namely: group consciousness, the consciousness of being a volk, and national consciousness. Essentially, this chapter aims to demonstrate the importance of both historical context and the changing balance of social forces in any proper analysis of this nationalist project.

**Appropriating the past:**

**The development of an Afrikaner identity**

For a long period, any understanding of Afrikaner nationalism was shrouded in myth so that its development was established as nothing less than inherently nationalistic: the behaviours of a fully-fledged and conscious grouping. In this sense, Afrikaners’ points of reference entered a virtuous circle, propagating ideas of community and a collective identity that were perpetuated by their very rise to power. Thus the realities of the past were effectively distorted and embellished as the dislocations wrought by the racial-capitalist path of modernisation became increasingly evident. Yet neither of the contending approaches to the development of Afrikaner identity comes fully to terms with the reality of identity as a historical process that assumes shape within the context of a particular political, economic and social system. Leaning towards a primordialist approach, Giliomee admits that ethnic identification: ‘sought to attain political and cultural goals and meet diverse psychological needs. It was more than a struggle for material rewards, but the outcome of the Afrikaners’ struggle in the economic field would be decisive in determining whether they would see themselves primarily as an ethnic group or as a class.’

During the 1930s, therefore, Afrikaner cultural and business elites constructed a scheme with both materialist and ethnic appeal to raise an ethnic mobilisation capable of improving and securing the economic position of an Afrikaner grouping. In order to do so, a programme of political and ideological engineering stirred up nationalist sentiments to fix conceptions of group interests, whilst simultaneously acquiring material rewards for this same grouping. Although Afrikaner capital and the middle class stood to benefit the most, at the heart of this movement lay the conviction that only a combination of ethnic mobilisation and volkskapitalisme could improve the lot of the economically and politically marginalised Afrikaner. Giliomee’s analysis is appreciative of the material sensibilities of Afrikaner nationalism, accepting the constructed nature of the movement and consequently its readiness for transformation.
In both his iconoclastic earlier work *Volkskapitalisme* and later *Forty Lost Years*, O’Meara’s broadly Marxist perspective analyses Afrikaner nationalism by introducing the imperatives of political economy and mode of production. In his analysis, the central protagonists were the economic entrepreneurs contained largely within the ranks of the *Broederbond*. These entrepreneurs systematically won over large sections of nascent Afrikaner business and workers to the nationalist project using not so much the complexities of Christian nationalism, as much as concrete, everyday issues within a network of overlapping social, economic and cultural organisations.6

In this picture, the Afrikaner Economic Movement, begun with the *Economic Volkskongres* and the *Reddingsdaad* (Rescue Action) of 1939, is perhaps the most important piece of the nationalist puzzle, responsible for the platform which led to the later election victory during 1948.

O’Meara’s account is sensible of the fractious elements within this class alliance – organised around Transvaal, Cape and Orange Free State (OFS) farmers, specific categories of white labour, the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and the emerging capitalists of the *reddingsdaad* movement7 – each of which had their own, often divergent interests that were pulled together by a form of racial protectionism which offered welfare, subsidies and job reservation. His concentration upon the relations between particular class forces and the capitalist economy ultimately affords the ideology of Afrikaner capital central stage within the nationalist ideology.8 And his resonant and nuanced account of capital, classes and the state itself is a useful depiction of the early politics of the Afrikaner nationalist project.

Nonetheless, the approach is not without flaws. In the main, critics have emphasised the materialist or class reductionism that hinders many Marxist approaches and, more specifically, the economic determinism inherent in O’Meara’s answer to the motive of support for Afrikaner nationalism. For example, Posel directs attention to the contested and non-hegemonic version of apartheid expounded by Afrikaner capital within the nationalist alliance.9 Giliomee refers to the wheat farmers in the Cape who he alleges could not have supported Malan over Hertzog within this class scenario given the fact that there was no particular economic policy to reward such a move.10 However, O’Meara’s account retains considerable power due to the cogent and organic record it provides of the constructed and contextual nature of Afrikaner identity. What is most useful about his analysis is the manner in which it can be utilised to address the early tensions and splits, as well as the unravelling of the Afrikaner nationalist alliance during the post-apartheid years. Indeed, this account is fully cognisant of the power relations inherent in the formation and thereafter reproduction of Afrikaner identities.
It is beyond the scope of this book to provide more than a concise overview of this formative period. By briefly reintroducing the complexities of these years during the remainder of this section, it will adhere to Butler’s four-fold periodisation of South African history prior to 1990: South Africa before minerals (pre-1870); the age of mineral revolutions and unification (1870–1910); the age of established segregation and early apartheid (1910–60); and, the age of high apartheid (1960–90).\footnote{Indeed, the notion of an ethnic awareness was first given substance in nationalist ideology prior to 1870. Giliomee suggests that by this stage a distinct grouping had emerged, all of whom spoke Dutch, had a common religion and managed a certain racial endogamy.\footnote{Racial hierarchies were present from the beginnings of the colony. These represented not so much an ideology as an inherent ethnocentrism that, during the Dutch period, was transformed into a hierarchy of legal status groups that established the basis for a racial order which survived even through the upheavals of the 1820s and 1830s.\footnote{There was also concern and resentment over British control’s being extended over the Cape Colony begun in 1795, and made permanent during 1805. Imperial hegemony was increasingly felt in many quarters with the prohibition of the slave trade during 1807 and, more significantly, a battery of legislation from 1833 onwards that served to weaken the colonialists’ authority over their native workers. The situation in the colony was complicated further by the incomplete incorporation of the settlement into the British Empire during the 1850s, stepping up what was perceived by many Dutch settlers to be hostile interference.}}\footnote{Although imperial intervention expanded significantly during this pre-minerals stage, relations between the British and Dutch settlers, as well as those between the Dutch and native inhabitants, were governed largely by a form of pragmatism. Indeed:

‘Precapitalist and capitalist modes of production existed side by side, as did state forms of varying size with their own ruling groups and systems of exploitation.’\footnote{Prior to the closing of the frontier, Guelke contends that the trekboers were far from being subsistence farmers, instead nurturing trade and other economic relations with the Cape in order to market their produce and buy supplies. He distinguishes between two distinct frontier communities: the first ‘orthodox’ or trekboer communities dedicated to maintaining an

\footnote{EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 2/27/2013 4:21 PM via UNIV OF ALBERTA LIBRARIES
AN: 307616 ; Davies, Rebecca.; Afrikaners in the New South Africa : Identity Politics in a Globalised Economy
Account: s5940188}}}
exclusivist ‘European’ way of life; and, the second, ‘pluralist’ community that involved the blending of cultures and peoples within an informal social framework. Indeed, Butler suggests that the Great Trek, later to become the seminal event of this period and the focus of many claims for Afrikaner political self-determination, was no more than a series of episodic migrations of around 12 000 migrants who left the Cape between 1836 and 1840. For the most part, the different colonies and semi-autonomous republics subsisted, if uneasily at times, side by side. Following Du Toit, it is proposed that this interval comprised the prenationalist phase of Afrikaner history, a stage prior to the subsequent refinement of a genuine group consciousness.

Between 1870 to 1910, however, what had been no more than a wavering sense of solidarity evolved into a group awareness even whilst the boundaries of this group remained a matter of dispute. With the discovery of diamonds and gold in 1867 and 1886 respectively, the advent of modern capitalism in South Africa ushered in an era leading to the establishment of the contemporary South African state which was characterised by tumultuous, deep-seated change. Butler outlines four processes that indelibly marked the country during this period and thereafter, namely: the Anglo-Boer War, unification, economic development and quasi-proletarianisation. As the piecemeal capitalist transformation of early settlement was entirely superseded so a new politics took hold in each of the three regional Afrikaner groupings. Urbanisation and migration proceeded at an unprecedented rate accompanied by a bona fide policy of segregation that catered to the vociferous demands of the increasingly omnipotent mining industry: the modern South Africa was being born.

In these few short years, the comparative stability of social relations in the preceding decades had disappeared entirely. Development progressed at vastly different rates through different sectors and regions, effectively contributing to the fractured class and ethnic awareness upon which an Afrikaner nationalist identity would be founded. Any group consciousness was thus slow to develop. Whilst the Jameson Raid of 1895–96 irrevocably harmed the integration promised during the late nineteenth century, it provided the term ‘Afrikaner’ with anti-British and anti-imperialistic undertones. Elsewhere uneven economic development aggravated regional and class differentiation among Afrikaans-speakers, injuring hopes of unity. Conversely, this same process shaped perceptions among Dutch-Afrikaner professionals that a significant section of their group was faced with economic and cultural degeneration. Thus, in 1875 the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Fellowship of True Afrikaners) was established in Paarl to champion the cause of the Afrikaans language and thus build a culturally
based means of ethnic recognition. It was the first of an increasingly number of such associations that were to follow.

It was, however, the outbreak of war that broke the bitter stalemate and heralded a vital progression in Afrikaner nationalist history. Schutte captures the importance of this event:

‘The old themes of purification through suffering reappear. The British were seen to be sent as a scourge. Their colonial expansionist tendencies were understood to be part of a larger plan that fitted the Afrikaner ethnic eschatology. God had a purpose with the humiliation of his people, namely to purify and sanctify them more than ever before. God’s standards were set very high for His elect. The materialism and selfishness of the mineral- and money-grabbing British were contrasted with the righteous suffering of the Afrikaners, who were the designated holders of the land. Among all this suffering and humiliation the Afrikaners believed in the divine promise of justice through the restitution of their land.’

Defeat demanded a high price of the Boer forces, inflicting a policy of Anglicisation as well as laying the foundations of Milner’s race-based, modern South African state. As whites, and thus the principal beneficiaries of the new political structure, the Afrikaners were forced to accept the permanent position of the victorious British enemy in this state. Thus, a period that had begun with the pragmatic coexistence of the region’s diverse populations had ended with nascent racial hierarchies securely in place; republicanism, language policy and white poverty inscribed firmly upon the nationalist agenda; and, a previously resentful if fragmented grouping having conceived a tangible and separate culture.

The ensuing three decades were perhaps the most critical in the formation of the Afrikaner nationalist project. At the time of electoral victory in 1948, the nationalist alliance could celebrate the unexpected success of a programme of cultural and economic engineering that had borne fruit with the maturity of Afrikaner nationalism as a cross-class and nationally supported enterprise. No small achievement, this process of unification had been hard won from the plethora of divisions that had periodically managed to derail progress towards unity. Indeed, the successes of this period can be broadly located within the material and social dislocations evident during the inter-war years.

Cohabitation in the aftermath of defeat reconciled little around the Afrikaner-English split. Although political power was essentially shared,
and a succession of supportive governments lent financial backing to Afrikaans speakers with subsidies and job reservation schemes, even middle class Afrikaners failed to compete equally with English speakers or to capture all-important civil service positions. The Depression of the early 1930s and late Afrikaner urbanisation took their toll so that even with the deepening of segregation, the blue collar and other manual workers and struggling farmers who comprised nearly two-thirds of the Afrikaner grouping by 1948 required state support to maintain some sort of parity within the dominant white grouping. Even the second industrial revolution wrought by the gold and export boom of the mid-1930s failed to make real inroads, unable to wholly erase the militancy apparent as mining capital and white workers clashed over the inequalities of this form of racial capitalism.

Circumstances did not improve with the advent of World War Two, despite the fact that it excised the lingering aftermath of the Depression and substantially enlarged the country’s industrial base and production. Instead, the relaxation of segregation and concomitant influx of blacks to the cities ostensibly served further to threaten the position of the largely Afrikaans speaking unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Accompanied by the revitalisation of the African National Congress (ANC) into a mass populist movement with far more conspicuous and militant democratic demands, these immense social changes effectively collapsed the final pillars of the then ‘Native Policy’, shattering the ruling ‘South Africanist’ consensus and its definition of the interests and project of white South Africa.

If the poor white problem had been established as a genuine concern by the 1932 Carnegie Commission – which had concluded that, out of approximately 300,000 poor whites, the majority were Afrikaans speakers – by the end of the war it had become a compelling political issue. Deliberately accorded a platform during the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938, capitalism, traditionally viewed as the domain of the imperial power, was imbued with a distinctly anti-Afrikaner character. Accompanied by the Fusion Pact of 1934 between Hertzog’s NP and Smuts’ South Africa Party which formed the United Party, an act seen by many Afrikaners as a betrayal, the politicisation of the Afrikaner culture began in earnest.

Since its inception in 1918, the Afrikaner Broederbond had been at the centre of this process. Utilising a network of overlapping cultural and economic organisations, the ‘belief-system which characterised the traditional Afrikaner was propagated both in theory and practice during this period, so that