

POL. SC. I.

From Grundy: The Militarisation of South African Politics.

The Militarization of South African Politics

Centralization of Power and Security

39

cost-effective procedures and structures have been marked for reorganization, reduction, or dismantlement.

IV. THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL DISPENSATION

How will these trends toward governmental centralization and executive power be affected by the implementation of the new constitution? More specifically, will the elaborate security management system so painstakingly molded by P. W. Botha need to be substantially modified to conform to the new constitutional dispensation?

In order to answer these questions it is necessary to outline the new arrangements and how they work. A three-chambered legislature is composed of: a House of Assembly of 178 members representing 4.5 million whites; a House of Representatives of 85 members for the 2.5 million Coloureds; and a 45-member House of Delegates for the 800,000 Asians. A 4:2:1 ratio is thereby entrenched. The 21 million blacks are not represented at all. Each house will legislate exclusively for the "own affairs" of its racial community. Each will also be consulted on matters of "general affairs," such as foreign policy. In cases of dispute as to what is "general" and what is "own" affairs, the state president will adjudicate. Contact between the three houses is through a series of joint standing committees for "general affairs." There is still considerable confusion as to how they will function and how opposition parties will operate in these committees, if at all.

Overseeing the entire operation is the executive state president. The old office of prime minister is abolished. The state president is elected by an electoral college consisting of 50 whites, 25 Coloureds, and 13 Asians, in other words, effectively by the dominant party in the white House of Assembly. The executive president will take the lead in resolving disputes between the three chambers, normally by referring the issue to the President's Council, an advisory body of 60 members—20 elected by the white chamber, 10 by the Coloured representatives, and 5 by the Asians, plus 25 members appointed by the president. On disputes among chambers, the President's Council's decisions will be final and beyond appeal to the courts.

Government itself consists of an appointed cabinet selected by the president. This includes Coloured and Asian members (at present one of each), thereby breaking with South African tradition. Each chamber has a Ministers' Council for its own community affairs.

On 5 May, 1983 the new constitution was introduced in Parliament and in November it was placed in referendum before the white electorate.

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III. RISE OF THE "EXECUTIVE STATE"

This centralization of executive power in the cabinet and particularly in a few departments, an inner circle or inner cabinet as it has been called, grows out of a personal hierarchical approach to management, as opposed to a representative mode marked by compromise, consensus, and delay. Personalized though it may be in its South African garb, it is a phenomenon common to many Western democracies.

Particularly in the area of security policy, this restructuring of the policy machinery is widespread. In the United States, for example, the need for administrative integration has demanded more than departmental advocacy and competition. Consequently, recent presidents have placed more emphasis on their National Security Council and the national security advisor. In this way, matters of defense, intelligence, and diplomacy can be better coordinated. At its press conference in September 1983, the State Security Council of South Africa preferred to compare itself to the National Security Council of the United States. In fact, the SSC is better managed and more effective as a policy-making and coordinating tool. There is still a great deal of competition and "freelancing" among its various participants, but far less than in the American context. In the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, formerly the assistant to the president for national security affairs, the United States has, in effect, "a chaotic non-system."⁵ No one today would characterize the executive structure in Pretoria as "chaotic" or unsystematic.

The rise of the "executive state" in South Africa in turn has meant the decline of two institutions representative of the exclusive white community—the National Party and Parliament. Government from above, especially when it seeks to fashion policies likely to be unpopular with one's narrow and privileged constituency, has led to a paternalistic, centralist regime, a departure from the casual "democracy for the Herrenvolk," as it was once described by Pierre van den Berghe.⁶ Among right-wing Afrikaners Botha is accused of erecting, especially with the present executive presidency, a *verligte* (enlightened, or ideologically flexible) dictatorship. Other institutions too have gained or lost power and influence in the movement toward the executive state, some within the executive branch. The Department of Foreign Affairs seemed, before the Nkomati accord, to have fallen on hard times. The Information Department has been downgraded (now merged into Foreign Affairs), as has what once had been called Bantu Affairs (now the Department of Education and Development Aid), as well as the intelligence organ formerly known as BOSS and then DONS and now called the National Intelligence Service (NIS). Institutions so sloppily managed that autonomy and individuality led to embarrassment or worse and organizations with less than

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Both the PFP and the rightist Conservative Party urged a "no" vote. The PFP opposed the fact that Africans were not consulted on or to be represented in the new arrangements; the Conservatives objected to any representation for Coloureds and Asians, thereby destroying the principle of exclusive separation of power and white control of the central government. Neither Coloureds nor Asians were asked to participate in the referendum. Presumably their rejection or endorsement of the constitution was reflected in their voting behavior for their separate Houses in August 1984. Some 66 percent of the white voters approved the constitution and a pleased National Party began the detailed countdown for placing the new constitution into force by late 1984. But only 30 percent of the eligible Coloureds and 20 percent of the eligible Asians troubled to vote. The NP government claims that because of intimidation from militants, ignorance, and general apathy many stayed away from the polls, and thus these figures represent sufficient support for the new constitution.

Just how will the security management system dovetail or necessitate change as the constitution evolves? Generally, the changes are perfectly compatible with the evolving security system. One student, citing the well-informed military correspondent of the *Cape Times*, claims that the initiative for the current constitutional proposals came from SADF planning as far back as 1978.⁷ The implication is that this was done to justify call-up for Coloured and Indian youth—a manpower issue. More likely, constitutional revision involves the ever larger issues of political structure and executive authority and would not turn on the questionable argument that the SADF needs to expand its ranks. A strong executive president as envisioned in the constitution will legitimize the behavior of the last prime minister, in fact the same person, P. W. Botha. Indeed, parliamentary democracy has been fairly watered down in the past nine years or so. The potential for authoritarian executive leadership is greater now than before. In this sense, the criticisms of the Conservative Party have been incisive. Presumably a centralized security management system under a State Security Council dominated by military leaders need not be altered in the new order. It can easily evolve into a secretariat for the state president, especially in that the new cabinet will find its role ambiguous and the parliament's roles are unclear. A cabinet with Coloured and Asian members is unlikely to be brought into the most sensitive security issues, especially if they are defined in terms of the maintenance of white power. Will Coloureds and Asians be included in the SSC? Will the SSC's decisions be put before the mixed-race cabinet? If so, will the cabinet be given the full data to discuss critically these matters? Certainly if government members have in the past said that the white opposition parties cannot be trusted with security information, would they be any more likely to share that information with Coloured and Asian ministers?

And will Coloured and Asian cabinet members be free to share security data with their own party caucuses?⁸ One cannot imagine P. W. Botha and his lieutenants undermining white power by getting into foolish structural binds of their own design. More than likely, they already have in their mind's eye or even more concretely a security management system to replace the old one, and probably not significantly different from the old one. The new dispensation fits well into their model of executive government for a dynamic defense of the status quo.

V. THE SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

The security establishment is the aggregation of institutions and groups that have a professional interest in maintaining the state. It can be divided into six identifiable components, although there is some overlap of function and membership. First and most salient are the SADF and the Department of Defence, and principally those Permanent Force officers charged with developing overall defense strategy and especially with applying it in Namibia and Angola. Reference has already been made to the growing force levels of the SADF in many of its formations. Particularly important to the present discussion are those elements of SADF responsible for tasks with strategic and political overtones. Here I include the various service academies and specialized advanced training institutes, the planning and especially strategic planning groups, Civic Action arms, intelligence and, as will become apparent shortly, those segments of the SADF that liaise regularly with governmental, political, and business elites in agencies such as the State Security Council, the Defence Manpower Liaison Committee, and the Joint Management Centres.

The hierarchy of the SADF at the policy-making level is fairly straightforward. The chiefs of the four services (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Medical Service) report to the chief of the Defence Force, Lt. Gen Jannie Geldenhuys. General Geldenhuys assumed that position in November 1985, succeeding General Constand Viljoen, who held that post since September 1980. Now General Geldenhuys, who is also the head of the Department of Defence, is responsible to Minister of Defense Magnus Malan.

Other Defence Force institutions specialize in high-level training and in the generation of strategic ideas.⁹ At an academic level is the Military Academy at Saldanha Bay. Degrees are awarded by the Faculty of Military Science of the University of Stellenbosch. If there is an intellectual elite in the SADF, Saldanha Bay produces it. Candidates for study there are carefully screened, and only the reliable survive its regimen.

The South African Joint Defence College in Pretoria also trains selected middle level and upwardly mobile officers for senior command and staff