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South African Post-Apartheid Transitional Remembrance Policy (1994–1999)¹

Abstract: The paper presents results of the qualitative-to-quantitative narrative analysis of the transitional remembrance policy in South Africa during Nelson R. Mandela's presidency. It refers to findings on the structure of political applications of historical interpretations to the issue of national identity reconstruction during democratisation. Therefore, the paper considers a degree in which remembrance story-telling was used to legitimise, justify, explain and promote the Rainbow Nation, the inclusive and non-racial vision of South Africa's 'ideal self' based on Archbishop Desmond Tutu's theology of Ubuntu hoping. It investigated these relationships on eight levels – legitimisation of new elites, presence of former elites, transitional justice, social costs of transformations, promotion of new standards, the symbolic roles of democratisation, need for national unity and the new state's identity in international politics. Moreover, the paper introduces a draft comparison with other cases of transitional remembrance policy – Chile, Estonia, Georgia, Poland and Spain – and it offers the structural model of the use of historical interpretations in South African transition, as well as discussing it with reference to the general model of the transitional remembrance policy.

Keywords: *Rainbow Nation; Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Nelson Mandela; Desmond Tutu; remembrance narratives; political narratives; reconstruction of society; democratisation*

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Introduction

The post-apartheid transformation of South Africa is one of the most unique examples of an influence of remembrance narratives on transitional politics. The contemporary history of this country is a mirror that reflects the complex processes in international relations – decolonisation, global conflicts, competition between powers, and a dream of sovereignty, self-determination, human rights and democracy. South African ‘long walk to freedom’ is a paradox of the very first independent African nation as well as the very last bastion of racialism, racial discrimination and segregation (Welsh, 2000, p. XXVII). Therefore, the democratisation of South Africa was not only a transformation of an authoritarian regime, but a deconstruction of cultural patterns of hatred that had organised intergroup relations since the apartheid state’s emergence in the 1940s (Cole, 2010, p. 31).

The transitional remembrance policy in South Africa had to deal with the legacy of violence, repressions and suffering. It had to overcome collective memories of tragic events of the conflict between the racist government of Afrikaner nationalists and the national liberation movement, and to popularise the new vision of South African community – the Rainbow Nation (Tutu, 1994, p. 7; Haws, 2009, p. 486–488; Evans, 2010, p. 309; Swanson, 2009, p. 10–11). New interpretations of the past had to re-narrate the nation’s history and ‘translate’ stories of trauma and violence into the mythology of post-conflict integration and reconciliation without retribution. New elites faced a dilemma of how to present sites of memory, as the Sharpeville Massacre, the Rivonia Trial, forced removals, the Soweto Uprising, violent deaths of anti-apartheid leaders Stephen Biko or Chris Hani and political violence in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, as pillars of the new South African, inclusive community (Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016a, p. 188–190).

In this paper we present results of the qualitative-to-quantitative study on relationships between South African transitional remembrance narratives and post-apartheid transformation of the nation’s political identity. We discuss them with reference to our investigations of the intensity of the internal conflict in authoritarian South Africa and mythologies of the African National Congress, the leading force of the anti-apartheid movement in the country. We analysed the structure of the transitional remembrance policy² and its links with seven main political narratives of South African transformations which explained citizens: (1) inclusive and non-racial vision of the Rainbow Nation, (2) imagination of the national unity, (3) democratisation as the

² See: Wawrzyński, 2015, p. 159–166; Wawrzyński & Schattkowsky, 2015, p. 74–80; Wawrzyński et al., 2015, p. 126–127.

end of colonialism in Africa, (4) mythology of peaceful change, (5) role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its procedures of healing national traumas, (6) the Reconstruction and Development Program and reconstruction of the economy, as well as (7) the Affirmative Action and the government's struggle against social consequences of the centuries of discrimination and inequalities (Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016a, p. 200–201; Gagiano, 2004).

Research Design and Methodology

The discussed research was a part of the comparative study on an influence of the transitional remembrance policy on identity politics during democratisations. Its primary objective was to investigate how governments are using the interpretations of the past to support a promoted vision of the nation's democratic 'ideal self'³. It was also an attempt to measure narratives' significance in the complex landscape of transitional narratives. Even if analyses of collective memory and the remembrance as a political asset are in the mainstream of contemporary social sciences, it is the very first study that has offered detailed investigations of relationships between transitional remembrance narratives and the reconstruction of national identities during post-authoritarian transformations.

In the study we analysed eight areas of remembrance narratives' the impact on identity politics. We measured a degree in which interpretations of the past had been used by a government to: (1) legitimise the leading position of new elites, (2) explain the presence of former elites' representatives in the nation's post-authoritarian public life, (3) justify the adopted model of the transitional justice or the lack of it, (4) explain the social and economic costs of transformations, (5) introduce new standards of social and political behaviour, (6) present symbolic roles of democratisation, including its inter- and transgenerational character, (7) justify the historical need for national unity, as well as (8) legitimise the new state's identity in international politics. These eight spheres were then divided into 36 individual fields of impact, which observation enabled us to measure the impact's degree and place it on the five-levels Likert-type scale, where: 1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – moderate, 4 – high, 5 – very high (Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016b, p. 27–29).

The first stage of the study was a qualitative narrative analysis of legal acts, official documents and reports, parliamentary proceedings, public speeches of state leadership, educational curricula, and topographies of memory and the organisation of time, including national celebrations of historical anniversaries. It offered us a roadmap of

³ See: Marszałek-Kawa & Wawrzyński, 2016.

transitional remembrance narratives promoted by democratic governments. Then, we observed relationships between interpretations of the past and a new vision of national community, and we identified if the remembrance was used to legitimise, justify, explain or promote it. After we established the framework of transitional interpretations of the past, we were able to apply the coding system that transformed observations into quantitative data. Therefore, we started with a description of use of historical argumentation in transitional politics and we coded it into objectivised dataset that can be compared with other remembrance policies during democratisation. As a result, in the study we applied qualitative-to-quantitative narrative analysis with a simple coding system based on the results of discourse analysis of transitional identity politics. It offered us the possibility to draw the general model of transitional remembrance policy and individual models for case studies, including the democratisation of South Africa discussed in this paper

General Results

The comparative analysis showed that – in general – interpretations of the past influence transitional identity politics in the low-to-moderate degree. It means that governments tend to use historical argumentations to legitimise, justify, explain or promote a democratic vision of the nation, but it is mostly an additional channel of the popularisation of a new political identity. The sample's average was 2.63 points, while the highest score was observed for Estonia (3.28 points) and the lowest one for Poland (2.03 points). Therefore, the amplitude between extreme results was 1.25 points, i.e. slightly more than one degree ($SD=0.43$). Differences between investigated cases were statistically significant and have proved that there is no one universal model of transitional remembrance policy that can support a hypothesis on universality of democratisation ($p\text{-value}=0.01$; $F=4.2563$). However, it does not implicate the lack of common features shared by all compared cases (Marszałek-Kawa & Wawrzyński, 2016).

Our investigations showed that in the four research categories there were no significant differences observed. These are: social costs of transformations ($p\text{-value}=0.762$; $F=0.5136$), presence of former elites' representatives in public life of a democratised country ($p\text{-value}=0.325$, $F=1.2370$), need for national unity ($p\text{-value}=0.176$; $F=1.7428$) and adaptation of new social and political standards ($p\text{-value}=0.142$; $F=1.8444$). Only in the first case (1.83) the average result was significantly different than the sample's average and showed that interpretations of the past were not used to explain why a society has to pay an economic price for the change of a political regime. Significant differences were observed for another four research categories – transitional justice ($p\text{-value}=0.002$; $F=5.8857$), new state's identity in international politics

(p -value= 0.011; F = 4.0800), symbolic roles of democratisation (p -value= 0.021; F = 3.2941) and legitimisation of new elites (p -value= 0.027; F = 2.9495). Moreover, results for these categories were less similar to the sample's average. Symbolic roles of the changes (3.07) and the new state's identity in international politics (3.00) were supported by remembrance narratives in the moderate level, while transitional justice (2.17) was significantly closer to the very low level. These results give us the general perspective of the structure of transitional remembrance story-telling.

How far from the average score was the case of South Africa? The overall result for this case was higher than the sample's average. The score of 2.83 points shows that President Nelson R. Mandela's cabinet used interpretations of the past to promote the inclusive and non-racial Rainbow Nation in the low degree, yet, the result is really close to the moderate level of impacts. It is justified to state that in the South African case we have observed the low-to-moderate degree of remembrance narratives' use in transitional identity politics. Moreover, only the post-communist government of Estonia showed more interest in the nation's history during post-authoritarian time, while Chile and Spain had slightly lower scores, and Georgia and Poland – significantly lower scores. Therefore, we can argue that South African interest in the past was not only a declarative one. In fact, it has influenced political processes and it has shaped the reconstructed post-apartheid society. Of course, it cannot be recognised as the core aspect of a country's transformation, but our study proved that it should not be marginalised or excluded from considerations of the way Mandela's government tried to politically materialise the Rainbow Nation.

It is also worth comparing results for individual research categories to establish a more detailed landscape of South African transitional remembrance policy. In the case of the most different area, justification of the adopted model of transitional justice or the lack of it, Mandela's government acted in a very different way than the leadership of other countries – the score of 4.25 points compared to the sample's average of 2.17 points shows how far more important was this aspect of remembrance story-telling in post-apartheid South Africa. The symbolic roles of democratisation (3.60 points compared to the average of 3.07 points) and legitimisation of new elites (3.17 points compared to the average of 2.72 points) were also emphasised more than it was in general. However, surprisingly, the use of historical argumentation to legitimise changes in the nation's role within the international community was rather limited and it was twice lower than the samples average – 1.50 points compared to 3.00 points. Even if these observations opposing the declarative 'African turn' in Pretoria's foreign policy, in fact they should not be surprised – South African democratisation was primary oriented towards reconstruction of the post-apartheid society and building a new inclusive community, thus political narratives promoted by Mandela's

government was supporting internal not external transformations of South African politics. This orientation was represented by the transitional remembrance policy that recognised the narrative on common pan-African legacy, which was a core narrative in the African National Congress’ ideology, as secondary and less significant during the democratisation (Barber, 2004, p. 171).

In the case of new social and political standards we observed the score significantly higher than the sample’s average (3.40 points compared to 2.73 points), slightly higher in the case of social and economic costs (2.00 points compared to 1.83 points) and observably lower in cases of the need for national unity (2.25 points compared to 2.71 points) and the presence of the former elite’s representatives in public life (2.00 points compared to 2.60 points). Again, the results show that the South African transitional remembrance policy was influenced by unique conditions of the violent internal conflict, legacy of colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid, as well as the mythology of Mandela as the father of the reconciled Rainbow Nation. The complex landscape of South Africa’s remembrance story-telling and its role in the transitional identity politics is different than the general image of these relationships. Image 1. presents these essential differences between cases.

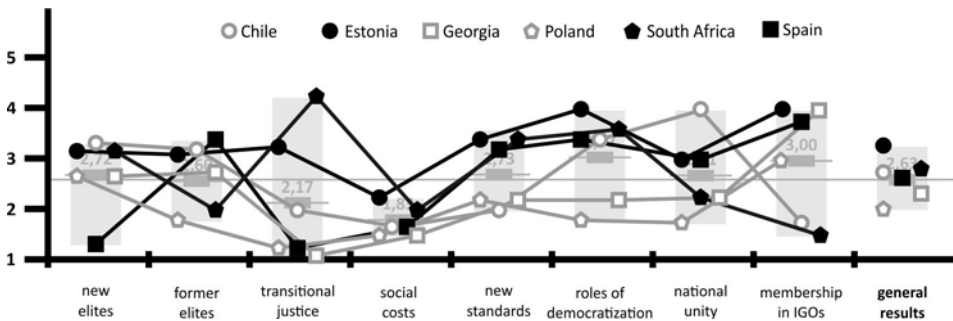


Image 1. The use of remembrance narratives in transitional identity politics in individual cases. Source: Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016b, p. 134.

Discussion of Results

The unique characteristics of the South African transitional remembrance policy influenced the shape of a model of its structure presented in Image 2. The intensity of narrative’s used significantly differs between categories and individual fields of impact – the most common result was the low degree of influence on transitional identity politics which was observed fourteen times; seven times we have identified the very

high degree, six times – the moderate degree, five times – the very low degree and four times – the high degree. It shows that the use of remembrance as a political asset was managed by Mandela's cabinet to realise transitional objectives and its intensification was regulated by evaluations of political needs and necessities. The very high interest in the past characterised the legitimisation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the African National Congress' dominant position within the new political elites, adaptation of new social and political standards, as well as symbolic roles of democratisation itself. On the other hand, the history was marginalised as a justification of the presence of Afrikaner nationalists in the nation's political life, the new state's identity in international politics and the social and economic costs of the political transformation. These differences clearly show essential divisions within Mandela's remembrance policy (Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016a, p. 247).

The high amplitude of results for individual areas and fields of impact makes the case of South Africa somehow similar to the democratisations of Chile and Spain, what can be considered as a result of deconstruction of repressive and conservative regimes in these countries. However, the uniqueness of South African transition is based on the major role of dealing with the past as the pillar of society's reconstruction – the transitional justice represented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was the substructure of the democratic order; and – as a narrative – it has guaranteed the stability of the newly-established regime. This principal role of the transitional justice is far different from the general model of the transitional remembrance policy, and it cannot be compared with any other investigated case. The only exception was legitimisation of adopted procedures as the punishment for human rights violators that was less visible in the TRC process fuelled by Archbishop Desmond Tutu's theology of Ubuntu hoping.

As we have already noticed, in seven cases we observed very strong relationships between remembrance narratives and transitional identity politics. These are the following fields of impact: (1–1) the past as a legitimisation of new elites, (1–3) transformation of national symbols and the pantheon of national heroes as a tool to legitimise the dominant position of new elites, (3–1) transitional justice as a legitimisation of the rule of law, (3–3) transitional justice as a source of forgiveness, (3–4) limited scope of dealing with the past as a way to prevent escalation of intergroup conflicts in the country, (5–3) national heroes as role-models of new social and political behaviours promoted by a transitional government, as well as (6–4) national heroes as role-models of democratic and civic behaviours or attitudes. Four times we have identified the high degree: (2–1) participation of former elites' representatives in the nation's public life as a way to prevent internal conflicts, (5–1) the necessity of changes as a justification of new social and political standards, (5–5) past experiences

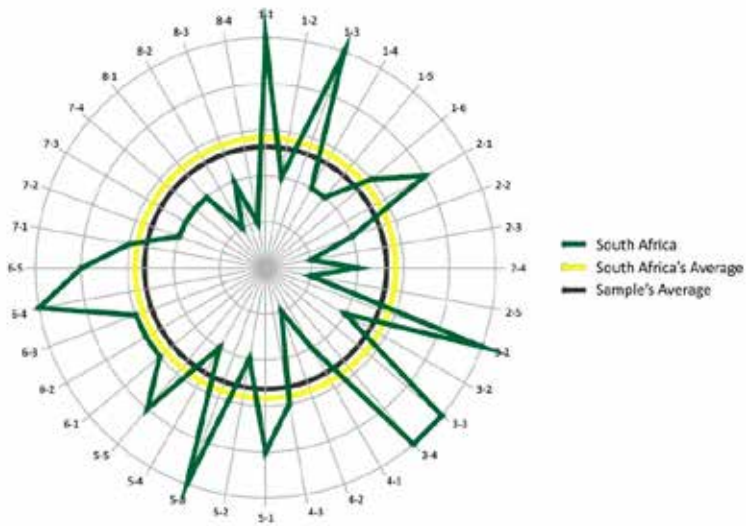


Image 2. The model of the South African transitional remembrance policy's structure.

Source: Marszałek-Kawa et al., 2016b, p. 132.

as an inspiration for a new definition of patriotism, and (6–5) new organisation of time as a presentation of democratisation's symbolic roles. On the other hand, we have also observed five cases of very low impact of remembrance narratives on the South African reconstruction of society. These were the following fields of impact: (2–3) presence of former elites in the nation's public life as a definition of political pluralism, (2–5) separation of the past and the present as a legitimisation of former elites' involvement in the democratic order, (4–2) the national history as a source of new economic attitudes, e.g. entrepreneurship, self-responsibility or creativity, (8–2) international integration as a fulfilment of transformations, and (8–4) adaptation of new standards as a result of the historical process of international integration (Marszałek-Kawa et al, 2016a, p. 205–246).

In this paper we presented results of the qualitative-to-quantitative narrative analysis of the South African transitional remembrance policy during the presidency of Nelson R. Mandela. The study proved that this case had unique characteristics different than those experienced in other countries. Mandela's government's remembrance policy was moderate and it served the realisation of primary objectives of

the democratisation: establishment and protection of the democratic order based on non-racialism, political pluralism, the rule of law and human rights, as well as building the reconciled Rainbow Nation, a political identity that was planned to commit all citizens to the peaceful regime change and the process of civil society construction. The South African remembrance policy in 1994–1999 was far from triumphalism and retribution, and President Mandela himself tried to use his heroic status to consolidate South Africans and to integrate them in the common ‘long walk to a consolidated democracy’.

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