

# The National Democratic Revolution as an ideological instrument for transformation in South Africa

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**Abstract.** The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) with its key strategy of Democratic Centralism (cadre deployment strategy) remains the core ideological approach of South Africa's governing party, the African National Congress (ANC), for the transformation of society and government. Both the NDR and democratic centralism are rooted in Leninist-Communism. The NDR as an ideology is used to mobilise political support, but also as the basis for all party political and government policy. The two phased approach of firstly taking control of government and secondly taking control of the rest of society depends on the employment of the cadre strategy. The cadre strategy has facilitated the deployment of party, and often factional, loyalists into positions of authority. This has had the unfortunate consequence of contributing to the massive abuse of party structures to enable state capture and large scale corruption. This article defines key theoretical concepts such as ideology and transformation, identifies the historical origins and conceptualises the NDR and explains democratic centralism as instrument for state capture. An explanation of the role of the NDR in the transformation of society is structured in terms of the various aspects identified in the definition of transformation, namely as a reaction to an unjust past, a new and better future (utopia), a social and political plan for fundamental and far-reaching change, planned (structured) political change and strategic political change. The article combines key theoretical concepts with historical and political realities to offer an academic explanation of current political considerations and challenges facing South Africa.

**Keywords.** African National Congress; National Democratic Revolution; South Africa; cadre strategy, state capture; corruption; transformation; ideology

## 1. Introduction

South Africa has become an interesting academic case study regarding ideologically based state capture. While the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) remains the central ideological basis, and to a large extent also the political strategy through which the African National Congress – led (ANC) governing alliance in South Africa plan to transform South African society, it has also facilitated and entrenched large-scale state capture.

Within a South African context, the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) describes social transformation with the following statement: *“Over the years, the ANC led congress movement has understood social transformation within the context of the*

*National Democratic Revolution whose central thesis is to extricate South African society out of the trappings of national oppression, gender subjugation and class super-exploitation.”<sup>1</sup>*

Recent populist approaches to transformation in South Africa, by the governing ANC, have included radical economic transformation, expropriation without compensation, a centralised National Health Insurance and proposals to nationalise the Reserve Bank and pension funds. The former South African President Jacob Zuma<sup>2</sup> explained the relationship between the NDR and radical economic transformation in the following comment: “*The governing party declared at the last national conference in Mangaung in 2012, that we had entered the second phase in our transition from Apartheid colonialism to a National Democratic Society.*”

He went on to confirm that this would be implemented by “*radical economic transformation*” which means “*fundamental change in the structure, systems, institutions and patterns of ownership, management and control of the economy, in favour of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female*”.

The concept NDR was an integral aspect of the liberation struggle in South Africa and has remained at the core of the ANC-government’s transformation initiatives since 1994, with the cadre policy as a key instrument. With the more radical approach to society by the ANC, it is important to understand the NDR within a broader context of transformation. Understanding the place and role of the NDR in the current transformation of South African society requires an academic framework that can be found in the definition of transformation.

Being the largest and most prominent liberation movement in South Africa, that also managed to take over executive power at the first all-inclusive elections in 1994, the ANC has steadfastly held on to its revolutionary nature through concepts that continue to be used as a basis for both the mobilisation of electoral support and the formulation of political and government policy. Democratic centralism, commonly known as the cadre strategy, remains the core strategy through which the NDR is implemented in South Africa. The NDR, as an ideology, has contributed to the establishment of an oligarchic society and this Leninist strategy has, through its operations, facilitated various forms of state capture, corruption and nepotism.

This article will link a conceptual theoretical background to NDR-based ideological political discourse which will emphasise the significance of theoretical concepts in current political debates. The theoretical conceptualisation will include transformation and ideology. A conceptualisation of ideology will facilitate an academic understanding of the NDR as the ideological basis for transformation, while the conceptualisation of the term transformation supplies a unique framework for the analysis of the NDR in terms of the ideological objectives of transformation. The cadre policy acts as a central instrument for the implementation of the NDR and will be examined alongside its role in facilitating state capture.

The research for this article is qualitative in nature and involves a literature study that includes various books, journals, online popular political articles and political party documents. The literature study ensures that theoretical sources are combined with the party-political documents and popular articles to ensure a sound theoretical conceptual basis to support the historical and political discussions of the topic. In order to ensure a balanced approach to the topic, sources explaining the NDR and its significance are balanced with sources that offer some criticism of this.

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<sup>1</sup> ANCYL, “The national democratic revolution and social transformation”. Paper presented at the ANC Youth League 25<sup>th</sup> National Congress, Johannesburg, Gallagher Estate, 24-28 September 2014.

<sup>2</sup> J Zuma, “Address by President Zuma at the Annual Official Opening of the House of Traditional Leaders”, Parliament Cape Town, <<http://www.gov.za/speeches/president-jacob-zuma-annual-opening-national-house-traditional-leaders-3-mar-2016-0000>> accessed 3 March 2017.

The purpose of the article is to provide an explanation of the NDR in terms of its origins and transformation objectives by combining key theoretical concepts with historical and political realities to offer an academic explanation of current considerations and challenges facing South Africa. In this respect the article will entail the following layout:

- Conceptualisation of key concepts;
- The historical origins and conceptualisation of the NDR;
- The NDR as ideological instrument for transformation;
- Democratic centralism as instrument for state capture; and
- Concluding remarks.

## 2. Conceptualisation of key concepts

Within a political science approach, concepts are regarded as tools with which we think, criticise, argue, explain and analyse. We make sense of the world by imposing meaning on it through the construction of concepts.<sup>3</sup> Since the NDR is the ideological basis for the transformation of South African society, it is important to conceptualise both ideology and transformation as key concepts in understanding the role of the NDR in South Africa.

### 2.1. Ideology

The concept ideology in layman's terms often has negative connotations. Such connotations refer to rigid, misguided, or partisan ideas of others: "*we have our truth, and they have their ideologies*".<sup>4</sup> From a political science perspective, ideology is defined by various authors in similar terms. For example, Sargent<sup>5</sup> defines ideology as: "*...a value system or belief system accepted as fact or truth by some group. It is composed of sets of attitudes towards the various institutions and processes of society. It provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and, in doing so, it organises the tremendous complexity of the world into something fairly simple and understandable.*"

In terms of Seliger<sup>6</sup>, ideology refers to: "*Sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to pre-serve... amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.*"

Some political scientists argue that since the end of the cold war, the era of ideology has come to an end. Ideology is often referred to as the "*-isms*" of politics. In this regard liberalism, conservatism, fascism, Nazism, socialism, and Marxist-communism are the most prominent (but not the only) examples of ideologies. These are mostly associated with systems of government that are not conducive to the freedoms required for politics to function effectively. In such systems, freedoms may be restrained and the political content of discussions is restricted to the content of the ideology of the governing regime.<sup>7</sup> This view is supported by Fukuyama<sup>8</sup> in his so called "*end of history*" premise with the evidence that since the early 1980's when the Chinese communist leadership began permitting peasants to grow and sell their own food, agriculture became de-collectivised and capitalist market relationships began reappearing. This was followed by protest action in the People's Republic of China (PRC), the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and other Eastern-European states between 1986 and 1989. Ideologies such as communism and totalitarianism as well as African socialism began to lose

<sup>3</sup> A Heywood, *Politics* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1997), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> A Van Dijk, *Politics, ideology, and discourse*, Volume on Politics: Elsevier Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics (In A Vodac: 2006), pp. 728-740.

<sup>5</sup> LT Sargent, *Contemporary political ideologies: a comparative analysis* (8<sup>th</sup> ed., Belmont: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> M Seliger, *Ideology and politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> A Vincent, *Political theory tradition & diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> F Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp. 34-35.

credibility which supported idea that the era of ideology was at an end. The end of ideology debate is further explained simply by Susser<sup>9</sup> with the views that grand ideologies became disgraced and disowned in the twentieth century. The prevailing order was to divide the resources of society in a manner that would attempt to satisfy as many sides of the political debate as possible.

Another argument that has been forwarded is that politics today is less about the differences between right and left on the political spectrum but tend to deal with aspects such as the environment, feminism, and religious and cultural identity. These new ideologies are more about identity and less about class and materialism. These ideologies do not have the philosophical baggage of the traditional ideologies. It has been argued that these issue-based ideologies are not complex enough to capture the complexities of modern politics and are not able to mobilise society as traditional ideologies were able to do. Central to the new ideologies is the acceptance of neo-liberalism with its market-centred approach that regards individuals as consumers whose consumer choices are seen as the highest form of freedom and whose cultural and social identities are regarded as part of their private sphere. The arguments are that most social conflicts in the world today are less about traditional left versus right ideologies and more about identity and equitable access to resources.<sup>10</sup>

The recent rise of identity-based populism may breathe new life into the debates on the relevance of ideology. In this respect, South Africa's Reserve Bank governor, Lesetja Kganyago, indicated that populists are very good at tapping into social frustrations and should be used as instruments for detecting where society is hurting the most. He went on to warn that alternatives are required and that it is not good enough to be only against populism.<sup>11</sup> The continued relevance of ideology in South Africa is supported by Susser<sup>12</sup>, who explains that ideology still has important functions in modern society. He explains that it is ideology that transforms the power in politics into accepted political authority, and that it is through ideology that political culture is transferred and communicated and provides a galvanising focus around which to build new nations in the absence of communal traditions. This argument is a crucial element in driving African nationalism in states that comprise diverse ethnic, lingual, or religious groups and remains central to the role of the NDR within South African society and politics.

## 2.2. Transformation

While the term transformation is not mentioned in the South African constitution and is, therefore, not a constitutional imperative, it is prominent in South African political discourse. A former leader of the opposition in Parliament, Tony Leon, explained the link between the NDR and transformation as follows: "*The ruling party's own strategy documents describe it (transformation) as a process of extending the power of the National Liberation Movement over all levers of power in the state and beyond it. In relation to our constitutional democracy, transformation is something rather different from what the ANC once described it in 1994 as a people-centred society. In fact, it is a programme of building a party-centred society, where the ANC is omnipresent and omnipotent.*"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> B Susser, *Political ideology in the modern world* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> J Schwarzmantel, *Ideology and politics* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), pp. 168-177.

<sup>11</sup> Businesstech, "The dangers of populism in South Africa", <<http://businesstech.co.za/news-business/2785/the-dangers-of-populism-in-south-africa>> accessed 2 November 2018.

<sup>12</sup> B Susser, *Political ideology in the modern world*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> T Leon, "The state of democracy in South Africa today: the good, the bad and the ugly". Paper delivered at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, 9 May 2006.

In the search for a definition for transformation, Eckstein indicates that: “By transformation, I mean the use of political power and artifice to engineer radically changed social and political structures, thus culture patterns and themes; to set society and polity on a new course toward unprecedented objectives.”<sup>14</sup>

This definition is supported by Duvenhage who describes transformation as: “...the fast progressive, comprehensive, and fundamental political change of society, that arises from an unacceptable past, which takes on the form of central planning (social engineering and political manipulation), often driven by hegemony, with an emphasis on the management of change in general and conflict management in particular.”<sup>15</sup>

In his analysis of transformation as a policy instrument, Duvenhage<sup>16</sup> created a unique structure for an analysis of transformation that comprises five aspects, namely:

- A reaction to an unjust past;
- A new and better future (utopia);
- A social and political plan for fundamental and far-reaching change;
- Planned (structured) political change and
- Strategic political change.

The above structure of transformation provides a framework within which an analysis of the NDR as an ideological instrument will be carried out in the section dealing with the NDR as instrument for transformation.

### **3. The historical origins and conceptualisation of the NDR**

The formal mobilisation against colonialism and white domination started in 1912 when the African National Native Congress (ANNC) was formed in reaction to the exclusion of black people from the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the political processes in the country at the time. Since then, various strategies were used by the movement that included petitions, passive resistance, mass mobilisation, defiance campaigns and eventually armed struggle. The ANNC held its congress in 1918 where the aims of a united democratic South Africa and universal adult franchise were formulated. Petitions, in this regard, were sent to both the South African and British governments. The organisation also participated in the rising labour movements at the time. The party adopted Gandhi’s strategy of passive resistance and in 1919 thousands of black people were arrested for burning their passes.<sup>17</sup> The failure of these approaches to bring about transformation in the political dispensation at the time allowed the SACP to exert a great deal of influence over the ANNC.

After a visit to Moscow in 1927, both Gumede of the ANNC and La Guma of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) brought back the message that: “Our aim should be to transform the African Native National Congress into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organisation against the white bourgeoisie and the British imperialists, based upon the trade

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<sup>14</sup> H Eckstein, *A culturalist theory of political change*, Volume 82(3): *American Political Science Review* (1988), pp. 789-804.

<sup>15</sup> A Duvenhage, *Politieke transformasie as 'n ideologiese denkraamwerk: 'n beledsdinamiese analise en perspektief*, Volume 72(3): (*Koers*, 2007), pp. 377- 404.

<sup>16</sup> A Duvenhage, *Politieke transformasie as 'n ideologiese denkraamwerk: 'n beledsdinamiese analise en perspektief*, Vol. 72(3), pp. 377- 404.

<sup>17</sup> TRH Davenport, *South Africa A modern History* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London: MacMillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1991), pp. 237-238.

*unions, peasant organisations, etc., developing systematically the leadership of the workers in the organisation... ”<sup>18</sup>*

In 1923 the ANNC changed its name to the ANC, and after World War Two, the Youth League emerged with a strong Pan African orientation. At that time, the Youth League often clashed with the old guard over their ideological approaches. By 1952 the organisation was better organised and launched a countrywide defiance campaign that encouraged people to go out at night without passes, enter black townships without permission and use public and government facilities reserved for whites. The defiance campaign was the first well-planned attempt by black nationalists to increase support and membership. This was followed by one of the most historic events, namely the acceptance of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown near Johannesburg in 1955 by the Congress of the People that comprised the ANC, the South African Congress of Democrats, the South African Indian Congress and the Coloured People’s Congress. This document remains an important platform for political mobilisation, and a basis for the NDR.<sup>19</sup>

The NDR finds its origins and historical roots in Marxist-Leninism and was the result of direct actions by the Communist Party to turn the ANC into a revolutionary movement that would achieve the socialist objectives of that organisation. The Freedom Charter was regarded as the *ideological constitution* of the ANC. In line with the Freedom Charter, the ANC defines the NDR as: “A process of struggle that seeks to transfer power to the people and transform society into a non-racial, non-sexist, united, democratic one and changes the manner in which wealth is shared, in order to benefit all the people.”<sup>20</sup>

The Pan African Congress (PAC) was formed in 1959 in opposition to the multi-racial nature of the ANC’s Freedom Charter. The formation of the PAC as well as the Sharpeville massacre on 8 April 1960 during which 69 people were killed and 178 wounded, combined with the Rivonia treason trials that saw Nelson Mandela and others imprisoned, had a profound impact on the ANC. These events resulted in adoption of the armed struggle by the ANC in 1969. After many years of violent conflict, the “*Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*” was published by the organisation in 1988. The guidelines were strengthened by the “*Harare Declaration*” in 1989, which adopted policy guidelines that were to guide the party into the future.<sup>21</sup>

On 1 February 1992, South Africa’s former National Party president FW de Klerk made a historical reform speech which was followed by a discussion document by the ANC titled: “*Structures and principles of a constitution for a democratic South Africa*” that included proposals for a new negotiated constitution and the first inclusive elections in South Africa.<sup>22</sup>

After the first inclusive democratic elections in 1994, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first black president of South Africa. Since then, the ANC-led government has undertaken a process of transformation that has changed the landscape and face of both society and government in South Africa.

#### **4. The NDR as ideological instrument for transformation**

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<sup>18</sup> JCM Venter, *The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) in a post 1994 South Africa: a reconstruction, interpretation and evaluation of this revolutionary ideology*, (Potchefstroom: North West University South Africa, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Davenport, *South Africa A modern History* pp. 349-350; S Ellis and T Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid the ANC and the South African Communist Party in exile* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 27-28.

<sup>20</sup> ANC, “Strategy and tactics of the ANC”, <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

<sup>21</sup> H Kotzé and A Greyling, *Political organisations in South Africa A-Z* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers Ltd, 1991), pp. 31-40.

<sup>22</sup> H Kotzé and A Greyling A, *Political organisations in South Africa A-Z*, pp. 44-45.

The conceptual discussions on ideology, transformation and the historical origins of the NDR have facilitated a sound theoretical basis for an analysis of the NDR as the instrument through which transformation of South Africa's society is to take place. The structure created by Duvenhage<sup>23</sup> provides a unique framework for the further examination of the NDR. The analysis of transformation as instrument for transformation will therefore investigate the NDR in terms of this framework of transformation, namely as a reaction to an unjust past, a new and better future (utopia), a social and political plan for fundamental and far-reaching change, a plan (structured) political change and as a strategy for political change.

#### **4.1. The NDR as a reaction to an unjust past**

The NDR has positioned itself, through the Freedom Charter, as an ideological alternative to an unjust past. From a theoretical perspective, the NDR as an ideology creates a typology of the ideal situation that is utopian in nature and offers an alternative to an existing or previous order, namely colonialism of a special type. This creates the dialectic or conflict between the two contrasting political orders. In this respect the ANC has the aim of: "...appropriating the state and making of it an instrument of democratic social re-organisation. The objectives (sic) of this social re-organisation was, and still is, the reversal of the grand colonialism of a special type and the building of a united nation whose citizens owe allegiance to the same democratic state, same constitution and the same flag without the oppression of one national group by another."<sup>24</sup>

In terms of this objective, the Apartheid state evolved into: "...Colonialism of a Special Type, with both the coloniser and the colonised located in a common territory and with a large European population. The deal between the descendants of Dutch settlers and the British imperial power at the end of the so-called Anglo-Boer War formalised, in 1910, South Africa's statehood, premised on the political oppression and social subordination and exclusion of the majority of the people."<sup>25</sup>

The origins of this paradigm may be traced back to the book "*The Black Man's Burden*" (1944) in which by Leopold Marquard described white South Africa as a colonial power with South Africa's black reserves referred to as colonies.<sup>26</sup> The coining of the term "*colonialism of a special type*" by the SACP in 1950 defined South Africa as being an imperialist state with black South Africans as being a colony. The implication of this was that the wealth of the white minority had been achieved through the exploitation of impoverished black people through a system of racial capitalism. In 1962 the SACP adopted a programme known as "*The Road to South African Freedom*" which envisaged the overthrowing of the white supremacist colonial state and the establishment of an independent state of national democracy. The new state would be led by the ANC who would implement the NDR on a continuous basis. In this respect, the NDR would have to go beyond the mere political enfranchisement of black people and repealing racial laws, but also have to rid the country of all aspects of white domination. An integral part of achieving this ideal would be the re-staffing of the civil service, the Judiciary, the army and police to make them fully representative of society. In order to prevent resistance, the SACP

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<sup>23</sup> A Duvenhage, *Politieke transformasie as 'n ideologiese denkraamwerk: 'n beledsdinamiese analise en perspektief*, Vol. 72(3), pp. 283-387.

<sup>24</sup> ANCYL, "*The national democratic revolution and social transformation.*"

<sup>25</sup> ANCYL, "*The national democratic revolution and social transformation.*"

<sup>26</sup> I Filatova, "The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet Theory of the National-Democratic Revolution and South Africa". (South African Historical Journal. 64 (3), 507-537, 2012, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2012.665077> accessed on 6 November 2018), p. 526.

further advocated for a vigorous and vigilant dictatorship to be maintained by the people against the former dominating and exploiting classes.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of colonialism of a special type and the need for an NDR to overturn the consequences of this, was officially accepted by the ANC in exile at its national conference in Morogoro in Tanzania in 1969.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.2. The role of the NDR in creating a new and better future (utopia)**

Kamrava<sup>29</sup> indicates that social and political changes are not only reflected in the structural changes that are a central feature of the developing world, but more importantly also in the alteration of people's attitudes, views and cultural orientations. The implication is that people have to believe that transformation can bring about a better future. The fanatical belief in the concept of liberation that dominates the political attitudes and views of the governing alliance, overshadow all other cultural and economic aspects relating to transformation. This is explained by Nyerere within an African context as follows: *"The foundation of all other kinds of liberation for Africa is political freedom from external rule, and from racist minority rule. Despite all the horrors that we have seen in independent Africa, I still assert that it is better to be ruled oppressively within a free nation, than to be part of a colonial empire, however mild its rule may be. For colonialism implies the inferiority of the colonised; acceptance of it means an automatic limit to self-respect."*<sup>30</sup>

Transformation in South Africa, similar to the views of Nyerere, is based on the ideas of liberation and the restoration of dignity and self-respect of the black majority. It also supplies the justification for the liberation movements to remain in power, even though they are unable to meet many of the liberation expectations. The ANC Youth League's (ANCYL's) views on political and economic transformation confirm Nyerere's comments within a South African context: *"The South African cause for democracy and freedom is essentially a struggle for fundamental social transformation whose strategic objective is the burial of the social architecture of the Apartheid state. It is about the creation of a democratic order whose political, social and economic dividend can transform our race relations, diffusing the dichotomy of blackness as a symbol of underdevelopment whilst whiteness coincides with exclusive privilege, and the forging of a common national identity that transcends the racial cleavage of our past."*<sup>31</sup>

This is based on the ANC's 2012 Strategy and Tactics document that summarise the main tasks of the NDR as the realisation of the following:

- A united state based on the will of the people without regard for sex, race, belief, language, ethnicity or geographic location;
- A dignified and improving quality of life for all people by providing equal rights and opportunities to all citizens and

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<sup>27</sup> SACP, "The National Democratic Revolution - the SACP's 1962 proposals for the building of a national democratic state", <<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71656?oid=16351>> accessed 19 September 2014.

<sup>28</sup> A Jeffery, *Chasing the rainbow: South Africa's move from Mandela to Zuma* (Cape Town: CTP Printers, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> M Kamrava, *Politics and society in the third world* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> JK Nyerere, *The process of liberation* (In H Goulbourne ed., *Politics and State in the Third World*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979), pp. 248-258, p. 249.

<sup>31</sup> ANCYL, *"The national democratic revolution and social transformation."*

- The restoration of the birth right of all South Africans regarding access to land and other resources.<sup>32</sup>

The ANC strategies were not different from many of the anti-colonial liberation movements that combined national democratic ideology with democratic ideas such as representativeness and human rights. An ideological approach provided the political justification for decolonisation that was manifested in the doctrine of a “*national right to self-determination*”, within the context of colonialism of a special type. This also provided the basis for the mobilisation of large numbers of people in opposition to that which was regarded as unjust, namely colonialism and Apartheid. The problem that government’s faced after mobilising people along such ideological lines is that it becomes difficult to demobilise them, which has the potential to erode any progress that was made in transforming societies.<sup>33</sup> This is particularly relevant to current South Africa where violent protests often replace democratic processes in the demand and urgency for further rapid transformation.

The utopian nature of the NDR has also been its source of criticism. Johnson describes the NDR as: “...*a long discredited soviet formula... a sort of African socialist nirvana in which not only will poverty, inequality and unemployment be abolished but the antagonistic contradiction between the oppressed majority and their oppressors, as well as the resolution of the national grievance arising from the colonial rule will be resolved.*”<sup>34</sup>

This description is an important feature of an ideology that is utopian in nature and in stark contrast to the previous order, colonialism of a special type. The problem with this typology is that it requires the Tripartite Alliance to remain in power indefinitely, which is a dangerous and inherently undemocratic point of departure.<sup>35</sup>

The NDR is often referred to as the ANC myth. The argument being that the ANC’s nationalism was constructed under conditions of oppression and was ideologically relevant while the oppression was in force. The demographics of a younger population who do not place sentimental value on an ideology that was based on a utopian struggle against Apartheid will inevitably cause this ideology to become vague and lose relevance. The almost divine right to govern indefinitely based on liberation credentials that some ANC leaders claim, will not be enough to meet the expectations of a younger electorate. The economic inequalities in South African society that are still visible in terms of race, however, still serve as a reminder to the older generation who experienced Apartheid to continue to support the ANC’s transformation agenda based on NDR rhetoric.<sup>36</sup>

#### ***4.3. The NDR as a social and political plan for fundamental and far-reaching change***

The NDR remains at the centre of all ANC-run government plans for fundamental and far –reaching transformation in South Africa. Filatova<sup>37</sup> indicates that: “*Many in South Africa think that the socialist revolution did not take place only because the ANC came to power as a result of a negotiated settlement, not a military victory. But the NDR goes marching on in South Africa today, long after the theory was abandoned by its authors. It constitutes the basis of ANC*

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<sup>32</sup> ANC, “Strategy and tactics of the ANC”, <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

<sup>33</sup> R Jackman, *Power without force: the political capacity of Nation-States* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> RW Johnson, *How long will South Africa survive? The looming crisis* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015), p. 103.

<sup>35</sup> RW Johnson, *How long will South Africa survive? The looming crisis*, p. 104

<sup>36</sup> P Mashele and M Qobo, *The fall of the ANC: what next?* (Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2014), pp. 182-184.

<sup>37</sup> I Filatova, *The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet...*, p. 521.

*official policy and from the mid-1990s the debate on the left of South Africa's political spectrum is defined by the questions of how it should be implemented and at what pace, not about whether it should or should not be implemented at all."*

The ANC-run government has attempted to implement various plans of action to bring about the transformation of South Africa's economy and society. Various government development programmes were drafted by government since 1994, that include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative- South Africa (Asgi-SA), the National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP). While the objectives of these programmes were acceptable across most of the political spectrum in South Africa, it is the capacity of government to implement them due to political interference through the implementation of the cadre policy that has kept the ANC's transformation plans from becoming a reality.

The conflicting ideological approaches between the party's NDR approach and the government's developmental approach to transformation are often a source of policy and economic uncertainty in South Africa. While the NDR strategy has its roots in communism, the government developmental programmes have predominantly been based on global and more liberal views of transformation. Herbst and Mills<sup>38</sup> indicate that the NDR, which forms the basis of political communication, is not aligned to government development plans. An example of this ideological schizophrenia is visible in the government's objective of inducing greater investor confidence in South Africa, while the governing party's NDR driven transformation policies threaten private property ownership and talk of nationalisation that inhibit investment.

#### **4.4. The NDR as a plan for political change**

The 50<sup>th</sup> conference of the ANC in Mafikeng in 1997 resulted in a '*Strategy and Tactics*' document that described the strategic objectives of the NDR as follows: "*The strategic objective of the NDR is the creation of a united non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. This, in essence, means the liberation of Africans in particular and black people in general from political and economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female.*"<sup>39</sup>

The ANC's 52<sup>nd</sup> Conference held at Polokwane in 2007 confirmed the commitment to the NDR with a statement that: "*There should be no denying the fact that our tradition is firmly revolutionary, now committed to the National Democratic Revolution of Reconstruction*".<sup>40</sup>

Within an NDR paradigm, the concept of liberation can never be fully achieved until all vestiges and symbols of the Apartheid past have been eradicated. The NDR political plan of action comprises of two phases. This is in line with Lenin's two-phase revolution developed in 1905 that saw phase one as creating democracy and phase two as the implementation of socialism.<sup>41</sup> The first phase in South Africa was the political control and transition to democracy in 1994. The 2012 ANC Strategy and Tactics document indicates that this first phase has been completed: "*Given the nature of the political settlement, the democratic movement used the*

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<sup>38</sup> J Herbst and G Mills, *How South Africa works and must do better* (Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2015), p. 184.

<sup>39</sup> ANC, "Tasks of the NDR and the Mobilisation of the Motive Forces: National General Council Discussion Documents", <<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=2356>> accessed 16 September 2014.

<sup>40</sup> ANC Today, *We are all in this together: Budget 2008* (ANC Today, 8(7): 22-28 available from [www.anc.org.za/docs/ancoday/2008/at07.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/ancoday/2008/at07.htm) accessed on 25 April 2016), p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> I Filatova, *The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet...*, p. 512.

*breakthrough of 1994 as a beachhead to lay the foundation for a systematic transition from colonialism to a National Democratic Society.*"<sup>42</sup>

This is followed by the second phase that is summarised as follows: "*The interventions required to speed up change, especially with regard to economic and social transformation, can be understood as marking a second phase in the transition to a National Democratic Society. This second phase of the transition should be characterised by decisive action to effect thorough-going economic transformation and democratic consolidation.*"<sup>43</sup>

A SACP leader, Jeremy Cronin, is of the view that the two phases should have been implemented simultaneously: "*The second radical phase of the NDR (that the ANC and its alliance partners have now agreed is absolutely imperative) is, in fact, a phase that should have been embarked upon immediately from the bridgehead of the 1994 democratic breakthrough.*"<sup>44</sup>

#### **4.5. The NDR as a strategy for political change**

The ANC's cadre policy (democratic centralism) is a central instrument for the implementation of the NDR's two-phase plan of action. One of Lenin's important introductions into the communist party system in the former Soviet Union was the idea of a professional revolutionary in an organisational principle referred to as democratic centralism. Within this system, the party would be composed of a group of professional revolutionaries who would have contacts with, and support from, various groups in society. These party members (cadres) had to have excellent organisational and propaganda skills in order to maintain front organisations throughout society and had to be permanently prepared for the revolution that would take place when the masses revolted against their oppressors.<sup>45</sup>

According to the ANC Joel Netshitenzhe's formulation, transformation is synonymous with the cadre policy by: "*...extending the power of the national liberation movement over all levers of power: the army, the police, the bureaucracy, intelligence structures, the judiciary, parastatals and agencies such as regulatory bodies, the public broadcaster, the central bank and so on.*"<sup>46</sup>

The cadre deployment strategy was formalised by the ANC's 50<sup>th</sup> national conference in 1997 and captured in a document titled '*Cadre and Deployment Strategy*' that was adopted by the National Executive Committee (NEC) in 1998 for implementation from 1999.<sup>47</sup> The achievement of the NDR objectives includes the presence of cadres in state institutions, as well as activism in civil society, business, universities and the media. The job of cadres in these institutions is to promote progressive traditions in the intellectual community, to reshape production relations in line with the outlook of a national democratic society and to help shape the intellectual and ideological terrain in a manner that avoids rigid dogma.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> ANC, "Strategy and tactics of the ANC", <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

<sup>43</sup> ANC, "Strategy and tactics of the ANC", <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

<sup>44</sup> J Cronin, "Why a second radical phase of the NDR is imperative", <<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/why-a-second-phase-of-the-ndr-is-impera>>, accessed 6 November 2018.

<sup>45</sup> LT Sargent, *Contemporary political ideologies: a comparative analysis* (8<sup>th</sup> ed., Belmont: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 139-140.

<sup>46</sup> G Davis, "Cyril Ramaphosa sworn in as President of RSA", <<http://ewn.co.za/2018/02/15/watch-live-ramaphosa-to-be-sworn-in-as-sa-president>>, accessed 4 August 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffery, *Chasing the rainbow: South Africa's move from Mandela to Zuma*, p. 5; R Southall, *The ANC: Party vanguard of the black middle class* (In Lissoni A, Soske I, Erlank N Nieftagodien N. and Badsha O. *One hundred years of ANC*. Post Office Witz: Witz University Press, 2012), pp. 335.

<sup>48</sup> ANC, "Strategy and tactics of the ANC", <<http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

## 5. Democratic centralism as instrument for state capture

Within the context of the NDR, recent developments in South Africa's political trajectory have sparked a keen interest in the unique use and understanding of the concept of state capture. This contribution to our political discourse has broadened our vocabulary by dissecting the form of corruption driven by cadre-deployed civil servants and politicians. This lends itself to the need for a brief consideration of what the term state capture entails.

A World Bank policy paper defines state capture as, “*shaping the formation of the basic rules of the game through illicit and non-transparent private payments to public officials*”.<sup>49</sup> This definition was further expanded upon as a condition whereby external and internal actors in a country use corruption to influence policies, laws and the economy to benefit private interests.<sup>50</sup>

In South Africa, the term is linked with government officials being tasked to conduct themselves in a morally compromised manner, to the exclusive benefit of politicians who “*seek to advance and protect their own empires*” and shape the mandate of state institutions.<sup>51</sup> Such government officials, or cadre deployees, would be rewarded with employment opportunities through their continued support and demonstrable loyalty by obeying the orders from their influential political leaders. This network of political collusion has ensured that patriarchy and nepotism are entrenched in South Africa.

After the defeat of former President Mbeki at the Polokwane conference in 2007, the then ANC President Jacob Zuma used the deployment committees to instigate the replacement of officials at various levels of government and on the ANC's electoral lists. The problem with this factional approach was that many cadres that were appointed lacked the necessary competence that increased the incidences of corruption and cronyism.<sup>52</sup> This was also a critical element in the implementation of state capture that characterised the Zuma-administration.

With reference to the rise of the communist dictator Stalin in the former Soviet Union, Leon Trotsky's warning regarding of the abuse of democratic centralism is particularly relevant to the Zuma era: “*...the organisation of the party takes the place of the party itself; the central committee takes the place of the organisation: and finally, the dictator takes the place of the central committee.*”<sup>53</sup>

The cadre policy is criticised as being inherently unconstitutional and a key factor that facilitates state capture. Jeffery<sup>54</sup> indicates that the cadre deployment strategy ensures the ANC's capture of state institutions that are meant to be constitutionally independent, such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and Public Service Commission (PSC).

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<sup>49</sup> JS Hellman, G Jones and D Kaufmann, “Seize the state, seize the day: State Capture, corruption and influence in transition”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, <[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/seize\\_synth.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/seize_synth.pdf)>, accessed 26 January 2020.

<sup>50</sup> R de Klerk and H Solomon, *The institutionalisation of endemic corruption: State capture in South Africa* (New Contree: 82, 64-87, 2019), p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> JS Hellman, G Jones and D Kaufmann, “Seize the state, seize the day: State Capture, corruption and influence in transition”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, <[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/seize\\_synth.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWBIGOVANTCOR/Resources/seize_synth.pdf)>, accessed 26 January 2020.

<sup>52</sup> R Southall, The ANC: Party vanguard of the black middle class. (In Lissoni A, Soske I, Erlank N Nieftagodien N. and Badsha O. *One hundred years of ANC*. Post Office Witz: Witz University Press, 2012, pp. 325-346), p. 335.

<sup>53</sup> B Susser, *Political ideology in the modern world*, p. 156.

<sup>54</sup> A Jeffery, Chasing the rainbow. South Africa's..., p. 13-14.

Furthermore, the deliberate deployment of ANC cadres in the civil service also contradicts South Africa's Constitution (1996) that deals with party political prejudice in the civil service.

The cadre policy erodes the important constitutional principle of the separation of party and state. The cadre policy has also entrenched patronage and clientalism within the civil service since it ensures that ANC party loyalists are given the most lucrative jobs. The problem with the cadre strategy is that factionalism manifests itself in the bureaucracy in national, provincial and local governments. Factionalism has even led to violence in provinces such as the Free State, North-West, and Limpopo. This has led to political assassinations, the paralysis of party functions and resulted in the decay of service delivery.<sup>55</sup> This is supported by comments of the former acting head of the PSC Richard Sizani who indicated, at the PSC Congress in 2014, that cadre deployment, affirmative action and transformation are the main reasons why many state departments are collapsing in South Africa. He went on to indicate that such measures were necessary immediately after 1994 to transform the inherited civil service, but that they should be revised after 20 years.<sup>56</sup> This confirms Fukuyama's warnings that a merit-based civil service often becomes a victim of policies or strategies that create institutions of party insiders that use superior access to information, as well as state and government resources, to manipulate a system to favour them and their political cronies.<sup>57</sup>

The cadre deployment policy has been abused by cadres who have used factional differences caused by ideological divisions within the Tripartite Alliance to promote personal agendas based on nepotism and self-enrichment. In this respect Mashele and Qobo indicate that, while the ANC hopes to cleanse itself of political impurities and lead the country to the utopia of the NDR, it has rather: "...become a magnet for political riff-raff and cadres who lust after tenders and those who, learning from its president Jacob Zuma, seek to turn the state into an avenue for personal gain".<sup>58</sup>

A commission to investigate allegations of state capture in South Africa was established under the Chairpersonship of Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo by a Proclamation (3 of 2018) that instituted a "*Judicial commission of inquiry to inquire into allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector including organs of state*".<sup>59</sup> Since its establishment, the commission has heard that state capture has directly and indirectly cost the South Africa economy about R1,5 trillion.<sup>60</sup>

A central figure in the state capture controversy in South Africa, former President Jacob Zuma, criticised the commission indicating that they have no discernible definition of state capture indicating that it is "*conceptually flawed*" since there are no laws that define state

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<sup>55</sup> W Greffrath, *State dysfunction: the concept and its application to South Africa* (Potchefstroom: North West University, 2015), p. 296.

<sup>56</sup> Volksblad, 12 November 2014.

<sup>57</sup> F Fukuyama, *Political order and political decay* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2015), p. 464.

<sup>58</sup> P Mashele and M Qobo, *The fall of the ANC: what next?* (Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2014), p. 192.

<sup>59</sup> Government Gazette, Proclamation 3 of 2018 by the President of the Republic of South Africa, Judicial commission of inquiry to inquire into allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector including organs of state, 25 January.

<sup>60</sup> M Merten, "State Capture wipes out third of SA's R4,9-trillion GDP – never mind lost trust, confidence, opportunity", <http://daily-maverick.co.za/article/2019-03-01-state-capture-wipes-out-one-third-of-sas-r4-9-trillion-gdp-never-mind-lost-trust-confidence-opportunity>, accessed 25 September 2019.

capture as a crime.<sup>61</sup> As an outcome of a more in-depth theoretical analysis of state capture, Dassah<sup>62</sup> indicates that state capture is basically the “*parasitic plundering of state resources*”.

While the legacy of Apartheid is still blatantly apparent in terms of economic inequalities in South Africa, the failure of the NDR to address this is largely due to the abuse of state resources meant for redress and redistribution by self-serving and corrupt individuals and syndicates of politically appointed cadres in government. The cadre strategy has become an impediment that has allowed individuals in government to build financial and political empires. Regarding the political will to reverse state capture, De Klerk and Solomon are correctly critical of current President Cyril Ramaphosa with the comments: “*Considering the reforms and practical policy recommendations that Ramaphosa can learn from, his attempts at reversing state capture seem half-hearted*”.<sup>63</sup> The President himself recently conceded the following in a January 2020 newsletter, “*We are committed to end the practice of poorly qualified individuals being parachuted into positions of authority through political patronage*”.<sup>64</sup> This, more than anything, is a testament to the extent of the rot and an inherent admission of guilt, that the practises of politicians appointing unsuitable public servants have taken place over an extended period of time. As former Deputy-President under Jacob Zuma and current President, Ramaphosa has been instrumental, either directly or indirectly, in the appointment of so-called cadre deployees.

It is clear that the Marxist-Leninist basis for the NDR, through the neo-patrimonial tendencies of a political elite, has taken on the Stalinist tendencies that Trotsky warned of in South Africa.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The above discussions indicate that the NDR has roots that are firmly established within the twentieth century communist ideology. Current debates around radical economic transformation that include expropriation without compensation and creeping nationalisation, indicate that the NDR is the driving force within the ANC’s approach to transformation. The Leninist-based two-phase strategy of the NDR is visible in both ANC rhetoric and strategy documents. Official government programmes that are often more liberal (market-orientated) remain a source of both ideological confusion and internal conflict within the ANC which is also a source of policy uncertainty that negatively affects investment confidence in South Africa.

While both the NDR and by extension radical economic transformation may have noble intentions, the NDR has been criticised as an ideological point of departure that undermines the principles of transparency and accountability in government. The former leader of the Democratic Alliance opposition party and former Premier of the opposition-run Western Cape Province, Helen Zille<sup>65</sup>, indicated that: “*The ANC’s National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is*

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<sup>61</sup> R Mathekga, “Zuma’s state capture argument misses the wood from the trees”, <[http://news24.com/Columnists/Ralph\\_Mathekga/zumas-state-capture-argument-misses-the-wood-from-the-trees](http://news24.com/Columnists/Ralph_Mathekga/zumas-state-capture-argument-misses-the-wood-from-the-trees)>, accessed 10 March 2019.

<sup>62</sup> MO Dassah, “Theoretical analysis of state capture and its manifestation of a government problem in South Africa”, <[https://td-sa.net/index.php/td/article/view/473/720\\_25/09/2019](https://td-sa.net/index.php/td/article/view/473/720_25/09/2019)>, accessed 5 October 2019.

<sup>63</sup> R de Klerk and H Solomon, *The institutionalisation of endemic corruption: State capture in South Africa* (New Contree: 82, 64-87, 2019), p. 85.

<sup>64</sup> L Schreiber, “Opinion: Together, the DA and President Ramaphosa can fix our public service”, <<https://www.news24.com/Columnists/GuestColumn/opinion-together-the-da-and-president-ramaphosa-can-fix-our-public-service-20200122>>, accessed 23 January 2020.

<sup>65</sup> ANC Today, *We are all in this together: Budget 2008* (ANC Today, 8(7): 22-28 available from [www.anc.org.za/docs/anctoday/2008/at07.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/anctoday/2008/at07.htm) accessed on 25 April 2016), p. 6.

*not only incompatible with democracy, but lies at the heart of virtually every crisis we face. The electricity crisis, the arms deal, the manipulation of the criminal justice system, the weakening of parliament and threats to the media and judiciary can all be traced back to the NDR.”*

This is supported by former ANC Member of Parliament, Ben Turok<sup>66</sup>, who describes the NDR based transformation as having become a source of large-scale abuse driven by an “*it’s our turn to eat*” motivation. He indicates further that the abuse of transformation initiatives has led to a situation in which inequality between black people is now greater than inequality overall, which past leaders of the ANC would not have, and currently do not, recognise as an advance to democracy.

The NDR was a successful ideological instrument in the mobilisation of support and in forging unity during the pre-1994 struggle for democracy. The first phase of the NDR that was driven by a strategy of cadre deployment, was initially successful but has subsequently been eroded by factional and personal interests. Cadre deployment is vulnerable to human vices and has been successfully abused for corruption and the implementation of state capture. The significance of the NDR during the implementation of the second phase, has been stunted by the destructive manner in which it has been used to advance factional and even criminal interests.

The NDR is still used as an ideological instrument by a powerful faction within the ANC to mobilise internal political support, while other factions support the NDR end-objectives with differing views on its practical ideological significance. This internal tug-of-war is what Gumede refers to as the “*...battle for the soul of the ANC*”.<sup>67</sup>

The NDR has allowed the ANC to remain in power longer than most other political parties in a democracy that fails to bring about the necessary economic, administrative and social transformation. The crucial question is how long an increasingly agitated electorate will allow their emotional attachment to a liberation movement, that has been unable to transform itself into a functional political party and effective government, to determine their electoral choices? The other pressing question is whether the ANC has the political will or capacity to give up its ideological attachment to the NDR in favour of a more liberal approach that is required to take South Africa into a global post Covid-19 economic future?

The manner in which the ANC is able to ideologically transform itself in the near future will have a significant impact on its historical legacy in the more distant future.

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<sup>66</sup> B Turok, “Reflecting openly on what went wrong with the ANC”, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2018-11-14-ben-turok-reflecting-openly-on-what-went-wrong-with-the-anc/>, accessed 13 November 2018.

<sup>67</sup> WM Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2005).

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