In the Melting Pot: Local Political Attitudes

The past month saw a number of important sociopolitical issues and developments coming to the fore, with political violence, the defection of Labour MPs to the National Party, the continuation of international sanctions, and the issue of an interim government dominating the scene. We received varied and wide-ranging responses when we polled South Africans on these issues.

Barrier of Spears

The question of political violence remained high on the agenda with three issues catching attention; the government's conference in Pretoria; the agreement that was reached between government and Inkatha on the carrying of so-called cultural weapons; and the charges from various sides that the government did not seem able to control the violent unrest.

South Africans were asked whether Zulus should be allowed to carry cultural weapons in unrest areas or not. No less than 81% of the total sample said that Zulus should not be allowed to do so. Coloureds, Asians and blacks were most strongly opposed while - surprisingly - fewer whites, although still a majority, opposed the idea.

When it came to government attempts to quell political violence, few people were happy, and the majority of respondents expressed the opinion that the government was not really succeeding in getting the violent unrest in the country under control. And the greater the exposure to mass media, the more sceptical the assessment of government's success; the respondents who were regular newspaper readers, and those watching television regularly tended to be the most sceptical of government success in this regard.

A different side of government was examined when we looked at defection from the Labour Party to the National Party.

How Green the Grass?

Within the context of establishment politics the large-scale defection from the Labour Party represented a dramatic development. Would the defection from the Labour Party to the National Party promote or harm constitutional negotiations? In general, noticeably large proportions of the sample were unsure or simply did not know what the effect would be, with 40% of the total sample being at sea on this issue. Those who did hold an opinion about the defection, generally thought that it was more likely to promote than to harm constitutional negotiations,
although young Nguni males thought the opposite - and markedly so. Afrikaans speakers were more inclined to interpret this event as beneficial to the negotiation process than were English, Sotho and Nguni speakers and, in general, women were more likely to see the defection as detrimental than were men. Interestingly enough, "coloured" respondents, those most directly affected by the change-over from the labour party, did not react significantly differently from other categories of respondents. In the case of English-speaking respondents (not only whites) regular exposure to newspapers seemed to reduce the uncertainty, although the relation was by no means straightforward.

Who should Govern until the People Govern?

There was a high degree of consensus among all population groups that the present government should continue to govern the country until the first election under a new constitution had taken place. The white, coloured and Asian respondents were more convinced about this, with consensus ranging from 71% to 88%, than were blacks, although even here consensus ranged from 64% - 77%. These findings are indicated in Figure 1. Statistical analyses showed that regular newspaper readers among the Asians, whites and coloureds were more in favour of the present government acting as the interim government than were their counterparts who did not read newspapers. In the case of black respondents, the following trends emerged: males were more strongly opposed to the idea than females, younger males were more strongly against the idea and lower qualified females were more against the idea than professional females.

Can Sanctions Still be Sanctioned?

The repeal of apartheid legislation and the release of political prisoners were the primary conditions for the lifting of sanctions set by the international community. Respondents were consequently asked whether they thought international sanctions should be retained even though the government had committed itself to the abolition of the last apartheid laws. Only in the case of metropolitan black respondents with at least a matric qualification who regularly read newspapers, was the majority
(54%) in favour of the continuation of sanctions. All the respondents in the other groups supported the lifting of sanctions - whites more overwhelmingly so than blacks. The coloured and Asian respondents also showed an overwhelming support for lifting sanctions, newspaper readers being more strongly in favour of removing restrictions than non-newspaper readers.

One thing was made increasingly clear as the results of the survey came in: the mass media, especially newspapers, play a telling role in influencing public opinion, and no political decisions or events - now or in the future - can unfold without due regard to media influence.

Figure 2 [N=891]
Political Confidence Index

In retrospect the past 4-5 weeks have shown that, although the level of violence decreased after the peace conference in Pretoria (24-25 May), it nevertheless remains, in the view of all the main political interest groups unacceptably high. Difficult though it is to assess the extent to which the Pretoria Peace Indaba contributed to decreasing violence, it might prove equally problematical to predict whether we are faced with a short, medium or long-term trend.

In the run-up to the envisaged constitutional negotiations, the two factors most significant in retarding the negotiation process are the continuing high level of violence and the ANC's insistence that real negotiations be preceded by a general one-man-one-vote election based on a common voter's roll. The latter would form the basis of a constituent assembly and an interim government. The NP government apparently shares the concern of the main extra-parliamentary opposition groups (ANC, PAC, AZAPO, etc.) over the current spate of violence, but it rejects the demand for a constituent assembly and an interim government. According to the Nationalist Government there is no historical precedent to warrant acceding to the ANC demand. The NP views the latter's demand as in effect meaning that a legitimate government of a sovereign independent country will be abdicating its statutorily defined position of power in favour of an interim government which, by definition, carries the seeds of sociopolitical instability and governmental paralysis.

Many analysts believe that the violence and mass protest action that is currently developing across South Africa is not necessarily the prelude to mass anarchy and ungovernability. When historical precedents are kept in mind, these convulsions are largely the result of the main opposition blocks' jockeying for bargaining power and for the strongest possible position at the conference table.

Meanwhile the government had irrevocably committed itself to repealing the last statutory cornerstones of apartheid, more specifically the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 and the Population Registration Act of 1950. A softer stance against South Africa by the OAU bears clear testimony that the dismantling of statutory apartheid is not going unheeded - as can also be inferred from the diminishing pressure for sanction against South Africa.

Generally speaking the findings of the present survey do not deviate significantly from those recorded in our May issue. Where applicable, the corresponding percentages from the May issue are included in brackets.
Regarding the concept "New South Africa" just over half the respondents (55%; May = 46%) believed that life in the new South Africa would be better than at present, as against 16% (May = 21%) who expected life to be worse. These figures show what could be the start of a trend towards increasing optimism.

A higher proportion of the main sample (42%) fully agreed that a new South Africa would bring prosperity to all South Africans than was the case last month (40%) with only 7% (May = 8%) strongly disagreeing and 43% giving either neutral answers or indicating that they agreed "to some extent". In terms of population groups, 62% of coloured respondents, 49% of the Asian respondents, 37% of Black respondents and 26% of the white respondents felt that prosperity would increase.

Expectations about the new South Africa remain closely linked with support (or lack of support) for State President de Klerk's leadership. Generally speaking, there is a strong connection between support for Mr De Klerk's policies and optimism about conditions in a post-apartheid South Africa. This trend confirms comparable findings from our last round of surveys in May. As shown in Figure 3, 42% (May = 34%) of the total sample agreed that these policies would bring lasting peace to South Africa. Only 7% (May = 9%) disagreed fully and the rest were either neutral or supported the assessment only to some extent. The Asian respondents were the most optimistic (65%) and the white respondents the least optimistic (23%) in this regard. When analyzing support according to political party, it transpired that NP supporters (57%) were predictably enough - more inclined to correlate lasting peace with the de Klerk's leadership than were other parties. Only 37% of ANC supporters, 31% of DP supporters and 3% of CP supporters shared this view.

Just over half (52%; May = 52%) of the respondents thought that State President De Klerk was sincere in his endeavour to eradicate racial discrimination in South Africa, with a meagre 5% (May = 6%) thinking the contrary. The white respondents (53%) were noticeably more inclined to believe in Mr De Klerk's sincerity than Black respondents (36%). Interestingly enough coloured (75%) and Asian (63%) respondents were more inclined to believe in De Klerk's sincerity than the white population group.
Figure 4 shows that 30% (May = 30%) of the total sample strongly supported the statement that South Africans shared a sufficient degree of goodwill to ensure a happy future, with 14% (May = 13%) strongly disagreeing. Figure 4 also indicates that white respondents were less optimistic than black, Asian and coloured respondents about South Africa’s chances of achieving a new and stable democratic order.

As indicated by our May survey, South Africans’ preoccupation with violence, security and personal safety shows no sign of abating. The majority (49%; May = 57%) of the sample overall were convinced that political violence in particular continued to threaten the introduction of a stable democratic order in South Africa, with only 6% (May = 6%) strongly disagreeing. (See Figure 5 below). Relatively more white (54%) than black (41%) respondents saw political violence as a threat to a stable democracy. The comparable figures for the Asian and coloured subsamples were 57% and 52% respectively. White English-speaking respondents (59%; May = 71%) agreed with this point of view to a larger extent than did white Afrikaans-speaking respondents (51%; May = 68%).

On the question that the possibility of mass political violence and anarchy in South Africa was increasing, 48% (May = 61%) of the sample with only 4% (May = 3%) strongly disagreed. This trend suggests a substantial decrease in pessimism compared with our May findings. The Asian respondents were the most pessimistic (59% thought violence would increase), followed by blacks (49%), coloureds (45%) and whites (40%). Overall the present figures indicate more optimism among respondents than was the case last month. Despite many respondents’ pessimistic outlook on the violence-security issue, only 11% of the sample overall considered emigrating as opposed to 87% - the same proportion
as in May - who declared their intention of not leaving the country.

Still in the context of sociopolitical instability, more respondents felt safe (49%; May = 41%) than felt unsafe (44%; May = 50%). Figure 6 below illustrated this. As with other data dealt with earlier, this seems to indicate a general trend towards a decline in the pessimism induced by violence. The coloured respondents (68%) felt they were relatively safer than did the other groups (whites = 59%, Asians = 48% and blacks = 36%). Black respondents were most inclined to feel unsafe (57%), followed by Asian (46%), white (36%) and coloured (25%) subsamples. Relatively more white English-speaking than white Afrikaans-speaking respondents felt unsafe, but only marginally so (57% and 34% respectively). Both language groups felt about equally safe (58% and 59% respectively).

Despite considerable pessimism spawned by the high incidence of violence in South Africa, almost three times as many people (31%; May = 29%) thought that foreign investors could feel assured of the safety of their investments (31% May = 29%), than those who thought it a very dangerous risk (8%; May = 9%). The majority (37%; May = 35%) conceded the existence of some element of risk.

**Political Confidence Index**

In order to measure the extent of respondents' confidence in the present political situation in South Africa, we designed an index based on the summed response frequencies for 10 questions. Each of these serves as a rough indicator/predictor of the degree of political confidence felt by individual respondents.

The two poles of the scale separate, on the one hand, those respondents who have no confidence in South Africa's political situation (the negative responses), and, on the other, those who have full confidence in the country's political situation (the positive responses). A zero value signifies that the respondent is uncertain or unsure about the indicator concerned; a 1-value signifies that the respondent concerned strongly agrees with a particular negative statement about political confidence; a 2-value indicates that the respondent feels negative about a specific
statement (indicator); a 3-value represents a neutral viewpoint; a 4-value means that the respondent agrees to some extent with a particular positive statement; and a 5-value signifies that the respondent strongly agrees with a particular positive statement (indicator). The aggregate score for each respondent can be computed by summing the ten individual scores. The respondent who consistently reflects the highest level of political confidence for all ten questions, scores 50 points, and the respondent who consistently reflects the lowest level of political confidence, scores 10 points. For the purpose of analysis the respondents were grouped into six major categories:

The Major Categories

Category 1: aggregate scores between 0-9 inclusive (the Uncertain/Do not know respondents); Category 2: scores between 10-17 inclusive (the respondents who felt strongly negative about the level of political stability);

Category 3: scores between 18-25 inclusive (respondents who feel negative about the relevant indicators of political stability); Category 4: scores between 26-34 inclusive (respondents with a neutral attitude towards the relevant indicators); Category 5: scores between 35-42 inclusive (respondents who feel positive about the indicators of political stability); and Category 6: scores between 43-50 inclusive (respondents who felt very positive about the relevant indicators of political stability).

Where Are We Going?

Figure 7 indicates that only 3% (May = 2%) of the respondents evinced the highest level of confidence. This contrasts with 5% (May = 6%) of respondents who expressed the lowest level of confidence in the country’s political situation. More than half the respondents (54%; May = 47%) recorded that they had only limited confidence in South Africa’s political situation.

Almost 40% (May = 43%) of the sample expressed neutral-not-sure/do not know responses. As we concluded in the previous Information Update, the present figures, read together, underscore the widespread uncertainty about the country’s political future in the minds of
many South Africans. The white respondents (5%; May = 8%) expressed the greatest measure of no-confidence in the political situation. Relatively more Afrikaans-speaking (6%; May = 12%) than English-speaking respondents (3%; May = 2%) were strongly negative about South Africa’s political situation.

Leadership and party preference

In the political arena State President De Klerk and Dr Mandela continue to receive strong support, with Mr De Klerk still enjoying overall support from most members of the sample (see Figures 8, 9 and 13). As can be inferred from the data the support for both leaders is noticeably consistent over time.

Taking the sample as a whole, 42% of the respondents preferred Mr De Klerk as national leader, while 19% preferred Dr Mandela. A breakdown of the relevant survey data in terms of the two major white language groups - and in terms of the major population groups - shows that Dr Mandela attracted considerably less support among the white, coloured and Asian respondents than did State President De Klerk.

In fact, it appears that Mr De Klerk’s current support base is much broader than that of any other leader. In black ranks, though, Dr Mandela remains the preferred leader (40% support against 19% support for Mr De Klerk). Surprisingly, considering his prominent role in South African politics, Dr Buthelezi was backed by only 2% of the white and 1% of the Black respondents.

Relatively more English-speaking than Afrikaans-speaking respondents supported Mr De Klerk (63% and 52% respectively). This indicates the way that Mr De Klerk’s power base has shifted since the beginning of 1990. Generally speaking, however, Mr De Klerk’s support base has not shifted much since the first Update surveys in February. The support for Dr Mandela from older black respondents (35 years and older) has remained equally consistent (averaging about 40%). In the case of younger
black respondents however there has been a significant decline in support for Dr Mandela during this period, with support from blacks younger than 35 years dropping from 56% in February to 44% in June.

Which Party?

Turning to political party preference, 29% (May = 26%) of the total sample overall supported the NP, 4% (May = 4%) preferred the CP and 23% (May = 22%) expressed support for the ANC.

It appears that support for the NP within the relevant main samples has remained fairly constant between the April and June Update surveys, namely 27% (April), 26% (May) and 29% (June). The level of white support remained stable at 55%. Over the same period, white support for the CP increased from 18% to 22%. Black support for the ANC dropped from 55% to 47%. Of the white respondents, 55% (May = 56%) supported the NP, 22% (May = 19%) the CP and only 1% (May = 1%) preferred the ANC. In contrast with the 47% of black respondents who supported the ANC, there was practically no support from the white respondents; only 7% and 9% of the coloured and Asian respondents respectively supported the ANC. Significantly, almost 40% (May = 38%) of the sample overall refused or were unable to indicate a party-political preference.
Update Indicators

Leadership profile

10 May
The Bureau for Economic Research says that the economic confidence level among black urban consumers is higher than that of whites. People throughout the country react to pleas from white women in Bloemfontein for work as domestic assistants.

11 May
White farmers attack residents of the black residential area of Thaba Nchu in the Western Transvaal.

13 May
Mrs Winnie Mandela, Mr John Morgan and Miss Zoliswa Falatsi are found guilty on separate charges of kidnapping and assault in the Rand Supreme Court.

American political commentator Mr Peter Duignan says that the ANC is afraid that it would not be able to enforce a black socialist government in South Africa should sanctions be lifted.

14 May
Right-wingers fight with fellow-students and ANC leaders at the University of Stellenbosch before Dr. Nelson Mandela is given the opportunity to address those present.

15 May
Central Statistical Services announce that during the first quarter of 1991 the South African economy showed negative growth for the sixth quarter in a row.

16 May
Dr W.B. Vosloo, Managing Director of the Small Business Development Corporation, says that at present only 125 of every 1000 job seekers are successful in securing permanent employment in South Africa.

16 to 17 May
At least 13 people are injured in two bombings in the Johannesburg city centre.

19 May
The Government Gazette reports that state expenditure for the first month of the present financial year was 36% higher than in April 1990.

20 May
Mr Kobie Coetsee, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, says in parliament that the ANC has reached the point where it should decide whether it is a political organisation subject to the rules of the game.

State President F.W. de Klerk, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi and other of Zulu leaders agree that the carrying of all dangerous weapons in unrest areas be prohibited. Cultural weapons will only be allowed at truly traditional events.

23 May
Mr Don Mateman, MP for Eldorado Park, becomes the first prominent member of the ANC to become a member of the National Party Parliamentary Caucus.

Figure 13

Political affiliation

Figure 14
Some might perceive the issues surrounding the position of the domestic worker as of little relevance to the economic future of the country. The *New Nation* (7 February 1991), however, quotes National Manpower Commission statistics as proof that the domestic labour sector is (after agriculture) the largest single source of employment for black women. With 862 000 domestic workers in South Africa in 1989 the domestic labour sector is described by the newspaper as a bigger work force than that of mining. Even if this force is of less economic importance, no country can afford to underestimate the benefits of a proper infrastructure for a labour force of these proportions.
Update Indicators

FW de Klerk

23 May
Mr Gaby Magomola, marketing chairman of Fabsco (Foundation for African Business and Consumer Services), says that blacks need to overcome the obstacles of poor education, lack of managerial and technical expertise, lack of access to capital, increasing resistance to free market principles, and an unstable and volatile environment in order to ensure black economic empowerment.

27 May
The International Amateur Athletics Federation announces in Tokyo that South African athletes may again compete in Africa.

12 to 27 May
At least 75 black people are killed and 49 injured during unrest-related incidents in South Africa.

28 May
Bankcorp says in the newest edition of Econsolution that this year, for the first time ever, the government's financial shortfall will absorb the net private savings.

30 May
Thirty-two coloured Members of Parliament who joined the National Party in recent weeks are welcomed at the National Party's parliamentary caucus meeting in Cape Town. State President P.W. de Klerk mentions this as proof of the irreversible process of scrapping apartheid.

1 Jun.
Whites attack a squatter camp near the old Goedehoop Secondary School in Germiston on the East Rand.

2 Jun.
Mr Perfect Malimela, a black business consultant, is reported as saying that black business should get its house in order regarding the poor treatment of its black employees.

Hospital doctors in Botswana claim that one in three patients admitted to hospitals in the country test positive for HIV.

4 Jun.
The Committee of Heads of Education Departments recommends a new system of education for South Africa. One of the major proposals are that all South African children be given free and compulsory education up to Standard 5.

General Magnus Malan accuses the ANC and South African Communist Party of deliberately sabotaging the peace process in South Africa by burning, threatening and boycotting everything from which it differs.

The ANC says in Mayibuye, its official mouthpiece, that the South African Government has not crossed the Rubicon, and that it will help the government to do so with mass action.

5 Jun.
Parliament scraps the Group Areas Act of 1966, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, and the Black Communities Act of 1984. These were cornerstones of the apartheid system.

Nelson Mandela

Support for Nelson Mandela
[February - June]

Support for F W de Klerk
[February to June]
Putting the Lid on Pollution

Internationally there is growing awareness of environmental issues. Closer to home, South Africa has established a reputation for preserving natural areas as part of the heritage of the country. Despite these measures disquiet about the long-term effects of pollution has increased.

Those who show such concern range from the kind of people who have, in a rather derogatory fashion, been referred to as the "hug-a-tree" environmentalists, to serious scientists who have addressed dire warnings to the government and the population at large. Warnings have mentioned the devastation associated with the abuse of beaches and estuaries, the environmental impact of the irresponsible use of fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides farming, the threatened status of animal and plant species, the rape of dune forests, the pressure of rampant population growth on the natural environment, the steady decline of essential elements for the survival of the human species, and many more.

These efforts have often been disparaged as ill-informed or alarmist, but in the final analysis, there cannot be any doubt that environmental issues should be viewed in the larger, and overwhelmingly complex, political context of the country. So, for example, few informed people will deny the importance of foreign capital in improving the economy of the country, and thereby the lot of its people. Yet the same people will fight tooth and nail against the mining of titanium in the dune forests on the coast of Northern Natal. The issue is quite obviously political. In a similar vein, there have been public outcries and petitions against the mining of coking coal in the Kruger National Park, the extraction of water from the Okavango swamps, the acid rain associated with the generation of electricity by means of thermal power stations in the Eastern Transvaal, the culling of seal pups along the western coast of the Cape, and so on.

Pollution

A major concern within the debate about the environment and its protection, relates to the question of pollution. Respondents were questioned on what they regarded as the most serious type of pollution, which authorities they thought should give attention to the problems posed by pollution, whether there was pollution in their area - and the nature of that pollution.

South Africa's Most Serious Type of Pollution

Most people thought that air pollution was the most serious source of pollution facing the country, with just over half (52%) of the respondents expressing this opinion.