict

John Aitchison
Centre for Adult Education, University'ot Natal, Pietermaritzburg

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hĩ-\202roduction

On Monday 2 July 1990 there was a massive stayaway in the major industrial areas of South Africa According to a representative of the South African Chamber of Business who was quoted on SATV that night the stayaway cost the economy about 750 million rands. The action which was called for by Cosatu, the ANC and the UDF, was directed at putting pressure on the business community and through them, the State, to disarm the Inkatha movement of Chief M.G. Buthe lezi (by removing the KwaZulu police from his control and by ensuring non-partisan policing).1 he call for a stayaway, which was turned by its detractors into a test of the ANCâ\200\231s nationwide support, is particularly interesting because it only makes sense if one particular interpretation of the Natal conĩ-\202ict is accepted as being soundly based - namely that the conĩ-\202ict is largely a political one.

In this paper I wish to look at the possible interpretations of the Natal conĩ-\202ict and incidentally in doing so to examine how so-called monitoring of the violence informs these interpretations and validates them.

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I need initially to make the necessary confession of possible bias. As a major propagator of one of the interpretations of the Natal conĩ-\202ict much of what I say needs to be carefully checked for lack of objectivity.

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What has happened in Natal

What has happened in Natal over the last few years has been, both at a superĩ-\201cial journalistic level and in the reports of monitoring groups, well documented. At the very least over 3Â\$00 people have died, several thousand houses have been destroyed, as many as 50 thousand people displaced for varying periods and in many places the school system has virtually ground to a halt.

In the Pietermaritzburg/Natal Midlands region fatalities from what the state has categori

zed as
unrest grew as follows:

1985
1986
1987
1988
1989
1990

12
13
413
691
696
488 (up till the end of April)

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The Durban region has also had heavy casualties. It has been estimated that at least 1150
pe0p1e
have been killed since 1987 to the end of March 1990. About 550 pe0p1e were killed1n 1989
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POLITICAL PARTY OR BODY CAUSING MOST (3001) CHANGE

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SPASEC

DALISU

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F %RF %AF

F %RF %AF

finkatha

ANC

SACC

BPC

PFP

Broederbond

No response

16

14

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58 M

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1.2

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19.4

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54.5
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45 M

Totals

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100

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POLITICAL PARTY ()R BODY CAUSING LEAST (300D CHANGE

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SPASEC

DALISU

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F %RF %AF

Inkatha
ANC
BPC _
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PAC
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SACC
No response

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85.0 M

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Totals

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100

20 100- 100, :

POLITICAL PARTY UR BODY CAUSING MOST/LEAST GOOD CHANGE

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Least
F %AF
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ANC
SACC
BPC
PAC

Inkatha

PF?
Broederbond
NP
NRP

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33.3
21.4 ' ,
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1
2
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10.0
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6.7

16

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2.4

2
2

6.7
6.7

No response

58

Missing 70

Missing

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Thirdly, Catherine Cross, in an unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA) conference in 1988 (Cross, Mtshkulu and Napier, 1988) noted that, in her analysis of letters from readers to the Witness Echo that referred to the violence, a clear majority identified political allegiances as a key factor in the conflict.

Fourthly, there is the question of whose interests are served by accepting or denying the political interpretation. It is a common procedure in assessing the authenticity of variant readings in textual sources (as in Biblical studies and other literary disciplines) to accept the more difficult reading, the one that is not in the apparent interests of later editors, compilers or users of the material. In the context of the Natal violence whose interests are served by denying that political issues play a leading role in the strife? In assessing the Inkatha Institute's position of denying political allegiance as a major factor in the violence one needs to take into account that it could be in the interests of this pro-Inkatha body (but one which is sensitive to the world of academia and overseas contemplators of South Africa politics) to deny that Inkatha (proclaimed as a model of moderation and non-violent peaceful approaches) is involved in horrific and barbaric killings of political opponents. By contrast, though the UDF/Cosatu alliance could derive satisfaction from blaming Inkatha for much violence, their willingness to accept a political source for the violence can be seen as offending both some of the interests and dominant ideological tendencies within the alliance. It is very much in the UDF and Cosatu's interests to deny any involvement in violence (given both their espousal of non-violence and the state's frequent attempts to depict them as violent revolutionaries). Yet they have had to admit that murders have been perpetrated by their members (whatever qualifications about self-defence are made) and the recognition of the importance of ethnic, nationalist and political (as against class and economic) dimensions and sources of the conflict certainly contradicts much of the Marxist and class based rhetoric and analyses that have tended to dominate the UDF and Cosatu speeches and writings. Because it is a "difficult reading" for the UDF and Cosatu it has more of the ring of truth about it than the Inkatha Institute's denial of it.

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The political interpretation is the simplest, the most obvious, and it seems to me, the most convincing. There is, after all, a sound argument for accepting that political explanations of political phenomena are to be preferred if they are available. Accepting the importance of the political interpretation for understanding the conflict does not mean rejecting the obvious multi-causal origins of the conflict. .

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For practical purposes, this means that in monitoring one can and should identify political affiliations. Even the Inkatha Institute now concedes this with its recent attempts to

o compile a list
of Inkatha members killed in the violence.

This does not mean rejecting the influence of criminal activity in the violence, nor the socio-economic factors which fuel it, nor indeed the messiness in any conflict which makes the apportionment of blame a risky undertaking.

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Delving into political causation

If, as I believe it is, the political interpretation of the conflict is the most useful tool for understanding the dynamics of the civil war, the role of monitors of the violence becomes quite crucial, for they can provide the data on which to make judgements on the role of the political actors and predictions on the course of the violence. As far as prediction is concerned only monitoring groups that accept the political interpretation seem to have been convincingly prophetic.

The monitoring project with which I am associated has consistently predicted the . escalation of the conflict, its spread to previously quiet rural areas, and its revival in the areas around Durban. Some of this success is due to the census like approach that we have adopted

A small attitude survey done by Aitchison (1989:) in December 1981 sheds a small circle of light on the question. The 100 black schoolchildren he surveyed had not been readmitted to school in 1981 or earlier (most of them had failed Standard 9 or 8 and there was an acute shortage of places in the schools) but had continued as private candidates studying virtually full time through a university student run teaching scheme (SPASEC) and a KwaZulu registered adult centre (Da Iisu). They were not, at least superficially, particularly radical - 73% of them said that schoolchildren should not take part in politics and 61% said they never discussed politics. Only 20% thought that the school boycotts of recent years had been done for good reasons.

They were asked a number of carefully worded questions about which political parties or groupings they saw as agents of productive change both now and potentially in the future. One of the key questions was phrased thus:

Which of the following organizations and political parties has caused the most change that helps the black people in this country? (You do not have to agree with the organization or political party.) Also mark the organization or political party that has caused the least change that helps black people.

African National Congress (ANC)
 Black Peoples Convention (BPC)
 Broedersbond
 Communist Party (CP)
 Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP)
 Inkatha
 New Republic Party (NRP)
 Pan African Congress (PAC)
 National Party (NP)
 Progressive Federal Party (PFP)
 South African Council of Churches (SACC)

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The intriguing results are shown in the tables on the next page.

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They show that relatively few respondents had clear political preferences (though of course the few responses may be conditioned by caution about revealing their political alignment), with Inkatha slightly ahead of the ANC in the popularity stakes but overwhelmingly down in the unpopularity listing.

If one groups the parties mentioned into the following crude categories : black radical, black moderate and white, one sees the radicals as the most popular grouping.

The following tentative conclusions can be derived from these statistics:

Among such extruded students the loudest voice is a radical one (57% of those who responded) and Inkatha comes only second in support (38%) but has an even larger negative vote against it

(60% of those who responded). Given that Inkatha had had 6 years of freedom to organise in the area and that radicals had experienced heavy repression since 1976, radical support is impressive. In terms of future prospects the real bad news for Inkatha was the negative vote. A lot of people did not like it. By contrast very few people actively disliked the radicals.

In retrospect the configurations of the forces involved in the conflict of 1987 can be perceived to be in formation. Inkatha is powerful but not all that powerful and the radicals are presented with the opportunity to mobilize an even more powerful antagonistic tendency. Within the radicals the ANC tendency is numerically stronger than the Black Consciousness/Africanist one and explains the dominance that the UDF came to exercise in the region.

When one considers that the militants in the conflict in 1987 and 1988, particularly on the UDF side, were often such extruded students - young, unemployed and yet with big aspirations - the answers given to this survey are suggestive of what was to come.

Also interesting is the extent to which "black" political groupings are central. In spite of the de facto reality that it was the National Party that was responsible for most change/regression at the time, it is not central to their political perceptions. Hence that the perceived enemy might be taken to be another "black" political grouping rather than the white government was also a tendency that would come into its own with deadly effect in 1987.

Notes

1. The rationale for emergency detention was that it halted violence. If one takes this rationale at

face value it explains why UDF supporting comrades (some 734 of them) were detained in Pietermaritzburg in 1987. UDF supporters had killed, according to my records, at least 65 people. But the same records listed 128 people killed by Inkatha supporters. Yet not a single Inkatha person was detained!

In 1988 a similar situation prevailed with at least 460 anti-Inkatha people detained from January to June whilst only 21 Inkatha people were detained and then most of them very briefly.

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Another aspect of the collusion between the security forces and Inkatha is shown by the police â\200\230 and armyâ\200\2315 tolerance of large meetings and rallies held by Inkatha which were clearly illegal¹¹¹ terms of the Emergency regulations.

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2. Woods should read Butler and Stokesâ\200\231 magisterial work Political Change in Britain: the

evolution of electoral choice. They describe surveys of the British electorate (probably the best read in the world) showing that a majority in 1962 could not name any figure in either party other than the party leaders themselves. Many respondents in 1963 could not identify Harold Macmillan after he had been Prime Minister for seven years. Two thirds of Americans do not know that members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years

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Recently the Association of Democratic Journalists have produced a useful report on the misreporting of the Natal conflict.

However there is a certain substratum of truth in the black-on-black violence argument that has to be excavated and addressed. Although it is clear that South Africa is a very violent society as a whole, there are amazingly high levels of personal violence in black communities (seen particularly in murders, stabbings, assaults and rapes). In the Pietermaritzburg area there were already over 300 murders per annum before the "unrest" began. One obvious explanation is that policing has been so politicised, undermanned and ineffective that violent behaviour has been allowed to reign almost unchallenged. Justice, of a rough and ready sort, has had to be achieved personally (and inevitably violently). Moreover, psychological explanations that can trace their lineage back to Franz Fanon, can see enormous amounts of anger and aggression being turned inward against more immediately accessible enemies. This tendency is also enhanced by the realities of a group areas segregated society. For great numbers of unemployed people and youth, white society is over a horizon.

In Natal there is also the genuine existence of the so-called faction fighting. There have been a number of studies of faction fighting, the type locality of which is the Msinga area in the centre of Natal. There an impoverished set of clans battle for scarce resources in a seemingly unending chain of blood feuds. But faction fights of this tribal type (more correctly of a tribal society in disintegration) are characteristic of the more traditional rural areas. In mid 1989 it became clear that the Inkatha/UDF conflict was spreading to rural areas (Aitchison, 1989b) and some of the violence in these areas is now what I would describe as a mixture of faction fighting and political violence. But it seems clear to me that whilst the essentially modern political conflict is beginning to ingest or overlay such faction fighting, the two can be clearly distinguished. This can be seen in two particular areas near Pietermaritzburg, Table Mountain (Maqongqo) and Richmond. In Table Mountain, the Inkatha supporting tn'be (the amaNyavu) that has attacked the community led by Contralesa leader Chief Mhlabunzima Maphumulo claim the pretext of an old land dispute. In Richmond, faction fighting is taking on the lineaments of a comrades versus the old guard conflict.

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The socio-economic interpretation

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In March 1989 the head of the KwaZulu police, Jac Buchner, previously better known for his expertise on the ANC's total onslaught against the Republic said that he remained firmly convinced that only long-term socio-economic upgrading of the area and the declaration by the community that they had had enough would bring the politically motivated violence to an end. In seeing socio-economic conditions as a primary causative factor he thus allied himself with the view avidly propagated by the Inkatha Institute, whose executive director, Gavin Woods, has

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produced a number of papers on the subject.

One of his major treatments of the Inkatha Institute's conclusions is found in A position paper
071 research findings into black township violence in Natal/KwaZulu. In this document, after
some preliminary sniping at the media and political opportunists for persuading the public that the
conflict is an ideological struggle for supremacy and extolling the effective "methodological
techniques employed by its multi-disciplinary research teams" (which are nowhere described in
detail) Woods presents the following argument on the causes-of the violence.

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Firstly, he Claims that 90% of all types of township violence are perpetrated by youths aged 15 to
24 who are deeply angry and frustrated at their lives, insecure because alienated and anxious due
to the absence of a future purpose, that is. they are latently aggressive. These negative emotions
are instilled by poverty and destitution. He claims also that it "is a universal phenomenon that
severe poverty radicalises and in so doing breeds anger and aggression". The fact that this
is proven by the fact that
lies cheek by jowl with affluence gives impetus to the anger and dissatisfaction. Unemployment,
inadequate education and no opportunities increase insecurity, frustration and purposelessness and

The validity of this interpretation of the Natal conflict as part of the "armed struggle" is dubious in the extreme, not because one denies that there was a clear political contestation between UDF and Inkatha, but because there is very little empirical evidence to suggest that there was much "armed struggle" against Inkatha. In more than three thousand incidents documented by myself in the Natal Midlands over the last three and a half years fewer than five clearly involve Umkhonto we Sizwe combatants and only a couple of these involve attacks on Inkatha rather than on the South African Police.

A weaker form of the conspiracy theory is however more plausible, namely that the violence in Natal was part of a general surge of rebellion by UDF supporters (and certainly claimed by the ANC in exile) against government structures in black townships. It must be conceded that there were stirrings of such a revolt in Natal. It is also plausible that Inkatha supporters in the various township bodies they controlled would be extremely worried that they might be targeted for the treatment that such people had received in the rest of South Africa.

However, whatever its partial truth, this form of the conspiracy theory is weakened by the curious picture that the Natal Midlands makes when compared to the rest of South Africa when one looks at the escalation of violence and the impact of State measures against it.

The unrest death statistics for South Africa as a whole from 1985 to 1990 show clearly that there was an escalation of violence and associated fatalities (victims both of revolutionary and state violence) from 1985 to 1986. The State response of the regional 1985 emergency declaration and the national emergency in 1986 certainly had the effect of drastically reducing the deaths.

The situation in Natal Midlands was very different. Deaths from unrest were minimal throughout this period and the violence only escalated in 1987 (and more particularly from September 1987). Here the emergency measures did not seem to work to reduce fatalities and the consistent trend since September 1987 has been upward. . a

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One conclusion is that the violence in Natal is chronologically a clearly separate wave from the ungovernability revolt in the rest of South Africa and the violence has responded in a completely

different way to State emergency restrictions. This calls into considerable doubt the idea of a

radical conspiracy causing the violence.

The black-on-black violence interpretation

The idea that the violence is the result of blacks being blacks has a powerful hold on the white South African (and white European and American) imagination. When allied to an aggregation of stereotypes about the Zulus it becomes potent indeed.

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This interpretation is fueled by two forces, racist attitudes, and intellectual and journalistic laziness. Its propagation has been solidly in the interests of the State because it gave the government little by way of bad publicity and it masked the existence of a massive civil war in Natal] at the height of an otherwise supposedly effective emergency.

Racist attitudes and ethnic stereotypes grow from a variety of sources. One example is the Jim of .iotâ\200\230k of the Bushwldt who looms large in the subconscious of most white English speaking South African children. Volatile, always in a i-\201ght, whacking lesser breeds like Shangaans (for contemporary purposes interpolate Xhosas and Indians), and generally a fine robust fellow, but regrettably rather unreliable and hence not to be trusted with real power.

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More generally the South African and international press i-\201nd it much easier to note a black on black killing than to explore the social, political and regional complexities that underlie VIOiCnCC.

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The interpretations

There are four common ways of looking at the violence:

1. Conspiracy theory
2. Black-on-black violence (racial/ethnic causation)
3. Socio-economic deprivation
4. Political conflict

The conspiracy theory (the "ungovernability" interpretation)

The fact that the term unrest is available points to the existence of one major interpretation, the State's allegation of there being a radical "ungovernability" conspiracy in Natal.

In fact this interpretation was not at first (in late 1987 when the deaths began to rise dramatically) particularly forcefully presented. Police spokesmen tended to deny that there was a real problem in the Natal townships and the Police Unrest Report underreported killings. The refusal of the Minister of Law and Order to provide statistics for deaths and injuries in 1987 (Natal Witness 9 April 1988) is indicative of this attitude of denial, enhanced by too ready claims (in mid 1988) that peace had been restored.

State allegations that there was a political conspiracy tended in fact to follow on the heels of the growing chorus of complainers from 'Cosatu, the UDF and monitoring groups who alleged that the state was colluding with Inkatha (particularly through its totally one-sided use of emergency detention [1]).

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This collusion was in effect officially blessed when the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, said at a police ceremony in Pietermaritzburg on 26 February 1988 that "the Police intend to face the future with moderates and fight against radical groups. Radicals, who are trying to destroy South Africa, will not be tolerated. We will fight them. We have put our foot in that direction, and

" we will eventually win the Pietermaritzburg area." (Natal Witness 27 February 1988).

He reiterated this approach with his "iron fist" speech in Parliament in April 1989.

This interpretation fitted in with the State's analysis of the revolt against government sponsored township structures in the mid eighties, was congruent with the belief in a total onslaught against the Republic and has, of necessity, begun to be shelved of late. Whilst from the UDF/Cosatu/ANC perspective, Minister Vlok's attitudes and actions still leave much to be desired, his more recent public utterances do not in fact push this kind of interpretation.

It is, however, a potent article of faith for many Inkatha writers and is often used by Chief Buthelezi himself (a good example of which is his answering affidavit in the interdiction application brought against Inkatha in relation to attacks on Ashdown location in Pietermaritzburg on 31 January 1988).

A more recent example can be seen in South African Update (Vol 2 No 7, 1 April - 22 April 30 April 1990, p. 8) which talks of the UDF identifying Inkatha as part of the enemy. "Inkatha is undoubtedly correct in believing that the ANC/UDF sought to destroy it. particularly from 1984 on when the people's war" started in earnest. All collaborators and agents of the system" became targets in an attempt to render the townships ungovernable, and Inkatha was the prime target. Despite ANC/UDF statements suggesting it is no longer policy, many Inkatha supporters question whether the people's war has in fact stopped -"

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youth have time on their hands to kill. Lack of political rights means there are no ways of changing the situation. On top of this, overcrowding causes more tension and conflict. The family structure has been broken down by apartheid and traditional authority structures, whether connected to respect for the older generation or to tribal hierarchies, have had their power eroded. These alienated and aggressive youths then gravitate towards group formation where they take on a group identity and purpose, often of a gang or criminal type.

Secondly, he claims that up to 50% of the violence deaths are gangster or crime related and many criminals operate using the name of a political body.

Thirdly, the above mentioned youths, subconsciously looking for an outlet for their pent up aggression and frustration, easily get caught up in mob violence. The irrationality of much of the violence cannot be sufficiently explained as a simple clash of political ideologies.

Fourthly, individuals "playing any one of a number of agendas and who use an issue that is sensitive to the community" instigate action and mobilisation for reasons of territorial or personal power, revenge, punishment or political subversion. They may offer material rewards or drugs to those they recruit to the purposes. Both criminal and political instigators capitalise on the predisposition to aggression among the youth.

Fifthly, Woods draws a profile of the youth combatants that summarises the previous points:

1. Scant formal or ideological connection with the established UDF and Inkatha movements.
2. No vision for a future South Africa. They are not consciously fighting for Black liberation or for any other political aspiration.[2]

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3. Material gain is an incentive to getting involved in violence.

4. They get enjoyment out of what they are doing; They enjoy the power and the camaraderie of

being in a group and the meaning that their lives gain from the group's activities.

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5. Almost all of their activities are either in response to serious issues that someone outside of

their group had advised them on, or are a reaction to something bad that some other person or group has done, ie. retribution.

6. They feel a compulsion to be destructive.

If one accepts this explanation at face value and assumes the data and statements to be accurate

then one can only conclude that it does explain the violence, but its explanation is so complete that it explains everything and therefore nothing. (I must also confess that in Woods's near equation of being extremely poor and rootless with not being really human extremely revealing.)

The depiction of the alienated, frustrated, angry black youth in desolate material and social surroundings is surely common cause. Nobody in their right mind would dispute that poverty and the destructive effects that apartheid have caused have an influence on the violence. Further, if seen within the broader context of social and economic change within South Africa and the collapse of the remnants of traditional society, the socio-economic deprivation thesis illuminates many aspects of the violence.

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What it does not explain is 'Why Pietermaritzburg?', 'Why Natal?', and 'Why has the state been unable to stop the conflict?'. The 'When' is also an important question that is not explained. However one does not have to accept the empirical validity of the data Woods presents. Whilst a many of the combatants are indeed such youths, many are not. Whilst the profile may well illuminate the psychology of the more humble UDF comrade, it throws very little light at all on