Creating Common Sympathies through Nation-Building and Nationalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa.


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Abstract:
South Africa celebrated its 20th anniversary of democracy in April 2014, after the fall of apartheid in 1994. However, the country still faces major challenges of nation-building and the establishment of the common identity based on South African nationalism and shared patriotism. These challenges have proved to be difficult to overcome due to segmental cleavages, which are rooted in South Africa’s plural society, ideological differentiation, class, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, and ethnic in nature. While academic research in other parts of the world demonstrates that democracy in plural societies is possible, I contend that South Africa’s plural society does mix, but not combine to form a nation based on shared values, heritage and history. Rather, South Africa remains polarized, both racially and ethnically. This does not mean that South Africa’s democracy is dysfunctional. It merely states that South Africa still faces challenges of a plural society, manifested in issues such as identity, race, ethnicity, and class. For the cause of nation-building, my paper reasons that South Africa’s diversity needs to be encouraged and reinforced through education, training, and the development of South Africa’s plural cultures and traditions, since diversity is a resource and an important ingredient in plural democracy, and not a curse.

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