[1]CHIEFTAINCY, The Ethnic Question and the Democratisation Process in South Africa

by
Zola S. T.Skweyiya

INTRODUCTION

The present negotiation process in South Africa and the imminence of a democratic constitutional order have engendered the need to revisit all the existing institutions in our society, both traditional and modern.Consequently, no traditional institution has received so much attention, since the beginning of the negotiations process, as chieftaincy. The clamour for a role for chiefs in the negotiation's process has not only been heard from those circles usually associated with the apartheid system especially the Bantustans, but also from the anti-apartheid forces particularly the Congress of Traditional leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) and even from most of the ANC's rural regions.

If we are to achieve our main objective - the participation of all sectors of the population in the democratization of South Africa, it seems that we have to pay more attention to the role this institution plays in traditional African society today, and examine how it can contribute to our main goal, the democratic transformation of South Africa.

As the transformation process proceeds , democrats find the way forward fraught with a plethora of difficulties and impediments, ranging from historical to socio-economic factors. As all the existing institutions including chieftaincy are predicated upon these historical and socio-economic factors, it is imperative that we should examine the former in the context of the latter with a view to ascertain ways and means of harmonising them with our goal of democratisation. Obstacles which history has heaped on our road to democracy will only be surmounted if their nature is studied and understood, both in the context of their historical development and their current existence. It then becomes important to study them and ensure that they are overcome or utilized towards reaching the ultimate goal of democracy.

We have never been under any illusion that the way to democracy would be smooth and without any difficulties. As we prod our way forward, trying to find solutions to the difficult task of creating viable, stable and progressive structures and institutions for the nascent democracy, we are faced with the problems that the present existing structures and institutions are incompatible with the democracy and economic development we are trying to entrench into our society. Unfortunately chieftaincy is one of those institutions that have been misused by colonialism and apartheid and has thus become tainted and suspect in the eyes of many Africans.

Despite this scepticism towards the institution, in our search for a way forward, we should not be blind and insensitive to the influence and authority the institution still wields today amongst millions of Africans both in urban and rural areas. As such in our choice of structures and institutions we should find ways and means of making it amenable to democracy by cleansing it of all the undemocratic attributes that were imparted to it both by colonialism and apartheid. This will, in

the final analysis, imbue the institution with the necessary legitimacy in the eyes of the oppressed, with the result that political participation will extend to them especially at grassroots level. Their effective participation will serve to ensure the maximization of the distribution process of all the fruits of economic development. Such an approach would not be unique to South Africa. Experience in independent Africa has demonstrated that traditional factors constituted major factors that vitally affected the development of nationalism. Thus in the design of constitutional structures, especially at local level, many African states have found a role for traditional leaders. This is a factor that might need more consideration in South Africa as we proceed forward towards the restructuring of society and the creation of a new bureaucratic apparatus suitable for development.

As we proceed forward towards entrenching democracy on South African soil and consolidating power, we might find the institution vital, especially in the rural areas, in determining the basic framework and institutions of the new state structures. As such, we should re-examine our approach to the institution. The concerns that have been raised within the anti-apartheid democratic movement in South Africa deserve a deeper understanding of the question. As [2]Horowitz rightly points out:-

> "There is a wealth of knowledge on the characteristics of both democratic and authoritarian regimes, even on the source of the regime breakdown. But building the regime, the process, the institutions and the connections between them, is the most uncertain part of an uncertain science."

It is this uncertainty that has been the driving force behind the choice of unsuitable structures and institutions by many African countries in their attempts to consolidate power. A deeper understanding of the institution might instill confidence and assist in charting a novel course for South Africa and defuse the impression that we are being dragged by events.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CHIEFTANCY

The history of colonialism and apartheid is presently so well documented that it leaves us to make only a synopsis of its salient features and in the process emphasize its impact on the indigenous social formations. We hope that such an historical synopsis would go a long way towards evaluating the role the institution of chieftaincy could play not only in the democratization process but also what impact it will have on developmental policies beyond the negotiations process.

Throughout Africa the colonial state invaded and endeavoured to destroy the pre-existing traditional modes of production that then prevailed in those countries. The indigenous producer had to be divorced from his means of production so as to compel him to offer himself to capital for his subsistence. In this process the way of life of the indigenous people disintegrated as the capitalistic mode of production made more inroads into the traditional mode of production.

Concomitant with the penetration of this capitalist mode of production and the imposition of its values upon the indigenous societies, the social base underpinning the traditional institutions, such as chiefs started to erode. As the colonialists could not successfully destroy the ethos of the African society and the institutions epitomizing it, resorted to the strategy of moulding and tailoring these institutions in order to serve objectives commensurate with its colonial 'mission'. Using the authority of the chiefs in almost all colonial countries, especially in Africa, colonialism sought to

establish among the people it governed, its sense of legitimacy as well as to demonstrate the force of its power. It was through the chiefs that the colonial authorities sought to instill in the local people a belief that they should obey because in some way obedience was morally right: The state had a right to demand that citizens complied with its policies, and people were forced to follow the colonial government's edicts without a studied analysis of the possible implications thereof.

According to Markowitz in pre-colonial traditional Africa, a sense of legitimacy accrued to chiefs because their positions in society required an exchange of services and obligations in return for taxes and duties extracted from the citizens. In addition the power of traditional authorities was limited by institutional restraints as well as by a convention in customs. Remedies were available for violation of these restraints and in fact were exercised.

[3]Claude Ake points out that traditional African political systems were infused with democratic values. They were invariably patrimonial and consciousness was communal, everything was everybody's business, engendering a strong emphasis on participation. Standards of accountability were even stricter than in Western societies. Chiefs were answerable not only for their own actions, but for national catastrophes, such as famine, epidemics, floods and drought. In the event of such disasters, chiefs could be required to go into exile or ' asked to die'.

Under colonialism a paradoxical situation occurred: traditional rulers were incorporated into the over-arching political structure. Many chiefs were reduced to mere auxiliaries. At the same time, the removal of all customary restraints by an often unknown superior administration thrust absolute power into the hands of the traditional rulers vis-a-vis their subjects. Now the chief could command without fear of popular retaliation, backed up as he was by the troops and police, as well as by fines and other economic sanctions of the Europeans, i.e. of colonialism.

As long as the chiefs met their quotas of conscripted labour and collected the required taxes in money and in kind, the colonial authorities did not overly concern themselves with the methods used or with the possibility that an unauthorised portion of the taxes might be pocketed by the chiefs. As a result chieftaincy in many areas of Africa and the Third World became an empty shell, all powerful on the outside but devoid of legitimacy. In spite of that, chieftaincy continued to constitute, as it did during the pre-colonial period, a privileged social class. Instead of exploiting the peasant masses for its own account, it was reduced to the role of an instrument in the exploitation process, with the right of collecting a few crumbs along the way. Its integration into the colonial system was accomplished in this manner but the methods of exploitation remained the same.[4]

In South Africa before the entrenchment of colonialism, the society had long passed the stage, of being a mixture of simple agricultural self-sufficiency or kinship based political organisation. It had undergone profound social transformation into a more complex social formation based on agriculture and pastoralism and on relatively simple technology. Production was characterised by the absence of private property - though each homestead had stable usufruct rights over the land allocated to it for cultivation by the chief - and by the division of labour, both between the sexes and between chiefs and commoners.

Through their overall control of village production, as well as of bride wealth, chiefs ensured the continuity of social and economic life. They made the major decisions regarding the plant-

ing, havesting and consumption. Kinship underpinned the relations of production and repro-
duction and provided the legitimating ideology; the chief was seen as "father of the people"
and was responsible, at least in principle, for ensuring the redistribution of surplus to the old
and weak[5].

EROSION OF CHIEFS' LEGITIMACY

With the advent of colonialism, the loss of important land assets and the centralisation of the ruling
house of the chieftainship, the balance of power within the social formation swung decisively
against the direct producer in favour of the chiefs. But this was not the only struggle going on.
Through the intervention of the colonial state apparatuses, the political, legal and economic
institutions which structured and reproduced the dominant chiefly enterprise were altered and
weakened. Control, for example, over the conditions of penetration of merchant and industrial
capital into the social formation were subsumed under the colonial administration. The institution
of parallel colonial courts and colonial law weakened the practice of customary legal structures.
The colonial state made the chiefs responsible for the collection and payment of the annual hut tax
and other taxes.[5]

Sovereignty over the land was transferred from the chiefs to the colonial government. The
ascendancy of the chiefs had in fact been diminished to authority only in allocation and distribution
of land. The function of trustee in the law of sovereignty, previously cherished by the chiefs, passed
on to the colonial administration. The chiefs were thus no longer chiefs in the traditional sense
as holders of land but were regarded as agents of the colonial administration. They became
government appointees, charged with implementing government policy and paid a salary.
Under apartheid and especially after the passing of the Bantu Authorities Act a system of
administration which linked the central state with its regional representatives was put in place. The
political recognition of the deformed chieftaincy in the reserves was now brought in line with the
maintenance of the contorted system of communal land. The chieftaincy, wrecked by colonial
penetration and the concomitant capitalist industrialization, was now to be placed in charge of local
administration. Their function as agents of social control long accommodated by previous Union
governments was now institutionalized in policy by the apartheid state. Besides the racism, writes
Hendricks;[7]
"Inherent in the political segmentation of blacks and whites, the Bantu authorities Act was to chain
the African consciousness to fictitious tribalism by romanticising the African homelands."
Superficially, the new policy was envisaged to entangle the remnants of the chieftaincy to the system
of social control by enlisting them in the arduous task of local policing.

The institution of chieftancy from then on was abused and corrupted by the state for the promotion
of its own interests. But a significant number of the rural population remained loyal to the
institution, hence the call for the restructuring and the redefining of its role in the future. Up to today
chieftainship remains one of those institutions that continued to be used by the indigenous African
people, notwithstanding its official marginalisation and corruption by the apartheid state.

According to Fritzpatrick,[8] a power usually operates in two broad modes in relation to counter-
power; that of inclusion and that exclusion . It includes counter power by desegregating and
appropriating eléments of it, transforming them in terms of its power. Once the counter-power

becomes transformed in terms of the power, it ceases to be autonomous but becomes part of the power itself. It is through the prism of this assertion that the transformation of chiefs in South Africa into organs and servants of the state can be understood.

The traditional law and justice that hitherto mirrored the norms and values of the traditional society were now manipulated and bent in order to serve the interest of the colonial rulers.
Credence to this view is further given by [10]Mare and Hamilton in their articulation of the changed chief's position during the colonial era. According to them:-

"The powers that were given to chiefs by the colonial authority were of different nature than powers they had in the pre-colonial societies. In the effect was to undermine the legitimacy of their position because such absolute power would not have been countenanced."

These authors further go on to asset that there were two possibilities for government over Africans. The first was to weaken the institution of chieftainship and rule through the colonial bureaucracy. The second was to rely on chiefs, appointed and hereditary, for indirect rule. With the ascension of the Nationalist Party to power in the 1940's several pieces of legislation were passed which redefined the role of chiefs and ethnic groups as the base of an apartheid administrative structure. It was in this pyramid apartheid - based structure in which the chiefs lost their legitimacy as the 'guardians' of their people.

During the apartheid period the institution of chieftainship became inextricably bound to the bantustan policy and the structures created in terms of that policy. As a result of this chiefs also found themselves on the receiving end of the struggles waged by the people against the apartheid system.

The incorporation of chiefs as a cog in the apartheid state administrative machinery left the South African society with virtually no political institutions that command broadly acknowledged legitimacy and of any hegemonic significance. The legacy of apartheid therefore, as far as this institution is concerned, is a residue of distrust and hostility that presently bedevils this institution.

One of the main facets of democratisation will be how to design appropriate institutions which will among other things serve to thwart an array of undemocratic impulses that are likely to bedevil the post apartheid society. At the same time these institutions should command legitimacy among the people they serve.

It is in this light that the institution of chieftainship and the role of chiefs in a democratic South Africa should be viewed. Factors that formed the political milieu in which this institution obtained have in the course of history, undergone radical metamorphosis which will make it incompatible with present the environment.

However, the historical specificity of the South African socio-economic landscape, is that there has been a juxtaposition of the modern mode of production with the traditional one. This has resulted in a society characterised, in the main by two value systems, modern and traditional. The majority of the people in the country side still owe allegiance to chiefs and it was for this reason that even

the apartheid regime used them for their own purposes.

The first step therefore towards democratisation of the institution of chieftainship is to cleanse it of all its negative attributes which both colonialism and apartheid have cast upon it. This will in turn remove the cause to view chiefs with suspicion and hostility and restore to same the semblance of legitimacy that the institution previously had.

With this done, the next step will be to examine the inherent features of the institution itself with a view to identifying features that are incompatible with the tenets of democracy. One here has in mind the hereditary nature of the position of chieftainship which has the effect of a blanket exclusion of commoners from the office. However, the historical analysis of the institution reveals that it is this heredity that underpins the legitimacy and authority of the institution itself. Motshabi and Volks[11] lend weight to this when they assert that chiefs, from outside the royal family are unlikely to command enough respect to be effective. It is not worthy that the custom and tradition that functioned to fetter the authority of the chiefs demanded that authority be exercised with the advice of councillors. The popular election of the council will therefore act to clothe the institution with an element of democracy.

Democratic transformation of chieftainship will also have to deal with the patriarchal feature of this institution. The principle of primogeniture which forms the basis of succession to chieftainship constitutes a flagrant infringement of equality of men and women and goes against the democratic principle which holds that people should have a choice in the identity of their rulers. The institutions of chieftaincy forms part of the existing social institutions and impacts heavily upon the lives and activities of the rural people at local government level. There is no doubt that failure on the part of a democratic government to devise a dispensation for the participation of chiefs at this level, will affect the acceptability of any administrative authority that can be installed in areas where traditional values and customs still rule supreme. It is not the objective reality that can be adapted to fit the institution, but it is the institution itself that has to be adjusted and synchronised with objective reality.

CHIEFTAINSHIP AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Devolution of power necessitates the creation of government structures at local level which in turn will ensure popular participation at that level. This in the South African context can be achieved by instilling confidence and building democracy into the fabric of existing social institutions.

Although we recognise that more than 16.5 million of our people, or 53% of South Africa's population lives in the rural areas and are catered for by apartheid created 'tribal' structures which have constantly exhibited serious deficiencies ranging from inefficiency to corruption, there still is a tendency to underestimate the havoc ethnicity has wreaked in the psychology and thinking of our people. Couple with this is the prevailing approach of the apartheid administration. We continue to allow the apartheid authorities to restructure rural local authorities in such a way as to be responsive to the apartheid ideology of divide and rule. If we want to entrench democracy within the fabric of the South African society we have to face this weakness squarely.

The objective reality of the South African social and political landscape is that it is a society constituted not by one value system due, among other things, to the articulation of the traditional mode of production and the capitalistic mode of production. This situation has been further exacerbated by the apartheid system which emphasised the so-called separate development predicated upon ethnic, racial and tribal divisions. Therefore our efforts to transform the present social institutions should be informed and guided by the realisation of this reality.

CHIEFS AND DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

Dispute settlement is one of the traditional roles that the chiefs have played among their people. Close examination of the traditional mode of dispute settlement reveals a system in which parties were encouraged to control the decision making process; a system characterised by popular participation in the process of justice distribution. Common sense as dictated upon by the custom and social values was the basis of the judgement and social integration was the purpose of sentencing. It advocated a solution to the dispute that was in harmony with community accepted notions couched in terms of justice, and virtue, reflecting community judgements about acceptable behaviour[12]

Violation of the court's decision amounted to defiance of the moral order of the community and their courts to settle specific categories of disputes among their people.

CARVING A ROLE FOR TRADITIONAL LEADERS

In assessing the role chiefs and traditional leaders can play in the democratisation process they should be viewed as leaders in their communities who are perceived by their fellow villagers as men and women of authority, who have used wealth, hereditry or personal magnetism to gain positions of influence. Some of them might have been appointed to their present positions by the apartheid regime and are viewed by the populace as collaborators lacking any semblance of legitimacy. These will most probably lack the necessary initiative needed in the transformational process and would work towards entrenching the present status quo and dooming the democratisation process before it even begins.

Others might have been removed from office because of their patriotic attachment and participation in the anti-apartheid struggle. Despite that they might still be regarded in high esteem by their communities and considered legitimate. Through them many people's attitudes might be changed and therefore they might be the key to the hearts of millions, influencing local and regional politics and also the shaping of major decisions while forming a vital link with the people at grass roots level.

THE SYNCRETIC ROLE OF CHIEFTAINCY

[13]Miller describes traditional leadership as:-
"Basically syncretistic, a leadership which is a synthesis and a reconciliation of the forces of traditionalism and modernism. The result is a form of leadership which is neither modern nor traditional but an incorporation of both. The process is one of

accommodation and compromise. It is a reconciliation of demands from:-
1. the traditional custom-bound elements of rural society and
2. the modernising bureaucratic groups made up of local administrators and political party leaders."

This kind of a leadership seeks some form of a synthesis between European culture and traditional values. It is in the process of the search for such synthesis that some have allowed themselves, mostly for personal gain, to be trapped corrupted and co-opted by apartheid and are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to extricate themselves from its clutches. As the situation in the country develops and change towards democracy becomes irreversible, they find themselves in a fluid situation which allows a great deal of personal jousting and bargaining. They begin to speak with forked tongues, vacillating between the democratic forces and the apartheid regime. They are unpredictable. This contributes further to the confusion and the insecurity of the rural populace which the incorporation of this institution into the repressive state apparatus had over the years engendered. Such behaviour could cause difficulties and delay to the democratisation process as some traditional leaders will try to find their footing among other rural influentials, maximizing their future bargaining potential while safeguarding their current leadership positions. In the process, tensions might build up, erupting in the breakdown of the democratic process and civil strife, causing irreparable damage to the national effort of nation building.

Finally, in assessing what role chiefs played under apartheid we should always stress the fact that, Africans irrespective of their social status in the indigenous social structure, most of the time occupied roles that were subordinate to those of Whites. Despite apartheid's preachings about creating indigenous elites or of allowing autonomy for Bantu authorities, in the end Whites expected to give orders and demanded that Africans, irrespective of their social status, should obey them. Further it is not worthy that the apartheid regime always emphasised its negative duties (that is, maintenance of law and order, prevention of extortion) rather than promoting large scale social trends such as economic development and social welfare. In the process corruption was allowed, if not encouraged, to take root.

As we chart our way forward we should never forget that traditional social structures will not wither away. They will continue to struggle to influence, if not to determine, the nature of a post apartheid South Africa. Some will succeed in maintaining their positions of power and privilege vis-a-vis their subjects. As [14]Markowitz rightly points out, they will try by all means to hold commanding positions within the social hierarchy and seek to perpetuate themselves as well as their values and their relations of dominance, within society. Even if these traditional conservative forces, adapt to change, they will continue to exist as powerful, if not predominant, forces within the community. They will not essentially change in purpose, nor will they wither away.

Their privileged status in the present day society has opened the doors of learning to them and given them better financial opportunities and advantages over the majority of the rural population. With such a background they stand better chances of occupying commanding positions in the future civil service and the private sector. This will not only give them new positions in the new society but will also entrench their legitimacy. Their working together in national and regional institutions under a common administration might help create a sense of corporate identity for them, deepening their hold over society, thus entrenching their class interests. This might not augur well for the

nascent democracy. They have never been known to be sensitive to the gender question and their attitude to human rights leaves much to be desired.

THE ETHNIC FACTOR

Many Africans in South Africa have been rather uneasy, if not suspicious, of any role being accorded to chiefs and other traditional leaders in the democratization process. This suspicion stems not only from the collaborative role some chiefs and other traditional leaders have played in the implementation of the apartheid policy but also in the realisation that chiefs and traditional leaders reinforce ethnicity.

There is a deep-rooted fear that they will bring their "ethnic baggage", with them and thus divide the African majority and consequently derail the democratisation process. The roots of this fear emanate from the keen awareness of the role ethnic divisions have played in the colonial conquest of South Africa and in weakening the struggle against apartheid. Hence there is a justified tendency amongst politically conscious Africans to reject tribalism and all forms of factionalism. It was on the basis of this rejection that the national liberation movement was forged and later the broader anti-apartheid democratic movement was structured and consolidated. Race and ethnicity have been the major effective tools in the maintenance of apartheid. They [15]continue to be an administrative and ideological reality up to this day.

They are the foundation of the present constitutional compartmentalisation of South Africa, tools of oppression and political control and as such are objectionable concepts which have been reinforced and continuously abused by the apartheid system in its quest to cling to power. It is on these grounds that the anti-apartheid forces continue to resist ethnic particularism, on the grounds that "tribal loyalty" will [16]sunder their newly found and fragile unity. Hence for the national liberation movement nation-building continues to be the primary objective. Nation building continues to be in sociological terms, the process of integrating diverse, primordial and ethnocentric African "tribes" into a modern " nation. In this manner it is hoped that national consciousness and unity, would strengthen their bargaining power in the struggle for equality and democracy.

The oppressed are aware of the fact that the victories that the liberation movement has scored in the recent past emanate from their unity. It was not the goodwill of the de Klerk Administration which led to the present liberalization process but the united efforts of the oppressed in struggle. It will be that "unity in action" that will move de Klerk from, " liberalisation" towards genuine democratization. It is with this background that many express some fears that the participation of chiefs, especially those with a history of apartheid collaboration, might in one way or the other reinforce ethnicity, if not at least taint the process with it. In a multi-ethnic society like South Africa, such fears need a deeper examination and understanding. The democratic process should not be allowed to be subverted by the demands of ethnic identity.

The challenges that ethnicity poses to the democratic process and the ways in which these challenges can be diffused need a thorough examination. They continue to be the ideological bases of the present de Klerk administration. They are being used up to this present moment to entrench

de Klerk's transitional policies. As such they have become objectionable to all patriotic minded South Africans. [17]Chege argues that African ethnicity like ethnic consciousness elsewhere, uses any number of primary identities - area of origin, religion, culture, language - to build a group's internal cohesion in the face of competition for power and resources from other groups. What most distinguishes sub-Saharan Africa's ethnic pluralism from ethnicity elsewhere is its vast cultural, linguistic and geographic bases. This variety multiples the manner in which ethnic identity may be involved in social conflict or collaboration. African ethnicity is also marked by weakness of secondary bases of identity - class, profession, vocation - that arise with industrialisation and the spread of secular values. These two factors complicate national political management of civil society by materially poor and weak states.

Despite that we cannot hope to escape our responsibility by pushing forward excuses to the effect that a discussion of ethnicity in South Africa at this moment in our history gives the concept an unwarranted status and deflects the debate from the real issues and essential problems that face the country. One tends to agree with [18]Jeff Guy when he points out that whatever one's attitude to the nature and reality of the ethnic conflict that engulfs this country may be - ethnic categories are being used and abused increasingly by participants and observers both inside and outside South Africa and are reinforced daily in the media domestically and internationally. His remarks that " ethnicity in South Africa has become an issue upon which all those with an interest in South Africa have to respond, if for no other reason than if one avoids the recognition and study of ethnicity this leaves the field open to its abuse, " poses a challenge to all activists in the democratization process . There is an intellectual debate to be won here with profound political implications. We have to break through these barriers, not only for improved academic discussion but also for urgent questions of policy. The ethnic question seems to be closely entangled with the solution of the national question which is central in the struggle for democracy and national liberation.

ETHNICITY IN PRESENT DAY SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa ethnic consciousness is a dynamic concept, borne out of and changing with economic development. It asserts the significance of an identity based on particular African rural cultural traditions. The specific forms it takes differ widely according to different histories, the chronology of conquest, and modes of incorporation, the ecology and economics of differing regions. The examples quoted by [19]Guy in his research among Blacks in South Africa, illustrate how ethnic ideology can manipulate a wide range of historical events, some from those with their origin in the pre-colonial past which forms, for example, such an important part of Zulu ethnic ideology, or the colonial context in the case of the Basotho, to the cynical and wholly invented ethnicity to be found in the Ciskei which has been created in the context of apartheid policy. Identifying this "invented aspect of identity", he warns, would not lead towards denying its significance. It is a powerful sense of shared identity to be used or abused in different contexts.

The articulation of ethnic consciousness in South Africa seems to coincide with what Donald [20]Horowitz terms 'centralized' as opposed to 'dispersed' ethnic systems. In the former " a few groups are so large that their interactions are a constant theme of politics at the centre" whereas the latter disperses conflict to many different points because of the multiplicity of small groups. Hence the " structure of dispersed ethnic systems abets inter-ethnic cooperation, while the structure

of centralised ethnic systems impedes it". Experience has shown that centralised ethnic systems are underpinned by centralised authorities, administrative machinery, separate judicial institutions and cleavages of wealth, privilege and status that correspond to the distribution of power and authority.

The administrative system is the cement that binds people together politically.[21] The steep challenges that the liberation process poses to these traditional structures and authorities and their manipulation of ethnicity threatens the stability in this country and can lead to an open conflict. To some of the traditional leaders in the Bantustan structures, the very thought of the possibility of an African led authority at national level, of which they might not be part of, and to which they might be subordinated, the loss of economic resources it will entail, and most of all, the possibilities that they might not "make it " in their own fiefdoms, due to challenges from their own 'subjects' infuriates them and encourages them to revolt.

Such conflict should be avoided by all means. In such situations traditional leaders will try by all means to manipulate ethnic consciousness and will capitalize on certain culture-bound factors that support traditionalism and also specifically manipulate such things as local myth, ritual, symbol and customary law.[22]

We should guard against being influenced by our built in biases and attitudes. Some consensus will have to be found. Ethnic consciousness will not disappear or wither away, nor can it be wished away. It will remain with us for a long time to come. Just as it was abused and manipulated in the maintenance of apartheid, it will certainly be abused again as elections for a Constituent Assembly loom on the horizon. Set shares of values will be exploited and manipulated in creating coalitions, swaying audiences and moulded to fit different agendas. It will then be necessary to consider seriously the challenge that ethnicity poses to democratic transformation and the way it can be diffused.

THE NEED TO DIFFUSE ETHNICITY

Diffusing the ethnic variable might contribute towards mutual understanding, the maintenance of peace and sustain the transition to democracy. Democracy cannot take root in the midst of anarchy and violence. Our experience has clearly demonstrated that the illegitimate apartheid government structures contribute tremendously to the violence in Black communities. Hence the justified demand for an Interim government of National Unity, which would give such structures some legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency. Effective government and democracy should thus be regarded as complimentary rather than incompatible. Our opinion concurs with that of [23]Christopher Clapham when he writes:-

"the maintenance of orderly government is the first condition for democracy, but by no means the only one. It has to be balanced by a structure of accountability through which government can be managed and controlled, in the interest of those on whose behalf it governs. This accountability may be aided by traditional political institutions, embodying shared values."

It needs to be promoted by deliberately constructed political institutions, whose role would be to aggregate and organise the views of broad sections of the populace, in such a way that they can entrench democracy and be made into an effective constraint on the way in which government power is used. We should not consider African social structures and values as weak because they failed to offer sustained overt resistance to the encroachment of colonialism and later apartheid which were forcibly imposed on them. It would be wise to "regard them as immensely strong, capable of biding their time, while tacitly subverting the feeble structure of an increasingly impoverished state, " advises [24]Clapham.

We could achieve this by instilling confidence and building democracy into existing social institutions, incorporating them into political life by not only mobilizing them but also by socializing them. The challenge facing us is to start from existing social attitudes and organizations and socialise them into public life. It is a task that requires not only great patience but also a level of modesty and restraint, which is lacking in most of us

As [26]Larry Diamond rightly point out " Democracy requires moderation and restraint. It demands not only that people care about political competition, but also that they not care too much, that their emotional and tangible stake in its outcome, be so great that they cannot contemplate defeat." The swollen state should not be allowed to turn politics into a zero -sum game in which everything of value is at stake in an election, and hence candidates, communities and parties feel compelled to win at any cost.

In our search for a way forward in the negotiations process we have discovered that there is a close relationship between process and substance in the transition to democracy. The auspices under which change is initiated affects the willingness of actors to participate. The scope of participation in turn shapes emerging interests, relationships and possible outcomes. The same is true for the mode of constitutional policy making on the choice of institutions. Some procedures are conducive to the adoption of certain institutions, others are not. Experience with the CODESA process seems to bear this experience out. The way in which the positions of different parties seem to have converged especially on the need for regions is a typical example of this. All parties seem to envisage some important role for regions, clearly all participating parties are agreed that a united South Africa will not be achieved by flattening out all local characteristics and forcing a single model in which all have to be assimilated. Different parts of the country have different characteristics, particular kinds of social and cultural ambiances which will have to be accommodated together with their languages, cultures and beliefs.

This highlights the need to design regional governmental structures that will diffuse ethnic dimensions, ensuring some degree of local autonomy and security, while crosscutting major ethnic solidarities. Such structures can do much to prevent polarisation of politics around ethnicity. " A flawed federal structure or unitary system" warns [27]Diamond, "can do much to generate ethnicity. Similarly electoral regulations and structures, can either reinforce or complicate and so gradually soften ethnic solidarities".

Ethnicity also profoundly affects economic performance. [28]Experience in the third world has clearly demonstrated how ethnic ties often constitute a major element in constituency building and patronage relationships in national politics.[29] [30]Goran Hyden argues that ethnic support starting at the village level, also fundamentally shape economic decision making. Ethnic and community links strongly held between rural and urban areas, lead to investment patterns aimed at diversifying and

sharing risks, often by solidifying group ties.

Writing on his experience in Nigeria, Larry Diamond observed that "ethnicity was significantly a product of the class structure. First, it functioned as a "mask for class privilege." By focusing politics on ethnic competition for state resources and by distributing patronage to their ethnic communities, politicians diverted attention from their own class action and precluded effective class-based mobilisation against it. Second, in mobilising mass ethnic bases, tribalism became an instrument of competition within the emerging dominant class for the limited spoils of the developing state.

In summary we cannot over-emphasise the need to re-examine our attitude towards traditional leaders and structures. We should do some research to find out whether those institutions could be utilised and moulded to entrench, stabilise and legitimise democracy, especially at local level in the rural areas. Furthermore there is a dire need to acknowledge the existence of ethnic consciousness, confront it and then diffuse it. Experience in Eastern Europe and many African countries have clearly demonstrated how difficult it is to replace individual ethnic identities by a commitment to a single overarching nationalism as the proponents of 'nation building' had hoped to achieve. Eastern Europe has further demonstrated the enduring pull of ethnic ties and how difficult it is to sub-merge and subordinate them to class identities. Ethnicity emphasises common origin and descent and shared characteristics based on language, religion, race, place of origin, cultural values or history. The assertion of ethnic claims has proved to be a powerful element in contemporary politics which can not be submerged into the struggle of the social classes as many left wing theoreticians had once believed, nor can it be satisfied by the social mobility of individuals as many liberals still think.

> "The struggle for status by ethnic and religious communities is a powerful contempo-
> rary form of this quest for equality, an equality based not simply on income and wealth
> but on the less tangible elements of cultural, linguistic, and religious autonomy, group
> pride, collective self-esteem, recognition and respect by others, and in the exercise of
> political power."[31]

To assume that the removal of apartheid would necessarily mean the end of ethnic particularism would be fanciful. Ethnicity may have been entrenched by apartheid bayonets but it has penetrated all levels of our society deeply enough to make the uprooting of its legacy a task for generations rather than a single revolutionary episode. Ethnicity cannot be educated out of existence or suppressed by force, and attempts to ignore, or wish it away will soon rebound. Some means must be found to manage it. It will be on the ability of such management that the success of any democracy in a multi-ethnic country like South Africa will depend. Although some might attempt to play down the political significances of ethnic identities, they will soon discover and recognise that these have a hold on popular consciousness, especially in rural areas, which cannot be ignored.

The writing of this article was provoked by discussions that started at the ANC policy conference in May 1992. It's goal is to inform debate and initiate research in support of the ongoing process of democratisation, especially around local and regional government. It is hoped that it will provoke responses that will lead to a deeper creative reflection and a reassessment of our general approach. Ethnicity has proved to be a difficult concept to analyse especially because of its multi-dimensional nature. "It is a slippery concept", writes Guy, which draws cross-class allegiances to a wide range of cultural facts and symbols."

Its significance for policy formulation cannot be overemphasised. Yet one has to be very careful for as [32]Guy advises "the analyst has to walk an intellectual tightrope made up of the broad historical strands of economic development and change in class forces, selected, rearranged and presented in terms which have to be critically tested with every step." Despite the many risks to be taken and possible pitfalls we might encounter, our research should reinforce our policy formulation and strengthen the courage of our democratic convictions. There seems to be no need to convince democrats in this country any longer of the dangers ethnic particularism poses to the democratisation process. It is an issue that calls for further and deeper reflection amongst all South African patriots seeking to recast the social basis of this country. At the same time, independent Africa's experience of repressing ethnic feelings and interests, centralising power and economic measures supposedly to promote a new "integrated" national consciousness, have not been very successful.

CONCLUSION

Our research should help South Africa to find ways and means "to live with its fissiparous subnationalism and ethnic diversity" More research on regionalism and how decentralisation will affect democracy is necessary. Political decentralisation is of course no panacea. To be effective it must be underpinned by democratic principles and institutions. Such institutions must arrest the process of political decay brought about by apartheid misrule. The inclusion and scrupulous observation of individual rights and the rule of law, and the separation of political powers to check the rise of autocrats should be considered. Finally we should ensure that such principles and institutions are not imposed on our people but arise as a result of popular acceptance and participation.

It seems that Blacks, especially Africans, would be best suited to carry out such research, as it affects them directly, but they are very few. While this is one of the results of Bantu education, there are other causes. The [33]Black Women's Research and Development Network recently came to the conclusion that :

> "Black scholarship in South Africa has been undermined by the effects of the Bantu education and been marginalised through the colonisation of research skills and publication networks by white academia. Issues of race and class and activists versus academics, have become pertinent in the general debate. Central to this debate is the need to restructure existing power relations within research in general ".

Sipho Pityana[34] commenting on the systematic reproduction of the relations of racial domination in research echoes the same sentiment. He writes:-

> "The under representation of blacks in general and Africans in particular in the research body and thereby its domination by whites is as much a legacy of a long history of racial domination as it is the most indictment on the enlightened sections of that body whose failure to seriously challenge this, only contributed to its perpetuation. It is an indictment on the (predominantly white) enlightened sections of that community because with all their well intended efforts they have done little to impart enabling skills, but have been content with using their research positions and intellectual prowess to

produce and generate ideas and knowledge for Blacks. Although this has been a positive contribution, it is by all accounts inadequate."

The essence of Pityana's argument is that where racial domination is institutionalised, the racial composition of research personnel is a socially and politically important fact. He calls for the de-racialisation of research in South Africa and critiques those who used the need to maintain quality as a pretext to continue with the status quo. Perhaps the attitude of the donors need to be questioned. They seem to be satisfied with the present status quo. They continue to empower the empowered. There is no demand from them to ensure that Blacks and especially Africans and women in particular receive the necessary training. The non-governmental and service organisations are allowed to continue as if the policies they are following in the selection of their personnel is justified. They should be made more sensitive both to the centrality of the national question and the importance of gender in present day South Africa.

Furthermore, the task of dismantling apartheid and the imbalances in research cannot be rectified by affirmative action only but must be ensured by focusing on transforming the institutions themselves. [35]Mahmoodi Mamdani writing on Africa's experience warns that :-
"Experience shows that affirmative action tended to strengthen and legitimate colonial institutions and practices by removing from them the racial stigma; and yet, precisely because this was at the expense of addressing those larger social issues that defined the existence of the majority, it turned immigrant minorities into a readily available scapegoat at times of social crisis."

Research on ethnicity in general should be used as an empowering tool to entrench democracy into our communities, despite the presently prevailing illiteracy, poverty and deprivation. Most of all it should encourage the promotion of equality and upliftment of women, making them a priority in all development programmes.

As we move towards elections for a Constituent Assembly it might be necessary to assess the damage caused by apartheid "divide and rule" policies. It might be necessary to find out how ethnicity would:
- determine the possible voting patterns of different African communities
- to what extent race and ethnicity have influenced different communities in viewing themselves as separate groupings within society, what they believe are the characteristics which make them distinct and how that will influence their voting patterns
- determine their concerns, interests and fears with respect to the political and economic transition
- what role does class stratification and the urban - rural divide play in shaping ethnic solidarity
- Implications of gender on ethnic consciousness
- Finally the Bantustan structures have heavily contributed to one of the most powerful structural problems of the apartheid state, the close coincidence of major cleavages: region, ethnicity and party. It might be useful to examine how this has complicated ethnicity and how it will affect party political organisations and the implications thereof for democracy.

The result of such research would go a long way in assessing how successful the endeavours of the national liberation movement in forging national consciousness have been. It would not only assist in the formulation of transitional national policies for socio-economic development, national reconciliation, political consolidation but also in the choice of relevant national structures and institutions. In the process, democracy will not only be ensured but also the necessary connection between it, development and economic growth will be drawn to the benefit of all South Africans. Although expectations are high and there will be difficulties, if we inform our people, appeal to their patriotic feelings, be realistic about the constraints that South Africa faces, focus on what works and actually deliver the results that improve people's lives, emphasising the connection between democratic decision making and the chances of success, we can be sure of the support of all our people.

Our research should, most of all, encourage the unity of all South Africans in their diversity. We should ensure that it is not used for purposes of oppression, keeping people poor and divided or for promoting hatred and violence against others. It should encourage all South Africans to recognise South Africa as a single country, with a single citizenship, a single loyalty and a single sense of belonging. Our destinies as South Africans, with our different religions, customs and traditions, languages and cultures are inextricably intertwined. What we want, above all, is a country at peace with itself, in which we all share equally in joy and in suffering. We can best achieve this by ensuring equal rights for all throughout the length and breadth of this country and an equal sense of security for all that will be protected by the law wherever we might be.

The formulation of policy is a difficult and complex process which does not depend on the expertise of individuals only but is also greatly influenced by the experience and participation of the masses. It might be useful for South Africa to change her Europe-centric approach and learn from other third world countries, especially Africa. There is a wealth of experience and knowledge which Africa has amassed over the last three decades, which would be of great value and use towards policy formulation and democratisation in this country. We are part of Africa and share the same colonial experience. There might be small differences here and there, because apartheid is an aberration, with no parallels anywhere, but it is a crystallisation of the colonial experience through which Africa as a whole has also passed. Consequently Africa's experience and expertise would be of great relevance.

• FOOTNOTES •

1. This paper has been adapted from a paper I delivered at a seminar on chieftancy organised by the Multi-Party Democracy Institute in Johannesburg in 1992. The change in content has been greatly influenced and informed by discussions and debate around Rural Local government that arose in the ANC Policy Conference in May, 1992. It has had the advantage of comments from some of my colleagues Sandile Nogxina, of the Centre for Development Studies, University of Western Cape, Adv. Dullah Omar of the Community Law Centre of the University of the Western Cape Bellville and Penuel Maduna of the ANC's Department of Legal and Constitutional Affairs and its Constitution Committee. The author however, remains responsible for the views and ideas expressed herein. They do not necessarily represent or reflect the positions of the Movement he belongs to.

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9. See S. Nogxina Ibid.

10. Mare and Hamilton: P.2 An Appetite for Power : Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa: Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987. p2.

11. Motshabi and Volks: 1992:pg111.

12. S. Nogxina Ibid :Supra: pg7.

13. Miller N.N. : Political survival of Traditional Leadership: in Markowitz I.L. African Politics and Society. pg 119 1970

14. Markowitz: Power and Class in African Politics: Prentice - Hall Inc Englewood cliffs. New Jersy 07632. pg159

15. (G. Mare & G. Hamilton P. Z.: An appetite for power. Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa Ravan Press. Johannesburg 1987 P2)

16. I have avoided using the word "tribe" as much as possible because I feel very strongly that it denigrates African ethnic groups and has a colonial racist connotation and vintage

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22. Miller: N.N.:ibid pg 122

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24. Clapham C. ibid

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27. Diamond L. Ibid

28. Michael Chege - Remembering Africa. Foreign Affairs - America and the world 1991/9 Pg 150

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32. J. Guy Ibid

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34. Sipho Pityana:Research and Racial Domination in South Africa: Transformation 18 :1982: Durban Pg73

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