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Political protest and political transaction in South Africa, 1994-1995.

Roefs, M.M.I.; Klandermans, P.G.; Olivier, J.

published in

African Studies
1997

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1080/00020189708707863](https://doi.org/10.1080/00020189708707863)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Roefs, M. M. I., Klandermans, P. G., & Olivier, J. (1997). Political protest and political transaction in South Africa, 1994-1995. *African Studies*, 56, 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020189708707863>

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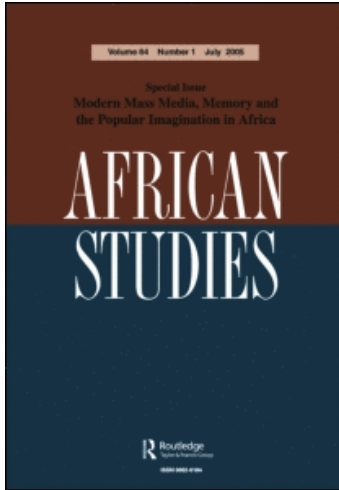
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African Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713405746>

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To cite this Article Klandermans, Bert , Roefs, Marlene and Olivier, Johan(1997) 'Political protest and political transition in South Africa 1994-1995', African Studies, 56: 1, 129 – 147

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/00020189708707863

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00020189708707863>

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Political Protest and Political Transition in South Africa 1994-1995

Bert Klandermans, Marlene Roefs and Johan Olivier

Abstract

Though fairly high levels of protest were maintained in the period 1994-1995, survey responses and other data suggest that its form, character and constituents may be changing. Surveys conducted in 1994 and 1995 demonstrate that among South Africans language and ethnicity have become more important in the formation of collective identity and that commitment to political organisation is slackening. Neighbourhood, generation and gender have also gained significance in the way in which black South Africans identify themselves. The data also indicate a shift in the perception of grievances, with black South Africans in most respects feeling less aggrieved and less deprived in 1995 than in 1994. Africans' expectations concerning the future have become even more buoyant whilst white pessimism has intensified. Patterns of trust and confidence in government among Africans compared to whites have reversed since 1994. Since 1994 violent forms of protest have decreased, together with an overall decline in collective action but there have been more peaceful protest events and the survey shows that preparedness to engage in peaceful protest remains high among Africans and is increasing among coloureds. Political preferences also seem to correlate with degrees of action preparedness. Increases in trust in government do not translate into decreased commitment to collective protest.

South Africa is experiencing fundamental social and political change at this time. The founding elections of April 1994 have signalled the end of the

apartheid era and black South Africans can now, for the first time, take their place as full members of society. It is when societies go through periods of fundamental social change that the probability of conflict and civil strife increases. Some sectors of the population will expect significant improvements in their position now that economic and political barriers which inhibited upward mobility have been removed. Others will be concerned about the possibility of a decrease in their standard of living now that their privileged position is eroding. Still others will experience increased levels of uncertainty and insecurity – which in itself is associated with times of significant social change. With apartheid no longer in place as the system to blame for every grievance, other cleavages may develop in the society and become grounds for mobilisation. Ethnicity, religion, language or gender may become the crystallisation point for the formation of new collective identities which may in turn become politically relevant. Much will depend on the development of a political climate in South Africa which provides citizens with the opportunities to participate in political decision-making: on the development, in other words, of a civil society.

South Africa provides a unique opportunity to investigate profound processes of transition. A longitudinal study which aims to register the changes in political opinions, attitudes, and behaviours is an important means to that end. As a part of the 'Social Movements in South Africa' research project, therefore, annual surveys of a sample of the South African population are being conducted during the five years from 1994 through to 1998. Key questions addressed by these surveys include:

1. What new cleavages will develop in the course of South Africa's transitional process – and what new grievances will result from this?
2. To what extent, and influenced by which factors, will those grievances become the motor of political protest?

In this paper we will highlight some key findings from the first two surveys. These are especially interesting because they span the first year of transition. In order to be able to place these findings in their context, however, we will begin with a brief exposition on the South African social and political situation during the year 1994-1995.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST YEAR OF TRANSITION

Political protest behaviour has been an integral part of South Africa's political history since the beginning of this century.¹ Levels of protest varied

1. J. L. Olivier, 'Causes of Ethnic Collective Action in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal Triangle, 1970-84', *South African Sociological Review*, 2, 1990, 89-108.

a great deal during this period as successive waves of protest were launched by those excluded from political participation under the country's previous apartheid system of government. The most recent wave began in the mid-seventies when Soweto school children mobilised, for the first time, against apartheid education. The issues over which people mobilised, the social categories from which they came and the repertoire of collective action have changed continually since the 1970s.

While peaceful incidents of political protest predominated during the earlier period, since the mid-eighties violence has become an increasingly common feature of such events. Two factors explain this change in protest dynamics. Firstly, levels of engagement between the state and its opponents became more intense as the state introduced more repressive measures against individuals and organisations that acted in opposition to its policies. Secondly, levels of political competition between emerging (new) political organisations became more intense. This was initially limited to Natal but spread to other parts of the country soon after the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political organisations on 2 February 1990.

Increased levels of political protest since the 1970s played an important role in initiating and accelerating the process of socio-political change in South Africa. This process culminated in South Africa's first democratic elections of 27-29 April 1994, which brought the Government of National Unity (GNU) into power. Despite the success of the 1994 elections, however, levels of political protest and violence remained high. This lends support to the view that the exclusion of the majority of South African citizens from the country's formal political institutions is not the only (or even the most important) factor responsible for the high level of protest activities during the period before the elections.

Similarly, it would be naïve to suggest that political protest activities were the only, or the primary, factors to impact upon political change in South Africa. Political protest activities are, after all, closely tied to a variety of factors which have impacted on the process of change during the past few years. These factors are to be found in the social, economic and political structures of society. Since these realities provide the context within which the results of our surveys should be understood, it is important to review in brief the most significant of these interrelated factors.

The Politics of Transition

During the first year South Africa's democracy was still young and fragile. The fact of the 1994 elections, however successful they were in and of themselves, did not turn the country into a democracy. While the elections provided a necessary foundation upon which to build a democratic society, the building of a democracy is a long and sometimes difficult endeavour. The tensions which surfaced from time to time between political parties

participating in the GNU underscores this point. Of particular relevance were the tensions between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the GNU regarding the devolution of power to provinces. The IFP finally pulled out of the Constitutional Assembly responsible for preparing a new Constitution. Tensions also existed in other sectors of politics, although they were played out in a less theatrical manner.

The Economics of Transition

Large proportions of the South African population expected significant changes in their socio-economic position after the 1994 elections. Since the government was constrained by a massive budget deficit and high debt, however, it was unlikely that many of these expectations would be met in the first year. This was particularly so because the South African economy had been for some time, and will remain for the foreseeable future, in a contracted state. Various analysts suggest that the annual economic growth rate will probably not exceed 3 per cent during the next few years. This, coupled with the fact that the country's population grows at a rate of 2,1 per cent per annum, suggests that it would be difficult to make a significant impact on unemployment. The results of a recent study² suggest that the unemployment rate among South Africa's youth (individuals in the 15-30 age category) in the formal sector of the economy is 42 per cent. There are limits to how far the informal sector can accommodate this large number of people. Continued economic stagnation will result in a widening gap between rich and poor. While the income gap between African and white remains large, Africans, coloureds and Asians saw a significant improvement in their personal income during recent years:³ a finding confirmed by our own research. At the same time, levels of crime remained very high. Although the state of the country's economy explains much of this reality, it is important to recognise that internationalisation of crime in South Africa is another factor. Nevertheless, unless effective strategies are launched that will impact significantly upon unemployment, crime will become an 'acceptable way of life' for many South Africans.

THE SURVEYS

Thus far two surveys have been conducted: Survey 1 in February-March 1994, and Survey 2 in February-March 1995.

2. F. Slabbert, C. Malan, H. Marais, J. Olivier and R. Riordan, *Youth in the New South Africa: Towards Policy Formulation* (Pretoria, 1994).
3. H. van Wyk, *The National and Regional Personal Income of South Africa by Population Group* (Pretoria, 1995).

In 1994 a representative nationwide sample of 2 286 South Africans of 18 years and older was interviewed. In 1995 a similar sample of 2 226 South Africans was surveyed. Respondents were interviewed in their homes by interviewers of the same ethnic background as they were. The interviews were conducted in English, Afrikaans or in the interviewee's home language – if needed. The surveys were conducted by Markdata, a branch of the Human Science Research Council specialising in survey research.

The results that will be reported here concentrate on some key findings regarding shifting identities, new grievances and modified protest behaviour.

NEW CLEAVAGES?

One of the questions we phrased concerned the development of new cleavages and new collective identities. There are various ways of investigating this. We have used the following two indicators:

- (a) Characteristics treated by people as relevant, distinguishing features in terms of establishing interpersonal bonds and in terms of characteristics deemed important in interpersonal interaction. The question to be answered, then, is: Has the weight people give to various identifiers changed over the past year?
- (b) The social, political and cultural organisations people feel committed to. In this case the question to be answered is: Have people's commitment to social, political and cultural organisations changed in the past year?

Of course, assessing relevant identifiers and organisational commitment is not the same as assessing collective identities,⁴ but such identifiers and commitments – especially as they modify – could be indicative of new collective identities which are emerging; or could become the solidary base of future collective action.

Relevant Identifiers

In addition to the usual characteristics that are possibly relevant identifiers (such as social class, gender, generation and political preference), the South African context provides other potentially important characteristics:

4. See V. Taylor and N. E. Whittier, 'Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization', in A. Morris and C. Mueller (eds), *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, 1992), 104-30; C. Kelly and S. Breinlinger, *The Social Psychology of Collective Action* (Basingstoke, 1995).

language, religion, ethnicity, and neighbourhoods – four features which are immediately related to the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the country. Table 1 gives the percentages of respondents for whom, in 1994 and 1995, a characteristic is a strong identifier. This assessment is based on a composite of the extent to which a respondent feels close to people with whom he/she shares some characteristics (language, religion, etc.) and the weight these characteristics carry in his/her interaction with other people.

Table 1 Relevant Identifiers

	blacks		col'd's		Asians		whites	
	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95
language	62	67	49	57	54	56	66	65
religion	46	40	61	71	37	39	69	59
ethnicity	25	30	12	14	21	31	32	32
work	21	18	25	25	15	11	15	20
financial situation	16	14	26	21	07	19	09	14
neighborhood	14	20	25	26	35	19	11	10
generation	12	19	14	15	27	20	17	16
gender	19	25	06	07	08	12	03	04
political preference	22	13	12	12	11	05	17	12

Language and religion were the most important identifiers in both 1994 and 1995. The remaining characteristics were less relevant. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) shows not only that patterns of identification have changed over the year (sign. main effect of time, $F=9.26$, $p<.001$, $df=9$), but more importantly that these changes diverge for the four racial categories (sign. time x race interaction, $F=6.34$, $p,.001$, $df=27$).

- (a) *Language* became more important among Africans and coloureds, and remained as important as it was among Asians and whites. As a result, language has become more important as an identifier.
- (b) *Religion* became less important among Africans and whites, remained equally important among Asians, and became more important among coloureds. On balance, religion has become less important.

- (c) *Ethnicity* became more important among Africans and Asians, and remained equal among coloureds and whites. Thus, ethnicity became more important as an identifier. We must, however, qualify this finding: ethnicity is especially important among supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party and the white right parties.

Thus, as far as socio-cultural identifiers are concerned, two crucial characteristics in the South African context, language and ethnicity, have become more salient and a third, religion, has become less salient.

- (d) *Work and financial situation*, two characteristics related to socio-economic status, became less important among Africans and coloureds and more important among whites. Asians provided a mixed picture.
- (e) *Neighbourhood, generation, and gender*, three characteristics related to one's social position remained equally unimportant among coloureds and whites. They became more important among Africans and less important among Asians. Gender as a characteristic is virtually irrelevant among whites and coloureds.
- (f) *Political preference* became less important among Africans, Asians and whites, and remained the same among coloureds. On balance, political preference became less relevant as an identifier.

Commitment to Organisations

We asked whether respondents were sympathisers, active members or office bearers of a specified set of organisations – or none of these. Table 2 presents the means for those organisations we asked about in 1994 and 1995.⁵ A score of 1.1 or less means that not even 10 percent sympathises with that organisation.

The overall impression is that, with one main exception, commitment to political, social and cultural organisations declined over the past year. Among Africans, Asians and whites this appears to be a consistent pattern. This may be due to processes of realignment or the first signs of a process of individualisation which has been noted in other countries, but it is too early for any definitive conclusion.

It was the coloureds who, interestingly, had become more rather than less committed to political organisations, unions and cultural organisations.

The overall decrease in commitment to political organisations is especially noteworthy among the Africans and the whites. It is in line with the reduced relevance of political preferences as an identifier – observed in a previous section.

5. See Appendix.

Table 2 Commitment to Organizations

	blacks		col'd's		Asians		whites	
	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95
political organization	2.0	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.4
unions	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
youth organization	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.2
civic organization	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
street committee	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
cultural organization	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.5	1.3
church organization	2.1	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.4	1.2	2.4	2.1

Note. Means on a scale from 1=none, 2=sympathizer, 3=active member, 4=office holder

In sum. During the first year of transition, except perhaps for the coloureds, a process of social and cultural diversification seemed to take place. Traditional social, political and cultural organisations seemed to have lost significance; identifiers referring to subdivisions within the major racial categories (such as social class among the whites and Asians, and language, ethnicity, neighbourhood, generation and gender among the Africans) had become more important. To what extent these evolving identities will become politically relevant remain to be seen.

Language and ethnicity are potentially conflict-generating identifiers as history has shown elsewhere. The increased significance of the two may suggest that people are becoming more sensitive in these matters – especially those who support Inkatha or the white right – but a year is too short to make any assessment of that kind. The increasing significance of social class among the whites may relate to the formation of more distinct class structures among whites now that apartheid is no longer protecting the white population. The increased significance of neighbourhood, generation and gender among Africans certainly relates to the major issues in South Africa: housing, educational and job opportunities, and the position of women in society. People's political identities have become less relevant, especially among Africans and whites. In a way, this is what one would expect after such a long period of intense political conflict. Africans and whites were the most politicised groups in South Africa, as witnessed by both

commitment and identification. In the aftermath of the political transition this seems to change. Whether this is a shift toward modal political behaviour in a society which has been over-politicised for a long time, or the first signs of a loss of interest or disappointment in politics, remains to be seen.

NEW GRIEVANCES?

Domains

Grievances may concern different domains and depending on the domain developments in the year spanning 1994-1995, may have been different. We asked our respondents how dissatisfied they were with their situation – with regard to seven domains. Table 3 gives the means. Multivariate analysis of variance reveals significant main effects of race ($F=52.96$, $p<.0001$, $df=24$) and time ($F=12.9$, $p<.001$, $df=8$) and a significant time x race interaction ($F=10.68$, $p<.001$, $df=24$). In other words, in the first year since the elections there has been significant change over time. These changes have been different for the four racial categories, but obviously, the overall pattern between racial categories remained very much as they were: Africans are the most aggrieved, whites the least, and coloureds and Asians share a more-or-less identical position in between. But, of course, dramatic changes were not to be expected within one year.

Table 3 Grievances

	blacks		col'd's		Asians		whites	
	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95	'94	'95
job/job opportunities	5.0	4.8	4.1	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.2	3.2
standard of living	5.1	5.3	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.3	3.6	3.5
conditions in neighborhood	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.1	3.7	3.6	3.2	3.0
educational opportunities	4.6	4.3	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.0	2.9	3.2
health care	4.6	4.4	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.1	3.4
safety	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.2	3.4	3.3
human rights	4.7	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.5

Note. Means on a scale from 1=extremely satisfied to 7=extremely dissatisfied

As far as Africans are concerned, however, their situation seems to have developed in the right direction. Except for their standard of living they feel less aggrieved in 1995 than they did in 1994. To be sure, most changes are small, but they are significant. Coloureds show very little change in the evaluation of their situation, for better or worse. Asians are slightly more satisfied with their socio-economic and human rights situations, but feel more concerned about education and safety. Whites are the most satisfied with their socio-economic situation, but are certainly more concerned about education and health care than they were previously.

In view of socio-economic developments, the results with regard to the socio-economic domain are surprising. The South African economy is in the doldrums, and one would have expected this to show up in the form of more dissatisfaction in socio-economic matters. But the picture is more complicated. To be sure, Africans and coloureds are more concerned about their standard of living than they were, but less about jobs and job opportunities. And, remarkably, whites are more rather than less satisfied in this respect. Whether this is so because their situation has indeed improved, or because it worsened less than they feared, is difficult to say at this point.

The real changes in the perception of the people during that first year seem to have concerned education and health care. Africans are significantly more satisfied with these two domains, while whites are significantly more concerned.

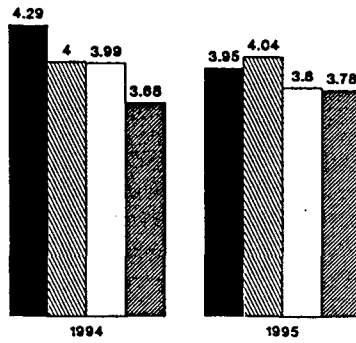
These patterns of change in grievances are reflected in the levels of relative deprivation reported by each group. We asked everybody to what extent their situation was better or worse than five years ago, and than that of other groups in South Africa.⁶ As we can conclude from Panel A in Figure 1, Africans and Asians feel less deprived in 1995 than they did in 1994, coloureds feel the same in both years and whites feel slightly more deprived.

Expectations for the Future

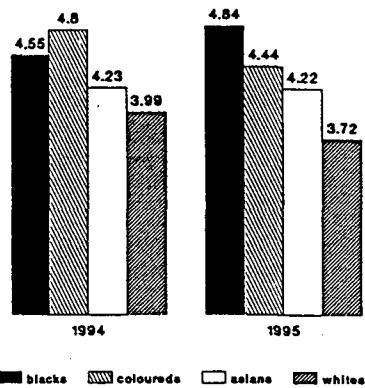
As far as the generation and continued existence of injustice frames are concerned, expectations for the future are perhaps even more important than levels of deprivation. Whether through risen aspirations or heightened fears, expectations about the future fuel resentment in the present. In that respect, the results presented in Panel B in Figure 1 are not really comforting. The already high expectations of Africans have increased even further. In 1994 the high expectations of the coloureds had become less optimistic, and the already low expectations of the whites had become even more pessimistic.

6. W. G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (London, 1996).

relative deprivation (1-7)



expectations of the future (1-7)



South Africa, February 1994-1995
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Figure 1 Relative deprivation and expectations of the future

In sum. Although Africans felt less aggrieved in 1995 than in 1994, they certainly expected a lot in the future. The coloureds did not see many changes and have, perhaps therefore, become more pessimistic about the future. Asians were less aggrieved and remained slightly optimistic about the future. Whites felt more deprived and more pessimistic about the future.

MORE OR LESS POLITICAL PROTEST?

In the decades before transition, South Africa was the scene of intense political protest – staged predominantly by the African population who were contesting apartheid. With the Government of National Unity in office, did political protest increase or decrease, become more moderate or more militant? We compared (a) the actual occurrence of protest events in the first three months of 1994 and 1995, with (b) reported participation in protest events in the past 12 months, and (c) action preparedness in the future. In addition, we measured trust in government and feelings of political efficacy.⁷ Political protest aims at challenging authorities. With the political transitions in mind, one would expect dramatic changes in people's opinions about the government. Did such changes indeed take place? And if they did, how did they impact upon political protest?

Trust and Efficacy

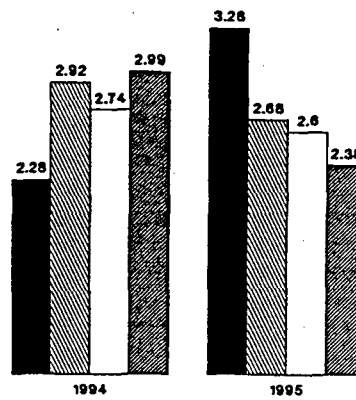
Two important dimensions of a citizen's opinion of government are trust and efficacy: the extent to which people feel that government can be trusted and influenced. The opposite of trust and efficacy is, of course, political cynicism: politics as an enterprise upon which ordinary people cannot have an impact, and government as an institution in which ordinary people cannot place their trust. With the transfer of formal political power from the white minority to the formerly oppressed African majority, the politics of apartheid came to a closure. What did that mean in terms of feelings of trust and efficacy among South African citizens?

Figure 2 presents the changes in trust and perceived influence as revealed by our two surveys. These results, although unexpected, are nevertheless exciting. Multivariate analysis of variance reveals strong main effects of time ($F=70.26$, $p<.001$, $df=2$), and a strong interaction of time x race ($F=85.66$, $p<.001$, $df=6$).

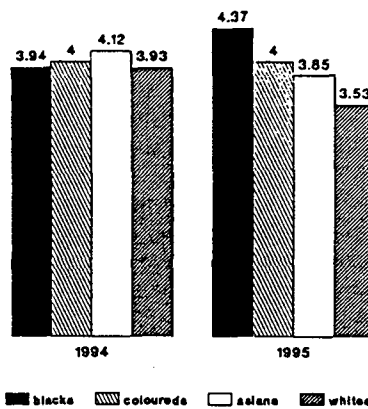
In 1994 all four racial categories were about equal on the influence they estimated to be able to exert on government – around 4 on a scale of 1 to 7, meaning not too much but not too little either. A year later the pattern is

7. W. A. Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, Ill., 1968).

trust
in government (1-5)



influence
on government (1-7)



South Africa, February 1994-1995
Klenderman, B., Olivier, J., & Roefs, M

Figure 2 Evaluation of government: Trust and perceived influence

changed, not for coloureds and Asians but for Africans and whites. In 1995 Africans felt that they had more, and whites less, influence on government than the year before. Even more dramatic are the changes with regard to trust in government. Africans who were the lowest in 1994 are the highest in 1995, whites who were the highest in 1994 are, in 1995, the lowest. Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, coloureds and to a lesser extent Asians had less trust in government in 1995 than in 1994. Obviously, in the eyes of the Africans the GNU is *their* government, unlike the government which was in power in 1994. Not so for whites, coloureds and Asians. As far as the whites are concerned this is perhaps not surprising, but for the others one would have expected, or at least hoped, otherwise. Apparently, in its first year the GNU has not been able to win the confidence of all the people to the extent that it won that of Africans. In fact, trust in government was restricted to supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Whereas over 50 per cent of the ANC/PAC supporters said they trust government 'mostly' or 'always,' these figures were 10 per cent for supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the National Party (NP), and less than 2 per cent for supporters of the white right. Only among supporters of the small Democratic Party (DP), some 24 per cent said they trust government 'mostly'.

Protest Participation

What did that mean in terms of political protest? Have levels of protest decreased among groups that feel that government has become more open to their claims (increased trust and efficacy) and increased among groups that feel that government has become less open (decreased trust and efficacy)? We have three different criteria in terms of which we can answer this question: (a) reported protest participation in the past twelve months, (b) protest event data from the first three months in 1994 and 1995 from our protest event study, and (c) preparedness to take part in protest events in the future.

As for reported participation, Table 4 shows a decrease in participation among Africans and whites in both peaceful, forceful and violent action in the first year of post-apartheid government, but an increase in reported participation among coloureds and Asians.

Protest event data for the first three months of both years reveals a sharp decrease in violent protest events, from 959, in 1994 to 346 in 1995, but an increase in peaceful protest events, from 109 to 289.

Finally, action preparedness decreased as far as forceful and violent action was concerned, across all four groups. However, the preparedness to engage in peaceful action remained high among Africans and low among whites, while it increased among the coloureds and decreased among the Asians (Figure 3).

Table 4 Action Participation in the Past Twelve Months

	blacks		col'd's		Asians		whites	
	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95	% '94	% '95
peaceful	20	15	8	14	1	6	5	3
forceful	9	5	2	5	0	0	2	0
violent	5	2	0	2	0	0	1	0

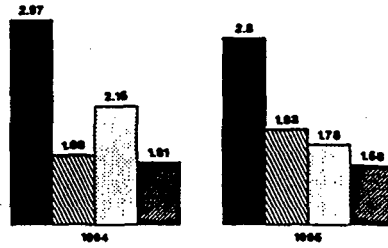
A breakdown of these figures according to political preferences in 1995 is very informative. Table 5 gives the levels of action preparedness for the four major political groupings in the country. Obviously, the supporters of the two 'African' parties (IFP and ANC) showed much higher levels of action preparedness than the supporters of the two 'white' parties (NP and the Freedom Front (FF)). Importantly, it was the supporters of the IFP and the FF (the white right) – that is, those who trust the GNU the least within their racial group – who are proportionally more inclined to take part in forceful or violent action.

Table 5 Action preparedness of the constituencies of four major political groupings

	IFP	ANC	NP	FF
Peaceful	45%	61%	22%	18%
Forceful	22%	11%	5%	11%
Violent	18%	7%	1%	7%

Apparently, changing opportunities are not identical for everybody, nor are they perceived alike by every citizen. Much depends on the positions occupied in the conflict arena. Indeed, in South Africa the challengers have

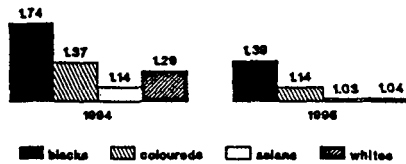
action preparedness (1-4)
peaceful actions



forceful actions



violent actions



South Africa, February 1994-1995
Klenderman, B., Olivier, J., & Roefs, M

Figure 3 Action preparedness

taken over government. Naturally, their constituencies consider this as the opening up of new opportunities – to the point that they feel that there is less need for political protest. But both the movement's competitors (the IFP) and the former elite (especially the FF) perceive the new government with suspicion and react with heightened action preparedness.

The political transitions in South Africa have thus brought a government into power which is viewed as an ANC/PAC government by both the Africans and the other racial groups. This has resulted in an increased trust in government and political efficacy among ANC supporters but reduced trust and efficacy among the other groupings. These figures did not translate into protest participation in a simple way. Overall, levels of preparedness to engage in forceful and violent action decreased, with the important exception of the supporters of the IFP and the FF whose lack of trust in the new government does translate into an increased willingness to engage in forceful and violent action. As far as peaceful action is concerned, the increased trust in government among the remaining Africans did not make them refrain from peaceful action. On the contrary, their preparedness to participate in peaceful action remained high. Protest preparedness among the remaining whites and the Asians did not increase, although their trust in government and political efficacy went down as well. This may be due to hesitation to protest against a government dominated by Africans so shortly after the transition. Be this as it may, in the final instance lack of trust and efficacy among others than Africans will not serve political stability.

DISCUSSION

It is far too early to draw any firm conclusions. It remains to be seen whether any of the observed changes will persist and whether trends will continue over time. A few remarks can, however, be made in answer to the questions that guided our research.

Are New Cleavages Emerging?

The increased significance of such identifiers as language, ethnicity, generation and gender could mark their emergence as generators of cleavages. Similarly, the increased political consciousness of coloureds could signify the development of collective identity within that group. Coloureds seem to be on their way towards developing a new political consciousness. They combine the feeling that their situation has not really improved over the past year with pessimism about the future, reduced trust in government, and – against the general trend – an increased action preparedness.

On the other hand there is a trend of decreasing organisational commitment. This may be part of the transition process and a symptom of realignment, or a more permanent weakening of the social organisation of the South African society. The future will tell us which of the two explanations is valid.

Are New Grievances Formulated?

In the 1994-95 period, housing, jobs and educational opportunities have replaced human and political rights as grievances. The levels of dissatisfaction in these domains are still very high especially among Africans. If the government fails to deliver better housing and health care and more jobs, or to distribute what is available fairly, grievances will certainly mount in these domains. If it fails to guarantee educational opportunities not only Africans will be aggrieved, but also Asians and whites; expectations for the future hint at some foreseeable tension. If their optimistic expectations are not met, Africans may lose their positive expectations and thus lose their trust in government. To be sure, expectations for the future must not be unrealistic, but strong feelings of deprivation without hopes for a better future may easily turn into apathy and resentment.

Is Protest Behaviour Modified?

In the apartheid era, it was primarily the African population that involved itself in protest behaviour. As their appreciation of the government in office shifted dramatically from 1994 to 1995, their participation in collective action, unsurprisingly, decreased. This does not mean, however, that Africans are refraining from collective action: they may, on the contrary, still be more prepared than other groups to take action.

For the first year after the elections the GNU had wide support, and there were no indications whatsoever at that point of significant groups who wanted to undermine the South African state. A commitment to nation-building and reconciliation assisted in stabilising the transition. In the first year after the elections protest became more peaceful both in terms of actual behaviour and in terms of the kind of action people were prepared to engage in. To everybody who is familiar with the South African situation this is a development which can only be applauded. Because of the closedness of the political system in the past to anyone but the white elite, politics in South Africa – both protest and repression – had become very violent. If only a greater responsiveness of the polity would establish a tradition of more peaceful protest, much could be gained.

APPENDIX

In 1995 we added tenants' committees, landowners' committees, education organisations, and women's organisations. In order to give an impression of the levels of commitment to these organisations, the following table presents the percentages of respondents who at least sympathise with an organisation.

Commitment to Social Organisations

	Black	Col'd	Asian	White
Political organisation	42,5	22,2	9,5	25,6
Unions	13,9	14,3	12,8	6,9
Tenants committee	11,9	6,2	2,6	5,2
Landowners committee	8,8	3,8	1,0	6,1
Education organisation	19,4	12,4	5,1	14,7
Youth organisation	20,3	20,1	2,7	11,6
Civic organisation	14,6	8,8	1,9	3,9
Street committee	14,9	7,8	0,3	5,7
Women's organisation	20,0	10,5	1,5	12,0
Cultural organisation	16,2	6,9	7,4	16,0
Church organisation	49,5	45,0	10,9	50,3

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