THE IMPOSSIBLE CONCEPT: SETTLER LIBERALISM, PAN-AFRICANISM, AND THE LANGUAGE OF NON-RACIALISM*

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the history of four words: 'non-racial', 'non-racialism', 'multi-racial', and 'multi-racialism'. Its main concern is to identify when and how these terms developed a role within British colonial and South African political discourse. At the end of the 1950s, the struggles within the anti-apartheid movement became entangled with a broader discussion across southern and eastern Africa regarding democracy, nationalism, and political representation. In clarifying the significance of this moment, this article reconstructs the earlier history of 'multi-racial democracy' from its formulation in South African liberal circles in the 1930s to its incorporation into British colonial policy following the Second World War. It then traces the divergent conceptualisations of non-racialism and African nationalism that developed in response to multi-racial democracy. It concludes that African National Congress (ANC) leaders adopted the language of non-racial democracy in a reactive fashion after the 1958 Africanist split in order to clarify the organisation's position on group rights.

Keywords: non-racialism, multi-racialism, Pan Africanist Congress, African National Congress, Tom Mboya, Albert Luthuli, Robert Sobukwe, Liberalism

This article traces the history of four words: 'non-racial', 'non-racialism', 'multi-racial, and multi-racialism'. Its main concern is to identify when and how these terms developed a role within British colonial and South African political discourse. At what point do these terms acquire a regular usage associated with a set of standardised arguments and correlated or opposing terms? This exercise does not presuppose that the words 'non-

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and multi-racial'– with or without the 'ism' – refer to stable concepts. Not only did their meanings change over time, but at certain key moments no consensus existed regarding their usage. Like many politically significant terms, they acquired their importance because they were central to an ongoing – and historically shifting – dispute over a set of questions that refused simple or definitive resolutions. The idea of non-racialism has long been, to borrow a phrase from the philosopher W.B. Gallie, 'an essentially contested term'.[1]

In large part, the contestations surrounding the terms 'multi-racialism' and 'non-racialism' reflect their semantic dependency on the sign 'race'.[2] Not only do ideas and practices of race possess their own complex, stratified, and disputed histories, race is an inherently unstable concept. As a discourse that both organises and naturalises inequality, racial ideology functions through the confusion of the biological and the social and therefore resists systematic definition (and thus refutation) in either framework.[3] The production of racial difference operates at the scale of political economy and in everyday gestures. It functions through state violence and in embodied experiences. It is statistically measurable and profoundly subjective. 'Race' is both a structure of domination and a rich terrain of contest where identities and cultural practices are produced, deployed, nurtured, and disavowed. Because of its 'articulation' with categories like gender and class, racism often functions through liberal discourses and institutions that are explicitly 'race neutral' such as the law or market.[4] To a considerable degree, the very language of race invites confusion: it suggests a false equivalency between whiteness and blackness as social formations. Constituted through a differential relationship to the violence of settler civil society, these categories are less discrete identities than interdependent, and fundamentally antagonistic, ontological positions.[5] Moreover, the concepts that social scientists frequently use to critique racism, like ethnicity and culture, are embedded

1 W.B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, (1955–1956), 167-198.

2 McDonald makes a similar observation, but then attempts to resolve this instability through an analysis of the distinction between racism and racialism. Although theoretically sound, the distinction is difficult to maintain in practice for reasons discussed below. See M. MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Boston, Harvard University Press, 2006), 93. For a fuller discussion of the language of race in the context of non-racialism and the anti-apartheid struggle, see G. Maré, '"Non-racialism" in the Struggle against Apartheid', *Society in Transition,* 34,1 (2003), 13-37.

3 See B.J. Fields, 'Race, Slavery and Ideology in the United States of America', *New Left Review,* 181 (May-June 1990), 95-118.

4 See S. Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance', in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris, UNESCO, 1980), 342; J. Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

5 F. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010). The asymmetric character of whiteness and blackness has significant implications for non-racialism. See F. Barchiesi, 'The Problem with 'We': Affiliation, Political Economy, and the Counterhistory of Nonracialism' in S. Walsh and J. Soske, eds, *Ties that Bind: Race and the Politics of Friendship in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, forthcoming).

within the history of racial thought and often serve as racial euphemisms.[6] Stuart Hall famously described race as a 'floating signifier'.[7] This instability haunts the ideas of multi- and non-racialism.

If we understand non-racialism as an ethos, as the rejection of white supremacy, Julie Fredrickse is undoubtedly correct in her classic description. Non-racialism is an 'unbreakable thread' in South African history.[8] In this particular sense, non-racialism has many origins and forms: it arose from ideological commitments and social milieus; it was embodied in organisational structures and diffuse mentalities; it animated collective political projects and remained deeply personal. At various moments, individuals and groups expressed their desire for a world without racial oppression in the language of Marxism, liberalism, feminism, Christianity, Islam, and African nationalism, to name only some more prominent idioms. This aspiration is not recent. The commitment to living in a common society existed long before the formation of the 1910 Union of South Africa. The African National Congress embraced this hope at its founding conference in 1912. Yet the instability of race frustrates the distillation of this sentiment into clear conceptual or political terms. Since the meaning of race itself has changed over time and is highly contested, debates over non-racialism have often revolved around the object of its negation. Does non-racialism entail the elimination of racial inequality or the disappearance of racial identities altogether? In other words, would a non-racial South Africa be a fundamentally African society where the majority could shape the national identity through democratic means or should the distinction between majority and minority lose all relevance? (It is worth noting that the coherence of this question hinges on the meaning of another contested word, namely 'African'). These competing formulations of non-racialism are not identified with a single worldview or political project. The fact that there are Marxist, liberal, and African nationalist versions of *both positions* further complicates efforts to reduce non-racialism to a single, definite idea. One of the causes of this bifurcation is that the transcendence of racism presupposes an alternative basis of unity: class, gender, bourgeois civil society, shared experiences of struggle, democratic ideals, faith, culture, or language. At the same time, each of these phenomena is inscribed within South Africa's racial order in complex ways. Racial domination, as Hall also argues, organises and works through other social structures.[9] English, to take just one example, has been celebrated as a vehicle for nation building

6 A.L. Stoler, 'Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth', *Political Power and Social Theory,* 11 (1997), 183-206; S. Dubow, 'Ethnic Euphemisms and Racial Echoes', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 355-370.

7 S. Hall, *Race: The Floating Signifier* [film], S. Jhally, director (Nottingham, Media Education Foundation, 1997).

8 J. Frederikse, *The Unbreakable Thread: Non-racialism in South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990). For a compelling defense of non-racialism as a lived practice and open-ended orientation to the future that refuses the closure of race, see K. Gillespie, 'Reclaiming Nonracialism: Reading *The Threat of Race from South Africa*', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 44, 1 (2010), 61-75.

9 Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance', 340-1.

and denounced as a symbol of colonial domination by intellectuals within the same political tendency.[10]

Rather than chronicling the centuries-long tale of this powerful and contradictory sentiment, this essay focuses on the question of political vocabulary. At the beginning of the 1950s, the term 'non-racial' appeared largely in liberal writings to express a legal principle associated with the nineteenth-century Cape franchise. By the time that Albert Luthuli (President and foremost spokesperson of the ANC) adopted the term 'non-racial democracy' in 1960, every significant current within anti-apartheid politics – with the exception of the South African Communist Party – had embraced the word and made it central to articulating their policies. The ANC and the Non-European Unity Movement, the Liberal Party and the Pan Africanist Congress each staked its own claim to the 'non-racial'. To a degree, the realignments of the 1950s facilitated this proliferation: the Defiance Campaign organised by the ANC and Indian Congresses, the formation of the Congress of Democrats and the Liberal Party, the Congress of the People and the adoption of the Freedom Charter. These developments propelled an overlapping set of debates over race and political organisation, the foundations of national identity, the constitutional status of minorities in a future political settlement, and the relationship between South Africa and the rest of the continent. The primary impetus for the adoption of this language by the ANC, however, came from outside of South Africa.

At the end of the 1950s, the political and intellectual struggles within the anti-apartheid movement became entangled with a broader discussion across southern, central, and eastern Africa regarding democracy, African nationalism, and political representation. Propelled by the British colonial policy of multi-racialism (a constitutional structure characterised by group representation and a qualified franchise), a variety of actors, including the liberal Capricorn Society and African political leaders such as Julius Nyerere and Tom Mboya, advanced competing ideas of non-racial and African democracy. The collapse of Kenya's Lyttelton constitution, the split of the Africanist current from the ANC, and the All African Peoples' Conference in Accra – all events that occurred in 1957–8 – forced the ANC to clarify its position on group rights and articulate its philosophy in broader, Pan-African terms. Luthuli and other ANC leaders adopted the phrase 'non-racial democracy' in response to these developments. In clarifying the significance of this moment, this article reconstructs the earlier history of 'multi-racialism' (and the 'multi-racial society' thesis) from its formulation in South African liberal circles in the 1930s to its incorporation into British colonial policy following the Second World War. It then traces the divergent conceptualisations of non-racialism and African nationalism that developed in response to multi-racial democracy both within and outside of South Africa. The eventual adoption of the term 'non-racial' did not displace the existing differences between (and within) South African political

10 See the discussion of the debate over language within the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) in this article.

organisations. But it did mean that anti-apartheid formations expressed their visions in a common language and invoked a shared, if truly indeterminate, principle.

THE MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY

The first systematic treatment of the 'multi-racial society' appeared in the writings of R. F. A. Hoernlé, a philosopher and the second president of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) (a liberal research and advocacy group).[11] In the aftermath of the countrywide debates over the 1936 Hertzog Native bills, Hoernlé argued that the government's 'native policy' represented an incoherent mixture of white supremacist, assimilationist, and separatist elements. Inverting the terms of earlier discussions (including much of his own writing), he argued that the central problem facing South Africa was the white population's intractable commitment to maintaining domination.[12] As a result of racism and other factors, European colonialism had abandoned the nineteenth-century project of assimilating the colonised within Western civilisation. Concurrently, the development of South Africa's economy and missionary activities had incorporated an increasing number of Africans into European society in subordinate roles, producing a race caste system in which the minority ruled under cover of trusteeship. By isolating racial consciousness as an independent social factor, Hoernlé was able to compare South Africa to the political dynamics of societies with highly divergent social and political structures, including the United States. He concluded that a strong sense of group consciousness would persist even if Africans fully assimilated to European social norms, an outcome – he underlined – vehemently opposed by the majority of whites. This result, he observed, undermined a core premise of classical liberalism: a political community based on shared interests and expressed in a common loyalty to a national identity. How then was it possible for liberal institutions to thrive in such circumstances?

This question introduced the 'multi-racial society' as a distinct problem in twentieth-century social thought. An extrapolation from the binary terms of U.S. race relations

11 An early use of the term appears in Hoernlé's 1937 lecture entitled 'Liberty in a Multi-Racial Society'. See *Annual Report of the South African Institute of Race Relations* (1937). The concept is developed at length in R.F.A. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 1939). Two other writers used the term in 1937, which suggests the possibility of an earlier source and highlights the borrowings of racial terminology across U.S. and British imperial literature. See W.K. Hancock, 'The Colonial Problem: Native Races', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 April 1937, and W.O. Brown, 'White Dominance in South Africa: A Study in Social Control', *Social Forces,* 18 (1939). As one reviewer of this article noted, Hoernlé's usage was also an expansion of the term of 'interracial', which was widely used by black and white liberals (as well as ANC leaders) from the 1920s and played a large role in the activities of the Joint Council Movement and SAIRR.

12 P. B. Rich, *Hope and Despair: English-speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics, 1896-1976* (London, British Academic Press, 1993), 40-65.

theory, the concept articulated the central question of South African politics as the co-existence of four self-conscious groups and the crosshatching interactions between them. Observing that earlier political theorists presupposed a homogenous nation, Hoernlé asserted that liberal ideals, including the nature of governing institutions, would have to be rethought in the South African context.[13] Significantly, Hoernlé did not understand 'race' solely, or even primarily, in biological terms. Like many of his contemporaries, he employed the vocabulary of race and civilisation almost interchangeably: race possessed biological, cultural, economic, social, and legal dimensions. In effect, 'white South Africa' referred to a vision of political economy and its interlocking bio-material forms: private property (and, by implication, the hetero-normative nuclear family), Western jurisprudence, and formal education. The development of a racial caste society arose from the African's incomplete assimilation into the institutions of civil society that defined Europeans as a racial group. Hoernlé believed that three political solutions were compatible with liberal principles: the biological and social assimilation of the colonised and the white race, 'parallelism' (racially distinct civil societies united by a federated political structure), and total separation. Deeply pessimistic regarding the prospects for each, he endorsed separation as a desperate recourse that might eventually win acceptance by whites.

South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit was widely discussed in the country and abroad. As Paul Rich observes, Hoernlé's arguments influenced later South African liberals by challenging their focus on individual liberties and introducing the question of group identities into political discourse.[14] Significantly, the future ANC leader Z.K. Matthews wrote a generally positive review for the *Race Relations* journal and set the book as a standard reading for the second module of his course on Native Administration at Fort Hare University.[15] Following Hoernlé's death in 1943, the psychologist I.D. MacCrone edited a collection of the philosopher's essays and began to employ ideas of the 'multi-racial society' and 'colour caste society' in his own widely influential research.[16] By the early 1940s, Christian writers also began to refer to the multi-racial society in articles that discussed the dilemmas of building a universal fellowship within a racially divided country.[17] In 1949, the Christian Council of South

13 Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy*, 136-7.

14 Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 41.

15 Z. K. Matthews, 'R. F. A. Hoernlé, South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit', *Race Relations,* 8,2 (1940), 34-7; Chief M. G. Buthelezi, *White and Black Nationalism, Ethnicity and the Future of the Homelands* (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1974), 1.

16 I. D. MacCrone, 'R.F.A. Hoernlé – A Memoir', in I.D. MacCrone, ed, R.F.A. *Hoernlé*, *Race and Reason* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1945); I.D. MacCrone, 'Reaction to Domination in a Colour-Caste Society: A Preliminary Study of the Race Attitudes of a Dominated Group', *The Journal of Social Psychology,* 26, 1 (1947), 69–98.

17 See H. S. Scott, 'The Christian Churches and the Colour Bar', *International Review of Mission*, 31 (1942), 301–307; S.M. Mokitimi, 'Apartheid and the Christian Spirit', *International Review of Mission* 38 (1949), 276–279; G.B.A. Gerdener, 'The Crux of the Racial Situation in South Africa', *International Review of Mission*, 38 (1949), 280–294.

Africa organised a three-day conference in the Johannesburg suburb of Rosettenville under the title 'The Christian in a Multi-Racial Society'. Significantly, Albert Luthuli – the future president of the ANC – spoke at this meeting.[18]

After the Second World War, the young historian Leonard Thompson revised and extended Hoernlé's arguments in the context of the post-war rejection of biological racism. In a 1949 paper originally presented to the SAIRR, Thompson argued that democracy posed two questions in multi-racial societies: the adjudication of political claims made by 'ethno-cultural groups' at a similar stage of development and the reconciliation of groups of uneven capacity (the 'civilised' and 'uncivilised') in the political process.[19] In response, Thompson advanced a federalist model (Hoernlé's parallelism) and racial franchises based on a qualified suffrage. Complementing an expanding system of education, electoral politics would train increasing numbers of the colonised in the norms of modern life. The power of Africans would 'progressively increase with their civilization'.[20] Far from undermining white supremacy, Thompson insisted, democracy would insure European leadership and the spread of Western culture.[21] Although he retained the word 'multiracial', Thompson rejected the biological substratum that informed Hoernlé's work.[22] In this respect, he drew on the anthropological critique of racial science that began with the work of Franz Boas and culminated with the postwar UNESCO statements on race.[23] By identifying white supremacy with a biological theory of human difference, Thompson and other liberal thinkers sought to insulate the core values and institutions of Western culture from the (now externalised) idea of race. Along these same line, the historian and journalist Arthur Keppel-Jones advanced that the confusion of these two concepts denied civilisation's basis in liberal values, particularly the sanctity of the individual, and therefore gave birth to a 'white barbarism' that was the true enemy of Western culture in Africa.[24] Racism thus obscured the essential content of the colonial project: the universalisation of bourgeois civil society.

This argument was closely related to two other developments in colonial intellectual circles. In the 1940s, South African liberals increasingly stressed the plural origins of European civilisation in Greco-Roman antiquity, ancient German democracy, and Christianity. Since the West had emerged out of a slow fusion of diverse elements, Kepple-Jones argued, it was capable of absorbing new peoples and ideas without

18 *The Christian Citizen in a Multi-Racial Society: A Report of the Rosettenville Conference* (Cape Town, The Christian Council of South Africa, 1949).

19 L. M. Thompson, *Democracy in Multi-Racial Societies* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1949), 5.

20 *Ibid.*, 9.

21 *Ibid.*, 22.

22 *Ibid.*, 5.

23 See M. Brattain, 'Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public', *The American Historical Review,* 112, 5 (2007), 1386-1413.

24 A. Keppel-Jones, *Race or Civilization? Who is Destroying Civilization in South Africa?* (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, N.D. [1951?]).

imperilling its basic unity.[25] Not only was indigenous labour essential to consolidating civilisation in Africa, the modern African would play a role in propagating European culture. Conceived as an advance over the colonial doctrine of trusteeship, this line of thinking echoed the new language of 'partnership' advanced by the British administration following the release of the Atlantic Charter. As intellectuals such as Matthews and Luthuli underlined, this view implied that Africans could contribute new elements to civilisation by assisting in its expansion.[26] Second, a number of voices, including figures close to the Fabian Colonial Bureau and SAIRR, began to advocate education, rather than property, as the main criteria for determining franchise.[27] In part, this shift reflected the influence of the post-war Labour government, which saw itself as the heir to nineteenth century struggles for universal male franchise and a conception of citizenship that stressed the development of personality. It was also pragmatic. As African political activity gained strength, the Fabian Colonial Bureau (which was closely allied with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones) and the Race Relations institute concluded that the colonised must be inducted into new structures of governance on a scale that exceeded the numbers of the small African middles classes. The colonial office began to draw similar conclusions. In this context, liberals saw the classroom and franchise as the main instruments of a newly de-racialised imperial project.

FROM THE MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY TO MULTI-RACIALISM

Beginning in the late 1940s, the term 'multi-racial' began to proliferate in international reporting on South Africa, Malaya, and (especially from 1951) East and Central Africa. Launched the year after the first widespread coverage of the Holocaust, India's 1946 case against South Africa at the United Nations brought the Union's racial politics, and the situation of the Indian minority, to global attention. In its defence of segregation, the government invoked the country's multi-racial population, 'barbarian and civilized', in order to deny that South Africa's policies represented a form of racial oppression.[28] The election of the Nationalist Party two years later ushered in a new period of international coverage and analysis, much of which was framed in terms of the problems facing South Africa as a multi-racial society. The London *Times* was typical: 'It [is] true that South

25 Keppel-Jones, *Race or Civilization*.

26 For a discussion of Luthuli's idea of civilisation, see S.E. Couper,'Chief Albert Luthuli's Conceptualisation of Civilisation', *African Studies,* 70,1 (2011), 46-66.

27 See Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education for Citizenship in Africa*, Colonial no. 216 (London, HMSO, 1948); 'Education with a Purpose', *Empire,* 10,11 (May 1948), 3; *East African Future: A Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau* (London, Fabian Colonial Society, 1952); *Advance to Democracy: A Report to the Fabian Colonial Bureau on the Implications of 'Partnership' In Multi-Racial Societies* (London, Fabian Colonial Society, 1952).

28 See 'Choice before Indians in South Africa', *The Times of India*, 7 November 1946; *Question of the Treatment of Indians in South Africa Before the United Nations Organisation India* (Simla, Government of India Press, 1947), 86.

Africa had problems of great complexity – problems inevitable to a sturdy, growing new country, and accentuated in this instance by the multiracial composition of the population'.[29] Reporting on South Africa began to popularise the idea that the multi-racial society represented a particular *kind* of sociological problem associated with colonial and postcolonial countries. Officials in Kenya and Central Africa also began to invoke this term, although it still remained uncommon in these contexts.[30]

Decolonisation propelled this new vocabulary. The 'new nations' defied the conventional wisdom that democracy necessitated a unitary national subject – a shared consciousness grounded in common territory, institutions, and historical experience. In contrast, the independent states appeared to most observers as entities different in nature from Western societies. The concepts of 'plural society' and 'multi-racial society' (sometimes differentiated, sometimes employed interchangeably) preserved the normative idea of the nation state by grouping a range of decolonising states under an alternative category.[31] These terms named a phenomenon that was seen as provisional and inherently unstable: democracy in the absence of a singular people. This usage intersected another development. From the early 1950s, British Labour Party politicians and intellectuals revived an idea initially formulated decades earlier, the multi-racial Commonwealth. As James Griffiths, a former Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated in the House of Commons: 'We belong to a multi-racial community and a multi-racial Commonwealth, and it is important for us to realize that… people with different-coloured skins from ourselves are the majority of its citizens'.[32] Accordingly Britain's management of its remaining colonies was a matter of diplomatic significance: it served as a microcosm of the government's capacity to lead the Commonwealth of Nations on a global scale.

These issues came together in the debates over the future of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. In July 1948, the Northern Rhodesian politician Roy Welensky put forward an ambitious proposal for a federation of the three colonies. The Colonial Office, which had long opposed settler schemes for amalgamation, rejected the plan on multiple grounds, including its failure to provide adequate safeguards for 'African interests'.[33] Nevertheless, Welensky's gambit reinforced the position of those

29 'British Investment In S. Africa', *Times,* 2 February 1950.

30 For example, in 1948 the Governor of Kenya invoked the good of 'complex, multi-racial communities'. See "Education with a Purpose', *Empire,* 10, 11 (May 1948).

31 For a discussion of plural society, see J. Pham, 'J. S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the "Plural Society" in Burma', *Modern Asian Studies,* 39, 2 (2005), 321-348.

32 Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 16 December 1952, vol 509, c 1213.

33 For background on the CAF, see R. Hyam, 'The Geopolitical Origins of the Central African Federation: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1948–1953', *Historical Journal,* 30,1 (1987), 145-72; P. Murphy, '"Government by Blackmail": The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered,' in M. Lynn, ed, *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 53-76; and C.J. Lee, 'Federation and Failure: Multiculturalism, Late Liberalism, and Decolonization in British Central Africa' unpublished essay. I want to thank Chris for sharing his unpublished article

within the government and civil service that believed a unified policy for central Africa was desirable. Following the 1950 general election, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, James Griffiths, agreed to a conference of British and Rhodesian officials to devise a practical outline for federation that would include strong protections for Africans, including some form of representation within parliament. After Griffiths visited Northern Rhodesia in September 1951, however, he grew increasingly cautious. Everywhere he travelled, Griffiths encountered African opposition to the plan. The debate over federation centred on the colonial policy of 'partnership' between black and white. The settler leadership invoked the rhetoric of partnership in order to assert the permanent character of the European settler population.[34] African political opinion countered that 'partnership' merely served as a gloss for naked exploitation, especially south of the Zambezi.[35] As a Northern Rhodesian politician declared: 'We, as Africans, would like to make it perfectly clear that we register a thousand times, 'no', to federation proposals, in which we have taken no part'.[36] In this polarised climate, Welensky published an article challenging Griffiths to demonstrate that Britain was capable of devising a system of government for a 'multi-racial society'.[37] Rhetorically, he invoked the (putative) vulnerability of the white population by placing its future, and the destiny of a 'civilised' Central Africa, in the hands of the British government. The implication was clear. Multi-racial society stood as the only alternative to barbarism.

As observers noted, the proposals for federation, particularly the possibility of direct African representation in a central legislature, carried major implications for the other countries of central and eastern Africa (Kenya, Tanganyika, and to a lesser extent Uganda). These debates also coincided with the growing strength of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) in Ghana, which intensified its campaign of 'positive action' in 1950, and early discussions over Tanganyika's constitutional future. In March 1950, the Fabian Colonial Society published a major statement that sought to elaborate a common policy for the territories of Eastern and Central Africa under the rubric of the multi-racial society.[38] Endorsing Thompson's 1949 pamphlet, the anonymous writer rejected the constitutional paths of India and Ceylon even while conceding the eventual goal of majority rule. The main difficulty, the article claimed, was balancing European and African demands. The settlers, slated for leadership due to their vastly superior wealth and skills, were imperilling their own future by opposing the extension of

and underlining the importance of the CAF for popularising the term 'multi-racial' and the regional dimension of the debate over multi-racialism.

34 R.Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (New York, Roy Publishers, 1964), 34.

35 C. Leys and C. Pratt, eds, *A New Deal in Central Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1960), 29-30.

36 Northern Rhodesia African Representative Council, *Proceedings of the Second Session of the Second Council, 22 January to 27 January 1951* (Lusaka, The Government Printer, 1951).

37 R.Welensky, 'Closer Union in Central Africa', *The National and English Review* (September 1951), 148.

38 'New Approaches to East Africa', *Venture,* 2, 2 (March 1950).

political rights to increasingly resentful (but still politically 'unversed') Africans. The author proposed a constitutional architecture that reflected an emerging consensus in liberal circles: a qualified franchise, separate election lists for each racial group, parallel institutions with jurisdictions limited to individual groups, and a federal assembly including equal representation for Europeans, Africans, and Asians. Nevertheless, the Labour government resisted articulating a unified policy for its east and central African territories.[39] This caution was also present among many officials and settlers. When the 1952 Tanganyika constitutional committee published its recommendations, it suggested policies identical to those of the Fabians (with an additional emphasis on African participation in local government), but it avoided the term 'multi-racial' and references to other colonial situations.[40]

It was the Labour Party's defeat in the 1951 election that led to the generalisation of multi-racial democracy in British Africa policy. Griffiths's replacement, the Tory businessman Oliver Lyttelton, inherited the proposal for the Central African Federation and moved forward with its implementation amidst African opposition. In his statement of policy to the House of Commons, Lyttelton declared the pillars of colonial policy would remain unchanged: the building of institutions that would allow colonies to achieve self-government within the Commonwealth and economic development. Griffiths, now in opposition, asked if self-government in multi-racial communities 'must include participation of all the people in the territories, irrespective of race, creed, or colour'.[41] Lyttelton assented in principle. When the House considered the question of federation the following year, the debate focused on meaning of the term 'partnership'. In his comments, Griffiths returned to the concept of the multi-racial society and drew strong parallels between the situations in Kenya, Tanganyika, and central Africa.[42] Endorsing the Tanganyika proposals for equal representation of whites, Africans, and Asians, Griffiths argued for the idea of parity in its 'spirit', i.e. as a general principle.

This intervention helped redefine 'partnership' in terms of a particular constitutional form: the collective representation of racial groups within a government. Over the course of the next two years, the term 'multi-racial' began to complement and then supplant 'partnership' as the focus of debate over East Africa in the British parliament and the press.[43] According to its proponents, multi-racial government represented the only alternative to both white domination (exemplified by apartheid) and the transition

39 'Document 62: Constitutional Development in East Africa: Extract from Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 20 November 1950' in A. Porter and A. J. Stockwell, eds, *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938-64*, vol. 1, (London, Macmillan, 1987), 368-9.

40 *Report of the Committee on Constitutional Development, 1951* (Dar Es Salaam, The Government Printer, 1952).

41 'Development of The Colonies', *Times,* 15 November 1951.

42 Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 4 March 1952, vol. 497, cc208-212.

43 For example, see Hansard, House of Lords Debates, 2 July 1952, vol. 177, cc590-609; Hansard, House of Lords Debates, 07 July 1952, vol. 177 cc726-832; and Hansard, House of Lord Debates, 29 October 1952, vol. 178 cc1091-142.

to African majority rule that was occurring in the Gold Coast. Group representation in government would mean that no one section would exercise power over the other communities – an arrangement designed to insure settler autonomy and leadership. Crucially, the idea of the multi-racial society was predicated on white indigeneity. Multiple speakers reiterated this point in parliament. Settlers born in Africa had an equal claim to residency and power as other groups – if not a greater claim given their unique contribution to economic development and promoting civilisation. They were truly 'African'.[44]

The constitution of the 1953 Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland did not use the term 'multi-racial'. The preamble invoked the notion of 'partnership' in order to avoid any implication of subordination or equality.[45] In March of the following year, Lyttelton introduced a new constitution in Kenya designed to create a broad consensus, including African and Asian support, for the state of emergency and the repression of Mau Mau. Introduced after consultation with leaders from different communities, Lyttelton's plan expanded the number of Africans in the legislative council to eight, made provisions for the direct election of Africans (the first vote was held in March 1957), and created a council of ministers that would include six 'unofficial' or elected members, including three Europeans, two Asians, and one African. This seat represented the first African cabinet minister in East Africa with portfolio.[46] The new constitution popularised of the concept 'multi-racialism'.[47] Before 1954, a small number of writers had employed the term 'multi-racialism' to refer to the general set of problems created by the co-existence of different racial groups, but the usage was relatively uncommon.[48] After 1954, the term 'multi-racialism' came into widespread circulation to describe a political doctrine represented by the Lyttelton constitution.[49] Both the British government and the international press then adopted the word when describing policy developments in Tanganyika, Uganda, and the Central African Federation. When groups of Ugandan

44 See, for example, Hansard, House of Lords Debates, 7 July 1952, vol. 177, cc726-832.

45 *The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Constitution) Order in Council, 1953* (HM Stationery Office, 1953), 15; C. Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888-1965* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966), 348.

46 D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209.

47 'Multi-Racial Government to be Introduced in Kenya', *The Irish Times,* 11 March 1954; 'African Will Sit on Kenyan Council', *New York Times*, 11 March 1954; 'Multi-Racial Council of Ministers will Run Kenya', *The Times of India*, 11 March 1954. See also Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 22 July 1954, vol. 530, cc1575–639.

48 See H. Gibbs, *Twilight in South Africa* (New York, Philosophical Library, 1950); L. Marquard, *Peoples and Policies of South Africa* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952). This sense of 'multi-racialism' became more common as the 1950s progressed. See, for example, G.M. Carter, 'Multi-racialism in Africa', *International Affairs* (1960), 457. Luthuli sometimes used multi-racialism in this sense, insisting that it was not an ideology but a fact of life.

49 'New Flare-Up in Kenya Imperils Kenya Plan', *The New York Times*, 18 April 1954; 'No Confidence In Multi-Race Rule', *The Times of India*, 6 August 1954; 'New Party Formed in Kenya', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 July 1954.

Africans mobilised against the appointment of an Indian minister in 1955, they voiced their opposition as a rejection of multi-racialism.[50]

THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN AND THE MULTI-RACIAL NATION

The same period witnessed a very different trajectory for the term 'multi-racial' in South Africa. During the early 1950s, the speeches and publication by ANC leaders regularly used the phrase 'multi-racial society'. In the case of Luthuli and Matthews, this invocation directly referenced the debates within South African liberal circles over the multi-racial society thesis. As Matthews wrote in 1953: 'Not only do [South Africa's] racial groups differ in number and in racial stocks, but they differ in cultural background, in the languages they speak, and in the level of their cultural development in terms of modern Western Civilization'.[51] According to this view, the central question of South African politics was the need for these groups – which Matthews described as 'inextricably interwoven' – to be welded together as a nation with common values and interests. At the same time, Matthews and Luthuli, drawing at least in part on a black American discourse of uplift, rejected the liberal concept of trusteeship by insisting on the importance, if not centrality, of African initiative for the development of this common society. In numerous other cases, the use of the term 'multi-racial' (which alternated with the older 'interracial') simply meant 'including several racial groups'.

By the end of the 1952 Defiance Campaign, the ANC's language had begun to shift in important respects. In the campaign's early phases, ANC leaders generally used the rhetoric of 'co-operation' between the separate organisations of African, Indians, Coloureds, and (later) whites. By and large, they motivated the alliance in the framework of race relations: the creation of 'harmonious' relationships between South Africa's separate groups.[52] However, the experience of common struggle, especially in the Transvaal and Natal, transformed the ANC's political rhetoric. From late 1952, ANC and Indian Congress leaders began to insist on the unity of the Congress movement and the indivisible nature of the liberation struggle.[53] Contrary to critics such as Neville Alexander, the ANC did not codify this new political vision at the level of doctrine (the 'four nations thesis').[54] Throughout the 1950s, ANC leaders continued to hold diverse views, including liberal pluralist, Marxist, and a variety of African nationalist positions. Rather, the ANC reconciled the principles of national unity and racial diversity in the

50 'Seat in Ugandan Ministry', *The Times of India*, 4 June 1955.

51 Z.K. Matthews, 'South Africa: A Land Divided Against Itself', *Yale Review,* 42, (June 1953), 513–28.

52 A. Luthuli, 'Wake Up, Africans! Wake up!' in G. Pillay, ed*., Voices of Liberation: Albert Luthuli*, second edition (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2012), 47.

53 The language of unity and race relations often co-existed. See 'Dr. Naicker's Call to the Indian People', *Ilanga lase Natal*, 26 July 1952.

54 On the 'four nations thesis', see N. Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (New York, Berghan Books, 2003), 35–7.

organisation and symbolism of the Congress Alliance itself. Constructed around the statements and persona of figures such as Yusuf Dadoo and Luthuli, this new imagery of struggle drew selectively on the earlier history of the ANC, the terminology of the Communist Party, and the rhetoric of national liberation movements throughout Asia and the rest of Africa. Platforms at political meetings that included representatives of the Congress's component organisations, the four-spoke wheel representing the 'sections' of the Congress Alliance, and the coverage of the different 'national' groups in congress newspapers together came to symbolise a new, inclusive South African nation in which each racial group possessed (at least symbolically) an *equal* claim to belonging. The Congress Alliance both produced and embodied a new aesthetics of nation.

In the 1954–5 campaign for the Freedom Charter, two important developments occurred within the ANC's political discourse. First, ANC leaders began to use the word 'multi-racial' to refer to nature of the South African *nation*. Describing the Congress of the People, Luthuli explained: 'people from all walks of life in our multiracial nation will have the opportunity to write into this great Charter of Freedom their aspirations for freedom'.[55] The idea of a multi-racial people (a plural entity with common values and political interests) challenged the premise of the multi-racial society thesis: that competition between racial groups could only be resolved through separate representation. As Luthuli observed at several points, this concept entailed a fundamental critique of the normative claim that democracy could only function within a homogenous nation.[56] It was during these years that Luthuli (speaking as the president of the ANC and the most visible African political leader in South Africa) began to develop a new understanding of nationalism that encompassed racial difference. In his writings, Luthuli did not dissolve the African political subject into a South African identity based on civic nationalism. Significantly, Luthuli described the 'philosophical basis of our freedom struggle' as a 'broad' or 'inclusive' *African* nationalism: a future South Africa would include everyone who gave Africa 'complete loyalty and allegiance'.[57] Invoking the pluralistic and inclusive character of precolonial African societies, Luthuli envisioned an African nation-building project coexisting with and enabling a broader patriotism (which, in turn, would contribute to the development of Pan-Africanism). This enfolding of one national project within another – for example, Zulu within African, African within South African, and South African within Pan-African – allowed for the preservation of separate identities and their common development in the quest for a shared future.[58] Rejecting the concept of a people as a singular or homogenous entity, Luthuli's arguments raised the possibility of a political subject constituted through difference. The unifying element of this new form of nation was neither race nor civil society, but shared ideals developed through struggle and sacrifice.

55 A. Luthuli, 'Resist Apartheid!—July 11, 1954' in *Voices of Liberation*, second edition, 73.

56 See A. Luthuli, 'Our Vision is a Democratic Society' in *Voices of Liberation,* second edition, 116; 'Luthuli Sends Message to Nyerere', *New Age,* November 3, 1960.

57 A. Luthuli, 'African National Congress in Recent Years', in *Voices of Liberation*, second edition, 86.

58 See J. Soske, 'How to Approach Heaven', *Chimurenga Chronic* (forthcoming).

Second, pro-ANC publications asserted that the Freedom Charter embodied the collective will of South Africans and therefore provided a new foundation for the nation itself. In this context, the singular article in 'Congress of *the* People' was an extraordinary statement. In an editorial published before the Kliptown gathering, the *New Age* (a pro-Congress newspaper largely written by members of the Communist Party) compared the charter with the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta, and the Soviet constitution. Describing the campaign as a major event in 'our national life', the editorial claimed that the charter would provide South Africans with a common ethics and mode of life absent from South Africa's 'caste society'.[59] In his 1955 speech on the Congress of the People, Mandela quoted the following remarks made by Luthuli:

> Why will this assembly be significant and unique? Its size, I hope, will make it unique. But above all its multi-racial nature and its noble objectives will make it unique, because it will be the first time in the history of our multi-racial nation that its people from all walks of life will meet as equals, irrespective of race, colour, and creed to formulate a freedom charter for all people in the country.[60]

Echoing the American constitution, the first incantatory lines of the charter declared: 'We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: That South Africa belongs to all that live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people'. Despite later claims that the Freedom Charter enunciated the doctrine of 'multi-racialism', the document did not included the term or describe South Africa's social composition. Even the term 'African' only appeared in the form of 'South African' – the problem of the indigeneity was simply dissolved into the nation state. The general emphasis was on a single national will. The charter denounced institutions of minority rule and stipulated the equality of rights 'regardless of race, colour, or sex'. At this level, the charter built on an older political tradition within the ANC that was powerfully voiced by the 1943 document, *Africans' Claims in South Africa*.

The Freedom Charter attempted to translate the political aesthetics of the Congress Alliance, which centred on the symbolic unity of the four racial groups, into the universalising language of civic nationalism. Yet this translation left central questions unanswered. What would be the constitutional status of racial groups within a new state? Would a single ethno-cultural identity develop out of South Africa's diverse society? The charter addressed the question of race in negative terms: groups would be protected from insults to their 'national pride' and be granted equal rights to develop their language and culture. Nevertheless, critics argued that its recognition of 'equal status' in the state for all 'national groups and races' enjoined a form of collective representation equivalent to multi-racial democracy – a suspicion reinforced by the ANC's idea of the multi-racial

59 'Three Weeks to Go', *New Age,* 9 June 1955.

60 A. Luthuli quoted in N. Mandela, 'Freedom in Our Life Time', in Nelson Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, ed, R. First (London, Heinemann, 1965), 55.

nation.[61] Moreover, the text generally referred to the rights of 'peoples' and, with one exception, avoided the liberal discourse of individual liberties.[62] Whatever the framers' intentions, the resulting document allowed for multiple, contradictory interpretations.

The Freedom Charter's ambiguities may have represented a consensus among Congress leaders that certain questions should remain open. Luthuli in particular believed that the ANC was a national movement, not a political party, and therefore should contain multiple ideological tendencies.[63] The Charter's equivocations may have also reflected a calculated strategy. During the 1950s, the ANC downplayed the demand for African majority rule and used language that left open the possibility of a power sharing agreement. Since the ANC rejected the revolutionary overthrow of the state, it had to appeal to the white electorate and leave open the policy of working with parties opposed to universal franchise.[64] This represented a major dilemma for the ANC. The organisation sought to assert African political leadership while finding ways to assuage white fears of 'black domination'.[65] The formulations of ANC leaders therefore allowed for the possibility of two interpretations: majority rule and some form of shared power among racial groups. Luthuli, for example, stated that democracy would reach its 'highest watermark' if African participated as '*equal partners* in all 10 legislative organs of the state – local, provincial, and national'.[66] Articles in ANC-allied publications indicate that at least some Congress Alliance intellectuals saw certain forms of multi-racial democracy as *temporarily* acceptable. For example, *New Age* endorsed Julius Nyerere's 1958 assumption of leadership over a government based on a multi-racial parliament. At the same time, it emphasised that this victory was only the first stage in a much longer struggle.[67]

TOM MBOYA AND THE CRITIQUE OF MULTI-RACIALISM

Immediately after its adoption in 1954, Kenya's Lyttelton constitution came under attack. The U.S. consulate in Nairobi recommended that government documents avoid the word 'multi-racialism' because it had become a red flag to Kenya's white settlers

61 U. Khoruha and K. Lekwame [Peter Raboroko and Robert Sobukwe?], 'The Kliptown Charter', *The Africanist* 11, 4 (June/July 1958).

62 The exception is 'Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as candidate for all bodies which make laws'.

63 Luthuli is building on an earlier tradition within the ANC. Sylvia Neame's work came out as I was revising this article for publication and I have not been fully able to incorporate her argument that the view of the ANC as a broad congress, rather than a party, develops as early as the 1920s. See S. Neame, *The Congress Movement*: *CU, ANC, CP and Congress Alliance,* volumes 1-3 (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2015).

64 'Searchlight on the Congresses', *Liberation*, February 1958.

65 For a general discussion of this dilemma, see D. Everatt, *The Origins of Non-racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid in the 1950s* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2009).

66 A. Luthuli, 'The Challenge of Our Time', *Voices of Liberation*, second edition, 77. Emphasis added.

67 'African Prime Minister for Tanganyika', *New Age*, 14 December 1959.

and African political opinion, especially in Uganda.[68] Another source of opposition was a small group of colonial liberals called the Capricorn Africa Society. In July 1955, the society launched a campaign for the abolition of the colour bar and the creation of a common, qualified franchise (based on property, education, and character). It described its goal as an 'organically non-racial' administration.[69] Although the society never attracted large numbers, its views received a hearing in the colonial office and influenced the government's shift from a 'multi-racial' to a 'non-racial' policy after 1957.[70] Even more significant was the campaign launched by a young Kenyan trade unionist named Tom Mboya. While studying at Ruskin College in 1956, Mboya held a news conference, organised by the British Labour Party, declaring his opposition to the Lyttelton constitution. Returning to the country later in the year, he ran for the legislative council based on his rejection of multi-racialism. After his victory, Mboya was the main force in organising a boycott of the new cabinet by African deputies. When the government eventually fell in 1957, the Secretary of State for the colonies, Alan Lennox Boyd, had little choice but to abandon the constitution altogether. Mboya became internationally famous as the man who defeated multi-racialism in Kenya.

Mboya expounded his critique of multi-racial democracy at length in a pamphlet published by the Fabian Colonial Bureau, *The Kenya Question: An African Answer*.[71] Drawing on the vocabulary of utilitarianism, Mboya began his discussion by invoking the fundamental equality of individuals and the role of society in allowing persons to participate in an effort to create a common good: 'This means that I reject any concept of race superiority, that I reject any concept of racial group rights or duties within the state… I believe that each individual must have an equal opportunity to develop himself and his potentialities'.[72] This insistence on *individual* freedom shifted the terrain of argument regarding African self-rule so that the defenders of colonialism, rather than African nationalists, would emerge as proponents of racial ideology. In this light, the settler colonialist appeared as the enemy not only of universal democratic values, but also of core elements of the British liberal tradition such as fair play and the rule of law. Mboya then elaborated this argument through an analysis of Kenyan history: colonial

68 'Dispatch from the Consulate General at Nairobi to the Department of State, Nairobi, September 15, 1955' in J. P. Glennon and S. Shaloff, eds, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957,* vol. 18 (Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1989), 188–89.

69 *The Capricorn Africa Society Handbook for Speakers* (Salisbury: Capricorn Africa, 1955), 29.

70 R. Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957–1960', *Historical Journal,* 38 (1995), 455–455.

71 T. Mboya, *The Kenya Question: An African Answer*, introduction by Margery Perham, Fabian Tract 302 (London, Fabian Colonial Bureau, 1956). For background on this document, see D. Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: the Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (London, Heinemann, 1982), 57-63. My treatment of Mboya and Nyerere centres on statements and texts that were significant for later debates in South Africa and obviously does not do justice to the East African context or the later evolution of their views.

72 Mboya, *The Kenya Question,* 12.

exploitation engineered a society composed of three racial groups, which fundamentally corresponded to class, and led to the perversion of the state into an instrument of dominance. Mboya emphasised that multi-racialism required the perpetuation of groups whose existence was inseparable from the development of colonial society.[73] The point was at once obvious and quite powerful. Every policy of collective representation demanded the institutionalisation of racial categories that existed *solely* due to settler economic and political power.[74]

As Mboya realised, this argument challenged the civilisational basis of liberalism as it existed within colonial discourse. His summary rejection of the Capricorn Society's proposal for a qualified franchise made this conclusion explicit.[75] In effect, he rejected the idea that democracy presupposed the existence of bourgeoisie civil society – the institutions which secured the superiority of 'European civilization' over 'the Native' in the context of settler colonialism. Drawing on 19th century arguments in favour of universal franchise, Mboya argued that it was only through participating in the electoral process that the African majority would develop political responsibility. By disassociating the educative function of elections from the existence of 'European standards', Mboya thus created the intellectual space to conceive of a democratic project that was simultaneously African (since it would develop on the basis of the African majority's languages, customs, and social practices) and fully inclusive (since the state, and therefore politics as a whole, would recognise individuals rather than groups). On a rhetorical level, Mboya was therefore able to sidestep the questions of inclusion and exclusion generated by collective political claims, including the demand for self-determination, while insisting on the African character of Kenya's future under majority rule.

'A NON-RACIAL FUTURE'

The international debate over multi-racialism virtually assured that diverse groups would claim the mantle of non-racialism as a linguistic repost. During a brief period in the mid-1950s, Nyerere and Mboya endorsed the idea of a non-racial democracy, although they both soon abandoned the phrase. After 1957, the British Colonial office began to describe its policy in these terms as well (Harold MacMillan endorsed a non-racial policy in his famous 'Wind of Change' speech). At almost exactly the same moment, the word gained currency from a different source: the United States. On May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court elaborated on its earlier decision in Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka Kansas (so-called Brown II). Employing the idea in a well-established legal sense, the decision empowered federal courts to hear cases related

73 *Ibid*., 30.
74 *Ibid*., 32.
75 See also Mboya's later account of these debates in 'National Mobilization 2,' in *Freedom and After*, 106.

to 'determining admission to the public schools on a non-racial basis'.[76] The court's language was widely reproduced and the term became common in media coverage of the struggles surrounding school desegregation.[77] By the late 1950s, the word 'non-racial' was frequently employed in the international, English-language press to refer to racially integrated spaces and institutions.

This meaning was a significant departure from earlier usage in South Africa. The word 'non-racial' first became common in political contexts in the aftermath of the South African War. In 1902 the Afrikaner Bond held a widely reported meeting where it announced plans to reorganise the association on a 'non-racial' basis, that is, including English and Afrikaners.[78] The Bond's use of non-racial may have been drawn from other white settler colonies in the British Empire, particularly Canada.[79] Alongside 'non-party', the term became increasingly common in the lead-up to the 1910 Union as a slogan of white reconciliation.[80] Jan Smuts adopted this language by 1910.[81] Contrary to a widespread misconception, 'non-racial' did not become associated with the Cape's qualified franchise until after the 1929 foundation of the Non-Racial Franchise Association by white liberals who sought to prevent the creation of separate African voting lists.[82] Their defence of the non-racial franchise influenced later writers, such as Keppel-Jones, who then applied the term to the Cape tradition.[83] 'Without regards to race' implied that other criteria for determining political capacity were in place, namely property. Given this close association with white unity and (later) colonial trusteeship, it is not surprising that African intellectuals generally avoided the phraseology. When Gandhi invoked the term in *Indian Opinion*, he did so with a tremendous sense of irony.[84]

A shift began in the mid-1950s. A new generation of white activists, associated with the recently formed Liberal Party, rejected their organisation's endorsement of

76 *Brown v. Board of Education*, 349 U.S. 294, 75 S. Ct. 753, 99 L. Ed. 1083 (1955).

77 See, for example, T. Marshall and R. Wilkins, 'High Court Edict Analyzed', *The Chicago Defender* (National edition), 13 August 1955.

78 'South Africa', *The Scotsman,* 15 November 1902; 'The Bond Regenerate', *The Rhodesia Herald,* 22 November 1902.

79 The London *Times* described the authorization of Dutch in parliamentary debate as giving South Africa the same 'non-racial' system as Canada. 'The Colonies', *The Times*, 15 June 1897.

80 'Botha's Non-Racial Views', *The Journal*, 15 October 1907; 'General Botha and the "Mother Country"', *The Manchester Guardian,* 16 June 1910.

81 'General Smuts on Union', *The Journal,* 12 February 1910. He used the term in this sense into the 1920s. See 'General Smuts Appeal for a Party on Non-Racial Lines', *The Scotsman,* 29 October 1920; **'**Letter to C.P. Crewe, 25 June 1924' in J. van der Poel, ed, *Selections from the Smuts Papers: September 1919–November 1934*, vol. 5. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 230.

82 In his founding address to the Non-Racial Franchise Association, Rose Innes consistently used the term 'Cape Franchise' to refer to the existing institution. See 'The Native Franchise Question' appendix A in *James Rose Innes: Autobiography*, ed, B.A. Tindall (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1949), 310–27.

83 A. Keppel-Jones, *Friends or foes? A Point of View and a Programme for Racial Harmony in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1950), 150.

84 I. Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Boston, Harvard, 2013), 92.

progressive stages of enfranchisement and embraced a universalising ideal of individual rights. The main driver of this process was Patrick Duncan, editor of the liberal paper *Contact*. 'It has become clear that our country only has one future', Duncan wrote in the inaugural issue of the journal *Africa South*, 'a non-racial future'.[85] The son of South Africa's first Governor General, Duncan became famous as one of the earliest white volunteers arrested during the Defiance Campaign. Despite deeply felt loyalties to the Congress movement, he joined the Liberal Party in reaction to growing communist influence in the ANC (he was driven by ideological hostility to Soviet totalitarianism) and a desire to be part of an 'all races' organisation. In 1956 Duncan lambasted the Cape tradition of qualified franchise: 'Any such qualifications have but one purpose in our country – to preserve effectual white control under a cloak of non-racialism'.[86] Duncan's use of the term 'non-racial' removed the word from its earlier legal context. No longer merely juridical and negative ('without regards to'), the term 'non-racial' had begun to develop an expansive sense as both a political philosophy and way of life.[87]

The word 'non-racial' was absent from the Liberal Party's 1955 statement of policy.[88] Duncan was part of a younger generation, including John Didcott and Violaine Junod, who envisioned 'non-racial democracy' as a society based on universal citizenship where individual personality would be promoted.[89] In style and sensibility, this small group was at odds with the more conservative, older generation of liberal doyens. Importantly, Duncan and his co-thinkers (unlike the leaders of the Congress Alliance) posited a direct relationship between party structure and national identity: non-racial organisation was necessary to bring about a non-racial society. They also believed that liberals bore a special responsibility for preventing the South Africa's conflict from escalating into a race war. Cooperation between white and black would undercut the country's polarisation and secure a place for the white minority in a new South Africa.[90] To a considerable degree, this scenario reflected a missionary attitude.[91] The language of non-racialism allowed a small group of white activists to endorse majority rule while avoiding the question of the white minority's privileged place within an African society: liberal institutions and individual rights, not a nationalism articulated in terms of an

85 P. Duncan, 'Passive Resistance', *Africa South,* 1, 1 (October-December 1956).

86 *Ibid*., 80.

87 There were certainly earlier uses of 'non-racial' to mean 'broadminded and non-racist', representing either a repurposing of the legal term or simply an ad hoc formulation. One reviewer usefully pointed me to J. Mancoe, *First Edition of the Bloemfontein Bantu and Coloured People's Directory* (Bloemfontein, A. C. White, 1934). As throughout this article, I am not trying to identify first usages (a virtually impossible task), but the points at which a term developed a regular usage within a political discourse.

88 *The Policies of the Liberal Party of South Africa* (N.D. [1955]).

89 V. Junod, 'Last Chance for Whites', *Africa Today,* 4,6 (1957), 39.

90 Junod, 'Last Chance for Whites', 39. *Ibid.*, 39.

91 Duncan left the Liberal Party after the Sharpeville Massacre, rejecting its continued adherence to non-violence, and joined the PAC (which changed its membership policies in the early 1960s). Driver, *Patrick Duncan*, 221.

African identity, would define South Africa's character as a political community.[92] In this version of the non-racial project, liberal activism and an 'all race' organisation would serve as the ultimate means for the extension of Western institutions and values. By the late 1950s, this concept of 'non-racial democracy' had become accepted in broader liberal circles, especially in Natal. In his 1958 book, *Hope for South Africa*, the author and liberal politician Alan Paton used the phrase five times alongside formulations like 'non-racial society'.[93]

Outside the liberal press, the term 'non-racial' appeared rarely in oppositional publications. Newspapers sometimes employed the word in a technical sense to describe an organisation's membership policy, although 'multi-racial', 'interracial', and 'all race' were each used more frequently. In a few cases, the word simply denoted that something was 'racially inclusive'. In a 1953 article published in *The Nation*, Z. K. Matthews described the Defiance Campaign as 'peaceful, disciplined, and non-racial'.[94] Two years later, an article by Jordan Ngubane, then a member of the ANC, used 'non-racial' to characterise the campaign in a *DRUM* magazine subheading.[95] Such instances were unusual. The term was largely absent from Congress Alliance speeches, publications, and statements of policy before 1960. In December 1957, representatives of the ANC, the Liberal Party, and other oppositional groups convened a 'Multi-Racial Conference' at the University of the Witwatersrand. The gathering endorsed the goal of universal suffrage and the transition from 'white supremacy to a non-racial democracy in which these franchise rights can be exercised'.[96] Congress Alliance publications reproduced the conference motions and praised this sentiment – without, notably, adopting the language of non-racial democracy. When ANC leaders such as Moses Kotane and Walter Sisulu expressed their vision of a future South Africa, they generally invoked the enigmatic Freedom Charter.[97] The terminology itself was not yet a matter of widespread dispute.

The position of the Communist Party during this period merits special discussion. An important intellectual tradition identifies the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) (dissolved in 1950 and reformed underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953) as the progenitor of non-racialism.[98] This argument points to the CPSA's

92 Driver, *Patrick Duncan*, 221.

93 A. Paton, *Hope for South Africa* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1958).

94 H.S. Warner [Z.K. Matthews], 'South Africa: Who Provoked the Riots?', *The Nation,* 21 February 1953.

95 J. Ngubane, 'Congress has Something Up its Sleeve!', *Drum,* December 1955.

96 'Conference Findings', *New Age,* 12 December 1957.

97 See, for example, M. Kotane, 'How to Build a United Front', *New Age,* 9 May 1957.

98 For a defence of white communist cadres as the pioneers non-racialism, see J.T. Campbell, 'Romantic Revolutionaries: David Ivon Jones, SP Bunting and the Origins of Non-Racial Politics in South Africa', *The Journal of African History* 39, 2 (1998): 313-328. Everatt's work is an important and nuanced presentation of this position, which also leaves room for other actors. For my evaluation of Everatt's argument, see J. Soske, 'Review of David Everatt, *The Origins of Non-racialism: White Opposition to Apartheid in the 1950s*', *Transformation* 76, 1 (2011), 150-155.

principled rejection of white supremacy, its vision of proletarian internationalism, and its racially inclusive membership structure. Even its opponents, such as Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, recognised the force of the organisation's political culture: 'we knew that if someone was a communist it meant he had no colour prejudice. He accepted you as a human being, this you just knew'.[99] Yet two important factors militated against the Party's adoption of the language of non-racialism during the 1940s–50s and frustrate the direct identification of its policies with later understandings of the concept.[100] First, the CPSA adopted the policy of building race-based organisations from the early 1940s.[101] After the Soviet Union's entry into the Second World War, the party leadership dissolved the anti-war Non-European United Front (the largest 'multi-racial' movement in South Africa) in favour of strengthening the distinct 'national' organisations.[102] When the CPSA dissolved in 1950, its members focused their energies energy on working within the separate sections of the Congress Alliance. Second, the SACP moved *away* from insisting on the primacy of class struggle and proletarian unity during the 1950s. In his valuable account of the white left, David Everatt describes how the formation of the SACP resulted in a transition of leadership from Cape Town to Johannesburg and a new emphasis on the national liberation struggle.[103] Developed during this period, the idea of 'Colonialism of a Special Type' provided a Marxian justification for endorsing the claims of a majoritarian, African nationalism. In both content and spirit, this stance was at odds with the liberal advocates of non-racialism during the 1950s.

It appears that the terminology first become politicized in debates within Cape Town leftist circles. Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) began to oppose the terms 'non-racial' and 'multi-racial' in its publications. In an article on the launch of *Africa South*, a writer for *The Torch* decried the idea of a multi-racial democracy: 'note: not a *non*-racial but a multi-racial democracy – a contradiction in terms since democracy implies the rejection of the very concept of "race".'[104] In February 1958, *The Torch* described the policy of the Congress Alliance as 'multi-racialism, which means racism multiplied'.[105] Unlike the younger generation of the Liberal Party, however, the NEUM did not develop a coherent philosophy of non-racialism at this point in time.[106] During the 1950s, the Unity Movement promoted non-

99 Robert Sobukwe interviewed by Gail Gerhart, not verbatim, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, 8 and 9 April 1970.

100 The one context in which CPSA/SACP publications regularly use the term 'non-racial' is to describe trade union membership.

101 For a defence of this position, see Y. Dadoo, 'The Non-European Unity', *Freedom* 4,1 (February 1945) reprinted in A.Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History, volume 2: 1943-64* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1997).

102 I. Meer, *A Fortunate Man* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2002), 67.

103 Everatt, *The Origins of Non-Racialism*, 82–96.

104 'Africa South', *The Torch,* 17 July 1956.

105 'Undented Racialists', *The Torch*, 4 February 1958.

106 See M. Adhikari, 'Fiercely Non-Racial? Discourses and Politics of Race in the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943–70', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 31, 2 (2005), 403-418.

European solidarity and the eventual goal of universal citizenship: this programmatic dualism impeded a generalization from organisational form to a racially inclusive national identity. In late 1956, a bitter factional struggle developed that highlighted this contradiction. Critiquing the use of the terms 'African' and 'non-European', Hosea Jaffe argued for a conception of South African identity based on the principle of *jus soli*. To this end, he developed a position of thoroughgoing race denialism: any invocation of race, including the concept of an African language, was tainted by the idea of biological difference. True unity, he concluded, required the disappearance of racial and ethnic identifications altogether. In a series of blistering responses, I.B. Tabata retorted that Jaffe's universalism masked Anglophone cultural chauvinism and an endorsement of colonial-style assimilation.[107] Because Tabata conceived of a unified nation as the outcome of struggle, he defended an African political identity and the use of African languages as an essential stage in the fight against colonial consciousness. Significantly, neither side invoked the terms 'non-racial' or 'non-racialism' in the exchange.[108]

The ANC leadership largely dismissed the NEUM as sectarian. These arguments did, however, influence intellectuals associated with the Africanist opposition inside of the ANC, most importantly Sobukwe. After the Africanist faction's break from the ANC in 1958, Sobukwe and his co-thinkers were at pains to articulate their version of nationalism in terms that undermined the widespread accusation of anti-minority racism. Drawing on the Unity Movement and Mboya, Sobukwe told the *Golden City Post*: 'We reject multi-racialism in favour of a non-racial democracy because multi-racialism suggests a maintenance of racial groups'.[109] He concluded by emphasising the need to educate Africans not to use nationalism as a 'symbol of racialism'. Sobukwe's intervention directly linked the NEUM's critique of the Congress Alliance and the East African debates surrounding the Lyttleton Constitution. Crucially, he followed the Unity Movement in characterising the Congress Alliance's doctrine as multi-racialism – a description of its views that the ANC itself never embraced.

The December 1958 All-African People's Conference in Accra, chaired by Mboya, lent tremendous authority to Sobukwe's position. Attended by Duncan, Ngubane, and a few other South Africans, the conference affirmed Pan-African socialism and the African personality while characterising the white populations of settler regimes, including South Africa and Kenya, as 'foreigners who have settled permanently in Africa and

107 In a letter to *New Age*, a 'Philip Madlokwana' made a similar critique of the NEUM as a whole, arguing that *The Torch*'s denunciation African culture production as 'racialist' reflected the chauvinistic embrace of Western civilisation by 'Cape Coloured intellectuals'. See 'The Torch and African Culture', *New Age,* 31 October 1957.

108 For early statements of position, see I.B. Tabata to 'Mr Chairman and friends' 26 October 1956; H. Jaffe's 'Reply to first letter (From I.B. Tabata?)', 2 October 1956; and W.M. Tsotsi, Presidential Address at the Conference of the All Africa Convention Held at Queenstown from the 17th-20th December 1956 in Unity Movement of South Africa Papers, 1954-6, box 3, UCT Special Collections Library.

109 '3 Africanists Tipped for New "Presidency"', *Golden City Post*, 9 November 1958.

who regard the position of Africa under their sway as belonging more to them than to the African'.[110] The same resolution stipulated the foundational claim of Africans to land: 'the rights of indigenous Africans to the fullest use of their lands be respected and preserved'.[111] Conference speakers, such as Kenya's Julius Kiano, denounced concepts like multi-racialism, apartheid, and Bantustans in a single breath. Mboya's critique of multi-racialism had circulated in South Africa before the Accra conference.[112] But it had not been imported into local debates. During the period of the Lyttleton constitution, *New Age* and *Contact* covered Kenya – as well as Central Africa and Tanganyika – extensively, but these articles deliberately avoided the terms 'multi-racial' and 'multi-racialism'. There seems to have been an editorial awareness that these words possessed a different meaning in common South African usage. A direct transportation would only generate confusion. A letter to *Contact* observed: 'For the past thirty years or so the term "multi-racial" has been used for organizations which wish to bring the members of different racial groups together'.[113]

The Accra Conference forced the Congress Alliance to reconsider how its language and policies would translate into other African contexts. At the conference itself, Ezekiel Mphahlele (who represented the ANC) misread the Kenyan critique of multi-racialism as 'anti-white' and began to confront the difficulties that the ANC would have in explaining the Freedom Charter and multi-racial nationalism to the liberation movements in 'colonial Africa'.[114] On returning from Ghana, Duncan wrote a sharp critique of the call for a 'multi-racial society' that invoked Kiano and Mboya[115]. In response, the Cape Town-based writer and Congress of Democrats activist Alf Wannenburgh published a letter in *New Age* that cited Luthuli's use of the phrase, which he argued was unambiguous in context.[116] This reply did not resolve the question. In its next issue, *New Age* ran an article on Tanganyika with the subheading: '"Multi-racialism" has a Different Meaning There'.[117] During a major address delivered in February 1959, Luthuli answered the Africanists by asserting that the Accra Conference supported the ANC's understanding of a broad Pan-African (rather than a narrow 'black') nationalism. He forcefully rejected the suggestion that the ANC held policies comparable to Welensky's plans for the Central African Federation.[118]

110 'Conference Resolution on Imperialism and Colonialism', in C. Legum, *Pan Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (Westport, Conn, Greenwood Press, 1976), 228.
111 'Conference Resolution of Imperialism and Colonialsim', *Pan Africanism*.
112 See, for example, B. Davidson's account in 'The Kenya Crisis', *Africa South*, 1, 3 (April-June 1957), 68–73.
113 'Multi-or Non-Racial', *Contact,* 13 June 1959.
114 E. Mphahlele, 'Accra Conference Diary', *Fighting Talk*, 1959.
115 See *Contact*, 27 December 1958.
116 'Both ANC and COD Stand for Multi-Racial S. Africa', *New Age,* 22 January 1959.
117 'Tanganyika Freedom Movement Has Backing of Europeans and Asiatics', *New Age*, 12 February 1959.
118 'Congress Policy is Pan-African says President General', *The World* (21 February 1959).

In its statements during this period, the ANC hailed the Accra conference and endorsed the idea of Pan-Africanism. At the same time, *New Age* drew a close parallel between the Congress Alliance and Nyerere's strategic use of multi-racial elections in order to achieve state power and then dismantle the colonial system of reservations. After a date was set for Tanganyika's independence, Luthuli telegrammed Nyerere and voiced his strong sense of accord with the East African leader's statements. 'Who knows', Luthuli remarked, 'but that destiny has preserved for Africa the task of building such a democracy in which all races participate'.[119] Underlining the challenges faced by independent states, Luthuli emphasised the task of steering African nationalism along 'constructive lines'. Through these gestures of solidarity, the Congress Alliance was able to demonstrate its commitment to Pan-Africanism while upholding a multi-racial image of African nationalism. In the pages of *New Age*, Nyerere served as a counterpoint to the Africanists' invocation of Mboya and Nkrumah.[120]

'RACIALISM MULTIPLIED'

Throughout 1958–9, the Africanist split generated enormous publicity at a time when the ANC was in disarray. Initially, the ANC dismissed the oppositionists as careerists and 'black fascists'. However, Sobukwe's reframing of the debate in terms of 'non-racial democracy' versus 'multi-racialism' forced a broader discussion over the question of minorities in the ANC's understanding of nation. Did the Freedom Charter's statement that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white' not uphold a social reality created through the violence of colonial domination? After the break from the ANC, the Africanist position followed Mboya closely. Rejecting a biological understanding of race, they insisted that 'national groups' were the product of a political economy founded on settler colonialism. To guarantee the status of minorities as races, rather than as individuals, meant to perpetuate the violence that produced distinct racial groups: African expropriation. Multi-racial nationalism was therefore not a true nationalism, since colonial domination made a common patriotism impossible. Individual rights and democratic institutions would create a community of interests: a future African government would grant citizenship to 'foreigners' as individuals within a transformed society. After their break from the ANC, the Africanists adopted the Unity Movement's slogan 'multi-racialism means racialism multiplied'. Opponents derided this expression as gibberish that confused South African and East African realities.[121] For the Africanists, it expressed a truism grounded in experience. Unlike interactions between individuals, social relationships between racial groups could never be equal.

119 'Lutuli Sends Message to Nyerere', *New Age*, 3 November 1960.

120 Mboya and Nyerere's policies on race were widely (if mistakenly) juxtaposed in the press in the late 1950s.

121 P. Rodda, 'Africanist Cut Loose', *Africa South,* 3, 4, July-September 1959.

In his inaugural address to the first congress of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Sobukwe rejected the concept of race on scientific and ethical grounds: 'there is only one race to which we all belong, and that is the human race'.[122] To accept the idea of racial groups, Sobukwe implied, would be to develop a political project on the same philosophical basis as apartheid, even if this system assumed a more 'democratic' form. In contrast, Sobukwe argued that South Africa was composed of three national groups defined by geographical origin and historical experience: Africans, Indians, and whites. (The Africanists rejected the idea that 'so-called Coloureds' were not Africans).[123] The African majority, united by a common experience of oppression, was the driving force in the battle against white supremacy, but only the idea of African nationalism could bind this heterogeneous group together as a self-aware political force. Sobukwe's analysis derived the subject of African nationalism from the shared material conditions of exploitation: the struggle only assumed a racial form because of the racist structure of South African society.[124] While emphasising that white individuals could be citizens of an African state, he argued against their membership in the PAC on the grounds that the material interests of minorities led them to seek guarantees that undermined African nationalism and, therefore, the basis of revolutionary unity.

Sympathetic observers soon queried this exclusion. In perhaps the first article to juxtapose 'multi-racialism' and 'non-racialism' as philosophies, Jordan Ngubane – who had become Vice President of the Liberal Party – suggested that the PAC contained two distinct factions, the non-racialist majority and an anti-white minority.[125] It was not enough, Ngubane urged, to advocate non-racialism in the abstract. Ngubane's piece rested on a widely shared assumption among Liberal Party (and some Congress) activists: membership policy prefigured both the post-apartheid constitutional structure and a future national identity. Sobukwe, however, rejected this postulate. Following both Luthuli and the Accra conference, the PAC defined an African as 'everybody who owes his loyalty only to Africa and accepts the democratic rule of an African majority'.[126] In Sobukwe's analysis, this definition of the African only had purchase *after* the dismantling of the white population's economic and political control. At that point, all citizens could participate in a continental project to develop a genuinely African culture. In a radically new fashion**,** Sobukwe distinguished between the racialised subject of anti-colonial nationalism and the individual citizen of post-colonial politics.[127]

122 M. Sobukwe, 'Inaugural Address' in *Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe from 1949-1959 and Other Documents of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania* (New York, PAC of Azania, N.D., [1979?]), 17. Note that this phrase also occurs in earlier Unity Movement writings.

123 For a discussion of the PAC and the Indian membership, see J. Soske, "Wash Me Black Again": African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1944–1960', (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2009), 254-9.

124 Sobukwe, 'Inaugural Address' in *Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe,* 23.

125 J.K. Ngubane, 'Pan-Africanism and the ANC', *Opinion*, 17 April 1959.

126 Sobukwe,'Inaugural Address' in *Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe*, 24.

127 The PAC manifesto distinguished between African nationalism, 'which upholds the material,

At least some Congress Alliance leaders saw the debate between 'multi-racialism' and 'non-racialism' as little more than terminological confusion.[128] 'Multi-racial' was a commonly understood word denoting 'including all races'. 'Non-racial' was a more recondite term that signified 'without distinction in regards to race'. ANC statements had repeatedly stated that the Congress Alliance championed equal rights 'without distinction of colour, race, sex, or belief'. In the course of struggle and state repression, Congress leaders likely saw this debate as hinging on a distinction without a difference. By the middle of 1959, Congress Alliance activists like Fatima Meer began to employ the term 'non-racial democracy' in articles and speeches. In May of that year, the Youth League of the Transvaal Indian Congress came out for a 'non-racial' youth association, initiating an extensive debate within the Congress Alliance over the conditions for merging into a single party. This piece was published on the front page of the *New Age*.[129] In October, *New Age* published an article announcing a mobilisation by the ANC, Natal Indian Congress, and South African Congress of Trade Unions under the slogan: 'Build Congress for a Non-Racial Democracy'.[130]

It may be significant that several early adoptions of the term 'non-racial' occurred in Natal, where the Congress Alliance collaborated closely with the Liberal Party and the organisations shared prominent members. In August 1960, Luthuli used a phrase that became a standard formulation for expressing Congress's position during this period: the ANC stood for 'multi-racial society and non-racial democracy'.[131] Luthuli's 1961 Nobel acceptance speech projected this vocabulary back to the founding of the ANC.[132] The following year, he voiced his opposition to group rights in terms almost identical to Sobukwe.[133] As the president of the ANC, Luthuli adopted the term 'non-racial' in a narrow, constitutional sense in order to clarify the ANC's position on minority protections. This pairing of non-racial democracy and multi-racial society captured well the contradictory strands of the Freedom Charter. The ANC's broad nationalism envisioned a diverse, African country in which the law would be applied without regards to race, gender, or belief. If anything, the expression of 'non-racial democracy'

intellectual, and spiritual interests of the oppressed peoples', and Africanism, 'a social force that upholds the material, intellectual, and spiritual interests of the individual.' See 'The 1959 Pan-Africanist Congress Manifesto'in *Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe*, 44.

128 Karis and Gerhart attribute this position to Joe Matthews and it seems to have been widely shared in the early 1960s.

129 'Non-Racial Youth Organization Proposed', *New Age,* 7 May 1959.

130 'Build Congress for a Non-Racial Democracy', *New Age*, 8 October 1959.

131 A. Luthuli, 'Face the Future' foreword to pamphlet published by the South African Congress of Democrats, 8 August 1960, http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4726, accessed 14 March 2014.

132 A. Luthuli, 'Africa and Freedom', in *The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross* (London, The Publicity and Information Bureau, African National Congress, N.D.), 66.

133 A. Luthuli, 'What I Would Do If I Were Prime Minister', reprinted from *Ebony*, February 1962 in *The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross*, 77.

narrowed the complexity of this vision by privileging race over the questions of gender and religion.[134]

The terminological shift was gradual and uneven. In 1959 policy document written on behalf of the ANC's National Executive, Duma Nokwe (also a member of the South African Communist Party) responded to criticisms of the ANC's membership policy by the Liberal Party, NEUM, and some elements within the Communist Party: 'Neither the ANC – nor for that matter any of the other Congresses – were formed or exist for the primary purpose of building a "multi-racial" or "non-racial" society. The ANC was formed to unite and voice the views of Africans'.[135] After deriding those who characterised this purpose as racialism, Nokwe went on to point out that the ANC had been farsighted enough, 'or, if you will, sufficiently "non-racial" in outlook' to unite with other sections of the oppressed and progressive whites.[136] The fraught term remained within scare quotes. In late 1960, *New Age* and *Fighting Talk* were still publishing articles that called for a 'multi-racial democracy'.[137] The South African Communist Party's 1962 *The Road to South African Freedom* document, which exerted significant influence over ANC propaganda in exile, employed the word 'non-racial' twice: once in the familiar context of trade union organisation and once to refer to general democratic principles. The ideological emphasis, however, remained elsewhere. The lengthy manifesto declared: 'the main content of the revolution will be the national liberation of the African people' – a clear endorsement of a majoritarian, rather than a non-racial, understanding of nation.[138] Outside of South Africa, the ANC appears to have adopted the language of 'non-racial democracy' in a piecemeal fashion and without a thorough discussion of its implications.[139]

134 Along similar lines Suren Pillay has argued that the idea of non-racialism is no longer adequate to the current problem space of South African politics. See S. Pillay, 'Identity, Difference, Citizenship, or Why I am No Longer a Non Racialist', paper for the CODESRIA 14th General Assembly (2015), http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article2343, last accessed 12 October 2015. For a discussion of the relationship between non-racialism and feminism as discourses of inclusion, see S. Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), especially 75-80.

135 Executive Report Submitted to the African National Congress, annual National Conference, December 1959, Luthuli Papers, Center for Research Libraries, File 9.

136 Executive Report, Luthuli Papers, Center for Research Libraries, File 9.

137 'COD Call on Referendum', *New Age*, 22 September 22 1960. 'Time for Multi-Racial Government', *New Age*, 27 October 1960.

138 South African Communist Party, *The Road to South African Freedom* (1962), https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1962/road-freedom.htm, accessed 11 October 2015.

139 For the failure of the ANC to clarify the meaning of non-racialism in exile, see Maré, '"Non-racialism" in the struggle against apartheid', *Society in Transition*, 13-14.

CONCLUSION

In using the terms 'multi- and non-racialism' anachronistically, historians risk overwriting the political discourse of the ANC's first five decades and, as a result, producing an inadvertent teleology at the level of narration. The result simplifies the range and nature of the debates that characterised the ANC's early history. The most important example of this practice is Peter Walshe's classic *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*.[140] By anachronistically referring to the Cape Franchise as 'non-racial franchise', Walshe is able to establish a direct line between nineteenth-century liberalism and the ANC's 'moderate' non-racialism via the defence of the Cape franchise by early ANC leaders. When the linguistic filament disappears, the linkage becomes more fraught. Intellectuals such as John Dube, Pixley Seme, and Sol Plaatje were also bitterly critical of the paternalism that informed Cape Liberalism and sought to rework its vision of civilisation in far more democratic, inclusive, and pluralistic terms. Racial pride, frequently informed by earlier Pan-African visions, and the insistence on African agency were central elements of the ANC's multifaceted political tradition from its inception.[141] While much changed between the ANC's founding and the 1950s, the productive contradiction between the ANC's inclusive South Africanism and its African nationalism remained very present.

The debates within anti-apartheid politics during the 1950s centred far less on the meaning of non-racialism than on the nature of African nationalism. The intellectual background to these exchanges was provided by the crisis in colonial liberalism following the Second World War. In response to the growing strength of anticolonial sentiment, the schema of multi-racial democracy attempted to preserve Western civilisation as the foundation for democratic self-rule while guarding white trusteeship through collective representation. In response, one small group of liberals sought to de-racialise and universalise the idea of Western civilisation in the forms of democracy and bourgeois civil society. Fundamentally, this concept negated African nationalism (in particular, the claim to popular sovereignty made on behalf of an African political subject) while endorsing the principle of universal suffrage. Duncan's understanding of non-racialism was the most radical expression of this programme. In contrast, black intellectuals across southern, central, and eastern Africa sought ways to reconcile the idea of African nationalism with an inclusive understanding of democracy. Rejecting the foundation of democracy in settler civil society, they reworked the concept of nation in terms of the development of the individual personality (Mboya), a common experience of struggle (Tabata and, to an extent, Sobukwe), and the holding of shared ideals (Luthuli and

140 P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1912–1952* (London, C. Hurst and Co., 1970).

141 For agency/liberation as a major concern in the ANC, see A. Butler, *The Idea of the ANC* (Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2013). For earlier Pan-Africanism, see R. Vinson, *The Americans Are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2012).

Sobukwe). The PAC's and then the ANC's adoption of the term 'non-racial democracy' occurred in the context of this discussion.

The thinking of the two most prominent figures in black South African politics of the late 1950s, Luthuli and Sobukwe, illustrates the complex interplay between the concepts of African nationalism and non-racial democracy. When Sobukwe and Luthuli used the term 'non-racial', they were referring to a constitutional principle: universal adult suffrage and individual citizenship rights. Their visions of national liberation, however, significantly exceeded this legal-juridical formula. By incorporating racial difference into the very definition of nation, Luthuli rejected the principle of social homogeneity at the heart of classical liberalism: a political subject could be defined by its multiplicity. Rather than a single culture or an existing set of institutions, a shared set of ideals would unite South Africans around an inclusive African nationalism. A practical thinker, Luthuli's writings suggest an understanding of nation that resembles an ethical process more than a site of arrival: living with and across differences would necessitate the continuous elaboration of new forms of unity – intellectual, political, cultural. In contrast, Sobukwe argued that emancipatory politics could not incorporate colonial racial categories. In the place of a racial subject, he employed two different concepts of the people –the oppressed masses and the democratic body of citizenry – separated by a revolutionary process. Reflecting the political economy of settler colonialism, the anticolonial struggle would initially take a racial form. After the dismantling of white power, the ruling majority would grant citizenship to white and Indian individuals, who would then participate in a common project of elaborating a non-racial, Pan-African culture. The distinction between majority and minority would then disappear. If this vision departed from Luthuli's, it was nevertheless united by a shared problem. Both leaders sought to develop an understanding of the African political subject that escaped the racial underpinnings of a classic, majoritarian nationalism.

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