

CHALLENGES TO POLITICAL COSMOPOLITANISM: THE IMPACT OF RACIALISED DISCOURSES IN POST- APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: One of the key challenges of post-apartheid South Africa has been the need to create a South African “nation.” The efforts of the leading African National Congress started with Nelson Mandela’s reconciliatory discourse of a “rainbow nation,” via Thabo Mbeki’s concept of the African Renaissance, to the current stream of racial nationalism articulated as “Africanisation.” The present article attempts to examine the dilemma which the ANC as the major custodian of nation-building has been facing since the 1990s: how to reach a balance between a civic nationalism based on cosmopolitan values and the need to redress the legacy of apartheid and persisting racial inequalities. It is argued that the current culturalist discourse of Africanisation is not only contentious but also dangerous for the cohesion of the fragile democratic society of post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: *Political Cosmopolitanism, South Africa, Post-apartheid, Race, Nationalism, Africanisation*

Introduction

One of the key challenges of post-apartheid South Africa has been the need to create a South African “nation.” The efforts of the leading African National Congress (ANC), in power since 1994, started with Nelson Mandela’s reconciliatory discourse of the “rainbow nation.” This metaphor was a direct response to the apartheid legacy of a deeply divided society polarised along racial lines. This discourse of the “rainbow nation,” a non-racial society and the ethos of reconciliation is legally embedded in one of the most liberal constitutions worldwide. It showed clear features of cosmopolitan thought that aims at creating

social cohesion in a racially divided society. However, this discourse of “rainbowism” has gradually been superseded by Africanism. When Thabo Mbeki became president, the nation-building discourse shifted to the African Renaissance, emphasising the need to renew the entire African continent. In his famous “South Africa: Two Nations” address of 1998, Mbeki directed the ANC party rhetoric toward a more exclusive form of nationalism by pronouncing that there were two nations, one white and rich, the other black and poor. For the first time after the demise of apartheid, an explicit public emphasis on race was formulated by a leading politician. By and large, the ANC under Mbeki, though still officially promoting non-racial politics as a backbone of civic nationalism, already promoted a form of narrow African nationalism, stressing a discourse of indigeneity (Chipkin 2007). With Jacob Zuma, the third president of the democratic South Africa, another stream of ethno-nationalism characterised by nativism and populism emerged while maintaining an “official” rhetoric of the ideal of a non-racial society.

The current shift of South African nationalist discourse from the all-inclusive, liberal, into the exclusivist, essentialist form signals a substantial retreat from the cosmopolitan ideals espoused by Nelson Mandela. This change is particularly salient in public space where “insurgent citizenship” (Johnston 2014: 278) is manifested in diverse forms. From 2015 on, social protest has encompassed broader popular antagonisms, namely, discontent over the character and pace of transition to democracy.¹ Predominantly black youths, the so-called “born-free” generation, show much discontent with the current degree of transformation and explicitly express disrespect to many who embody the cosmopolitan values of the early transition, such as expressed by Mandela.

The aim of this article is to critically engage with the complex realities of South Africa’s post-apartheid nation-building and top-down political initiatives. It points to the inherent dilemma the ANC as the major custodian of nation-building has been facing since the negotiated settlement of the 1990s, namely, how to reach a balance between a civic nationalism based on cosmopolitan values and the need to redress the

1 See, for instance, Horáková forthcoming: “Student protest movements in post-apartheid South Africa: Belated transformation and unfinished decolonization” in *Archiv Orientální. Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 86(3), 2018.

legacy of apartheid and persisting racial inequalities. The contradiction of this dual conception of nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa (between civic and African nationalism) is translated into the following research questions: What are the main stumbling blocks to nation-building in South Africa? What complicates the South African civic nation-building project initiated by Nelson Mandela? What are the reasons for a gradual eroding and undermining of Mandela's universalist, cosmopolitan conception of a South African nation? What are the prospects for a civic nation in South Africa? And what is the impact of the resurrected narrow nationalism on South Africa's nation-building and, by extension, democracy?

The text is divided into four main parts. The first section examines the ways in which cosmopolitanism is debated and experienced in Africa. The second examines Mandela's political cosmopolitanism as an example of elite cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006) and points out both its power and its limitations in post-apartheid South Africa. Much of the current rhetoric of Africanisation is conceptualised as "indigenisation" with an ongoing imperative for "real" transformation and decolonisation and this approach is elaborated in the third section. Since questions of nationhood and identity are inextricably linked to South Africa's democratic prospects, the concluding section discusses the political impact of resurrected narrow nationalism wrapped in the racialised discourses on South African democracy. It is argued that the current culturalist discourse of Africanisation is not only contentious but also dangerous for the cohesion of the fragile democratic society of post-apartheid South Africa. The present article primarily draws on secondary literature, as well as on newspaper articles, policy documents and official governmental press statements.

Cosmopolitanism in Africa

The word "cosmopolitan" implies a wide variety of attitudes in moral and socio-political philosophy. The core shared by practically all, so-called cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, irrespective of their political affiliation, can and should belong to a single community, based on a shared morality (Kleingeld and Brown 2014). However, many different versions of cosmopolitanism imagine this community in diverse ways, some focusing on political institutions

and others on moral norms or relationships, while still others concentrate on shared markets or forms of cultural expression (*ibid.*).² In most versions of cosmopolitanism, the universal community of world citizens functions as a positive ideal to be established and developed (*ibid.*). Such a conception nevertheless generates two major objections to cosmopolitanism: first, its idealist nature and the difficulty of realising the cosmopolitan ideal (Davids 2018); and second, its desirability, as for some it bears traits of Eurocentrism or “false” universalism. Some intellectuals holding “exceptionalist” views of cosmopolitanism would claim that it is politically rooted in the historical and ideological experience of the West, and hence is not universal. Generalisations about a dichotomy between a “naturally cosmopolitan West” and the rather unc cosmopolitan rest of the world have triggered many critical attitudes, arguing that cosmopolitanism is by no means an elite phenomenon bound to the West (C. Eze 2017). The notion of “glocalised cosmopolitanism” (Tomlison 1999), emphasising the capacity to live ethically in both a global and a local space, means that cosmopolitanism can be observed in multiple social situations that are characterised by flux, uncertainty, and encounters with difference. From this perspective we can approach Africa as a place of cosmopolitanism, where people’s lives are characterised by an enormous cultural and linguistic complexity, also as the result of long-term hybridisation, and by transnational mobility including migration, nomadism, and diaspora.

Contrary to the (mis-)representation of Africa in public discourse as the “Dark Continent,” it is legitimate to view Africa as a profoundly cosmopolitan space. Evidence stems, for instance, from Africa’s involvement in the world economy; the implosion of the dichotomy between the urban and the rural; the dichotomy between between the formal and the informal economy (Mbembe 2001). Furthermore, African society re-composes itself around a whole host of commercial and religious networks (Mbembe 2002). Last but not least, we also witness the growing internationalisation of African social mobilisation.³ These developments all point to the accelerated pluralisation of African societies and to its ongoing transnationalisation (Mbembe 2001).

2 It is beyond the scope of this article to present a comprehensive review of the literature on cosmopolitanism.

3 E.g. the Oxford university protest inspired by South Africa’s #RhodesMustFall movement (see Nyamnjoh 2016).

But which shape does cosmopolitanism in Africa take? As Appiah (2006) has argued, at least two versions of cosmopolitanism emerged in late 20th century Africa, namely the practical and the elitist. The former is often associated with *petits migrants* who are involved in religious, economic or cultural exchanges, adding to the existing hybridity and forms of creolisation. The latter is associated with the elite's attempts to reconstruct an African identity according to universal values, either striving to revive tradition and custom, or to appropriate symbolic resources of globalisation. Another form of cosmopolitanism among the elites is based on distancing themselves from tradition while emphasising the institutions that favour egalitarian participation and universal human rights. Most recent scholarship exploring the concept of cosmopolitanism revolves around three mutually intertwined perspectives. First, it criticises a Eurocentric core that ignores African content and context (Davids 2018),⁴ while emphasising universal humanity as the glue with which to construct a better and more just world.

The appeal for mutual respect and understanding among people is closely connected with the second perspective, namely trying to reconcile the tension between the global and the local. In his seminal work *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* Appiah (2006) points out that two strands of cosmopolitan thinking – one stressing global obligations, and the other celebrating local differences – help frame the tension between preserving local values and communities, and seeking universal standards. Appiah seeks to find an ethical terrain that allows for the flourishing of both, in other words, a cosmopolitanism in which individuals can give expression to a multiplicity of identities and loyalties while building a global community based on justice and respect to diversity.

Third, much of African philosophy revolves around the role and position of a person in the community, which is key in African traditional thought (Menkiti 1984), embedded as it is in the concept of *ubuntu*, i.e., to “recognise others in their unique differences, histories and subjective equation” (M. Eze 2017: 100). The essential point of departure of *ubuntu* can be underlined by Mbiti's statement, “I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am” (1969: 108).

4 To name just a few scholars: Appiah 2006; Davids 2018; Eze, C. 2017; Eze, M.O. 2010, 2017; Ramose 2014; Mbembe 2001.

The relational character of *ubuntu* is equally observable in other definitions, such as “a person exists only in relation to the other” (Schutte 2001: 23); “a person is a person through other people” (M. Eze 2010: 190–191). Complementarity between the “I” and “the Other” finds expression in Ramose’s (2014: 30) view on “transcending cosmopolitanism,” which is built on the presupposition of an ineradicable network of complex relationships between and among human beings.

Political Cosmopolitanism in Post-apartheid South Africa

Historically, (practical) cosmopolitanism in the South African context generally refers to pre-apartheid communities known for their racial integration and cultural diversity (Davids 2018). For a long time, cosmopolitan practices existed not only discursively but also functionally in many urban spaces across the country. Under apartheid, however, most of these culturally mixed spaces were physically destroyed. Post-apartheid South Africa is witnessing a cultural renewal of some of these spaces (such as District Six, Sophiatown, South End, Fietas, Lady Selborne), as well as the emergence of new spots of cultural *métissage*. To conceptualise this phenomenon, Davids (2018: 7) suggests using the concept of “cosmubuntism” to capture the evidence of global and local influence and the racial inclusiveness of these communities, which arguably even moves beyond some narrow ideas of European cosmopolitanism. The confluence of cosmopolitanism and *ubuntu* is a local expression of universal human values practised in “cosmubuntu” communities.

Political cosmopolitanism (or elite cosmopolitanism in Appiah’s perception) in South Africa is closely associated with the ANC. Despite the long-term persistence of white minority rule, the dominant discourse of the ANC has never been anti-white. The ANC’s non-racialism also led to its consistent strategic perspective during the armed struggle that it was the *system*, and not the whites who were the enemy. In the early 1990s, Nelson Mandela played an outstanding role as national reconciler and he was a key bearer of cosmopolitan attitudes. Yet, throughout its history, the ANC has been characterised by a rivalry between the ideas and practices based on cosmopolitan values (expressed in the concepts of constitutional nationalism

based on Charterism⁵), and narrow-looking ideas supporting racially or ethnically motivated discourses and practices. In other words, although the ANC has historically been the main driver of an inclusive, non-racial, “cosmopolitan” vision of South Africa, it has also played with the appeal of an exclusive, racial nationalism. In post-apartheid South Africa, this historical dichotomy persists within the ANC (see Wesemüller 2005). While in the 1990s, Mandela’s concept of the “rainbow nation” paid tribute to Charterism, Thabo Mbeki’s “two-nation” address could already be interpreted as a deviation from a cosmopolitan ethos. The recent upsurge of “black nationalism” in public discourse, however, is cause for concern, particularly for those who are meant to espouse the founding values of non-racialism of the ANC (Monethi 2018).

Over the Rainbow

There are many reasons for initially focussing on Mandela. First, South Africa’s “miracle” transition is largely credited to him. Second, the way in which Mandela was able to captivate diverse segments of the “deeply divided” South African population, especially Afrikaners, was unprecedented (see, for instance, Giliomee 2003). Third, although his official mandate as president lasted only five years, he has been called the most significant driver in the nation-building process (Johnston 2014: 140). Last but not least, universal values, cosmopolitan idealism and ideas of civic nationhood fitted the post-bipolar-world climate as South Africa was “re-joining the world” (Johnston 2014: 9).

Several cosmopolitan aspects of Mandela’s presidency with regard to the idea of a “rainbow nation” can be traced here. It is noteworthy that a variety of very diverse groups and communities, from black nationalists to white communists, from rugby players and novelists to world leaders and celebrities, were addressed by him and claimed his emblem to some extent. The impact of his political commitments and strategies is difficult to integrate into any single narrative (Lazea et al. 2014). Yet, as some scholars argue (Lazea et al. 2014; C. Eze 2017), there is legitimate reason for interpreting Mandela’s politics of first resistance and then reconciliation in a cosmopolitan way. The

5 The concept of Charterism is derived from the 1955 Freedom Charter’s demand for and commitment to a non-racial South Africa. This document has become the platform of the ANC’s post-apartheid nation-building project.

political concepts he used were cosmopolitan in nature. His plea that individuals should neither be regarded as enemies nor as extensions of their racial or communitarian identities, speaks (not only) for present-day South Africa. His book *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) can be read as a cosmopolitan proclamation: “No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite” (quoted in Binford 2014: 55). Mandela’s vision of South Africa as a country where all “races,” religions and peoples are equal in the eye of the law, democratic and free, has even lead Edet to propose the idea of “conceptual Mandelanization” in contemporary African philosophy, by which he means a “process of reconceptualising or radicalizing social issues, concepts and themes in view of the appropriated values and qualities of the deified personage of the Madiba toward the construction of a progressive Africa of the future” (Edet 2017: 29).

There are significant cosmopolitan interpretations in the way Mandela rejected the apartheid regime. In his role as a key ANC personality, he was able to overcome old dichotomies and struggles, and to renounce violence. After the demise of apartheid, he played a key role in negotiating a non-violent political transformation, avoiding substantial bloodshed, commonly termed a “small miracle.” His readiness to learn Afrikaans while in prison, which Hannerz (2006) calls “genuine cosmopolitanism,” can be read as an extraordinary willingness to engage with the Other.⁶ According to Chielo Eze (2017), Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu are widely recognised as leaders who identified cosmopolitan values as a duty to humanity. Mandela’s conception of cosmopolitanism is linked to the idea that people should cultivate feelings of empathy that can cut across race, religion, ethnicity, etc.; and it is closely associated with *ubuntu*. The consistency between Mandela’s words of reconciliation and its work in the government of national unity enabled him to achieve both local and global political success in the early 1990s. Domestically, South

6 Mandela’s motivation to learn Afrikaans can also be viewed as a political strategy. In his book *Long Walk to Freedom* he describes that as a boxer he knew one needed to study the moves of the opponent to achieve victory. It was only later that he concluded that speaking to someone in his or her own language speaks to the person’s heart (I am grateful for this comment to one of the reviewers).

Africans in 1996 succeeded in establishing arguably one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. Mandela's discourse of non-racialism and human rights became a backbone of the constitution. In the late 1990s, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) documented crimes perpetrated by the apartheid state without taking revenge against those responsible. It operated in the constitution's spirit to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" (Plagemann 2015: 154). One of the most celebrated examples of Mandela's nation-building charisma was his reconciliatory gesture⁷ towards the Springbok team⁸ during the 1995 rugby World Cup, which has become a persuasive foundation myth to nation-building (Johnston 2014: 141-147).

South Africa under Nelson Mandela was also celebrated for its transformational leadership in foreign affairs. Mandela's 1993 article "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy," appreciating human rights as "the light that guides foreign affairs," democracy and diversity, peace and international cooperation, reads like a cosmopolitan manifesto (Plagemann 2015). One of the unique signs of this cosmopolitan spirit can be seen in Mandela's ability to transform the local liberation struggle into a universal symbol of resistance and reconciliation (Lazea et al. 2014). His capacity to inspire the world with universal concerns of justice and human rights; his efforts to help bring peace to troubled countries such as Northern Ireland, DRC, Angola, or Burundi; as well as his ability to address the wider international community with issues such as nuclear disarmament, international conflict, peace processes and human rights, make way for a humanist political model that has the potential to be put into universal use (ibid. 168). The concept of the rainbow nation based on reconciliation and mutual respect "became one of the most potent political tropes of the late twentieth century" (Johnston 2014: 5).

Mandela's contribution to nation-building illustrates both the power and the limitations of an individual, elite humanism. As Johnston

7 Given that rugby had been a traditionally white' sport in South Africa, it was no arbitrary matter that Mandela met with the team, wore the jersey of the Springbok captain Francois Pienaar, and publicly rejoiced with them.

8 Springbok is the name of the rugby team that arguably represented the sporty essence of apartheid ideology.

argues, the Mandela World Cup myth, although a convincingly representative demonstration of *lived* non-racialism, was enough for the moment (post-apartheid euphoria of the 1990s), but not enough in the long run (Johnston 2014: 147). The problem was that his “exemplary, lived, humanistic non-racialism was not anchored by any searching and rigorous analysis of the structural legacies of apartheid and how to confront them” (Johnston 2014: 151). In other words, catchphrases of the rainbow nation and the New South Africa failed to address the abject material conditions of the majority of Africans.

Mandela’s successor, Thabo Mbeki, in contrast, sent a clearer message in addressing this issue by pointing to the “terrible deprivation” and the “dehumanisation” of millions of Africans in the country (Mbeki 1998). His critique on the nature of the previous nation-building project embedded in “rainbowism” was fully revealed in his “two nations” address (in which he describes the one as white and prosperous, the other as black and poor).⁹ Mbeki’s Manichean conceptualisation of a nation implied that all inequality is race-based. The collateral message, though equally significant, was that whites are a separate nation, an idea that was later deployed further under the Zuma presidency. Mbeki can serve as another example of the elitist approach to nation-building, although of a different kind than Mandela. While Mandela emphasised universal values, Mbeki added the more contested conceptualisation of “African” identity into nation-building. Both of them, however, reveal the limitations to the contributions of individual leaders to nation-building. This is not unusual, however. For centuries, the driving forces of nation-building have been charismatic individual leaders, metropolitan political classes, state sponsorship and mass media. However, their success relied on the wider support of the populace. This is not the case in South Africa, where there is a lack of synergy between top-down and bottom-up initiatives (Johnston 2014: 182). The former refer to the vertical relations between the state and citizens, involving consensual allegiance, while the latter imply horizontal relations between citizens as individuals, both formal and informal, and shared patterns of behaviour. Even if there are some indicators of shared life, there are more markers of difference, deviance and fragmentation among South

9 His reductionist portrayal of inequality as exclusively racial was ignoring the changing nature of inequality in South Africa, such as trends in declining racial inequality and rising intraracial inequality (Nattrass and Seekings 2005: 343).

Africans, in terms of “race,” language, ethnicity, cultural practices and social attitudes, which are widely recognised as challenges to social cohesion as part of any nation-building project.

From the “Age of Hope” to the “Age of Anger”

The post-apartheid euphoria of “rainbowism” and reconciliation has largely vanished (Roberts et al. 2010) and the racial equality envisaged by Mandela seems a far-away dream. Although race has always been an issue in South Africa, racial tensions have more recently intensified, also due to a generational conflict. The black youth seems to be much less reconciled with the current state of affairs than older people, which can be observed by the rise in student protest movements since 2015. Multiple interpretations are brought forward by scholars across disciplines and political commentators as to why nation-building is hampered. A concept of *double transition*¹⁰ (Webster and Adler 1999) appears to provide some explanation as to why the ANC, as the key political driving force of post-apartheid South Africa, has been “unofficially” undermining an inclusive, cosmopolitan vision of South Africa.

The political transition in South Africa coincided with the intensified effects of globalisation, especially with the advent of neoliberal economic ideologies and macro-economic policies. The central contradiction lies in the interconnectedness between the political and economic spheres after the neoliberal turn. Political democratisation brought the benefits positively endorsed by a majority population, such as freedom of political expression and participation, and yet the effects of neoliberal reform triggered economic volatility and rising socio-economic inequality, accompanied by social unrest, xenophobia and racism (Wood 2006: 234–243). The Janus-face of the transition came to full light during the second decade characterised by a great deal of disillusionment and pessimism in South African society. The “age of hope” that accompanied the birth of the New South Africa evaporated and shifted to an age of uncertainty and despair (Roberts

10 Double transition involves both the political transition from apartheid to a democratic order, and the economic transition to neoliberal policies, although these are wrapped up in the policies of affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment focused on the historically disadvantaged groups. For more information, see Webster and Adler (1999).

et al. 2010: 1). This has found expression in social protest movements and in multiple forms of populist and extremist political formations, especially the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) under the leadership of Julius Malema (Horáková 2014: 11–38).

The rise of populist politics went hand in hand with proliferating expressions of nationalism (Hart 2013: 4). Nation-building was a constant preoccupation of South Africa's elites in the early post-apartheid years (Johnston 2014: 5), but the ANC never satisfactorily resolved the contradiction between civic and African nationalism. The question who and what the improvised nation should represent, or what should be the unifying principles of South African national identity were never raised and tackled by their roots (Johnston 2014: 123). Hence, South Africa's hastily "improvised nation" (Johnston 2014: 2) is still in the making, rather than a *fait accompli*. ANC discourse shifted from Mandela's reconciliatory vision of the rainbow nation, over Mbeki's two-nation address, to the new nationalism characterised by nativism and populism under the Zuma presidency. Recent nationalisation is embedded in the narrative of the "national question," which is a key phrase of the ANC's project, the National Democratic Revolution (Hart 2013: 8). The latest and the most comprehensive plan of official nation-building in South Africa was the 2011 National Development Plan (NDP). Despite the official government commitment to promote the civic nation based on the Constitution and to prohibit narrow ethno-nationalisms, the difficulties how to tackle African nationalism vis-à-vis non-racialism have remained unresolved. The section "Transforming society and unifying the country" deals explicitly with nation-building. However, the NDP has few words on what constitutes a common culture (Johnston 2014: 194–195). The document tends to conceptualise nation-building challenges in dichotic terms, such as "unity and redress." Black Africans are conceptualised in the Manichean perspective as a "victim nation," hence redress, treated unproblematically as race-based, is central to building a national unity (Johnston 2014: 195).

There is both a continuity and a discontinuity in the ways the ANC has approached the issues of nation-building. Continuities exist between the ANC's pre-1990 formulation of African nationalism, Mbeki's two nations, and the NDP which insists on race as the basis for redress (Johnston 2014: 290). The discontinuities can be traced between

Mandela's cosmopolitan vision of the rainbow nation and Mbeki's reconceptualisation of what the South African nation is and should be (Johnston 2014: 4). For Mbeki, African nationalism referred to all Africans who suffer from the legacies of colonialism and apartheid both in South Africa, on the whole continent, and in the diaspora. He emphasised that "removing" apartheid was not enough. "The exclusively African nation of the downtrodden would become the non-racial, African nation of equality" (Johnston 2014: 174).

Resurrected Racial Nationalism as "Africanisation"

The recent nationalist renewal articulated as "Africanisation" was only recently promoted during the Zuma presidency, but his predecessor, Mbeki, had laid a solid foundation with his "two nation" speech.¹¹ The very idea of Africanisation is highly contested, and the term itself is complex and heterogeneous (Naidoo 2016). There are many definitions of what the concept of Africanisation entails. One of these underlines the need to promote African culture, traditions and value systems such as communalism or the African ethic of *ubuntu* ("personhood" or "humanness"), while also fostering an understanding of African identity *within the world community* (Higgs 2015; Horsthemke 2009). Another approach builds on the assumption that African culture is *the only* basis of all forms of knowledge, and as such fails to respect diversity (e.g. Ramose 1998). In some interpretations the primary aim is focused on restoring African culture while suppressing "Western" thought. The debate on Africanisation inevitably has developed as part of the larger discourse on the transformation of higher education that is still, more than two decades after the demise of apartheid, heavily dependent on Western epistemic culture. The approaches to Africanisation within the South African academia are equally heterogeneous (Suttner 2010). Arguably, the more radical approaches are associated with the South African student generation, the so-called born-free generation, that is, the generation that did not directly experience apartheid nor the transition to democracy. Though "born-free," this generation is currently caught in a double trap, between socio-economic disillusionment and existential pain (Louw 2016).

11 Nevertheless, "Zuma watershed" (Piper 2009) represents a more authentic strain of African nationalism, different from Mbeki (Johnston 2014: 293), opening up a public space for populism and chauvinism.

Their discontent is being manifested through participation in or support of protest movements demanding a “real” decolonisation and transformation. These movements, triggered by the #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town in 2015 (Nyamnjoh 2016), are highly mediated for their critical stance on Mandela’s legacies.

Many black Africans, especially the youth, see Mandela’s reconciliation and “rainbowism” as having “sold-out.” Most public tertiary institutions, both formerly Afrikaans universities and English-speaking “liberal” universities, became targets of student protest and activism. Student movements such as #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #End Outsourcing, and #Open Stellenbosch all share the common aim of decolonising institutions. Some have even proposed protest movements such as #MandelaMustFall (Munusamy 2015, in C. Eze 2017: 237). The controversial painter, Ayanda Mabulu, calls Mandela “a dignified bastard, a political slut,” arguing that he “was just an image, an idolised black man, a colourful image in so-called ‘rainbow colours’ who gave away property rights to the oppressor,” and that he was “a sell-out who readily acquired stardom but he forgot about the freedom of his people” (Mabulu 2015, in C. Eze 2017: 237).

Africanisation understood as “indigenisation” puts an emphasis on “transformation” in order to “purge” South Africa of the last vestiges of colonialism (Kistner 2008: 95). The outrage is directed against the symbols of colonialism and apartheid that epitomise the unfinished business of post-apartheid transformation (Nyamnjoh 2016). Public discourse is replete with slogans like “black lives matter,” originally a US-based slogan, “black pain” and “white privilege.”¹² Whiteness is seen as the epitome of privilege and supremacy, while black pain centres on the overall plight of African people in the New South Africa. Those who emphasise that white privilege persists, point to a host of contexts in which it manifests itself, such as in the corporate sector. White privilege is also seen in the inequalities between young black and white people when they start working. “For us black people, white privilege exists and is evident in so many of our ordinary, day-to-day interactions” (Ratshikuni 2018). Zama Mthunzi, a mathematical

12 See Black Lives Matters – Facebook page 2018; Hendrics 2016; Ramsdem 2015; Mosala 2016. “Black pain” is not only juxtaposed to “white privilege” but also to “white tears,” implying “the perilous plight of white South Africans, who are being discriminated against” (see Helm 2018).

sciences student at the University of Witwatersrand, made a T-shirt with an inscription “Fuck White People.” In explaining the hate slogan, he states that he felt excluded when he saw white students paying school fees whereas he did not have money to pay his (C. Eze 2017: 237).

Although there is no denial that “white privilege” is part of the ongoing legacy of apartheid, the problem with the constructed opposition between white privilege and black pain is that it almost unanimously singles out whites as the sole cause of the manifold problems in the post-apartheid era. Undoubtedly, legacies of colonialism and apartheid, especially the socio-economic inequality, tend to complicate current efforts at nation-building. However, the explanation of inequality as a sole problem inherited from colonialism and apartheid, which is the main ANC narrative, tends to ignore the ANC’s 24-years in parliament. In addition, several of the measures implemented turned out to be both static and controversial.¹³

The ANC’s insistence on inequality as the colonial and apartheid legacy tends to ignore the fact that most of the socio-economic indicators such as the unemployment rate or socio-economic inequality have worsened under the ANC-led government (Hart 2013; Statistics South Africa 2018). The Left¹⁴ – especially the SACP and COSATU, though they are part of the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC – claims that the main problem lies in the political-economic orientation¹⁵ of the ruling party; a broader critique predominantly points at the vast political

13 The diverse measures of redress such as the affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programmes in combination with economic growth had some effects on reducing poverty and socio-economic inequality but poverty is on the rise in South Africa, compared to the years between 2006 and 2011. More than half of South Africa’s population was poor in 2015, with the poverty headcount increasing to 55,5 percent from 53,2 percent in 2011. Compared to the country’s poverty situation from a decade earlier, poverty affected two-thirds of South Africans (Statistics South Africa 2018). Moreover, the critique claims that the BEE was primarily skewed towards an insider elite and affirmative action mostly favoured the educated and the skilled (Johnston 2014: 247).

14 The ongoing accusation from the Left is that the ANC government has sold out redistribution to global neoliberalism (Johnston 2014: 8).

15 The ANC adopted conservative neoliberal macro-economic policies in 1996. Despite the early 2000s’ declaration of anti-neoliberal and pro-poor policies under the Zuma administration, the ANC’s macro-economic policies remain neoliberal (Hart 2013).

mismanagement¹⁶ (see Hart 2013; Johnston 2014; Ballard et al. 2006; Foster 2012).

The catchphrases of “black pain” and “white privilege” tend to foster a dualistic view of the world and thus essentialise the two categories – blackness and whiteness. In effect, the racial classification, which was the backbone of the apartheid regime, is being re-invented rather than transcended. Anyone who utilises such a discourse bears the risk of being abused by those who are in power. Polarising race discourse based on essentialism creates conflict-riddled identity politics and is counter-productive to social cohesion in South Africa (Rudwick 2018). The “decolonising” attempts to reject whiteness in its entirety – individual, societal, and institutional – tend to reinforce colonial and apartheid racial identities. The desire to create a singular identity (black African) is not only morally objectionable but also contains within itself the potential for violence because it is, by nature, exclusionary (C. Eze 2017: 238).

Conclusion

Despite the enormous efforts the ANC have made to build a post-apartheid South African nation, the process of nation-building is far from finished. South Africa appears to be a nation-in-waiting, rather than a nation achieved (Johnston 2014: 118). This article has highlighted some of the challenges to the nation-building project. The key problem is that the ANC has never satisfactorily resolved the contradiction between civic and African nationalism. Although the ANC has been the official custodian of non-racialism in the past 27 years, it was always trying to find a balance between versions of non-racialism and African nationalism, emphasising one or the other according to the needs of the time or the audience. Furthermore, the continuing ambiguity over the status of African nationalism led to

¹⁶ One of the key concerns for nation-building and by extension for democratic prospects is a fusion between party (the ANC) and the state apparatus. Further on, crime and corruption can affect nation-building progress as they undermine both horizontal relationships between citizens, and vertical relationships between citizens and the state (Johnston 2014: 205, 265). Last but not least, public protests revealing a grass-root discontent and anger with the failure of the state to provide basic services can equally shake confidence in democratic consolidation (Ballard et al. 2006).

a failure to articulate what a unified “national” culture should entail in practice, and how this can be reached. As a result, the question who is an African – who can appropriate the African identity, or to whom can be ascribed the African identity – keeps looming large over nation-building even in contemporary South Africa.

The present article initially examined the ANC’s cosmopolitan nation-building project during the Mandela presidency, which aimed at the ideal of non-racialism, reconciliation, and human rights. Then the discussion moved first to Mbeki’s “two-nation” speech and a focus on racial inequalities and differential access to social and cultural capital, and finally to the Zuma era that gave rise to a narrowly conceived racial nationalism understood as Africanisation. The key question, whether the ANC has betrayed its heritage of non-racialism, is difficult to answer as the contours of non-racialism, especially the ways of instrumentalising this vision, or what in practice a non-racial society would be, remain unclear and open to interpretation. As Mangcu (2005: 116) claims, the ANC has never articulated the political inclusiveness in detail.

Moreover, critics point to an anachronistic form of African nationalism, which is an obstacle to constructing a civic nation. Johnston, for instance, writes that exclusiveness, the marginalisation of minorities, and the possibility that African nationalism emerges as a form of majority racial domination from the camouflage of non-racialism, while the civic nation ranks among the potential problems associated with the ethno-nationalism in South Africa (Johnston 2014: 3, 170). On the other hand, political cosmopolitanism wrapped up in civic nationalism also poses significant problems in post-apartheid South Africa. A classic critique of liberal society claims that “equal rights are a sham in the face of material inequality” (Johnston 2014: 169). Today, it seems to be more and more evident that the idea of the civic nation was problematic from the very beginning. As has been shown, one of the main obstacles to nation-building are weak horizontal and vertical attachments as a result of both race-linked poverty and inequality, and of a weak and ineffective state (shortcomings in health, education, local government, along with patronage, corruption, political favouritism). Moreover, widespread public protests hinder the creation of horizontal attachments, which are essential to nation-

building. All these issues have the capacity to erode prospects of the full realisation of civic national citizenship.

At present, the fundamentals of civic nationalism in South Africa are endangered by a populist form of narrow African nationalism. The current discourse and practices exhorting to celebrate narrowly conceived Africanisation have the potential to undermine the fragile South African democracy (Gumede 2014).

Racially charged nationalism could pose a menace to the process of South African nation-building and social cohesion. Indeed, some scholars argue that the resultant contemporary ANC nationalism bears striking similarities to the Afrikaner nationalism of the 1950s. A central feature of this nationalist project is ethnic/racial advance, in the form of black empowerment, which is reminiscent of Afrikaner *volkskapitalisme* (Louw 2004: 183). The legacy of Afrikaner nationalism, which manipulated “race,” culture and ethnicity in the service of policies of dispossession and human rights violation (Johnston 2014: 5), can serve as a deterrent. Concerns about replacing one form of ethno-racial domination (Afrikaner nationalism) with another (narrow nationalism conceived as Africanisation) are right in place. It is possible that a race-based society could be created anew, with some groups benefiting at the expense of others. Needless to state that neither Afrikaner nor African nationalism can serve as a tool of democratic national identity for all South Africans (Johnston 2014: 2). Both have been and still are exclusivist as they cannot offer a unifying principle to the multiple identities of current South Africa.

The danger in constructing narrow identities and claims of autochthony, which deny diversity and hybridity, is easily abused by politicians. As is evident from contemporary political commentaries, various social protest movements, such as the #FeesMustFall campaigns, have been backed by Julius Malema and his EFF party, whose populist politics continue to attract predominantly poor and marginalised black South Africans. Malema has succeeded in capturing the revolutionary potential of popular discontent and anger (Hart 2013) and continues to split up South African society, while pointing to white South Africans as “settlers” and as such “not-belonging.” Recently, the EFF motion for a constitutional amendment that would allow the expropriation of land without compensation was approved by Parliament (Cronin

2018a). The issue of land reform, although legitimate as most of the land is still in the hands of the white minority, remains problematic, since the EFF is silent about how expropriation would affect the land and the homes of black people (Cronin 2018b).

It is becoming more and more clear that the growing obsession with indigeneity in contemporary South Africa is not only contentious but also poses a threat to the fragile democratic society. *What are the prospects for making a viable nation in South Africa?*

In his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) as the elected president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa openly subscribed to the ethos of Charterism,¹⁷ while simultaneously recalling that “[W]e remain a highly unequal society, in which poverty and prosperity are still defined by *race*” (SONA 2018, my emphasis). In other words, the contradiction how to reconcile civic nationalism embedded in cosmopolitan values, and redress formulated in racial terms, persists.

It remains an open question whether the official version of the civic, constitutional nation, or a form of narrow nationalism conceptualised at present as Africanisation will prevail. The ANC has used both, in different situations, time periods and for different audiences. South Africa’s future depends on how the ANC comes to terms with its own history of nationalism. One possibility is that by re-installing a productive and inclusive leadership with political vision and carefully articulated policies, commitment and open-mindedness, the ANC rediscovers its cosmopolitan roots and reconciles itself to no longer cherishing narrow nationalism (Nyamnjoh 2016). Other possibilities are that it remembers (or invents) another nationalist past, either as the party of Africans, or that it increasingly positions itself as a regional, ethnic party. In the latter scenario, the party’s cosmopolitan commitments are likely to weaken (Chipkin 2016: 226).

A powerful current in ANC politics has historically always been cosmopolitan. However, given the country’s racial demography, apartheid legacy and lingering material inequalities, as well as the weak state, the prospects for implementing a “real” civic nation, which

17 “our belief that South Africa belongs to all who live in it”; “we are one nation”; “we are one people” (SONA 2018).

was Mandela's vision of South Africa as an open, cosmopolitan society (Eze 2017), remain bleak.

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