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Draft: Comments would be appreciated

# THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Note: This document is meant to be an introduction to the political and administrative structures in South Africa

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On Friday 31 January 1986 Mr. P.w. Botha opened the parliament of South Africa arguing that he was to take "far reaching steps" in the "next few months" to carry out his reform plans. Of course, these "far reaching steps" proved to be the declaration of a national state of emergency in June 1986, the widespread detention of community leaders and activists, the declaration of the United Democratic Front as an 'affected organisation', a massive clampdown on the flow of information, and much EDIE. Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee attempted to explain the detentions and repression by arguing that

In any country, where you have a situation of reform, where the country is in a transition, then it's possible that a government may have to make inroads into the liberties of individuals in order to ensure the success of reform (Natal Mercury, 16 December 1986).

The Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning Chris Heunis had earlier argued in a similar vein when suggesting that "XXXXXXXXXXXXX". Implicit in these conceptualisations is a belief that a small group of (usually communist inspired) agitators were orchestrating a total onslaught in order to seize power while things were in a state of flux. Interestingly, Government supporters have developed an interpretation of total onslaught in the political, and not just military, context as well. This views only status quo politics as democratic; In a recent interview; for example, the Deputy Minister of Information, Mr van der Merwe, took great pains to argue that the democratic forces in South Africa were those who participated in the government-created structures and all other groups were undemocratic. Branding particularly extra-parliamentary forces such as the United Democratic Front as undemocratic, the government has attempted to convince observers that the existing political structures offered opportunities within which effective negotiations about power-sharing can occur. However, it is important to bear in mind that particularly all of the recently created political structures have been rejected by the majority of South Africans on the basis that these structures were not just undemocratic, but anti-democratic, and that they could not deliver any material benefits to the vast majority of South Africans. The massive boycott of the Tricameral Parliament and the campaigns against Black Local Authorities provide such cases in point.

The creation of 'new' political structures has occurred over at least the last decade. This paper attempts to introduce the variety of new political and administrative structures to the uninitiated in a way that the underlying philosophy and practice of the Botha government may be better understood. The first section reviews very briefly some aspects of the legitimacy crisis in South Africa and suggests some of the problems the National Party legislation has tried to address. The second section describes the political and administrative structures which have been developed by the Botha government. The final section identifies some of the general and specific criticisms which have been directed against this legislation. Any constructive comments on the paper would be gratefully accepted.

#### THE CONTEXT FOR THE EMERGENCE OF BOTHA'S APARTHEID

Very few analysts have identified the broader material circumstances within South Africa which have provided the direct pre-conditions for the protest 'actions over the past decade. Of course, such analyses would need to locate post-1976 'unrest' within the political economy of South Africa. The community council system introduced in 1978, the role of the security forces, the government's political reforms, and the emergence of black extra-parliamentary political organisations are central aspects, for example, in understanding the origins of black protest action in South Africa. 'Economic' factors have also played an important part in reducing the ability of the state to manage the crisis and in promoting black protest action given the desperate conditions under which the masses live and work. In particular, the growing costs of Verwoerdian apartheid, when coupled with the post-1980 recession and the loss of investor confidence, have provided severe constraints on the options available to the apartheid government.

What is of some significance is the form that black protest action has assumed. On the whole, black opposition to the state and capital has been issue-based, relatively localised and focussed on three aspects of reproduction -- housing, transport and education -- and within the progressive trades unions. Over the post-1980 period, for example, transport boycotts, struggles over rent and housing, education boycotts and labour action particularly in the manufacturing sector, have increased dramatically. These struggles are directly linked to the deterioration in life circumstances (living conditions, transport, educational and employment opportunities) for blacks. By contrast, and in part as a consequence of capital's and the state's repression of these struggles, black protest action has recently become more 'mass-based'.

Notwithstanding the state of emergency, consumer stayaways and funerals have emerged as important rallying points for black mobilisation.

Whilst one may argue about how serious the present legitimacy and credibility crisis is for the South African government, there is considerable agreement by analysts that the 'unrest' has not substantially diminished and that the calls for a new order in South Africa are more widespread than ever. Even though in the eyes of black South Africans the white government has always been illegitimate, protest action over the past ten years has highlighted the fact that the legitimacy crisis operates at all political levels in all regions of South Africa.

Moreover, with this lack of legitimacy is coupled with the international

condemnation of colonialism, racism, and undemocratic governments, one realises why the white minority government of South Africa has been forced to establish new bases of legitimacy.

The shift by the South African government away from what has been called Verwoerdian apartheid began in the aftermath of the 1976 struggles. Just as the earlier forms of apartheid took a decade to crystallise, so too have the Botha 'reforms' taken a considerable period of time to materialise and their underlying strategy clarified. The next section details the major political and administrative structures developed in the economic, political and security arenas.

#### THE NEW POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

##### EXISTING PROBLEMS

The Botha government was forced to recognise three problems which had to be solved and around which the new structures were to be built. Firstly, the government faced the problem of providing effective and legitimate governmental structures for black South Africans. By 1984, for example, it became patently obvious to the government that most South Africans and the international community rejected the bantustan system. At the same time it became clear that these bodies, given their restricted resources, could never become the 'separate' and 'independent' countries required under the Verwoerdian philosophy.

Moreover, non-bantustan blacks rejected the local government structures created for them through the Black Local Authorities Act. In terms of these regulations, black Community Councillors were to be elected onto Community Councils which would have limited local government powers. Elections held were widely boycotted, and in many areas of the country those councillors who were elected have either been forced to resign or have been assassinated. At the same time, the Government refused to accede to requests for power-sharing with blacks at a national level. A second problem faced by the Government arose out of the demands made by particularly urban blacks. Calls for increased state expenditure on housing, transport, education, welfare and the like, increased at an exponential rate during the 1970s and 1980s. Given the scale of this problem the Government had to find ways of reducing its responsibility for particularly welfare services, in addition to finding new sources of funding for these services.

Finally, the Government felt compelled to ensure stability not only through repression, but through attempting to win the "hearts and minds of the people". The increasing use of state media for the purpose of conveying a positive image of the reform process is noticeable. In addition, one could argue that the numerous controls imposed by the government on information dissemination are another means of achieving this aim.

#### THE STRATEGY ADOPTED

The Botha government adopted the view that the reform package must involve a 'total approach' whereby the strategies adopted in the economic, political and security sectors were to be properly coordinated. This is consistent with the government's analysis that there is a 'total onslaught' against South Africa as a whole, and not, as most South Africans see it, against simply the government. Government members have therefore argued that a similar strategy to that used by the 'enemy' should be adopted. As will be indicated in the next sub-section, what this has meant is the creation of committees within each sector at the same spatial scale, so as to have a common framework within which the economic, political and security situation could be planned and effective responses to problems developed.

In addition to this rationalisation of the activities carried out within the various sectors, the government saw an opportunity for the further rationalisation of functions through the twin policies of regionalisation and privatisation. Regionalisation refers to the decentralisation of certain functions from the central state to lower tiers. For example, whereas traditionally the provision of transport subsidies has been decided upon and implemented at a national level, recommendations have been made to regionalise such subsidies so that regional governments would both decide on whether or not to have such subsidies and would also have to find the monies to pay for such services. Privatisation, on the other hand, refers to the government giving up the responsibility of providing certain services and/or benefits. These services would in future be provided by the private sector (on a profit-making basis), or the relevant state departments would operate on a 'fee-for-service' basis in order to eliminate any state subsidy.

Not only were these principles to be used in reforming the political and administrative structures of South Africa, but there was an increasing recognition of the need to ensure that government appeared 'multi-racial'. Given the very strong anti-National Party government feelings of the majority of South Africans, and the potential embarrassment of low (or zero) election polls, it was decided that black officials would be co-opted onto at least most of the economic and political committees.

#### THE NEW STRUCTURES

The broad principles described above were used in the development of the 'new' structures of government in non-bantustan areas of South Africa. Basically, the structures operate in three arenas: economic, political and security. The government recognised the need for a set of economic structures to manage the economic development of South Africa. This necessity arose out of a perceived need for both 'balanced growth' and the provision of employment opportunities in all areas of South Africa, particularly the non-metropolitan areas. In addition, the political structures were supposed to reflect a more multi-racial government. At the same time, however, and particularly given the anti-government feelings of the majority of South Africans, the need for a streamlined government machinery to co-ordinate political and security action was recognised. Thus emerged a security structure known as the National Security

Management System (NSMS).

Importantly, the new political and administrative structures are organised in terms of a spatial hierarchy and contain within them a mix of democratically elected committees and appointed committees. With regard to the former, each sector (economic, political and security) contains national, regional and local committees. At the same time, although most of the committees consist of nominated officials, because some of the political committees are elected bodies, there is a semblance of democratic procedure operating.

The various levels of government and appropriate committees are as follows:

#### STRUCTURES

SPATIAL SCALE ECONOMIC POLITICAL SECURITY

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NATIONAL President

E.A.C. Cabinet S.S.C

Committees SSC Working

Tricameral

President's Council

REGIONAL R.D.A.C. Executive Committee JMC

R.S.C. Sub-JMC

LOCAL R.D.A. Local Authorities Mini-JMC

#### 1. Economic Structures

The Economic Advisory Council (EAC) consists of businessmen nominated by the President. While the EAC develops broad economic policy, for administrative purposes and the development of economic strategy, the country has been divided into eight development regions. These regions do not conform to existing bantustan and provincial boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Each region has a 'node' of development (metropolitan area or large town) and a development policy for each region focusses on certain development priorities (the need for employment creation, need for a higher standard of living, and the potential of a region to develop). Substantial emphasis is placed on industrial development and incentives are given to new enterprises locating within regions according to how depressed each region is.

Regional Development Advisory Committees (RDACs) have been established within each region to assist in the process of regional development. The members of the RDAC are not elected, but are supposed to represent 'interested parties'. The RDAC looks at the creation of growth points and economic strategy as it pertains to their region.

## 2. Political Structures

The Tricameral Parliament is the national governing body for South Africa. It consists of three Houses of Parliament, one for each of the three minority race groups: whites (House of Assembly), coloureds (House of Representatives) and asians (House of Delegates). The representatives for each house are elected in the ratio of 4 white to 2 coloured to 1 indian politicians. As all the important nominations, and most powerful executive bodies, follow from this ratio it means that whites retain effective control. For example, the President is elected by an electoral college consisting of representatives from the majority parties in each house, using the ratio 4:2:1. This means that the majority party in the white House of Assembly will always decide who the President is.

Legislation is divided into Own and General Affairs, although there is still considerable confusion over this distinction. While the parliament is supposed to be consensus oriented, disputes are referred to the President's Council, which is also structured in favour of the dominant white party.

Because of protests about the exclusion of blacks from national South African government, Mr. P.W. Botha recommended the creation of the National Statutory Council (NSC) to discuss constitutional proposals. This body is to consist of members, nominated by the President, of the government, the 'self-governing' bantustans, and other black 'leaders'. The NSC has been rejected by most blacks, including many presently working within the bantustan structures.

The Provincial Councils and Provincial Executive Committees have been replaced by the Regional Executive Committees (RECs). These RECs consist of varying numbers of people, all nominated by the President, and include an Administrator who heads up the REC. The RECs are at present multiracial in composition although it must be noted that: (a) the National Party dominates all RECs, and (b) the coloured, black and asian people who are found on the RECs are in no ways considered by their respective communities as representative leaders.

The Regional Services Councils (RSCs) have been set up as explicitly political entities whose main objectives will be to: (i) allocate services and infrastructure to 'disadvantaged' parts of metropolitan areas; and (ii) introduce 'multiracial' local government onto the South African scene. Representatives on the RSCs will be nominated by local authorities and 'representative bodies'. The 'representative bodies' have been defined to take into account the situation in most black areas in non-bantustan South Africa where there is no properly constituted representative body. Each member on the RSC will not have the same voting power. Instead the allocation of votes on the RSC's is to be determined according to the consumption of services in each constituent region of the RSC. This will have the effect of entrenching white domination. Moreover, there is some evidence that the RSC's will not have the resources to 'deliver the goods' on any reasonable scale.

The Local Authorities (LAs) are areas defined according to racial Group Areas. The government is in the process of encouraging the creation of LAs