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Zollmann, Jakob

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Negotiated Partition of South Africa – An Idea and its History (1920s–1980s)

Jakob Zollmann

WZB Berlin Social Science Center

ABSTRACT

This article analyses a number of academic and journalistic proposals on the negotiated partition of South Africa coming from different schools of thought, from within South Africa and abroad, from the 1920s up to the late 1980s. These proposals of dividing South Africa into a 'predominantly black' and a 'predominantly white' state were presented by their authors as an alternative to apartheid and seen as a way out of the impasse created by the unwillingness of the National Party to accept the one man, one vote principle for a unitary state. The article examines how the proposals gradually foresaw giving the economically most relevant parts of the country to the 'predominantly black state'. The article argues that this debate also has to be seen in the context of the Cold War where the partition of countries had been a means to pacify divided societies, at least temporarily.

KEYWORDS

South Africa; intellectual history; partition; Alfred Hoernlé; South African Institute of Race Relations

Throughout the twentieth century, territorial reorganisation was a recurring question in southern African politics. The 'unification' of the hitherto four separate British colonies – the Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal Colony and the Orange River Colony – into one 'Union of South Africa' in 1910 is merely the best-known example of such reorganisation.¹ Before World War I rumours were rampant that Germany had designs to expand its colony, German Southwest Africa (GSWA), into Angola and British Bechuanaland. The Germans, in turn, accused the British in South Africa of annexation schemes towards GSWA; with the South African invasion of GSWA in the early days of World War I this turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. After the war, Prime Minister Jan Smuts (1870–1950) reinitiated plans to enlarge the South African state northwards, but in the Southern Rhodesian

CONTACT Jakob Zollmann  jakob.zollmann@wzb.eu

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1. L. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa 1902–1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

government referendum of 1922, the British-origin electorate rejected joining the Union of South Africa.²

As African politics during the twentieth century has shown, the opposite version of territorial reorganisation – namely partition of a country – was also repeatedly seen by political power brokers as a feasible means for their politics. Separatist and secessionist movements and wars, such as Biafra in Nigeria, Oromo in Ethiopia, or Katanga in Kongo/Zaire, are cases in point.³ The partition of Sudan and South Sudan (2011) or Ethiopia and Eritrea (1994) even shows that it is possible to challenge and break with the principle of *uti possidetis* – the continuity of colonial boundaries⁴ – upheld throughout decolonisation, leading to the creation under international law of recognised states.⁵

In South African politics, too, the idea of partitioning the state – beyond accepting the independence of Namibia (1990), which was originally planned to be incorporated into the state as ‘Fifth Province’⁶ – was ventured by various political circles and academics. This article analyses not plans for expansion but ideas for partitioning the territory of South Africa. Plans for a Greater South Africa were a sign of self-confidence and spoke of a sense of grandeur and historical mission, as exemplified by ‘frontier philosophers’ like Jan Smuts.⁷ The idea, on the other hand, for negotiated or ‘radical partition’, as the leader of the Progressive Federal Party Frederik van Zyl Slabbert (1940–2010) called it,⁸ sprang from a sense of crisis that was very different from academic and administrative plans for ‘macro- and micro-segregation’ between South Africa’s ‘races’.⁹

The perceived impossibility of continually upholding white dominance over the disenfranchised majority of Africans, or the notion that – given the (cultural) heterogeneity of South Africa’s population – cohabitation would be impossible under the one man, one vote principle, led not only politicians but also scholars and journalists to develop proposals to divide or partition not only ‘the races’ but the territory of South Africa. To make things clear from

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2. R. Hyam, *The Failure of South African Expansion 1908–1948* (London: Palgrave, 1972); R. Hyam and P. Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa Since the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
 3. For ease of reference, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_active_separatist_movements_in_Africa, accessed 1 September 2017.
 4. See J.P. Quéneudec, ‘Remarques sur le règlement des conflits frontaliers en Afrique’, *Revue Générale de Droit International Public*, 74 (1970), 70; S. Lallonde, ‘The Role of the *Uti Possidetis* Principle in the Resolution of Maritime Boundary Disputes’, in C. Chinkin and F. Baetens, eds, *Sovereignty, Statehood and State Responsibility: Essays in Honour of James Crawford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 255.
 5. D.M. Ahmed, *Boundaries and Secession in Africa and International Law: Challenging Uti Possidetis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); B. Fagbayibo, ‘South Sudan, *Uti Possidetis* Rule and the Future of Statehood in Africa’, *AfricLaw*, 26 April 2012, <https://africlaw.com/2012/04/26/south-sudan-uti-possidetis-rule-and-the-future-of-statehood-in-africa/>, accessed 1 September 2017.
 6. J. Silvester, ‘Forging the Fifth Province: Imaginative Geographies and Territorialities of Empire’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), 505–518.
 7. B. Schwarz, *The White Man’s World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
 8. F. van Zyl Slabbert and D. Welsh, *South Africa’s Options: Strategies for Sharing Power* (London: Rex Collings, 1979), 169; Albert Grundlingh, *Slabbert: Man on a Mission* (Johannesburg: Ball, 2021).
 9. Christoph Marx, *Trennung und Angst. Hendrik Verwoerd und die Gedankenwelt der Apartheid* (Berlin: DeGruyter 2020).

the outset: The partitionist proposals discussed here were understood by their authors as an alternative to the sort of ‘segregation’ or ‘partition’ as defined and practised under apartheid policy. The latter was indeed officially ‘South Africa’s Politics of Partition’, as journalist Patrick Laurence (1937–2011) subtitled his analysis of the political history of the Transkei ‘Bantustan’ in 1976.¹⁰ As one critic analysed in 1967:

[F]or those Africans not actually in the employment of Whites, apartheid calls for *macro-segregation*, i.e., round-the-clock separation in totally distinct regions, namely the Native Reserves, now in the process of restyling under the name of Bantustans. *Macro-segregation* thus becomes synonymous with the government’s notion of total territorial partition, accompanied, of course, by White political paramountcy, even in the African areas.¹¹

The ideological origins and the execution of apartheid and segregationist plans have been widely researched and it has been shown that ‘segregation [...] was part of a wider pattern of modernization of South African society.’¹² Yet, in this ‘context of the formal elaboration of apartheid from the 1930s to the 1950’, as well as later on,¹³ counter-discourses also evolved. One of the issues debated in these counter-discourses about ‘alternatives’ was the possibility of ‘total separation’, ‘radical’, or ‘negotiated partition’. The history of this idea has found relatively little attention amongst researchers, mostly by political scientists.¹⁴ Yet, it is part of South Africa’s intellectual history, for it depicts a ‘development in South African political thought’,¹⁵ and needs to be seen in the context of ‘racial ideologies of modern Afrikaner nationalism’ and its adversaries.¹⁶ Historian Saul Dubow bemoaned years ago that the ‘continuities and discontinuities which marked the transition from segregation to apartheid

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10. P. Laurence, *The Transkei: South Africa’s Politics of Partition* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1976).
 11. P. van den Berghe, *South Africa: A Study in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 120.
 12. P.B. Rich, *Hope and Despair: English Speaking Intellectuals and South African Politics 1896–1976* (London: British Academic Press, 1993), 14.
 13. S. Dubow, ‘Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of “Race”,’ *Journal of African History*, 33, 2 (1992), 209.
 14. The most comprehensive account is by G. Maasdorp, ‘Forms of Partition’, in R.I. Rotberg and J. Barratt, eds, *Conflict and Compromise in South Africa* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1980), 107–146; shorter overviews are provided in D. Geldenhuys, *South Africa’s Black Homelands: Past Objectives, Present Realities and Future Developments* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 1981), 52–58; E. Lourens and H. Kotzé, ‘South Africa’s Non-unitary Political Alternatives’, in A. Venter, ed., *South African Government and Politics* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1989), 298–300; A. Lijphart, *Power-Sharing in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 31–46; D.L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 131–133.
 15. N.J. Rhoadie, *Apartheid and Racial Partnership in Southern Africa: A Sociological Comparison between Separate Ethno-national Development in South Africa and Racial Partnership in the Former Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, with Special Reference to the Principles and Motives Involved in these Policy Systems* (Pretoria: Academica, 1969), 359.
 16. A. du Toit, ‘Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Prof. F.A. van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner’s Ideas on his Calling and Mission’, *South African Historical Journal*, 16, 1 (1984), 79.

remain undertheorised and poorly explained'.¹⁷ The political and academic writings since the 1920s about a possible partition of South Africa into independent states offer at least some explanations regarding these (dis)continuities, as they underline counter-discourses and the active search for alternatives. However, the ever-changing context of apartheid politics also explains – in part – the changing argumentative focus of the debate. In these long-lasting debates about 'alternatives' (amongst academics, journalists, and politicians) it is important to note that contributions focusing on the possibility of partition, starting in the 1920s, came from diverse schools of thought (from within South Africa and abroad) across the political spectrum. The texts considered in this article are chosen to indicate this wide political spectrum, thereby laying bare divergent motives – from early forms of (in the parlance of C.R.D. Halisi (1947–2013)) 'black republicanism'¹⁸ to Afrikaner 'realists' who anticipated the end of apartheid but were eager to ensure the 'protection of cultural rights'.¹⁹

Early voices in favour of partition: a communist and a liberal tradition

Amongst Africans involved in politics who came of age in the decade after Union, the influence of Garveyism or communism grew markedly. These circles underlined that their more radical ideas, like claims for one man, one vote, were not their last word.²⁰ Indeed, 'partition has been mooted [...] since the 1920s.'²¹ In the 1920s, Africans associated with the Marxist-oriented Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union made clear that they did 'not necessarily seek inclusion in a common society on the basis of equal citizenship. [African] Rejectionism could be compatible with segregation,' if the latter was a way to more rights and possibly self-determination.²² Since 1928, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA, founded in 1921) officially followed the 'correct slogan proposed by the Comintern [Communist International] calling for an independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full, equal rights for all races'.²³ However, this 'idea that black liberation had to be framed in terms of state-independence' (at the expense of 'dreams of socialism'), as enforced by Comintern, was thoroughly

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17. S. Dubow, review of Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (University of California Press, 1997), *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36, 3 (1998), 531.
 18. C.R.D. Halisi, 'From Liberation to Citizenship: Identity and Innovation in Black South African Political Thought', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 39, 1 (1997), 61–85.
 19. R. Omond, 'South Africa's Post-apartheid Constitution', *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 2 (1987), 634.
 20. An early analysis of the process is provided in A.P. Walshe, 'The Origins of African Political Consciousness in South Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 7, 4 (1969), 583–610.
 21. Maasdorp, 'Forms of Partition', 117.
 22. S. Dubow, *South Africa's Struggle for Human Rights* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012), 52.
 23. Resolution on 'The South African Question' adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International following the Sixth Comintern congress, 1928; in: S. Johns, 'The Comintern, South Africa and the Black Diaspora', *Review of Politics*, 37, 2 (1975), 200.

disliked by the South African party leadership.²⁴ Yet, ‘CPSA’s [previous] class-oriented program based upon the premise that blacks were to be treated primarily as workers and not as peasants or components of a nation was rejected by the outside authority of the Comintern and replaced by a new made-in-Moscow program which demanded that particular attention be paid to national issues.’²⁵ In 1931, the CPSA, now purged of almost all its previous leadership, and Comintern’s Executive Committee in Moscow agreed to further strengthen this focus by decreeing ‘the right of the Zulu, Basuto etc. nations to form their own Independent Republics’.²⁶ The plural of ‘Independent Republics’ – mirroring the nationalities policies of the Soviet Union²⁷ – was decisive here, since the CPSA argued for a partition of the Union, which could later (re)unite, as expressed by Comintern’s slogan: ‘For the voluntary uniting of the African nations [of South Africa or beyond?] in a Federation of Independent Native Republics.’²⁸ When recently quoting these communist demands, historians Irina Filatova and Appolon Davidson sarcastically added: ‘Hendrik Verwoerd [...] who was to propose something similar thirty years later, would have been extremely surprised had he known that the same idea had occurred to the leaders of the Comintern.’²⁹

This thinking in terms of ‘Independent [black] Republics’ found its continuation in the demands of Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu (1885–1959), the first African academic at the University of Fort Hare and prominent liberal critic of the Hertzog government’s segregation policies. He is generally considered an ‘advocate of nonracialism’ who ‘espoused South African territorial nationalism rather than black African nationalism’.³⁰ Yet, he was equally aware of the previous debates on the left and was looking for a response to the ‘sharply escalated oppression of blacks’ following the re-election of J.B.M. Hertzog (1866–1942).³¹ At the All-African Convention, held in 1935 in the (failed) hope to halt discriminatory legislation,³² Jabavu declared: ‘Segregation and colour-bars must go; alternatively we want a separate state of our own where we shall rule ourselves freed from the present hypocritical position.’³³ This alternative, however, was only his second best political choice. In the words of his

24. E. Johanningsmeier, ‘Communists and Black Freedom Movements in South Africa and the US: 1919–1950’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 1 (2004), 169.

25. Johns: ‘The Comintern’, 234.

26. I. Filatova and A. Davidson, “‘We, the South African Bolsheviks’: The Russian Revolution and South Africa”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, 4 (2017), 953.

27. G. Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

28. Filatova and Davidson, ‘We, the South African Bolsheviks’, 953.

29. *Ibid.*

30. C.R.D. Halisi, *Black Political Thought in the Making of South African Democracy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 50.

31. Johanningsmeier, ‘Communists and Black Freedom Movements’, 169.

32. Halisi, *Black Political Thought*, 76–77.

33. Quoted in C.M. Tatz, *Shadow and Substance in South Africa: A Study in Land and Franchise Policies Affecting Africans, 1910–1960* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 1962), 88; see also D.D.T. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy and Other Papers: A Native View of some South African Inter-Racial Problems* (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1928), 46–47.

biographer, Jabavu's 'worldview [was] shaped by the old Cape Colony ideal of "equal rights for civilized men", based on the hope for one 'South African state that embraced assimilation and rejected segregation'.³⁴

Behind Jabavu's claim for an altogether 'alternative' plan, 'a separate state', was the notion in the 1930s that 'land questions' were increasingly blended with 'race questions'. The Hertzog government had promised to Africans 'extended communal land rights in specific "reserved" areas'. It did so to soothe African anger about the disenfranchising of Africans in the Cape. The politics behind the segregationist legislation was thus based on the 'assumption that one kind of right [access to land] could be traded for another [voter's rights]'.³⁵ However, Africans had made their own experience with the 'reserved areas' since the inception of this system with the Native Land Act of 1913 that, according to Jabavu in 1928, had for its 'purpose [...] to confine the black man within such circumscribed limits that he should never be territorially independent'.³⁶ Hence his demand for 'a separate state', completely free from white domination.

In 1939 the 'German-English [...] liberal European'³⁷ Alfred Hoernlé (1880–1943), professor of philosophy at the University of Witwatersrand and since 1934 chairman of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), published his seminal *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*. Here he openly denounced South Africa as 'a dictatorship of the White minority over the non-White majority' and declared categorically that 'domination intended to be permanent [...] is, in principle, irreconcilable with the liberal spirit'.³⁸ Already for the preceding 15-odd years, Hoernlé had been a 'trenchant critic of the segregation policy and all its works' as implemented by the Hertzog government.³⁹ But he recognised, like his fellow South African liberals, that he was 'swimming against a rough segregationist tide'.⁴⁰ Thus, Hoernlé's *South African Native Policy* is seen as 'indicative of [...] pessimism or resignation' reigning amongst liberals.⁴¹ For a disillusioned Hoernlé, the segregated 'multi-racial

34. C. Higgs, 'Jabavu, Davidson Don Tengo', in E.K. Akyeampong and H.L. Gates Jr., eds, *Dictionary of African Biography*, Vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 179.

35. Dubow, *South Africa's Struggle*, 50.

36. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy*, 11.

37. I.D. MacCrone, 'R.F.A. Hoernlé – A Memoir', in I.D. MacCrone, ed., *Race and Reason* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1945), xxiv.

38. A. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1939), ix.

39. MacCrone, 'R.F.A. Hoernlé – A Memoir', xxiv.

40. R. Bernasconi, 'The Paradox of Liberal Politics in the South African Context: Alfred Hoernlé's Critique of Liberalism's Pact with White Domination', *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 4, 2 (2016), 172–173.

41. S. Dubow, 'Introduction', in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds, *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005), 7.

society’ in South Africa, standing at odds with any liberal notion of equality and justice, was ‘bound in the end to fail’.⁴²

Consequently, South Africa’s ‘most outstanding English-speaking liberal intellectual in the 1930s and early 1940s’ discussed the possibility of ‘total separation’ (as he called the option opposed to ‘thoroughgoing parallelism’ or ‘total racial assimilation’) of South Africa’s ‘races’.⁴³ Under the heading ‘Is a Liberal Native Policy Possible?’ Hoernlé argued that ‘Total Separation’, given the white rejection of legal equality for other races and common citizenship, ‘should be the liberal’s choice’.⁴⁴ However, Hoernlé admitted that even though ‘total separation’ ‘was ethically sound, [he] [...] thought that whites would refuse the enormous sacrifices that would be required to make it a reality’.⁴⁵ Also, the first commentators on Hoernlé’s ideas about how to achieve liberty and equality for all South Africans noted his ‘confess[ion] that he can give no confident answer’ to the ‘all-important question’ about the applicability of his ideas.⁴⁶

Historian of race and philosophy Robert Bernasconi has recently pointed out that ‘there is still no consensus’ about the meaning of Hoernlé’s arguments and in particular ‘about what this long-standing opponent of segregation might have meant when he proposed “Total Separation”; even though he did explain that by separation he understood “the organization of different groups in several mutually independent, self-determining societies”’.⁴⁷ Later Hoernlé defined and distinguished: ‘Segregation [...] is most perfectly realized in a multi-racial caste-society. Separation, falsely also called “segregation”, is most perfectly realized when the different racial groups are sorted out into their own territorially distinct societies.’⁴⁸ Was this, in other words, an argument to divide the Union of South Africa into two or more independent, internationally recognised sovereign states with their own governments, capitals, and currencies? Indeed, already in 1936 Hoernlé had considered the possibility to ‘make segregation complete [what he elsewhere called “the position of the double-minded segregationist [...], setting free both Whites and Blacks from mutual dependence”], by the establishment of economically and politically self-contained Native State’.⁴⁹

42. R.F.A. Hoernlé, ‘Anatomy of Segregation (1936)’, in I.D. MacCrone, ed., *Race and Reason* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1945), 108.

43. H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 448.

44. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy*, 181.

45. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 473, referring to Hoernlé 1939, 149–168; see also Lijphart, *Power-Sharing in South Africa*, 32; A. Nash, *The Dialectical Tradition in South Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 65–66.

46. MacCrone, ‘R.F.A. Hoernlé – A Memoir’, xxxv.

47. Bernasconi, ‘The Paradox of Liberal Politics’, 174, quoting Hoernlé 1945, 158.

48. R.F.A. Hoernlé, ‘Present-Day Trends in South African Race Relations (1941)’, in I.D. MacCrone, ed., *Race and Reason* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1945), 160.

49. Hoernlé, ‘Anatomy of Segregation’, 108–109.

Conversely, historians such as the Marxist Martin Legassick have suggested that Hoernlé's arguments were not based in this history of land use and segregation but, rather, that they were to become, in the future, an important contribution to the 'formulation of apartheid'.⁵⁰ This opinion, however, seems based on an erroneous reading of Hoernlé's definition of liberty and his quasi-teleological argument that 'the spirit of liberty is ineradicable and cannot in the end be denied'.⁵¹ Also, Hoernlé's scathing criticism of South Africa's 'division' into 'Native Reserves' and, as he added, 'White Reserves',⁵² his contempt for this policy of 'kraaling Blacks and Whites apart in territorially-separated areas' whilst keeping up the economic entanglement between them, leaves little room for making him an intellectual forerunner of National Party (NP) politics in the years after his death.⁵³ The usage of terms such as 'separation' or 'Native State' did not make Hoernlé the intellectual 'founding father' of the pseudo-independent homelands, such as the Transkei or Bophuthatswana.

Historian Paul B. Rich, on the other hand, pointed out that Hoernlé 'recognized – long before the creation of Homelands – that any artificially created black state would be subject to white control' and thus white lordship would remain intact. However, Hoernlé 'failed to offer any politically feasible solution' and provided, so Rich, a 'generally gloomy analysis of South African politics'. And still, the argument for territorial separation 'offered a model for the decolonization of South African society before the advent of popular African nationalism'.⁵⁴

Yet, it appears that the alternative to the South African racial 'caste society', as coined by Hoernlé, was more paradox and had a more complicated relation to questions of its practical implementation. Hoernlé was well aware that his critics called him a 'pessimist', to which he replied that he merely had 'no use for confidence based on illusion'.⁵⁵ In the words of Bernasconi, 'Hoernlé was not advocating "Total Separation" in practice' – he was not doing so for political and ideological reasons: Hoernlé noted that there was no 'will' to execute such plans and he 'knew full well that no form of liberalism could accept the measures [for example infringements of property rights and freedom of movement] that would be necessary to implement the "Total Separation" liberalism called for' when faced with the racial hierarchies executed

50. Legassick, quoted in Bernasconi, 'The Paradox of Liberal Politics', 174.

51. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy*, 185.

52. Hoernlé, 'Anatomy of Segregation', 95.

53. Hoernlé, 'Present-Day Trends', 162.

54. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 59, 55. On Hoernlé's possible influence on apartheid thinking and Jack Simons' accusation that he contributed to the formulation of the idea by stressing the word 'separation' instead of 'segregation' – the former translating into Afrikaans as 'apartheid' (though 'apartheid' could be better translated as 'apartness'), see Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 63–65. On earlier uses of the term 'apartheid' by the Bond vir Rassestudie in 1936, see Dubow, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', 211; and H. Giliomee, 'The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929–1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29 (2003), 373–392.

55. Hoernlé, 'Present-Day Trends', 145.

in South Africa. Rather, he ‘seems to have been saying that he, as a White liberal, could not advocate “Total Separation” because he could not advocate the means necessary to bring it about, while at the same time inviting “the Native peoples” to pursue this course’.⁵⁶ Hoernlé, who had recognised the ‘colonial dimension to South African society’, did not believe in ‘ambulance work’ of reformist assumptions; these were indeed illusions.⁵⁷ After all, in the final section of his book he did not shy away from pointing to the agency and the ‘force’ of the ‘non-European majority’ that would be decisive for the future of South Africa. It was nothing but blunt when Hoernlé predicted in 1939: ‘The caste-structure of South African society has no intrinsic stability and permanence.’⁵⁸

The repercussions of the Second World War in South African politics were profound, as evidenced by the NP’s victory in 1948. And still: The rise of Afrikaner nationalism to state power did not preclude the existence of voices emanating from the White minority in favour of coming to terms with African aspirations for equality.⁵⁹ The Second World War, as Shula Marks puts it, was ‘an important factor in releasing left and liberal energies’ in South Africa.⁶⁰ Liberals ‘wanted government to accept that the process of racial integration, particularly in the cities, was irreversible’.⁶¹ Recalling his own childhood, historian Hermann Giliomee (*1938) mentions implicitly receiving a ‘message’, namely ‘that uncontested white domination would not last forever’.⁶² Dubow underlines the concurrent development of competing world views in this period, speaking of the 1940s ‘as a decade in which several “new” South Africas were imagined’. And, thus, ‘in no sense [...] was the advent of apartheid preordained.’ Dubow identifies three lines of political thought in the era: African nationalism, Afrikaner nationalism, and a ‘liberal or social-democratic South Africanism’ that ‘overlapped to an extent with African as well as Afrikaner nationalism’ – all with their distinct hopes for the future.⁶³

As an example of the latter – the ‘shifting middleground’⁶⁴ – stands the poet and language scholar N.P. van Wyk Louw (1906–1970), who was part of a liberal tradition of Afrikaner thought. Shortly after the Second World War he argued in

56. Bernasconi, ‘The Paradox of Liberal Politics’, 175, 177.

57. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 59, 62.

58. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy*, 184.

59. H. Suzman and E. Kahn, eds, *New Lines in Native Policy* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1947).

60. S. Marks, ‘Afterword: Worlds of Impossibilities’, in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds, *South Africa’s 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005), 267.

61. H. Giliomee, ‘Apartheid, Verligtheid, and Liberalism’, in J. Butler, R. Elphick, and D.J. Welsh, eds, *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 363–383.

62. H. Giliomee, *Historian: An Autobiography* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2016), 21.

63. Dubow, ‘Introduction’, 2.

64. *Ibid.*

favour of recognising the national ambitions of all nations within South Africa. The rejection of the notion of nationalism as an exclusive preserve for the Afrikaners led him to envisage ‘four white and four black separate states in southern Africa’.⁶⁵ But, as Giliomee adds, Louw, like Hoernlé, ‘left the whole question of the actual division of land obscure’.⁶⁶ Only in 1960 did Louw make a ‘brief reference to the “two halves of this large country of ours” to which whites and blacks had claims’.⁶⁷ In this respect it should also be recalled that ‘few liberals in the 1940s accepted equal political rights for black and white’.⁶⁸

It is hard to establish concrete links between the writings and opinion pieces of a few academics, on the one hand, and politicians, on the other. In 1946, Judge Henry Fagan (1889–1963), a former United Party cabinet minister, was appointed by Prime Minister Smuts to head a *Commission on the Native Laws* in order to investigate the issue of African urbanisation. Not unlike Hoernlé, the commission under Fagan ‘outlined three theoretical options for South Africa: total segregation (partition), which it called “utterly impracticable”; equality (no racial discrimination), which it also rejected; and an “in-between” one, which it endorsed’.⁶⁹ Practically the commissioners thus recommended relaxing the influx control of Africans to urban areas in order to stabilise the workforce. This made the Fagan report, according to researchers, ‘[a]rguably the most liberal official document produced in the segregation era’.⁷⁰ As a (negative) response to the Fagan report, in 1947 the NP’s Daniel F. Malan (1874–1959) appointed a party commission headed by Paul Sauer and charged it with drafting a report⁷¹ that would turn ‘apartheid into a comprehensive racial policy’.⁷² The Stellenbosch academics who were involved argued in favour of a strict regulation of African migration to urban centres and the restriction of political and social rights of Africans outside their so-called ‘homelands’. They considered the suggested ‘in-between’ solution to lead to ‘racial levelling’ if ‘race as a legitimate criterion’ was rejected. ‘Significantly, the [Stellenbosch] declaration referred to a white and a black group, each having its own territory. The idea of ten black ethnic groups each with its own homeland was a later elaboration.’⁷³ Evidently, these (quasi-

65. Giliomee *The Afrikaners*, 473.

66. *Ibid.*

67. ‘Dat ons vir twee soorte mense ‘n plek wil regmaak in twee helftes van hierdie groot land van ons’, H.P. von Wyk Louw, ‘Voorwoord’, in D.P. Botha, *Die opkomst van ons derde stand* (Cape Town, 1960), viii, translated in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 473; see Giliomee, *Historian*, 34–35.

68. Marks, ‘Afterword’, 273.

69. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 478, referring to UG 28–48 Report of the Native Law Commission; see Dubow, ‘Introduction’, 10.

70. I. Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 57. (cpt. Reviving the Department of Native Affairs)

71. P.O. Sauer, *Verlag van die Kleurvraagstuk-Kommissie van die Herenigde Nasionale Party* (Sauer Report, 1948).

72. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 476–479.

73. *Ibid.*

)government commissions and their reports exposed cleavages and controversies over the form of white dominance.⁷⁴ For example, in 1948 Fagan wrote a response on the NP’s policy of ‘total territorial segregation’:

If the attempt succeeds, well and good. If not, it will nevertheless be a preparatory step [...] to bring the mentality of the public to maturity and to get people to acquiesce in a policy which concedes the impossibility of territorial segregation and [...] to find the best way of adapting ourselves to what is possible.⁷⁵

For the new Prime Minister, Daniel F. Malan, it was obvious that the white minority would unilaterally decide on any borderlines to be drawn within the country between black and white. Plans in this direction were under way.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the implementation of apartheid by the authorities, the ‘period of the 1950s proved to be a fertile one for liberal debate in South Africa’.⁷⁷ Whilst in this liberal context some exchanged opinions about the legitimacy of partitionist proposals, others argued not only about the ‘impossibility of territorial segregation’⁷⁸ but, most of all, refused to see its necessity for a future South Africa. The Multi-Racial Conference of 1957 at the University of the Witwatersrand is an example in this respect. Under the auspices of church ministers, the conference ‘tried to define the nature of economic, social and political duties in a “common society” and was hailed by some observers as being one of the most representative gatherings ever held in South Africa’.⁷⁹ In 1959, the lawyer and liberal Cape politician Donald Molteno (1908–1972) declared ‘Hoernlé’s three a priori theoretical objectives of parallelism, assimilation, and separation as being of marginal use, since even Hoernlé had recognized that they were politically impracticable’. Rather, Molteno hoped to develop feasible and democratic alternatives by asking why Hoernlé’s objectives were impracticable. Thus, whilst Molteno argued and hoped for ‘piecemeal reforms’ in order to liberalise the system, this was exactly what Hoernlé rejected to accept as a feasible solution for South Africa’s ‘race relations’.⁸⁰

Arguments for and against partition in the face of Bantustans

Others in South Africa and beyond continued to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of partitioning South Africa. They did so in light of the ongoing implementation of ‘Bantustans’, such as the Transkei, following the introduction

74. A. Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 135–136.

75. Fagan, quoted in Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 498.

76. S. Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948–1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919–36* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).

77. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 91.

78. Ibid.

79. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 93.

80. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 64.

of the South African Bantu Authorities Act in 1951. Furthermore, starting in 1955 the South African authorities began to implement the much discussed ‘Eiselen line’, named after the anthropologist and Secretary for Native Affairs Werner Willi Max Eiselen (1899–1977). Through influx control legislation this geographical line partitioned South Africa for black Africans into two territories, as the government designated the Western parts of the Cape province as the so-called Coloured Labor Preference Area. Black Africans were refused to reside permanently to the west of this line and were not to be given work there unless there was no coloured person able to do it. The Eiselen policy became synonymous with the forceful mass removal of black Africans to the ‘Bantustans’ further to the east of the line.⁸¹ NP leaders themselves were, however, unclear about the ultimate goal of such a policy. This lack of clarity included the question whether the implementation of ‘total apartheid’ would result (in the distant future) in Africans being ‘given political independence in their own areas’. For the time being, these politicians preferred the customary patriarchal language of ‘guardianship’ and ‘trusteeship’ with regard to African ‘self-government’.⁸² Amongst African opposition circles, led by the African National Congress (ANC), on the other hand, the ‘Leninist principle of “democratic centralism” was rapidly gaining ground’.⁸³

It was in this adversarial Cold War context that, beginning in the late 1950s, a steady flow of publications aimed at laying out apartheid policies. They justified these policies or proved them wrong, in particular from a theological, legal, historical, or economic point of view. Famously, parliamentarian Helen Suzman (1917–2009), of the Progressive Party, laid bare the ‘anomalies’ and inconsistencies of ‘race classification’ and other perversions of the idea of the rule of law;⁸⁴ others described the economic problems through increased inequality as caused by apartheid economics; even historians ‘warn[ed] contemporary Afrikaner cultural leaders that viewing the Afrikaner people as a chosen people with inter alia an apartheid’s mission was basically wrong’.⁸⁵ And the most vocal critics analysed ‘the drift towards Fascism of the white government of the South African Republic’.⁸⁶

81. A.J. Christopher, *Atlas of a Changing South Africa* (London: Routledge, 2001), 121; M. West, ‘From Pass Courts to Deportation: Changing Patterns of Influx Control in Cape Town’, *African Affairs*, 81, 325 (1982), 463–477.

82. Tatz, *Shadow and Substance in South Africa*, 156–157.

83. Dubow, *South Africa’s Struggle*, 74; see Filatova and Davidson, “‘We, the South African Bolsheviks’”, 955.

84. H. Suzman, *Race Classification and Definition in the Legislation of the Union of South Africa 1910–1960: A Survey and Analysis* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1960), 1; see J. Dugard, *Human Rights and the South African Legal Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 59–60; Dubow, *South Africa’s Struggle*, 79.

85. F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘André du Toit: Much Ado About Nothing’, *South African Historical Journal*, 16, 1 (1984), 81, on the aim of his own paper ‘Die Afrikaner se idees oor uitverkorenheid, geroepenheid en bestemming’ (1959/61).

86. B. Bunting and R. Segal, *The Rise of the South African Reich* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964); see Dubow, *Apartheid*, 282. On South Africa historiography, see C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 4–11; F.A. van Jaarsveld, ‘Recent Afrikaner Historiography’, *Itinerario*, 16, 1 (1992), 93–106. The centre-right journalist John Mander warned already in 1963 that ‘comparisons with Nazi Germany do more harm than good.’ J. Mander, ‘South Africa: Revolution or Partition’, *Encounter*, 21, 4 (1963), 11.

Academics, journalists, and others likewise weighted the chances for alternatives, also based on – as one contemporary put it – a ‘growing awareness among whites that their [dominant] position cannot be maintained indefinitely’.⁸⁷ Leaders of the World Council of Churches, including some South African theologians, at the South African Cottesloe convention (1960) expressed their conviction: ‘The segregation of racial groups [...] involving discrimination leads to hardship for members of the groups affected,’⁸⁸ a claim that was subsequently rejected by the Dutch Reformed Church. In the aftermath of the ‘traumatic conjunction of Sharpeville [1960] and the final moves to bring about the Republic’,⁸⁹ these alternatives were searched for (internationally) with an increased sense of urgency.⁹⁰ Evidently, ‘an alternative racial policy acceptable to the majority of whites and non-whites alike has not been formulated’ in the 1960s,⁹¹ but with regard to ideas about subdividing or partitioning South Africa, a number of titles shall be summarised hereunder.

Denis V Cowen (1918–2007), professor of comparative law and dean of law at the University of Cape Town, in his *Constitution-Making for a Democracy* (1960), explicitly searched for *An Alternative to Apartheid* (the sub-title of his work) by drawing-up a ‘new constitution’. Without mentioning Hoernlé, he argued: ‘If apartheid could measure up to an ideal [...] of fair territorial partition with real autonomy for each territory and full rights of each race, it is [...] a solution which could be morally justified, calling for the greatest self-sacrifice.’ Yet, given the difficulties of defining the meaning of ‘fair’ (‘Where exactly should the boundaries be drawn?’), Cowen thought that this plan had no real prospects. Apartheid thus remained ‘a wrong policy, one of despair’. Cowen rather argued in favour of a ‘territorial federation’ and proposed the possibility of a ‘racial federation’ with constitutionally guaranteed rights for minorities.⁹² A couple of months later, however, in October 1960, the economist Johannes de Villiers Graaff (1928–2015) published an article in the *Cape Argus* newspaper in which the subject of ‘partition’ of South Africa re-emerged ‘as a possible solution’ to end apartheid. Graaf argued for a negotiated partition of the country

87. D.V. Cowen, *The Foundations of Freedom – with Special Reference to Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), 69.

88. The Cottesloe Convention, part II no. 9, http://kerkargief.co.za/doks/bely/DF_Cottesloe.pdf, accessed 14 February 2018.

89. Du Toit, ‘Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm’, 52.

90. See, for example, B.B. Keet, *Suid-Afrika Waarheen?* (Stellenbosch: University Publishers, 1956); C.W. de Kiewiet, *The Anatomy of South African Misery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956); B.B. Keet, ‘The Bell has Already Told’, in B.B. Keet, ed., *Delayed Action: An Ecumenical Witness from the Afrikaans-Speaking Church* (Pretoria: N.G. Boekhandel, 1961), 5–12; A.B. du Preez, *Inside the South African Crucible* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1959; N.J. Rhodie and H.J. Venter, *Apartheid: A Socio-Historical Exposition of the Origin and Development of the Apartheid Idea* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1960); L.E. Neame, *A History of Apartheid: The Story of the Colour War in South Africa* (New York: London House and Maxwell, 1963); Jordan K. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid* (New York: Praeger, 1963).

91. E.A. Tiryakian, ‘Apartheid and Politics in South Africa’, *Journal of Politics*, 22, 4 (1960), 696.

92. D.V. Cowen, *Constitution-Making for a Democracy: An Alternative to Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, 1960), 5, 33–37.

into two states: the east was to be inhabited mainly by Africans, the west mainly by Whites. Remaining vague on the future borderline, he was nevertheless quite open in his intention to keep the eastern state rather small, including Natal and parts of Transvaal, excluding the gold and diamond mines. This border was to be secured ‘internationally’, that is by troops of the United Nations. Graaff estimated that no negative economic effects should be expected in Southern Africa from this plan.⁹³

Soon after this publication Graaff found a veritable opponent in Cowen, who in his book *The Foundations of Freedom* (1961) discussed critically Graaff’s ‘possible solution’. Cowen characterised the ‘partition’ plan not only as unrealistic and conflict-prone but also as a confession of ‘abject failure’ of the South African society in the assumption that ‘whites and non-whites simply cannot live together in peace’. Cowen was rather intent to convince his reader of the political and constitutional necessity for a ‘fresh start’ in South Africa, namely a federation. This was preferable to apartheid, civil war, or the ‘ultimate resort of partition’, which, Cowen argued, would have to be ‘far more favourable to the Africans’ to be acceptable (‘The whites might be lucky to keep the Western Province’) and which, for him, was rather a ‘strategic withdrawal, a shortening of the lines of defence’.⁹⁴

The economist F.P. Spooner, a one-time economic adviser to the government, argued in the *South African Predicament* (1960) for the ‘survival of White influence and leadership [in South Africa] – for without such influence the country will surely decline’.⁹⁵ However, having emphasised his Afrikaner-British origins, he rejected the NP’s Bantustan policy and apartheid. Long before international observers predicted that ‘apartheid would prove economically unsustainable’,⁹⁶ Spooner characterised this ideology as ‘a one-way street leading to the collapse of the country’s economy’. Given the impoverishment of the African majority in times of an unprecedented boom, Spooner rather hoped for a generally improved development of the wider region of southern Africa and insisted on a more equitable sharing of economic gains with South Africa’s non-white majority. Having predicted that apartheid will result in ‘the downfall of the Whites in the Union’, he found that apartheid could ‘succeed’ in ‘one sense only’, namely ‘partition, where the white and the non-whites are given full control of their respective areas, after an equitable division of the country’. With a view to the practicability of such plans, Spooner admitted that ‘boundaries would be hard to define; it would also inevitably entail immense hardship’.⁹⁷

93. Jan Graaff, *Cape Argus*, 15 October 1960.

94. Cowen, *The Foundations of Freedom*, 70–71; 159–160.

95. F.P. Spooner, *South African Predicament: The Economics of Apartheid* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), 234.

96. Dubow, *Apartheid*, 285, referring to Michael O’Dowd, 1974.

97. Spooner, *South African Predicament*, 131–132.

Franco-Austrian journalist Paul Giniewski (1926–2011), in his book *Bantustans: A Trek Towards the Future* (1961), undertook to analyse, with an unmistakable colonialist undertone, the original idea of Bantustans in a more positive light; but, importantly, he also questioned whether the government was actually doing what it preached. Accepting the official view of distinct ‘nations’ within South Africa, Giniewski argued in favour of a ‘regrouping of territory’ along national lines. He considered that the ‘solution by partition is the only realistic and moral one [...]. Partition is the answer for human groups whose sentimental and therefore irrational aspirations diverge.’ Like other critics of the ‘Bantu policy’, he was certain: ‘[N]othing except complete political emancipation will satisfy [the Africans]’, and therefore he demanded the “creative withdrawal” of the Whites from the Black territories’. Giniewski accepted the idea of several unrelated territories (yet seven, more encompassing areas than those scheduled by the South African administration) and saw them bound in a ‘Bantu federation’ of independent states, including British-administered Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland. Regarding the ‘frontiers of a partitioned South Africa’, he wanted them ‘generous’ in favour of the new African states and predicted a ‘Bantu horseshoe’ reaching from East London to Kuruman and the borders with Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique.⁹⁸ As a contemporary critic assumed, this plan ‘would be rejected by urban African leaders as it would “Balkanize” South Africa into perpetually weak economic states’.⁹⁹ A similar critique of the Bantustans ‘as a form of “balkanization”’ can still be found in the most-recent historiography.¹⁰⁰

However, it is important to recall that some Western observers were open to see South Africa’s ‘homelands’ and, in particular, the development of the Transkei, ‘the flagship of its homelands policy’, as a first step towards the ‘decolonization’ of South Africa. ‘The *Guardian* accepted the principle of separate, viable white and black spheres of influence, leading ultimately to full partition.’¹⁰¹

The Belgian-American sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe (1933–2019), in his influential *South Africa, a Study in Conflict* (1965), an angry analysis of the flaws and injustices of apartheid policies and ideology, made sure to lay out that the Bantustans had nothing to do with an ‘equitable geographical partition’ between ethnic groups – despite all official propaganda. It was not only a fact that Whites kept 87 per cent of South African territory for themselves but the talk of ‘independent Bantustans’ was also a sham.¹⁰² Van den Berghe quoted future prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd (1901–1966) who, in 1951, felt obliged

98. Paul Giniewski, *Bantustans: A Trek towards the Future* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1961), 8, 14, 178, 223 [French orig., *Un faux problème colonial: L’Afrique du Sud* (1961)].

99. E.A. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism: Partition for South Africa?’, *Social Forces*, 46, 2 (1967), 214 n. 25.

100. Dubow, *Apartheid*, 112.

101. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 532.

102. P.L. van den Berghe, *South Africa, a Study in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965; repr. 1970), 125.

to mitigate worries in parliament that the ‘self-governing Native areas would be sovereign’. Verwoerd underlined: ‘We cannot mean that we intend [...] to cut large slices out of South Africa and turn them into independent States.’¹⁰³ With a sense of sarcasm van den Berghe described ‘equal partition’ as “‘ideal’ apartheid’ that ‘the government has never seriously envisaged’ to implement since this ‘would entail the political and economic disruption of the entire country’.¹⁰⁴ Van den Berghe was also eager to include the perspective of the African majority on any partitionist proposals: ‘[M]ost politically conscious Africans are against any territorial partition along ethnic lines and will not settle for anything less than control over the entire country.’ Most ‘[n]on-White leaders’, he argued, ‘envisage various forms of a multiracial country within present frontiers.’¹⁰⁵

Also the SAIRR, in the meantime the nation’s undisputed pedestal of liberalism,¹⁰⁶ kept an eye open towards the solution of partition. The institute’s president from 1961 to 1964, Oliver D. Schreiner (1890–1980), had been, prior to his retirement, amongst South Africa’s most distinguished jurists who, as a judge of appeal, had been passed over twice for the chief justiceship. Considering his refusal in the 1950s to endorse the disenfranchising of ‘coloured voters’ in the Cape, he ‘was clearly regarded as politically unsafe by the Nationalist government’.¹⁰⁷ Schreiner, describing in 1961 the risks of a ‘composite nation’ consisting of several nationalities with varying degrees of loyalty to the state, was aware of the possibility of ‘the state breaking up’, like ‘Austria-Hungary’ after 1918. Even though ‘partition agreements’ were preferable to ‘liquidation by battle’, such a ‘division of an established state [...] is a desperate remedy, [...] it confesses failure’.¹⁰⁸ Clearly Schreiner’s preferences lay elsewhere when looking for a “‘U” turn’, an alternative to the despised *apartheid* system. With regard to the Bantustan policy, Schreiner, in his 1962 presidential address to the SAIRR entitled ‘Realism in Race Relations’, pointed to the questions left open for debate by the National Party: ‘whether, for instance, there would eventually be African states inside our existing boundaries, with their [...] armed forces [...] and customs barriers [...], and with the right to make treaties with other countries’.¹⁰⁹ In ‘South Africa – United or Divided’ (1964), Schreiner emphasised that the ‘Bantustan policy [...] bears no relation to what would be a fair

103. van den Berghe, *South Africa*, 117.

104. van den Berghe, *South Africa*, 125.

105. van den Berghe, *South Africa*, 148, 158.

106. See H. Suzman, *In No Uncertain Terms: A South African Memoir* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 15.

107. S.D. Girvin, ‘The Architects of the Mixed Legal System’, in R. Zimmermann and D.P. Visser, eds, *Southern Cross: Civil Law and Common Law in South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 132; see E. Kahn, ‘Oliver Deneys Schreiner: The Man and his Judicial World’, *South African Legal Journal*, 97 (1980), 574.

108. O.D. Schreiner, ‘Building Real Nationhood in South Africa’, *Optima* (London), 11 (1961), 127.

109. O.D. Schreiner, ‘Political Power in South Africa’, in P.J.M. McEwan and R.B. Sutcliffe, eds, *The Study of Africa* (London: Methuen, 1965), 230, 237; O.D. Schreiner, *Realism in Race Relations* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1962), 6.

method of dividing the country between the groups.’ He argued for a general franchise and equality for all and openly ridiculed the ‘Bantustan’ elections: for him it did not matter if the ballot papers there would be ‘dropped into a well’ or in the ballot box.¹¹⁰ Only in passing did Schreiner refer to what his predecessor Hoernlé had described as ‘the liberal’s choice’¹¹¹: ‘A system of partition would not necessarily be a sham.’ But, like others, Schreiner considered partition, if it were to achieve equality and fairness, ‘politically and economically impossible [because] [...] we are so well mixed up that there is no possibility of sorting us out’.¹¹²

Nic J. Rhoodie (b. 1932), a Ph.D. student of sociologist Geoff Cronjé – ‘one of the chief ideologues of apartheid’¹¹³ – did not concern himself with these concrete challenges when he spoke of South Africa’s possible ‘radical geo-political partition’ in his Ph.D. thesis (1965) on apartheid and racial partnership. Replete with apartheid apologetics and terminology, his chapter on ‘separate development and geo-political partition’ can be read as an attempt to include the thinking about ‘partition’ into an apartheid narrative about the future of South Africa and its Bantustans.¹¹⁴ In more than one way Rhoodie tried to present a counter-narrative to van den Berghe, who had offered a quote of Dr Verwoerd of 1951 as a clear indication that the South African government had never envisaged to create ‘independent States’ out of the present South Africa. Rhoodie, on the other hand, quoted Verwoerd from 1964 when he propagated the future ‘independence’ of ‘our Bantu territories’. But most of all, this piece was a ‘Sauer report-reloaded’ that showed Nic Rhoodie, similar to his brother Eschel (later to be disgraced in the Muldergate scandal), as an academically sophisticated defender of apartheid and ‘ethnogenesis’. From the self-confidence of Rhoodie’s assumption that ‘South Africa’s policy of separate freedoms [...] will in the course of time crystallise in [...] the geopolitical separation of White and Bantu interests’ and territories, the contemporary context can be clearly discerned: the early days of John Vorster’s premiership have been termed by historians as the ‘golden age for the white polity’ when economic growth ‘was rampant’.¹¹⁵ Correspondingly, Rhoodie left African aspirations for self-determination at the mercy of the National Party, whose politicians had already for a

110. O.D. Schreiner, ‘South Africa – United or Divided’, in O.D. Schreiner, *The Nettle: Political Power and Race Relations in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1964), 85.

111. Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy*, 181.

112. Schreiner, ‘South Africa – United or Divided’, 87.

113. C. Marx, *Oxwagon Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 126; but see also Giliomee who emphasises that Cronjé was not an ‘influential figure’; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 471.

114. N.J. Rhoodie, ‘n Rasse-sosiologiese Ontleding van Afsonderlike Volksontwikkeling en Partnership, met besondere Verwysing na die Motiewe vir hierdie Beleidsisteme’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 1965).

115. J. Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2; S. Dubow, ‘Racial irredentism, ethnogenesis, and white supremacy in high-apartheid South Africa’, *Kronos* 41, 1 (2015), 236.

long time intended including ‘the British protectorates’ (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland) into any territorial reorganisation of the sub-continent. The creation of ‘Bantu South Africa’ would thus have to include the former British territories *and* South Africa’s homelands, resulting in a territory that ‘will eventually comprise a surface area at least equal to that of White South Africa’ (an argument which the Fagan report had already referred to as useless for solving the ‘issue of migrant workers’). Rhoodie’s understanding of ‘partition’ ‘elicited considerable interest in political and academic circles’, as the author proudly explained in the English edition of his book (published in 1969). Rhoodie reminisced on reactions from NP members who indicated openness. Further ‘support’ came from journalists, ‘provided [partition] could be equitably implemented [...] [Following the English edition,] a group of English-speaking South Africans held a symposium in Durban during which the merits of, and the motives for, radical geo-political partition were discussed’.¹¹⁶

However, it would require other proposals, also from abroad, for a more equitable territorial solution to be weighted and considered a feasible way out of the South African impasse.

Academic ‘realism’ in drawing the line? Tiryakian’s ‘Partition for South Africa (1967)’

Even though it has been argued that ‘Hoernlé’s idea that racial [total] separation might be compatible with liberalism did not find much favour internationally’,¹¹⁷ the previously mentioned works, also written by non-South Africans, show otherwise. At least one American academic turned favourably to the idea of an equitable partition of South Africa into two viable autonomous states. Associate professor of sociology at Duke University, Edward Tiryakian (b. 1929), who had early on developed an interest in South African matters, travelled several times to the country to ‘gather materials’.¹¹⁸ In his ‘realistic sociological appraisal’ of the state of affairs, he concluded in 1967 that a partition ‘may be the optimal solution’.¹¹⁹ Thirty years earlier, Hoernlé had apparently ‘never [...] thought of “Total Separation” as a practical possibility’.¹²⁰ Tiryakian, on the other hand, considered the practical aspects of partition plans in particular and at length. This opposing point of view might be one reason why Tiryakian decided to never refer to Hoernlé, even though it seems unlikely that he did not take notice of *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*.

116. Rhoodie, *Apartheid and Racial Partnership*, 357–360.

117. Rich, *Hope and Despair*, 62.

118. Tiryakian, ‘Apartheid and Politics’, 682.

119. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 208–209; see Pennsylvania State University, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Edward A. Tiryakian Papers, 1881–2011 (6521), ‘Partition for South Africa 1967, 1965–1968’, Box 9, Folder 5.

120. Bernasconi, ‘The Paradox of Liberal Politics’, 175, 177.

Tiryakian aimed at presenting an alternative to the dystopic perspectives on South Africa of ‘[m]ost sociologists’ and of van der Berghe in particular – who, as he saw it, allegedly predicted ‘that the only outcome to the South African situation is a revolutionary holocaust’. Discussing a number of ‘possibilities’ ventured so far for South Africa, ranging ‘from the ideological far right to its polar extreme’, Tiryakian aimed at showing how they ‘are either unfeasible, impractical, or morally unacceptable’. With reference to contemporary challenges to coexistence in Canada, Belgium, and Cyprus (‘still bitterly divided along ethnic-cultural lines’), Tiryakian excluded the possibility of a ‘successful policy of racial-cultural integration in South Africa’. Given the ‘fate of the Asiatic minority in East Africa’, he assumed that under ‘black dominance’, through the ‘one-man, one-vote’ principle, ‘alien races [would be excluded] from decision-making functions in political processes.’¹²¹ Five years after Algerian independence, this case loomed large in Tiryakian’s argumentation. He asked what would be the consequence of an ‘Algerian-type situation’, meaning an ‘all-out war of liberation’: ‘[C]ould a prolonged war lead to the Europeans being “driven into the sea” [...] that is, to their voluntary migrating away from South Africa after defeat?’ ‘Again, the outcome of the Algerian war would seem to suggest this possibility.’ However, whilst Tiryakian considered it ‘conceivable’ that the English-speaking community might “return” to their “homelands”,’ just as other minorities (e.g. Israel, Greece), he deemed it ‘unlikely that the Afrikaners would “rather switch than fight”’. He spoke of the ‘wishful thinking expressed in some quarters that everything would be amicably settled if only the Afrikaners could be persuaded to leave South Africa’. Finally, the ‘extermination of the whites’ would be unacceptable ‘to the West’. Therefore, Tiryakian warned of the consequences of a ‘racial war’, which ‘should give pause to those who see a blood bath as a necessary catharsis for purifying the South African atmosphere’.¹²²

Given these ‘unfeasible’ alternatives, Tiryakian considered the partition of South Africa the ‘inevitable answer’ and opened his argumentation with quotations from the above-mentioned works of Spooner, Cowen, Giniewski, and Schreiner, published just a few years before; thus illustrating that ‘South African liberals have had to recognize grudgingly that partition is the only solution.’ Whilst there had been several commissions since 1910 in South Africa to investigate ‘race relations’ and ‘some form of territorial segregation’, no commission ‘has ever been appointed to examine the feasibility of partition’.¹²³ A number of questions was thus open: ‘What would the partition of South Africa look like? What would be the major consequences of partition?’ Would Africans ‘also reject partitions’ the same way they rejected segregation? As

121. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 208, 214, 212.

122. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 213.

123. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 214, 217.

mentioned, van den Berghe had predicted they would ‘not settle for anything less than control over the entire country’.¹²⁴ Tiryakian, however, pointed to ‘the absence of public opinion polls of urban Africans’ and was of the ‘opinion that a great majority [of (urban?) Africans] would endorse’ Jabavu’s demand for ‘a separate state of our own’. Unfortunately he left open why he was of this opinion.¹²⁵

Tiryakian was confident about ‘sketch[ing] a tentative proposal’ for a partition of South Africa into two new states, ‘viable economically and politically’. He presented a map that showed the dividing borderline as follows:

On the one hand a ‘black’ state composed of the bulk of the Transvaal, Natal, Lesotho and Swaziland [...] On the other hand, there would be a ‘white’ republic consisting of the Orange Free State and the Cape Province [...] the Transkei and perhaps the Ciskei could be detached from the Cape, thereby restoring the older historical boundaries between whites and Africans back to the Kei or Fish Rivers [...] Conversely, the predominantly white area of the Transvaal [...] (the Klerksdorp-Potchefstroom district) including Vereeniging would remain a part of the white republic (as would Pretoria but not Johannesburg).¹²⁶

Given the sovereignty over the Witwatersrand mining area, agricultural centres in the Transvaal, and industrial centres like Johannesburg, Durban, and East London, the ‘African state would have a diversified economy’; this was a decisive difference to the above-mentioned plan made by Villiers Graaff in 1960. Tiryakian counted on the ‘realism’ of the ‘whites’ to accept their much-shrunken state:

If the white population were to feel that a shrunken territory would be legitimated by black popular leaders [...], if they felt there would be a place in the African sun for their grandchildren, then we suggest that pragmatic considerations would make them accept this difficult alternative to an Algeria- or Kenya-type all-out conflict.¹²⁷

In both new states, ‘unrestricted adult suffrage would be a *sine qua non* for the international acceptance of partition’. Thus, in the Cape those called ‘coloureds’ were to be given back their vote; all racially discriminatory legislation like ‘pass laws’ was to be done away with. ‘Relocation’ for both ‘black’ and ‘white’ would have to be encouraged, but both groups were free to stay either as ‘permanent citizens’ or as ‘expatriates on a temporary visa’ in the ‘black’ or the ‘white-coloured’ state.¹²⁸ Also, given South Africa’s history of forced removals,¹²⁹ Tiryakian did not envision any sort of perfect or clear-cut division based on colour;

124. Van den Berghe, *South Africa*, 158.

125. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 218.

126. *Ibid.*

127. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 219.

128. *Ibid.*

129. See Suzman, who argued that ‘half a million Colored and Indian families had been removed since [the Group Area Act of 1950] [...] Compensation [...] was minimal.’ Suzman, *In No Uncertain Terms*, 80–81.

the futility of which already Jabavu had stressed in 1928 with regard to many regions of South Africa ('the costs of buying [occupants] out of their possession would be fabulous'). Jabavu thus had concluded 'that territorial segregation on the model of Basutoland [a small and densely populated territory exclusively for blacks who were expected to work for whites nearby across the 'border'] is an absolute impossibility in the Union'.¹³⁰

Viability, economic and political, was decisive for the maintenance of independence of both states after partition. The 'partition could be supervised by the United Nations with a period of five or ten years given for relocation.' Tiryakian did not believe in 'a last-ditch liberal argument' and talk about 'deep feeling of racial good will' as a basis for coexistence. This he considered 'wishful thinking' that had to face the reality of the 'damage done to race relations by past white oppression'. Therefore, upon his return from South Africa Tiryakian summarised his impressions of the 'urban African' as 'craving for emancipation, for being one's own boss in one's own country'.¹³¹

These concerns 'for being one's own boss in one's own country' were also taken up in other studies that sought for 'a way out of the South African dilemma': *Multistan* (1974), by Paul N. Malherbe (b. 1927), was but one of several plans advanced in the 1970s 'for multiracial, bottom-up cooperation'.¹³² At the outset he asked: 'Are there persons today – politically sophisticated persons – who support apartheid because they believe it can succeed?'¹³³ Even before the Soweto uprising this was more than a rhetorical question and, in its sense of crisis and unavoidable change, far away from the brash confidence in the future of the apartheid order exhibited by Rhodie and others barely five years earlier. *Multistan* was a plan for a unified area with a common roll irrespective of ethnicity (contrary to the Bantustans) that formed part of a South African federation composed of mainly 'white' and 'black states'. Malherbe was thus not advancing a sort of two-state solution but asked for smaller administrative units bound in a federal system – not unlike the concept of a South African Federation promoted by Gatsha Mangosuthu Buthelezi (b. 1928), then leader of the KwaZulu territorial authority.¹³⁴ For Malherbe, KwaZulu (he still spoke of Zululand) was 'a Multistan Prototype' for which, to succeed politically and economically, it was however necessary to include the property of 'white land-owners', who were to retain their land under a common roll (evidently dominated by 'Zulu voters') and equal rights.¹³⁵ This way, as former liberal senator for Zululand, Edgar Brookes (1897–1979),

130. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy*, 4, 7.

131. Tiryakian, 'Sociological Realism', 220–221.

132. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa?*, 145.

133. P.N. Malherbe, *Multistan: A Way Out of the South African Dilemma* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1974), 1.

134. G.M. Buthelezi, 'Mein Konzept einer südafrikanischen Föderation', *Internationales Afrika-Forum*, 10, 2–3 (1974), 118–122 (translated and introduced by Klaus von der Ropp).

135. Malherbe, *Multistan*, 37.

summarised in a positive review, ‘white residents can remain political sharers in Kwa Zulu without humiliation’. If the Kwa Zulu example succeeded, this would convert whites in other South African regions ‘to the view that a black majority can rule whites without economic, political or personal disaster’.¹³⁶

Making international headlines: the maps of Blenck and Ropp (1976)

Opposition parliamentarian Suzman called the political correspondents in Cape Town her ‘most helpful allies’. In her memoirs she brought to mind ‘foreign correspondents from overseas papers whose support gave me great encouragement in my more despairing moments’. The coverage of South African politics by *New York Times* journalist Joseph Lelyveld (b. 1937) was particularly relevant in this respect.¹³⁷ And the *New York Times* also played a major role in disseminating the idea of ‘negotiated partition’ of South Africa to an international audience. No less a journalistic authority than Cyrus L. Sulzberger (1912–1993), former lead foreign correspondent of the newspaper, pointed in 1977 to the ‘negotiate[d] territorial partition’ of South Africa. For Sulzberger this was a way of ‘Eluding the Last Ditch’, which encompassed, for him, the prospect of ‘widespread war’ – and for this end he referred to an ‘interesting’ study by Jürgen Blenck and Klaus von der Ropp.¹³⁸

Both the geographer Blenck (1938–2016) and the lawyer von der Ropp (b. 1938), working for the think tank *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, were rightfully characterised by Sulzberger as ‘African specialist[s]’.¹³⁹ They had widely published on the current affairs of the continent and in 1976 had jointly published in the German foreign affairs review *Aussenpolitik* (Hamburg) a study on the partition of South Africa.¹⁴⁰ The following year the piece was translated into English and published in South Africa under the title ‘Republic of South Africa: Is Partition a Solution?’¹⁴¹ Over the following years von der Ropp continued to discuss these proposals, which were the most elaborated hitherto, not only in German and English publications but also in French, Dutch, Australian, and Mexican journals.

Based on the contemporary context (partitions from Ireland to Cyprus), two tenets were important for the argumentation at the outset: first, the notion of the

136. E. Brookes, ‘“Multistan”: A New Factor’, review of P.N. Malherbe, *‘Multistan’: A Way Out of the South African Dilemma* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1974), *Reality*, 6, 5 (1974), 16.

137. Suzman, *In No Uncertain Terms*, 133; see J. Lelyveld, *Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black and White* (New York: Crown, 1985).

138. C.L. Sulzberger, ‘Staying Out of the Last Ditch’, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 August 1977, 4; also published as under the title ‘Eluding the Last Ditch’, *New York Times*, 10 August 1977.

139. Sulzberger, ‘Staying Out of the Last Ditch’, 4.

140. J. Blenck and K. von der Ropp, ‘Republik von Südafrika: Teilung als Ausweg?’, *Aussenpolitik*, 27, 3 (1976), 308–324.

141. J. Blenck and K. von der Ropp, ‘Republic of South Africa: Is Partition a Solution?’, *South African Journal of African Affairs*, 7, 1 (1977), 21–32.

historicity of plans for an equitable partition of South Africa, strengthened by the observation that the ‘advocates of this type of solution have been recently been speaking out more frequently’;¹⁴² second, the assumption of irreconcilably opposing views, animosity, mutual fear, and conflict of interests of white and black South Africans. Already three years earlier von der Ropp had quoted a statement that Anglican Bishop Gonville French-Beytagh (1913–1991), expelled from South Africa for subversive activity against the state, had declared in Bonn, West-Germany: ‘an integrated society can only be realized in heaven, not in South Africa.’¹⁴³ Consequently, Blenck and von der Ropp described the partition of South Africa as the only alternative ‘[i]f a racially integrated society were to remain an illusion’.¹⁴⁴

Their proposal for partition, illustrated by two often reprinted maps, contained the following elements: South Africa is to be partitioned into two states (‘Black’ in the east, ‘White, Coloured and Indian’ in the west) along a border that runs from Sishen over Kimberley and Bloemfontein to Port Elisabeth. In both states the one man, one vote principle is to apply. This border takes into account historical and economic factors that aim at fairness and equal development potential in order to ensure the viability and independence of both states. The eastern, ‘Black’ state would have at its disposal over about 50 per cent of the territory of South Africa with 70 per cent of the total population and about 75 per cent of the gross national product, including, contrary to Tiryakian’s plan, all goldmines and the Johannesburg/Pretoria industrial centre. Each state would have three major port cities. Major population movements were foreseen, ‘in which contrary to separation policy until now White and Asian Africans would be most affected. In all some 4.6 million were to be resettled.’ Given these staggering numbers, the authors emphasised that this partition ‘would only represent a viable solution if it remains the only alternative to years of bloodshed’. In order to assure the White minority of the durability of this solution, the West was to guarantee the existence of a smaller, western state by offering membership in the Western defence community. Both, the western and the eastern South African state, were to be provided with extensive Western economic aid, ‘comparable to the Marshall Plan’.¹⁴⁵

Already in 1976 this proposal drew considerable attention from South African and German newspapers – the Soweto Uprising and the independence of neighbouring Angola and Mozambique caused an upsurge in international

142. Blenck and von der Ropp, ‘Republic of South Africa’, 25.

143. ‘Eine integrierte Gesellschaftsordnung sei nur im Himmel, nicht aber in Südafrika zu verwirklichen.’ K. von der Ropp, ‘Simplifizierungen?’ [letter to the editor], *Afrika heute*, May (1973), 54; see also K. von der Ropp, ‘Südafrika muss geteilt werden’ [letter to the editor], *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 289, 13 December 1974, 10.

144. Blenck and von der Ropp, ‘Republic of South Africa’, 25.

145. K. von der Ropp, ‘Is Territorial Partition a Strategy for Peaceful Change in South Africa’, *International Affairs Bulletin*, 3, 1 (1979), 40; Blenck and von der Ropp, ‘Republic of South Africa’, 31, 25.

awareness of the urgency to find alternatives to apartheid acceptable to both parties. As historian Jamie Miller remarks: ‘These years [1974–76] marked [...] the crossroad for the apartheid order.’¹⁴⁶

Where Sulzberger soberly noted, ‘[s]uch a surgical operation would be cruel’, others expressed their ‘doubts’ and ‘pessimism concerning the readiness’ of the parties to the conflict to divide ‘their country’.¹⁴⁷ Given the rejection by the NP government of the one man, one vote principle and the Soweto uprising, it even seemed possible that partition would only be executed once open war had broken out and the ‘whites’ were forced to take refuge in the southern Capeland, thus making partition a fallback plan and a reality only after bloodshed, as in most similar cases throughout the twentieth century.¹⁴⁸ A former German ambassador to South Africa called partition a ‘radical solution out of desperation’.¹⁴⁹ Ten years earlier, Tiryakian had already admitted apodictically that ‘partition goes counter to liberal ideas of integration’.¹⁵⁰ And a later analyst noted, also with reference to the unclear solution of intergroup conflicts between Whites, Indians, and Coloureds: ‘Partition cannot be ruled out, but it is not a promising idea.’¹⁵¹ In the following years, other proposals were tabled according to which, for example, ‘the entire present appearance of the Republic of South Africa will be radically changed by manipulation of internal borders’ and ‘adjustments to few external frontiers’. However, such attempts, arguing with ‘natural regions’ and complaining about ‘arbitrary geopolitical borders’, appeared more like a benign Bantustan policy, hoping to give away these ‘black states’ by ‘incorporating’ them with Lesotho or Botswana (‘amalgamation’), whilst still imagining the largest parts of South Africa as ‘White country’.¹⁵²

Yet, considering South Africa’s worsening political and human rights situation in the late 1970s, European politicians became more involved in debates about concrete alternatives to apartheid. In Germany, for example, the Social Democrat Egon Bahr (1922–2015), until 1976 minister of economic cooperation and an *éminence grise* of German politics, took a special interest in southern Africa. In a newspaper interview in July 1977, he spoke not only about the future of Namibia but also about South Africa. The interview clearly showed how the idea of ‘negotiated partition’ of South Africa had reached beyond

146. Miller, *An African Volk*, 2.

147. Sulzberger, ‘Staying Out of the Last Ditch’, 4; Ropp, ‘Is Territorial Partition’, 41.

148. Arguments listed in von der Ropp, ‘Is Territorial Partition’, 41, 47 n. 4.

149. ‘Radikale Verzweiflungslösung’; G.A. Sonnenhol, *Südafrika ohne Hoffnung: Wege aus der Gefahr* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1978), 68. On ambassador Sonnenhol (1968–1972), see S. Schrafstetter, ‘A Nazi Diplomat Turned Apologist for Apartheid: Gustav Sonnenhol, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and West German Foreign Policy towards South Africa’, *German History*, 28, 1 (2010), 44–66.

150. Tiryakian, ‘Sociological Realism’, 214.

151. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa?*, 133.

152. P.R. Botha, *South Africa Plan for the Future: A Basis for Dialogue* (Johannesburg: Perscor, 1978), 212–213, 175–176.

academic circles. Rejecting for South Africa the ‘simple propagation of the “one man, one vote” principle’, Bahr emphasised the necessity to find a

settlement that links the coexistence of Black and White with the security of the rights of both races. The ‘easiest’ arrangement of such problems in world history was partitioning. This cannot work in South Africa. Thus, we need a hitherto unknown model of equitable cohabitation with a special protection for minorities.¹⁵³

In South Africa, then leader of the Progressive Federal Party van Zyl Slabbert, in his sober assessment of *South Africa’s Options* (1979), took note of Blenck and Ropp’s ‘radical and equitable suggestion’ and considered it ‘morally quite defensible’. Yet he cautioned that ‘quite likely the line [of partition] will be drawn where the battle has ended’.¹⁵⁴

This dystopian consideration of the partition option was, however, not the end of the discussion. In 1980 the economist Gavin Maasdorp (b. 1937) collected several of the ‘forms of partition’ discussed so far, including those that clearly fell within the orbit of apartheid measures, like the infamous Eiselen line of 1955.¹⁵⁵ From the late 1970s even the NP government launched studies into potential constitutional reforms for South Africa that included a geographical reordering of power. Prime Minister P. W. Botha (1916–2006), in his Twelve-Point Plan of 1979, set as a policy objective:

(3) The creation by the Black nations of constitutional structures giving them the greatest possible degree of self-government within states which are consolidated as far as possible. We believe that part of the right to self-determination of these Black states is to allow them to grow towards independence according to their own judgement.¹⁵⁶

In the words of political scientist Deon Geldenhuys (b. 1950), the plan ‘represent [ed] the lowest common denominator’ within the NP. However, this party position on the future of the ‘homelands’ was not only a mere continuation of the policy since the 1960s – and thus a far cry from the above-quoted ideas about ‘negotiated partition’ put forward by academics and journalists (thus indicating the limited impact of these authors) – but ‘international opinion [also] rejects the balkanisation of South Africa into separate black homelands and the granting of independence to them’.¹⁵⁷

Whereas Prime Minister Botha rejected notions of ‘negotiated partition’ and remained intransigent towards a federal or consociational future of South Africa, others in his party, namely Piet Koornhof (1925–2007), Minister of

153. E. Bahr, ‘Ohne Verhandlungslösung ist die Gefahr eines dritten Weltkrieges ständig gegenwärtig’, *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 28, 10 July 1977, 8.

154. Van Zyl Slabbert and Welsh, *South Africa’s Options*, 169.

155. Maasdorp, ‘Forms of Partition’, 117.

156. Quoted in: D. Geldenhuys, *Some Foreign Policy Implications of South Africa’s ‘Total National Strategy’, with Particular Reference to the ‘12-Point Plan’* (Johannesburg: South African Institute for International Affairs, 1981), 60.

157. Geldenhuys, *Some Foreign Policy Implications*, 11, 14; see also Geldenhuys, ‘South Africa’s Black Homelands’, 53.

Co-operation and Development (formerly known as ‘Bantu Affairs’ [1978–1984]), ‘one of the “reforming” ministers’ in Botha’s government,¹⁵⁸ considered for several years options of a ‘canton system’ based on the ‘Swiss model’ – an indirect impact of Malherbe’s *Multistan* ideas seems likely here.¹⁵⁹ Throughout the 1980s such a ‘geographically and ethnically based federal/confederal order for South Africa’ was discussed by politicians, who were aware that the introduction of the tricameral system in 1984, which created coloured and Indian ‘houses’ in Parliament in parallel to the whites-only House of Assembly, was an insufficient reform. Contemporary observers spoke of ‘a long series of speculations about this issue’ and ‘evolving constitutional plans’ of the ruling party, but also of academics and others who were eager to present a constitutional alternative to the impasse Botha’s insistence on the ‘homelands’ (and thus the rejection of ‘South African’ citizenship for their inhabitants) had created.¹⁶⁰

However, to the main opposition all this talk about federal or cantonal systems (politicians did not discuss a negotiated partition) was the wrong ‘alternative’, because the old tragedy described 60 years earlier by Jabavu remained unresolved: white politicians held the power to ‘confine the black man within such circumscribed limits that he should never be territorially independent.’¹⁶¹ Within the ANC it seemed clear that the intended ‘liberation’ was meant to include all of the South African territory – just as van den Berghe had predicted 20 years earlier. Also, Geldenhuys pointed out in 1981 that the ‘homelands policy has discredited the notion of territorial separation in the eyes of the majority of blacks in South Africa’.¹⁶² The ANC’s Govan Mbeki (1910–2001) told a British audience in the mid-1980s that his party disliked a ‘federal structure’ that would mirror the ‘bantustans’; rather, he stated, ‘we are saying a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.’¹⁶³

Conclusion

In 1969 Rhoodie suggested that ‘the advantages and disadvantages of radical geo-political partition will increasingly become the subject matter of academic and political discussion.’¹⁶⁴ This projection turned out to be true,

158. Omond, ‘South Africa’s Post-apartheid Constitution’, 629.

159. K. Asmal, L. Asmal, and R.S. Roberts, *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid’s Criminal Governance* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), 72.

160. D.C. Hindson, ‘Orderly Urbanization and Influx Control: From Territorial Apartheid to Regional Spatial Ordering in South Africa’, *Cahiers d’études africaines*, 25, 99 (1985), 402; see A. Lijphart, ‘Federal, Confederal, and Consociational Options for the South African Plural Society’, in R. Rotberg and J. Barratt, eds, *Conflict and Compromise in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980), 51–75; D. Welsh, ‘Constitutional Changes in South Africa’, *African Affairs*, 83, 331 (1984), 147–162.

161. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy*, 11.

162. Geldenhuys, ‘South Africa’s Black Homelands’, 57.

163. Quoted in Omond, ‘South Africa’s Post-apartheid Constitution’, 633.

164. Rhoodie, *Apartheid and Racial Partnership*, 359.

as the discussion above has shown. What has become equally clear is that the meaning of ‘partition’ of South Africa remained disputed amongst authors and that it changed over time. To give one last example, the editor of *Die Transvaaler*, G.D. Scholtz (1905–1983) – an ardent nationalist hagiographer of Afrikaner leaders who was despised by professional university historians – proposed his own definition of ‘partition’ because of his opposition to the term ‘apartheid’, stylising in the 1960s and 1970s “partition” to be the seminal concept of Afrikaner political thought.¹⁶⁵ Be this as it may, others thought of ‘partition’ as a political solution to a moral, social, and economic catastrophe that, under the term ‘apartheid’, had been turned into a ‘hegemonic ideology’ which ‘had achieved broad support in white society’.¹⁶⁶ Considering that there were Afrikaner voices heard in the discussion about ‘partition’, it is to be noted that these critical voices attest to the heterogeneity of the Afrikaner community, parts of which expressed their ‘own discomfort with apartheid’.¹⁶⁷

Whereas authors opposed to partition plans tried to disqualify any thought about dividing the country in two by claiming that it was the architects of apartheid who had ‘original partition aims’ once the Bantustans were economically self-sufficient and could accommodate all Africans,¹⁶⁸ the maps produced by researchers giving the greater part of national wealth, including the Rand, to black Africans, indicate that ‘partition’ could be defined very differently. Evidently, besides the model of two independent states, others were discussed as future alternatives to apartheid; there was, as Geldenhuys put it, ‘a range of scenarios’, from dismemberment (including ‘radical territorial partition’) to reintegration (of South Africa as a ‘unitary state’).¹⁶⁹ Given this plethora of suggested options and ‘plan[s] for the future’, an American scholar characterised South Africa as a ‘real graveyard of social science prophecies’.¹⁷⁰

Counter-factual questions about the prospects of a negotiated partition of South Africa becoming a reality at different times need not be discussed here. However, where did the thinking about partition come from? Two considerations – one domestic and one on foreign policy – are particularly

165. Van Jaarsveld, ‘Recent Afrikaner Historiography’, 98; on Scholtz, see A. Mouton, “‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’: Professional Historians and Political Biography of South African Parliamentary Politics, 1910–1990”, *Journal for Contemporary History*, 36, 1 (2011), 65.

166. S.B. Greenberg, *Legitimizing the Illegitimate: State, Markets, and Resistance in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 123. On the shifting meaning of ‘apartheid’, see Dubow, *Apartheid*, 274–280, 290–294.

167. L. Koorts, ‘Palatable and Unpalatable Leaders: Apartheid and Post-apartheid Afrikaner Biography’, in H. Renders, B. de Haan, and J. Harmsmap, eds, *The Biographical Turn: Lives in History* (London: Routledge, 2017), 151.

168. SABC Radio, 6 January 1985, quoted in Greenberg, *Legitimizing the Illegitimate*, 188.

169. Geldenhuys, ‘South Africa’s Black Homelands’, 52.

170. Quoted in E. Leistner, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen Ordnung in Südafrika’, *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik*, 22 (1977), 191.

relevant here: When speaking about a ‘predominantly black’ and a ‘predominantly white’ state to be created through a negotiated partition of South Africa, authors like Jan Graaff and others have assumed since 1960, first, that people would know where they belonged; and, second, that an exact definition of the meaning of ‘black’ and ‘white’ was – contrary to the absurdities of *apartheid* legislation and practice – unnecessary. After all, historians were at the same time busy to historicise (thus, to problematise) the ‘emergence’ of Afrikaners and the ‘construction’ and ‘development of the Afrikaner self-concept’.¹⁷¹ However, the existence of a plurality of groups in South Africa, each having their own identity, their ‘culture’, which was in need of protection, was a matter of course for the authors discussed here. This assumption stood at the baseline of their arguments for some form of partition.¹⁷²

Furthermore, the international context of world politics and historical precedents did play a decisive role. During the Cold War era, seeing the world as bi-polar and thinking in ideological camps that were impossible to reconcile was nothing unusual. And it sufficed to look at any world map printed around 1970 to see the geopolitical results of this bipolarity.¹⁷³ ‘This is a century of partitions’, wrote Sulzberger when discussing Blenck and Ropp’s proposal: ‘Ireland, India, Palestine, Germany, Korea, Vietnam. None has worked well; but mankind favors “war tomorrow” over “war today”’.¹⁷⁴ The proposals discussed here were all destined to avoid war altogether – they offered conflict regulation in a plural society through partition. For liberals this was tantamount to an ‘abject failure’ of the South African society in the assumption that ‘whites and non-whites simply cannot live together in peace’.¹⁷⁵ Beginning with Jabavu and Hoernlé, ‘partition’ was seen as a political means of protecting blacks from white domination – and reducing the risk of subsequent revolt and revolution that may, in turn, have led to the overthrow of the white minority regime and to black domination. Partition was then a third option between the two poles of domination, to be preferred for reasons of peace.

171. A. du Toit, “‘Afrikaander circa 1600’: Reflections and Suggestions Regarding the Origins and Fate of Afrikaner Nationalism’, *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 4 (2008), 563. This refers to A. du Toit and H. Giliomee, eds, *Afrikaner Political Thought: Analysis and Documents: Vol. 1, 1780–1850* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983). See Tony Kirk’s angry review of this book for the exclusion of ‘all Coloured people [...] from their definition of “Afrikaner”’; T. Kirk, review of A. du Toit and H. Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought, Analysis and Documents, Vol. 1, 1780–1850* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), *Journal of African History* 25 (1984), 497; see J.A. van Jaarsveld, *Wie en wat is die Afrikaner?* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1981).

172. Omond argued sarcastically: “‘Cultural rights’ translated means “group rights” – the insistence, usually by whites, that the group must be regarded as more important than the individual.’ Omond, ‘South Africa’s Post-apartheid Constitution’, 634.

173. R.H. Wagner, ‘What was Bipolarity?’, *International Organisation*, 47, 1 (1993), 77–106.

174. Sulzberger, ‘Staying out of the Last Ditch’, 4.

175. Cowen, *The Foundations of Freedom*, 70–71, 159–160; similar Maasdorp, ‘Forms of Partition’, 139.

However, the converse was also conceivable. That partition would be preceded by an outright war, as Van Zyl Slabbert believed, was not an unreasonable assumption. Thus, partition was also a fallback option. After all, already in 1960 Kwame Nkrumah warned of the risk that, in South Africa, ‘a revolution of desperation creates another Algeria on our continent.’¹⁷⁶ In the late 1970s ‘many observers’ envisaged ‘in South Africa a protracted but ultimately successful war of African liberation’.¹⁷⁷ Contemporaries viewed ‘multiracialism’ in South Africa as unrealistic, ‘except after an upheaval on the scale of the American Civil War.’ Others even put their hope in ‘outside intervention amounting [...] to an act of war’ against South Africa.¹⁷⁸ The involvement of the Soviet Union in southern Africa was most evident since the beginning of the Angolan civil war, and the ANC was believed to be thoroughly in the Soviet camp. In case open conflict had broken out (with Soviet support) inside South Africa, a (literal) east-west division of the country could have offered (at least for a period of time) a compromise, similar to Korea, Vietnam, or Yemen. Partition, then, was close to a worst-case scenario, to be avoided by politicians at all cost.

Note on the contributor

Jakob Zollmann read history, philosophy, and law in Berlin, Paris, and San Francisco. He has taught at the University of Namibia where he also undertook research and at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. He was a visiting fellow at the German Historical Institute Paris and is researcher at the Center for Global Constitutionalism of the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. His research focuses on the history of international law and on the legal and social history of colonial Africa. He has published *Koloniale Herrschaft und ihre Grenzen: Die Kolonialpolizei in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) and *Naulila 1914: World War I in Angola and International Law* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016).

176. K. Nkrumah, ‘Racialism and the Policy of Apartheid’, in K. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961), 226.

177. N.M. Stultz, ‘On Partition’, *Social Dynamics*, 5, 1 (1979), 2.

178. Mander, ‘South Africa’, 14, 19.