

## CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

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In a democracy it is not an easy task to deal effectively with a sustained terrorist threat. Civil liberties, constitutionally entrenched rights and the rule of law come at a cost when it comes to fighting terrorism: the state has to expend considerable resources and patiently collect evidence over frustratingly lengthy periods of time to successfully convict the kingpins in a closely knit terrorist network. This requires excellent teamwork between the various intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and a motivated and specialised investigating and prosecuting unit devoted to identifying and convicting terrorists.

Even more difficult to deal with is an ethnocentric and religious inspired terrorist campaign. Such a campaign can successfully take advantage of popular grievances against the central government, and exploit ethnically-based aspirations for greater political and cultural autonomy.

To crack an isolated terror cell is possible. To defeat a band of terrorists who are abetted in their actions by a growing group of sympathisers in large parts of the country is almost impossible. The former can be done through good police and intelligence work alone. The latter requires a political solution.

One way to respond, as the South African government has done, is to foster national integration and develop a true South African identity and national spirit among all ethnic groups. This may work to an extent. Not so much because of state-driven nation building campaigns, but because of national successes such as South Africa's 1995 World Cup rugby victory. In fact, Smith warns that government efforts at nation building may even be counterproductive:

In their desire for social integration, the leaders of these [poly-ethnic] states generally employ policies of cultural assimilation... unfortunately, the very act of integrating such divided peoples may well exacerbate ethnic antagonisms and highlight ethnic solidarities.<sup>313</sup>

A political solution to a sustained right wing threat will invariably contain elements which are unpalatable for the ANC and many of its supporters. For

example, it will not be easy for an ANC controlled government to justify spending more resources on preventing and combating farm attacks while levels of violent crime are also extremely high in the country's townships. Fortunately many of the grievances farmers have about farm attacks are not directly related to resources. Many farmers believe that virtually all farm attack victims are white and that convicted farm attackers are not punished harshly by the courts. These are misconceptions which can be changed through a credible public information campaign targeted at the white commercial farming community. Moreover, black leaders who make inciting statements against white farmers need to be relieved of their public duties, and their statements must be condemned by senior government officials, up to the level of the president's office. The government's land reform programme, especially in respect of providing state land to the landless, should be expedited.

Given that affirmative action has been cited as a significant grievance for right wing and moderate whites alike, affirmative action policies need to be tempered by economic considerations, and the right of employees to employ persons of their choice. The implementation of affirmative action must be carefully managed so as not to demoralise and humiliate white male employees and job seekers. Consideration should be given to whether it is fair that future job seekers born after, say 1990, should be employed and promoted according to affirmative action guidelines. Present affirmative action legislation should not become a permanent fixture on the statute books, but be repealed at a fixed time in the not too distant future.

Probably the most controversial concession the government can consider is granting Afrikaners greater political and even territorial autonomy. Such an issue should be approached from the perspective of ethnic minorities generally in South Africa. South Africa is essentially a unitary state with some weak federal elements. It is also a country where voters vote largely along racial lines. For example, in the 1999 national election the ANC received over 80% of the black vote. In a post election poll 77% of black ANC voters said they would still vote for the ANC even if it failed to fulfil its promises over the following five years (and less than 9% said they would vote for another party).<sup>314</sup> This suggests that there is little prospect of a change in government for many years to come. A consequence of such racial consolidation is that "the opposition tends to be peripheral to the system".<sup>315</sup> Unsurprisingly, in a national opinion survey in early 2000, a third of white respondents indicated that they had not voted in the previous election (compared to 13% of black respondents)—a likely consequence of the political alienation experienced by white South Africans. Responses by Afrikaners only were not provided.<sup>316</sup>

South Africa's political system, and the racial solidarity of its voters, sidelines ethnically based minority groups to a position of perpetual opposition and political marginalisation. Even liberal commentators argue that the drafters of the country's constitution should have given "more serious consideration to balancing the numerical principle with more substantial provisions for the incorporation of minority interests".<sup>317</sup>

A compromise to the dilemma of accommodating the fair and reasonable aspirations of the ethnic Afrikaner minority may be to investigate forms of cultural or corporative self-determination. That is, a type of non-territorial federalism where distinguishable ethnic groups or communities live together, but take separate responsibility for their own cultural interests and, at the same time, strive towards co-operation in respect of matters of common interest.<sup>318</sup>

It may be tempting to believe that large scale ethnic mobilisation and ethno-centrism is extremely unlikely in an era of globalisation and multiculturalism. The sad fact is that real and perceived ethnic grievances can quickly explode into ethnic conflict (and, in extreme cases, even 'ethnic cleansing'), as recent events in the Balkans, Chechnya, Rwanda and, indeed, South Africa in the run up to the 1994 election, have shown. While national elites often adopt cosmopolitan value systems, the much larger number of people who are not part of the economic or political elite tend to have a much more parochial worldview.

American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, argues that most decision makers and opinion formers in the Western world subscribe to what may be called the 'Davos Culture'. Each year about 1,000 businesspeople, bankers, government officials, intellectuals and journalists from throughout the world meet in the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Almost all of these people hold university degrees in the social or physical sciences, business or law, work with ideas, words or numbers, are fairly fluent in English, are employed by governments, corporations, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions with extensive international involvements, and travel frequently outside their own country. They generally share beliefs in individualism, market economies and political democracy. Huntington makes a convincing argument that while 'Davos people' are extremely important and powerful in world and national affairs, they constitute a small minority of the world's population.<sup>319</sup>

In South Africa Davos-type people dominate the national economy, media and formal civil society, and constitute the bulk of the country's political elite.

It is probable that 95% or more of the readers of this monograph are Davos-type people. This, however, does not make Davos culture the national culture in South Africa. Davos culture is probably shared by not more than two to four million South Africans—less than a tenth of the population. Outside of the major cities, it is likely to be less than a fiftieth of the population. For Huntington this kind of reality leads to the conclusion that while globalisation might be taking place on an economic level, on a political level most people define themselves on the basis of ancestry, language, religion and custom:

Spurred by modernization, global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart... Political boundaries increasingly are redrawn to coincide with cultural ones: ethnic, religious, and civilizational.<sup>320</sup>

Huntington's thesis, while useful, risks being too dichotomous. In South Africa's case the divergence between Davos and non-Davos type people is not always clear cut. There are many mainstream Afrikaners who subscribe to most elements of the Davos culture, but who are nevertheless concerned about the future and interests of their ethnic group. Since the late 1990s a number of discourses traditionally unique to the Afrikaner right have been taken up by the Afrikaner establishment. Over the last few years there has been a revival of Afrikaans culture and language, and a variety of Afrikaner civil society movements. The intellectual and cultural battle in defence of Afrikaans and Afrikaner culture, which was the preserve of the right wing in the 1980s and early 1990s, has been adopted by the broad Afrikaner mainstream.

In defence of cultural and linguistic rights which are perceived to be under pressure, many cosmopolitan and modern Afrikaners are beginning to mobilise around ethnic issues. This mobilisation is taking place not only within rural and conservative communities, but also among traditionally liberal Afrikaner academics, Afrikaans authors and artists and in the editorial offices of the country's largest Afrikaans-language newspapers.

Other, less ethnically aware Afrikaners, are emigrating. These are primarily well educated and prosperous people who are disillusioned with the new South Africa. A developing country such as South Africa crucially needs to retain the skills and human capital such emigrants are taking with them.

Government efforts at alleviating Afrikaner concerns need not be directed primarily at the concerns of the Afrikaner right. More importantly, such efforts

need to address the fears and reasonable aspirations of the Afrikaner mainstream. Once a significant portion of the Afrikaner mainstream emigrates, engages in 'internal emigration' by withdrawing from public life and its civic responsibilities, or interprets political events along mainly antagonistic ethnic terms, the threat to the country's economic and political stability is likely to be greater than a few isolated bombings by the extreme right.

The extreme white right does not have the resources, capacity or support to successfully execute a coup d'état in South African. It also lacks the broad popular support and access to military weaponry to successfully proclaim and defend an Afrikaner or Boer state in any part of the country. It would be naïve, however, to presume that the extreme white right cannot create instability and destruction on a significant scale.

The twenty-first century may well see the world becoming increasingly vulnerable to small groups of extremists. According to Canadian political scientist, Thomas Homer-Dixon, this vulnerability is the product of two key social and technological developments. First, the growing complexity and interconnectedness of modern societies. Secondly, the increasing geographic concentration of wealth, human capital, knowledge and communication links. For Homer-Dixon the growing technological capacity of small groups to destroy infrastructure and people, and the increasing vulnerability of a country's economic and technological systems to carefully aimed attacks, has empowered small groups of extremists.<sup>321</sup>

South Africa's industry, wealth and human capital are concentrated in a few metropolitan areas. A number of powerful bombs, strategically placed, could cause considerable harm to South Africa's fragile economy by frightening away foreign investment, hard currency tourists and cash laden international conference attendees. Strategic targets are not difficult to identify. A dozen bombs targeting, for example, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the Reserve Bank, key bridges along busy national roads, one or two international airports, the Koeberg nuclear power station, a prominent foreign embassy and a luxury hotel filled with foreign tourists would see the rand plummeting, tourists fleeing the country and an end to foreign direct investment. Alternatively, the assassination of a handful of cabinet ministers and popular black political or religious leaders could take the country to the brink of a race war.

To ensure their long term success, terrorists need the support of parts of the community in which they live. Terrorists—besides the exceptional loner who works on his own—are members of bigger groups and gangs that provide

them with logistical support and finances to further their cause. Moreover, terrorists have families, friends, and lovers, and live in a bigger community in which they plan their deeds, build their bombs and talk about their ideas and actions. Terrorists who live and hide among people who do not co-operate with law enforcement agencies can be a state's biggest nightmare. Such a scenario must be avoided at all costs in South Africa.