

## CHAPTER 9

### *The interaction between convictions and interests*

#### 9.1 THE AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter will deal with the interaction between convictions and interests. We have seen in section 8.5.2 of chapter 8 why this interaction appears to be crucial for our problematic.

We remember that interests (a) represent needs and desires which are related to structural position and (b) interpret and prioritise such needs and desires, thus containing elements of meaning and normativeness. To a certain extent they can be called counter-convictions, but they lack the authority of convictions. Their power is derived, rather, from the needs and desires which they represent and which press for attention.

The interaction between convictions and interests moves along three avenues: perception (guided by values), justification (guided by norms) and motivation (guided by goals). We concentrate on justification, but the other two avenues are understood to be implied all along.

We assume that the interaction between convictions and interests moves in two directions: (a) interests justify themselves against convictions, and (b) convictions control interests.

Interests try to make themselves acceptable in the following ways:

- (a) If there is a choice between *convictions* they will tip the balance towards the alternative most amenable to the interests concerned. If there is a choice between emphases and interpretations within a prevailing conviction they will make the group fall for those emphases and interpretations which are more in line with the interests concerned than others. If that is not the case they will try to manipulate the truth of the conviction.
- (b) The pursuit of *interests* and its institutional entrenchments can be subjected to selective emphases, interpretations and manipulations of the truth as well.
- (c) The area of life in which the interests occur, for instance politics, business or sexual gratification, can be declared to be *autonomous*, i.e. to fall outside the jurisdiction of the prevailing conviction and its representatives. That means that a counter-conviction is established alongside the original, thus forming a syncretistic or polytheistic situation. We remember that classical polytheism provides divinities for erotic satisfaction, alcohol, commerce, war, etc.

Convictions control interests in the following ways:

- (a) The prevailing *system of meaning* has an influence on the interpretation and prioritisation of needs and desires, and

thus establishes what can become an interest at all and which priority it may claim.

- (b) The *normative system* screens the suggestions, claims and demands of interests according to its values, norms and goals. The authority to do so lies in the ability of ultimates to confirm or question the right of existence of a person, group or institution.

I presented these distinctions to make the reader aware of the possible ways in which interests and convictions influence each other. Examples from real life, however, are very complex and require detailed analyses. Since there is no space and time for such elaborate investigations, I only offer an impressionistic first entry into the whole problematic of this chapter.

## 9.2 VITAL INTERESTS ARE JUSTIFIED IN TERMS OF CONVICTIONS

The process of justification mediates between vital interests (closely related to position in the power system) on the one hand and the current system of meaning and its system of norms on the other. The former have to be shown to be acceptable in terms of the latter. To give a comprehensive picture numerous examples would be necessary: the number of vital interests multiplied by the number of convictions (or systems of meaning) multiplied by the three ways in which justification is carried out. We give only a few examples representing each of the three types of conviction, each of the three ways of justification, and both elite and underdog interests.

## 9.2.1 Justification in terms of religious convictions

### 9.2.1.1 Manipulation of the system of meaning

The Biblical faith is a dominant religious system of meaning and norms in the history of the West. When the Spanish and Portuguese set out on their voyages to conquer Latin America they interpreted their undertakings in terms of a divine mission. While the true motives were power, wealth and glory, these were interpreted in such a way that the Kingdom of God was ostensibly extended beyond the seas. Souls were saved from eternal condemnation by forcing them into the fold of the church. If they were unwilling, God's righteous condemnation was executed there and then by means of the sword.

The apocalyptic messianism of the early Colonial period actually had its origins in Spain itself ... the South American frontier was a continuation of the campaign against the Moors in the Iberian peninsula. The combination of religious crusading fervour and the systematic establishment of Catholicism which had characterised the Reconquest in the peninsula, was extended directly to the colonies ... The events of the Conquest were given Biblical significance. Hernán Cortés was seen as a new Moses ... Martín Fernández de Enciso compared the Conquest with the entry of the Jews into the Land of Canaan... (Norman 1981:51f.).

The enthusiasm with which the British built their Empire was couched in similar terms. The Anglo-Saxons were the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, elected by God to execute a historic mission to bring the light of Christianity and civilisation to the heathen and

barbarous nations of the world (Stokes 1960; Sandison 1967; Villa-Vicencio 1981).

Similar appeals to the Biblical imagery emerged among the Afrikaner settlers in the early 19th century (Villa-Vicencio 1981:50; Bosch 1984:18). They also saw themselves as the chosen nation. The "Great Trek" out of the area of British jurisdiction was seen in the light of the liberation of Israel from Egypt. The Afrikaners' movement into the interior was seen as a parallel to the conquest of Canaan. And the Blacks were seen as Canaanites who had to be subjugated and placed under the benevolent reign of Christian civilisation and with whom no social contact on equal level was permitted. The true motives of the Great Trek - sovereignty, land and feudal dominance - were thus justified in terms of the acknowledged religious system of meaning.

It is obvious that this is a corrupted version of the Biblical faith. Spaniards, British and Afrikaner are not Jews but Gentiles, on a par with Blacks. Likewise, Blacks are not Canaanites. Moreover, Jewish exclusiveness has been superseded by the universal church of Christ. Acceptance to the People of God is no longer based on biological descent or fulfilment of a religious law, thus conditional, but on acceptance of the unconditional grace of God. The principle of national survival and dominance which indeed played its role in the history of Israel, has been superseded by the impartial justice of Yahweh and the self-giving concern of Christ. Obviously a whole religion has been redesigned here to function as a legitimization of vital interests.

The policy of Apartheid has also been justified in terms of the acknowledged religious system of meaning. The deuteronomic exclusiveness of Israel was taken as justification for the racial

segregation of Whites, the curse of the tower of Babylon was taken as proof for the necessity to carve up the population according to language groups. And the mission of the elect children of God was understood to imply that Whites have been placed into the Southern African situation to defend and extend the Christian civilization.

Again a corruption of the Biblical faith is apparent. Deuteronomic exclusiveness was based on religion, not on race. If applied directly it should have meant that White and Black Christians should keep aloof from Black and White non-believers. Instead, White atheists and agnostics were included in the exclusivist camp while Black believers were pushed out. The Old Testament saw the communicative confusion of Babylon as a curse brought upon mankind because of sin, and redeemed in the miracle of Pentecost - not as a divine command to be enforced by law. If it was a divine command, English- and Afrikaans-speaking Whites should have been separated (with the Coloureds added to the latter) while the Xhosas of the Ciskei and Transkei should not have been separated. And, of course, the church has no mandate to enforce or protect a civilisation by force of arms but spread the Good News by word and deed.

The reinterpretation of the Biblical system of meaning also took on another form: spiritualisation. After the Afrikaners had been liberated and Blacks began to clamour for their liberation, the latter was considered to be a misunderstanding of the Biblical message: A Christian is liberated from sin and condemnation, not from (mere) external oppression. The slaves, liberated in Christ, were told to be subject to their masters in the New Testament. Social justice was superseded by justification by faith. The unity of the church was a spiritual, not an institutional or physical unity. In ethics attitudes mattered, not

structures. In fact, the idea of freedom, equality and fraternity was not Christian but a brain child of the humanists of the French Revolution which has to be opposed as anti-Christian.

These ideas are not easily unmasked, because they draw on traditions which go back as far as the first Hellenistic influences on the Biblical faith. They are particularly popular in pietistic and fundamentalist circles and bear the mark of the "pure Gospel". But the underlying motive is clear. It is a withdrawal from responsibility before God in the spheres of social organisation, economics and politics. Of course, this was never the intention of the Biblical writings. For the Old Testament (Torah, Psalms and Prophets) this is obvious. The New Testament church used the Old Testament as its Bible. The background of its faith was the apocalyptic expectation of a complete renewal of the world by the approaching Kingdom of God. Early Christians ordered their lives on this basis in anticipation of the Kingdom, as far as their sphere of influence as a tiny community stretched. That God should not be interested in social justice is indeed a rash assumption to make.

Anti-apartheid, liberation and Black theologies utilise the Exodus motif as well (Villa-Vicencio 1981), leaving out, for the time being, the motif of the conquest of Canaan which forms one package with the former in the Old Testament creed. The strong Biblical insistence on social justice receives a selective emphasis. The harsh claims of the Law are emphasised at the expense of the suffering acceptance of the sinner by God for the sake of redemption. Modern concepts of human rights, freedom, democracy and socialism and, in particular, the Marxian analysis of society provide a powerful hermeneutical key for the interpretation of Scriptures.

While the 'preferential option for the poor and oppressed' certainly does have a powerful Biblical backing, the Marxian hermeneutical key often leads to the notion that the poor (=proletariat) are, by virtue of their poverty, without sin and without need of (spiritual) redemption. They are, almost by definition, the elected instruments of God's project of liberation. The Kingdom of God is seen to materialise wherever social shackles are removed; it is ultimately interpreted in terms of the classless society. One has to add that Marxism can largely be understood as a secular appropriation of Biblical concerns which have conveniently been neglected by the selectively spiritual piety of bourgeois Christianity (Nürnberg 1979b:46-47). What cannot be denied, however, is the fact that the utilisation of the Marxian hermeneutical key is largely motivated by the justification of the pursuit of collective interests.

#### 9.2.1.2 Acceptable presentation of the pursuit of interests

The second way of justification is the presentation of vital interests in such a light that they seem to be covered by the religious system of meaning. Apartheid policies appeared as an expression of Christian concern and responsibility. Whites saw themselves as guardians who protected their Black foster children from detrimental influences such as liberalism and communism, taught them a sound discipline, developed their language and culture, granted them homelands of their own, invested huge sums of money in agricultural development, health services, education, housing and administrative institutions, gave them all opportunities to develop their own potential to the limits of their capacity and finally granted them their political independence. "Never in world history has so much been done for so many by so few" one of my White friends told me.

This whole line of argument has, for our purposes, been debunked sufficiently in chapters 2-6 and no more need be said. Blacks who have not fallen into despondency, mental dependency or acquiescence, would obviously like to do without such foster parents. They resent being treated as minors for whom things are ostensibly being done and they wish to be recognised as citizens of their own country with all rights and obligations.

Nor is the underdog free from this type of justification. But it can be very subtle. Members of the elite should not be too quick in their effort to debunk the claim of the underdog that it is God who demands freedom, social justice and human dignity for all people and thus also for the underdog. It is also hardly appropriate to deny that a stand against discrimination, oppression and exploitation is required of those who claim to belong to the people of God. Everything said and done, however, one has to admit that the attitude of a "confessing church" is in line with the vital interests of Blacks while it is diametrically opposed to the interests of Whites. Blacks do not need to be Christians to clamour for their rights - their vital interests alone would be quite sufficient to make them do so. In contrast, for Whites the call for social justice is a call to sacrifice and to suffer social demotion.

#### 9.2.1.3 Declaration of autonomy

The third way of justification is to declare the social, economic and political realms out of bounds for the religious system of meaning. While it has become clear to many that racial discrimination, or separate development for that matter, cannot be justified with Biblical or theological arguments, this simply means, they argue, that social organisation, economics and politics are autonomous spheres of life. Segregationist policies

are a practical necessity which does not depend on one's faith. Religious convictions are one's private concern. They only deal with one's relation to the eternal God, at best with one's attitude to one's immediate neighbour. Jesus never bothered about politics but confirmed the legitimacy of the Roman State. So did the Apostles. Religion should never be desecrated and abused for filthy political purposes. In the meantime, policies must be based on realism and pragmatism (rather than on 'ideology'), thus on the "facts" of the situation (Posel 1982).

The practical effect of this subdivision of life into a religious and a secular sphere is, of course, that the former becomes irrelevant for the concrete issues of life, while the latter is guided by new ultimates. In most cases this is individualist or collective materialism: In economics, politics and social organisation the principles of the survival of the fittest and the priority of the powerful prevail. Some idealists may be motivated by humanistic, even romantic leanings: Blacks must be protected from the decadence of Western civilisation. Scientists are inclined to be naturalists: Blacks are on a lower level of biological or cultural evolution. Christian considerations no longer play a role. A new divinity has taken over control. A form of syncretism or polytheism evolves.

### 9.2.2 Justification in terms of cultural identity

The imperialism of the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and British were all cultural imperialisms as well. As Brazil became a Portuguese cultural colony, as North America became a British cultural colony, the Cape became a Dutch cultural colony. Other European settlers - particularly the French and the Germans - were deliberately absorbed and lost their cultural identity. While the "feudal lords" (the settlers) kept aloof both in Brazil

and in the Cape, other population groups (Red Indians and African slaves in Brazil, Hottentots and Malayan slaves in the Cape) were culturally assimilated at the base of the feudal pyramid.

The outcome in Brazil, in the U.S.A. and in the Cape Colony was essentially a single stratified society. Had this development continued, the Cape could have become a small Brazil. Race and ethnicity would have disappeared as decisive criteria of social organisation. Only class would have remained. The value of cultural identity does not occur to the members of the dominant culture as long as its cultural imperialism is unchallenged.

As we have seen in chapter 7, section 7.3.1, this development was thwarted in the Cape Colony by three interdependent factors:

- (a) A new imperialism, more advanced in terms of the Western dynamic, overlay Dutch imperialism and began with its own assimilatory policies. Cape Dutch settlers who formed a substantial cultural block with considerable self-esteem as a feudal elite, got into distress.
- (b) The expansion on the Eastern frontier ran into culturally compact, numerically superior, politically and geographically well-established Black population groups beyond the Fish River. Here a clear limit was set for cultural domination and assimilation. The obstacle was made all the more annoying by the policies of the British colonial government which was frequently seen to take sides with the Blacks during the frontier wars.
- (c) The liberal-humanitarian policies of the British colonial government undermined the position of the Cape Dutch feudal elite from within the system in that slaves were

emancipated and Hottentots were treated as equals to Whites, at least to some extent.

It is this threefold threat which forced the Cape Dutch population group to change its orientation. Before the British occupation of the Cape its attitude was elitist but not particularist. Its own cultural dominance was not questioned. Now it became beleaguered by cultural groups which endangered not only its superiority but its very survival as a cultural entity. The result was a withdrawal into an ethnic fortress or - to use a South African image - a laager. This attitude was mainly defensive - as was the Great Trek and the establishment of the Boer Republics. It remained that way until the British finally smashed these defensive structures and applied their assimilatory politics over against the Afrikaner with increased vigour.

It is only then that a defensive ethnic and feudal-elitist attitude changed into an aggressive ethnic nationalism, (Bosch 1984: 21ff). The enormous upsurge of nationalism in Europe, particularly in Germany, provided the inspiration while the entrenchment of equality with the British in the constitution of the Union (1909) provided the institutional opportunity for the Afrikaner to build up their cultural identity, their political power base, their economic potential and the rehabilitation of their traditional social status as a feudal elite over against other population groups. Because the other cultural groups, particularly the British and the Blacks, were too powerful to be incorporated in any way, this was only possible through a narrowly defined ethnic cultural solidarity. The feudal-elitist position was maintained, therefore, also over against the Coloureds who belonged to the Afrikaans cultural family.

Once in complete political control of the country, the security and power of the Afrikaner socio-cultural group had to be entrenched to ensure its survival both as a feudal elite and as cultural unit. The English population, which still had considerable influence, had to be outmanoeuvred and cut off from its overseas power base - the British homeland and its world-wide empire. This was symbolically achieved in the declaration of the Republic in 1961. Only then did the English become a subservient local minority which has gradually lost its political drive.

The greatest threat to Afrikaner power and security, however, was posed by the massive Black population, particularly by the acculturating urban elite. Its emerging unity had to be broken up and its strength dissipated. Two interrelated political doctrines emerged:

- (a) Blacks were to be granted the right to develop their own cultural identity in their own social, economic and political spheres just as the Afrikaner had developed theirs. Ethnic (periphery) institutions were built up and systematically upgraded.
- (b) The cultural melting pot of the Black urban population was considered to be decadent, thus undesirable. The presence of Blacks in White areas was declared to be "temporary", their emerging institutions were dismantled as far as possible and the whole potential power base of the acculturating Black centre population was downgraded, if not destroyed.

Once the English were no longer a problem and the Blacks were firmly under control, the Afrikaner felt more secure and the ethnic nationalist fortress carefully began to open its doors. While those who thought that they had reason to believe that the danger was not over, remained in the "verkrampste" (cramped)

attitude, a substantial portion moved to a "verligte" (enlightened) outlook. The shift from ethnic nationalism to a more inclusive "Whitism" was most significant.

Japanese and, recently, Chinese were given White status. Their numbers do not pose a threat and commercial ties with Japan and Taiwan demand a dignified treatment of these groups. Cultural considerations fell by the board.

But even a careful consideration of a wider South Africanism including Coloureds and Indians came in sight with the new constitution. Blacks are still excluded because they have not ceased to be the major threat. Yet the cooptation of a minority of privileged urban Blacks into the system does not seem to be impossible in the foreseeable future.

All this shows that interests manipulate convictions - in this case convictions concerning cultural identity.

English-speaking Whites have also changed their attitudes. Obviously British imperialism is dead. The consciousness of belonging to a global culture still provides a feeling of superiority over the Afrikaner and all other cultural groups. Cut off from their overseas power base, however, and being a White minority, the English-speakers seem to follow three distinct ways. Some become politically despondent or indifferent. Their spiritual energy has been exhausted by decades of fruitless opposition. They turn to their private pursuits which are well protected by the overall system guaranteed by the Afrikaner. Others realise that their best bet is to throw in their lot with the Afrikaner in a common "Whitism". The Rhodesian experience has greatly strengthened this trend. The third group, a

minority, opts for a broader South Africanism (or even universalism) which is to include Blacks in some sort of danger-free arrangement.

It seems obvious that the first group will become aggressive once their private interests are threatened. While their attitude seems to be benevolent and humane towards Blacks, it remains condescending. Such a frame of mind can flare up into racism any time when danger draws near. The second group will participate in the entrenchment of White security and superiority although it will be more flexible, pragmatic and humane in the process. The last group seems composed mainly of those who are not threatened. Only the truly superior are relaxed sufficiently to be open to the underdog. This superiority may be derived from social status, economic potential or intellectual independence. Again convictions seem to be at the mercy of interests.

While Indians stick to their cultural traditions in private, they adapt completely to the English culture in public. Obviously they want to be counted with the White elite as far as possible and the Afrikaner culture is not accessible to them for historical reasons. Coloureds in turn form an integral part of the Afrikaner cultural family and deeply resent being treated by Whites as being on a par with Blacks. Only the harsh experience of discrimination, manipulation and oppression has led these groups toward a degree of pragmatic identification with Blacks in a common struggle for liberation and recognition.

Blacks display a wide variety of attitudes towards cultural identity:

- (a) Those who withdraw into tribal traditions, sometimes maintain a narrow cultural identity which does not even transcend the boundaries of a particular tribe. Thus the Bagananwa in the north-western Transvaal (amongst whom I had the privilege to work for some time) keep aloof from the neighbouring Batlokwa although both speak Northern Sotho dialects.
- (b) Those with a mentality of dependency have a casual attitude towards cultural identity. While they stick to their cultural traditions on the whole, they willingly adjust to the dominant culture. In many cases they have been assimilated into the latter (e.g. the so-called Oorlams). The same is true for the acquiescent, though here we may find more silent resistance.
- (c) The ambitious obviously try to master the dominant culture. This does not mean that they lose their cultural roots entirely. While there is constant conflict and a lot of synthesis between the former and the latter, the ambitious person will be offended when treated as a member of an African traditional cultural group simply because this implies non-recognition and discrimination.
- (d) Those whom we categorised under the concept of "reversion" are prone to develop a new type of ethnic nationalism. In South Africa the "Homeland" or "Black State" elite has largely accepted and developed such an induced attitude to their own cultural identity, since it goes along with social status, economic privilege and at least some political power. It also provides the illusion of being on a par with the White elite while in fact earning the approval, recognition and continued support of the latter.
- (e) Revolt and defiance signify the alternative reaction to frustrated ambition. This is the root of the Black Consciousness movement. It tries to sever all ties with Whites,

particularly those closest to acculturating Blacks (White liberals). It attempts to build up a new Black identity and trans-ethnic solidarity based on the Western culture which it has adopted, synthesised with some acceptable features of the Black heritage (e.g. communalism). Its aim is to gain psychological self-respect, social status, economic potential and some political power, and in this way become able to negotiate or compete with Whites from a position of equality and strength. The basic drive is not dissimilar to that of Afrikaner Nationalism. But there are two decisive differences: (i) The new identity is primarily based on the experience of the social, economic and political underdog position of a majority and thus tries to include all cultural groups sharing its ambitions. (ii) The declared intention of Black Consciousness is to abandon the isolationist policy once parity with Whites is achieved. Blacks can afford this because they are in the majority; the Afrikaner cannot because it would deprive them of their power base. To put it differently: Once they are in power Blacks will probably tolerate Whites as a minority just as the Afrikaner, once they were securely in power, opened their doors to the English minority.

- (f) Integrated and competitive Blacks normally would have made their home in the dominant culture. Because they have attained recognition in the latter at least up to a point, they are more relaxed in their attitude to the Black cultural heritage. They can move freely among traditional Blacks and show respect for the "old people". In turn they are respected by the latter as "our boys" who "have done it", i.e. who have shown that, given a chance, Blacks are able to achieve as much as anybody else.
- (g) Blacks who sense that in theory they could be competitive and integrated but that this status is artificially withheld

from them by the discriminatory policies of the White elite, are probably the most impatient and enraged of all rebellious population groups. They are far less preoccupied with their cultural identity than with the class struggle. The ANC and the UDF may be representative of this category.

The upshot of these observations can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Without doubt, cultural identity possesses a certain power of conviction in its own right.
- (b) However, this can be blown up or deflated, become imperialist, defensive or aggressive, turn to a narrow exclusivism or be open to compromise, cross-fertilisation and amalgamation with other cultural entities, even be abandoned altogether - depending on the character of the vital interests of the cultural group concerned. This in turn depends, as we have seen, to a large extent on position in the power grid.
- (c) That ethnic-cultural identity is used as a justification device is more than obvious: Afrikaans- and English-speaking Whites are not segregated from each other by Apartheid policies while Xhosa speaking Transkeians and Ciskeians are. The culturally totally different Jews (even Japanese and Chinese), are not discriminated against, while the Coloureds, who share the Afrikaans culture, are. Ambitious Blacks may view African cultural traditions with contempt while they are in the process of eager acculturation, and then, when frustrated, glorify the same traditions as being superior to Western civilisation. In all cases a relaxed and objective attitude to the fact of cultural identity and diversity only becomes possible when the

necessity to justify vital interests by means of the latter disappears.

Our examples have shown all three types of justification:

- (a) Cultural identity as a conviction is variously defined by the Afrikaner to exclude or to include other language groups such as the English, Dutch or German, to exclude or include other religious groups such as the Jews. Blacks can either attach normative significance to African cultural traditions (the withdrawal group), or deem them to be obsolete (the ambition group), or thirdly, pay lip service to its excellence without seriously adopting it (the group in revolt).
- (b) Practical policies can be presented to fit the conviction of cultural identity. The whole separate development scheme has largely been defined by Apartheid idealists as a rescue operation in favour of the cultural identity of all ethnic minorities. Many Whites see this as the basic rationale of the policies of the SA government. Black ethnic nationalism, of course, jumped on the White bandwagon. Black Consciousness, too, has claimed to be motivated by the idea of cultural identity, though with much less conviction and consistency.
- (c) To declare certain areas or decisions out of bounds of the conviction of ethnic identity is most obvious as a way of justification in the case of the exclusion of the Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds and the inclusion of Japanese and Chinese as "honorary Whites". The cultural discrepancy between the Afrikaner and the Japanese (or Chinese) can hardly be greater. Black Consciousness again allows militant Coloureds and Indians because they too are oppressed, but excludes what it derisively calls "Non-Whites", i.e.

Blacks who cooperate with the Apartheid system. In all these cases it is clear that the rationale is not cultural identity but vital interests, the former only being used to support the latter where relevant.

### 9.2.3 Justification in terms of the distribution of economic potential

Western society is governed by two conflicting economic norms: the achievement norm and the equality norm. On these two norms two basic models of interpretation of economic reality are built. Reduced to its essential statement the first says that the poor are poor on account of their failure, while the rich are rich because of their achievement. The second holds that the poor are poor because they are the victims of oppression and exploitation while the rich are rich because of their undeserved privileges and the cruelty with which they abuse their power to oppress and exploit others. Two corresponding policies are then formulated, the liberal, which believes in free enterprise, and the socialist, which believes in state intervention on behalf of the poor and powerless. There are essentially four varieties: *laissez-faire* capitalism, social democracy, democratic socialism and Marxism-Leninism (Wogaman 1977, Leatt *et al*, 1986).

Apart from these two classical Western economic convictions there are two older types which are still relevant in South Africa today: African communalism (which has been developed into African Socialism in Tanzania and other African countries) and the typically South African type of feudalism which has determined economic relationships between Black and White for most of their history. As we have seen earlier on, all these are convictions in their own right which are not necessarily linked to

position in the power grid. They are used, however, as justification for the pursuit of vital interests, the particular character of which is closely related to position in the system.

Both Afrikaans and English settlers believed in feudalism as long as they were in the unchallenged position of feudal lords. These attitudes persist on White farms and were carried over into the urban-industrial situation to regulate the relationship between White supervisors and Black workers. On the whole Black-White relationships are still characterised to a very large extent by feudal attitudes. Their mainspring lies in the White dominant class but many, if not most Blacks, also resign themselves to the facts of the situation either because of limited horizons, necessity or expediency.

The English-speaking commercial and industrial elite has traditionally opted for free enterprise. Obviously a free market is in their best interest, particularly a free labour market. Here it ran into the stiff opposition of the White work force, initially on the mines, but later elsewhere too (Van der Horst 1971; Doxey 1961). In the early phases of S.A. capitalism White workers were predominantly English-speaking. By means of industrial action the latter secured a privileged position on the labour market at the expense of competitors from other races, particularly Blacks. On the whole the White "worker aristocracy" opted for a sort of social market capitalism including job security and social welfare with the proviso that their own interests were served first over against those of Blacks. In other words, feudal attitudes towards Blacks merged with social-democratic attitudes within the White dependent but privileged group.

After their defeat by the British the Afrikaner were in a pitiful economic position. The war had destroyed their agricultural

base. Discrimination against them was rife. Drought and economic recession made things worse. Many left their farms and flocked to the cities in a destitute state. In this situation Afrikaner leadership opted for massive state intervention, including strongly socialist ideas. Again these were restricted to Whites and aimed particularly at the upliftment of the Afrikaner (cf. O'Meara 1983; Giliomee in Adam 1979: 149ff).

These protective strategies led to substantial bottlenecks when the growth of the South African industrial economy picked up speed during and after World War II, particularly in the higher skills, but also in management. For a long time this suited the White dominant class - and the government it had voted into power - well. Incomes and standards of living of Whites rose to heights comparable to those in the most advanced industrial economies. The income gap became one of the highest in the world (McGrath 1983). For a time, also, it was possible to let Blacks enter lower job categories by moving Whites up the ladder. The inviolable principle was that no White should ever work under a Black - evidence of the feudal heritage!

But there came a time when the clamour of the business elite for a scaling down of state intervention in the economy began to make sense to most middle-class Whites and in particular to the nationalist government:

- (a) It became clear that the White minority's reserves to provide skills and managerial leadership were rapidly being exhausted and that a growing economy had to tap on the neglected resources of other race groups. A massive training program was launched and labour restrictions in the urban economy relaxed in certain ways.

- (b) The government's new "total strategy" concept had to include the cooperation of big business because the financial resources of the latter were needed. A growing economy became a prerequisite of survival and "free enterprise" became the slogan of economic policy. Needless to say, the adoption of this slogan did not imply a weakening of the privileges or the power base of the White population group as a whole. Other race groups are released from their bureaucratic fetters only in as far as their services are needed to build up the economy or to divert tension and discontent.
- (c) White South Africa desperately needed the support of major industrial nations, particularly the USA. The latter is quite sensitive on the issue of free enterprise as an economic creed and White South Africa could sell its image abroad much better under this banner.

In the underdog population groups we again have to make a number of distinctions:

- (a) Tribal society can only survive on the basis of communalist solidarity. This necessity is exacerbated by the erosion of its subsistence agricultural base. More and more it depends on the loyalty of its migrant labourers. The same is true for the rural and urban marginalised groups, many members of which would simply starve to death were it not for the sense of communal responsibility within their social group (Möller 1983).
- (b) I have already mentioned that dependent and acquiescent groups tend to share underdog feudal attitudes. Those whom we categorised under "reversion" obviously will be more inclined towards elitist feudal attitudes.

- (c) For those who embark on the path of ambition there seems to be an ambiguous future ahead. At first they long for "free enterprise" in the sense that they desire the removal of the obstacles in the way of their advance. If they hope for a Black take-over they may also hope that some of the preferential treatment now accorded to Whites will fall to them. All steps towards socialism are beneficial to them, however, as long as they battle on the lower rungs of the ladder and provided such steps are not restricted to the White 'worker aristocracy'.

These observations may explain why Schlemmer (1983c:5f) found a 78% option for private business *and* a 71% option for state guaranteed social securities (thus a 'social democracy' option) among urban Blacks in 1981.

- (d) In the state of revolt communalist ideas may be toyed with and African Socialism becomes theoretically attractive. But the reality of the South African industrial economy does not allow recipes designed for a subsistence economy such as that of Tanzania. Thus, when it comes to concrete alternatives, the choice is between capitalism and socialism. In the mood of frustration, revolt and defiance directed against what is perceived as "racial capitalism" the option for Marxism-Leninism seems to become the obvious ally or alternative. "Communism" at least does not imbue Blacks with the same kind of hatred and fear as Whites. This mood may be enhanced by the anticommunist propaganda of the state; The enemy of one's enemy seems to be one's friend!
- (e) Those who are integrated into the system will probably tend to opt for social market capitalism with trade union rights, social securities, welfare legislation, etc. But this does not mean that they would necessarily mind if the country was turned into a Marxist-Leninist state, in so far as present

restrictions seem scarcely more acceptable than possible future restrictions.

- (f) The few who become fully competitive may naturally opt for free enterprise unless a spate of solidarity with their less fortunate fellow citizens makes them abandon their opportunities and become the 'avant garde' of a Marxist revolutionary struggle.

Again the three types of justification of interests can easily be distinguished in the observations made above:

- (a) The reinterpretation of the system of meaning can best be seen in the case of free enterprise to which the S.A. government is ostensibly committed and which is strongly advocated by the business elite. Concentration of the control over productive capital under a few major companies has been accelerating (Lombard 1984). Parastatal enterprises have not been dismantled. Price control, especially in the agricultural sector, is widespread. The Black majority of the population is in the grips of a bureaucratic stranglehold which controls both vertical and horizontal mobility, smothers entrepreneurship in the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors and regulates the labour market. There are state-run development corporations, schemes to encourage small business, etc. It takes some imagination to describe the South African economy as a case of free enterprise. Yet this is what it is given out to be - a clear case of the manipulation of convictions.
- (b) Equally obvious is the presentation of the facts of the situation in such a light that they seem to be covered by the conviction concerned. Blacks are ostensibly protected from unfair competition so as to learn to hold their own. Unfortunately, it is argued, they have not been able to

produce much skilled labour, management or entrepreneurship and Whites have to carry that burden alone. Little is made of the obstacles placed in the way of their advancement, of the absence of adequate education and training, etc. Blacks prefer not to be involved in the industrial economy, it is said, and they want to leave their families at home (Zille 1984:30). Why influx control to keep families out should then be necessary, is not mentioned. They are neither used to, nor eager to enter into, the Western-type trade union movement (it has been said until very recently). The government is doing everything possible to assist Blacks in the development of their own economies..., etc. (For a set of examples see Zille 1984: 28-47).

Erasmus (1977a:21) found that 58% (no more!) of his sample of previous migrants were happy to leave their families behind in the Black areas. Schlemmer (1982b:33) found in his sample of migrants that 62% rejected families separation, though fewer than 20% wish to urbanise (1983d:14).

- (c) Finally the declaration of certain parts of economic reality as being out of bounds for the overriding conviction: While it is true, it is argued, that market forces are the best guide for the allocation of resources, labour, skills or the establishment of consumer preferences, it would be impractical to allow Blacks to choose for themselves where they wanted to live, to work, to relax, to put up their own enterprises, to train their children, etc. This would lead to chaos. The real position is, of course, that it would lead to some very stiff competition for Whites in the areas of jobs, skills, housing, commerce and industry, agricultural land, farming, training, social status and - ultimately - political power.

Looking back, it seems that religious or metaphysical convictions are the most deep-rooted and stable of the three types. They are not easily exchanged, they are only reinterpreted to cover vital interests. Next in line are convictions based on group identity. There is a core area which is fairly stable and which is probably rooted in early childhood socialisation. Yet cultural identity is more prone to be made more inclusive, to be disregarded or to be abandoned if vital interests so require. Economic convictions seem to be most unstable. While communal and feudal attitudes tend to be rather deep rooted because they belong to a pre-dynamic frame of mind, the alternatives of liberalism and socialism are fairly easily exchanged when vital interests demand it.

### 9.3 VITAL INTERESTS INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS

Before leaving this theme we need to consider the fact that there are three related avenues through which interests manipulate convictions, viz. perception, justification and motivation. So far we dealt explicitly with justification, though motivation was constantly implied.

Let us briefly look at perceptions. Whites are generally convinced that they live in a free enterprise system comparable to that of the USA. They are hardly in a position to imagine the bureaucratic network in which the lives of Blacks are entangled and which many Blacks perceive as smothering all initiatives on their part (type C).

Whites are also generally convinced that the main differences between Blacks and Whites - differences which make segregation unavoidable - are cultural. Going to Soweto as tourists, for instance, they will make sure to take a photo of the odd tribal

diviner in this most acculturated Black urban area in the country (Unisa News, Vol. II, No. 5, June 1984, p.4). By the same token Black leaders in Soweto will tend to deny the significance of cultural differences - particularly between Blacks because it is not in their best interest to have a divided front (type B).

Whites are also generally convinced that militant opposition against the present system must be inspired by anti-Christian (communist) designs - implying that there is something deeply Christian in condoning the status quo. Many radical Blacks, in contrast, are convinced that only an aggressively militant stance against the racist regime can save the credibility of the Christian faith in this country from total collapse (type A).

These are gut-level feelings (or mental predispositions), not the result of empirical research or rational argument. Yet they lead to sets of rationalisations which do not only determine the behaviour of the man and woman in the street but also the paradigms of academic enquiries and, in consequence, their findings and recommendations to a very large extent.

Biased perceptions are both the cause and the effect of isolation. Interests cause a group not to want their biased perceptions to be challenged and thus they shield themselves against an alternative picture of reality. Politicians utilise this natural tendency for their propaganda and - in South Africa - even take administrative measures to isolate different sections of the population from each other and from outside influences. Isolation again may lead to the unhindered growth of biased perceptions of reality to such an extent that people begin to live in a fool's paradise.

The extent of the problem is quite alarming as empirical research has shown:

1. Investigating perceptions of different elites in South Africa, J.J. van Wyk of the Rand Afrikaans University is reported to have received, for instance, the following responses to his propositions (Deurbraak March 1984:11):

(a) "The communist threat against South Africa is exaggerated by the Government".

	agree	disagree
White politicians	3,0%	94,1%
Black elites	70,3%	24,3%

(b) "South Africa's Blacks have good reasons to take up arms against the Government".

	agree	disagree
White politicians	4,4%	92,7%
Black elites	72,9%	24,3%

White politicians in this case were parliamentarians belonging to the ruling National Party. It is obvious that an almost unbridgeable gap in perceptions exists between the Government and Black leaders. If one takes account of the fact that the latter belonged to the Black 'bourgeoisie' and that workers and, in particular, youth leaders can be expected to be even more radical, prospects for agreement seem remote.

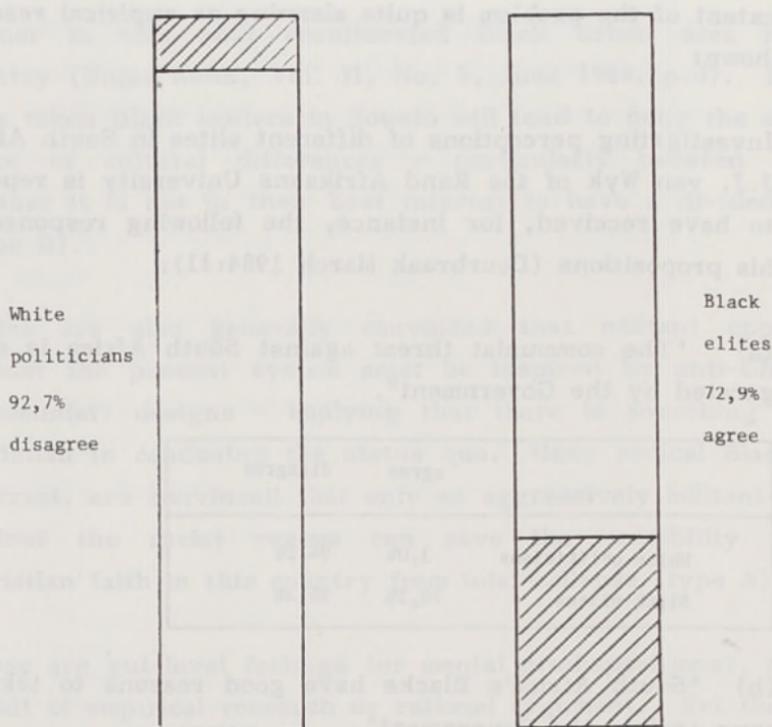


Figure 1: Responses to the proposition: "Blacks have good reasons to take up arms against the Government"

2. Just how dangerous misconceptions, particularly of decision-making elites, could become in real crisis situations is revealed by responses to the following proposition:

(c) "White South Africans cannot depend on the loyalty of Black South Africans in the case of war against South Africa."

	agree	disagree
White politicians	19,1%	78,2%
Black elites	72,9%	24.3%

This seems to suggest that Whites are prone to a selfdelusion which is dangerous even to their own power interests.

(d) "A terrorist war like in SWA/Namibia will in time also develop in South Africa".

	agree	disagree
White politicians	39,7%	57,3%
Black elites	81,0%	16,2%

Similarly White politicians felt most threatened by communist military support to liberation movements and the worldwide spread of Russian military and political influence, while rioting and resistance in Black townships ranked last on the scale of perceived threats. The problem is projected from the internal scene to outside enemies. No wonder that politicians are caught off balance time and again by the outbreak of violence which they do not really seem to expect, and that they attribute such outbreaks to remote controlled instigation rather than to real grievances.

Biased perceptions can lead to vastly inappropriate actions by the prime decision-makers in the country. This is also true for bureaucrats, another very powerful White elite in South Africa, who were shown by Van Wyk's analysis to approximate the perceptions of White politicians most closely.

The inability to comprehend the grievances of Blacks led, amongst many other examples, to the injudicious handling of the student uprising in Soweto in 1976 and the violence on the East Rand which triggered off the current unrest.

3. It seems to be self-evident that discrepancies in perceptions would not have been able to grow to such proportions if the elites would not have been artificially isolated from each other. A lively dialogue always challenges extreme positions, draws attention to overlooked aspects and makes one aware of alternative perspectives to a situation.

The paternalistic tendency of Nationalist leaders to absolutise their own perception, to shun and even suppress other points of view and to try and indoctrinate the population through propaganda and censorship severely backfires in the sense that Whites have no idea in what type of situation Blacks find themselves, what their perceptions and aspirations are, what to expect from a Black revolution or a Black government. The result is fear of the unknown and further isolationist and repressive tendencies. In this connection it is significant that the most powerful of all media in the country, the S.A. Broadcasting Corporation, was shown By Van Wyk to follow Government perceptions and to support 'separate development' to the rate of 76,9%. In contrast two thirds of English journalists rejected the policy. The majority of Whites, however, do not read English newspapers.

4. According to the multipurpose survey of the HSRC over 60% of the Whites in the sample (n=682) believed that the Government is moving in the direction of increased integration, 19,79 thought that it was moving in the direction of

increased apartheid or that there was no real change. Blacks felt exactly the opposite: almost 60% (n=914) believed it was moving in the direction of increased apartheid (40,15%) or that there was no change (18,92%) while 23,45% believed it was moving towards greater integration.

Since Blacks were left out of the new deal, this is hardly surprising. Indians were nearer to the White point of view though with a reduced percentage (41,50% for integration), Coloureds in-between (29,75% for integration, 15,99% for apartheid, 28,05% for no change).

Generally speaking, Whites are the victims of perceptual manipulations to a greater extent than educated Blacks. White opinion is spread daily through the mass media and Whites do not hesitate to express, and act upon, their opinion in the work situation. The free expression of Black opinion is largely suppressed by the state and even the media which do exist, are not fully utilised by Whites to inform themselves. Being in a dominant position they do not have to be interested in what Blacks really think.

Even greater is the impact of another circumstance. Through generations, Blacks have learnt in their own cultural context that is not always very profitable to speak one's mind. You never know how the other person will use your revelations. Expediency and courtesy dictate that you say what you think the other person wants to hear. The cultural obsession with social harmony combines with the fear generated by a situation of repression where you are at the mercy of the dominant group and have to play it safe. The consequence of this is, however, that most Whites are convinced that they 'know the Blacks'. Have they not been in close contact with Blacks from childhood?

In fact, it takes years of living in a traditional Black community on as equal a level as possible before a White begins to get a feel for what is happening in this cultural context. Whites also have to build up sufficient confidence for Blacks in town to believe that they are safe to express a political opinion. Black elites are, naturally, more self-confident and defiant. And so the impression is gained by Whites that only a few Black extremists - probably the victims of liberal or communist indoctrination - hold radical views, or that moderate Black leaders such as Nthato Motlana, Desmond Tutu, even Gatsha Buthelezi, are isolated individuals who do not have to be taken too seriously except as possible instigators. Since these leaders have been found to have a high rate of popularity (Ciskei 1980: 229) Whites should perhaps listen more to them than to their servants.

In my work on the multipurpose survey of the HSRC I made a disconcerting discovery. In the case of questions relating to the social involvement of religious organisations in public affairs, Black responses showed consistent majorities under the 'agree' categories, quite irrespective of the contents of the question. Here are examples of diametrically opposed questions:

	agree	disagree
(a) A religious movement should help in limiting changes in society.	66,64%	14,09
Various religious movements should cooperate to change SA society.	71,23	15,11
(b) A religious movement can even condone violence when people's rights and people's dignity are restricted.	49,95%	26,25
Religious movements should oppose any resistance against the present political dispensation.	51,32%	19,69%

	agree	disagree
(c) Religious movements that continuously keep themselves busy with equal rights for various population groups are not busy with their real task.	43,04%	29,66%
Social justice should be the most important item in the work of a religious movement.	64,33%	12,44%

The same phenomenon, though less marked, could be observed in the other underdog population groups. It is clear that such findings have to be evaluated with the greatest circumspection. Did respondents resent being made the object of what they consider to be a White, state-sponsored opinion survey? Did they want to mislead the surveyors? Is it part of their cultural tradition to be affirmative rather than negative in social relationships? Is it impolite to negate a point of view one perceives as being the opinion of the questioner? Has one's opinion in public concerns ever mattered at all, so that one feels that it is important? Many questions!

One should, in any case not be surprised if underdog population groups become vastly more radical once they have a chance to express an opinion which really matters, such as the election in Zimbabwe which swept Robert Mugabe to power on a radical ticket and which shocked so many unsuspecting observers.

On the basis of these observations all Black responses of an affirmative nature in the multipurpose survey quoted in this study can be taken to be generally too high.

But big political issues are not the only theatre of such misconceptions. Even where Black and White interact on a daily, practical basis (on the shop floor, in the shop, in the White home) perceptions of the different groups are far removed from each other - and from reality. Misunderstandings which border on the ridiculous are proverbial. But the phenomenon can have serious social implications on a massive scale as the following examples demonstrate:

1. In a country-wide, all-sector survey of perceptions of the free enterprise system involving some 2800 respondents (76% turn-out), Nasser (1984) found some revealing discrepancies between groups in different positions within the power structure. We only quote the extremes on both sides (between which there is a continuum in most cases):

(a)	Running expenses of a firm comprise	Perceptions of	
		workers with education below Std 6	management
	managers' salaries	56%	28%
	employees' salaries	4%	15%
	tax	21%	10%

Comment: Assuming that the managers' assessment is correct, the fact that the tiny managerial elite earns more than half of the pay-packet of the total labour force must lead to discrepancies in life-style conspicuous enough to make the stated impression on non-informed, arithmetically untrained workers seem quite plausible. But the potential for dissatisfaction, unrest and radical politicisation is enormous. This is even more marked in the following table:

(b) Post-tax company profits are spent on	Perceptions of					
	workers earning less than R200 p.m.	workers with education below Std 6	Black workers	earning above R2 000 p.m.	education post-matric	Whites
Management bonuses and salary increases	85%	76%	69%	8%	19%	27%
Worker bonuses and salary increases	1%	3%	4%	44%	30%	32%
Shareholders	0%	0%	0%	26%	19%	3%

Comments:

The remarkable and consistent shift from workers of all races earning less than R200 to Black workers *and* from earners of all races above R2 000 to Whites shows that:

- (i) Blacks with higher salaries have perceptions which move in the direction of White perceptions and
- (ii) Whites with lower salaries have perceptions which move in the direction of Black perceptions. In other words, perceptions are a function of income and educational standard rather than race.

Only those who earn incomes high enough to allow for an interest in investment opportunities are aware of the existence of the system of share capital - surely a remarkable case of the impact of interests and location in the system on perceptions!

Even more revealing is the following (simplified) table summarising the perceptions of different groups of participants in the industrial economy on the distribution of post-tax company profits:

Share attributed to	Perception of		
	unskilled workers	skilled workers	middle/senior management
management bonuses and salary increases	72%	48%	17%
worker bonuses and salary increases	3%	12%	30%
shareholders payback	0%	3%	18%

Two impressions stand out: (i) The incredible discrepancy in perceptions between the lowest and the highest rung in the capitalist hierarchy and (ii) that skilled workers, irrespective of race, are exactly half-way between unskilled workers and management. There can hardly be a more impressive demonstration of the impact of structural location on perceptions!

(c)

The ongoing financing of a company is derived from:	Perceptions of	
	unskilled workers	management
banks	49%	22%
government	31%	0%
sales/output	3%	43%

Comment: Assuming that the assessment of management is realistic, the vast deviation of unskilled worker perceptions must find an explanation. Mere lack of information (as Nasser assumes) cannot be the reason for a positive statement. Rather the perception may be built on three structure-related myths:

(i) Banks are believed to be unfathomable sources of finance for the rich (ii) government is supporting Whites under all circumstances and (iii) the attempt to increase one's income through effort is futile (maybe even morally wrong?). If this hypothesis should prove to be correct the perception in question is both structure- and culture-related. This would also mean that mere information would probably not be believed.

(d)

Improved productivity can be derived from:	Perceptions of	
	earning less than R200 p.m.	earning above R2 000 pm
better training	42%	28%
improved salaries	39%	21%
staff motivation	3%	21%

Comment: While the unskilled labourer is keenly aware of the fact that his training is inadequate for the level of sophistication encountered in the enterprise, he is not conscious of a lack of motivation. Again pure information may not help; it may even backfire, because the labourer may feel that he is being slave-driven and exploited. An improved salary, on the other hand, would do productivity a world of good in the eyes of the labourer - how perceptive! In this case it may be management which needs to be better informed.

(e)

Funds for improved wages can be derived from the following sources:	Perceptions of	
	unskilled workers	management
pay Whites less	30%	4%
employ fewer people	0%	25%

Comment: Here the impact of structure-related interests is most blatant. Management cannot be interested in receiving less pay, nor is it very concerned about people who might lose their jobs. The unskilled worker, on the other hand, has exactly opposite perceptions. It is in this regard that Nasser may be right when he states: "... the perceptions of the well-educated, high-income, high-status white managerial group, although in some ways more realistic, indicate substantial insensitivity to the plight of black labour" (p. 11).

Nasser blames inappropriate perceptions on a lack of information. In our interpretation a lack of information is due to isolation: the isolation of the worker from the actual running of the company and the isolation of management from the existential reality of the worker. More fundamental to both, however, is the impact of differential vital interests on perceptions. And interests are a function of location in the power structure. If the statistics reveal anything, it is that comprehension grows progressively with higher reward and greater involvement in the actual running of the firm, which again presupposes education and training. In short, the key is a movement towards a greater balance of power.

2. Another indication of how position in the power grid determines perceptions was found by Möller and colleagues (1984). In the study described in Chapter 4 pp.91f above, it was found that the assessment of the level of dissatisfaction amongst Blacks in general dropped with the group's own level of dissatisfaction, which again was a function of the group's average income.

Thus peri-urban destitute shack-dwellers, with a dissatisfaction level of 70%, assessed general Black dissatisfaction at the level of 37%, while better-off urban Blacks with a dissatisfaction level of 11% assessed general Black dissatisfaction at the level of only 17%. It is hardly surprising then, that Whites who are not particularly informed about the Black situation, have the impression that Blacks are, in general, very content with their lot and ascribe outbreaks of violence such as the Soweto riots to instigation or irrational excitability and immaturity. (Cf. the finding of Van Wyk quoted above that 92,7% of White politicians disagreed with the statement that Blacks have good reasons to take up arms against the Government, while 72,9% of Black elites agreed.)

Concerning *goals* the responses of Van Wyk's sample are also very illuminating (1984:20):

(a) Separate development:

White politicians 88,0% positive,

Black elites 71,8% negative.

(b) Joint political control by Whites, Coloureds and Indians (as envisaged by the new constitution):

White politicians 82,4% positive,

Black elites 81,1% negative.

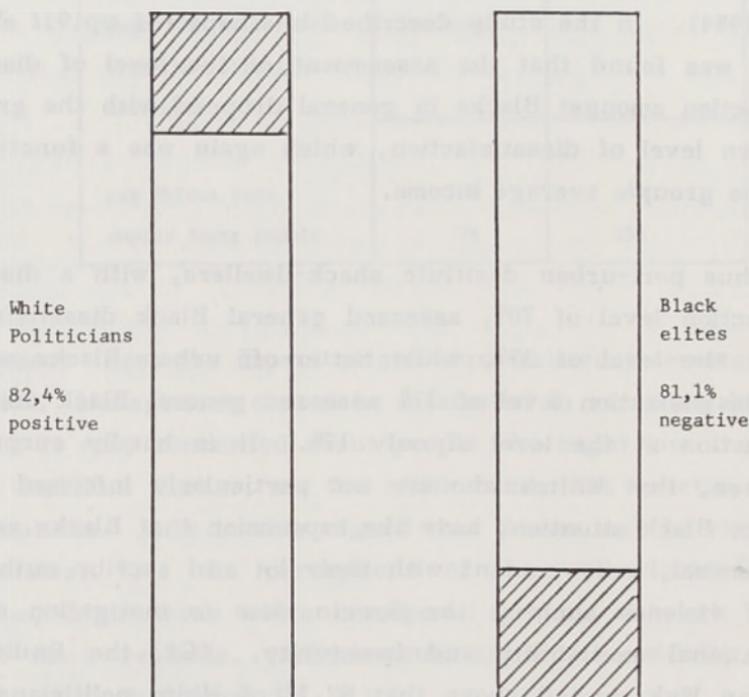


Figure 2: Attitudes towards the new constitution

It is interesting to note that 67,5% of Coloured and Indian elites responded positively, 12,5% negatively. Van Wyk finds a surprising degree of affinity between Coloured and Indian elites to Government positions almost right through the board. This corroborates our hypotheses in chapter 7, par. 7.3.2 on the attitudes of Coloureds and Indians before the campaign of the UDF.

(c) Blacks exercise their political rights in homelands or 'national states':

White politicians 94,1% positive,  
Black elites 67,6% negative.

(d) The survival of the Afrikaner nation and culture:

White politicians 98,6% positive,  
Black elites 43,2% positive, 43,2% negative.

It is heartening to see that there are at least some abstract demands on which both White politicians and Black elites, in fact all elites investigated, agree to a considerable extent: Economic stability and growth, unimpeded manpower utilisation, the physical safety of all people.

The need for the physical safety of Whites was affirmed by 48,6% of Black respondents, while 32,5% reacted negatively. The latter is probably due to the fact that Whites were singled out as people in need of safety. Blacks, of course, have to contend with insecurity to a far greater extent than Whites at present. In the case of safety for "all people" 86,5% of Blacks responded positively and only 2,7% negatively.

#### 9.4 CONVICTIONS DETERMINE AND CONTROL INTERESTS

So far we discussed ways in which vital interests manipulate convictions. Now we have to consider ways in which convictions have an impact on the formation and pursuit of interests. If there was no such impact, the materialist position that convictions are the product of structural circumstances - whether as legitimations in the case of the dominant, compensations in the case of the dominated, or evasions in the case of the fearful and irresponsible in both groups - would win the day. In that case theological ethics, any ethics for that matter, would be a useless enterprise. In fact, it is not. Let us enumerate just a few examples which is worth investigating.

##### 9.4.1 A-type convictions

African *traditional religion* with its veneration of ancestors is geared to the past. The *Western* faith in progress, in contrast, is geared to the future. African traditional world-views approach nature with circumspection for fear of disturbing the delicate equilibrium of dynamistic forces in the universe. The Western technological mind, in contrast, sees in nature nothing but available material for its designs. African religious culture

is filled with awe towards the sanctity of social relationships and nothing may be done which transgresses the bounds of one's competence and position in the hierarchical structure. Western individualists, in contrast, assert themselves freely against others as far as their power, expertise or personality goes. (For further examples see Turner 1980.)

The *Biblical faith* has always disturbed the conscience of its adherents in view of blatant injustices or human suffering, even if there are few believers who are able to break out of existing structures and ongoing processes. Some of the most powerful attacks against the South African system have come from the ranks of leading Jews and Christians. *Humanists* have raised their voices against unchecked utilitarianism and stood for human rights and personal dignity. Amnesty International is an example of an institutional expression of this concern with worldwide impact. Scientific-technological *pragmatism* has undermined irrational ideological positions even within the ranks of government supporters.

#### 9.4.2 B-type convictions

*Tribalism* with its relatively limited world of 'significant others' militates against a broader trans-tribal solidarity amongst Blacks. *Pan-Africanism* tends to exclude White sympathisers. *Afrikaner Nationalism* has united a seriously splintered ethnic group and built up a power base of considerable proportions. But its obsession with racial purity has excluded a mass of potential supporters among Coloureds who share the Afrikaner culture. The *ethnic nationalism* of Inkatha and similar ventures seem to simulate this example in typically African cultural fashion. *British Imperialism* managed to divert attention from serious social tensions building up at home, to the historical task of

fulfilling a world-wide mission. The individualist-universalist attitudes of *English liberals* seem to have prevented the establishment of a viable particularist pressure group in opposition to its Afrikaner counterpart.

According to Nel (1982:38) the percentage of Black household expenditure on personal care in Johannesburg spent on *face bleaching cream* fell from 13,2% in 1970 to 5,2% in 1980; for *wigs and hairpieces* it fell from 30,9% to 0,4% during the same period. Without any doubt this is the impact of the *Black Consciousness* movement with its slogan 'Black is beautiful'.

#### 9.4.3 C-type convictions

For African *communalist* traditions the development of individual initiative for private gain is the most feared of all vicious pursuits; for the spirit of *free enterprise* it is the highest virtue. *Feudalistic* convictions strongly militate against equality of opportunity, thus against free competition, thus against the full development of the potential lying dormant in a society. *Liberalism* strongly suppresses the tendency of the state to interfere even in cases where blatant inequalities are seen to develop. *Marxism*, in contrast, concentrates all energies on the overthrow of bourgeois domination even at the expense of efficiency and economic progress. (For an example of direct effects of economic convictions on policy see Hendrie 1984.)

#### 9.4.4 D-Type convictions

Although it would not seem to make much sense to speak of the impact of interests on interests, we have the situation that one set of conviction-determined interests (say racial purity) may militate against another within the same group (say economic

growth). In this case, the respective derivations of such interests, both from structural position and from convictions, have to be investigated in detail. The recent split in Afrikanerdom, for instance, can be seen as a conflict between structure-related interests of low-class Whites combined with conviction-related interests of purist ideologues against structure-related power-interests of technocratic pragmatists who have discovered the importance of capital (Charney 1981).

## 9.5 SUMMARY

This chapter we discussed the relation between convictions and structure-related interests. It is, in a sense, the culmination of our investigations so far.

We concentrated our deliberations on the justification of interests in terms of prevailing convictions. Examples were given from both the position of the dominant White and the dominated Black social groupings and in the realms of all three types of conviction, viz. those related to religious ultimates, cultural identification and economic resource distribution. In each case we distinguished between the three ways in which interests are justified: manipulation of the truth of the conviction concerned, manipulation of the interpretation of the pursuit of interests and the declaration of autonomy of the sphere in which interests occur (9.2).

We added a reminder that the interaction between convictions and interests is not only a matter of justification but also of perception and motivation. We gave a number of examples (9.3).

Finally we dealt with the way in which the three types of convictions determine both the perception and the pursuit of

interests. This discussion was very concentrated and calls for greater elaboration and detailed investigations (9.4).

The overall impression of this chapter is that structure-related interests have a considerable capacity for manipulating convictions in terms of perception, justification and motivation. This is, of course, of great significance both for the way in which people respond to the challenge of structural change and for the maintenance of their moral integrity. On the other hand convictions do have an impact on the perception and pursuit of interests and thus on the way in which groups work for structural change.

It would seem that greater clarity on the exact nature of this interaction would greatly enhance our chances of rectifying structural imbalances and of redeeming broken group relations endemic in the South African situation. I hope that my rather impressionistic reconnaissance of the whole problem area will prompt more comprehensive and detailed research.