THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY[1] IN SOUTH AFRICA: DEVELOPING A DYNAMIC MODEL[2]

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It was like a fairy tale come true. On the hot summer's afternoon of 11 February 1990, Nelson Rolihahla Mandela, walked hand in hand with his wife, Winnie, out of the grounds of Victor Verster Prison outside Cape Town. His walk outside the prison walls symbolised a march to freedom that had galvanised a nation, and indeed, the entire world. It was a memorable moment that will forever be captured in the hearts and minds of South Africans, both black and white, of all generations.

Four years later on 27 April 1994, in a similar dramatic moment in the unfolding drama that was spawned by his release from prison, Mandela walked into a dusty polling station in the sprawling township of Inanda in Natal, where he voted for the very first time in his life. That vote, and the millions of others cast in the euphoric atmosphere of the following three days, culminated in the declaration of Nelson Mandela as the first black President of the Republic of South Africa. In the eyes of the world, South Africa had come of age.

The world's media screamed headlines that celebrated the victory of a successful transition. South Africa was seen to provide the evidence for what reasonable, compromising, and adept leadership could generate. Mandela and De Klerk were viewed as the heroes of South Africa's 'negotiated revolution'. Without them, and their stabilising influence, South Africa would have degenerated into an abyss of poverty, violence, and economic catastrophe.[3]

But these headlines, and much of the other coverage in the popular media, (Ottaway, 1993) overly simplified a transition rich and complex in character. Mandela and De Klerk, and their compatriots, had been brilliant actors in the drama of South Africa's transition. But, they were also credited for writing the script, producing the play, and directing its content. In this scenario, the millions of South Africans, and the world at large, were simply a passive audience to a spell-binding human drama unfolding before their eyes.

Yet such simplifications were not only the preserve of the popular media. Scholars, activists, and political organisations were as guilty of reinforcing these and other myths around the South African transition. Much of the scholarly writing and the propaganda material of political organisations attempted to pigeon-hole the transition into one or other historical trend. Political organisa-

tions and scholars associated with the Congress Movement suggested that the transition was similar to the process of decolonisation that occurred in earlier decades in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.[4] Others, like the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), followed a similar line of reasoning, but concluded that the transition would culminate in a neo-colonial situation typical of much of Africa in its post-colonial days. Some scholars, particularly those of a liberal bent, suggested that the transition was typical of those from authoritarianism to democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe over the last decade or two.[5] And others, on the other extreme, intimated that South Africa was following a political evolution so distinctive that it had not been attempted elsewhere in the world.[6]

Such pigeon-holing, however, is not particularly useful in understanding the transition underway in the country. South Africa's transition, like most others, bears some resemblance to all of the historical trends suggested above. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the South African transition will, like the decolonisation process, involve the ascension to political power by black political elites. But, unlike the decolonisation process, it will not involve the physical retreat of a colonising nation and a settler class. Most of South Africa's white population is indigenous to the country, and their permanence colors the transition in ways very different to the decolonisation that occurred earlier on in the century.

Neither, however, is a neo-colonial settlement likely in South Africa. The charge of neo-colonialism suggests that the post-apartheid economy will overwhelmingly be in the control of foreign hands. But, South Africa has a significant entrepreneurial class who, although mainly White and Asian, are nevertheless indigenous to the country. Moreover, the small number of monopolies that dominate and control virtually all aspects of the South African economy are also indigenous, making a foreign-owned economy an unlikely scenario for the post-apartheid era.[7] What is likely is increasing penetration of the economy by foreign capital through joint ventures and investment, so that a close symbiotic relationship emerges between indigenous and foreign entrepreneurs. Such an alliance, typical of Latin American societies under military regimes, results in economies marked by a significant interpenetration of national and foreign capital - economies that resemble those of the advanced industrialised democracies far more than they do that of neo-colonial societies.[8]

Suggestions that the transition is typical of those underway in Latin America and Southern Europe are also unhelpful. Similarities are clearly there. The repression experienced by the black population in South Africa was similar to that experienced by populaces living under military regimes. Moreover, political pacts, corporatist decision-making arrangements, and other cooperative arrangements between elites, coincide in both the Latin American/Southern Europe

and the South African cases. But, the origin of the South African transition was not a military regime. The country's white population has always enjoyed liberal democratic freedoms, even in the 1980's under the political reign of P.W. Botha who provided the military with a central role in governance of the country. The central character of this transition is different - it does not involve the retreat of the military from political power - but rather the curbing of the monopoly of political power by a white civilian elite.

Finally, while analyses suggesting the distinctiveness of South Africa's political evolution manage to capture the 'exceptionalism' of the country's conflict and the innovativeness of its social movements, they have not demonstratively proven what is unique in this transition's trajectory. Too often, these analyses glibly take for granted the rhetoric of the leadership and activist base of social and political movements. In the process what is said is interpreted as what is true. However, while this rhetoric of the 'transfer of power', an 'alternative route to socialism', the 'midway path between reform and revolution', may provide a radical legitimacy to the transition, they tend to inhibit fruitful and scholarly analysis. The net result is that the forces underlying the transition, its character, and its possibilities and limitations, all become hidden in the mountain of propaganda that attempts to legitimise the current political trajectory of the transition.

This is not to deny any scholarly utility to these analyses. Indeed, they possess a number of distinct strengths. But the fundamental problem with them is that by emphasising either the 'normalcy' or the 'exceptionalism' of the transition, they over-simplify a complex process, and therefore are incapable of developing a holistic picture of the transition. Viewing the transition through one or other historical lens, blinds one to the distinctive features of this transition, or to its similarities with those of others. When viewing it through the lens of 'exceptionalism', scholars tend to ignore the similarities of this transition with those that preceded it. Any attempt to understand the transition in South Africa then, must simultaneously recognise the distinctiveness of the country's conflict and the nature of its resolution, while being flexible enough to capture the similarities of aspects of this transition with those that have occurred at different times, in different parts of the world.

A model for understanding the transition in South Africa must, of necessity, address three central questions. These are:

- What was and is the principal character of the conflict in South Africa?
- How do we theoretically account for the form, pace and content of the transition?
- What are the prospects of consolidating democracy within the country.

All three issues are inter-related. For instance, an understanding of the first is

crucial to that of the third, particularly because democratic consolidation is dependent on resolving the central disputes of the major contending parties. Similarly, addressing the second question influences one's answer to the third, since it provides an explanatory paradigm within which to locate issues of democratic consolidation. A model of the transition then, must address issues of the nature of the conflict, extrapolate the forces and factors that influence and direct the transition, and outline conditions that will facilitate its consolidation. In effect, a model becomes the analytical tool that enables scholars to dabble in the past, explain the present, and speculate on the future. It is the crystal ball of scholars in the social sciences.

The Character of the Conflict in South Africa

Since the 1970's there has been a lively debate in academic and political journals and forums about the principal character of the conflict in the country. Two schools of thought have predominated in this debate. On the one hand, theorists associated with the liberal modernisation school, have suggested that the principal struggle is one between racial or national groups - the racial character of class inequality is a product of the white monopoly of political power. Marxist and neo-Marxist scholars, on the other hand, have suggested that the principal conflict in the country is one of class - race is the means through which class has expressed itself in South Africa.

Both schools have evolved complex theoretical explanations, supported by empirical research, to justify their analysis. Liberal modernisation theorists suggest that apartheid and capitalism were and are incompatible since the former has always stunted the efficient functioning of the latter. They argue that apartheid's refusal to adequately educate the black population, and its establishment of a cheap labour system, directly contributed to a skills shortage and a stunted home market that adversely affected capitalists in the country (Lipton, 1986; Bromberger and Hughes, 1987). Michael O'Dowd, one of the earlier representatives of this school, also suggested that South Africa's highly repressive labour system was typical of advanced capitalist democracies in an earlier stage of their development. He thus concluded, by analogy, that the rationalising imperatives of capital accumulation would over time erode apartheid and the repressive labour system that it maintained. In this view, democracy was perfectly compatible with capitalism in South Africa, and that, further, its realisation would be a product of evolutionary change (O'Dowd, 1978).

Marxist and neo-Marxist theorists tended to describe the relationship between capitalism and apartheid as a functional one (Johnstone, 1976). They maintained that capitalist industrialisation in South Africa, which primarily took a mining and agricultural form in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, was

dependent on the availability of cheap labour. The state ingeniously adapted and modified the existing reserve system which was dominated by pre-capitalist subsistence agriculture, to support workers' families as they travelled as migrant workers to service the expanding mining industry of the country. In effect, the reserves served to reduce the cost of reproducing black labour power (Wolpe, 1972; Legassick, 1974, 1975).

Neville Alexander notes that the Union of South Africa's drastic curtailment and denial of franchise rights for blacks, 'measures which were interpreted and explained on grounds of race', served the interests of mining capital by providing the latter with the political and legal space to maximise the exploitation of black mineworkers. He also suggests that although there existed conflict between various fractions of capital which arose with regard to 'their differential needs for labour of differential quality', such contradictions were resolved through the state by adaptations of the original process. Thus, the contradictions that arose after 1920 between primary and secondary industry were initially resolved by segregation, and after 1948, by means of apartheid (No Sizwe, 1979). In this perspective, democracy was incompatible with a market economy given the peculiarity of capitalist development in the country (Legassick, 1985).

Both schools, however, underwent major revisions as they became subjected to the scrutiny of critics and historical circumstance. Lipton (1986) and Greenberg (1980) contributed to the sophistication of liberal analyses, and acknowledged that both mining and agricultural capital had benefitted, and indeed in some cases demanded measures that reinforced apartheid's labour controls. However, they also absolved manufacturing and commercial capital from complicity in the creation of the modern racial order, and concluded that all major groups of capitalists now oppose apartheid and are engaged in attempts to reform it.

Wolpe (1988) subjected both liberal and marxist historiography to scathing criticism. His central thesis is that earlier marxist analyses, including his own, tended to suggest that capitalist relations in South Africa would inevitably have to adopt a racial form. Criticising this conception since it 'functions to close off questions about the possible separation of and contradictions between capitalism and racism', he argues that it might be more accurate to describe the relationship between apartheid and capitalism as contingent. Such a description, he suggests, allows us to accede to the reality that contradictions do exist between certain fractions of capital and racism, and that in principle capitalism and racism are separable, whilst enabling us to retain the understanding that

> the inter-penetration which has occurred in practice and, most importantly, the vested interests of powerful groups and class forces in racial domination, are such as to make the de-racialisa-

tion of capitalism unrealisable (Wolpe, 1988:32).

While this academic controversy about the relationship between racism and capitalism reached a stalemate towards the late 1980's, developments in the political arena signalled that far-reaching changes were soon to be underway. With the release of the senior leadership of the ANC, and the political negotiations that subsequently ensued, the transition to a post-apartheid order began in earnest. These developments rendered obsolete some of the conclusions of earlier analyses of both schools. Liberal modernisation theorists who predicted the evolutionary development of capitalism to a less stratified order were hard put to explain the intensified conflict that capitalism had generated in the post-1973 phase. Similarly, Marxist scholars who had denied that it would be possible to realise democracy within the framework of a market-based economic and social system struggled to explain the emergence of the new, democratically elected post-apartheid regime.

On balance, it might seem as if the liberal theories were more accurate in their analyses and predictions. After all, a democratic political order was indeed realised within the framework of a market economy. Moreover, this was realised not through a revolutionary upheaval as radicals had predicted, but rather though a process of 'peaceful' negotiations. But it is, as yet, too early for Liberal theorists to open up the champagne bottles for their victory celebration. Democracy has emerged, but it is far from being consolidated. Also, the more sophisticated Marxist analyses had for some years been suggesting that the de-racialisation of capitalism, not the realisation of democracy, was improbable. If this is true, what is the likely impact of a continually racially-skewed market economy on the prospects of consolidating a democratic political order within the country?

This question, and others, still remain unanswered. And, any investigation of them requires us to return to the original controversy between the Liberal modernisation and Marxist theorists: what is the principal character of the conflict in South Africa? Is it a problem between contending racial groups? Is it, as Giliomee and Schlemmer (1989) maintain, a conflict between Afrikaner and African nationalism? Is it, as Horowitz (1991) and Lijphart (1985) would argue, a conflict between different ethnic groups? Is it, as most marxists would have it, a class conflict manifesting itself in a racial form? Or is it, as Welsh (1987) would argue, a multiplicity of conflicts, neither of which can be conceived as the primary one?

It might be useful at this point to acknowledge that people simultaneously hold several identities, and their behaviour in everyday life may be motivated by any one, or an amalgam of these identities.[9] But all identities do not necessarily have to manifest themselves in a conflictual form. Moreover, not all conflictual identities manifest themselves in the political realm. For example, the Muslim

population in South Africa is, at one level, stratified along the lines of caste and ancestry. Memen Muslims would often oppose the marriage of their children to descendants of surti, urdu, or any other Muslim or non-Muslim category. Yet this conflictual relationship that they display to other categories of Muslims and non-Muslims is not extended to the political realm. They do not demand a political identity, but rather are content to manifest this identity in their own personal lives.

This example underscores the point that while there might be a multiplicity of conflicts, not all conflicts have the same degree of political saliency. Which conflict, or amalgam of conflicts, displays a dominant political saliency can only be determined through a specific analysis of the situational context one is focussing on. In the case of the South African transition, the issue of relevance is which conflict, or amalgam of conflicts, generated the intensive resistance of the 1980's, and forced in the political transition of the 1990's? Moreover, how did the forces that opposed the racial political order, and their counterparts, conceptualise their respective identities?

It should be noted that recognising that there is a multiplicity of identities and conflicts in society, need not imply that there is no central dynamic to the conflict in South Africa. The outward manifestation of conflict does not necessarily reflect the primary contradiction within society. This incorrect assumption is often made by consociational (and many liberal) theorists, as they assume from the presence of ethnic strife that there is primordial ethnic sentiment within the populace. Their solutions are thus to codify ethnic representation in the form of consociational political arangements.

By contrast this contribution recognises that outward manifestations of conflict may deviate significantly from the causal contradictions within society. For example, class identities and struggles may, under certain conditions, manifest themselves in ethnic forms. This is because in the complex world of reality, identities often overlap with one another. In particular historical contexts, workers and bosses might primarily be black and white respectively. Class conflicts between the two then, might be interpreted by analysts, and even conceived by the participants, as a racial conflict since this is the most easily recognisable feature of the interaction.

Moreover, it must be noted that what Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to as 'imagined identities' are malleable; they recede and re-emerge, their significance increases and decreases. Thus, the life and intensity of 'imagined identities' is dependent on political choices. Certain policies may promote some identities and undermine others; other policies might achieve the reverse. This then suggests that governments, political and social movements must make appropriate choices (in the form of policies, decisions, and behaviour), and decide which

identities they will promote and which they will undermine.

Analyses that simply reduce the conflict in South Africa to either a multiplicity of conflicts with no primary contradiction, or those that reduce the conflict too either nationalist, ethnic or class categories, oversimplify a complex struggle and misrepresent its essential character. At a general level, the South African conflict represented a national liberation struggle against a racial political order that disenfranchised the vast majority of the populace. But nationalist struggles can take a variety of forms, represent a range of social forces, and aspire to a number of contradictory goals (No Sizwe, 1979; Alexander, 1986). Their essential content is determined by the specific social and class forces that dominate in the leadership and governance of the social movement. Given the contingent relationship between class and racial categories in South Africa, and the strength of the organised workers' movement in the national liberation struggle, it should come as no surprise that the nationalist struggle has reflected both national and class aspirations. The conflict in the country has been and is composed of both national and class dimensions.

But what of ethnicity? Radical scholars have traditionally attempted to underplay ethnicity particularly because apartheid reified and used it to facilitate white domination. Also, ethnicity does not have as prominent a saliency as does, for instance, nationalism. Nevertheless, in particular conflicts and situations, especially in the violence that racked the PWV region in the period that preceded the elections, ethnic conflict did rear its head. Moreover, Inkatha has openly mobilised on an ethnic ticket, and has been successful in generating a small, but significant, constituency base. To simply deny ethnic manifestations of the conflict then, only sweeps the problem under the carpet.[10]

But recognising that the conflict in particular contexts has manifested itself in an ethnic form, does not mean that ethnicity is conceived as one of the primary social stratifications of South African society. Rather it is a recognition that ethnicity as an 'imagined identity', is malleable. If appropriate political choices are made, its significance could be undermined. The essential task of the national liberation movement, as reflected in party propaganda, programmes, and manifestos, has always been to:

- subsume ethnic, racial, and other identities into a broader South African identity;
- undermine the political saliency of ethnic and racial identities;
- address the national and class aspirations of its constituency.

Its success in fulfilling these tasks will determine the possibilities of consolidating democracy in South Africa.

Explaining the Transition

Much of the scholarly literature on the current transition in South Africa has taken a programmatic or descriptive form. This is partly understandable given the contemporary nature of the transition and the desire of, and opportunity provided to, scholars to participate in the process of crafting a legitimate, post-apartheid, democratic political order. However, the result is that much of this scholarly literature is not able to tell the whole story. It is able to describe the events, and argue for one or other ideological solution, but its lack of an analytical focus prevents it from telling us why particular choices have been made, the forces and factors that have prompted these choices, and the possibilities and limitations of this transition. In short, this literature lacks the depth and explanatory power required to provide us with the whole story.

Any model that purports to provide a framework to explain the transition currently underway in the country must confront the perennial problem of structure versus agency. Much of the international literature on democratic transitions or their converse, have tended towards either a structural determinism or a free-for-all voluntarism. Deterministic accounts were characteristic of much of the earlier literature published in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Perhaps the most famous example of such accounts was that of Lipset (1960) who concluded with the thesis that the possibilities of a nation sustaining democracy was conditioned by the state of its economic development. The more economically developed a nation the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy.

Critics of Lipset's thesis, although advocating very different conclusions, nevertheless adopted a similar methodological approach in their studies. O'-Donnell (1979) challenged Lipset's equation between political democracy and economic development. Focussing on economic development and class conflict as his principle explanatory variables, he suggested and demonstrated why there was an 'elective affinity' between 'bureaucratic authoritarianism and high modernisation'. In a similar vein, Schmitter (1974) suggested that the corporatist political order of many authoritarian systems was determined by 'the specific nature of capitalist imperatives' on the one hand, and 'the international context of capitalism' on the other.

Scholars on regime transition underwent a significant methodological conversion in the last two decades. Arguing that structural accounts of regime transition often implied a kind of inevitability thesis, they tended towards providing genetic explanations of democratic transitions and their converse. One of the first landmarks in this new literature was Rustow (1970) who argued that despite the correlation demonstrated by functional accounts between structural factors and democracy, such correlations did not necessarily prove causation:

> ... correlation is evidently not the same as causation -it provides at

> best a clue to some sort of causal connection without indicating its direction. Lipset's data leave it entirely open, for example, whether affluent literate citizens make the better democrats; whether democracies provide superior schools and a more bracing climate for economic growth; whether there is some sort of reciprocal connection so that a given increase in affluence or literacy and in democracy will produce a corresponding increment in the other; or whether there is some further set of factors, such as the industrial economy perhaps, that causes both democracy and affluence and literacy (Rustow, 1970:342).

He concludes by developing an alternative genetic model for understanding democratic transitions, that places less emphasis on structural factors, and more on the behaviour and decisions of elites, political and social movements, administrators, and the wider populace.

Rustow's work was supported by Dahl's conclusion that the empirical evidence simply

> did not sustain the hypothesis that a high level of socio-economic development is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for competitive politics nor the converse hypothesis that competitive politics is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for a high level of socio-economic development (Dahl, 1971:71).

These critiques of earlier functionalist and structuralist studies soon opened up the way for genetic explanations of democratic transitions. Two of the more influential of such explanations were Linz and Stepan (1978), and O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986). The former, in response to earlier structuralist explanations, focussed primarily on elites and suggested that the earlier systemic breakdown of democracy must be understood as a result of poor democratic leadership. The latter approached the democratic openings underway in the 1970's and 1980's in a similar methodological vein, arguing that 'what actors do and do not do seems much less tightly determined by "macro" structural factors during the [current] transitions ... than during the breakdown of democratic regimes' (Volume 4:19). Their work thus emphasises 'elite dispositions, calculations and pacts' to understand the emergence of transitions and 'the parameters on the extent of possible liberalisation and eventual democratisation' (Volume 4:48).

In the wake of these publications, genetic explanations of democratic transitions came into vogue. Yet, an underlying tension continued to exist within this methodological approach. Should genetic accounts stress, as Rustow seemed to indicate, the role of social actors, mass movements, political organisations, politicians and administrators. Alternatively, should individual decision-makers be treated as the sole independent variables? (Higley and Gunther, 1992). This

tension continues to exist and remains the central distinguishing characteristic between studies on democratisation located in the genetic mould.

It should thus come as no surprise that the dominant methodological approach in the South African literature concerned with the transition underway in the country is a genetic one.[11] And, that the essential tension in this literature is on whether to treat the behaviour and decisions of elites as the sole independent variable, or broaden the analytical prism to incorporate social movements and other social actors as independent variables who influence the openings of the transition, its substantive content, and the prospects of its consolidation.

Curiously, this methodological divide has taken the form of a contest between mainstream (mainly liberal) and radical (mainly Marxist) scholars. The former, as in Adam and Moodley (1993), Friedman (1993), Rantete and Giliomee (1992), Lee and Schlemmer (1991), van Zyl Slabbert (1992), Du Toit (1990) and Welsh (1993), tend to focus their analyses on the major political parties, and the political pacts that were being forged in the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum. The latter, as in Saul (1992 and 1994), von Holdt and Webster (1992), Adler and Webster (1994) and Cronin (1994) argued that the emphasis on elites leads scholars 'to misunderstand the role of popular movements and struggle in the origin, development, and outcome of actual transitions' (Adler and Webster, 1994:2/3). Arguing from a methodological framework that:

> views a mobilised civil society and powerful social movements - especially the labour movement - as playing a central and constructive role in creating the conditions for the transition, in shaping its character, and indeed, in legitimising the transition process itself,

they focus their analyses on the emergence of a radical reform strategy within the labour movement, which enabled it to play a central role in 'shaping the institutions, policies and practices of the transition process in South Africa'. (Adler and Webster, 1994:2/3).

While both schools have contributed much to an understanding of aspects of the transition, neither has been able to provide a holistic and in-depth picture of this process. Part of the reason for this is their narrow focus. By emphasising either individual decision-makers and the formal negotiations process, or social movements and their struggles, both schools ignored significant developments that crucially influenced the evolution of the transition, and its substantive character.

But a more fundamental problem also exists with both schools' analyses. Because scholars tended to locate their studies within a genetic mould, they are vulnerable to weaknesses associated with this methodological approach. Genetic approaches ably describe the concessions made by, and the ideological conver-

sion of, both individual decisionmakers and social movements. And, they ably describe the decision processes that facilitate the transition. But, they do not persuasively enable us to understand why decisionmakers and social movements suddenly changed their ideological viewpoints and moderated their views. Moreover, such explanations do not account for the similarities in the settlements of a variety of transition cases. They do not explain why different countries within this particular historical epoch have, despite their fundamental differences, achieved settlements so similar in their essential character. Finally, genetic explanations inform the debate on the prospects of consolidating democracy only to the extent of suggesting decisions and behaviour by actors that will facilitate this process - they do not inform us whether structural conditions in the national and international context are conducive to the consolidation of democracy. The transition is treated as an autonomous process - divorced from developments outside the negotiating forums and the organisational structures of individual decisionmakers and social movements.

A dynamic and holistic explanatory model, then, must steer clear from these pitfalls and locate itself within a structuralist mould. It, however, must also avoid the weaknesses of earlier structuralist explanations and not succumb to an inevitability thesis. The political choices of social actors, including social movements and decisionmakers, crucially influence the pace, content and outcome of the transition. Their decisions also determine whether existing structures carry over into the new era, or are transformed thereby facilitating new possibilities and limits for action. A dynamic explanatory model for the transition then, must locate itself within the perspective of Karl Marx's maxim enunciated in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 1972).

The mode of social science enquiry most appropriate to realising the approach underlying Marx's maxim is a historical-structuralist one. This approach, in the words of Cardoso and Faletto, 'emphasises not just the structural conditioning of social life, but also the historical transformation of structures by conflict, social movements and class struggles' (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979:X). Structures condition actor behaviour and choices, but they themselves can be transformed under certain conditions. This is because structures generate contradictions and social tensions, which under certain historical circumstances establishes a dynamic that enables human agencies to alter them, opening up new possibilities and limits for change. A historical-structuralist approach, then, facilitates the development of a dynamic model of democratic transitions, avoiding both the

voluntarism inherent in most genetic analyses, and the determinism characteristic of earlier structuralist explanations.

How then should we define structure? Dependency theorists tend to emphasise the structures of the international capitalist economy in conditioning development. While this might be appropriate for studies concerned with the 'underdevelopment of peripheral economies', it is only one factor in conditioning the pace, content, and outcome of democratic transitions in domestic contexts. Earlier structural analyses, particularly those of O'Donnell and Schmitter, focussed on the global and national economies in understanding the transitions in Latin America to bureaucratic authoritarianism and state corporatism respectively. Once again, while these are significant variables in conditioning the behaviour and choices of domestic actors, they are by no means the only independent variables influencing democratic transitions.

Actor behaviour and decisions in the South African context have been conditioned by a variety of political, economic, cultural, ideological, and military considerations. The delegitimation of communist ideology has significantly reduced the rhetorical and propagandistic capabilities of some political actors, and enhanced those of others, in South Africa's transition. Similarly, the behaviour of and choices available to the ANC were conditioned by the fact that the state's military apparatus had remained intact, and that the country's geographical layout was not conducive to a classic rural-based guerrilla struggle. Clearly, what is required is a conception of structure that is much more holistic and capable of capturing the diverse structural features that influenced the pace, content, and outcome of South Africa's transition.

A useful conception of structure is provided by the realist theorist, Waltz, who suggests that:

> a domestic political structure is ... defined first, according to the principle by which it is ordered; second, by specification of functions of formally differentiated units; and third, by the distribution of capabilities across those units (Waltz,1986:74).

The strength of this succinct definition is that it clearly separates structure from process, thereby enabling us to determine the effects of one on the other. Its problem for our purposes is that is limited to the formal political arena. And given that the focus of our study is the South African transition, which affects not only the formal political arena, but the entire landscape of political, economic and societal relations, the definition is too constrictive to serve as the linchpin for our investigation. Nevertheless, it can be adapted for our investigative purposes.

Such an adaptation simply requires us to expand the definitions of unit and system. Whereas Waltz was referring to institutions and agencies (units) that comprise the political system, we are more concerned with the units of classes,

racial and other social groups, the state, political parties and social movements, foreign governments and international financial agencies, all of which comprise the overall system whose structure conditions societal behaviour. Structure thus represents the arrangements of these units. The principles that define the political structure remain as relevant to a definition of the overall societal structure. This structure is hierarchically ordered and there does exist a specification of functions for the differentiated units: states (or their components) are responsible for deciding on and implementing legislation which is binding on all individual and social groups within the society. Different classes and organisations serve different functions in society: the proletariat works in, and capitalists own, manage, and make decisions for industrial and commercial enterprises.

Nevertheless, despite the significance of these principles for a definition of societal structure, their importance in the South African context was mediated because of the nature of the transition currently underway in the country. Although these principles remained in effect in de jure terms, their de facto status can be questioned since the ANC often played a quasi-state role in the post-1992 period. This role, however, does not undermine the status of the third principle of my definition of societal structure, namely, the distribution of capabilities (defined below) across the units.

The differing capabilities of classes and other social groups, political and other organisations, foreign governments and international financial agencies, crucially influenced the pace, content, and outcome of the transition. These capabilities are not only generated as a result of the differentiated functions allocated to the units, but also by other factors both within and outside individual units' control. For instance, the above mentioned example of the delegitimation of communist discourse crucially influenced actor capabilities in the South African transition. The social context (both global and domestic) within which the transition was occurring, once again, conditioned the capabilities of the units in the transition.[12]

Structure, for our purposes then, is defined as the hierarchic ordering, functional differentiation, and the relative capabilities of the state, classes, social groups, political parties, social movements, foreign governments, international financial agencies and other relevant collective categories, that determines the arrangement of these units with one another. Focus should however be placed on the third element of this definition (for reasons discussed above) to explain the substantive content of the South African transition, and to understand the interactions between the various units, and their success in effecting their analyses of, and solutions to, the conflict in the country.

One final point to note is this model'sS approach to the state. The state, like classes, social groups and other units, is conceived as an independent actor with interests and power of its own. This conception deviates from both the be-

haviouralist\pluralist and marxist approaches to the state. Both of these schools view the state as the expressor of others' interests. For pluralists, the state is a neutral entity within which a variety of groups do battle to translate their interests into state policy. Marxists, particularly the instrumentalist faction, treat the state as the simple expressor of ruling class interests and desires. Both schools' deny the state any independent interests or power - rather, these are seen as exogenously derived from constituents of civil society.

Marxist theories of the relative autonomy of the state attempt to address this deficiency by suggesting that the state's primary task is to rationalise the contradictions between various fractions of capital (Poulantzas, 1973; Althusser, 1971; O'Meara, 1983). In this conception, the state is conceived as having the interest and power to act against one or other fraction of capital, so as to stabilise the overall capitalist system. Its problem, however, is that it is unable to explain why and how the state comes to express one interest, and not another. Nor does it explain the extent or limits of state power. The essential problem, in the words of Max Weber, is that

> the state cannot be defined in terms of its ends. There is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand, and there is no task that one could say has always been exclusive and peculiar to those associations which are designated as political ones ... Ultimately one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it ... namely, the use of physical force (in Bennett and Sharp, 1985:41).

This model's approach to the state then is one adopted by Douglas Bennett and Kenneth Sharpe in their investigation of the relationship between the Mexican state and transnational corporations in the automobile industry. Following Weber, they conceive of the state as a system of administration composed of legal, bureaucratic and coercive components. But, unlike other adherents of Weber, such as state autonomy theorists who focus solely on institutional structures and ignore class alliances, social interests, and the class content of policies of the state, Bennett and Sharpe acknowledge that 'the state's interests are likely to have been shaped in ways that lead it generally to act in concert with dominant classes or social forces' (1985:358). They, however, argue that analyses must not take these as given, but rather 'explain how these ends were taken on historically and how the state institutionalised the capacity to pursue them' (1985:358). In their words:

> Understanding how the state acquires its interests and power means understanding the state as an actor involved in national and international structures ... This approach is necessarily historical, because the state's experiences with other actors and structures will determine whether the state is coherent or fragmented in its

> actions and what specific interests, what power or weaknesses, it has. At the same time, the approach is inherently structural; it denies the voluntarism that sees the state as an actor that chooses and acts wholly freely, viewing the state instead as an actor whose interests and power are shaped by structures. It can transform structures, but only within limits that are themselves historically structured (Bennett and Sharpe, 1985:358).

The Consolidation of Democracy

Although South Africa is still at the outset of its transition, it might be useful for a model concerned with this process to at least discuss the conditions that will facilitate the consolidation of democracy within the country. Care must, however, be taken to avoid any tone of inevitability. Arguments that conclude that the consolidation of democracy is doomed or realisable because of the absence or presence of one or other cultural or socio-economic structural condition are extremely unhelpful in determining the prospects for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. As discussed earlier, actors (both elites and social movements), while conditioned by structures, nevertheless have significant room for manoeuvre. Their behaviour and choices, then, crucially influence the prospects for the consolidation of democracy.

A useful way to approach this discussion on the prospects of consolidating democracy in South Africa is to traverse the vast literature that has emerged on democratic transitions. This rich international literature, with its large number of comparative studies, is a useful beginning point since it identifies the features that were present in cases of successful democratic consolidation, and absent in cases where such attempts at consolidation failed. It should be noted that this discussion does not delve into the important literature on the appropriateness of any particular constitutional design, particularly because this debate has not conclusively proved that any of the options is more appropriate for the consolidation of democracy. A variety of states, with differing constitutional designs, have successfully consolidated democracy. It thus seems that the particular constitutional design adopted is less relevant to the issue of consolidating democracy, than it is for facilitating compromise between the major political players in the negotiation forums.

In any case, four studies are particularly useful for our discussion on the prospects of consolidating democracy in South Africa. The first of these suggests that an essential precondition for successful democratic consolidation is the existence of a national identity amongst the vast majority of the citizens. Rustow argues that the consolidation of democracy, what he terms habituation, is also facilitated by the success of the 'first grand compromise ... (which should

demonstrate) the efficacy of the principle of conciliation and accommodation' (Rustow, 1970:358).

Although the former point might seem self evident for any successful consolidation of democracy, it is useful to boldly state it given the controversy that exists in the South African literature on whether people conceptualise their identities in ethnic, racial, class, or national terms. Moreover, it is absolutely essential that a national political identity be generated that subsumes narrower ethnic and racial identities, so that manipulating political figures are not able to exploit social and economic tensions within society to establish widely supported claims for secession. Failure to generate this national identity will leave the forces of democracy forever vulnerable to such political figures, and to the civil war that will undoubtedly result if any such secession were ever attempted.

It should also be noted that 'the success of the first grand compromise' can, in the final instant, only be determined in the medium term; often, newly established democracies are granted a honeymoon period in which the populace waits to see whether the new political system delivers. Thus, even if the grand compromise succeeds in terms of its acceptance by elites, such success might become ephemeral if powerful social forces in civil society, like the unemployed, organised wokers, or a combination of these and others, come to the conclusion in the medium term, that the 'first compromise' did not facilitate the delivery of promises made to the wider populace. Such social forces may then embark on widespread extra-institutional action that could, but need not, lead elements within the GNU and ANC to adopt an authoritarian, repressive response that would ultimately threaten the fragile foundations of the democratic order.

This then points to a second issue taken up particularly by Przeworski (1991) and Di Palma (1990) who suggest that the essential trick involved in any successful consolidation of democracy is the ability to institutionalise conflict. Przeworski argues that this involves the establishment of institutions that offer the relevant political forces 'a prospect of eventually advancing their interests that is sufficient to incite them to comply with immediately unfavorable outcomes' (1991:19). Di Palma (1990) emphasises the need for institutionalising rules that convince all players that their interests can prevail in a democratic order. Given this, Przeworski (1991) underlines the attractiveness of neocorporatist decision-making arrangements for fledgling democratic governments.

But despite their similar prescriptions, both scholars offer remarkably different hopes for the consolidation of current democratic experiments. While Di Palma argues that negotiated transitions can be a promising path to consolidating democracy, Przeworski suggests that such possibilities are slim under conditions requiring major economic reform. In other words, for Przeworski, the institutionalisation of conflict is undermined by the poor economic circumstances

of many transitional societies.

This then raises a third issue discussed in Huntington (1991:59-72) who suggests that economic development in the form of significant industrialisation creates the conditions for the transition to, and the consolidation of, democracy.[13] While the validity of this train of argument is questionable, especially in the light of studies by Cardoso, O' Donnell and others, who have demonstrated that economic development is as easily compatible with authoritarian regimes as it is with democratic ones, Huntington's work, nevertheless, has the merit of pointing us to the fact that democratic consolidation is facilitated under conditions of an expanding economic system.

Such an expansion of the economy generates necessary surplus resources that could be used for redistribution, thereby legitimising the democratic process. The South African transition, like many others, occurs under conditions of heightened expectations. The populace expects the newly established democracy to not only protect its human rights and civil liberties, but to also uplift its material standard of living. Should the GNU and/or ANC fail to do so in any appreciable sense, a substantial demoralisation could emerge amongst the populace, thereby undermining the support, and ultimately the social foundations of the democratic order. This could then create the context for the aforementioned widespread extra-institutional action, and the attendant possibility of a repressive clampdown by the newly-elected regime.

Finally, a related but distinct problem that would have to be addressed in South Africa if the consolidation of democracy is to be realised is the racial character of the economic system. Shubane argues that

> almost all the major companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) are white owned and controlled. The Anglo American group's control of market capitalisation of the JSE amounts to 43,3 percent, the Rembrandt group's 13 percent, Sanlam's 10,5 percent, South African Mutual's 9,7 percent, the Liberty group's 7,2 percent: all these companies are white owned and controlled (Shubane, 1994).

At this point there are only three black companies listed on the JSE. He also suggests that in a recent published list of the wealthiest people and families in South Africa - no African person or family made it onto the list and well over 90 percent of those who are listed as wealthy are white.

Often Liberal commentators (and many Marxist ones) seem to suggest that the prospects for the consolidation of democracy are higher in South Africa than in other societies particularly because 'democracy will not have to be accompanied by structural economic transformation to create a viable market order'(Shapiro, 1993). In this view, all that is required is some degree of redistribution which

'should not breed foundational resistance to democratisation'. (Shapiro, 1993).

Such a view, however, seems exceptionally naive. The racial character of the ownership structure of the South African economy has and will continue to be a stark reminder of apartheid and its inequities. In a country of heightened racial awareness amongst the populace, the transformation of the racial nature of ownership relations (which would involve a structural transformation) must be conceived as one of the significant goals of the democratic experiment. The failure of the newly-established democratic regime to address this problem, then, could make it the rallying cry of the many disaffected elements within the country. The long-term consolidation of democracy in South Africa is thus dependent, in part, on the deracialisation of the economic system.

The model of democratic transitions suggested here establishes a framework involving five dimensions on which assessments on the prospects of consolidating democracy in the country can be made. These five dimensions are:

- the emergence of a national political consciousness in which the majority of citizens perceive their overall political identity in South African terms;
- a perception amongst both elites and the populace of the success of the Government of National Unity and Reconstruction (GNUR) which represents the 'first grand compromise' of South Africa's transition;
- The institutionalisation of conflict and a belief amongst the major political and socio-economic actors that institutions are structured as to offer them an opportunity to advance their interests;
- an expanding economic system within which resources are made available for redistribution, so as to lead to an appreciable increase in the standard of living of the populace;
- a perception amongst the populace and significant social forces within civil society that the new regime in engaging in some attempts to transform the racial character of ownership relations in the South African economy.

Assessments on the prospects of consolidating democracy would involve both normative judgements and empirical study. Normative judgements would have to be made on whether the GNUR, the emergence of corporatist decision-making arrangements, and the particular economic growth path adopted by the newly-established regime, will facilitate the realisation of conditions that have been suggested as necessary for the consolidation of democracy. Empirical studies will also be useful in this regard. Such studies can provide crucial empirical data that will enable scholars to determine whether the effects of governmental decisions and policies on the wider populace enhances or inhibits the prospects for the consolidation of democracy. In this way, scholarly studies can assist the democratisation process underway in the country.

Conclusion

The dominant trend in both the international literature, and in that focussing on the transition in South Africa, is to understand developments through lenses colored by genetic approaches to democratic transitions. The model presented here, by contrast, suggests that this approach is unable to provide a holistic account of the 'why's, how's, and where to's' of this transition.

Three general features characterise the model presented here. First, while the character of the conflict in South Africa is viewed as manifesting racial, class, and ethnic dimensions, the objectives of the transition is conceived as the undermining of racial and ethnic identities, the establishment of a broader South African identity, and the realisation of the national and class aspirations of the constituencies that fought against apartheid. This conceptualisation, it has been argued, should necessarily inform our approach to the transition, the arrangements and agreements arrived at within the transition, and the prospects for its consolidation. Secondly, the methodological approach adopted by the model to understand the transition underway in the country is a historical-structuralist one. This approach, it has been suggested, avoids the excessive voluntarism characteristic of most genetic analyses, and the inevitability implications associated with many of the earlier structuralist studies on democratic transitions and their converse. Finally, the model outlines a number of conditions that facilitate the consolidation of democracy, suggesting that these conditions need to be fulfilled if democracy is to be realised in South Africa.

The transition to democracy in South Africa and elsewhere does not simply involve an electoral event. Rather, democracy must be conceived as a process that often takes years to consolidate itself. The emergence of democratic possibilities in the country are by no means guarantees for its continued existence. South Africa, like other nations, could easily succumb to the totalitarian impulses within its midst. Democracy must thus continuously be worked at. It must be constantly nurtured by appropriate behaviour and policies that facilitate its continuation. Scholars (both in academia and in associated organisations) can assist in this process by analysing the conditions that facilitate this goal, and by making recommendations on policies that will strengthen the democratic forces that have been unleashed. This contribution is written in that spirit.

NOTES

1 The definition of democracy that underlies this article is a proceduralist, minimalist and anti-substantive one - a definition that is most often identified with Joseph Schumpeter's classic 1942 study of procedural democracy, entitled *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. This procedural definition, following Robert Dahl, holds that a country can be described as democratic if it is simply distinguished by contested elections based on universal franchise, as well as having the civil and political freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and organisation that are necessary for political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns. Although I do not believe that this is the only possible form of democracy, I have used it as the basis for this

article because almost all political actors and academic writings on the transition have interpreted democracy in these terms, and have taken procedural democracy as their desired end goal.

2 I would like to thank Ashwin Desai, Kenneth Erickson, Howard Lentner, Vishnu Padayachee, Rupert Taylor, and an anonymous referee, for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

3 *Time*'s lead article, entitled 'Time to Take Charge', referred to the transition as that miracle 'brought forth by Nelson Mandela and F.W. De Klerk ... ' It went on to suggest that the elections 'represented a triumph of patience forbearance and political wisdom' (*Time*, 9 May 1994:24).

4 This is not surprising given the fact that the ANC and SACP had since the 1960's conceptualised South Africa as a 'colony of a special type'. For a recent elaboration of the concept, see *The Path to Power: Programme of the South African Communist Party*, 1989, Inkululeko Publications. Recently, there has been some debate within party circles on whether the current transition represents a national democratic revolution as had been envisaged by the party's programme, or a national bourgeois revolution. For a discussion of this debate, see *The African Communist*, 1993:133.

5 This accounts for the enormous popularity of O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986). For applications of their framework to South Africa, see van Zyl Slabbert, (1992) and Du Toit, (1990). Another similar attempt to conceptualise the South African transition as an example of those underway in Latin America and Southern Europe is Rantete and Giliomee, (1992).

6 This is the implication in Saul (1991 and 1992). For a critique of these works, see Desai and Habib (1994 and 1995).

7 It should be noted that AZAPO conceptualises the white minority as a settler-colonial class, and will therefore maintain that white control of the economy represents a neo-colonial outcome. This conceptualisation, however, is an oversimplification and does not appreciate the birthright of the majority of South Africa's populace.

8 See, for instance, Erickson and Peppe (1976). These authors argue that the massive inflow of foreign capital into Latin America in the mid to late fifties significantly diminished for industrialists the utility of political cooperation with the working class, 'thereby establishing one of the foundational elements on which the military regimes' resided (1976:26).

9 Most of these identities are what Benedict Anderson (1983) would refer to as 'imagined communities'; that is, unlike classes, they do not exist 'as a result of a structured position in society'. For a useful introductory discussion of one such imagined identity, ethnicity, see Maré (1993).

10 Maré (1993) makes a strong case for not ignoring ethnicity as an explanatory factor of people's actions. He argues that there is a need to 'contextualise ethnicity within a context of material conditions and class relations. Political and economic mobilisation of ethnic sentiments occurs within a context of class relations and class power. Ethnic mobilisation frequently occurs in situations of uneven development, of colonial exploitation, and of political and economic domination. This factor has to form part of the investigation of the origins of ethnic identity, the re-awakening of ethnic sentiments, and the operation of ethnic manipulators'.

11 This need not mean that the literature completely ignores structural factors. Indeed, many of the scholars who have contributed to this literature, often note the collapse of communism and/or other global and national structural features, in their analyses. Very few, if any of them, however, go on to explore how these structural features impact on the negotiated outcome and conditioned the substantive aspects of the transition.

12 One of the distinguishing characteristics of this new context is the absence of the Soviet Union. Its collapse reduced the resource base of the SACP, and significantly weakened the radical wing of the ANC. The structural economic crisis of South Africa, and the need for large-scale financial resources to restructure the economy and narrow the levels of inequality amongst racial groups, strengthened the moderate wing of the ANC as it became apparent that the country required significant resources from international financial agencies and the industrialised nations. These developments, the internationalisation of capital, and the dominance of neoliberal economic thinking globally (in the wake of the Reagan-Thatcher revolution), also enhanced the power capabilities of domestic capital, leading Sitas (1993) to conclude that 'its interests and claims appear natural and legitimate, ... and in every calculation and consideration its profitability and performance is at the centre of everyone's worries'(75).

13 Huntington argues that economic development promotes democracy because it facilitates tolerance and education, increases trade thereby creating private wealth, alters the value structure of society by opening it up to democratic ideas prevalent in the industrialised world, and makes economic resources available for distribution.

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