

Unbecoming American: Did Apartheid Really End in 1991? The Vanities of Academic Politics

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Author's Introduction: The Vanities of Academic Politics

I wrote my first book, Church Clothes in 1997. It was finally published in 2004. The essay was written because I had to write it. At the time when I began my work that would culminate in this book there was still a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and a German Democratic Republic.

By the time Maisonneuve Press published Church Clothes both states were extinct.

I can only recall one review by a South African historian. He repeated the misunderstanding uttered by some of the doctoral committee that rewarded my work with a degree.

Today I do not hesitate to say that that "misunderstanding" and the vanities of academic politics combined to prevent the magnum cum laude grade.

The only committee member who opposed that honour was the chair herself. I mention this as a reiteration. My principal lecturer in political science as an undergraduate also told me that even though I was by far his best student he would never give me an "A" because I did not write what he wanted me to write in my assignments and exams.

Decades later I draw attention to these incidents in my academic curriculum vitae because they are exemplary not only for my personal intellectual development but for the sotto voce character of what so many distinguished scholars praise as the "peer review" system.

Just as I have found my arguments ignored rather than rebutted, I have repeatedly found that the data upon which I have drawn for my research has been similarly ignored or discounted without any attempt to establish its accuracy or soundness. The reasons for this are not unrelated to the central argument of this book.

Since the initiation of the Manhattan Project, the secret US program for developing the first atomic bombs, science has been progressively overwhelmed by a new sacerdotal class, enriched by the State and endowed with access to the plenitude of power and violence. This wholesale purchase of the institutions of learning and research and its subsequent devotion to the business of death first destroyed free inquiry in the natural science fields.

The best funded and highest paid in the natural sciences—those developing the weapons of mass murder and destruction for the State—became the envy and the measure for aspirant scholars, researchers and students. In imitation and greed for a share of that largesse and access, the social sciences followed, as did the humanities, albeit at a slower pace. The peer review system as well as what Morse Peckham called “publish and perish” was nothing less than the proliferation of little House Un-American Activities Committees (HUAAC) throughout American and then Western academia. In a country whose culture has been notorious for its conformism, subjecting intellectual labour to group consensus was perhaps an inherent national trait. In any event the system has functioned very well. It has rigorously defended the elusiveness of the obvious.

Thomas Kuhn, in his famous *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, argued that such “revolutions” do not occur gradually or because some prevailing prejudice has suddenly been disproven or discredited. Instead there is a change in the questions being asked usually starting with those about all the data that does not fit in the current theoretical framework. Peckham, who also knew Kuhn from Princeton, said that any human response in the world requires distinguishing something from everything. Inevitably a lot more is left out than included when limiting one’s behaviour, i.e. responding to the environment. What changes is not the data but the interest. Some data previously deemed irrelevant becomes central. The scholar or researcher is no different from anyone else here. Attention must be restricted in order to respond. That is to say an interest must be followed in order to distinguish from all the data to which they judge it is appropriate to respond. Joseph Weizenbaum’s primary argument against the validity of artificial intelligence focuses on the verb *to judge*. Machines and those humans who prefer to behave like them (or consider humans to be mere machines) cannot distinguish between data and information because they cannot judge. From an ethical point of view Weizenbaum also insists that the function of such machines, digital or analogue, should not be treated as judgment.

The creation of a vast system of inspection and certification of intellectual product was a logical consequence of organizing the highest levels of scientific activity based on secrecy and loyalty.

However it also applies to the laity. In the US it is virtually impossible to utter public criticism of the country or its institutions without first professing “love” for one’s country. (Needless to say, “love” for any other country is impermissible). Whether it was the adoption of the US version of the *Ermächtigungsgesetz* (Enabling Act) aka *The USA Patriot Act* in 2001 or the implementation of the mass incarceration and economic shutdown under the pretext of an alleged pandemic in 2020, even the most academically qualified and experienced critics have felt obliged to demonstrate that their scientific assertions have survived “peer review”. While the Soviet Union was extant Western scholars and scientists discounted or denounced all but the most technical work product as “under political control”. However, the semi-anonymous peer review is nothing less than the act of a collective political commissar with no personal responsibility.

As for the conforming student or scholar and researcher, everything works as if organized

intellectual life (the university and its ancillaries) were centres of free inquiry. They are made and kept safe by one's peers. The potential to become one of those peers depends on decisions taken early in one's education. Some decisions, like what to write on a term paper or which thesis topic to choose, can make or break one's career. Without peers there is no one to promote one's work, whether merely incremental or potentially monumental. The work which never reaches the assent of peers may disappear utterly. The work from which assent has been withdrawn can perish. Lorie Tarshis's *The Elements of Economics* is a case in point.

There is another reason I have decided to reissue *Church Clothes*. Not only did I argue in 1997 for recognition of the way mission, as a knowledge technology, transforms social formations, I also argued that the "land question" was fundamental for any serious political science and its systematic neglect a discredit to any politics claiming to serve human beings. To simplify the argument of the following pages: mission is the ecclesiastical expression of conquest.

Church conquest is essentially the domination of souls (minds) and hence also culture.

Since the soul or mind (a metaphor for the body of human responses) develops from the historical experience in the empirical world and reproduces the culture (instructions for performance), control over the material world is essential in order to produce culture. The Church (Christian mission in all its manifestations) engaged in mission to preach a culture it would create by conquering and dominating the space in which that culture was to be imposed. Following Kuhn, destroying the data sets and institutions for stabilizing responses to them was a prerequisite to conversion. The conquered population had to be redirected to other data and data structures—those preferred by the Church and those who own it. Kuhn's scientific revolutions, at scale, are conversions not proofs. Expropriating the land, whether in North America, Australia or South Africa, to name but the most notorious, was not only a strategy for enrichment but for mass conversion. That mass conversion was essential to sustain what would otherwise have been transitory conquest.

Since the annexation of the German Democratic Republic, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demolition of the Yugoslav Federation, the official Western policy has been that all the pre-1989 borders were violations of the inherent national and ethnic identities of the peoples inhabiting those countries.

National and ethnic, following long-standing British political warfare strategy, are assumed to be identical for the purposes of forced conversion.

Two seemingly contradictory policies have been pursued vehemently for nearly forty years. On one hand, every ethnic group susceptible of recognition by either the US or EU is entitled to political self-determination. On the other hand, any nation that defends its territorial integrity against foreign intervention (overt or covert) can be denied its sovereignty regardless of ethnic composition. Thus although the dissolution of the Soviet Union was eased by the Union constitution that permitted (in contrast to the *US Constitution*) republics to secede, the vast distribution of large Russian majorities in those newly separate republics did not legitimate redefinition of the boundaries or guarantees for those who literally overnight had lost their Soviet citizenship, which had made them citizens wherever they lived in the USSR. The historical complexities of the Yugoslav Federation were irrelevant to the forces determined to destroy it and steal its resources, including the geographical

advantages for trans-Eurasian rail and pipeline traffic.



In fact since 1947 only one nation-state has been able to guarantee by any means it deems necessary its territorial and “ethno-religious” homogeneity. The former POTUS Jimmy Carter even called the means by which its system of governance and territorial control—its land regime—are imposed, *apartheid*, after the original legal regime by that name had been abolished in South Africa. Although the title of my book refers to the “end of apartheid in South Africa” it did not suppose the end of *apartheid* as a policy *per se*. In 1948, the ethnic nationalist National Party was elected to govern South Africa. In the same year, the settler regime in Mandatory Palestine announced its independent statehood. South Africa declared itself a republic in 1961 and was practically expelled from the Commonwealth. The NP’s Afrikaner version of ethnic nationalism was offensive to the non-white Commonwealth members upon whom Britain’s material wealth depends. The National Party regime understood itself as a movement of ethnic national self-determination, antagonistic both to the Bantu and the British. It elaborated the Afrikaner identity but would have been incapable of dominating the country without including the British and other European “foreigners”. Thus its original ethnic base was diluted to establish a “white” nationalism while the “Bantu” majority was carefully segregated into language and tribal groups, later assigned by law to their own “national” territories, territories with no real sovereignty. This was the NP’s version of the “two state solution”. By 1991 there was an international consensus imposed upon the South African state. The Republic of South Africa was a unitary state and not a pseudo-confederation of white and black entities. After separation of amenities and other segregation measures were repealed, the acts creating the so-called Bantustans were also purged from the law. Meanwhile the other apartheid regime continues in force.

The persistence of *apartheid* and its fanatical violence in the West means the question “what is *apartheid*?” continues to be of the utmost importance. Furthermore, just as the South African state claimed an essentially Old Testament basis for its legitimacy until 1994, the surviving *apartheid* system in Palestine retains this rabbinical-scriptural foundation. Yet more importantly, the establishment and maintenance of *apartheid* today is inseparable from the land in dispute. There can be no doubt that apartheid is ultimately a strategy and justification for expropriation and exclusive control of land by the State, on behalf of those who own it.

Beyond the most obvious extant *apartheid* regime there are far greater forces at work. It is tempting to see the current 70+ year war in Palestine as a local conflict. Even those who worry about world peace because of the failure to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict between the occupying state and the aboriginal population are often blinded by the fanaticism with which the war is waged by the occupying state actor. Their concerns range from humanitarian to pragmatic-economic. It is impossible to deny that the Middle East has

been a strategic interface for global trade and communications for millennia. The Latin Church waged centuries of war in order to dominate what it called the Holy Land. Here the Latin Empire battled the forces of Islam before a European sect adopted the territory as a settler-colonial project—just at the moment when Woodrow Wilson’s liberal cant had established the principle of decolonization (if only for the colonies of one’s rivals). His Britannic Majesty’s government, masters of indirect rule and exploitation at arm’s length, needed little prodding to support some kind of settlement proposal for an economically influential cult. It has been credibly argued that the Balfour Declaration was actually a clever bit of subterfuge that was very unpopular among much of Britain’s ruling elite. However the decision-makers, some very powerful members of the Rhodes-Rothschild Round Table and some essentially bribed agents of the same forces were able to impose this new white settler colony even while other white colonies in Africa were collapsing. The terrorism conducted against all opponents to the realignment of Mandate Palestine has been interpreted by many as proof that the policy subsequent to the Balfour Declaration was not only a mistake but injurious to British interests.

Such arguments rely on an antiquated concept of British interests. It relies on a view of Britain propagated precisely by those historians from the Round Table (RIIA) tradition who continue to dominate the history profession on both sides of the Atlantic, and hence the derivative historical research on the Continent. The principal innovation of the Netherlands and Great Britain in the 18th century was the amalgamation of the State and the joint stock company. Today this is called the “public-private partnership”. When the VOC and BEIC were formed, unlike their weaker counterparts in France and Denmark, they were not only stronger than the existing state apparatus, they had achieved quasi-personal union with the sovereign. The VOC was essentially a republic apparatus while the more advanced BEIC benefited by the patronage of a monarchy that was beholden to its financial class in the City of London. Although the British East India Company eventually went bankrupt and was dissolved as an entity, the piratical machine it has innovated—the precursor to the modern multinational corporation—survived and flourished as an instrument of empire. The geographical centre of that empire is the City of London, the Square Mile. In that enclave of financial adventurism, i.e. piracy or capitalism, the aim of all policy is the control over cash flow and risk throughout the world.

In other words it is necessary to look for the technology of social transformation in processes found in a variety of institutions. These may operate with different formal ideologies and organizational structures. Those structures provide constraints both as internal and external projections of power. In politics power is exercised by the ability to impose shared meaning. That in turn means the capacity to limit responses in ways that conform to a given culture. We tend to ignore power when politics succeeds in compelling consensus and marginalizing or eliminating dissent. That is as natural as the thoughtlessness by which a fork and knife are used to eat until one finds there is only soup.

If we recognize that *apartheid* did not end with the retirement of the NP regime and the adoption of the 1994 constitution, although its legal framework was largely abolished in South Africa, then we have to examine the phenomenon as something that is not specific to the Cape republic. We have to consider the South African experience just one historical example of a social formation and that there are other varieties that may share attributes but also exhibit differences from the system formally in place from 1948 until 1994. In 1997 I based my analysis of South African *apartheid* precisely on the premise that South Africa was a special case of a more general phenomenon.



“Reserved for the sole use of members of the white race group” sign in English, Afrikaans, and Zulu at a beach in Durban, 1989 (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

One of the founding myths of the South African epic was the claim that whites and blacks migrated into the Southern tip of Africa more or less at the same time. Hence black tribes had no prior territorial claims with precedence over those of the Dutch settlers at the Cape. This myth also asserted that nations, at least those that had emerged after the Thirty Years War, were politically and socially more mature forms of social organization and culture than anything the black inhabitants could claim. Maturity meant innate superiority. Hence Afrikaner nationalism was hierarchically superior to any other emergent nationalism, although potentially comparable to the nationalism in Britain’s other African colonies. A derivative myth was the foundation of the *Group Areas Act*. Allowing that each population, racially-ethnically defined, was entitled to its own development in its own space, separate spaces had to be recognized and assigned in which that development could occur. Beyond those boundaries black South Africans had no legal rights or privileges since these were

residual to their own areas. In order to reconcile this legal fiction with the facts on the ground, the South African government began the process of forced removal. Cape Town and Cape Province was particularly disrupted because of the population of people called “Coloured” for whom there were no natural areas or “tribal homelands” to which these descendants of white settlers could be assigned.

In 1989 a global realignment began. While this has been analysed in terms of great power politics, the so-called Cold War, and the various strategic decisions by the Anglo-American Empire, another form of realignment was also initiated that cannot be subsumed by the Cold War model or the proposed Unipolar vs. Multipolar debate. This realignment is multi-layered and multi-faceted. Since the end of the Soviet Union has meant the end of grand theoretical analysis in any of the sciences, there has been enormous fragmentation combined with simplification in the study of the political-social-economic changes. This is due in large part to the absence of credible cultural history. By cultural history I do not mean either the comparative cultural studies associated with anthropology or sociology. Nor do I mean the sophistry and mendacity embedded in such pseudo-disciplines like “critical race theory”.

Cultural history is an integration of humanistic research methods with other tools aimed at explaining human behaviour, both individually and collectively, in the present using all the artefacts and documents available from the Past. Every explanation implies an organization and every organization can be understood as an explanation. There is no meta-position from which to study culture. We are in it to the end, till death do us part.

We have been witnessing—at least into the far reaches of the Anglo-American Empire—unprecedented human migration. Millions of people have been driven from their homes by wars, conventional and counter-insurgency (terrorism) and mysteriously transported over oceans no armies could cross, past borders once guarded by men at arms, into countries whose economies are being driven to collapse by the empire’s ruling oligarchy. Very little of the public debate, whether by laity or government functionaries, addresses the scope of this migration in anything resembling a coherent way. These flows in the millions within very short periods of time are not being repelled, like Asians or Southern Europeans were once repelled from US shores. On the contrary all the leading functionaries and officeholders in the West are insisting that these millions be admitted into the country on terms not only more favourable than lawful immigration (for which waiting lists and quotas apply) but also more favourable than for native-born or previously naturalized citizens. There is strong, if ineffective, resistance to this wave. However it is condemned rather than analysed.

Historical records show that massive waves of human migration are not in themselves new. What is unique about these migrations is that they are entirely man-made. China, central Eurasia, and Africa all experienced waves of migration when famine or other natural disasters accumulated to force people in large regions to move from desolation to new sources of food and shelter. Nowhere was such migration wholly without conflict. Yet what we have seen since 1989 is another kind of enforced migration. In an era where the monopoly of armed force as well as commercial and manufacturing power is in the hand of a small band of pirates calling themselves hedge funds or investment banks, two parallel forms of globalization have been accelerating. Until now the lead form of globalization was the relocation of industrial capacity to low wage countries and continued capture of their natural resources. In this shape there was little difference from the old colonial model, except that local governments run by natives had replaced imperial administrators and governors. The almost complete de-industrialization of the metropolitan countries has

steadily reduced their populations to consumers and service workers. Thus the value extracted from those countries is derived from cash flow and the traffic in intangibles (finance and intellectual property). Population declines have been compensated by increase in the cost of consumption in order to maintain high cash extraction rates.

As a rule there has never been any interest in developing a similar consumer-based extractive economy in the low-wage, resource-rich parts of the world. This has led those who profit from the international flows of cash and resources to speculate by creating a massive international flow of human resources. Hence there has been a systematic series of wars incited and waged throughout the world to make large swathes of the planet uninhabitable. These wars constitute essentially strategic deportation of indigenous populations, whether from Syria, Palestine, Central Africa, Ukraine, or any other place where the land is worth more than the people living on it.

It is certainly no accident that high representatives of hedge funds, armaments, digital technology and mass media sit annually in ecumenical council in the heights of the Swiss Alps to devise such ideas as *The Great Reset* or the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* for a world in which the vast majority of people will “own nothing and be happy”. It should surprise no one that policies to concentrate populations like battery chickens in the urban conurbations of the temperate zone are to be administered by the PPP World Health Organization with its program of regular pandemics and constant inoculation. Much speculation and hysteria has been spent divining the motives, intentions and secret plans at the pinnacle of the sacerdotal and neo-feudal estate in aspiration. Unfortunately much of that has been impaired by fixation on a worldview that sentimentalizes the political ideologies of the English and Scottish Enlightenment at the same time demonizing the ideas of the French.

Both positions distract from the underlying cultural historical phenomenon upon which the West is built: the Latin Church, the original totalitarian system in the West. It has mutated many times since the Reformation and the Thirty Years’ War, however it remains the single most important explanation and organization in the West. It is the core of what Samuel Huntington meant by “the superiority in applying organized violence.” The Fourth Crusade was an early climax in the “clash of civilizations”, better said the clash of the West with civilization. Philanthro-capitalism, especially that attributed to Bill Gates and George Schwartz Soros, is atomic-strength or a viral form of the mass conversion model propagated by the Latin Church. When the 14-year-old Soros adopted the “deport and confiscate” practice of enrichment, as a willing helper to the occupying forces of Nazi Germany, he was confessing to the business model upon which his entire Open Society and Quantum Fund organizations are based. The International Organization for Migration, a UN specialized agency (PPP), turned the UN relief to workers compelled to migrate as labourers after World War 2 into the service provider to permanently displaced people. The overall objective pursued by the World Economic Forum, as the college of cardinals in the Church of Finance Capitalism (what the medieval Latin Church was in essence), can be seen when these prelates convene to put their seal upon the covenants by which capital, humanity, and natural resources are maintained in continuous flow to be allocated wherever the hierarchy deems desirable or necessary. The land upon which people are born, from which they derive their nutrition and habitation, in which their cultures emerge and the humanity unfolds, is to be seized *de facto* where people are deported and *de jure* where they still live or arrive. The hedge funds or carcino-capitalists like Gates, Soros and those whose names we will never hear or read are already buying whatever is vacated by force of arms or destitution, both in the source countries and the new targets.

Deprived of land and affordable, safe homes in the places they were born and where their families have lived, often for centuries, these human flows will be dehumanized, too. Their material culture no longer either natural or self-produced, it too becomes the discharge of planned obsolescence. A mass conversion is underway in the West. Instead of “group areas” there will be no areas and no groups. The *grand apartheid* of the future is that separation between those who own nothing and those who own everything. Perhaps that is a good reason to rethink what one thought one knew about the *apartheid* in South Africa.

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