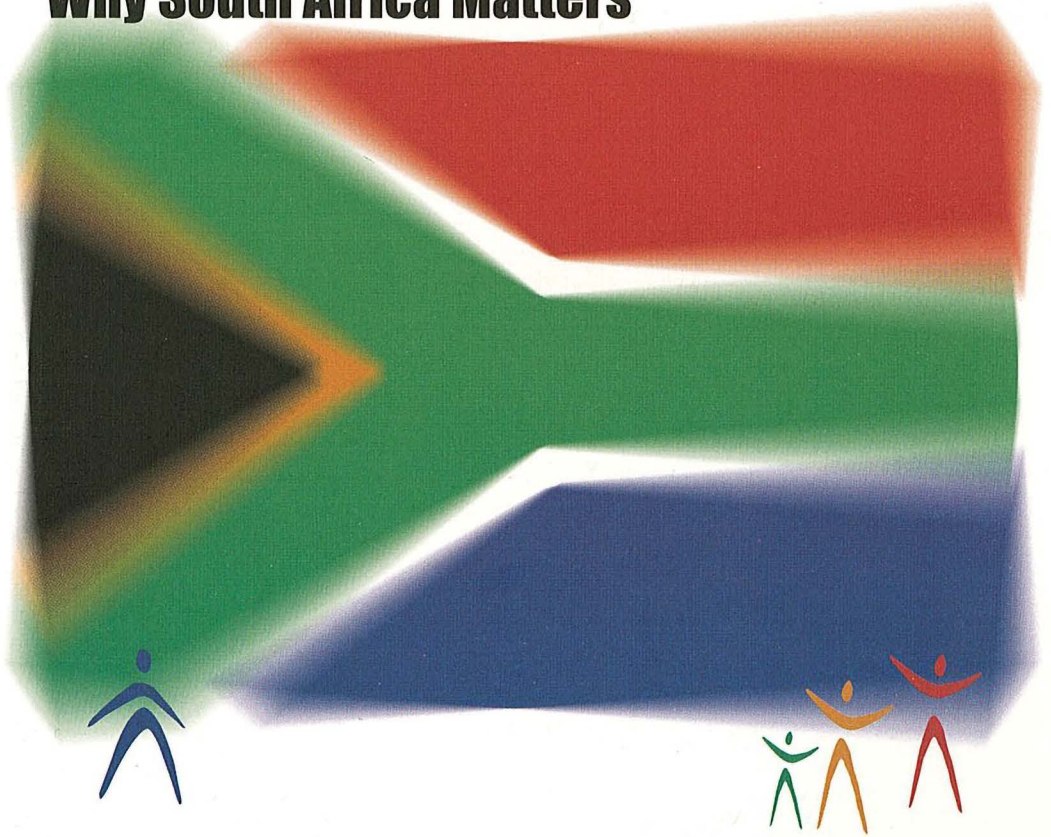


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Why South Africa Matters



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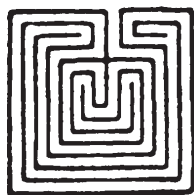
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Preface to the Issue “Why South Africa Matters”

I N THE SPRING of last year, *Dædalus* published an issue entitled “Brazil: The Burden of the Past; The Promise of the Future.” In choosing to publish an issue dealing with the new South Africa, as that nation has evolved in recent years, *Dædalus* might have used an analogous subtitle, seeing it as an opportunity to comment not only on what South Africa experienced in the terrible decades of apartheid, but also on how its history since the seventeenth century has shaped it. Indeed, Brazil and South Africa have often been compared, with attention given to race, class, poverty, and wealth. If we have chosen a more tendentious title, “Why South Africa Matters,” it is because all who have written for this issue believe that the South African experiment in self-rule, adopting a constitution that extols representative institutions, that seeks to make democracy a reality on a continent where it scarcely exists today, is a matter of the greatest consequence. South Africa today is multiracial, multiethnic, and multireligious—the characteristic features of many of the most highly developed societies in the world at this time—but it is by no means certain that the unique human resources created by such diversity can be protected

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when massive inequalities and inequities prevail, when education is so inadequate for many, when crime is rampant, unemployment is common, and there are overwhelming pressures to seek simplistic explanations to account for conditions recognized to be deplorable and unjust.

As long as apartheid existed, there were compelling reasons for men and women outside South Africa to extend help. While some exaggerated what they did to end the iniquitous apartheid system, how effective their interventions were, and what they accomplished because of their regard for South Africa's long-time political prisoner and first president, Nelson Mandela, the country was unquestionably for a time the object of considerable international solicitude. South Africa cannot claim comparable attention today, and not only because of the absence of a charismatic political leader. It is today a struggling state like many others in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and those outside need more than ever to understand its problems and what it is doing to resolve them. This, then, is the principal objective of this issue of *Dædalus*; it tells of policies rarely mentioned in the world's mass media, where only the country's acute social and economic problems are featured. While no effort is made to minimize the seriousness of the country's plight, our chief concern is to analyze both the strengths and the weaknesses of the society, at once so highly developed and so tragically impoverished. To consider its options and opportunities, its handicaps and intolerances, requires imagination and candor. Our authors have sought to provide both, refusing to be taken in by the more conventional criticisms of a society seeking desperately to define itself. South Africa matters, for itself, for the rest of Africa, but also for a larger world community that has invested such hope in its democratic prospects as a multiracial state.

In South Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, it is common to emphasize the salience of economic problems—incontestably crucial—but these must always be seen in a context that takes account of the political, social, and intellectual conditions that prevail in this rich/poor society, that make it unique, different from all others on that vastly overpopulated and largely impoverished continent. Until the full dimensions of

the South African political experiment are understood—and there is frank appraisal of the need for creating a national dialogue that does not search for scapegoats, that accepts the importance of being hospitable to all who seek to find a place in a land endowed by nature with abundant resources—there is no possibility of understanding how the problems of unemployment, health, education, and crime relate to each other, and why fostering a “polity of discussion,” in both public and private life, is absolutely crucial. Building on what the country achieved through its “Truth and Reconciliation” procedures, it must look now with equal thoroughness at the institutions created since the end of apartheid, asking whether they are in fact achieving their intended purposes. What is one to say about South African politics today, about the party system, the nation’s press, the influence of the trade unions? What concern is there with the levels of migration that have become common, that are revealed in the vast queues of South African citizens applying for visas to go abroad? Is the country prepared to probe deeply into its educational system—asking about the quality of the men and women who are today teaching the young—and are those issues any less important than those that relate to the problems of crime and punishment that make many, both inside and outside the country, preoccupied with what they conceive to be its endemic violence? What price is being paid for these conditions in terms of lost tourist revenues, diminished foreign investment, and the like?

Whatever the suffering of the past—and who would be so churlish as to deny it?—there is today the possibility of transcending it, of achieving the kind of human dignity that Immanuel Kant called for. This, however, will not be easy, and among those who have the greatest doubts about South Africa’s future are some who believe that the very struggle for liberation may have created habits of mind inimical to the creation of a non-racial democracy. Those who spent a good part of their adult lives in exile, who are now among the country’s leading figures, will soon give way to a generation for whom apartheid will be a historic memory, whose ideals will have been formed principally in more congenial times. This may allow them to be more imaginative, more innovative, understanding how geopolitics

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today allows South Africa to seek friends abroad and exert influence in ways scarcely perceived when the Soviet Union existed, when Marxism was thought to be a vital intellectual and political force. To examine what South Africans—black, colored, and white, of many religious persuasions—believe, how South African nationalism develops, and how it relates to other nationalisms on the African continent, whether a new kind of “work ethic” is developed, respectful of wealth and achievement, but not overwhelmed by either, is to ask whether power in this new democratic society will be effectively controlled and tamed, whether moral values will be salient, so that South Africa becomes an example to others. If South Africa is no longer defined by its racist past, it is not yet a society fully committed to tolerance, encouraging of dissent, able to fashion a political, social, and economic agenda calculated to embrace many tens of millions.

A number of American foundations helped make this issue possible. A great debt is owed to the Carnegie Corporation, always generous in its benefactions to *Dædalus*. Thanks are due also to the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, whose financial assistance supported both the planning and the authors’ conferences in Cape Town. All the authors would wish me to express my thanks to the University of Cape Town, and most particularly to its former vice-chancellor, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, who first suggested that we undertake this study, but also to Dr. Wilmot James, who helped bring us together, encouraging the kinds of discussion that can only take place when the objective is recognized to be important.

S.R.G.

Editorial note: In South Africa as in the United States, racial terminology is politically charged—and constantly changing. Many of the authors in this issue observe the South African convention of dividing the country’s population into four racial categories: white (of European descent), colored (of mixed ancestry), Indian (forebears from the Indian subcontinent), and African. The official nomenclature for “Africans” has itself varied over the years, changing from “native” to “Bantu” in the middle of the apartheid era, and then changing again to “black” or, today, “African/black.” All of these terms appear in the essays that follow.

Citizenship Challenges for South Africa's Young Democracy

INTRODUCTION

THE IDEA OF CITIZENSHIP is at the heart of democratic political systems. It embodies the rights and responsibilities of those living under the rule of law. Political systems can be measured by the extent to which citizens exercise their rights and responsibilities and hold their leaders accountable for upholding the core values of their society. This essay explores the complexities of defining citizenship and identifying the core values underpinning it in South Africa today—a society that has experienced a uniquely difficult transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

Citizenship is a dynamic phenomenon. Dipankar Gupta, quoting T. H. Marshall, asserts that citizenship has a “tendency towards equality,” and goes on to stress that citizenship tends to equalize people who may otherwise be very different in terms of wealth, power, status, or achievement.¹ Yet at the same time, citizenship is a complex, even ambiguous concept. In his analysis of citizenship and ethnicity in modern Kenya, Stephen Ndengwa concurs with J. M. Barbalet’s definition of citizenship as “defining those who are, and who are not, members of a common society.”² Nevertheless, he challenges the tendency to assume that there is only one form of citizenship. Ndengwa insists on the importance of recognizing the multiplicity of conceptions of citizenship—liberal, civic-republican, transnational, to name but a few—that can and do coexist in

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the modern state. But it is his analysis of the distinctions between the liberal and civic-republican views of citizenship that offers the most useful framework for understanding the challenges facing South Africa's young democracy.

The "liberal vision of citizenship holds that rights [are] inherent in individuals, exist prior to community, and are guaranteed with minimal obligation to the community. The civic-republican vision considers rights not as inherent but acquired through civic practice that upholds obligations to the community."³ Ndengwa points out that in the postcolonial state, liberal citizenship *qualifies* one to participate in the inclusive national community, whereas republican citizenship *requires* members to participate in the group's preservation, especially in competition against other communities *and* against the national community—unless the state is controlled by fellow community members.

Although Ndengwa focused on ethnic groups as the "subnational" units in which civic-republican citizenship is enacted in Kenya, I contend that in the case of South Africa the areas of subnational community are much more complex. Citizenship is claimed and defined by political actors in multiple and sometimes competing communities, united by shared values. Ethnicity defines communities such as Afrikaners, Zulus, Italians, Xhosas, etc., but the enactment of their citizenship in many instances encompasses units that are trans-ethnic. It could also be argued that Ndengwa's characterization of ethnic communities as networks of "obligations and opportunity" applies equally to *political* communities, such as the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party, the National Party, and other political formations.

Membership in these parties becomes the basis for a moral economy. Individual members of these elite entities are regarded, and regard themselves, not as morally autonomous, but as attaining rights and responsibilities only as active members of their specific political communities. Party members in good standing are defended against criticism by outsiders even though they may have broken the moral code of the national community at the state level. Thus the National Party has defended the actions of its members under apartheid, even in the face of

overwhelming evidence of wrongdoing.⁴ Similarly, the ANC government has consistently defended the actions of *its* members in government and other public office.

At the same time, modern conceptions of citizenship have to compete in South Africa with traditional and often parochial obligations to specific ethnic groups. In traditional societies, individual rights do not occupy center stage. Duty to the community and to those in authority is what matters. The individual has no independent status. Indeed, the Nguni concept of *ubuntu*, which has equivalents in other Bantu languages, has been elevated to a creed in post-apartheid South Africa. *Ubuntu* literally means that one's value as an individual can only be defined in relation to other human beings: *umntu ugumtu gabanye abantu* ("a person is only a person through other people"). In South Africa today, individual human rights and traditional communal obligations coexist in a state of tension.

THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

The architects of South Africa's old regime drew a sharp distinction between citizen and subject.⁵ Whites were raised to become citizens: generally educated, they were prepared to exercise their agency as morally autonomous beings. Until 1994, black South Africans, by contrast, were denied not only the rights of citizenship, but also the kind of education that would prepare them to become morally autonomous agents. Subject to white rule on the national level, they were simultaneously subject to client chiefdoms that purportedly gave them citizenship rights and responsibilities based on tradition and ethnicity. The former subjects of client states often do not understand what it means to be a citizen of a true democracy.

The denial of the right of indigenous African people to own land and the segregation of the population according to a racial hierarchy was at the core of South Africa's long history of white privilege. The 1936 Land Act allocated only 13 percent of rural land—the most arid—to indigenous people, who nevertheless comprised 75 percent of the population.⁶ In addition, restrictions on property ownership by the indigenous African people prevented capital accumulation—the foundation for cre-

ating wealth. This piece of legislation ensured the continuing impoverishment of indigenous African people. To add insult to injury, urbanization for indigenous people was delayed for over a century by the policy of reserving urban areas for white people, people of mixed descent, and people of Asian descent. The latter were also segregated from the white population in a system that reserved the best areas for white people.⁷ Indigenous people were only tolerated in urban areas for as long as their labor was needed by the economy. Such laborers were housed in single-sex compounds and forbidden to settle in urban areas with their families.⁸ The system of influx control with the infamous pass laws was instituted to enforce this policy.⁹

Flying into Cape Town—one of the most beautiful cities in the world—gives one a vivid picture of the legacy of spatial apartheid. The beautiful long beaches of the two oceans caressing the Cape Peninsula and the feet of Table Mountain stand in stark contrast to the Cape Flats. The former areas were reserved for white people whereas black people were scattered on the sands of the Cape Flats in overcrowded and underserved townships.

These settlement patterns have continued in the post-apartheid period. Only those black people who can afford the high costs of residential properties in the Western Cape have managed to move into the leafy suburban areas with their spectacular views. The latter comprise professionals, successful businesspeople, and the political elites. For the majority of black South Africans the social rights of all citizens as entrenched in the new National Constitution remain a far-off dream. The egalitarian and integrative potential of modern citizenship as Marshall defined it remains unrealized.

While black South Africans before 1994 were treated as political outcasts, white South Africans struggled among themselves over the proper understanding of citizenship. The majority of Afrikaners and those who supported the National Party elaborated a civic-republican vision of citizenship, while the majority of English-language speakers defended a classically liberal vision. For National Party supporters, citizenship entailed serving country and God. Those who defined themselves

as liberals were meanwhile able to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, including benefiting from the special advantages of being white in a racist country. Few were prepared to serve their country in any direct or indirect way. Many, provided with free education, left for greener pastures. Some left in fear of what they perceived as an inevitable civil war. Others left out of disgust and shame at the violation of human rights by a government claiming to protect their privileges. Some of those who stayed struggled to act according to their consciences. But the majority acquiesced silently.

These different experiences help explain some paradoxical features of contemporary South African politics. Members of the new black political elite often say that they would rather deal with Afrikaners than with English-speaking South Africans. They regard Afrikaners as more committed to the new South Africa than white English-speakers. Most Afrikaners and black South Africans share a view of citizenship as defined by the civic-republican philosophical orientation. The elite Afrikaner also knows how to play the power game in a civic-republican citizenship model—underplaying the role of the individual and emphasizing loyalty to those in power.

The experience of black South Africans of being treated as subjects has put them at a disadvantage in negotiating the realities of the new South Africa. The illiteracy rate in some communities is as high as 60 percent, making it difficult for these citizens to understand what their rights and responsibilities are under the new Constitution. The Constitution is inaccessible to them as a tool for understanding and asserting their rights. Such citizens, particularly rural women and the young unemployed, are effectively disenfranchised. They are not in a position to make informed choices in the exercise of their citizenship. They are at the mercy of local and national demagogues who take it upon themselves to interpret what citizenship entails in the young democracy.

An added difficulty for the majority of rural black South Africans is the active promotion of traditionalism in rural areas. Many poor people, especially women in rural areas, continue to be subjected to tribal laws. Many fall victim to the

ravages of polygamy and are denied property and inheritance rights.

The entrenchment of traditionalism in the new South African Constitution creates tensions between different segments of the citizenry. Various factors led to this entrenchment. First, the divide-and-rule strategy of past white governments required the cooperation of traditional leaders—legitimate or illegitimate. These leaders insisted that the abolition of apartheid leave intact their base of power. Second, the alliance between the ANC and Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) also ensured that the interests of traditional leaders were not forgotten at the negotiation table. The obvious contradictions between democratic and traditional leadership on the one hand, and the ANC's commitment to gender equity and the protection of human rights on the other, did not deter those who were determined to ensure the continued alliance with traditional leaders as a lever for rural voter support. Objections from some women and young people did not carry enough weight.

South Africans today thus adhere ambiguously to conflicting notions of social membership. Traditionalists among the old Afrikaner elite and the old black African elite limit the ability of the state to pursue a credible agenda of promoting greater equality between citizens regardless of race, class, gender, geographic location, and age. How can women acquire leadership skills in an environment that stipulates that women cannot lead? How can young people make meaningful contributions to community life if they are seen as a threat to the established age hierarchy?¹⁰ Traditionalism in these ways undermines the liberal notion of citizenship as tending toward equality in terms of race, gender, and age.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

The very nature of the struggle for freedom created further complications for the definition and enactment of citizenship. Consider the impact of solidarity politics: solidarity among the oppressed majority black people was essential to the success of the liberation struggle. Equally important was solidarity among

those defending white privilege. Notable exceptions that occurred between the two extreme positions did not obliterate the chasm that developed between “them” and “us.”

Apartheid divided the country; communities were polarized in the struggle against it. Emphasizing the differences between black and white people, workers and managers, young and old, poor and rich, was essential to the whole project of mobilizing support for the course one was espousing. There was no scope in solidarity politics for gray areas—issues were painted in stark black-and-white terms. Solidarity networks bedevil South African politics to this day. C. R. D. Halisi refers to a kind of “dual citizenship” that creates tensions between loyalty to the nation and to one’s own group, however defined.¹¹

It is indeed fascinating to observe how often leaders of various groups cite particular features of their groups as insurmountable barriers to the pursuit of common goals. Yet the same leaders promptly change their tune once they become part of the ruling elite. Witness the change in rhetoric by Sam (né Mbadzima) Shilowa, the once uncompromising trade-union leader, who currently is the premier of Gauteng. He is quite comfortable establishing a minimum set of common goals to permit Gauteng to function as a successful province, even if it entails taking on his former trade-union colleagues.

Solidarity groups can and do damage the common good. For example, the stranglehold of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union on South Africa’s educational system has made it difficult to implement responsible reforms. Radical rhetoric masks the pursuit of narrow self-interest. The run up to the 1994 elections and the post-apartheid-era civil rights culture created an environment for virtually risk-free militant action. It is ironic that some of the teachers who became radical in the 1990s had not once stood up to the apartheid system. It has taken time for the post-apartheid government to learn how to balance the rights of individual citizens against the claims of interest groups allied to the ruling party. The minister of education elected in 1999 has brought sanity to the education system by insisting on professionalism and putting the national interest above subnational ones. But this process remains vulnerable to political pressure.

The problems of migrating from opposition politics to the mainstream are evident in many spheres of life in South Africa. Former activists who are now part of the establishment in both the public and private sector have to adjust to taking a broader view of public service beyond parochial constituency politics. This cultural change has its costs. Former activists find it difficult to accept that the wider national interest should prevail.

Indeed, some former activists feel understandably ambivalent about holding power and actually governing. After all, one goal of the liberation movement was to make South Africa ungovernable. Protests disrupted factories, schools, and townships where oppressed people lived. It was an effective strategy that demonstrated that even poor communities have the power to stop a powerful government machinery by refusing to make it work. It remains a challenge for the post-apartheid ANC government to enable various communities to recognize the new government as their own and to accept responsibility for making it work for the common good. It is still too easy for interest groups to threaten anarchy if they do not get their way in policy debates.

To these complexities must be added the unacknowledged cleavages between those who fought the antiapartheid struggle from the home front and those who went into exile. Even among those in exile there is a further division between those who were in the liberation camps and those who pursued personal development objectives whether sanctioned by the liberation movement or not. There seems to have developed a hierarchy of privilege. At the pinnacle of this hierarchy are the oldest members of the movement, the old guard—the Mandelas, Tambos, Sisulus, Mbekis, etc. They were the pillars of the modern ANC in prison and in exile. Next come these leaders' activist sons and daughters, and all those who were in leadership positions in the ANC camps in exile. Finally come the internal activists who were part of the mass democratic movement of South Africa that was responsible for reinvigorating antiapartheid activities in the 1980s and 1990s.

Evidence of this hierarchy comes in many forms: the allocation of portfolios in the cabinet of the first democratic government, parliamentary seats and positions of leadership within it,

and membership in the ANC leadership structures. For example, of the thirty cabinet ministers in the first democratic government in 1994 the ANC's share was nineteen. Thirteen of these cabinet positions went to those who had been in exile. Figures for the post-1999 election period reflected change: the ANC increased its share to twenty-four of the twenty-seven total cabinet posts because of the non-participation of the National Party. Fourteen of these went to those from exile and ten to home-based activists. The latter figures represent an easing of obligations to the old guard from exile who have either retired or died. Women from exile continue to dominate the leadership of Parliament in the post-1999-election era—exemplified in the position of speaker and deputy. There is greater equity at the provincial level where both former exiles and home-based activists are well represented.

Reward for loyalty and hardship endured in exile seems to have been an important consideration in allocating the “spoils” of liberation. The imperatives of survival in the risky exile environment were total loyalty and obedience to those in authority. The military culture that came with guerrilla warfare added to the entrenchment of an authoritarian culture. The political culture that evolved was antithetical to democratic principles and practices that embody respect for individual rights and tolerance for different viewpoints. The willingness to learn from others in a different political camp was perceived as a luxury that could not be afforded. In contrast, those who participated in the mass democratic movement within the country in the 1970s and 1980s embraced democratic approaches even though the actual practice may have on some occasions fallen short. The unfortunate outcome of this differential treatment of “exile” and “home” ANC activists has been the allocation of key portfolios to individuals who in some cases lacked the capabilities and/or experience to discharge their public responsibilities.

In addition, the public protector's office and the anticorruption unit under Judge Heath have been undermined by the readiness of ANC leaders to defend their own members. For example, the former minister of health, currently minister of foreign affairs, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, has yet to accept public

accountability for the mismanagement of the resources allocated to the anti-HIV/AIDS education program in the 1994–1996 era. She was protected and defended by her party despite evidence of acting in contravention of government procurement procedures. Similarly, the ANC has gone out of its way to protect the former minister of mineral and energy affairs, now minister of justice, Mr. Penuell Maduna. The public protector reported that Mr. Maduna falsely accused the auditor general of connivance with the apartheid government, but before Parliament could debate the public protector's recommendation that sanctions be applied, the office of the president issued a statement that the minister's political career was not at risk. It is difficult to see how the public can trust a government that fails to act impartially in dealing with members of its political party.

The ANC has in this regard acted like an ethnic group in Ndengwa's analysis of Kenyan politics: opportunities are dispensed in return for obligations discharged. It is not insignificant that the term "chief" is used in some circles of the ANC to refer to leaders of this "ethnic" group. Members in good standing are assured of protection even though the national interest may not be served by such action. Such protection does not create incentives for the evolution of a public service with a culture of accountability, nor does it encourage the development of a strong civic culture. The common good has suffered as a result.

THE NATURE OF THE SETTLEMENT

The very nature of the settlement between former citizens and subjects involved compromises that had the net effect of entrenching the privileges of those previously advantaged by the discriminatory system. Disappointment at the perceived lack of social justice by those who continue to suffer deprivation is understandable. So too is the anxiety and insecurity of those whose privileges would appear to hang by a thin thread.

There can be no doubt that the relatively peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa was a major achievement on the

part of those who slogged through it at the negotiation table and behind the scenes. The outcome was by its very nature a compromise. The extent to which one side compromised more than the other, or more than was essential to achieve a settlement, will continue to be debated. It is, however, understandable that those who had fought for freedom and the ideals of democracy were more conscious of the burden of history than their counterparts who had resisted democracy for so long. It is also inevitable that those in power needed a number of concessions in order to let go of their monopoly over power peacefully. Those desiring a settlement were convinced that they needed freedom above all. Compromise with an apartheid regime they knew could not be defeated in a civil war was an unavoidable price to pay.

The outcome, brutally stated, is that white South Africans got away with murder. They were not asked to give up any of their previous privileges. On the contrary, the settlement entrenched their privileges. For example, the provision for the protection of property rights is enshrined in the Constitution. Such a provision is essential to the security of those wanting to remain in the country as well as to those intending to invest in the South African economy. But it is a bitter pill to swallow for those who were long denied the right to acquire property.

Some privileges, of course, can never be undone. For example, how does one take away the education and work experience acquired by virtue of membership in an advantaged group? The persistence of white male dominance of the economy and other key sectors in society in the post-apartheid period is not surprising. South African white males were recipients of one of the longest and most successful affirmative-action programs in history. White male dominance remains the greatest sore point for many black South Africans. Efforts to redress the inherited imbalances have not been uniformly successful. Financial capital can be borrowed, but intellectual capital takes much longer to accumulate through hard work and experience. Affirmative-action appointments that ignore these realities have put victims of the legacy of racism and sexism in positions beyond their level of competence, sometimes with unfortunate results.

The ANC's black economic empowerment strategy has thus far focussed on black men. Some of them have become instant millionaires. The result has been to increase, rather than decrease, the inequalities within the country, particularly among and between black people. The poorest sectors who missed out on education and skills training in the apartheid era continue to bear the largest burden of poverty. It is against this background that the 1998 public comment by the former deputy minister of trade and industry in the Mandela government that black people must not be ashamed of becoming stinking rich was most inappropriate.¹²

Another critical area that has suffered from hasty efforts at "transformation" has been the education sector. There seems to be reluctance on the part of those driving the transformation agenda to recognize the impact of the legacy of poor investment in human development. The appointment of heads of higher educational institutions has become politically fraught. The laudable ideal of ensuring greater participation by all stakeholders in the appointment of educational leaders has unfortunately undermined the imperatives of bringing wisdom to bear on the selection process. Many of the processes have become *elections* rather than *selections*. The outcome has been to lumber some of the weakest institutions with the weakest leaders. Such leaders not only discredit the higher education system as a whole but reinforce the worst racist prejudices among conservatives. Resisting populist approaches in this regard is difficult, but serves the long-term goals of society better. Postponing short-term gratification allows for greater confidence in the new dispensation among citizens across all segments of society and forges a shared view of the future.

CONCLUSION

Some of the recent furor about the persistence of racism in the society reflects the frustration some black South Africans experience in seeing the continued privileges of their white counterparts without much evidence of awareness of the price paid by black people for those privileges. There is, of course, persistent racism in many quarters. But framing the problem in the man-

ner in which the Human Rights Commission did in its 2000 Racism in the Media hearings is unlikely to take the country much further in healing the divide. Racism in the media reflects the deeper problems within society. There are still too many white people who are unconscious of their racist assumptions about black people. A process of greater awareness, self-reflection, and education is key to success. But black people will also need to make peace with the reality that all South Africans—black and white—are tainted by the racist past. Time is needed for healing.

If South Africa is to consolidate its young democracy, its leaders must come to grips with their competing visions of citizenship. In particular, it is critical to have an understanding of the differences between liberals and “civic republicans.” Consider the inability of President Mbeki to communicate with Mr. Tony Leon, the leader of the main opposition party, the Democratic Party. To Mr. Mbeki, who sacrificed his youth for the liberation struggle, group loyalty must sometimes outweigh impartial justice. To Mr. Leon, such “civic republican” politics seem illiberal and undemocratic. It is in the national interest for the two leaders to understand their different approaches to citizenship and to find a way of working together to consolidate democracy.

Equally important is an understanding of the interplay between the two visions of citizenship at the various levels of South African society. How individuals enact their civic-republican citizenship may enable or constrain their ability to participate in a political environment in which a liberal notion of citizenship is predominant or assumed to be the only one. There is also a need for greater vigilance against the capture of the state in the name of civic-republican citizenship. Such capture for purposes of creating opportunities for members of special groups at the expense of the common good can only weaken democracy.

It also seems unlikely that adherence to only a liberal citizenship approach by those previously advantaged is sustainable in the long run. It is likely to become more and more difficult for white South Africans to justify the demands for their rights as citizens without being seen to be willing to participate in civic

duties beyond the minimalist liberal approach to citizenship. Black South Africans have risked their lives, careers, and personal development opportunities to attain the liberty enjoyed by all today. Indeed, many have paid with their lives. It is not realistic to imagine that there will not be pressure for a greater contribution to the transformation process from all those enjoying the benefits of democracy. It makes sense for the white sector of the community to make an offer to build trust between all segments of the society. A once-off voluntary income-related reconciliation tax could be a useful tool.

There are many South Africans who subscribe to neither of the two philosophical approaches to citizenship that I have described. They are sophisticated enough to understand that there is merit in each approach. They subscribe to a notion of citizenship that reflects the reality of South Africa's history and that blends the best of the liberal and civic-republican approaches. Many of these citizens are professionals, academics, and those of the new middle class. They are the new democrats, and they can help create a new political culture—one that transcends the legacy of the past.

At the same time, South Africans need to be willing to acknowledge the fault lines in their new democracy. South Africans tend to be either triumphant or pessimistic about the future of the country. Greater balance is required to begin to tackle part of the legacy of the past in a systematic way. Investing in high-quality education at every level is essential to long-term success to enable citizens to acquire the skills and capabilities to enact their citizenship. In the shorter term, leading by example at all levels of society is critical. Political parties have a major role to play in this regard.

How does South Africa build a civic culture from the past it has inherited? Many countries have civic education embedded in the school curriculum. What models work and what can be learned from those? Elizabeth Frazer examined attempts by the Labour Party in the United Kingdom to help ensure that young people feel that they have a stake in the society and the community in which they live.¹³ She concludes that such an educational process can only succeed if it does not protect children and young people from the harsh realities of power.

The late arrival of South Africa's transition to democracy has been both a blessing and an impediment. It is a blessing in a continent that has paid such a high price for democratic politics. South Africa can benefit from the lessons learned by fellow African countries about what works and what does not. Those lessons have not been appropriately captured in a form that promotes their utility as case studies. At an Association of African Universities conference in 1998, President Mkapa chided the heads of African universities for their failure to respond to the fact that the strongest centers of African studies are not in Africa, but elsewhere in the North and West. Africa has yet to develop a culture of disciplined critical self-reflection.

Critical self-reflection is essential to Africa's success. It will take time, energy, and vigilance to translate the promises of *uhuru* (a Swahili word for freedom) into reality. Liberation politics, as indicated above, is not an adequate preparation for democratic governance. An active process of institutional cultural change is called for to transform former liberation movements into political parties that are suited to serve a modern democratic state.

Leadership styles suitable for liberation struggles have proven inadequate and inappropriate in accountable democratic politics. Yesterday's liberators can turn into today's despots—witness Obote of Uganda, Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mugabe of Zimbabwe, etc. African leaders, like their counterparts elsewhere, need to be made accountable to the people they represent. Intolerance of criticism should not be allowed to silence critics, even if the price of speaking up may be high. The long-term cost of silence is much higher. The tendency to tolerate mistakes and mismanagement in the early stages of transition to democracy often turns into passivity and silence in the face of abuses of power in the long run.

It will take maturity to have a democratic society that works to ensure that hierarchies of race, class, and gender are not allowed to undermine the notion of equality of all citizens. Such a maturation process will require unlearning all the myths of superiority and inferiority deeply ingrained in most South Africans. It will also involve an appreciation of the richness that diversity has endowed South Africa with. The differences be-

tween men and women, between various cultures, religions, and lifestyles, will have to be seen as strong pillars on which to build the future together.

Most important, all citizens will have to commit themselves to both making peace with the past and redressing its injustices. The generosity of those previously disadvantaged who have demonstrated their willingness to forgive and reconcile will have to be matched by generosity on the part of those advantaged by past discrimination. Promoting greater equity in society is critical. It will entail affirmative action for those who were denied the opportunities to develop their talents to enable them to function effectively in the increasingly competitive world. It will also involve ensuring that all South Africans are given the opportunity to use their talents to build the new democracy—black and white, men and women, young and old, rich and poor.

South Africa has a window of opportunity to establish this kind of democratic citizenship. As Feliks Gross so aptly states, “citizenship reflects a major dilemma of democracy: it touches on the relationship between an individual and society, between an individual and the state, and hence, between the collective and the individual. The history of the human struggle for freedom is reflected in the dialectical issue, in search for a workable and just balance between those two components of society.”¹⁴ The consolidation of South Africa’s democracy depends on the success with which it manages this dilemma.

ENDNOTES

¹Dipankar Gupta, “Survivors or Survivals—Reconciling Citizenship and Cultural Particularisms,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34 (33) (14 August 1999): 2314.

²Stephen N. Ndengwa, “Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Moments in Kenyan Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 91 (2) (September 1997): 599–615; J. M. Barbalet, *Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 1.

³Ndengwa, “Citizenship and Ethnicity,” 602.

- ⁴The 1999 Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission details the abuses of power by National Party operatives who had captured the state to promote their interests at the expense of the wider body of South African citizens.
- ⁵Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (London: James Currey, 1997). See also C. R. D. Halisi, "Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa," *Africa Today* 45 (3–4) (1998): 423–438.
- ⁶See Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988).
- ⁷See Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989).
- ⁸See Mamphela Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1993).
- ⁹See Wilmot James and Mary Simons, eds., *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip; in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1989).
- ¹⁰Gupta, "Survivors or Survivals," 2315.
- ¹¹C. R. D. Halisi, "Citizenship and Populism in the New South Africa," 432–433.
- ¹²Heribert Adam, "Embarrassment of 'Filthy Richness,'" *Daily Mail & Guardian*, 7 March 1997, <<http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/97mar1/7mar-riches.html>>.
- ¹³Elizabeth Frazer, "Citizenship Education: Anti-political Culture and Political Education in Britain," *Political Studies* 28 (2000): 88–103.
- ¹⁴Feliks Gross, *The Civic and Tribal State: The State, Ethnicity, and the Multiethnic State* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998).

While obnoxious to the world, the system of Afrikaner domination was quite stable at the beginning of the 1980s, resting as it did on three pillars: vastly superior state power, white unity, and black political fragmentation. Over the next decade this system disintegrated until it finally was abolished in the mid-1990s. The system was undermined on the one hand by long-term demographic and economic trends and on the other hand by swelling black resistance. This produced such ideological and political disarray in the Afrikaner leadership ranks that they decided to risk the unbanning of the liberation movements, followed by negotiations for a power-sharing system. A lack of any strategic vision on the leadership's part, coupled with tough bargaining by the African National Congress negotiators, produced the outcome very few had expected and many feared: largely untrammelled majority rule in a unitary state.

Hermann Giliomee

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Who's Got the Map? The Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa

INTRODUCTION

SINCE THE DISMANTLING OF APARTHEID, white people in South Africa have not experienced a tangible decline in living standards.¹ Most still live in big suburban houses, drive expensive cars, and send their children to good schools. Despite the affirmative action program of the African National Congress (ANC) government, unemployment remains low in the white population. On the surface, not much seems to have changed for white South Africans. But just below the surface, white Afrikaners must live with a host of new uncertainties. Over the last ten years, as a result of the effort to transform South Africa into a democratic and nonracial society, the premises for being Afrikaner—a white Afrikaans-speaker—have changed dramatically.²

The field of opinions among Afrikaners about recent changes can be usefully divided in two, using Pierre Bourdieu's notions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy.³ Heterodox Afrikaners welcome the new challenges and champion the opening of the social field, while the orthodox resist change and cling to established values. In order to understand the present situation of Afrikaners in South Africa today, it will be useful to begin with a brief look at the history of Afrikaner identity.

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CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

The Nationalist Party (NP) electoral victory in 1948 and the initiation of the apartheid system were the culmination of the political success of a Christian nationalist Afrikaner movement.⁴ This movement was launched early in the twentieth century by a group of intellectuals returning from studies in Germany and the Netherlands. As the movement became stronger, it came to encompass a wide range of organizations. Apart from the NP, these included most significantly the Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret society; the Dutch Reformed Church; the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organizations; and a range of companies, such as the insurance giants Sanlam and Santam and the publishing house Nasionale Pers (National Press).

Racial differences have been important in South Africa ever since the first European set foot in the country, but the new Afrikaner nationalists added an ethnic principle to the existing racial categorization by giving the label “Afrikaner” a new exclusive ethnic content. This was represented in the notion of the Afrikaner *volk*—a genuine, distinct people with their own *volksgeist* (to use Herder’s term), called by God to fulfill its destiny as Christians, as a civilization—as a people.⁵ Piet Meyer, once chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond (1958–1972) and a range of other nationalist bodies, captured this Christian nationalist definition when he stated:

To Afrikanerdom belong only those who by virtue of blood, soil, culture, tradition, belief, and calling form an organic unitary society. This nation is by nature an organic wearer of authority with the patriarchal leader as chief bearer of authority of the nation, and with the members of the nation as active and cooperative workers. The national Afrikaner state is in this sense also a medium of Afrikanerdom to protect and promote its own fulfilment of calling.⁶

This Afrikaner identity was based on values of God-fearing Calvinism, structures of patriarchal authority (husband and father, priest, school principal, political leaders—all of whom were representing God on earth), adherence to the traditions invented by the nationalist movement, conservative values such

as the fundamental importance of the nuclear family and heterosexuality, and, above all, the importance of whiteness.⁷

After 1948, the South African state apparatus was used to promote Christian nationalist morals and values, and a normative understanding of Afrikaner identity became entrenched. As apartheid policies took hold, it became increasingly difficult to question the authority of Christian nationalism.⁸

Economic upheaval was a central element in this mobilization of ethnic consciousness. After the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), a lengthy rural crisis and rapid industrialization turned many Afrikaners from farmers into an impoverished urban proletariat. The living standards of Afrikaans-speaking whites were significantly lower than those of English-speaking whites, and in the cities they had to compete with blacks for jobs. Anthony Marx has argued that apartheid fundamentally was an attempt to solve intra-white social, economic, and political conflicts between the English and the Afrikaners.⁹ The apartheid state initiated a massive affirmative action program for Afrikaners: they staffed the government, received special funds for education, and were given preferential treatment in the awarding of business contracts.¹⁰

While most Afrikaners benefited enormously from apartheid economically, they had to comply outwardly with the prevailing Christian nationalist credo. As a result, generations of Afrikaners grew up in a social space where the boundaries of identity were sharply drawn.¹¹ If they failed to embody the “good Afrikaner,” they could not only lose their material privileges, but also be ostracized from their communities, churches, or workplaces. In a recent article Deborah Posel pointed out that the privilege and power of Afrikaner civil servants functioned as a “golden handcuff”: jobs could be revoked just as easily as they were supplied. There are examples of Afrikaners who were dismissed simply because they were not members of the NP.¹²

Because Christian nationalists managed to present themselves as the only true representatives of the Afrikaner people, they were able to conflate political and theological concerns. Opposing apartheid meant opposing not only one’s own people, but also, ultimately, the will of God.

POST-APARTHEID ORDER

Since the election of 1994 and the adoption of the new Constitution in 1996, white minority rule has been supplanted by black majority rule as South Africa tries to reinvent itself as a democracy. Liberal democratic values have replaced the puritanical credo that was so central to apartheid. The easing of censorship, the legalization of abortion, the abolition of the death penalty, and protective laws regarding sexual orientation make the new South Africa not only more liberal than the apartheid state, but also more liberal than many Western democracies. The new Constitution upholds a range of basic rights that were denied during apartheid, such as the abolition of different types of discrimination, the freedom of religion, the freedom of expression, the freedom of association, and the freedom to travel and live wherever one wishes.

With the fall of the apartheid regime, the Christian nationalist elite lost the political power to define Afrikaner—or any other—identity, leading to a reopening of the social field. A cacophony of voices has been raised in debate about what it means to be an Afrikaner. These voices both constitute, and are reactions to, the situation in which Afrikaners have found themselves after the end of apartheid: the collapse of Christian nationalist power, in a context where the old Afrikaner identity is badly tarnished by its association with apartheid and its incompatibility with new liberal norms. Above all, it has become illegitimate to express one's identity along racial lines—especially if one is a white South African.

THE CHANGING STATUS OF AFRIKANER SYMBOLS

As Benedict Anderson has argued, a national identity is formed through the use of collective symbols.¹³ In order to assert a new South Africa, a range of new national symbols has been constructed to replace the old symbols of apartheid. Abandoning the old symbols has had particular significance for Afrikaners, because the symbols used to imagine Christian nationalist Afrikaner identity were also the national symbols of apartheid South Africa. South Africa's national day was the "Day of the

Covenant,” a commemoration of the covenant Afrikaners made with God after their victory over the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River in 1838. The Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria was a celebration of the Afrikaners’ Great Trek. The national anthem was an Afrikaner anthem; the flag was an Afrikaner flag. The streets were named after heroes from nationalist Afrikaner history, and airports and dams bore the names of Afrikaner politicians.

In his pioneering work on the sociology of religion, Emile Durkheim pointed out that the totem of a group is sacred because it functions as the materialization of the “spirit” of the group—of its collectivity.¹⁴ The worship of the totem is a celebration of the group itself. Some recent scholars would argue that totems are not symbolizations of something already existing, but, on the contrary, that this “something” only exists through symbolization.¹⁵ It is by the act of worship that we create—or “imagine,” in Anderson’s term—the very object of our worship. Arguably, the disappearance of old Afrikaner symbols has a radical impact on the reproduction of collective Afrikaner identity.

Some old symbols have certainly changed. The national calendar has been revised: the Day of the Covenant has been adopted by the new regime, but renamed the “Day of Reconciliation.” New holidays have been established that celebrate black history and the values of the new nation; for example, Youth Day (on the anniversary of the Soweto uprising), Freedom Day, International Human Rights Day, Heritage Day, Workers’ Day, and National Women’s Day. At the same time, few monuments have been removed, and even fewer desecrated. This is likely in part due to an apparent government strategy not to upset the white population. Furthermore, monuments such as the Afrikaans Language Monument in Paarl and the Voortrekker Monument are tourist attractions and a source of revenue that benefits the general economy. But while these monuments have survived, the reverence that once surrounded them has not. Two years ago, for example, a television personality called the Voortrekker Monument “big and stupid,” and suggested that it be painted pink and become a site for a gay club or a drug rave.¹⁶ The post-apartheid state does not censor such state-

ments, but the remarks provoked an outcry among certain orthodox (in the Bourdieuan sense) Afrikaner groups.

The strong reaction clearly showed the emotional significance national monuments still have for some Afrikaners—either as a positive identification with the Christian nationalist values of the past, or as an emblem of a disgraceful past that is best ridiculed and rejected. In this way, monuments and other symbols become centers of contestation and debate over abstract issues of collective identity.

REWRITING HISTORY

The changing status of national Afrikaner symbols reflects a general delegitimization of Afrikaner national history. An important part of Christian nationalism was the writing of a specific national history, which in essence went as follows: God made the Afrikaners his Chosen People by leading them through immense suffering at the hands of the British, and by giving them victory in battles against the heathen blacks.¹⁷ This narrative lent substance to the nationalists' sense of themselves as Afrikaners and explained their right to rule South Africa according to "the will of God."

In the new democratic order, this national history is being challenged. As a consequence, new history books are being written, historical events are publicly reinterpreted in speeches and media presentations, and school curricula are being changed as the deeds of black South Africans play a more prominent role in a new national narrative. To give one example: at the banks of Blood River, the monument celebrating the Afrikaner victory over the Zulus in 1838 is now being augmented by a new monument to commemorate the Zulu victims of the battle. The history of the Anglo-Boer War is being similarly rewritten, to stress the participation of black soldiers; a monument to their memory has also been erected in the Orange Free State.

A crucial contribution to the reevaluation of Afrikaner history has been the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In public hearings, victims came forward to tell their stories and publicly describe a catalog of abuses related to "killing, abduction, torture, or severe ill-treatment"—terms that

had been carefully selected by the TRC and defined in the mandate of the commission.¹⁸ This process has been central to the creation of the new South Africa, as it affirms one of its fundamental premises—that apartheid was a “crime against humanity.” The stories of cruelty and suffering subvert the image of Afrikaner nationalists as righteous Christians preserving civilization in Africa.

The reactions to the TRC among Afrikaners have varied widely. Some, like former state president P. W. Botha, have called it everything from “a circus” to a “witch hunt for Afrikaners,” denouncing it as an ANC ploy to even old scores with longtime enemies. Some prominent Afrikaners have, not surprisingly, expressed outrage at the new challenges to Christian nationalist history. At a celebration of the old Day of the Covenant, Pieter Mulder of the Afrikaner party the Freedom Front declared that “Afrikaners will not allow their history to be questioned!”¹⁹

Still, some other prominent Afrikaners have welcomed the opportunity to come to terms publicly with a painful past. In *Country of my Scull*, a book about the TRC, the Afrikaans poet and journalist Antjie Krog recounted some of the stories that came out of the hearings, which she covered extensively for national radio. Her experience led her to reflect on what the hearings meant to her as an Afrikaner. In the book she writes of her own reaction after F. W. de Klerk had denied any responsibility for the crimes of the past:

Speechless I stand before the Archbishop. Whence will words now come? For us. We who hang quivering and ill from this soundless space of Afrikaner past? What does one say? What the hell does one do with this load of decrowned skeletons, origins, shame and ash?

And later:

Was Apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and braaivleis? How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart?²⁰

Krog's impassioned response remains somewhat unusual: it is a well-known fact that the majority of whites cannot identify with the stories of violent atrocities retailed by the TRC.²¹ Most say that they did nothing wrong, they just lived their lives as good law-abiding citizens. They never tortured or killed anybody. That they were beneficiaries of a system—kept in place with the help of those who committed the human-rights violations, at the expense of nonwhites—is rarely acknowledged.²²

LANGUAGE

A third area in which a fundamental aspect of Afrikaner identity has been challenged is language. The promotion of the Afrikaans language was one of the most important features of the nationalist Afrikaner movement, and it became a vehicle for mobilizing a pan-South African Afrikaner identity at the start of the twentieth century.²³ During the apartheid years, the government turned Afrikaans into the official language of state. But since 1994, Afrikaans has had to find its place among ten other official languages.²⁴ It has been replaced by English as the official language of command in the army and the police. And in television broadcasts, it now has to share airtime with programs in the other official languages.

Afrikaans, like the other key ideological ingredients in Afrikaner nationalism, was taught in the public schools. The favoring of public white schools in general and Afrikaner schools in particular at the expense of black education has created one of the major problems facing post-apartheid South Africa. As a result, the public schools are under increasing pressure to offer education in languages other than Afrikaans. The use of Afrikaans in schools is likely to decline, because many colored Afrikaans-speakers prefer to be taught in English, which is widely perceived to improve their career opportunities in the new South Africa, while Afrikaans still carries the stigma of being the “language of apartheid.”

Different Afrikaners have reacted differently to the highly emotional issue of the status of Afrikaans. On the one hand, some argue that Afrikaans should now be used without any

special arrangements to protect it. The language has never been as alive and well as it is today, exactly because it has shed its burden of being the official language of oppression. Instead of moaning about the possible extinction of Afrikaans, one should simply keep using it. And many do. The arts scene is blooming with bands and writers using Afrikaans as their medium of expression. The number of copies of Afrikaans novels has increased. A champion of this line of argument is playwright Pieter Fourie, one of the managers of the annual Klein Karoo National Arts Festival in Oudtshoorn, where about a hundred thousand people gather for Afrikaans theater and music. According to Fourie, the festival celebrates the new vibrancy of the language and the wide variety in the types of Afrikaans spoken in different parts of the country and Namibia. Fourie's festival, by highlighting unorthodox ways of using the language, challenges the notion of *suiwer* ("pure") Afrikaans, which was so important to the Christian nationalists.

But other observers, especially academics, are more worried. Facing the global domination of English at the expense of smaller vernaculars, such as Afrikaans, and the local dominance of the Nguni languages, such as isiZulu and isiXhosa (spoken by almost 40 percent of the population as their home language), some scholars fear that the smaller languages, including Afrikaans, will die unless something is done. Their concern has spurred the formation of a number of groups devoted to promoting the status of the Afrikaans language, such as *Stigting vir Afrikaans* ("Foundation for Afrikaans") and *Afrikaanse Taal-en Kultuurvereniging* ("Afrikaans language and culture society").

The most recent, and perhaps most significant, of these groups calls itself "Group of 63." A highly varied assortment of Afrikaner intellectuals, it "brings together perhaps a broader range of political thought than has gathered around any Afrikaner cultural project since early last century."²⁵ The members of the "Group of 63" argue that the battle for protecting Afrikaans should be seen as a larger project of protecting minority languages in South Africa as such. They are at pains to stress that the group is concerned with not only white Afrikaans-speakers,

but also with colored Afrikaans-speakers. They also stress that they have no sympathy with the discredited ethnic politics that eventually led to apartheid.²⁶

AFRIKANERDOM IN A NEW CONTEXT

The democratic Constitution has established new rules for discussions of issues of identity and group rights. The “Group of 63,” for example, tries to cut across racial divisions and avoid white exclusionism; it tries to distance itself from the apartheid past and to speak the language of “minority rights.”

The end of apartheid has made it necessary for Afrikaners to establish a new sense of identity in a new context. The influential co-founder of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, a liberal politician, scholar, and Afrikaner, deals with the issue in his latest book, *Tough Choices: Reflections of an Afrikaner African*. Because the “Afrikaner” has been identified in the past with intolerance, he argues that “Afrikaners will have to apply themselves imaginatively to the task of establishing who they are in the new South Africa. In the process they will have to free themselves from a part of their history and work to create a new one.”²⁷ Van Zyl Slabbert believes that “Afrikaners” should consist of all Afrikaans-speakers, regardless of color, but he also asserts the need to formulate a new set of specifically “Afrikaner” values. Despite calling for such values, he does not specify any particular one, apart from saying that they should be nonracist and inclusive.²⁸

South Africa after apartheid has become a virtual battleground where different actors are trying to define Afrikaner identity. Collective symbols, history, and language are central to these debates. Within this complex field of negotiations, it is possible to map out certain positions and trends.

THE REPOSITIONING OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The old guardians of Christian nationalism are now busy repositioning themselves in the new order. A common tendency among them is an effort to distance themselves from narrow Afrikaner nationalism. Like van Zyl Slabbert, they wish to

redefine Afrikaner identity along linguistic lines. In this way, major players and once the most zealous protectors of whiteness—such as the *New NP* (or NNP: the prefix signals change), the Afrikaner Bond (its name changed from Afrikaner Broederbond, to include women), and the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organizations—have all tried to include the roughly three million colored Afrikaans-speakers. Marthinus van Schalkwyk, the leader of the NNP, put it clearly in a speech in Parliament recently: “We in the New NP say there are no colour or political requirements to be an Afrikaner. It is an inclusive concept based on only one criterion: *language*.”²⁹

In the business sector, a similar trend is evident. Well-known Afrikaner companies are struggling to recast themselves in order to appeal to all South Africans. A good example is the old nationalist publishing house Nasionale Pers (National Press), which has changed its name to “Naspers,” a less nationalistic-sounding brand name. Naspers now publishes a significant number of English as well as Afrikaans titles. Similarly, the newspaper *Die Burger*, the old NP mouthpiece, now has a readership that is 50 percent colored. The insurance giant Sanlam is selling shares to non-Afrikaners and arranging “cultural understanding” workshops in order to integrate new non-white colleagues into the company. And the old Afrikaner Volkskasbank has merged with an English bank to form a new bank, called ABSA.

DEPOLITICIZATION OF AFRIKANER IDENTITY

Many Afrikaner organizations, academics, and politicians have expressed concern that their culture and language are under serious threat in the new South Africa.³⁰ One of the more prominent ones is the historian and political scientist Hermann Giliomee, who seems to conflate culture and language, without specifying exactly what that culture consists of. And because he believes the language is under threat, by default so too is the culture.³¹

At the same time, there is a marked tendency to depoliticize Afrikaner identity. “Ordinary Afrikaners” seem not to worry much about their “cultural survival,” as I discovered in my

fieldwork in and around Cape Town. Opinion polls also indicate that most Afrikaners are mainly concerned with issues like education, the economy, jobs, and, above all, crime. These concerns are shared by most other groups in South Africa. In fact, many Afrikaners prefer *not* to associate themselves with an ethnic identity at all. When asked, individuals who formerly might have called themselves “Afrikaner” now increasingly define themselves according to their profession, their geographical location, or simply as “South African.”

THE RETURN OF RACE

Despite the efforts of the new democratic government, South Africa remains thoroughly racialized. When Afrikaners try to evade the implications of race, their actions and statements are likely to be interpreted within a racial context. Thus, when a white person makes a statement, it is perceived as a *white* person speaking—making a *white* statement.

Race remains one of the main organizing principles in social life. In a recent article, Melissa Steyn puts it this way: “. . . I cannot remember a time when I was not aware of the fact that I was white, that it was the single most important fact about my existence, that it determined every aspect of my life.” Elsewhere Steyn remarks that “their existence as ‘blacks’ made me ‘white.’”³² In the Christian nationalist construction of the Afrikaner Self, blacks functioned as the Other.³³ They were less civilized, corrupt, unfaithful, disorderly, incompetent, irrational, and so on.

In post-apartheid South Africa, it is, of course, no longer legitimate to express such ideas publicly, but racial stereotyping remains. The concerns of ordinary Afrikaners with schools and crime are overtly devoid of racial thinking. But if one scrutinizes how they are formulated and explained by the white political opposition, as well as by individuals, it is clear that racial prejudices often lie behind these concerns.³⁴ For example, I interviewed a fifty-seven-year-old Afrikaner who worked for the Department of Education. He explained the problems in black schools this way: “The teachers cramp three classes together in one room, about eighty to ninety kids, in order for

the two others to sit outside—they are like lizards, they like to sit in the sun. That is why there always are chairs outside. Africans just have a much more lazy way of doing things and they're never in a hurry." When he described the white schools, his mood brightened: "There the kids WANT to be better and the teachers WANT to take it to a higher level! The black kids have no ambitions."

Racial stereotypes are most obvious when white people make such generalizations about how black people behave. But sometimes the stereotyping is subtler, as when a weak South African economy is said to be due to the black government's inability to run a modern economy—"they simply don't have what it takes," as it has been put to me more than once.

The persistence of racial reasoning (thinking in terms of racial categories) also comes out in the effort to redefine Afrikaner identity along linguistic lines. Every time I heard a white Afrikaans-speaker insist that an Afrikaner is solely defined as "someone who speaks Afrikaans" (thereby including nonwhites), the context or content of their statement indicated that the Afrikaner they talked about was without any doubt a *white* Afrikaans speaker. There was, in short, a discrepancy between the explicit and implicit meaning of their words.

The speech by van Schalkwyk referred to earlier is an example. After declaring that language alone makes one an Afrikaner, he goes on to say that the NNP is fighting a battle "... to convince Afrikaners that there is no salvation in the Ian Smith option of mobilising whites on the basis of their anger and their fear," and that the NNP does not support a *volkstaat* for the Afrikaners. This is not because there is no room for coloreds in the proposed *volkstaat*, but because the NNP does not want "the Afrikaners to isolate themselves."³⁵ This is clearly a reference to *white* Afrikaners—indeed, to white Afrikaners who are also white separatists.

SEPARATISM

Whereas there is a conspicuous attempt to depoliticize and deracialize Afrikaner identity, there are nevertheless other voices in the current debate. Some Afrikaner intellectuals still uphold

the paramount importance of whiteness and Afrikaner ethnic identity and argue for an independent *volkstaat* for Afrikaners.

The idea of a *volkstaat* dates back to the middle of the 1980s. It stems from right-wing Afrikaner discontent with the NP government. One of the organizing principles of apartheid was territorial segregation through the “homeland” system, which allocated 13 percent of the country to blacks so whites could reign over the remaining area. The policy was never fully realized, and in 1985 the NP government gave up on the idea of total territorial segregation and stated that it would restore citizenship to all blacks permanently residing in “white areas.”³⁶ In response, some critics of the NP policy change proposed that the homeland system be inverted: white Afrikaners could withdraw to a smaller area of the country and leave the rest to black majority rule. The NP, like the rest of the nationalist establishment, rejected this proposal, and tried instead to remain in power by introducing a range of transformation policies, including the creation of a tricameral parliament that incorporated Indians and coloreds. As we know now, this strategy ended in failure: the NP finally had to surrender power to the ANC.

While the NP released Nelson Mandela and initiated the transformation process that would lead to democracy and a united South Africa, the dream of a separate *volkstaat* lived on. At the end of the 1980s there were disagreements as to where such an area should be, but in 1991 the first steps were taken toward creating an Afrikaner homeland. According to Giliomee, there are now several dozen organizations in South Africa that hope to create a *volkstaat*.³⁷ Lately the Freedom Front has accepted that it is unlikely that Afrikaners will get an independent country and have settled for an area with relative autonomy—for example, a new province.³⁸

The most serious effort to create an Afrikaner homeland has occurred in Orania, a little town consisting of prefab houses, located in the Karoo semi-desert in the Northern Cape, bordering the Orange Free State. Here, a group of separatists has founded “a growing point of a future *volkstaat*”—a province they imagine filling an arid area between Orania and the Atlantic Ocean. After initial problems persuading Afrikaners to re-

settle, Orania now has more than six hundred inhabitants, and property values have doubled. The town contains a high-tech dairy farm with a thousand cows, is South Africa's biggest producer of pecan nuts, and has a biodynamic grape farm that produces fruit for overseas export. One of the town's two schools is fully computerized with all the pupils having their own computer beginning in grade 1. A local server is being built to provide Internet access to Oranians. It is one of the very few places in South Africa where there are *no* nonwhites—not even working as domestic workers or doing manual labor.

Orania does not want to be part of the new South Africa and has thus not accepted the new national symbols of the country. Its residents celebrate their own holidays, hoist their own *volkstaat* flag, and have their own museum. The extent to which Oranians imagine themselves to be “outside” South Africa is evident in the way they talk about “exporting products to South Africa.”

The argument of Oranians is that Afrikaners as a group will die out in the new South Africa, because they form too small a minority.³⁹ They do not trust the ANC government to leave space for them, despite minority rights being guaranteed in the Constitution. To illustrate their fears, they refer to the changing of school curricula, the new collective symbols, the new recounting of South Africa's history, and the new regime's affirmative action program for blacks. They argue that Afrikaners cannot be free under such circumstances. Only if they build an independent state will they be able to survive as a distinct group.

It is not without reason that many Oranians feel threatened in the new South Africa, because they uphold a Christian nationalist identity that has now become illegitimate. But although they have a statue of one of the main architects of apartheid, H. F. Verwoerd, they in no way argue along racist lines for a reversion to apartheid. On the contrary, they are painfully aware of the altered landscape of power and the new rules of legitimacy. Like the nationalist organizations, the Oranians know that they have to make race “appear to disappear.” For their project to succeed, it must be formulated in a way that does not allow them to be officially labeled racists. To be labeled as such would effectively mean exclusion from the

constitutional framework of the new South Africa, and it is exactly within the new Constitution that the people in Orania find the possibility for self-determination.⁴⁰ Hence, there is a paradox: the Oranians are highly skeptical of the new South Africa, and do not want to be part of it, but at the same time the new Constitution of South Africa gives legal protection to them. Leaving the *Blut und Boden* rhetoric of the old Afrikaner nationalists behind, they couch their Christian nationalist values in legitimate cultural terms, coupled with sophisticated arguments about the value of voluntary association.⁴¹

Even though coloreds, like Afrikaners, can make solid claims to Dutch roots and to Afrikaans as their mother tongue, non-white Afrikaans-speakers are not regarded by Oranians as being Afrikaners at all. Since the Oranians are aware that most of the traditional Afrikaner organizations now include non-whites, they call themselves “Boere-Afrikaner.” This label sets them apart from other Afrikaner groups, and also defines the (racial) purity of their own ranks.⁴² As one young Oranian put it, speaking of colored Afrikaners, “I think they have a crisis. I am proud of being an Afrikaner, proud of being a Boer. And if they are not proud of being blacks, it’s not my problem. Why do they have to take on my nationality?”

ALTERNATIVE AFRIKANERDOM

A very different expression of current Afrikaner identity is to be found among young artists. Like the separatists, many artists politicize Afrikaner identity and display a high degree of self-consciousness as white Afrikaners. But unlike the separatists, they are extremely skeptical of the established values long associated with the group.

A good example of this is the cartoon magazine *Bitterkomix*. It was founded by two art students from the University of Stellenbosch in 1992. They have since published nine issues together, turning *Bitterkomix* into an institution within Afrikaner youth culture. According to thirty-one-year-old Conrad Botes, one of the founders, the magazine has a distinct goal: to undermine the patriarchal authority represented by father, priest,

and principal. Under apartheid, such figures customarily left no space for independent thinking and questioning—people simply had to obey. According to Botes, repressive Christian nationalist values still inform the everyday experience of many Afrikaners.⁴³ His publication's antiauthoritarian agenda is evident in its wildly anarchistic content. One finds everything from explicit sex to violence and blasphemy in its irreverent pages, as its creators consciously play with the taboos of Christian nationalism, deconstruct historical myths, and ridicule the stereotypes of the Afrikaners.

There are numerous other examples of how "traditional" Afrikaner values are being challenged by young Afrikaners. Apart from graphic artists, there are a multitude of bands, writers, playwrights, and performers who are eager to challenge and provoke. Many of them appropriate traditional Afrikaner iconography, using old symbols in new ways, to wage a kind of "semiotic guerrilla warfare."⁴⁴ For example, young DJs mix techno beats, popular Afrikaner songs from the 1970s, and tunes made famous by Miriam Makeba and other black artists.

These Afrikaner artists articulate a somewhat ambivalent position, summed up by a young painter who told me: "I am an Afrikaner, though I hate the Afrikaners!" These artists recognize that they belong to a group with a certain history, skin color, and language. They express themselves in that language, for other Afrikaners. They nevertheless resent most of what is associated with being an Afrikaner—and so they make fun of traditional values, morals, and so on.⁴⁵

The "alternative Afrikaners" today claim to be more a collection of individualists than a subculture as such. Whereas the Afrikaner establishment during apartheid promoted an authoritarian collective identity, the Afrikaner artists are exploring an explicitly antiauthoritarian identity with fluid boundaries, open to all kinds of global as well as local African influences.

Resistance to the Christian nationalist establishment is not a new phenomenon. But due to the apartheid regime's firm control over the social field, earlier resistance largely took the form of isolated dissidents voicing opposition to the system at great

personal cost.⁴⁶ Many were incarcerated by the regime, and most were subject to constant harassment by the security police and ostracized by their own local community.

From the late 1970s apartheid experienced an escalating crisis, and despite the efforts of the regime, white Afrikaans-speakers started asking critical questions about the political order. Boundaries that had attained a certain naturalness started to appear ideological and arbitrary.⁴⁷ In the 1980s discontent had mounted on both sides of the NP, and although the regime tried to control the criticism, the task of censorship became increasingly difficult to execute.⁴⁸

In this context, a new wave of protest among young Afrikaners developed, which for the first time gained widespread support among large sections of Afrikaner youth. A pivotal element in the movement was rock music, and a central event was the Voëlvrý (“free as a bird” or “outlawed”) Tour in 1988.⁴⁹ For the first time activities such as these were allowed by the regime.

As the political negotiations transformed the country into a democratic post-apartheid society, the counterculture among young Afrikaners remained alive. Post-apartheid South Africa and its liberal democratic constitution, with the protection of fundamental civic freedoms, has made it easier than ever to voice opposition and alternative views—without running the risk of persecution. Young Afrikaner artists take full advantage of this right and have taken up the challenge of discussing what it means to be Afrikaner in South Africa in their own way. But as opposed to van Zyl Slabbert’s call for the formulation of a new set of values that unite Afrikaners, they refuse to fix the identity. They simply say “we are Afrikaners, but we are not Christian nationalist Afrikaners,” and they leave the rest open.

CHANGE: PROS AND CONS

No matter their political views, all Afrikaners would agree that the coming of a multiracial democracy has radically transformed their social world. Above, I have described some elements in this transformation and mapped out some of the responses to it. Some Afrikaners have resisted the new reality,

while others have welcomed it. A policeman from Paarl in his late thirties put it this way: “there is more fresh air now, society has opened up. There is not the same political propaganda. It is possible to disagree without being ostracised. I am not forced to be a Boer . . . there is no one pressuring me to be member of the church or different organisations.” Hitherto untried possibilities have opened up and one can be an Afrikaner in several new ways. Consider, for example, the Afrikaners who are members of the ANC. Two of these are Wilhelm Verwoerd (grandson of the late prime minister H. F. Verwoerd) and his wife, Melanie Verwoerd. The latter, who is member of Parliament, last year began a speech in the national assembly during a debate on the TRC report with the words: “Today I want to speak my mother tongue as a proud young Afrikaner, as well as a very proud member of the ANC.” Melanie Verwoerd claims an identity by combining two: “Afrikaner” and “member of the ANC”—positions that during apartheid were incompatible and even mutually exclusive; they were privileged signifiers on separate sides of an “us and them” construction. The ANC was the Other that was threatening the existence of the Afrikaner Self. That these two identities can now be combined is a distinctive feature of the new situation of Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa. But the situation is still precarious. Although many Afrikaners are adapting relatively well to the new South Africa, others feel alienated. As one woman in her late forties told me: “The South African Broadcasting Corporation doesn’t show good programmes anymore, it is all black culture and music. It is like being in a foreign country and then turning on the TV—it is alien to us!”

Separatist politicians try to reach such people by offering the *volkstaat* as an alternative. For some Afrikaners, it can seem that the loss of the old order is the loss of order as such. The new South Africa is experienced as a chaotic place without moral or religious values. A woman in her mid-forties expressed it to me this way in an interview:

Look, things are getting very much entangled and mixed. . . . The main thing—my God is now placed on the same pedestal as other Gods. In every school the State gives money to. And that’s not good for me. And very much different languages and things is in the

same school and outlook on things, outlook on history, outlook on the future. So that is, I can't be free in that. My children isn't free that I can bring them up the way I want to bring them up. That's clashing, I think it is a recipe for an unstable country. There is so much different backgrounds and the way you think about things and how to order things, it is culturally different and then you can't understand each other very well.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

South Africa is still in a process of transformation; the socio-economic disparities caused by forty years of systematic discrimination cannot be reversed with only six years of democratic governance. The country also faces an equally difficult challenge in trying to establish a sense of shared humanity.

There is a need to create a new national South African identity, a sense of solidarity, that cuts across old divisions. But the new rulers cannot force a new standard, and cannot refuse to accept diverging opinions, beliefs, and values. Minority rights and protection are important parts of a liberal democracy, which is what South Africa strives to be. The ANC government clearly has difficulties accepting particularist identity claims, since they stand in an uneasy relationship with the effort to forge a new universal national identity.⁵⁰

Liberal democratic nation-building, as attempted in South Africa, contains the paradox of forging identity and at the same time accepting difference—negotiating between universalism and particularism.⁵¹ In their role as nation-builders, presidents Mbeki and Mandela have repeatedly tried to include the Afrikaner community in the new South Africa. In a statement last year, Mbeki declared that “Afrikaners are Africans. And because we are all Africans . . . our endeavor [is] to accept our shared legacy and our inextricably bound destiny.”⁵² Even though Afrikaners are offered a chance to be accepted as a part of Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance in the new South Africa, as Afrikaners it is only under certain conditions. As a group they to some extent carry what Erving Goffman has called a “tribal stigma”⁵³ and are constantly at risk of being labeled “people against transformation,” reactionary, racist, or

the like. There is therefore a requirement that they prove their loyalty to the new South Africa—more than any other group of South Africans.⁵⁴

Minority rights, such as articulated by the UN, were meant to protect fragile, weak minorities against the oppression of the strong, wealthy majority. This is not the case with the Afrikaners: they are not weak, and they are as a whole wealthier than the majority. But more importantly, they are the old power elite—the oppressors. This makes a difficult case for those Afrikaners claiming their constitutional right to minority protection. But one could say that the latter poses a real challenge to the Constitution.

When discussing minority protection and cultural survival it is important to be aware of the concept of culture and identity on which the discussion is based. As we have seen, there are very different ways of being Afrikaner, and it is only a small section of Afrikaners who “play the minority card.”

In these circumstances, many Afrikaners feel understandably ambivalent—open to change, yet wary of what change may bring. One should heed the words, in closing, of Frederik van Zyl Slabbert in his book *Tough Choices*: “Whether I like it or not (and quite separate from my subjective battle), my social identity is also that of an Afrikaner. . . . Not a vanguard Afrikaner or a devout, sombre-suited one; not an uptight culture vulture Afrikaner or a free-and-easy, ‘alternative,’ Woodstock one, but a rapidly ageing, confused and sometimes lost Afrikaner, nevertheless.”⁵⁵

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ENDNOTES

¹This essay is in part based on fieldwork done in and around Cape Town and the Northern Cape in 1998.

²When talking about population groups in South Africa (as elsewhere) one inevitably faces the problem of defining the boundaries of the groups—boundaries that are politicized and contested, as this essay will show. When I talk about Afrikaners I use the most widely accepted and used definition: whites who speak Afrikaans as their mother tongue. I will in this connection not deal with the fact that whiteness is also a contested category.

³Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 68.

⁴The NP was founded in 1914 by J. B. M. Hertzog. In 1934, it formed the United Party, joining with Jan Smuts's pro-British South African Party. This fusion was a rejection of Afrikaner separatism and an alliance with British capital interests. As a reaction in 1934 D. F. Malan broke away from the NP and formed the *Purified* National Party, advocating for an exclusive ethnic Afrikaner nationalism. In 1939 Hertzog split from the fusion government, partly because of Smuts's support of the British in World War II, and formed the Afrikaner Party. It later merged with Malan's party—which had gained dominance in political Afrikanerdom—under the name United National Party. Under this name the party became the official opposition party in 1943 and narrowly won the elections in 1948. In 1951 it was renamed the National Party.

⁵T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 11.

⁶Quoted in Willem Abraham de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom* (London: R. Collings, 1975), 214.

⁷A wide range of literature deals with this issue. See, e.g., Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (London: Verso, 1996); Dan O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934–1948* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983); and Hermann Giliomee, "The Development of the Afrikaner's Self-Concept," in Hendrik W. van der Merwe, ed., *Looking at the Afrikaner Today* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1975).

⁸Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, 300.

⁹Anthony Marx, "Apartheid's End: South Africa's Transition from Racial Domination," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20 (3) (1997). In 1910 the ratio of the per capita income of Afrikaner and English-speaking whites was 100 to 300. In 1933 it was approximately 100 to 240, and in 1974 it had been reduced to 100 to 120. Giliomee, "The Development of the Afrikaner's Self-Concept," 29. The income differences nevertheless persisted, and in 1996 the average Afrikaner household earned R 1,000 less per month than its English counterpart (but R 4,000 above the national average). Data compiled by L. Schlemmer and supplied by Hermann Giliomee, personal correspondence.

¹⁰See O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*.

¹¹These boundaries were not static, but were redrawn and altered in the course of the reign of the NP. They were nevertheless always defined by the nationalist movement and stayed within the discursive framework of Christian nationalism.

- ¹²Deborah Posel, "Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: Paradoxes of the South African State," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (1) (March 1999): 115.
- ¹³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).
- ¹⁴Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965).
- ¹⁵See, e.g., Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996), 4; and Craig J. Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 5.
- ¹⁶"Monumental Fury Over Ronge's Jeers," *Cape Argus*, 4 April 1999; <<http://archive.iol.co.za/archives/1999/9904/30/ronge2704.html>>.
- ¹⁷Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 10.
- ¹⁸Lars Buur, "Institutionalising Truth: Victims, Perpetrators and Professionals in the Everyday Work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission," Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology, Aarhus University, Denmark, 2000, 6.
- ¹⁹"A Crowd of 2000 Gathers at the Voortrekker Monument," *Independent Newspapers*, 1997; <<http://www.iol.co.za>>.
- ²⁰Antjie Krog, *Country of my Skull* (Johannesburg: Random House, 1998), 128, 238.
- ²¹See Mahmood Mamdani, "Reconciliation without Justice," *Southern Revue of Books* (November/December 1996).
- ²²Convicted apartheid police spy Craig Williamson criticizes the lack of acceptance of involvement with the apartheid system when he says: "Our weapons, ammunition, uniforms, vehicles, radios and other equipment were developed by industry. Our finances and banking were done by bankers who even gave us covert credit cards for covert operations. Our chaplains prayed for our victory and our universities educated us in war. Our propaganda was carried by the media and our political masters were voted back into power time after time with ever-increasing majorities. It is therefore not only the task of the members of the Security Forces to examine themselves and their deeds. It is for every member of the society we served to do so." *Truth and Reconciliation Report 4* (Cape Town: Juta Publications), 23.
- ²³See Isabel Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902–1924," in Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, eds., *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (New York: Longman, 1987).
- ²⁴Afrikaans is far from an obscure language in South Africa. In 1994, 14.97 percent of the South African population spoke Afrikaans as their home language, making it the third most widely spoken language after isiZulu and isiXhosa. See *South Africa Survey 1997–1998* (Pretoria: South African Institute for

Race Relations), 100. As many have Afrikaans as their second language it is one of the most widely understood languages in the country.

²⁵Howard Barrell, "Throwing a Lifeline to a Language," *Daily Mail & Guardian*, 23 May 2000; <<http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/2000may2/23may-taal1.html>>.

²⁶See Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words," on the language movement.

²⁷Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough Choices: Reflections of an Afrikaner African* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2000), 79.

²⁸Ibid., 81.

²⁹Marthinus van Schalkwyk, National Assembly, 24 March 1999, my italics.

³⁰There was even a special debate on the issue in Parliament in 1999.

³¹Hermann Giliomee, "The Cultural Survival of Afrikaners/Afrikaans-speakers in a Democratic South Africa," paper prepared for a seminar on the South African Jewry, organized by the Jewish Board of Deputies, Johannesburg, 15–16 September 1998.

³²Melissa Steyn, "White Identity in Context: A Personal Narrative," in Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin, eds., *Whiteness: The Communication of a Social Identity* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999), 265.

³³Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, 54. Norval points out that Afrikanerdom was constituted by excluding a series of Others who, apart from blacks, were English-speakers, imperialists, communists, Jews, coloreds, Indians, and so on—depending on context.

³⁴The political party favored by most whites—both Afrikaans- and English-speakers—is the Democratic Party, which has emerged as the main protector of white interests. A rapidly disintegrating NNP, together with the DP earlier this year, has formed the Democratic Alliance.

³⁵As mentioned earlier, the term *volk* has a very narrow ethnic quality to it, which is why one never hears anyone talk about the "Afrikaner *volk*" when it is meant to include coloreds. The category of "coloreds" has a specific meaning in South Africa; it is an apartheid category that includes a variety of people such as the descendants of Khoi and San people, Malays, and those referred to elsewhere as mulattos. Although contested, the label is still used today. Coloreds have Afrikaans as their mother tongue, and they outnumber white Afrikaans-speakers: 2.9 million as opposed to 2.5 million. See *Census in Brief: The People of South Africa Population Census* (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 1998).

³⁶Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, 245.

³⁷Giliomee, "The Cultural Survival of Afrikaners/Afrikaans-speakers."

³⁸There are two main suggestions: the Northern Cape, where because of its scarce population Afrikaners can form the majority if enough move to the area, and the area around Pretoria, where the concentration of Afrikaners is the highest in the country.

- ³⁹It should be noted that there are great differences within Orania in terms of the view on the situation, the possibilities of the Afrikaners, and the legitimacy of the ANC government. In very general terms the political leadership tends to have a more positive approach to the new South Africa and recognizes the importance of being on good footing with the new rulers. This position is considered “too liberal” by some residents.
- ⁴⁰The Constitution reads: “The right of the South African people as a whole to self-determination, as manifested in this Constitution, does not preclude, within the framework of this right, recognition of the notion of the right of self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language heritage, within a territorial entity in the Republic or in any other way, determined by national legislation.” Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, chap. 9, 235.
- ⁴¹Although the official position of Orania fully recognizes the legitimacy of the ANC government and is careful to avoid references to race, the town attracts a lot of people who disagree with the political leadership on these issues. Thus, some people will not negotiate with the government, and simply want to be outside South Africa because it has become “too black.” Although the Oranians officially have discarded the discourse of natural identities, the primordial logic is nevertheless retained through the assumption that certain people will naturally identify with the same values.
- ⁴²The term *Boer* literally means “farmer” and has a very distinct white, conservative connotation.
- ⁴³Homosexuality is still considered a big taboo for many. NNP leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk responded to allegations that he had a homosexual relationship with his gardener with the words: “I have never in my life had homosexual relations, I am a Boer son!” *Daily Mail & Guardian*, 8 May 1998.
- ⁴⁴Umberto Eco, “Towards a Semiotic Enquiry into Television Message,” in W.P.C.S.3, University of Birmingham, 1972.
- ⁴⁵Mads Vestergaard, “Afrikanerdoom? Negotiating Afrikaner Identity in Post-apartheid South Africa,” master’s thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 2000, 137.
- ⁴⁶Of these can be mentioned people like the lawyer Bram Fischer, the reverend Beyers Naudé, and the poet Breyten Breytenbach.
- ⁴⁷Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*, 218.
- ⁴⁸A wide range of alternative initiatives were launched as it became apparent to an increasing number of people that there was an acute need for political change. An example was the meetings between Afrikaner businessmen and the exiled ANC, at the initiative of van Zyl Slabbert. See van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough Choices*, 58.
- ⁴⁹Dan O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), 14.

⁵⁰It is important to note that despite Mbeki's call for a pan-African African Renaissance, the South Africaness the ANC advocates for is strongly based on the nation-state, is very nationalistic, and is in that sense particularistic.

⁵¹See Ernesto Laclau, "Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity," in Ernesto Laclau, ed., *Emancipation(s)* (New York: Verso, 1996), for a brilliant discussion of this philosophical and political problem. See also Nic Rhoodie and Ian Liebenberg, *Democratic Nation-Building in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1994), for a debate on nation-building in South Africa.

⁵²Statement to the Afrikanerbond, 27 July 1999; <<http://196.14.83.132/andocs/history/mbeki/1999/tm0727.html>>.

⁵³Goffman writes: "... these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family." See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 14.

⁵⁴Vestergaard, "Afrikanerdoom?" 137. The tendencies outlined in the latter part of this essay can be seen as examples of how this negotiation of identity occurs.

⁵⁵van Zyl Slabbert, *Tough Choices*, 87 f.

“Two Nations”? Race and Economic Inequality in South Africa Today

SOUTH AFRICA HAS LONG BEEN INFAMOUS for its very high level of inequality. Speaking in Parliament in 1998, then-deputy president Thabo Mbeki described South Africa as divided into “two nations, the one black and the other white”:

One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographical dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility of exercising their right to equal opportunity, and the development opportunities to which the Constitution of 1993 committed our country. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst-affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility of exercising what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation.¹

This view is often backed up with data indicating interracial inequalities. In 1994, the year apartheid ended, average per capita income among the black population was one-tenth that

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of the white population; among people aged fourteen years or more, 90 percent of the white population had passed at least standard six (corresponding to grade eight in the United States) in school, compared to 46 percent of the black population; among people aged eighteen years or more, 61 percent of the white population had passed at least matric (standard ten), compared to just 11 percent of the black population; 36 percent of black households and 0 percent of the white population lived in shacks, traditional huts, or hostels; only 18 percent of black households had internal piped water, and only 37 percent had electricity—compared to 100 percent of white households.²

The notion of a society comprising “two nations” is certainly not original. Benjamin Disraeli, who was later to become prime minister of Britain, first used the imagery of “two nations” in his 1845 novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations*. For Disraeli, the two nations were the rich and the poor of nineteenth-century England:

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.³

Amidst the rapid social and economic change of the industrial revolution, economic inequalities in Britain were widening dramatically. The evidence is thin and the comparison difficult, but inequality in income distribution in Britain appears to have reached its highest level in the 1860s or 1870s, at a level slightly lower than that in South Africa a century later.⁴ In his novel, Disraeli contrasted the opulence of aristocratic life with the desperate squalor of industrial poverty. But Disraeli’s primary emphasis was the social and cultural divide, rather than economic inequality per se.

More recently, the imagery of two nations has been used in the United States with reference to interracial inequalities. Ghetto riots in the 1960s led to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders warning that “our nation is moving

toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." In 1992 a popular American political scientist, Andrew Hacker, used the imagery in a book on America entitled *Two Nations, Black and White: Separate, Hostile and Unequal*.⁵ Hacker surveyed the scope of interracial inequalities in late-twentieth-century America across issues as varied as divorce rates, percentages of children born to unmarried parents, earnings and incomes, unemployment, educational achievement, and crime.

Mbeki's use of "two nations" imagery is like Disraeli's and Hacker's in that it is intended to draw attention to injustice. But there are important differences in the ways in which Mbeki, Disraeli, and Hacker each use the imagery. For Disraeli, the inequality is that of class: the rich and the poor. Hacker does not presume to comment on American inequality as a whole; he does not claim that all white Americans are rich or that all black Americans are poor. Mbeki, however, appears to reduce inequality to race: black equals poor and white equals rich. Indeed, he claims, black South Africans are "equally incapable" of realizing the right of equal opportunity.⁶ If Mbeki had attached more importance to social and cultural divides between white and black South Africans he would probably have been on stronger ground, but in emphasizing interracial economic inequality he misunderstands the changing nature of inequality in South Africa.

In South Africa, black and white are *no longer* synonymous with rich and poor. Moreover, South African society cannot simply be divided into rich and poor, as if the distribution of incomes were bipolar. In the final decades of apartheid the deracialization of formerly discriminatory policies, upward occupational mobility among black workers, and rising unemployment resulted in declining *interracial* inequality but rising *intraracial* inequality, especially among the black population.

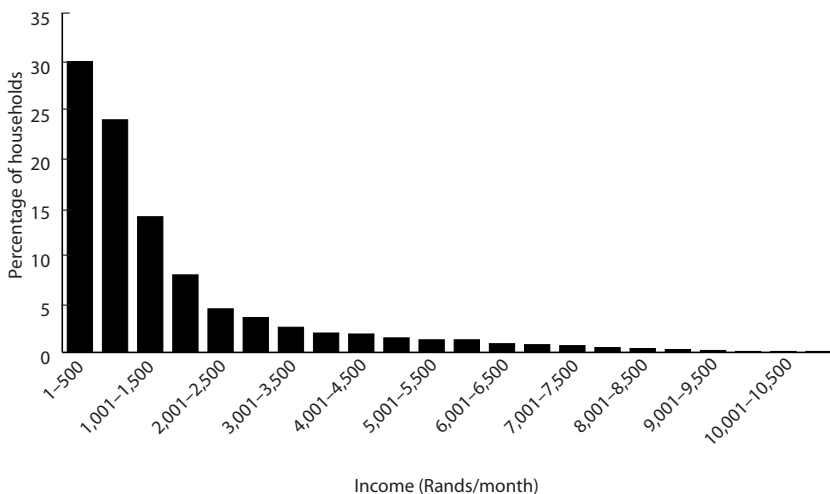
In post-apartheid South Africa, inequality is driven by two income gaps: between an increasingly multiracial upper class and everyone else; and between a middle class of mostly urban, industrial, or white-collar workers and a marginalized class of black unemployed and rural poor. A more appropriate eco-

conomic comparison might be drawn with the image of the United States painted by the American Catholic Bishops in 1995: “The U.S. economy sometimes seems to be leading to three nations living side by side, one growing prosperous and powerful, one squeezed by stagnant incomes and rising economic pressures and one left behind in increasing poverty, dependency and hopelessness.”⁷

THE CHANGING NATURE OF INEQUALITY

Household incomes are certainly distributed very unevenly in South Africa (see figure 1). If the population is divided into income deciles (each decile comprising one-tenth of the total number of households, ordered by ascending income), then the top or richest decile (decile ten) earned about half of the total income in 1993, whereas the bottom four deciles (deciles one through four, which actually comprised 52 percent of the population, as poor households were larger than rich ones) earned

Figure 1. Inequality in South Africa



Source: Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town data set, 1993.

less than 10 percent of the total income. There is some evidence that inequality has widened further since 1993.⁸

Unsurprisingly, given South Africa's history of apartheid, there is still a strong correlation between race and household income. Nine out of ten households in the bottom six deciles (the poorest 60 percent of households) were black in 1993; a small proportion were colored, and a tiny proportion were white. By contrast, three-quarters of the top decile were white. This is unambiguous evidence of interracial inequality. But consider the following: between 1975 and 1996, the share of total income received by black people rose from 20 to 36 percent, while the share received by white people fell from 71 to 52 percent.⁹ This shift was primarily due to the rapidly rising incomes of the black working and middle classes. In 1975 only 2 percent of households in the top income decile were black, while 95 percent were white; by 1991, 9 percent were black and 83 percent were white, and by 1996, 22 percent were black and 65 percent were white.¹⁰ These shifts may be long overdue, but they are extraordinarily large and rapid.

Rising income among better-off black households has widened intraracial inequality as well as reduced interracial inequality. By 1996, the average household income in the richest tenth of black households was over two hundred and fifty times higher than the average income in the poorest tenth. The richest tenth alone earned about one-sixth of the total national income, which is more than the combined share of the other nine-tenths of black households together (and about the same share as the top tenth of the white population).¹¹ There are very few countries in the world where income inequality is higher than it is among the black population in South Africa. Whiteford and Van Seventer estimate that "within-group" inequality now accounts for over two-thirds of total inequality, whereas it only accounted for 38 percent in 1975.¹² If black South Africans comprise a "nation," as Mbeki puts it, it is an extremely unequal one—so unequal that it seems nonsensical to use the term "nation." Moreover, declining interracial inequality has not led to lower inequality overall, because intraracial inequality has increased.

Sources of Income Inequality

Table 1 shows the composition of mean household income for each income decile (using 1993 SALDRU data). Wage income clearly contributes the largest share of income for South Africans as a whole, although not for the poorest deciles that rely on pensions and remittances. Old-age pensions are very important to deciles two through four (but not the bottom decile, because receipt of a pension is enough to push the household up). Income from agricultural production is of little importance, except to the top decile (which includes high-income, capitalist farmers) and the bottom decile (in which the incomes are so low that even a meager R 8 per month, in 1993 prices, is an

Table 1. Composition of Household Income, by Income Decile and Source (in percentages)

Decile	Regular wage	Casual wage	Total wage	Remittances	Agriculture	Self emp	Pension	Other transfers	Capital income	Total
1	12.3	9.7	23.5	48.5	8.4	13.0	0	1.0	3.5	100
2	19.5	6.6	30.6	30.0	4.4	6.1	23.2	3.2	2.1	100
3	24.2	5.1	37.8	18.4	3.0	5.1	27.9	4.8	2.8	100
4	34.9	5.8	50.0	15.0	3.3	4.0	21.8	3.7	2.1	100
5	44.7	4.7	55.8	10.0	2.5	5.5	18.8	3.5	3.7	100
6	60.5	4.1	69.6	6.8	0.7	3.9	12.1	3.0	3.4	100
7	68.8	2.2	75.0	5.1	1.3	3.8	7.6	2.0	5.0	100
8	72.1	2.5	78.5	2.9	1.0	4.8	4.3	1.6	6.6	100
9	72.8	1.9	79.9	1.2	0.7	4.6	1.9	1.1	10.5	100
10	56.0	1.5	64.5	0.4	6.8	9.0	0.5	0.3	18.1	100
Total S.A.	59.3	2.3	67.7	3.4	4.0	6.7	4.6	1.2	12.1	100

Notes: "Regular/casual wage" represents wages from regular/casual employment. "Total wage" includes all wages, together with the value of employer subsidy of transport, food, and housing (not included here as a separate column). "Remittances" include the value of remittances in money and in kind. "Agriculture" includes the value of agricultural production whether consumed or sold. "Self-emp" comprises the profits earned from self-employment, whether formal or informal. "Pension" comprises the noncontributory, means-tested government old-age pension. "Other transfers" comprise other public transfers (primarily disability and child-support grants). "Capital income" includes income from capital, actual, and imputed rent on land and property, interest on financial assets, and income from contributory pension schemes. The rows do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding errors and the omission of some very minor sources of income. The "Total S.A." row is the weighted average of the rows above, where data has been weighted according to shares of total national income.

Source: SALDRU data (1993); our calculations.

important mean contribution to household income). In other words, smallholder agriculture is almost irrelevant in South Africa. For every decile from the fourth up, wages comprise by far the most important source of household income.

The overwhelming importance of the labor market in the distribution of income reflects the ways in which the South African economy was transformed under apartheid. Industrialization was accompanied by deagrarianization. Black sharecroppers and labor tenants were squeezed off white-owned land. Excluded from the towns by the pass laws, they were forced into the reserves, where agricultural production collapsed through overpopulation. The pass laws (and other measures) also served to restrict the informal sector. The result was a society unusually dependent on waged work.

Inequality and the Labor Market

During the apartheid era, racial discrimination was an important determinant of wage inequality. Similarly qualified people were paid different wages for doing the same job, depending on their racial classification—especially in the public sector. As late as 1979, for example, the starting salary for a black nurse in the public sector was two-thirds that of a white nurse with the same qualifications.¹³ Furthermore, black people were often unable to get jobs for which they were qualified. The color bar reserved most skilled jobs for white people until late in the apartheid period. The maximum salary for black secondary-school teachers and police constables was just one-half that for white teachers and constables.¹⁴ When an occupation hitherto reserved for white workers was reclassified for black workers, the wage rate was typically reduced greatly.

From the 1970s, however, the impact of racial discrimination declined. Between 1980 and 1993 the contribution of racial discrimination to wage determination is estimated to have dropped from 20 to 12 percent of the average black wage.¹⁵ More importantly, upward mobility into better-paying occupations raised wages for many black employees. The gap between the average wages of white and black employees narrowed sharply. But even in 1993 white employees' earnings were on average more than five times larger than black employees' earnings (see

Table 2. Characteristics of the Sample of Wage Earners

	Black		Colored		Indian		White	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Years of education	6.8	7.6	8.5	8.5	11.0	10.7	12.2	11.2
Rates of return on education (%)								
-primary	8.4	6.2	1.4	2.3	-9.5	-8.2	-1.2	-3.4
-secondary	15.8	24.9	18.7	19.9	21.4	12.6	8.4	5.2
-higher	29.4	39.6	18.6	30.7	21.4	30.4	15.1	13.9
% living in rural areas	56.1	47.2	10.3	9.9	1.8	0.9	6.6	6.8
% working in agriculture	20	11	14	11	0	0	4	1
Hourly wage in rands	4.8	3.3	7.2	5.1	12.8	8.2	27.9	15.8

Source: T. P. Schultz and G. Mwabu, "Labor Unions and the Distribution of Wages and Employment in South Africa," *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 51 (4) (1998): 682, 687. Analysis based on SALDRU data, 1993.

table 2). The racial wage gap is now explained primarily by factors other than overt discrimination, such as differences in education and skill, location (urban or rural), and economic sector. As shown in table 2, black workers have the lowest educational qualifications, live predominantly in rural areas, and have the highest concentration in low-paying sectors such as agriculture. Econometric estimations confirm the importance of such characteristics in explaining wage inequality.¹⁶

Education is particularly important. According to one estimate, half of the difference in racial earnings can be attributed to differences in educational qualifications.¹⁷ If it were possible to include a measure of the different *quality* of education received by white and black workers, then education would probably explain an even greater proportion of wage inequality. Black workers with good educational qualifications are particularly well placed to obtain highly paid jobs. It is estimated that black men can command an extra 8 percent on wages/salaries for every year of primary education, an extra 16 percent for every year of secondary education, and an extra 29 percent for every year of tertiary education. Such rates of return on education are higher than for all other racial groups (see table 2). The returns on secondary and tertiary education

are even higher for black women. This suggests that improving the access of black men and women to secondary and tertiary education would narrow wage inequality significantly (although the rates of return would decline as more and more people obtain higher qualifications).

As apartheid unraveled, many black people moved up the occupational ladder.¹⁸ Between 1980 and 1993, the proportion of black men in the laborer and semiskilled categories dropped from 57 to 38 percent. As the number of black people in higher-paying occupations rose, so the gap between high- and low-paid black workers increased. But not all the forces in the labor market were working to widen inequality in the black wage distribution. As the black trade-union movement gathered momentum in the 1980s, unskilled black workers were given a significant wage boost. Trade-union membership appears to increase wages of black workers in the bottom 10 percent of the wage distribution by 145 percent and increase the wages of those in the top 10 percent by a mere 11 percent.¹⁹

By increasing the wages of low-paid workers faster than high-paid workers, the black trade-union movement acted as a force in favor of greater wage equality. But the union movement's effects on the overall distribution of income is unclear, because higher union wage settlements might have encouraged firms to shed labor. According to Schultz and Mwabu, an increase of 10 percent in the union relative wage effect (i.e., the ability of unions to push their members' wages above those of non-members) reduced employment by 5.6 percent.²⁰ This would have acted to widen inequality by increasing the number of people without any access to wage income.

Access to Wage Income

Most employed workers are earning enough to raise their household incomes above the poverty line. Only about 30 percent of employed workers are in households in the bottom five deciles. These workers are predominantly farm workers and, to a lesser extent, domestic workers. The industrial working class, by contrast, is concentrated in the top five deciles. Only 13 percent of manufacturing workers are in households in the bottom five deciles; fully 77 percent are in the top four deciles. Mine work-

ers are distributed more widely, with the largest numbers in deciles four to seven. In terms of occupation, people in professional, technical, managerial, and administrative jobs are, unsurprisingly, in households in the top two deciles. Most workers in clerical and sales occupations are in the top three deciles. Artisans are spread across the top four deciles. Most machine operators and similar semiskilled workers are in deciles six to nine. Unskilled laborers are spread across deciles four to eight.²¹

Most poor households are poor because they have no access to wage income. There is a clear relationship between employment/unemployment and inequality. The majority of households in the bottom four deciles have no members in employment, whereas a majority of households in each of the top two deciles have two or more members in employment. The relationship between the lack of employment and poverty is much stronger in South Africa than in more developed economies.²²

The relationship between participation rates (i.e., the proportion of adult household members participating in the labor force), unemployment rates (i.e., the proportion of the labor force that is unemployed), and income inequality is clear in table 3.²³ Both participation and unemployment rates are presented using the expanded definition of unemployment, which includes people who are not actively looking for jobs because they believe there are none available (i.e., the “discouraged” unemployed). Poor households are poor because their members are not in the labor force, and because of high unemployment few jobs are available. Because poor families tend to be larger than richer ones, the relationship between unemployment and income is even stronger when income deciles are calculated on a per capita basis.

There is strong evidence that unemployment increased in the 1990s. According to the October Household Survey, unemployment rose from 20 percent to 23 percent between 1994 and 1997 (if one counts only the active job seekers as unemployed) or from 32 percent to 38 percent (using an expanded definition of unemployment).

The fact that racial discrimination has declined in importance, and that employment, education, and other factors are now of primary importance, explains why intraracial inequal-

Table 3. Participation Rates and Broad Unemployment Rates by Decile (in percentages)

Income decile	Participation rate	Unemployment rate	Unemployment rate using per capita income deciles*
1	48	71	76
2	47	56	59
3	45	48	48
4	50	40	41
5	51	37	34
6	57	33	26
7	58	28	17
8	61	24	10
9	64	14	5
10	75	5	2
Total S.A.	61	30	32

*Calculations by G. Kingdon and J. Knight, "What is the Appropriate Definition of Unemployment?" presented to the Seminar on Unemployment in South Africa, Institute for Economics and Statistics, Oxford University, 10 November 1999, 7. Analysis based on SALDRU data, 1993.

ity has grown while interracial inequality has declined. When new employment opportunities opened up for black people in the 1970s and 1980s, there was no equality of opportunity among black people. Black children who grew up in households headed by middle-class or white-collar employees were many times more likely to follow into such occupations themselves than were black children who grew up in households headed by migrant workers. Under apartheid, the presence of black people in towns was regulated under the "pass laws"; the minority of black people with the "right" to stay in town regardless of their employment status had big advantages over those who did not have this "right" to urban residency.²⁴ The opening up of new employment opportunities thus exacerbated class inequalities within the black population. In racial inequality was also reproduced through enduring inequalities in education. In 1993 black children living in middle-class households had completed, on average, almost three more years of schooling by the age of eighteen than black children living in households headed by farm workers or domestic workers; the differential widens dramatically after the age of eighteen, as the former continue in school while most of the latter have dropped out.

REDISTRIBUTION THROUGH THE BUDGET

Democratic states are typically subject to political demands to mitigate, through redistributive patterns of taxation and public expenditure, the inequalities generated in the market. In South Africa, the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity inherited, in 1994, a surprisingly redistributive budget. Calculations by Michael McGrath and colleagues suggest that redistribution through the budget reduced the Gini coefficient (a measure of the amount of inequality in income distribution) from about 0.7 (for gross or original income) to 0.6 (for post-tax/transfer income, taking into account also benefits “in kind” in the form of public education and health care) in 1993–1994.²⁵ Servaas Van der Berg estimates that redistribution through the budget in 1995 was even more effective in reducing inequality, with the Gini falling to as low as 0.51. Redistribution happened because the top two deciles received fewer transfers or benefits in kind than they paid in tax, while all other deciles received more benefits than they paid taxes. Richer households benefited more in absolute terms than poorer households—but this inequality in the incidence of expenditure was more than offset by their payment of the lion’s share of income tax.

Even in 1993–1994 the South African budget was more redistributive than the budget in other middle-income economies (such as Chile, Brazil, and Argentina, although it was less redistributive than the budgets of advanced capitalist economies).²⁶ This reflected a combination of factors on both the taxation and expenditure sides. Income tax constitutes a comparatively high proportion of total tax revenue in South Africa. On the expenditure side, the democratic South African state inherited a means-tested, noncontributory old-age pension system that had, with the deracialization of benefits (completed in 1993), become well targeted on the poor,²⁷ together with an education system that may have had enduring interracial and interclass inequalities but was nonetheless less inegalitarian than in Brazil, for example (at least in terms of the number of grades completed, since secondary-school enrollment is very high among the poor in South Africa).²⁸ The pattern of health-

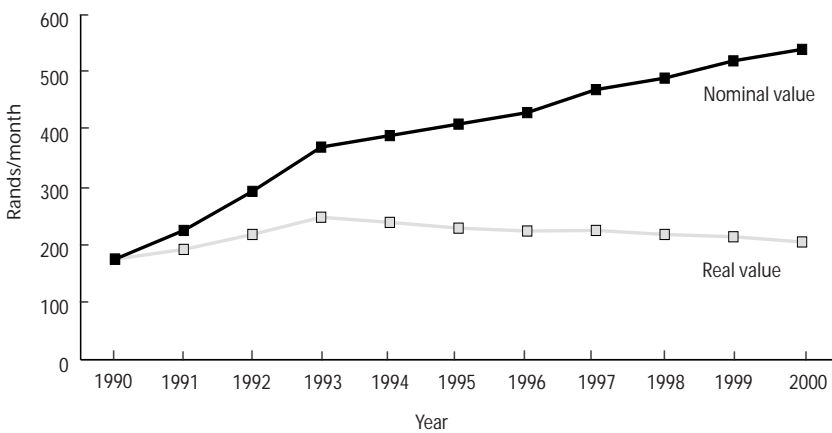
care expenditure was progressive by African standards but not by the standards of other middle-income economies.²⁹ Some areas of public expenditure were clearly not targeted progressively in terms of income distribution. Households in the top half of the income distribution, which include the urban, industrial black working class as well as black and white middle classes, benefited disproportionately from public funding of the senior years of secondary school and tertiary education, transport subsidies, and continuing de facto subsidies of urban infrastructure and municipal services.

After 1994 there were further shifts in government expenditure. The Department of Finance claims that “the first years after the political transition saw a large and significant shift of social spending from the affluent to the more disadvantaged members of society.”³⁰ Taking into account government spending on welfare transfers, public education, public health, subsidies for housing, and capital expenditure on the provision of water, Van der Berg estimates that spending on the poorest 40 percent of households (i.e., the bottom four deciles) rose by about 50 percent between 1993 and 1997.³¹ A small part of this was made possible by reduced spending on the rich, but the lion’s share came from increased and well-targeted spending by the government.

However, the poor gained little in terms of cash income (through government welfare transfers). By far the most important instrument of cash redistribution through the budget is the old-age pension. As can be seen in table 2, pensions are a major source of income for the poorest 40 percent of households. In the last years of apartheid the deracialization of pension benefits was achieved through large increases in the real value of the pension paid to black people (see the 1990–1993 data in figure 2; note that the pre-1993 data in figure 2 refers to the pension paid to black pensioners only). Racial parity was achieved in 1993. Since 1993 the real value of the old-age pension has declined by an average of about 1.5 percent per year, or a total of about 20 percent (see the 1993–2000 data in figure 2).³²

In addition, grants to low-income single parents were slashed, supposedly in order to free resources for improved take-up rates (i.e., the proportion of eligible claimants who actually

Figure 2. Nominal and Real Value of the Old-age Pension



Note: Pre-1993 data refers to the pension paid to black pensioners only.

Source: Department of Welfare/Social Development.

receive the grant) in poorer parts of the country. The result, in the short term, has thus almost certainly been regressive. In the longer term, improved take-up rates among the very poor might result in a more progressive outcome—but only if institutional obstacles to improved take-up rates among the poor can be overcome.³³

Where the poor arguably did gain, hugely, was with respect to benefits in kind—especially in terms of public education. Van der Berg shows that the removal of indirect discrimination in teachers' salaries, together with the provision of some extra teachers and hence reduction in pupil-teacher ratios, entailed massive increases in spending in “black” schools, i.e., schools with overwhelmingly black student populations, especially in poor, rural areas.³⁴ This shift was probably driven by the political pressure of black teachers rather than a concern for the poor. But if the value of public education is deemed equal to the cost of providing it, then the poor can be said to have benefited substantially from this increase. It is unlikely, however, that the quality of schooling did improve dramatically, and in this regard the “shift” in spending toward the poor is

probably somewhat misleading. Teachers in schools in poor areas remain inadequately qualified. It is even reported that some teachers arrive at school drunk. It is probably fair to conclude that, at least in the short term, the major beneficiaries of increased educational spending were teachers (who are not poor)—and not the students sitting in their classes.

In other areas of public spending, the gains to the poor were also ambiguous. More money was spent on clinics in poor areas, but it is unclear what effect there was on the quality of the service provided. Housing policy was undoubtedly reformed in a progressive direction, but the beneficiaries were the urban poor, not the substantially worse-off rural poor. Investment in the provision of water brought clean water to many people in rural areas for the first time, but it has been reported that many pipes and taps ceased to work due to inadequate maintenance. Overall, therefore, while there were substantial shifts in the foci of spending, it is unclear how much the poor actually benefited in terms of the *quality* of the services provided.

The year 1996–1997 also proved to be the peak of government spending on social services as a percentage of the total budget. The government's projections for public expenditure for the period up to 2002–2003 indicate its plan to reduce its spending on health care, education, and welfare from just over 44 percent of the budget in 1996–1997 to less than 43 percent by 2002–2003 (see table 4).

The rising prosperity of a minority of black households combined with new government austerity with respect to social expenditure has resulted in growing numbers of black households turning away from the public sector. More than one-fifth of the population is now covered by private medical aid schemes, and this includes a fast-growing number of black people.³⁵ Similarly, many black people are members of contributory, private retirement funds. Growing numbers of better-off black parents are sending their children to semiprivate, formerly “white” public schools that charge much higher fees than public schools in formerly black areas and provide a higher-quality education. The provision of health and retirement income is increasingly linked to employment, and education is increasingly linked to income.

Table 4. Consolidated National and Provincial Spending by Function: Selected Years, 1996–1997 through 2002–2003

	1996/1997 (percent)	1999/2000 (percent)	2000/2001 (percent)	2002/2003 (percent)
Defense	5.9	4.8	5.7	6.2
Police	6.2	6.7	6.5	6.5
Justice and prisons	2.4	3.1	3.2	3.3
Education	22.4	21.4	21.1	21.0
Health	13.2	13.4	13.4	13.5
Welfare	8.6	8.8	8.7	8.3
Housing and community development	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.8
Economic services	10.0	8.5	8.6	9.1
Other	11.9	11.5	11.9	12.1
Debt Service	17.7	19.9	19.1	18.3
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Department of Finance, *Budget Review 2000* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2000), 140.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

South Africa's enduringly high level of overall inequality and even its high level of interracial inequality may be mitigated somewhat through taxation and social expenditure (including the provision of welfare). But other government policies, affecting the labor market and the overall rate and path of economic growth, serve to reproduce inequality. The imagery of "two nations" in fact serves to distract attention from the truly poor and from many of the policies that inhibit a reduction in poverty and inequality.

Access to wage employment is a key determinant of inequality in South Africa. With about a third of the workforce unemployed, job creation must clearly be at the center of any strategy designed to bring about a significant and sustainable decrease in poverty and inequality. This immediately turns the spotlight on the government's growth strategy: to what extent have government economic policies promoted (or inhibited) job creation?

After coming to power in 1994, the ANC adopted orthodox fiscal policies. These were formalized in the “Growth, Employment and Redistribution” (GEAR) document, which promised that deficit reduction would boost growth by boosting investor confidence.³⁶ So far, the GEAR strategy has not delivered the promised benefits. Investment and output growth has been disappointing, and employment has declined (see table 5).

This lackluster performance cannot be laid entirely at the door of government. The Asian crisis and overzealous monetary policies by the independent reserve bank also acted as economic brakes. But it is nevertheless a moot point whether the ANC should have adopted such restrictive fiscal policies given the recessionary conditions of the mid- to late 1990s.³⁷ There is, for example, mounting evidence that the pursuit of anti-inflationary policies undermined growth in the developing world; South Africa is unlikely to be an exception to the rule.³⁸ Furthermore, by continuing with trade liberalization in the absence of labor-market reforms, the government probably contributed to employment losses.³⁹ Import-competing industries (particularly the ultra-labor-intensive industries) have been particularly hard hit, and South Africa’s export industries are

Table 5. GEAR Prediction versus Actual Performance

Annual growth rates	1996	1997	1998	1999
Real GDP:				
GEAR prediction	3.5	2.9	3.8	4.9
Actual performance	4.2	2.5	0.6	1.2
Private investment:				
GEAR prediction	9.3	9.1	9.3	13.9
Actual performance	6.1	4.7	-2.9	-4.4
Real wage growth (private):				
GEAR prediction	-0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Actual performance	1.7	2.3	8.6	3.0
Employment (non-agricultural):				
GEAR prediction	1.3	3.0	2.7	3.5
Actual performance	-0.7	-1.7	-3.7	-3.2
Conventional deficit/GDP:				
GEAR prediction	-5.1	-4.0	-3.5	-3.0
Actual performance	-4.9	-4.6	-3.3	-2.6

Source: SARB, *Quarterly Bulletin* (March 2000).

becoming increasingly capital-intensive.⁴⁰ Continued wage growth in the face of falling demand has no doubt also contributed to falling employment, as may have the tightening of labor-market regulation.⁴¹

South Africa's wage-setting machinery probably dampens employment growth because it enables large unions and employers to set wages that are then extended across the entire industry to the detriment of smaller, more labor-intensive firms.⁴² GEAR claimed that wage agreements would be made more sensitive to "regional labour market conditions, the diversity of skills levels in firms of varying size, location or capital intensity."⁴³ However, this has not happened. Instead, labor-market regulation has tightened,⁴⁴ and even in areas earmarked as Industrial Development Zones, labor regulations and minimum wages apply, with the result that only large capital-intensive megaprojects have been attracted there.⁴⁵ Higher wages and reduced employment have meant that the productivity of labor has risen, and the economy has become more capital-intensive.

The combination of poor growth and pro-union labor legislation has clear effects on distribution in the short term. In the late 1990s, real wages rose at just over 2.5 percent per year, while employment fell at just under 2.5 percent per year. The unemployed have not become poorer (except insofar as they may receive less support through intra- or inter-household transfers). But the ranks of the poor and unemployed have swollen as some workers have lost their jobs. The combination of rising incomes for those with jobs and falling employment has probably led to greater inequality in the distribution of incomes in society as a whole.

Job creation could bring about a significant improvement in poverty and inequality. According to Tom Hertz, the elimination of unemployment through the creation of 3.8 million low-wage jobs would reduce the number of people in poverty by 43 percent (*ceteris paribus*) and reduce the Gini coefficient by 12 percentage points.⁴⁶ This result, however, assumes no change in existing wages. If new jobs could only be brought about by a reduction in existing wages, then Hertz estimates that the redistributive impact would be greatly reduced, although there would still be a reduction in absolute poverty. This points to the

importance of labor-market reforms that allow for the creation of new jobs without affecting the existing wage structure. Public-works programs and changes to the wage-setting machinery in order to create labor-intensive industries in poor, marginalized parts of the country could fall into this category. The ANC has not proceeded adequately down either path, and hence has missed an opportunity to make the growth path more redistributive.

A Basic Income Grant?

Gosta Esping-Andersen argues, in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, that welfare systems and labor-market policies work together to shape the distributive character of different versions of welfare capitalism.⁴⁷ In South Africa, labor-market and welfare policies were formally deracialized between the late 1970s and early 1990s, but no attempt was made to transform the system to address the problem of the unemployed poor.⁴⁸ To the extent that labor-market regulation constrains job creation, the system continues to foster inequality—albeit by exacerbating the divide between the employed and the unemployed rather than between the races. There is a huge gap in the welfare net with regard to income support for the unemployed. The only available unemployment support comes from the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The UIF is a contributory scheme (and hence is only available to those unemployed workers who had contributed to it while working) and only lasts for twenty-six weeks. It is thus not surprising that less than 2 percent of the unemployed draw on the UIF for support.

There are two ways of making South Africa's labor and welfare policy regime more coherent and appropriate for an economy like South Africa. South Africa is what the World Bank calls a "middle income" economy, but one with a massive surplus of labor (i.e., very high unemployment). One option would be to engage in substantial labor-market reform in order to push the economy onto a more labor-intensive growth path. This, however, is likely to be met with strong resistance from the politically powerful trade-union movement. It is also likely to be resisted by those arguing that South Africa is better off attempting to compete through upgrading the skills of the

workforce rather than competing on the basis of lower wages. The other option would be to engage in substantial welfare reform in order to provide the unemployed and marginalized with a basic income grant. This, however, will entail greater taxation of wage-earners, and hence is also vulnerable to resistance from organized labor and other constituencies.

According to estimates by Michael Samson and colleagues, it would cost R 52 billion per year to provide every individual in South Africa with a grant of R 100 a month.⁴⁹ This comes to about 21 percent of total government spending—i.e., more than the entire education budget, and well over twice the amount currently spent on welfare. On the face of it, the costs seem prohibitive. However, they argue that R 24 billion can be recovered from higher earners through appropriate adjustments to marginal income tax rates and tax thresholds. This leaves the net cost of transfer at R 28 billion, to be financed through further increases in taxation, including a general increase in value-added tax, a capital-gains tax, etc. There is room for this increased taxation, they argue, because South Africa's average tax rate is 26 percent, compared to 32 percent in countries at similar levels of development.⁵⁰ More optimistically, they go on to argue that a basic income grant would have positive spin-offs for growth (in terms of increased labor productivity and demand) and therefore partially pay for itself over time.

There are at least three problems with this proposal. First, it does not take into account the administrative costs of delivering the grant to all individuals. The costs of delivering pensions (excluding the salaries of administrators) varies from R 13 per month in the Western Cape to R 70 per month in provinces with a high proportion of pensioners living in remote, undeveloped areas.⁵¹ This amounts to between 2.5 percent and 13 percent of the grant. Second, the study does not account for the possibility that some of the increased taxation (for example, increases in VAT) will be passed on to the poor in the form of higher prices, thereby lessening the redistributive impact of the grant. Third, and probably most important, the proposal is far too sanguine about increasing the burden of taxation. South Africa may have a lower proportion of tax revenue to GDP than other comparable countries, but given that most income tax (and future

capital-gains tax) is paid by the very top end of the income distribution, talking in terms of average tax rates is not very helpful. South Africa's top income earners are already highly burdened, and it is thus likely that significant and sustainable increases in tax revenues could only come about through either adding to the income tax burden of households in, especially, the seventh and eighth deciles (i.e., the labor movement's chief constituency) or increasing value-added tax. If the burden falls mainly to value-added tax, then the redistributive impact of the basic income grant will be reduced, as the poor will be paying for part of it every time they spend on goods and services. At present both the trade-union movement and the Democratic Party (representing most of the rich) profess support for a basic income grant, but both seem to anticipate that their constituencies will not shoulder the financial burden.

Nonetheless, the basic income grant proposal is important as it highlights a central policy dilemma in South Africa today: how to provide basic income support in a middle-income labor-surplus society. Given that wage earners are protected relative to the unemployed, the moral and political *quid pro quo* is higher taxation in order to finance a basic income grant for the unemployed. The attraction is that the deal does not entail any erosion of labor standards or hard-won rights. But it does entail higher taxation, and there is little indication that the organized working class is any more prepared to countenance higher taxation than it is to agree to greater labor-market flexibility. There remain major political obstacles to crucial redistributive reforms.⁵²

CONCLUSION

The image of a divided nation is important in highlighting the extreme level of inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. But Mbeki's portrayal of "two nations" is inadequate. South African inequality is not simply or even primarily interracial. Declining *interracial* inequality has not reduced overall inequality, and will not do so in the future, because the factors that drive inequality have become increasingly significant at the *intra*racial level. In a society that has become dependent on wages and

salaries, a reduction in inequality requires a more egalitarian educational system, broader access to employment (through job creation), and, perhaps, reforms to the welfare system that direct more resources to the poor, whether elderly or not. Insofar as South Africa comprises a divided nation, it is perhaps most accurate to see it in terms of three broad classes, not two racially defined nations: an increasingly multiracial upper class, comprising not just high-profile corporate figures but much more broadly the professional, managerial, and business classes; a “middle” class of mostly urban, employed workers; and a marginalized class of outsiders, comprising many of the unemployed as well as workers in agricultural and domestic employment.

ENDNOTES

¹*Hansard*, 29 May 1998, col. 3378.

²This data is from the 1993 survey of the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town. See also the 1999 survey funded by the Kaiser Foundation and widely reported in the press in April/May of 1999.

³Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (London: Macmillan, 1845/1930), 74.

⁴Jeffrey Williamson, *Did British Capitalism Breed Inequality?* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985); Jeffrey Williamson, “British Inequality during the Industrial Revolution: Accounting for the Kuznets Curve,” in Y. S. Brenner, Hartmut Kaelble, and Mark Thomas, eds., *Income Distribution in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and W. D. Rubinstein, *Wealth and Inequality in Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

⁵Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1992).

⁶There is a further irony in the origins of the “two nations” imagery: Disraeli, later the prime minister of Britain, was a key figure in social Toryism, the reformist wing of British conservatism that sought to rebuild the party on a multiclass basis. Disraeli was a strong exponent of the expanded franchise and the need for a *cross-class* alliance. He stood for amelioration, not redistribution; patrician responsibility rather than radicalism. His One Nation conservatism entailed responsible patrician leadership rising above class loyalties in the national interest. See, e.g., John K. Walton, *Disraeli* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁷Quoted in Claude S. Fischer et al., *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3.

⁸Andrew Whiteford and Dirk Van Seventer, "Winners and Losers: South Africa's Changing Income Distribution in the 1990s," WEFA Southern Africa, Pretoria, 1999; and Michael Carter and Julian May, "One Kind of Freedom: Poverty Dynamics in Post-Apartheid South Africa," unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin, December 1999.

⁹Whiteford and Van Seventer, "Winners and Losers: South Africa's Changing Income Distribution in the 1990s," 9.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 44.

¹²Murray Leibbrandt, Haroon Borat, and Ingrid Woolard, "Understanding Contemporary Household Inequality in South Africa," DPRU Working Papers No. 99/25, Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town, May 1999, have shown that such estimates vary according to the statistical technique and data source used.

¹³Shula Marks, *Divided Sisterhood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 173–174.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 173; John Knight and Michael McGrath, "An Analysis of Racial Wage Discrimination in South Africa," *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 39 (1977): 258.

¹⁵Peter Moll, "Discrimination is Declining in South Africa but Inequality is Not," SANER Working Paper no. 5, South African Network for Economic Research, Cape Town, 1998.

¹⁶T. P. Schultz and G. Mwabu, "Wage Premia for Education and Location, by Gender and Race in South Africa," Economic Growth Center, Discussion Paper no. 785, Yale University, February 1998; Schultz and Mwabu, "Labor Unions and the Distribution of Wages and Employment in South Africa," *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 51 (4) (1998): 680–703; Moll, "Discrimination is Declining in South Africa but Inequality is Not"; and David Lam, "Generating Extreme Inequality: Schooling, Earnings, and Intergenerational Transmission of Human Capital in South African and Brazil," *Research Report* no. 99–439, Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1999.

¹⁷Schultz and Mwabu, "Wage Premia for Education and Location, by Gender and Race in South Africa."

¹⁸Julian Hofmeyr, *An Analysis of African Wage Movements in South Africa*, Research Monograph No. 9, Economic Research Unit, University of Natal, 1994; and Owen Crankshaw, *Race, Class and the Changing Division of Labour under Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁹Schultz and Mwabu, "Labor Unions and the Distribution of Wages and Employment in South Africa," 700.

²⁰According to Schultz and Mwabu, if the union relative wage effect were cut in half, then black employment would increase by about 2 percent: "There

would be a redistribution of wage payments from the upper-middle class African union workers to lower-wage nonunion workers and the marginalised poor who are often now not actively participating in the labour market.” *Ibid.*, 701.

- ²¹Jeremy Seekings, “Visions of Society: Peasants, Workers and the Unemployed in a Changing South Africa,” *Journal for Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 24 (3) (November 2000).
- ²²OECD, “Recent Labour Market Developments and Prospects: Special Focus on the Patterns of Employment and Joblessness from a Household Perspective,” *Employment Outlook* (June 1998): 24.
- ²³See also Gita Kingdon and John Knight, “What is the Appropriate Definition of Unemployment?” presented to the Seminar on Unemployment in South Africa, Institute for Economics and Statistics, Oxford University, 10 November 1999.
- ²⁴Steffen Schneier, “Occupational Mobility among Blacks in South Africa,” working paper no. 58, South African Labor and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town, 1983.
- ²⁵Michael McGrath, C. Janisch, and C. Horner, “Redistribution through the Fiscal System in the South African Economy,” paper presented to the Economics Society of South Africa conference, Potchefstroom, 1997. See also Servaas Van der Berg, “Trends in Racial Fiscal Incidence in South Africa,” unpublished paper, 1998.
- ²⁶See Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), *Facing Up to Inequality in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: IADB, 1999); Branko Milanovic, “Do More Unequal Countries Redistribute More?” unpublished paper, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1999.
- ²⁷Elizabeth Ardington and Francie Lund, “Pensions and Development: Social Security as Complementary to Programmes of Reconstruction and Development,” *Development Southern Africa* 12 (4) (1995).
- ²⁸Lam, “Generating Extreme Inequality.”
- ²⁹F. Castro-Leal, J. Dayton, and K. Metra, “Public Social Spending in Africa: Do the Poor Benefit?” *World Bank Research Observer* 14 (1999).
- ³⁰On the basis of calculations by Van der Berg; Department of Finance, *Budget Review 2000* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2000), 15.
- ³¹Servaas Van der Berg, “An Analysis of Fiscal Incidence of Social Spending in South Africa, 1993–97,” report to the Department of Finance, South Africa, 2000.
- ³²It is possible that take-up rates among poor elderly people improved (*ibid.*), but other studies (such as Ann Case and Angus Deaton, “Large Cash Transfers to the Elderly in South Africa,” *Economic Journal* 108 [450] [1998]: 1330–1361) found that take-up rates were very high by 1993.
- ³³IDASA, *Poverty Profile, Special Edition on Child Maintenance Reforms* (Cape Town: IDASA Poverty Monitoring Service, April 1994); IDASA, “Submis-

sion to the Portfolio Committee on Finance on the 2000/2001 Budget," 3 March 2000.

³⁴Van der Berg, "An Analysis of Fiscal Incidence of Social Spending in South Africa, 1993-97"; Van der Berg, "An Analysis of 1997 School Data Flowing From Work on the Fiscal Incidence of Social Spending in South Africa," report to the Department of Finance, South Africa, 2000.

³⁵Marius Olivier et al., "Social Insurance and Social Assistance: Towards a Coherent Approach," report for the Department of Welfare, South Africa, 1999, 152.

³⁶Department of Finance, *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1996).

³⁷See, e.g., John Weeks, "Stuck in Low GEAR? Macroeconomic Policy in South Africa, 1996-98," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 23 (4) (1999).

³⁸Joseph Stiglitz, "More Instruments and Broader Goals: Moving Towards the Post-Washington Consensus," WIDER Annual Lectures 2, UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki, 1998.

³⁹Nicoli Natrass, "Globalisation and the South African Labour Market," *Journal for Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 22 (3) (1998).

⁴⁰This is not to say that the net impact of trade liberalization has been to reduce jobs. Indeed, there is evidence that the overall impact has been marginally positive as export industries have helped boost labor-intensive down-stream industries like transport and services. Lawrence Edwards, "Globalisation and the Skill Bias of Occupational Employment in South Africa," unpublished paper, School of Economics, University of Cape Town, 2000. The point is simply that a more flexible labor market would probably have reduced the negative impact of trade liberalization. Trevor Bell and N. Cattaneo, *Foreign Trade and Employment in South African Manufacturing Industry*, occasional report no. 4 (Geneva: Employment and Training Department, International Labor Office, 1997); ILO (drafted by S. Hayter, G. Reinecke, and R. Torres), *South Africa: Studies on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation*, final draft, February 1999, Task Force on Country Studies on Globalization, International Labor Office, Geneva.

⁴¹Most calculations of employment elasticity in South Africa indicate that the labor demand curve is relatively elastic. Estimates range from -0.66 to -0.85, which suggests that a 10 percent increase in wages will result in a drop in employment of between 6.6 percent and 8.5 percent (reported in the EAGER Report [10] [Spring 1999]: 7). F. Barker, "On South Africa's Labour Policies," *South African Journal of Economics* 67 (1) (March 1999): 1-33.

⁴²Peter Moll, "Compulsory Centralisation of Collective Bargaining in South Africa," *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings* 82 (2) (1996): 326-329; Nicoli Natrass, "Inequality, Unemployment and Wage-Setting Institutions in South Africa," *Journal for Studies in Economics and Econometrics* 24 (3) (November 2000).

⁴³Department of Finance, *Growth, Employment and Redistribution*, 18.

⁴⁴Barker, "On South Africa's Labour Policies."

- ⁴⁵ILO, *South Africa: Studies on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation*, 25.
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- ⁴⁷Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- ⁴⁸Nicoli Natrass and Jeremy Seekings, "Citizenship and Welfare in South Africa: Deracialisation and Inequality in a Labour-Surplus Economy," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (1997): 452–481.
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- ⁵¹V. Peterson, "The Payment of Pensions," paper presented to the conference Towards a Sustainable and Comprehensive Social Security System.
- ⁵²See, in general, Nicoli Natrass and Jeremy Seekings, "Democracy and Distribution in Highly Unequal Economies: The Case of South Africa," paper presented at a conference on Democracy and Distribution, Yale University, 1999.

Economic Scenarios for South Africa: A Business Perspective

INTRODUCTION

IN 1994, SOUTH AFRICA'S new democratic government inherited an economy in which growth had been feeble for several decades, and a social system in which a majority of laborers had been denied access to education and well-paying work. One in five adults were formally unemployed.¹ Inequalities were glaring. Even today, South Africa is an economy that contains, as one journalist has remarked, "a Belgium within an India . . . A dual economy with a high-skill, capital-intensive modern sector alongside a mass of unskilled people scratching a living from subsistence farming, casual employment and self-employment."²

The economic challenges the country faces are daunting. As a result, many commentators have suggested ever since the heady days immediately following South Africa's first democratic election in April of 1994 that South Africa "needs an economic miracle to follow its political miracle" if its infant democracy is to survive. This claim is, however, misleading in two interrelated and important respects.

The first of these is the reality that South Africa's political transition was not, in fact, "miraculous." Rather, it represented

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the coming together of powerful social and economic forces that had been growing for decades, but which apartheid had tried vainly to keep apart. That this occurred relatively peacefully was the result of the exceptional statesmanship of Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk, together with the existence in South Africa of an extraordinary range and depth of civil institutions. Political negotiations hit troubled waters time and again during the four years leading up to the April 1994 election. On each occasion it was these institutions—a free press, independent judiciary, churches, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, and a well-developed and socially engaged business community—that rose to the challenge and helped get the political process back on track. Political change was thus a “managed revolution” rather than a supernatural phenomenon.

The second reason talk of miracles is misleading is that, while the impact of economic success on societies is profound, its causes are never “miraculous” in the dictionary sense of “remarkable events impossible to explain by the known laws of nature.”³ Mancur Olson, for example, has examined the remarkable ability of an expanding group of countries in the past half-century to grow at rates previously unparalleled in history.⁴ He concluded that economic success has nothing to do with geography, natural resource endowment, or culture, but rather the quality of countries’ domestic institutions and their economic policies:

Any poorer countries that adopt relatively good economic policies and institutions enjoy rapid catch-up growth: since they are far short of their potential, their per capita incomes can increase not only because of the technological and other advances that simultaneously bring growth to the richest countries, but also by narrowing the huge gap between their actual and potential income. . . . Countries with the highest per capita incomes do not have the same opportunity.⁵

The key reason that some countries since World War II have been able to grow at rates previously unparalleled in history has been their ability to take advantage of the massive growth in world trade, capital flows, and the transfer of knowledge that have defined the global economy in this period.

Successful countries generally have followed a common set of policies:

- economic liberalization, including tariff reduction and removal of restrictions on capital flows;
- macroeconomic stability, including relatively low inflation, appropriately valued exchange rates, and affordable budget deficits;
- secure property rights; and
- efficient and noncorrupt governance in areas such as public administration, law and order, education, and public-service provision.

The East Asian crisis emphasized the need, too, for sound financial institutions and impartially enforced codes of practice, especially banking regulation, accurate financial disclosure, and working bankruptcy laws.

South Africa since 1994 has already made substantial strides in putting together the necessary policy and institutional ingredients for success. But more is still needed. Economic policies must be shaped toward simultaneously achieving a rapid rate of economic growth and employment creation, the fastest possible reduction of poverty, and the fastest possible reduction in inequality.

Fortunately, these goals are complementary. The principal cause of poverty and inequality in South Africa is the high rate of unemployment. With a population growing at about 2 percent per annum, unemployment can only fall if the economy grows rapidly. There appears to be quite broad agreement that South Africa's economy needs to grow at a minimum of 5 percent per annum.

There is also a broad consensus that to achieve such a rate of growth South Africa's level of fixed investment or capital formation will have to rise from the 18 percent of GDP recorded over the decade 1984–1993 to some 26 percent of GDP. To fund this higher level of investment, domestic savings must rise from around 16 percent of GDP currently, and any remaining shortfall between this and the level of investment attained

must be funded by foreign capital inflows. At the same time, the labor intensity of that investment must increase so that 5 percent per annum growth is indeed sufficient to absorb the approximately three hundred thousand new entrants into the labor force each year and begin making inroads into the current high level of joblessness.

The situation, in short, is not hopeless. South Africa can boast of a range and depth of civil institutions that is quite exceptional by the standards of other emerging markets; these will doubtless prove to be a significant political and economic asset in progressing further. For just as South Africa's nongovernmental institutions helped keep the political negotiations of 1994 on track, so they will be important in encouraging and supporting the often politically difficult adjustments still necessary for future economic success.

POLICY ADJUSTMENTS SINCE 1994

South Africa's new democratic government moved swiftly post-1994 in an attempt to set South Africa on the path to a higher, employment-creating growth.⁶ Already some of the rewards are apparent. Since 1994, growth has averaged 2.6 percent per annum (see table 1), despite the adverse impact of weak commodity prices and the Asian economic crisis during this period. While this growth is substantially better than that achieved in the previous two decades, it is still feeble when compared with successful economies globally. Formal employment has, moreover, continued to decline, albeit at a slower pace than in the period immediately following democratic transition. Policy changes already made and remaining weaknesses that prevented a more rapid growth and employment response are outlined briefly in the following sections.

Improved Access to Global Capital

The first important change was the ending of financial sanctions in 1993 and the ensuing readmission of South Africa to global capital markets. This brought to an end the politically induced requirement to repay large amounts of foreign debt

Table 1. South Africa’s Deteriorating Growth and Employment Performance

Period	Growth in real GDP (percent per annum)	Growth in employment in the nonagricultural sectors (percent per annum)
1961–1970	6.0	6.8
1971–1980	3.1	2.9
1981–1990	1.4	1.0
1991–1993	- 0.8	- 2.1
1994–1999	2.6	- 1.6

Source: South African Reserve Bank, “Labour, Price and other Selected Economic Indicators of South Africa, 1923–1993,” supplement to South African Reserve Bank, *Quarterly Bulletin* (September 1994); and also South African Reserve Bank, *Quarterly Bulletin* (March 2000).

that had drained the equivalent of some 2 percent of GDP per annum from the economy between 1984 and 1993. Repaying this debt against the background of a miserably low national savings rate had meant a severe cap on fixed investment that restricted domestic economic growth to less than 1 percent per annum over the decade. Simply removing this requirement to repay debt, which under normal circumstances is easily rolled over, automatically produced a significantly greater capacity to invest and grow.

In addition, since 1994 South Africa has attracted important foreign capital inflows, which have averaged 1.9 percent of GDP per annum. Unfortunately, capital inflows have largely comprised portfolio flows into the well-developed and liquid domestic bond and equity markets. Foreign direct investment has been disappointingly small, thanks to the slow pace of privatization (see below), pessimism about Africa in general, and an inevitable caution in the period immediately following dramatic political change. Moreover, some investors have doubtless been put off by the country’s high levels of crime and violence, increased labor militancy, and the unspoken fear that the new government’s embrace of the market system may prove to be half-hearted. As a result, capital inflows have been highly volatile on an annual and even quarterly basis, thus jeopardizing macroeconomic stability.

A More Open Economy

A second important recent change in South Africa's economic situation has been the signing in 1994 of the Marrakesh Agreement, which led to the founding of the World Trade Organization. This agreement, negotiated jointly by government, business, and labor, committed South Africa to the removal of nontariff barriers and the phased reduction of tariffs from a simple average of more than 30 percent in 1990 to just above 14 percent in 1998. The agreement committed South Africa to redressing the complexity and highly skewed nature of its historical tariff protection. Thus the number of tariff lines fell from thirteen thousand in 1990 to eight thousand and the tariff bands from two hundred to seventy-two. Highly protected industries such as motor vehicles and textiles and clothing bore the brunt of these reductions.

In 1999, South Africa signed a free-trade agreement with the European Union, and it is hoped shortly to enter into a free-trade agreement within the Southern African Development Community. The EU agreement is currently bogged down in prolonged disputes over wine and spirits and claims of exclusive regional naming rights. But if successfully implemented, this agreement will represent another important step in opening the South African market to imports, while simultaneously improving the country's access to the world's second-largest regional market.⁷

Though government has been reluctant to scrap all exchange controls, significant progress has been made in their phased removal. This process began with the abolition of all controls on nonresidents in March of 1995. Shortly afterward, financial institutions were allowed to diversify their asset base geographically, mainly by means of asset swaps, and individuals were permitted to invest increasing sums offshore. Restrictions were also lifted on resident companies, allowing them to invest freely in Africa and, more recently, anywhere in the world.⁸

The opening up of the economy has attracted much criticism from both business and organized labor. Critics argue that the rapid implementation of tariff cuts, without measures to offset their harsh impact, has been responsible for unnecessary hard-

ship. Unemployment has risen in some sectors of the economy: some critics point to the reported loss of four hundred thousand jobs in the formal sector between 1994 and 1999. But two hundred thousand of these jobs were lost in the mining industry, mainly because of the weaker gold price. Moreover, recent evidence suggests that overall employment in the economy has probably *not* fallen since 1994, since the number of jobs in the informal sector has been rapidly growing.⁹ There is also some evidence that official statistics do not adequately measure the growth of jobs in the fast-growing information and telecommunications sectors, as well as in nontraditional areas such as outsourcing.

Indeed, some benefits of a more open economy are already apparent. These include heightened domestic competition, the impact of which is best measured by the relatively modest rise in domestic inflation in 1996 and 1998, despite the sharp weakening of the rand exchange rate in both of those years. As a result of competition from imports, local producers were unable to simply pass on higher input costs, as had been the norm previously. In addition, the removal of tariff barriers ensures that South African producers have access to both imported and locally produced inputs at world prices and can therefore themselves be internationally competitive. Manufactured exports have dramatically increased in recent years. Much of this increase has occurred in areas not previously associated with the export market.

Fiscal Policy

A further important step toward raising domestic investment levels was the reduction of the company tax rate in 1999 to 30 percent. To this should be added a further 12.5 percent tax on distributed earnings, resulting in an overall tax rate of 37.8 percent. This is a significant improvement on the 48 percent corporate tax rate applicable in 1992. After a brief, largely unsuccessful experiment with targeted tax incentives from 1996–1998, South Africa has chosen not to offer the type of tax incentives for foreign investment often found elsewhere in both developed and developing countries. While a common competitive tax rate is clearly preferable to such concessions, South

Africa's company tax rate needs to be reduced still further (to around 30 percent on distributed earnings) if it is to approach that of countries with which it is competing to attract investment.

At the same time as the tax rate has been lowered, domestic resources have been freed up to fund expected higher levels of investment by a reduction in the government's budget deficit from 7.4 percent of GDP in 1992–1993 to 2.0 percent of GDP in 1999–2000 and a projected 2.6 percent in 2000–2001. In terms of the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, the deficit is expected to fall further to 2.1 percent in 2003–2004.¹⁰ It is notable that this decline has been achieved at the same time as company and personal tax rates have been reduced. A major reason for the decline in the deficit has been significantly improved tax collections flowing from a restructured South African Revenue Services, with revenue collected rising from 21.7 percent of GDP in 1992–1993 to 24.3 percent in 1999–2000. Government spending has also been constrained, falling from 30.0 percent of GDP in 1992–1993 and 31.0 percent in 1993–1994 to 26.2 percent in 1999–2000.

Unfortunately, as a result of constrained government spending, capital expenditure has inevitably suffered. Thus capital expenditure has fallen from 2.5 percent of GDP in 1992–1993 and 3.5 percent in 1993–1994 to 1.0 percent in 1999–2000—a level that is now inadequate to maintain the existing infrastructure, let alone extend it to areas that were previously inadequately serviced. Government is committed to reforming the civil service and reducing spending on salaries, principally by reducing the number of bureaucratic posts inherited from the old political order. The October 2000 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement provides for capital spending on infrastructure to rise significantly over the next few years. Moreover, to further compensate for growing infrastructural inadequacies, the government has emphasized the need for public/private-sector partnerships. But with the exception of some high-profile toll roads, these have as yet failed to reach any meaningful scale.

Government dissaving (borrowing to fund consumption expenditure) has nevertheless fallen from 7.3 percent of GDP in

1992 to 2.6 percent in 1999 and should fall further to zero in 2002–2003. However, given the low level of domestic savings, even greater progress than this is required if higher levels of domestic investment are not to be constrained by inadequate domestic savings and foreign capital inflows. Lower dissaving can be achieved either by reducing the deficit further or, preferably, by reallocating government spending in favor of capital expenditure. In the absence of political will to shift the structure of spending, the deficit will have to fall still further.

Critics of the current fiscal policies, mainly from within the organized labor movement, have argued that the focus on reducing the fiscal deficit has imposed unnecessarily tough limits on the government's ability to increase spending in areas of high social need, such as rural development, education, and infrastructure. The government's response has been to suggest that spending in these areas has been constrained by inefficiencies at the provincial and local levels rather than by lack of funds per se. Fortunately, with deficit reduction now virtually at an end, government spending in the future should be able to rise in line with economic growth without drawing on a greater share of national resources.

Monetary Policy

For more than a decade prior to 1989, interest rates in South Africa were frequently lower than inflation. The result was a boom-bust cycle of domestic spending and inflation that remained stubbornly double-digit. Since 1999, the South African Reserve Bank has ensured that interest rates have remained consistently positive in real terms in line with its mandate to "maintain the internal and external value of the rand" through fighting inflation. The bank's position has been consistently supported by the government, which recently has adopted policies of its own for fighting inflation.

The benefits of consistent, relatively high real interest rates, responsible fiscal policy, and reduced import tariffs are most clearly seen in the fall in inflation in South Africa to below 9 percent. This ends almost three decades of consistently double-digit inflation. Unit labor costs have led the fall in inflation, with labor productivity growth exceeding 4 percent per annum

between 1994 and 1999—a rate of increase unparalleled in South Africa’s recent history. Unfortunately, nominal wage increases have fallen only slowly, and the reduced rate of growth of unit labor costs has been effected by reduced employment rather than by increased output per existing worker.

Inflation is now probably already at a level at which it is no longer a significant disincentive to savings or a substantial distortion in investment decisions. Moreover, the government recently announced an inflation target of 3–6 percent by 2002. In this way, it hopes to manage inflationary expectations downward so that the target may be successfully achieved with minimum economic pain. The key will be whether wage settlements, stuck at around 8 percent for the past two years,¹¹ will adjust to the target so that unit costs can rise by less than 6 percent without employment having to fall.¹² A further test will be whether the effects of a possibly sustained sharp rise in oil prices will be absorbed without significant secondary price rises, so that the targets can still be reached without damaging increases in interest rates.

Critics of monetary policy in both organized business and labor charge that real interest rates in South Africa are too high, stifling higher levels of fixed investment and attracting volatile portfolio flows. Few would deny that these criticisms are valid, but the problem is one of distinguishing between cause and effect. First, long-term interest rates are determined by the market and not by the monetary authorities. The fact that this market demands a real interest rate premium (generally 6–8 percent) that is high by developed country standards (but not necessarily by emerging market standards) is in part the consequence of inflation expectations (and therefore future currency depreciation) still lagging behind the actual decline in inflation. International experience suggests that once the decline in inflation is credible, real interest rates will decline. The government’s inflation targets are an effort to help restore the confidence of investors.

Second, experience demonstrates that significantly lower real short-term interest rates in South Africa trigger not only a rise in investment but also a surge in borrowing to fund consumption spending. This inevitably sucks in imports and results in a

deficit on the current account of the balance of payments that is increasingly difficult to fund with capital inflows. Thus, high real interest rates are in fact the result of South Africa's inadequate domestic savings levels, and it is only through raising savings that real interest rates can sustainably decline.

Unfortunately, government efforts to encourage higher savings have thus far been disappointingly weak. The amount of interest earned on savings that is exempt from personal income tax was raised from R 2,000 to a still miserly R 3,000 for those younger than sixty-five in the 2000–2001 budget. But the government seems unwilling to introduce legislation to prevent workers from cashing in their pensions and provident fund contributions when changing jobs. Inadequate savings therefore seem likely to remain the principal brake on economic growth for the foreseeable future.

Competition Policy

As a result of historical exchange controls, political isolation, and the relative smallness of the South African economy, economic activities in many areas are highly concentrated by the standards of more developed economies. While the greatest impact on increasing competition has already occurred as a result of lower import tariffs, government has also moved to put South African competition law in line with international standards. A new Competition Act came into effect in 1999. The newly constituted competition authorities have been quick to flex their muscles, blocking a number of high-profile intended mergers for domestic competition considerations, but possibly to the detriment of South Africa's international competitiveness in these industries by preventing the establishment of global-sized players.

Privatization

Inevitably there are still policies and institutions that are out of line with what is required for rapid "catch-up" growth. As long as the rate of saving remains low, South Africa will need to attract large foreign direct capital inflows—and this requires rapid privatization. Unfortunately, privatization has been proceeding very slowly. From the election of South Africa's first

democratic government in April of 1994 to February of 2000, the government sold off some R 14.8 billion in assets. The sale of the state-guaranteed insurance fund, Sasria, accounted for R 6.2 billion alone. Sales to foreign investors comprised R 5.6 billion from the sale of 30 percent of the state-owned telecommunications utility, Telkom; R 1.4 billion from the sale of 20 percent of South African Airways; and R 1.0 billion from the sale of a 25 percent stake in the Airports Company. The amount received by the exchequer to reduce debt was R 9.5 billion.

The pace of privatization has been sluggish, especially when compared with the pace in successful emerging economies in central Europe and elsewhere—doubtless one reason for the disappointingly low levels of foreign direct investment attracted to the country so far. In this regard, the government's recent commitment to speed up the process is to be welcomed. The government has announced that it hopes to complete restructuring the large state-owned companies by 2004 and to have concluded privatization deals worth R 40 billion by that date. The focus of restructuring is to be on Denel (defense), Transnet (transport), Eskom (electricity), and Telkom (telecommunications), and it is intended that Telkom will be listed in 2001.

Labor-Market Policies

The new government moved swiftly, together with its alliance partner, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), to introduce a new legislative environment for the domestic labor market. Two existing acts governing the labor market were amended, namely the Labor Relations Act of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, and the new Employment Equity Act of 1998 was introduced.

The Labor Relations Act set out to regulate employment contracts and establish the environment in which collective bargaining would occur, with a Labor Court being established to deal with disputes. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act focused on minimum conditions, including the remuneration premium paid for working overtime, a maximum working week, and maternity and family responsibility leave. The Employment Equity Act had as its aim the accelerated hiring, training, and promotion of people from “previously disadvantaged” groups.

To this end, employers with more than fifty employees or above a minimum turnover level must submit annual employment equity plans setting out their programs to achieve equity in the workplace. A fourth piece of legislation, the Skills Development Act, introduced a compulsory levy on wages to fund training. While increased training is essential for global competitiveness (see below), this levy on wages is in practice an additional disincentive to increasing employment.¹³

While organized labor has sought to extend the legislation into areas currently unprotected, organized business and a number of outside commentators, locally and abroad, have reacted critically to these developments. They argue that the new legal environment has a negative impact on investment, job creation, and especially small businesses. Central to such criticism is the belief that South Africa is attempting to introduce a European-style labor environment before achieving European levels of productivity, development, and growth. Moreover, the continuing tensions in relations between labor and management in many sectors, in conjunction with the new labor laws, has produced labor-market rigidities that inhibit the creation of new jobs. These tensions are not felt so much by big business, which can afford to employ experts to help them in this area. But they can be disastrous for small and medium-sized businesses, which international experience shows are likely to be the only significant creators of jobs in the future.

This is critically important for South Africa. It is only through substantial job creation that poverty can be significantly reduced. Moreover, as the high level of unemployment is unquestionably the greatest cause of inequality in South Africa, the danger is that progress will be made in reducing inequalities in the workplace only at the expense of rising inequality for society as a whole. Inequality will then become associated with class instead of race.

Governance

While the government has made substantial progress in establishing macroeconomic stability and an appropriate policy environment for encouraging higher levels of economic growth, governance in important areas remains inadequate. Some of the

problems are rooted in South Africa's political past. Since 1994, the government has struggled to integrate a myriad of racially and regionally divided institutions into single entities. Attempts to redress discriminatory employment patterns were sometimes hasty and poorly implemented. As long as such problems remain, South Africa's ability to take full advantage of its reintegration into the global economy will remain constrained.

Crime and violence are frequently cited as the most important factors deterring foreign and even local investment. Low skills levels are another major problem in competing internationally. Problems can also be identified in areas such as customs and excise enforcement and inadequate responses to foreign dumping of goods in the local market, and probably also in areas such as the support of small business. Uncertainty also hampers attempts to formulate coherent strategies to combat the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In particular, there remains a gulf between policy formulation at the central government level and the capacity of provincial and local authorities or institutions to implement these policies. Education provides a good example. Even if appropriate changes are made at the level of central government, local schools often lack the capacity to respond adequately. Numerous studies have shown that the greatest impact on the quality of education provided by a particular school lies not in its physical or staffing resources, nor in whether it is located in an urban or rural area, but in the quality of its headmaster/mistress.

The government has been attempting to address such problems. It has tried to put strong leaders in positions of authority in areas like education and the criminal justice system. But the nature of the institutional problems in these areas is such that success can be only incremental. It will be some time, therefore, before significant progress is made in reducing these institutional impediments to higher growth.

THE INITIAL RESPONSE TO POLICY REFORM

The most immediate measure of the impact of policy change on economic performance is the rise in GDP growth to 2.6 percent

per annum in the period 1993–1999, compared with less than 1 percent in 1984–1993. Inflation, too, has fallen to an average of 7.6 percent since 1994, from an average of 14.4 percent in the previous decade. Moreover, South Africa emerged largely unscathed from the emerging market crisis in 1997–1998, and economic growth now looks set to accelerate. But 2.6 percent per annum growth is barely more than South Africa's population growth, and employment creation remains woefully inadequate. Clearly, more is needed.

The different response of individual sectors to policy change provides some indication of what needs to be done next. For example, the two sectors most affected by tariff reductions were motor vehicles and clothing and textiles. Employment in the still inward-looking clothing and textiles sector fell some 9 percent over the period from June 1994–June 1999.¹⁴ Yet employment in the motor industry rose some 20 percent over the same period,¹⁵ largely because of increased exports of vehicle components and built-up units. Thus, exports of passenger vehicles, for example, rose from fewer than 9,000 units in 1995 to more than 52,000 units in 1999 and are expected to reach 115,000 units in 2001.¹⁶ Similar adjustments can be found in the defense and aerospace industries, where the drive for exports has proved quite successful, resulting in the emergence of a genuinely competitive high-technology industry.

Similar positive signs can be found in many sectors of the economy. The gold-mining industry, for example, despite a sharp fall in the price of gold, has witnessed not just a process of consolidation, but also new investments, with new local and foreign players entering the local industry. Indeed, despite its reputation as a sunset industry, the mining of platinum, chrome, and coal has begun to expand significantly. Totally new areas of beneficiation (adding value to primary commodities by processing them further), such as aluminum, stainless steel, and zinc, have also opened up, as a result of large new investments in these areas.

Mining has also provided the platform for a strong drive into the larger African market. In pursuing this market, South African business has not only demonstrated a willingness to cope with the type of political risks associated with Africa, which

most overseas companies have been reluctant to absorb, but has also begun providing the sort of real foundation that is necessary if a regional renaissance is to be created.

SCENARIOS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

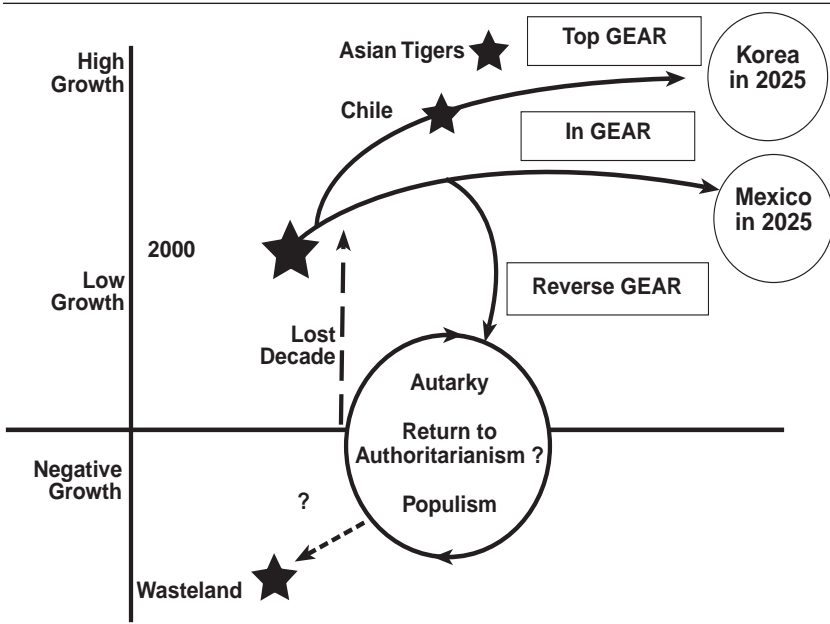
Given the context we have sketched, we foresee three different scenarios for the future development of the South African economy.

Scenario 1: In Gear

The first scenario occurs against what is presently a favorable global backdrop of reasonable international growth, firm commodity prices, and an improved market confidence in emerging markets generally and South Africa specifically. In this scenario, further modest reductions in the fiscal deficit over the next two years free up almost all of domestic savings to fund more domestic investment. Because of the continued low level of domestic savings, capital inflows remain essential to fund higher levels of investment and growth. Because of slow, disjointed privatization, foreign direct investment remains limited and foreign capital inflows remain largely portfolio in nature. As a result of an ever-present deficit on the current account of the balance of payments,¹⁷ periodic exchange rate crises will occur whenever portfolio capital takes fright, because of either adverse domestic economic developments or regional political instability. In this scenario, there is also only modest progress in important areas of governance, such as the criminal justice system, education, and labor legislation. Industrial relations are liable to remain tense.

The outcome of these developments is that economic growth remains constrained by inadequate savings. South Africa therefore suffers relatively high real interest rates at averages of 3–4 percent per annum. This is higher than population growth, and, if sustained, per capita income would rise over a twenty-five-year period to a level approximately equal to that of Mexico today (see figure 1). But unemployment—and therefore poverty and inequality—would continue to rise as well both because

Figure 1. Scenarios for South Africa



Source: Anglo American Corporation, unpublished internal presentation, May 1997.

growth is inadequate and because its labor intensity is inadequate.

While such a scenario seems plausible over the medium term, the inevitable increase in unemployment, poverty, and inequality suggests that this mix of policies cannot be politically sustained in the long run.

Scenario 2: Reverse Gear

In this scenario, impatience with the slow pace of economic and social change leads to reversals in important areas of policy. Higher levels of public spending raise the fiscal deficit and absorb significant amounts of domestic savings, leaving less available to fund investment. Artificially lowered interest rates to boost growth encourage higher levels of consumption and increased imports in a classic boom-bust outcome. As a result, the need for foreign capital inflows rises just when existing foreign investments are frightened off by their perception of unsustainable policies being implemented.

The rand exchange rate therefore falls sharply and tighter exchange controls are eventually reintroduced in a vain effort to stem outflows. Tariffs are raised to dampen imports, but exports also suffer from retaliatory action from major trading partners as a result of South Africa having reneged on WTO rules and the EU Free Trade Agreement. Minimum-wage legislation and tighter restrictions on retrenchments are introduced to counter business attempts to remain competitive in a deteriorating economic environment. Bankruptcies and closure are the inevitable consequence.

In such an environment, economic growth returns to the less than 1 percent per annum experienced in the 1980s, unemployment soars, and average per capita incomes fall by one-third over a twenty-five-year period. Political instability grows. In such an environment, democracy is at risk.

There are essentially two possible ways out of the mess. The first is for events to spiral out of control, and for South Africa to become an economic wasteland. The second is for policymakers to realize the folly of their ways and to respond to the pressures exerted by the power of the market by restoring the abandoned policies. But this is done at considerable cost, both in terms of the substantially worsened levels of domestic poverty and inequality and in terms of the damage to South Africa's economic reputation both locally and abroad.

Fortunately, such a scenario has a relatively low probability, both because there is sufficient consensus within South Africa of the risks associated with such policies and because of the disciplining influence of the "market policeman." Any deviation away from current policies will be immediately punished by the financial markets; the reaction, in terms of equity and bond selloffs and resultant capital outflows, will be swift. A sharply falling currency and soaring long-term interest rates will have an immediate sobering influence on policymakers, who are more likely to back off their intended path than to plunge on, heedless of the consequences. In this way South Africa's sophisticated financial and business environment offers a check on foolish economic policies that is not present in many other emerging markets.

Scenario 3: Top Gear

The third scenario, Top Gear, requires an aggressive determination to address the current problems discussed above. Public-sector spending is refocused away from wages toward infrastructure provision. Small businesses receive special support in areas such as credit provision. A targeted program of privatization attracts long-term foreign direct investment, alleviating the shortfall of domestic savings. The authorities focus aggressively on improved governance at all levels. Existing labor laws are amended to exempt small and medium businesses from the most onerous of current provisions.

In this scenario, growth rises to perhaps 5–6 percent per annum at the end of five years. Per capita income would rise 2.5 times over a twenty-five-year period, which would mean a level about equal to that of South Korea today. Importantly, in this scenario, unemployment and poverty slowly fall, and so does inequality. But an important caveat is that even if all other policy and institutional areas are adequately addressed, Top Gear is impossible without a substantial improvement in education and training levels. For no economy can grow at 5–6 percent per annum for more than a few years without substantial inflows of skilled workers into the workplace.

CHANGING GEARS

The Top Gear scenario is obviously in the economic and political interest of all groups in South Africa. Indeed, much of the current debate on economic policy is about how to make such a shift. Although there are important differences in policy prescriptions, there are also a growing number of common assumptions. Yet international experience demonstrates that the adjustments necessary to successfully ensure high rates of economic growth are, unfortunately, not automatically made. As Bobby Godsell and Jim Buys have pointed out, “Those countries which succeeded did so by drawing all powerful groups into an integrated set of economic, political and social goals. But they not only correctly identified a common set of goals or ends to all economic endeavour; they also managed to establish a rea-

sonable consensus on the means to those ends.”¹⁸ Achieving such a consensus will not be easy—and not just because of ideological differences about what is actually required for higher economic growth and success. Global developments have hurt the cause of economic reform in South Africa. Generally feeble commodity prices, a sharp fall in the price of gold, and the emerging market crisis of 1997–1998 have all affected South Africa adversely.

But surely the most fundamental obstacle in achieving a consensus is South Africa’s historical legacy of racially charged political conflict and adversarial industrial relations. In this respect, South Africa added a unique racial dimension to the traditionally hostile nature of Anglo-Saxon industrial relations. The workplace was often the only place where protestors could legally express their views prior to 1994. This relationship contrasts sharply with the experience of continental European countries and Japan, where the common interest of employers, employees, and the state has been recognized and cooperative interaction has been the norm. Can South Africa’s culture of industrial contentiousness be changed?¹⁹

A number of developments provide hopeful indicators. These include the predominance of industrial unionism in South Africa; unlike craft unions, industrial unions can address broad national interests. Unions are willing as well to play an independent role, rather than simply taking directions from their political allies in the government. Unions seem also to seek a constructive, and not just an economically defensive, role. This is reinforced by the continued alliance between organized labor and the government, for “the crucial element in gaining workers’ co-operation is the belief that their sacrifice will contribute to general gains and that those gains will be distributed fairly.”²⁰

However, the continued confidence of the workers is, in turn, dependent upon the following conditions being satisfied:

- Unions must have confidence in the government’s economic management and faith that it has a workable game plan for the economy.
- Unions must have confidence that their interests will be fairly represented and that they will have influence in economic decision-making.

- There must be confidence in political stability (that is, that the rules of the game will not suddenly change to labor's disadvantage under a new government).

Joan Nelson notes that "these requirements are strikingly parallel to the conditions needed to get business to start investing again."²¹ Militant trade unionism characterized by attempts to improve the real incomes and political clout of its members is the counterpart to business's reluctance to invest in a climate of economic and political uncertainty. Conversely, union wage restraint is "essentially an investment: current income and consumption are foregone in favour of expected greater returns later."²² Such a cooperative rather than confrontational relationship will be encouraged where the state (and business) balances the call for wage restraint to encourage higher growth with greater emphasis on the goals of poverty reduction and equity. Moreover, business can play a vital role in developing such a relationship through the conscious pursuit of increased participation and economic empowerment of workers. It is crucial, however, that such a relationship should not develop into a "corporatist" alliance that pits business and labor against the unemployed or against those employed outside the formal business sector.

The role of business in encouraging such a national consensus on appropriate economic policies is equally complex. In the first place, if the desire is to create an environment in which economic success is to be based on export-led growth, it will be necessary for existing businesses to accept the discomfort caused by the phasing out of tariffs required to enhance competitive conditions. In addition, business leaders would do well to take the initiative in tackling deep-rooted social problems, from the development of a more skilled labor force to the destruction of discriminatory employment patterns. Business can play an especially vital role in a country where many of the institutions considered normal in developed societies are still in their infancy or are operating suboptimally.

In terms of sharing a common vision of South Africa's economic future, the relationship between business and government is unquestionably the best it has been since 1948. One

example of this cooperative relationship is Business Against Crime. Few would doubt that tackling crime is one of the country's most urgent priorities and that effective policing is an essential ingredient to this end. Yet it was quickly apparent post-1994 that the problems of policing, prosecution, and incarceration in South Africa were not so much the result of inadequate resources as the consequence of inappropriate organizational structures, ineffective management systems, and inadequate levels of skill and morale.

While business has little operational knowledge of crime detection and prosecution, these management problems are all areas in which it has plenty of experience. Accordingly, working in close partnership with the government, BAC has assisted in a number of areas, principally in helping conceptualize and design a government-funded five-year R 2 billion project to reengineer completely the criminal justice system. This project, which is well underway, promises to build gradually a new institutional base, which will improve both crime prevention and prosecution. The governments of the United States and the United Kingdom have assisted in the process, and, with the incidence of virtually all types of serious crime having leveled off (albeit at completely unacceptable levels), there are now signs that genuine progress is being made.

Experience in South Africa also demonstrates the important catalytic role business can play in the area of education, thereby simultaneously meeting a core need of social development and its own need for skilled employees. Strategic investments by the private sector can help expand opportunities for quality education. This can never occur on anything but a small scale, but by taking an innovative lead and singling out individuals and institutions for support, business can help pave the way for larger, structural changes. At its most immediate, this can take the form of identifying, mentoring, and providing financial assistance for talented current and future employees who might otherwise not have had the opportunity for further education. In this way, the natural pool of skilled workers will be enlarged.

At its broadest, corporate social investment in education can be targeted to assist key governmental policies. Support for effective nongovernmental organizations working in schools to

upgrade teaching skills, and pioneering new approaches to learning or helping school managers operate more efficiently, provide further avenues for business to expand education opportunity by judicious social investment and send a powerful message of the way communities, governments, and businesses can help change society for the better.

A further example of putting this experience into practice is the recently formed R 1 billion Business Trust for Employment Creation and Human Capacity Building. This joint venture with the government hopes to assist in bridging the difficult period of political and economic structural adjustment through which South Africa is passing, and in the process also contribute to the building of trust between the private and public sectors. It is hoped that the various projects in which the trust becomes involved will produce an impact far greater than the not inconsiderable sum of money that business is contributing to the effort by combining business skills and experience with those of government and nongovernmental organizations.

Thus, in education, for example, the trust will sponsor a nationwide pilot scheme conducted by one of the country's most effective NGOs, READ (the acronym for Read, Educate and Develop), to improve the reading and learning skills of primary-school children. It is believed that through this program the repeater rate of the one million participating children will be reduced, so that the typical period a child spends in school will fall from the current average of fifteen years to twelve years and, finally, to a norm of ten years. If successful, it is hoped that government will then expand the proven teaching techniques into the formal national education system with significant benefits in terms of efficiency and the release of scarce funds for vital, but currently neglected, capital investment. The close working relationship that has developed between the ministry of education and the private sector during deliberations such as this has seen a convergence of views on policy and implementation issues. Business now believes that serious reform is underway in the South African educational system, with substantial long-term benefits.

The other central thrust of the trust is to help attack the critical challenge of unacceptably high levels of unemployment

by targeting the sector with the most job-creation potential, tourism. Projects include the pooling of government, private, and business trust resources to run a far larger tourism promotion campaign internationally than has been possible until now. Other programs aim to improve skills in the tourism industry and to stimulate the creation of tourism enterprises, especially among the disadvantaged. There is also a project to stimulate the eradication of malaria, a disease that is a key inhibitor of tourism growth.

The trust has also made a large donation to Business Against Crime, strengthening the existing private-sector effort to combat another key inhibitor of tourism. The potential benefits in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation that would flow from successfully increasing the numbers of foreign tourists visiting the country demonstrate the capacity of the business community to reach beyond the self-interest of its individual members. Evidence of the close working relationship between the government and business on tourism is to be seen in the composition of the Board of SATOUR, the parastatal tourism agency, where five of the twelve directors appointed by the minister are senior business executives and trustees of the Business Trust.

Unfortunately, evidence of such striving for common goals has until recently been less common in the relationship between business and labor. There are some instances of cooperation in individual industries; for example, the Gold Crisis Committee was established to deal with the problems facing the gold mining industry in the face of a weak international gold price. Business also meets regularly with labor and the government in the statutory structures of the National, Economic, Development and Labour Council (Nedlac). But there is scant evidence of shared initiatives on the scale of BAC or the Business Trust.

One possible area of cooperation is increased productivity in the workplace, a field too often neglected in South Africa's conflict-ridden past. Moreover, the isolation and protection from competition in an era of sanctions and disinvestment meant that by 1994 South African industry had too often fallen behind its international competitors. One illustration of what could be achieved is provided by the example of Samcor, the

South African manufacturer of Ford and Mazda vehicles, which in 1995 increased its production of motor vehicles per employee by a factor of 50 percent, from ten to fifteen cars per annum. Samcor's rate compared with an industry average in 1994 of nine cars per employee and was achieved not by cutting staff, but by increasing the average number of hours of training per employee from fourteen hours in 1994 to fifty-four hours in 1995. A further factor was the introduction of the best international practices, thanks to the return of Ford as a joint equity partner with Anglo American Industrial Corporation. Training was increased further in 1996, with the bill rising to 7–8 percent of the payroll—five times the industry average. At the same time, the number of cars produced per employee per annum rose to twenty. (Yet even at this level, productivity lagged well below Ford's plant in Valencia, Spain, where production in 1994 amounted to sixty-five cars per employee.)

Productivity gains such as these provide an important illustration of mutual benefits. The benefits to the employer in terms of improved competitiveness are obvious. The benefits to the unions are not just a greater number of skilled jobs, but also the possibility of real wage increases for their members. Thus, as mentioned above, productivity growth in South Africa averaged some 4 percent per annum between 1994 and 1999, while unit labor costs rose some 7.4 percent per annum. Wages over this period rose 11.7 percent per annum, an increase in real terms of more than 3 percent per annum. Unfortunately, too often the productivity increases were achieved by reducing the number of people employed rather than increasing the amount produced per existing employee. The challenge is to change this through productivity-linked wage agreements, so that employment increases and workers receive above-inflation wage increases.

A more recent development is the establishment of the Millennium Council by business and labor. The council, with twelve representatives from each side, will cover all the trade-union federations and the various constituencies of organized business. It takes as its starting point the agreement that current levels of poverty and inequality are unacceptable, and will explore new initiatives to improve the quality of life. The objec-

tive of the council is to develop a shared analysis of the crisis in unemployment, job loss, and the lack of job creation and to agree to potential solutions to be pursued with the government and Nedlac as appropriate. This was seen to have been an important ingredient in the recent economic successes of Ireland and the Netherlands. Provided the dangers of a “corporatist” alliance can be avoided, this initiative offers renewed hope that a national consensus on the policies necessary for our “Top Gear” scenario may yet be forged.

Will South Africa succeed in reaching such a consensus and making the further changes necessary for economic success? Only time will tell, but South African society possesses a resilience and flexibility that enabled it to negotiate successfully the turbulence of the apartheid 1980s and the challenges of democratic transition in the 1990s. Other societies have fallen apart when faced with such hurdles. It would be a mistake to underestimate the will to succeed in South Africa, or the positive factors already in place.

ENDNOTES

¹The October Household Surveys (Statistics South Africa, *1999 October Household Survey*, August 2000) found an official unemployment rate in 1996 of 19.3 percent and an expanded unemployment rate (which includes those who have not looked for work in the past four weeks) of 33.0 percent. By 1999, official unemployment had risen to 23.3 percent and the expanded unemployment rate to 36.2 percent.

²Martin Wolf, “Spreading South Africa’s Wealth,” *Financial Times*, 14 March 2000, 13.

³See, for example, World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴Mancur Olson, “Distinguished Lecture on Economics in Government—Big Bills Left on the Sidewalk: Why Some Nations are Rich, and Others Poor,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 10 (2) (Spring 1996): 3–24.

⁵*Ibid.*, 20–21.

⁶The South African government’s formal response to these economic policy challenges was set out in its macroeconomic strategy document, *Growth, Employment and Redistribution: A Macroeconomic Strategy* (GEAR), published by the department of finance, June 1996, Johannesburg.

⁷In terms of the EU agreement, tariffs on 86 percent of South Africa's industrial exports to the EU are to be fully liberalized on implementation and by year six only 1 percent will be subject to duties. Only 62 percent of agricultural exports will be duty-free by 2010. In turn, 89 percent of industrial imports from the EU will be liberalized over twelve years, with 62 percent reduced to zero on implementation. Tariffs on 81 percent of agricultural imports will be fully liberalized by 2012.

⁸The current situation regarding exchange controls is as follows: No restrictions for nonresidents. Resident individuals may invest abroad a total of R 750,000 per adult, and foreign travel allowances have been raised to R 130,000 per annum per individual older than twelve years. Resident financial institutions may invest up to 15 percent (20 percent for unit trusts) of total assets offshore by means of asset swaps and 10 percent of their annual net inflow of funds up to the 20 percent limits. Companies may invest up to R 250 million per new investment in Southern African Development Community countries and R 50 million per new investment elsewhere. On application, corporates may finance up to 10 percent of approved new foreign investments where this exceeds the current limits.

⁹Statistics South Africa, *1999 October Household Survey*, August 2000.

¹⁰RSA National Assembly, *Medium Term Budget Policy Statement 2000*, 30 October 2000.

¹¹Andrew Levy and Associates, *Quarterly Wage Settlement Surveys*. These surveys mainly measure settlements in larger unionized businesses. Encouragingly, data from Statistics South Africa (*Survey of Average Monthly Earnings*, August 2000) suggest that average earnings were growing at a more modest 6.4 percent by the end of 1999.

¹²Reducing inflation expectations after three decades of double-digit inflation is not easy. This is illustrated by a recent example in which the condition in a multiyear wage agreement that provided for wage negotiations to reopen if inflation fell below an agreed 8–5.5 percent band was triggered by the trade union concerned. Headline inflation was below 5.5 percent and the union used this to demand wage increases *higher* than had been agreed.

¹³In August of 2000 the government announced some modest amendments to this legislation, including making easier the retrenchment of workers within the first six months of employment, ending double pay on Sundays, and allowing more flexibility in negotiating working hours. This package must, however, still be negotiated with business and labor. The government's determination in standing up to labor's already expressed hostility to changes will be a key test of its understanding and resolve in addressing the remaining constraints to higher economic growth and employment creation.

¹⁴Statistics South Africa, *Labor Statistics: Survey of Total Employment and Earnings*, monthly.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa, *Quarterly Review of Business Conditions*, November 1999.

¹⁷Arithmetically, the surplus/deficit on the current account of the balance of payments is the difference between what a country invests and what it saves. It is a truism that South Africa will have a current account deficit that must be funded by foreign capital inflows if its level of investment rises above its low level of domestic savings.

¹⁸Bobby Godsell and Jim Buys, "Growth and Poverty: Towards Some Shared Goals," in Robert Schrire, ed., *Wealth or Poverty? Critical Choices for South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992), 635–656.

¹⁹This section draws heavily upon our Anglo American colleagues, Godsell and Buys, "Growth and Poverty."

²⁰Joan M. Nelson, "Organized Labour, Politics and Labour Market Flexibility in Developing Countries," *World Bank Research Observer* 6 (1) (January 1991): 37–56.

²¹*Ibid.*, 53.

²²*Ibid.*

Minerals and Migrants: How the Mining Industry has Shaped South Africa

Here was an industry which feared neither locusts nor cattle diseases, neither drought nor summer floods. Its product always commanded a ready sale in the financial centres of the world. War or peace, depression or inflation—none seemed to affect the demand. Under an international gold standard there existed a constant and reliable demand for gold at established prices. Even the compromised position of the international gold standard after the Great War did not alter the favoured position of gold. Indeed unlike maize, tobacco, wool, mutton, or wheat it could exploit falling prices and distressed currencies to its very signal benefit. Gold, in consequence, did many things for South Africa. It stabilized revenues and preserved national income from violent fluctuations. It gave firmness to foreign trade because it was by far the principal article of export, accounting since 1910 for more than one-half of total exports.

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Although very intimately a part of the world's economic system, South Africa was spared the worst effects of the fluctuations and crises that occurred between the Great War and the war against the Germany of Hitler. The number of fine ounces won, the expenditures in wages and salaries, foodstuffs and stores, taxes and repairs moved between exceptionally narrow limits. Like a great flywheel the mining industry gave stability to a country that otherwise would have been singularly sensitive to movements in world economy. Farming, so sensitive to world conditions without, and to drought and pestilence within, found comfort and strength in the lee of the Witwatersrand. Were South Africa suddenly to be bereft of its gold-mines, the effect upon its economic system would be catastrophic.

—C. W. de Kiewiet

A History of South Africa,
Social and Economic, 1941¹

HOW MINING LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF GROWTH AND APARTHEID

FOR CENTURIES, even before slavery drew merchant ships south, Africa was known to be a source of gold. By the thirteenth century, reports the *Times Atlas of World History*, “Italian city states and the Christian Spanish kingdoms were striking gold coins. Up to about 1350 at least two-thirds of the world’s supply of gold came from West Africa. Mansa Musa, ruler of the great empire of Mali, epitomized the golden wealth of Africa.”² Laden with gold, camel caravans traveled northeast across the Sahara to the Mediterranean and to Mecca. It was in order to find an alternative route to the fabulous wealth believed to exist where the mysterious camel caravans began their journeys that Henry the Navigator, younger son of

King João I, pushed his ships down the west coast of Africa in the fifteenth century.

He did not immediately find what he was looking for, but he and his successors pressed on. So, too, did navigators on the other side of the continent, favored by a friendlier wind. Ocean traders moved toward the gold emerging from the Great Zimbabwe. Africa was believed to be the home of Prester John, the great king whose glittering kingdom somewhere in the depths of the unknown continent might be a source of fabulous wealth.

When diamonds were discovered in the heart of southern Africa in 1867, and more gold was found nearby in 1886, the news hit the industrializing world with its newly acquired technology like a thunderbolt. Not only could the new steamships get to the coastal towns where Dutch, British, and Portuguese empires had gained a toehold in earlier centuries, but the new railways could now penetrate deep into the interior.

With their appetites whetted by the gold rushes to California and Australia a generation earlier, prospectors and fortune-seekers poured in. South Africa, as Hobart Houghton has argued, is (at least from one perspective) a classic case of rapid development.³ A country trapped by poverty, without the necessary accumulation of capital to invest in its own growth, suddenly found itself with something for which a ready world market existed. The world's investment markets focused on South Africa as one of the most important of the "newly industrializing countries" of the late nineteenth century. Diamonds led the way, but the real impetus came from gold. Barely a decade after the opening of the Witwatersrand gold fields, some hundred thousand men were employed in mining. Within twenty years, gold accounted for two-thirds of the exports from the country that, after a painful civil war over control of the mines, emerged as the Union of South Africa.

Gold mining, as the economic historians have long pointed out, powered South Africa's industrial revolution and dominated its economy for a century. Whether in terms of export earnings, employment of labor, stimulation of a wide range of economic activity from coal mining to agricultural production, or tax revenue, gold was the driving force.

Table 1. Gold Mining in South Africa: 1911–1999

Year	Output fine kg. (thousands)	Contribution to world prdn. (percent)	Contribution to govt. revenue (percent)	Contribution to GNP (percent)	Contribution to exports (percent)	Total employment (thousands)	Avg. value per fine oz. (Rands) (U.S.\$)
1911	257	37	7	20	64	215	8.5 -
1921	253	51	9	13	63	194	10.7 -
1931	338	49	12	16	69	233	8.5 -
1941	448	37	42	18	n.a.	410	16.8 35
1951	358	45	14	10	36	343	24.8 35
1961	714	65	10	10	40	448	25.1 35
1971	976	78	5	6*	n.a.	417	28.6 41
1981	658	67	26	11*	46	479	402.6 460
1986	640	49	n.a.	10*	n.a.	534	837.3 368
1991	599	34	1	5*	30	424	997.9 362
1996	495	n.a.	n.a.	4*	n.a.	342	1664.0 388
1999	449	n.a.	n.a.	(2*)	n.a.	222	(1623) (294)

Notes: Figures marked with an asterisk refer to gross domestic, rather than gross national, product. Total employment measures the average number of persons in service during the year. Figures in parentheses are for 1998. In December of 1932 South Africa abandoned the gold standard; in January of 1933 U.S. President Roosevelt devalued the dollar and set gold at \$35 per fine oz. Before that time the relevant price of gold for South Africa was set in sterling rather than dollars.

Sources: Chamber of Mines South Africa <<http://www.bullion.org.za>>, annual reports plus personal communication; Leo Katzen, *Gold and the South African Economy* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1964); and Nicoli Nattrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining," *World Development* 23 (5) (1995).

I will turn to the more recent developments in the mining industry shortly, but the huge impact of gold on the development of the South African economy is clear. During the first half of the 1980s, the South African gold mines were producing between one-half and two-thirds of world output and generating between 40 and 50 percent of the country's exports. These levels of production had been sustained throughout most of the twentieth century. By 1986, employment in the gold mines, stimulated by the expansion following the phenomenal rise in the price of gold in the early 1970s, reached an all-time peak of 534,000 persons.

While gold was South Africa's primary mineral resource, it was by no means the only one. Within the borders of South Africa itself lay the diamonds, discovered in 1867, that provided much of the early capital as well as the founders (including Cecil Rhodes and Barney Barnato) of the first four of the great mining finance houses that developed Johannesburg. Coal also lay close by in huge reserves and was used to provide cheap power for mining the gold. Coal eventually powered the

wider development of the economy, through the production of iron and steel from the local ore bodies and then through export.

Without going into the details, it is easy to see how mining, with gold at its core, provided the thrust that enabled the South African economy to lift off, in classical Rostovian fashion, to self-sustained growth.⁴ In the fifty years from the end of World War I to 1969, real production grew at somewhere between 5 and 6 percent annually, with employment growth easily outstripping population growth and average per capita income rising steadily. From one perspective, the development of the South African economy during the first century of its industrialization, sparked by the discovery of gold in 1886, was enormously successful.

But there is another side to the story. What is so interesting and painful about South Africa's "development" is the extent to which the very processes that generated wealth in the economy simultaneously produced poverty and patterns of unemployment that still hobble South Africa as it struggles to democratize in the twenty-first century. And these processes were focused on the gold-mining industry itself. Consider what happened.

Essentially the story revolves around the way in which mining entrepreneurs and the state resolved the difficulties they faced in securing the labor needed to dig for gold at the lowest possible cost.⁵ As early as 1889, the Chamber of Mines organized the recruitment of a black labor force; by monopolizing all hiring, it managed to ensure that for two generations at least, real wages for black gold miners did not rise. In 1969, wages were no higher than they had been in 1911,⁶ and the wages in 1911 were, if anything, *lower* than they had been two decades before that. At the same time, the diamond mines housed their black labor force in single-sex compounds, issuing contracts of limited duration. This practice, adopted by the gold-mining industry, meant that men were compelled to return to the rural areas on a regular basis (after their contracts, ranging from a few months to two years, ended)⁷—a system of oscillating migration that was enforced by means of "pass laws" (which had roots going all the way back to the reluctant abolition of slavery in the 1830s). These laws, enacted by the

state at the behest of the Chamber of Mines, regulated the supply of black labor while other measures helped ensure that white workers got, and kept, the best jobs. Consistent with the colonial attitudes of the time was the establishment (both de facto and de jure) of a color bar defining clearly what jobs black miners might not do. Within this power structure, white workers rapidly won a privileged position for themselves, and also, in 1913, trade-union recognition. Black miners faced a much tougher struggle to unionize, fighting on two fronts: against both employers and hostile white workers. Despite numerous bitter battles, notably major strikes in 1914, 1920, and 1946, it was not until 1980 that employers and the state finally conceded the right of collective bargaining to black miners through recognition of the National Union of Mineworkers led by one of South Africa's master negotiators, Cyril Ramaphosa.

Perhaps the single most significant consequence of the way in which mining shaped the political economy of South Africa was the embedding of a system of forced oscillating migrant labor at the heart of its industrial revolution. Elsewhere, I have explored the uniqueness of this system in the context of different patterns of migration.⁸ In short, the gold-mining industry recruited black men from all over rural southern Africa, not only from within South Africa. It housed these migrant workers in huge single-sex compounds built specially for the purpose, and then sent them home at the end of their contracts. Those who, over time, might have chosen to stay near the mines and have their families join them were prevented from doing so by laws designed specifically to discourage such urbanization from taking place. In the eighty years from 1906–1986 employment on gold mines affiliated with the Chamber of Mines rose from 81,000 to 534,000, with men being drawn, in varying proportions, from all over southern Africa. Indeed, one definition of the fourteen-country membership of the Southern African Development Community is that, apart from Mauritius, the Seychelles, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all of the countries at one time or another provided labor to the gold mines. Throughout this period the eastern Cape of South Africa, Lesotho, and southern Mozambique were areas supplying

large proportions of their able-bodied men to the mines. By 1986, 315,000 black workers in the mines came from South Africa (60 percent); 109,000 (20 percent) from Lesotho; 58,000 (10 percent) from Mozambique; and the remaining 54,000 from Botswana (4 percent), Swaziland (3 percent), and Malawi (4 percent).⁹

There is no other country in the world whose urban industries, whether mining or manufacturing, have employed such a large proportion of oscillating migrants for so long a period of time.¹⁰ There were three major sets of consequences to this system of migration: one economic, another political, the third social.

The economic consequences were devastating. Although hiring men to dig gold can be analyzed as a form of trade in which both sides benefit, even if unequally, the long-term impact on the workers' home regions depends critically on whether or not migrants invest their earnings there. If earnings are used almost entirely for consumption without any investment, then what happens over time in those areas where a large proportion of able-bodied males have become migrant workers is that the capacity of those areas to generate income actually declines.¹¹ To put it another way, the population living in a particular area may decide to shift out of agricultural production in order to go into mining gold, for example, and then use their wages to buy food for themselves and their families. Workers in many countries have done exactly this. But a major problem arises when the mining or production does not take place in the workers' home areas. For then, over time, those areas essentially become labor reserves of the town (which may be five hundred miles away) where the gold is being dug or the steel forged. Workers' home regions become steadily impoverished, being unable to generate from within the area an adequate income for the increasing population. This, in effect, is one aspect of what happened in southern Africa.

The political consequences were equally vicious. After the National Party victory in the 1948 elections (six decades after the discovery of gold), ideologues led by Hendrik Verwoerd (who became prime minister in 1958) enunciated the apartheid policy of economic growth and "separate development." The

implication of economic growth was, of course, urbanization.¹² By 1960 the proportion of whites living in urban areas was over 80 percent, while only 33 percent of blacks lived in cities, the majority kept by pass laws in rural poverty. Rural black men served as the primary source of new labor for the expanding economy. According to the ideology of “separate development” black men belonged (with their wives and families) as citizens and husbands in their “homelands.” But these were the very rural areas that under the dynamics of South African gold mining had long since become impoverished labor reserves. By virtue of their total dependence on the white-controlled economy, these rural “homelands” could thus safely be declared politically independent. The system of oscillating migration resolved the contradictions inherent in a policy that required black men (but not women) to be in two different places.

The social consequences of this policy are more difficult to measure, but may prove to be the most devastating of all. Much research and writing remains to be done, particularly by those coming from within the communities most affected, but sensitive observers have long warned of the destruction caused.¹³ Who can doubt that the random violence that wracks the new South Africa has its roots, in part at least, in a race-based policy of immiseration and forced oscillating migration?

THE ROLE OF MINING IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF APARTHEID, 1970–1990

Seen from the perspective of the new millennium, one of the most fascinating questions to ask about South Africa is what exactly caused the fall of apartheid. As late as 1989, most analysts (whether participants or observers) did not anticipate the sudden process of political reform set in train by the decision, announced in February of 1990, to free political prisoners and to negotiate with the African National Congress and other previously banned parties. In retrospect, it is obvious that a variety of factors played a part, from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to the personality of Nelson Mandela. But what, if any, role was played by changes within the mining industry?

In the twenty years leading up to the dramatic political events of 1990 there were essentially six changes within mining whose repercussions are worth examining in order to assess the extent to which the industry itself helped to transform a political landscape that it had done so much to shape.

The End of the Migrant Labor System in Diamond Mining

In 1973, the De Beers firm decided to end the migrant labor system in the diamond mines. It converted the workers' compounds into more normal accommodations for families and single persons, and it hired workers for as long as they wished to work, rather than issuing limited contracts.¹⁴ This action was widely hailed as an important breakthrough, not least since it was the diamond mines that had created the forced oscillating migrant labor system in South Africa. Important though it was, both symbolically and in its own right, the ending of the migrant labor system in the diamond mines proved to be less far-reaching in its impact than originally predicted. The apartheid state insisted that the only workers who could be hired for the new permanent jobs were those who had lived in the mining town, Kimberley, for a decade or more. Many workers did not qualify. The pass laws remained in effect. Thus, while the mining industry was now willing to go on hiring, for as many times as they wished to return, those oscillating migrants currently working in the diamond mines at the time of the transition, this concession lasted only as long as the individual miner wanted or was able to return. Once he decided to stop, his place could be taken only by somebody who already qualified to be in Kimberley. In this manner, the people of Lesotho, who had worked in the diamond mines for more than a century and done as much as any community to develop South Africa, gradually lost access to the very mines they had helped to dig and to jobs in a city they had watched grow from nothing.

The Rise in Black Miners' Wages

In 1973, for the first time in more than sixty years, the real wages of black gold miners began to rise significantly. Within five years they had tripled. Some observers credited the rising

wages to the rising price of gold. For forty years, the underlying price had been determined by the U.S. government, fixed in the famous devaluation of January of 1933 by President Roosevelt at \$35 per fine ounce. But in 1968, gold began to come loose from its moorings. By the mid-1970s the tide had risen beyond all expectations, and it was still going up (see table 2).

Table 2. Gold Price, 1971–1980

Year	Price per fine oz. (U.S. \$)	Index (1971=100)
1971	40.8	100
1972	58.1	142
1973	97.2	238
1974	159.1	390
1975	161.1	395
1976	124.8	306
1977	147.7	362
1978	193.4	474
1979	307.1	753
1980	612.8	1502

Source: Chamber of Mines, Annual Reports.

Other observers looked beyond these dramatic price increases and focused rather on the rising militancy of black labor unions. In December of 1972, textile strikes caused all major employers in South Africa to treat workers with more respect than they had ever shown in the past.

Still, the decisive factors were more simple, and even more dramatic. In April of 1974 two unexpected and disconnected events took place that, taken together, shattered the old certainties within which the South African gold-mining industry had worked for so long. First, there was an airplane crash near Francistown in Botswana in which seventy-two Malawian mine workers were killed while being ferried between their home and the rail link to the mines. The President of Malawi, Hastings Banda, responded by announcing that all recruiting to South African mines would be stopped and, further, that all Malawian mine workers would be prohibited from renewing their contracts after they had returned home. The consequences of this abrupt shift in policy were sharp. In the nearly forty years in which the Chamber of Mines had been recruiting in Malawi,

the number of Malawian men going to dig gold had risen to more than 120,000, some 30 percent of the total number of men working in the mines. Mining in South Africa provided Malawi with far and away its greatest source of foreign exchange and, outside agriculture, was its largest employer. Suddenly the country had to manage without either. How it did so is itself a fascinating chapter in the history of the vicissitudes of development in Africa, but we must keep our focus on the south where Dr. Banda's unexpected decision forced the mine owners to reconsider their hiring practices.

Indeed, no sooner had the Malawians started to withdraw than, in the very same month, a military coup in Lisbon shook Africa to its foundations. Overnight, it became clear that the old Portuguese empire was about to be dismantled. South Africa's gold-mining industry had long enjoyed a cozy relationship with the Portuguese rulers of Mozambique. In the early 1970s, Mozambique was supplying 25 percent of the black migrant labor force, some hundred thousand men, to the gold mines. The coup in Lisbon threatened to disrupt this source of migrant laborers. The freedom fighters in Mozambique, led by Frelimo, had proclaimed loudly, without thinking through the full implications for their economy, that once they came to power they would put an end to supporting apartheid in South Africa by no longer sending men to the mines.

In the brief period between March and May of 1974, the tectonic plates underlying the labor market of southern Africa shifted in a way that, at first glance, changed everything. Faced with the withdrawal of 120,000 miners from Malawi and threatened with the loss, from Mozambique, of another 100,000, a total of approximately 50 percent of its labor force, the gold-mining industry had to take radical steps. It did what it had to do at a time when the rising price of its final product made it possible to act and when pressures from the trade-union movement encouraged such a response. Changing political circumstances had sharply curtailed the supply curve of cheap labor; the only solution was to pay black workers more.

This action effectively resolved a dispute within the gold-mining industry that had been raging for several years between two groups that one might label the "recruiters" and the "wage-

raisers.” The argument had arisen at the end of the 1960s when it was found that the traditional level of wages paid by the industry for black miners was no longer sufficient to attract from within South Africa more than 20 percent of the men needed to dig for gold. The post-World War II growth of the manufacturing sector, which had access to labor only within the national boundaries of South Africa, had effectively bid wages far above the level for similar types of skill in mining. For the gold mines to reduce significantly the proportion of non-South African black workers would require a major increase in wages. And so, argued the recruiters, why try to compete? Do what the mining industry had always done when faced with a shortage of labor: recruit from further afield. Countries like Rwanda or Burundi had plenty of men who might be recruited to work on the gold fields down south. The wage-raisers disagreed. Although it might be expensive, the step of raising wages was necessary to avoid the possibility, rapidly becoming a probability, of the industry becoming 100 percent dependent on workers from outside the country. Besides, they argued, the industry could not sustain forever, in the face of increased criticism, a situation in which miners were paid as little as 34 cents for a full day’s work, as was the case in 1969.

The events of April of 1974 clarified what had to be done. The gold mines followed the pattern set by diamonds, not by eliminating the migrant labor system and providing family housing for all workers, but by internalizing the labor market and reducing sharply the jobs available to miners coming from outside South Africa. Table 3 shows what happened between 1971 and 1996.

During the 1970s, first Malawi and then Mozambique took steps to restrict the supply of workers to South Africa’s gold mines. The absolute decline was not as large as it might have been due to the fact that employment of black miners from other countries rose by almost 50 percent in an industry expanding under the heady gold price increases. For black South African men the change was even more dramatic: the total number employed rose by nearly 300 percent, from 87,000 to 333,000 men.

Table 3. Geographic Origins of African Mine Labor, 1971–1999

Year	Total (thousands)	Percent from: South Africa	Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	Mozambique	Malawi
1971	386	22	23	27	28
1976	365	33	30	32	4
1981	480 489*	59	28	9	4
1986	560 536*	60	27	10	4
1991	390*	57	31	11	-
1996	(296)	45	36	19	-
1999	(229)	46	30	23	-

Notes: Figures refer generally to those employed by the mines and by members of the Chamber of Mines (mainly gold mines), including contractors. Average number of migratory employees for 1981–1991, and figures marked with an asterisk showing the average number of migratory employees in service on gold and coal mines, are drawn from the Chamber of Mines, annual report 1991, p. 60. Figures in parentheses are estimates. Figures for 1996 and 1999 refer to those workers recruited through Teba in 1996 and 1999. Most Botswana/Lesotho/Swaziland workers come from Lesotho, with far smaller proportions from Botswana and Swaziland. Malawian workers include a few from Namibia and Zimbabwe. In the late 1980s all recruiting from Malawi for the South African mines ceased.

Sources: Annual reports of Wenela and Teba (originally W.N.L.A. and N.R.C.) and personal communication from Teba statistics office.

But 1986 was a peak year, and, as we shall see shortly, a huge crisis for the mining industry lay just around the corner. But first, it is necessary to assess the impact of four other important changes in the mining industry in these years.

Labor Reform and the Union

One of the most striking of the many paradoxes in recent South African history is that the dramatic increase in mine wages took place several years *before* black miners won their long battle for bargaining rights. It was not until 1980 that the National Union of Mineworkers was granted formal recognition, thus ushering in an era of negotiated bargaining for black miners more than sixty years after white miners had won the same rights in 1913. Important though this decision was, it is worth noting that, far from leading the way, the mining industry was coming in at the tail end of a process led by textile and other manufacturing sectors where strikes by black workers,

starting in December of 1972, had opened the way to fundamental labor reforms during the decade.

The Color Bar

Another important change, the abolition of the color bar, also reflected changes in the wider society. Since the 1890s, white workers had tried to prevent blacks from competing for their jobs. This protection had taken numerous forms, including an employment ratio agreement, as well as job restrictions that prohibited blacks from earning blasting certificates, for example. During the 1960s, in the face of increasing pressure to be more flexible, the white miners had used the considerable strength of their union to extract greater earnings for themselves in exchange for some relaxation of the color bar. The system was complex, but essentially the agreements enabled white miners to take home the lion's share of productivity increases brought about through more efficient deployment of skilled black miners. But by the start of the 1980s, the higher wages paid to black miners, combined with the demands made by the newly recognized National Union of Mineworkers, increased the pressure on the mine owners to abolish all job restrictions. Finally, in 1988, the color bar was abolished.

Abolition of the Pass Laws

Another important change involved the pass laws. The struggle by black South Africans against the pass laws that controlled their movement was waged for at least a hundred years. In 1889, for example, there were vigorous protests by black leaders against a draconian new pass law bill then being debated in the Cape Parliament.¹⁵ While it would certainly not be true to argue that the pass laws were enacted solely in response to the needs and desires of the mining industry, it is nevertheless clear, as we have argued above, that they were a necessary tool for the establishment and, even more, for the long-term maintenance of the forced oscillating migrant labor system that lay at the heart of the mining industry in South Africa. As the years wore on and whites embraced apartheid at the end of World War II, the redoubled efforts to limit black urbanization through the enforcement of the pass laws became an ever harsher

manifestation of white control. During the decade of the 1940s an average of 158,000 persons, all of them black, were convicted each year under the pass laws. During the 1950s, the average number more than doubled, to 319,000. The number of contraventions rose again, by nearly 50 percent, to 469,000 during the 1960s. And during the first half of the 1970s, the number of prosecutions reached the astonishing level of 542,000 persons per annum. This meant that on average somebody was being arrested every minute of the day and night for being in some place (generally an urban area) without official permission.¹⁶ Something had to give—but not without a bitter struggle. A growing number of black women, who were poor, powerless, and uneducated, simply refused to leave cities such as Cape Town. The state tried to terrorize the defiant people, bulldozing and burning self-built family homes.¹⁷ Then, in 1986, the state capitulated. The pass laws were abolished.

At long last, black citizens were free to move as they wished. They were free to live where they pleased—and free to look for work anywhere they chose. The proportion of black South Africans living in towns, held constant by the pass laws, began to rise again.¹⁸ But the irony is that this dramatic collapse of apartheid's labor policy did not significantly affect the very industry that had been most responsible for its original establishment and maintenance.¹⁹ While some modifications could be made to the huge labor barracks to provide smaller shared rooms for single miners rather than dormitories, and while the use of long-distance buses could enable an increasing proportion of black men working in the mines to go home more frequently for long weekends, neither the mining industry nor the state was willing to build family housing for black gold miners. The system of migrant labor survived the abolition of the pass laws in 1986. It has even survived the creation of a democratic government in 1994.

Falling Gold Price

One reason for its survival is the drop in gold prices that began, coincidentally, in 1988—the same year the color bar was abolished. In the years since, a combination of falling prices and rising costs have wreaked havoc on the gold-mining industry.

During the 1970s the price of gold, as we have seen above (table 2), increased fifteen-fold, reaching the dizzy average height in 1980 of over \$600 per fine ounce. For South Africa, this was too good to be true, but nobody quite expected the plunge that then followed.

Table 4. Gold Price, 1980–2000

Year	Price per fine oz. (U.S. \$)	Index (1980=100)
1980	612.9	100
1985	317.3	52
1990	383.6	63
1995	384.1	63
2000	(277)	(45)

Source: Chamber of Mines, annual reports; and Natrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining," 858.

Nicoli Natrass has analyzed the consequences. On the one hand, it seems likely that the collapse in the gold price and the subsequent crisis in the industry, coming when it did, was "a further impetus driving the old regime to the bargaining table."²⁰ On the other hand, as she points out, it was a double-edged sword, for the decline in gold mining was accompanied by a large fall in its contribution to the revenue of the state. Gold tax in the three years from 1981 to 1983 averaged 16.7 percent of total government revenue; ten years later, in the three years prior to 1994, the contribution averaged only 1.0 percent. And in the five years of the Mandela government, 1994–1998, the gold mines contributed even less: an annual average of 0.7 percent.

Perhaps even more serious than the loss of government revenue was the disappearance of jobs. Five years after its peak in 1986, total employment in the gold mines operated by the Chamber of Mines fell 21 percent, from 534,000 to 424,000 persons in 1991. The number of migrant workers dropped even more sharply, by 26 percent, from 478,000 to 354,000.²¹ But this was only a foretaste of what was to come. During the 1990s employment in the mining industry as a whole fell a further 40 percent.

Table 5. Index of Employment in Mining, 1991–1999

Year	Index (1995=100)
1991	121
1992	111
1993	104
1994	102
1995	100
1996	95
1997	92
1998	77
1999	73

Source: South Africa Reserve Bank, *Quarterly Bulletin* (March 2000).

By 1999, employment in gold mining had fallen to 222,000—the lowest total in more than seventy years.²²

It is, of course, too soon to write off the gold-mining industry as the relic of a bygone era. Reports of its imminent extinction were circulating as early as the 1920s, and a careful analysis of the future price of gold by so respected an economist as Fritz Machlup failed in 1968 to foresee the astronomical price rises of the 1970s.²³ It would be a rash economist who confidently predicted the future price of the metal. All one can do is examine some of the underlying trends. More recent signs all point to a steady decline in the significance of gold as a store of value in both national and international economic life. This could, of course, change in the face of some catastrophic economic meltdown or the collapse of international trust in the global credit system, but that is a possibility too ghastly to contemplate. What is more hopeful, however, is that the steady demand for gold to make jewelry may continue to grow, and so begin to push up the price.²⁴ But a dramatic reversal of the contraction of gold mining in South Africa seems unlikely.

CAN MINING HELP TRANSFORM THE FUTURE?

Does this mean then that South Africa has come to the end of the road as far as minerals are concerned? Could it be that the most enduring legacy of gold, whose glittering wealth powered Africa's only industrial revolution, and which underpinned the

economy of the whole world during the twentieth century, will be deep rural poverty and massive unemployment—not to mention the volcanic explosion of AIDS, particularly in the all-male mining compounds?

As South Africa moves beyond the politics of racial reconciliation to tackle the hard problems of inequality and unemployment in an era of rapid globalization, there is a need to reconsider the role played by its mining industries. Despite everything, South Africa at the start of the twenty-first century remains what it was at the end of the nineteenth—the jewelry box of the world. Consider the following table:

Table 6. South Africa's Mineral Reserves and Production, 1997

Mineral	Percent of World Production	World Rank
Alumino Silicates	61	1
Chrome Ore	46	1
Ferrochromium	45	1
Gold	20	1
Platinum Group Metals	47	1
Vanadium	57	1
Vermiculite	44	1
Titanium Minerals	24	2
Zirconium Minerals	29	2
Ferromanganese	12	3
Fluorspar	5	3
Manganese Ore	15	3
Antimony	3	4
Coal	6	5
Diamonds	9	5
Ferrosilicon	4	6
Silicon Metal	4	7
Aluminum	3	8
Iron Ore	3	8
Lead	3	8
Nickel	3	8
Uranium	4	8
Asbestos	2	9
Phosphate Rock	2	9
Copper	2	12
Silver	1	15
Zinc	1	17

Source: *South African Yearbook 1999* (Pretoria: Government Communication and Information System, 1999), 102–103.

South African gold mining may have lost its preeminent share of the market, but South Africa is still the leading producer of gold in the world. It is also the leading producer of six other minerals. And it remains a major supplier of coal, diamonds, and a host of other minerals, from aluminum to zinc.

The question facing South Africa today is whether its mineral resources can be tapped without exploiting the majority of its people. At its heart this is a question of values. For it is important to recognize that just as slavery could flourish in Jefferson’s United States, or child labor in the factories of Dickens’s England, so too was it possible for South Africa to have a labor system that contradicted fundamental norms of human decency. The history of industrialization is filled with similar examples.

How then can the South African mining economy be reshaped to forge a more humane future? In the seven years from the end of the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the dramatic decline in gold’s share of exports from South Africa was compensated by an increasing share of manufactured exports, beneficiated mineral exports, and material-intensive export products.

Table 7. Changing Composition of South Africa’s Export Basket: 1988/1989–1995/1996

Export	Percent of total exports	
	1988/1989	1995/1996
Gold	36.1	21.5
Primary products	20.3	19.4
*Beneficiated primary products	23.3	27.8
*Material-intensive products	4.9	7.1
*Manufactured products	5.6	17.0
Unclassified	9.8	7.2
Total	100	100

Source: Pieter Laubscher, “South Africa’s Manufacturing Exports: Recent Market Trends,” *Trade and Industry Monitor* 4 (December 1997): 2.

The categories marked by an asterisk together increased from one-third to one-half of the total. But as Pieter Laubscher has argued, primary and semi-processed products still dominate, suggesting that there is a long way to go in developing South Africa’s downstream manufacturing export capacity. That

undeveloped capacity must surely include the beneficiation of minerals.²⁵ To take one example, despite having been the leading producer of gold for a century, South Africa in 1990 produced only 0.1 percent of jewelry in the world.²⁶ Between 1984 and 1988, when a falling gold price led to a massive increase in the demand for jewelry, Taiwan increased its production of gold jewelry from three tons to ninety tons, while South Korea increased from one ton to sixty-five tons. And South Africa? Over the same period the world's leading producer of gold increased gold jewelry production from one ton to only two tons.²⁷

In 1993, shortly before the transition to democracy, the Chamber of Mines released a gloomy forecast, due to "the difficulty and expense of establishing export sales outlets abroad."²⁸ But, as David Meachin, chairman and CEO of Cross-Border Enterprises, has pointed out, it is precisely this barrier that the technological developments of the past decade have swept away.²⁹ The explosion of the Internet now makes possible a virtually costless process both of testing the global market and of actually marketing the final product in a way that revolutionizes the potential of mineral beneficiation in countries that, like South Africa, are geographically far from their final consumer markets. In the same way that the country is now marketing its rural arts and crafts on a global scale in ways that were undreamed of only a year or two ago,³⁰ it is now possible to rethink the production and marketing of minerals in a manner that moves far beyond the simple extraction or even semi-processing of commodities, which has been the lot of so many "less developed" countries in Africa and elsewhere. This rethinking, if properly organized by a creative alliance between government and the private sector, could form the basis of a fundamental renewal of the South African mining industries that might generate new jobs and spread wealth on a more equitable basis.

CONCLUSION

South Africans achieved a notable victory when, with the support of the world, they found a way to negotiate a peaceful

transition from apartheid to a democratic society. But the achievements of the 1990s, magnificent though they were, take South Africa only halfway. The structures of apartheid were shaped in no small measure by mining industries that remain a central factor in the nation's economy. Until these industries are transformed in such a way as to deal with the more serious of their own legacies, the transition to democracy will remain incomplete.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to colleagues, family, and friends for criticism of earlier notes and drafts. Participants in the workshop organized to think through this special issue were very helpful. So too were specific comments by Stephen Graubard, Dudley Horner, Nicoli Nattrass, and Lindy Wilson.

ENDNOTES

¹C. W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (London: Clarendon Press, 1941), 156.

²Geoffrey Barraclough, ed., *The Times Atlas of World History* (London: Times Books, 1978), 136.

³D. Hobart Houghton, *The South African Economy* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1964), 38 ff.

⁴See D. Hobart Houghton, *The South African Economy*, 15, 38 for discussion of the country's economic development in terms of W. W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth, a Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

⁵Francis Wilson, *Labour in the South African Gold Mines 1911–1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1–13.

⁶*Ibid.*, 66.

⁷For a description and analysis of this seminal development in the 1870s see Robert Turrell, *Capital and Labour in the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and William H. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867–1895* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁸Francis Wilson, "Migration in Southern Africa: A Force for Development?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (forthcoming).

⁹Malawians may have included some others from other tropical areas north of latitude 22° south. Numbers do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

- ¹⁰For a discussion of Turkish migrants in Germany after World War II, see W. R. Bohning, *The Migration of Workers in the United Kingdom and the European Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).
- ¹¹For an analysis of this point see Dori Posel, "Migration, Poverty Traps and Development: A Tale of Two Villages," University of Natal, Durban, 1999. Also Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge: Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 199 ff.
- ¹²The combination of economic growth, due primarily to technological change, with the fact that income elasticity of demand for agricultural products is generally less than one while that for non-food tends to be greater than one implies a steady push-pull pressure out of rural areas and a steadily rising proportion, over time, of the population living in any of the country's urban areas, as may be verified by examination of the history of any growing economy since the industrial revolution began in England in the mid-eighteenth century.
- ¹³See, for example, Anthony Barker, "Community of the Careless," *South African Outlook*, April 1970. For further discussion see Wilson, "Migration in Southern Africa: A Force for Development?"
- ¹⁴For a discussion of this initiative, which involved also Rio Tinto's copper mine in Phalaborwa in 1972, see Francis Wilson, "The Political Implications for Blacks of Economic Changes Now Taking Place in South Africa," in Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler, eds., *Change in Contemporary South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 176 ff.
- ¹⁵*Christian Express*, July 1889, reprinted in Francis Wilson and Dominique Perrot, eds., *Outlook on a Century: South Africa 1870–1970* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press and Spro-cas, 1972), 126–128.
- ¹⁶Wilson and Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty*, 209.
- ¹⁷For details of the battles in Cape Town during the 1970s and 1980s, see various issues of *South African Outlook*, e.g., August 1975; April 1976; February 1978; November 1982; August 1986.
- ¹⁸Wilson and Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty*, 26, Table 1.08.
- ¹⁹This statement is not annulled by the fact that within the industry there were voices, particularly after World War II, calling for a modification of the system in order to allow more highly skilled black miners to live with their families as permanent employees near their work. At no stage did employers push for more than approximately 10 percent of their black labor force to be "stabilized."
- ²⁰See Nicoli Nattrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining," *World Development* 23 (5) (1995): 858.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, 862.
- ²²This figure was kindly supplied by the statistics office of the Chamber of Mines. For the historical perspective see Chamber of Mines, annual report 1989, 32 S.
- ²³Fritz Machlup, "The Price of Gold," *The Banker* CXVIII (1968).

- ²⁴Jewelry demand absorbed two-thirds of newly mined gold in the 1980s, while the demand in the 1990s began to outstrip new supplies. Natrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining," 865.
- ²⁵See Paul Jordaan, *Mineral Beneficiation: Some Reflections on the Potential for Resource-Based Industrialisation in South Africa*, Economic Trends Research Group, Cape Town, 1992.
- ²⁶A. Edwards, "South Africa's Gold Jewelry: A Scenario for the Future," *Mining World* 8 (12) (1990), cited by Natrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining."
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Chamber of Mines, cited by Natrass, "The Crisis in South African Gold Mining."
- ²⁹I owe this point to David Meachin, chairman and CEO of Cross-Border Enterprises, LLC, who explained it to me in New York in May of 2000. I hope he will publish a more fully worked-out version of an idea that could revolutionize the potential of mineral beneficiation in South Africa.
- ³⁰See <<http://www.buy-afrika.com>>.

The character of African economic development in the past twenty years is strangely obscure. This has a good deal to do with the size and diversity of the continent—Nigeria is booming, Ethiopia starving, and so on—but it is due even more to the filtration of the African experience through successive layers of interpretative theory. One can see this from the sort of questions people ask: Have the African economies become less or more “dependent” or “externally oriented”? How far is their new technology “appropriate”? Are they less vulnerable than formerly to “unequal exchange”? How far have “basic needs” been met? These are not primarily factual questions. They testify to the extraordinary degree to which African reality has been overlaid by theory. It is as if the poverty of so many millions in Africa were too painful to contemplate without being immediately set in the context of a theory that can somehow explain it, and at the same time show the way to ending it. The motive is good, but the pitfalls are many. Today, the prevailing view of African economic development is pessimistic—profoundly disappointed at the postindependence record, and gloomy about future prospects. This view, however, is a reaction to a previous moment of exaggerated optimism. Neither really helps us to understand what is happening in Africa. To be able to come a little closer to that reality, we need to stand back somewhat from the interplay of hopes and fears and theories that reflect and may so easily amplify them.

Colin Leys

From “African Economic Development
in Theory and Practice”
Dædalus 111 (2) (Spring 1982)

Can South Africa Avoid a Malthusian Positive Check?

... both historically and philosophically the doctrine of Malthus was a corrective reaction against the superficial optimism diffused by the school of Rousseau. It was the same optimism, with its easy methods of regenerating society and its fatal blindness to the real conditions that circumscribe human life, that was responsible for the wild theories of the French Revolution and many of its consequent excesses.

—“Malthus” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*¹

THE REVERSAL OF SOUTH AFRICA’S MORTALITY DECLINE

ALTHOUGH THE STATISTICAL EVIDENCE is not complete, it is clear that the twentieth century has seen substantial lengthening of life expectancy in South Africa. At the beginning of the century, the expectation of life at birth was about forty-eight years for white men and fifty years for white women in the Cape Colony. Colored and black life expectancies were about thirty-two years for men and forty years for women.² Table 1 indicates how the situation has developed during the century.

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Table 1. Life expectancies at birth: 1936–1941, 1970–1975, 1990–1995

	1936–1941		1970–1975		1990–1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Blacks	9.6	40.5	56.8	63.4	59.8	67.9
Coloreds	43.2	43.6	55.8	62.6	59.2	64.9
Asians	52.7	50.9	60.0	65.1	64.7	71.8
Whites	58.6	62.5	65.2	72.8	69.7	76.8

Source for 1936–1941 statistics: J. L. Sadie, *A Reconstruction and Projection of Demographic Movements in the RSA and TBVC Countries*, Bureau of Market Research Report 148, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1988.

Source for 1970–1975 and 1990–1995 statistics: Charles Simkins, “Reconstructing South African Demographic History 1970–1995,” paper presented to the 1996 Census Phase II evaluation workshop, Pretoria, December 1999.

Little has happened to interrupt the general trend. War mortality in South Africa has been relatively light since 1850 and can be summarized briefly. In 1857, after nearly eighty years of border warfare in which they had lost much, the Xhosa of the Ciskei and southern Transkei succumbed to a millennial movement, which promised that their land would be magically restored if they killed their cattle and destroyed their crops. J. B. Peires estimates that about 40,000 people died as a result, mostly by starvation.³ The Zulu War of 1879 saw 1,326 British soldiers wounded and killed.⁴ The Zulu kingdom could muster about 40,000 warriors in the field;⁵ of these many must have been killed, but it is unlikely that mortality could have exceeded 15,000 in total.

Worse was the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, in which 7,800 British soldiers were killed or died of wounds and a further 14,000 of disease. Some 4,000 Boer men in the field died; more notoriously 27,000 Boer refugees died of disease in concentration camps. About 14,000 blacks died in similar camps. The number of Boer civilian casualties outside the camps is not known.⁶ In World War I, 12,272 South Africans were killed or died in military service, and in World War II, 5,962 members of the Union Defense Force were killed in action, died of wounds, died in prisoner-of-war camps, or were accidentally killed outside South Africa.⁷

More lethal than any war—in fact, almost as lethal as all of them put together—was the influenza epidemic that reached

South Africa in late 1918. Over 40 percent of the population contracted it. Within a few weeks, close to 140,000 people had died—more than 2 percent of the population.

No attempt has been made to estimate the effect of apartheid on mortality or on population size. To do so would require the construction of an elaborate counterfactual theory, which would always be controversial. And the effects would have to be interpreted in light of the fact that the population grew by more than 2.7 percent per annum between 1946 and 1970 and by more than 2.3 percent per annum between 1970 and 1994, the period when black fertility started to drop.⁸ Estimates of the casualties of the political transition are available: the South African Institute of Race Relations has estimated the number of deaths from political violence between September of 1984 and December of 1994 at 21,651, the worst years being from 1990 to 1994.⁹

It must seem a cruel irony that, just as South Africa emerges from nearly a century of segregation and apartheid into a universal suffrage democracy, the downward trend in mortality has been arrested and reversed. The reason for this is the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the United Nations believes that South Africa has 4.2 million infected people, more than any other country in the world. It estimates AIDS deaths in 1999 alone at 250,000.¹⁰ The estimate is probably on the high side, but not of the wrong order of magnitude. Every indication is that mortality will become much worse during the next decade.

Like the influenza virus, HIV is not in itself a consequence of poverty. Unlike the influenza virus, which generally killed within a few days or weeks of infection, HIV works by weakening the immune system, rendering the carrier vulnerable to a variety of infectious diseases. The initial strength of the immune system is a function of nutritional and health status. The rate of weakening is also a function of the ability of the health-care system to make stabilizing interventions. The period from infection to death is therefore dependent on social, economic, and political variables. So is the rate of infection. One variable that will affect it is the mean age at marriage, which influences the length of premarital sexual activity. Another is the degree of general education and specific HIV/AIDS knowledge. The de-

lineation of the social and economic variables affecting mortality is the central theme of this study. Understanding them will be crucial for an effective HIV/AIDS policy.

The first substantial modern analysis of episodes of rising mortality was Thomas Robert Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (first edition, 1798, second and expanded edition, 1803), which exerts a continuing influence in the fields of demography and population economics.¹¹ A brief survey of the major tenets of Malthusianism will help to identify the weaknesses in social and economic structure rendering South Africa so vulnerable to the epidemic.

MALTHUS AND NEO-MALTHUSIANISM

Malthus's central concern was with the tendency of a population to outstrip the resources necessary to sustain it. He identified two "checks" to population size and growth in this situation:

- the consciously chosen preventative check of late marriage, which would result in a reduction of fertility, and
- unintended positive checks that involve an increase in mortality. Positive checks were subdivided into:
 - the relatively rare ultimate check of famine, and
 - more common immediate checks, consisting of all customs¹² and diseases generated by a scarcity of food and all the causes independent of scarcity that weaken and destroy the human frame.

By including positive checks independent of the scarcity of food, Malthus made them consist of more than just an "error correction mechanism." They also contain shocks independent of the population–food resource balance. The Black Death, which ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1352 and reduced the population by a third, was one such event. In the half century before the Black Death, there seems to have been a slowdown in economic and population growth; the plague supervened and

over-adjusted the population downward, with the result that wages and agricultural incomes per capita rose sharply in the late fourteenth century. The pre-crisis population level was not again reached until the mid-sixteenth century.

Neo-Malthusianism applies Malthusian ideas to modern theories of economic development. It suggests the following reasons that rapid population growth undermines growth in real income per capita:

- the stock of physical capital (land, buildings, equipment, etc.) per worker declines as population rises, and with it per capita output;
- it is easier to improve educational attainment and quality in societies with low rates of population growth, since there are fewer children and young adults to be taught. High fertility means low average levels of human capital;
- pressure on natural resources increases with the rate of population growth;
- public spending on physical infrastructural investments gets crowded out by high population growth and consequent pressure on social services;
- rapid population growth biases household allocation decisions toward consumption and away from savings because of the pressure of meeting basic needs; and
- there are no economies of scale arising from population increase.¹³

There is, of course, a debate between those optimistic or neutral about rapid population growth and Malthusians. Ester Boserup has argued that, in agricultural societies, population pressure is the cause, rather than the consequence, of agricultural innovation. Population density increase leads to greater intensity of land use; population decline favors a return to less intensive methods. Equally, one may point to theories and facts of industrially based growth that do not conform to the neo-Malthusian postulates. Three examples of counters to the neo-Malthusian view can be cited. At the theoretical level, it has

been argued that high population density facilitates adoption of “green revolution technology” by making infrastructure development and technology transfer easier. It has also been suggested that under circumstances of high fertility adult labor intensity increases so that the impact of fertility on savings is neutralized. At the factual level, the population of the four leading Western nations (Britain, France, Germany, and the United States) grew by a factor of 5.5 between 1820 and 1987, whereas their combined gross domestic product in constant prices multiplied by 93.¹⁴

The prediction from neo-Malthusian theories is that there should be an inverse relationship between population growth and growth of income per capita. Cross-sectional data for recent decades do not show such a relationship in poor countries. But this finding does not rule out the general operation of Malthusian mechanisms in the future. Nor does it rule out their operation in particular countries over a period of time.

This brief survey of Malthusian themes establishes a checklist of aspects of social and economic issues that need investigation if the vulnerability of South Africa to rising mortality is to be assessed.

It should be noted that the consequences of a Malthusian episode reach beyond rising morbidity and mortality. A recent influential study on infectious disease suggests that infant mortality correlates strongly with political instability, particularly in countries that have already achieved a measure of democracy.¹⁵

THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

As background to the South African situation, the sub-Saharan African context can be sketched briefly. Of the sixteen countries of southern, central, and east Africa, excluding South Africa, only five had life expectancies at birth of more than fifty years in 1997. Five had life expectancies of less than forty-five years. Seven countries saw life expectancy drop between 1970 and 1997.¹⁶ Ten countries had total fertility rates of 5.4 or more in 1998, indicating that the fertility transition had not yet begun. Eight countries had a GDP per capita of U.S. \$1,000.

Three countries had a drop in real GDP per capita in 1998 and a further four had rises of less than 0.5 percent. Real per capita incomes dropped in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole between 1970 and 1995.¹⁷ Six countries had wars or major rebellions in progress, or have had them since 1980.¹⁸ Nine countries were regarded as “not free” by Freedom House (a nonpartisan organization working to advance political and economic freedom worldwide) and the remaining seven as “partly free.”¹⁹

The picture that emerges from these data is one of a general vulnerability to Malthusian positive checks. Episodes of demographic retrogression occur in response to political deterioration, adverse weather, commodity-price developments (sub-Saharan African economies have large agricultural sectors with high dependence on commodity prices), or epidemics of infectious diseases. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly half of infectious disease-caused deaths worldwide; 65 percent of all deaths in the region are caused by such diseases.²⁰

Under these circumstances, the status of a country’s health-care system matters a great deal. The CIA World Fact Book ranks health systems from one (the most advanced) to five (the least developed). Category four countries concentrate epidemiological surveillance, response, and prevention in the capital, and characteristically offer health care to 40–50 percent of the population. Health systems in category five countries rely on humanitarian assistance and characteristically offer health care to only 40 percent of the population. One of the sixteen sub-Saharan African countries has a health system in category three, nine are in category four, and six are in category five. Five have improving health-care systems and three have deteriorating systems. Health systems in these countries are in a poor position to deal with infectious diseases. Only in a minority of countries are there signs of progress.

The CIA World Fact Book assesses the South African health system as being in category two (i.e., as having a national system of epidemiological surveillance, response, and prevention throughout most of the country, offering medical care to 70–90 percent of the population, having established primary, secondary, and tertiary health-care capability, and making pharmaceuticals available to the population generally). It also

regards the South African system as deteriorating, a claim that would be controversial among South African health-care experts. Certainly the public system will be greatly stretched as AIDS morbidity rises. South Africa has a substantial private health-care sector, buttressed by medical aid schemes. This sector can make a contribution to reducing AIDS mortality, especially if the cost of AIDS pharmaceuticals falls.

SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION DYNAMICS AND THEIR SPATIAL ASPECTS

The 1904 Population Census put South Africa's population at 5,174,000. The 1996 Census estimated the population at 40,584,000, implying a nearly eightfold increase in just under a century. The national average population density in 1996 was thirty-three persons per square kilometer, relatively low by international standards. The average rate of population growth from 1904 to 1996 was 2.26 percent per annum.

South Africa's fertility transition has been unusually stretched out because of the heterogeneity of the population. The white fertility transition had started by the beginning of the century, the Asian fertility transition started in the 1950s, the colored in the 1960s, and the black transition in the 1970s. The transitions for the three minority groups are almost over; the black total fertility rate remains above three. In the absence of AIDS mortality, the population could have been expected to peak eventually at over 60 million; J. L. Sadie's 1993 projection for 2011 was 54.1 million with an annual growth rate of 1.39 percent at that date.²¹ The post-transition to pre-transition population ratio would have been twelve or more—double the post-transition to pre-transition ratios in the four leading Western countries.

HIV/AIDS is changing these expectations rapidly. The data available on HIV infection comes from tests of pregnant women attending prenatal clinics in public health facilities. The series starts in 1990, when 0.7 percent of such women were found to be HIV-positive. By 1993, the infection rate had risen to 4 percent and by 1996 to 14.2 percent. In 1998 it was 22.8 percent, and in 1999 it was 22.4 percent. Infection among these

women is more prevalent in the northern than in the southern provinces, the 1999 rate in KwaZulu-Natal being 32.5 percent and in the Western Cape 7.2 percent. The unevenness in provincial prevalence rates suggests that the national rate will rise further as the epidemic spreads southward. Like the United Nations, the Department of Health believes that one in every ten South Africans is infected with HIV (among all adult men and women the estimated rate of infection is 19.9 percent).²² Mortality will be increasingly affected by AIDS deaths, but since the data are published about four years in arrears, a substantial AIDS effect has not yet shown up in official statistics. Not all deaths caused by AIDS will be recorded as such; inferences about AIDS mortality will have to be made from trends in total mortality.

The Actuarial Society of South Africa has developed a model of the spread of the epidemic. It divides the population into four groups (sex workers, those infected with sexually transmitted diseases, others at risk, and those not at risk). It sets up a contagion matrix to represent cross-group risks of infection and assumes differential infectivity rates by sex and mean terms from infection to death. The model has been calibrated against the limited data available. Robert Dorrington observes that:

such an exercise is by its nature perhaps inevitably a little more art than science but briefly the aim was to set, where possible, the assumptions to be consistent with empirical studies and where this was not possible to set the assumptions by trial and error (within bounds of reasonableness) so that the output from the model reproduced the observations of the epidemic.²³

The model projects that the population will peak at fifty million in 2011 before it starts to fall. By 2008, the model projects that the period probability of someone exactly fifteen years old dying before age sixty will be over 80 percent for both men and women.²⁴

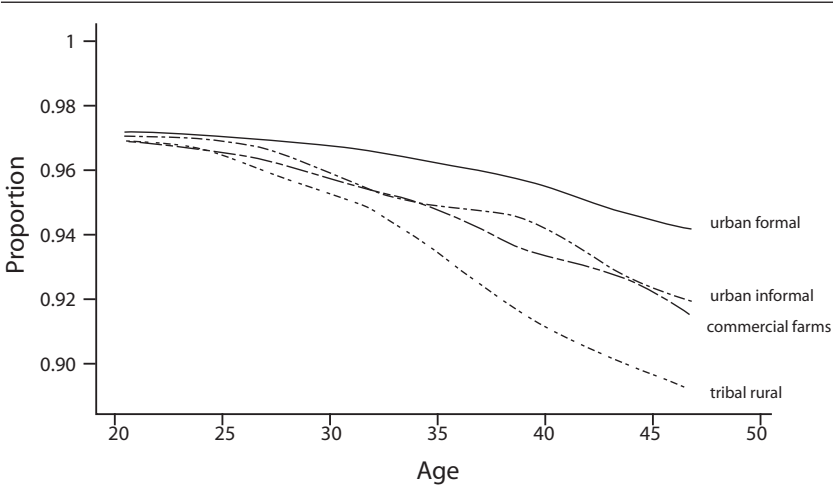
An account of national population dynamics needs to be supplemented by a description of the distribution of the population across space and by settlement type. The 1996 Census put the urban population at 53.7 percent of the whole. Formal urban areas were inhabited by 18.2 million, and another 3.5

million lived in informal urban areas. Most of the rural population (14.8 million) lived in tribal areas; a further 2.9 million lived on commercial farms, and 1.1 million lived in other rural areas (which are more like tribal areas than commercial farms). Apartheid had two effects on this distribution: it retarded urbanization, particularly from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, and it affected the distribution of the rural population between tribal areas and commercial farms through a number of policies, including resettlement.

Population densities, already high in some of the reserves at the time of the 1913 Land Act, have risen throughout the century. Since the 1960s there has been a rise in informal urbanization in the tribal areas. Many studies have shown that there is great dependence in tribal areas on remittances from relatives in town and on transfers from the state. What there has not been to date is a Boserupian agricultural response to rising population densities. Half of South Africa is not suited to intensive agricultural development, since it has an average annual rainfall of less than five hundred millimeters (less than twenty inches). The greater part of the tribal area population is to the east (the wetter side) of that isohyet, and there other explanations must be sought. Two candidates deserve particular mention. First, the tribal agricultural tradition is pastoral, and there has been a gender division of roles, with women assigned to arable work while men deal with animals. Second, for many, the returns on industrial work have been much higher than those on farming activities. All this could change if nonagricultural work continues to become scarcer and land reallocation proceeds either through the land reform program or through the market.

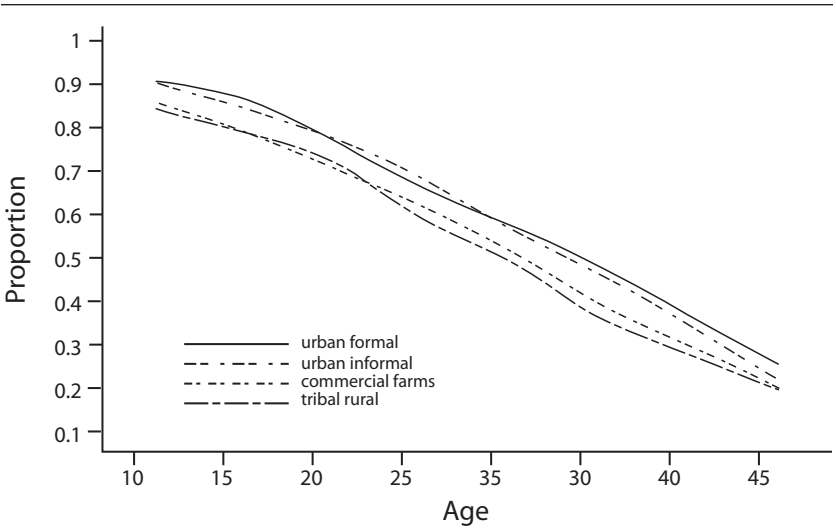
Mortality varies between the four main settlement types. Figure 1 shows the number of children still living as a fraction of the number of children ever born by age of mother in urban formal, urban informal, commercial farm, and rural tribal areas in 1996. This fraction is an indicator of infant and child mortality. The fraction is highest in urban formal areas, then in urban informal and commercial farming areas, and is lowest in tribal rural areas. Figure 2 shows the proportion of males between ten and forty-nine whose father is still alive. Here the

Figure 1. Number of children still living as a fraction of the number of children ever born by age of mother, 1996



Source: Based on data from the 1997, 1998, and 1999 October Household Surveys published by Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Figure 2. Proportion of males between ten and forty-nine years of age whose father is still alive



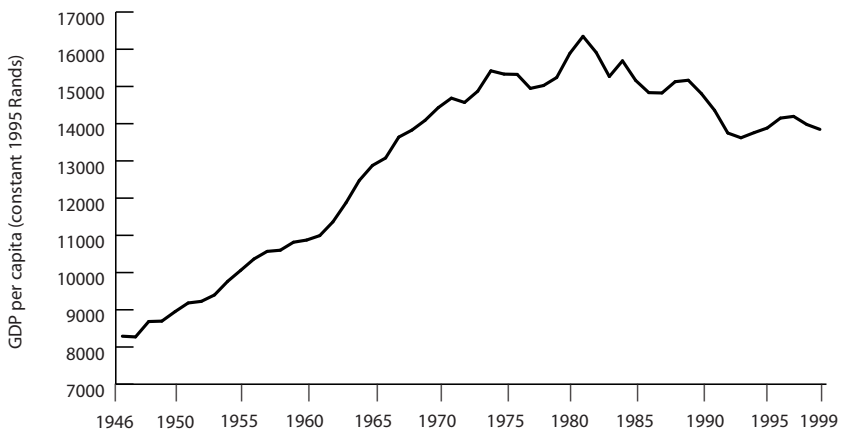
Source: Based on data from the 1997, 1998, and 1999 October Household Surveys published by Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

fraction is highest in urban formal and commercial farming areas and is lower in urban informal and rural tribal areas. This fraction is an indicator of adult male mortality. The proportion of females between ten and forty-nine whose mother is still alive is generally a good deal higher, indicating that adult mortality is significantly lower for women than for men. The differentials in mortality between settlement type are very small for adult women.

SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

South Africa's national accounts date from 1946. Between then and 1981, GDP per capita in 1995 prices rose from R 8,290 to R 16,437, just about doubling in thirty-five years. As figure 3 shows, the trend since 1981 has been downward, with 1999 GDP per capita at R 13,847, a 16 percent drop from the peak. GDP per capita in 1999 was virtually the same as in 1994, so the first ANC government presided over a stabilization but not an improvement in average living standards.

Figure 3. South Africa: GDP per capita in constant 1995 Rands, 1946–1999



Source: South African Reserve Bank.

Figure 4 shows that gross fixed capital formation as a percentage of GDP rarely dropped below 20 percent between 1946 and 1985 and was generally above 25 percent between 1964 and 1981. Since 1990, gross saving and gross fixed capital formation have been between 15 percent and 20 percent, without the capital inflows that sustained the difference between savings and investment between 1946 and 1959. Indeed, savings exceeded investment between 1985 and 1994; as a consequence of financial sanctions, South Africa was forced to reduce its foreign debt in relation to GDP. Unlike GDP per capita, savings and investment as a percentage of GDP have not stabilized; they have both dropped between 1994 and 1999.

Table 2 sets out the components of gross savings and investment in relation to GDP at market prices.

Table 2. Savings as a percentage of GDP at market prices

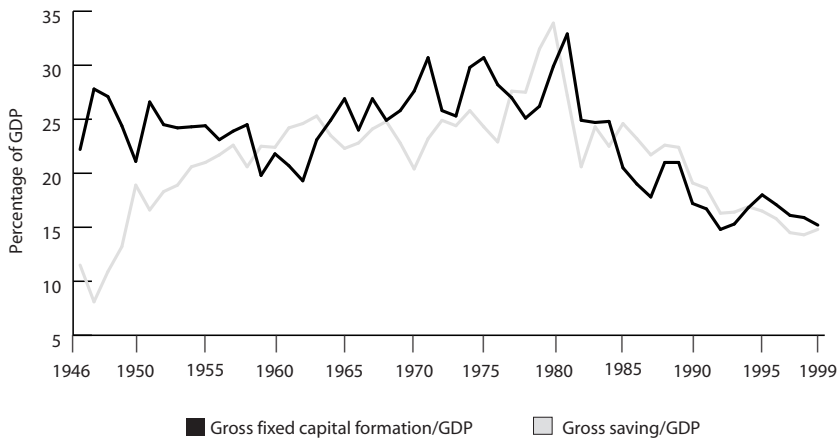
	1992	1996	1999
Saving by households	3.64	1.15	0.49
Corporate saving	5.57	7.02	4.12
Saving by government	-7.49	-5.06	-2.66
Net saving	1.72	3.11	1.95
Consumption of fixed capital	14.90	13.04	13.21
Gross saving	16.62	16.15	15.16
Net foreign investment	-1.52	1.34	0.36
Gross capital formation	15.10	17.49	15.52

Source: South African Reserve Bank, *Quarterly Bulletin* (Pretoria) (March 2000): Tables S-126 and S-127.

Net household savings have dropped steadily, and net corporate saving has dropped between 1996 and 1999. These drops have been offset by a decline in government dissaving, the rate of which will not drop as fast in the future. Table 2 confirms that net foreign investment is small in relation to gross saving and gross capital formation.

Neo-Malthusian theory predicts that high fertility puts downward pressure on savings. This relationship was tested on data from the 1995 Income and Expenditure Survey as linked to the 1995 October Household Survey. The linked surveys contain a

Figure 4. South Africa: investment and saving as a percentage of GDP, 1946–1999



Source: South African Reserve Bank.

national sample of 28,585 households. Household consumption was graphed against permanent income, from which was excluded retirement lump sums, annuity lump sums, state compensation lump sums, life insurance payouts, inheritances, funeral fund payouts, insurance payouts in respect to fixed property claims, accident claims, other gratuities, and *lobola*²⁵ (bride wealth) received. Lowess smoothing (locally weighted scatterplot smoothing in which a separately weighted regression is estimated for every point in the data) was used to extract the relationship between household consumption and permanent income. This yielded a close approximation to a straight line, with an autonomous consumption of R 1,366 and a marginal propensity to consume of 0.919 for all households with a permanent income of up to R 1,000,000 per annum. The residuals (actual consumption less predicted consumption as a proportion of predicted consumption) were then examined for a relationship between (a) total household size and (b) the number of children under twenty years of age. The predicted relationship was found. Each child increased consumption by 0.66 percent (the coefficient was significant at the 1 percent level) and each

household member increased consumption by 0.26 percent (the coefficient was significant at the 10 percent level).

Foreign investment is split into three categories in the national accounts:

- *direct investment* includes transactions related to the acquisition of share capital in foreign countries by establishing new businesses, or through mergers and takeovers. The equity threshold used to determine a direct investment relationship between a direct investor and an enterprise is 10 percent. Loan capital is excluded, unless it represents permanent debt.
- *portfolio investment* consists of international equity and debt securities not classified as direct investment. Money market debt instruments and tradable financial derivatives are included.
- *other investment* comprises trade credits, loans, currency and deposits, and other assets and liabilities.

Net direct investment has been negative in six of the eight years between 1992 and 1999. It was positive in 1997 and 1999; in other years, South African direct investment abroad exceeded foreign direct investment in South Africa. Net portfolio investment has been positive throughout. It was small up until 1996. In 1997 it was R 30.6 billion, in 1998 R 20.4 billion, and in 1999 R 51.0 billion. Net other investment was negative in five of the eight years, turning positive in 1995, 1996, and 1998. Portfolio investment contains the potentially volatile “hot money” flows.

The financing of growth in 1990s South Africa appears precarious: the domestic savings rate is low, and foreign funding augmentation is relatively small and easily withdrawn. A complementary issue then arises: how productively are South Africa’s investable funds and labor used? Anthony John Wright, Murray Leibbrandt, and R. T. Bell have carried out a careful study of total factor productivity growth in manufacturing, concluding that average annual TFP growth in manufacturing from 1954–1963 was 1.0 percent. From 1963–1974 it was 0.3 percent, from 1974–1981 it was 0.3 percent, and from 1981–1990 it was -0.5 percent. They conclude:

The extent of this recent slowdown and its pervasiveness across industries outside the capital intensive category is an alarming feature of the productivity growth performance of South African manufacturing. . . . Available international evidence suggests that, for manufacturing as a whole, South Africa's TFP performance has been relatively poor.²⁶

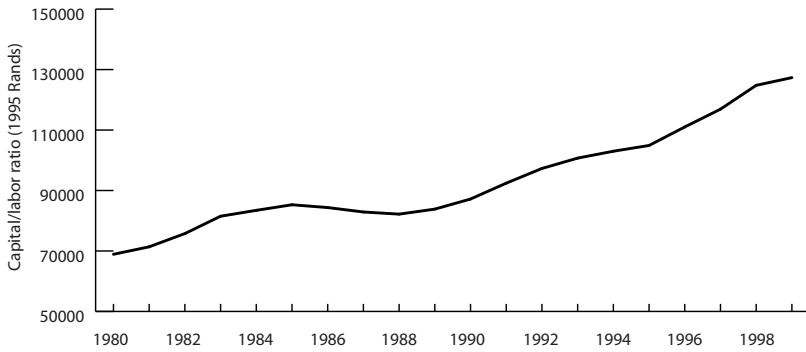
There are some subsectors within manufacturing for which this is not true. But a general trend toward increasing the efficiency with which capital and labor are used has not been in evidence in the last two decades.

Figure 5 shows the evolution since 1980 of the capital/labor ratio in four predominantly private-sector industries: 1) mining, 2) manufacturing, 3) construction, and 4) wholesale trade, retail trade, catering, and accommodation. In constant 1995 prices, the ratio rose by over 80 percent between 1980 and 1999, with most of the rise occurring in the second decade. Employment dropped by 15 percent over the period. This development occurred during a period of high and probably rising unemployment. The neo-Malthusian prediction about the capital/labor ratio is that it will be depressed by high fertility; implicit in the prediction is the assumption of an efficient labor market. The South African labor market, instead of spreading the capital stock over all available workers, spreads it over only some of them and assigns the rest to unemployment. Unemployment is selective; it varies across space, by education, and by age and experience, as will be shown below.

Neo-Malthusian theory predicts the crowding out of public infrastructural investment by expenditure on social services. Figure 6 shows that this effect has been present in the South African economy since the mid-1980s; democratization has turned a latent tendency into a manifest one. The Medium Term Expenditure Framework, which projects national government expenditure for three years, envisages a slight downturn in the percentage of government spending accounted for by social services, but no upturn in the economic services percentage.

In summary, several neo-Malthusian factors are present in the form of the precariousness of the current level of real GDP per capita, the low level of savings and investment, the pressure

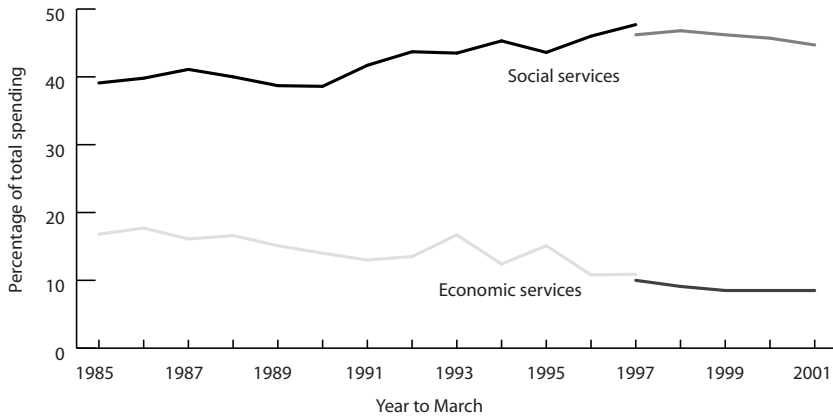
Figure 5. South Africa: capital/labor ratio for selected sectors (capital per worker in 1995 Rands)



Selected sectors: mining, manufacturing, construction, trade, catering, accommodation.

Source: South African Reserve Bank.

Figure 6. South Africa: components of government spending as a percentage of total spending



Source: South African Reserve Bank (1985–1997); Department of Finance (1997–2001).

of large households on savings, generally poor productivity trends, rising unemployment, and pressure on public funds available for physical infrastructure. Conditions in the labor market and South Africa's human capital are further causes for concern.

THE LABOR MARKET AND HUMAN CAPITAL

The October Household Surveys from 1994 to 1998 and the 1996 Population Census all attest to very high rates of unemployment in contemporary South Africa. This has much to do with the spatial distribution of the population in relation to centers of employment, which in turn have been greatly affected by segregation and apartheid. Table 3 shows the variation of unemployment across type of settlement.

Table 3. Unemployment by settlement type, 1996

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Urban formal	20.4	30.3
Urban informal	35.8	58.5
Commercial farms	6.1	17.4
Tribal rural	54.2	67.9
South Africa	27.1	41.9

Source: 1996 Population Census; 10 percent sample.

The relatively low rate of unemployment on commercial farms reflects generally tight control over the population on those farms where residence is tied to employment, despite recent legislation designed to improve security of tenure among farm workers. For the rest, the picture is as one would expect: higher unemployment in informal urban areas than in formal, and very high unemployment in the rural tribal areas.

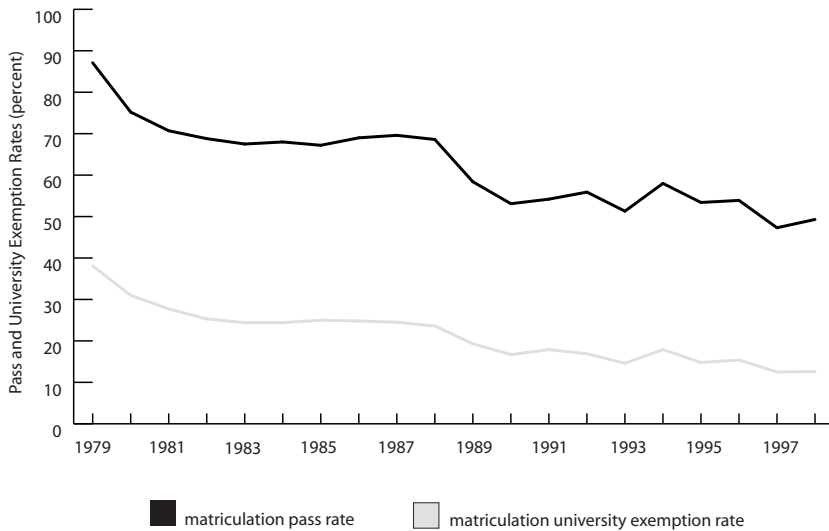
Increasingly it has been recognized that the accumulation of physical capital (land improvements, machinery, and the like) is not the only determinant of growth prospects. Human capital matters a great deal; indeed, societies recover more quickly from the destruction of physical capital than from the loss of human capital. The United Nations Human Development Re-

port publishes a human development index annually. This index is constructed from life expectancy, the adult literacy rate, a combined primary, secondary, and tertiary education gross enrollment ratio, and real GDP per capita in purchasing power parity U.S. dollars.²⁷ In 1999, South Africa's human development index was 0.695, placing it 101st in the world. On the basis of GDP per capita in PPP\$, South Africa is placed fifty-fourth, so the PPP\$ rank minus the HDI rank is -47, indicating that South Africa's human capital is seriously underdeveloped in relation to its level of GDP per capita. Among ninety-four medium human development countries, only Oman, Botswana, and Gabon have greater negative discrepancies than South Africa.

What pulls South Africa down on the HDI is its low life expectancy. The combined educational enrollment index is relatively high, as is the proportion of GDP spent on education (7.6 percent in 1999).²⁸ The country's high expenditure on education is not in doubt. But expenditure is the input to the formation of human capital. How efficiently is it used?

South African secondary-school enrollments have risen rapidly in the last two decades. This is reflected in a rise in the number of candidates for the senior certificate, a public examination written after twelve years of schooling. In 1979, there were 85,276 candidates; by 1998, the number had risen to 552,862.²⁹ The average annual rate of increase of candidates over the period was 10.3 percent. But the number of passes has not risen as fast; the average annual growth rate over the period was 7.1 percent for passes as a whole and 4.1 percent for university exemption (entrance) passes. The number of university exemption passes rose from 68,700 in 1988 to 88,497 in 1994, but dropped back to 69,861 in 1998. In that year, it took an average of 189 school years to produce one senior certificate pass at the university entrance level. Figure 7 shows that the pass rate has dropped from 87 percent in 1979 to 49 percent in 1998 and that the proportion of candidates who qualify for matriculation exemption (i.e., who may go to university) has dropped from 38 percent to 13 percent.

Figure 7. South Africa: matriculation pass and university exemption rates, 1979–1998



Source: South African Institute of Race Relations, *South Africa Survey 1999/2000* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 2000).

The South African higher education system also has its inefficiencies:

- since the 1950s, the ratio of degrees conferred by universities to university enrollments has fluctuated between 10 and 15 percent—this in a system where the average undergraduate curriculum is between three and four years in length, and where the average postgraduate curriculum is about two years;
- the number of dropouts each year from universities and technikons (technical universities) slightly exceeds the number of graduates;
- from the mid-1980s, real expenditure per degree has shown a marked upward trend;
- the proportion of degrees awarded in the mathematical, natural, and engineering sciences has dropped from close to 25 percent in the mid-1960s to little over 15 percent in the 1990s;

- of the seventeen universities for which Department of Education publication units per lecturer could be calculated in 1989 and 1994, eleven showed a decline, five an improvement, and one remained constant;
- whereas colored, Asian, and black university enrollments have risen rapidly in universities over the last three decades, the entrance of these groups in substantial number into technikons has only come about in the 1990s; and
- apprenticeship training has been in decline since the mid-1980s.³⁰

The inefficiencies of the South African secondary and higher education systems are particularly problematic in light of the severe skills shortages in the labor market. The Human Sciences Research Council reviewed trends in the occupational distribution of formal employment from the early 1970s and concluded that the higher the skill of an occupational category the faster demand for it has grown.³¹ Interviews with business and professional associations confirmed that this trend would continue.

This picture is further confirmed by the fact that unemployment rates vary dramatically by highest education level, as Table 4, taken from the 1996 Population Census, indicates:

Table 4. Unemployment rates by sex and highest education level, 1996

Highest education level	Male (%)	Female (%)
Complete primary or less	34.1	51.4
Incomplete secondary	29.1	47.0
Senior Certificate	23.1	34.9
Less than SC plus certificate/diploma	10.9	18.4
SC plus certificate	7.4	15.3
SC plus diploma	5.3	7.0
SC plus degree	2.6	3.6
South Africa	27.1	41.9

Source: Statistics South Africa, 1996 Population Census, tabulation from electronic data.

At the end of the twentieth century, the South African educational system can be described as a low-quality mass system.

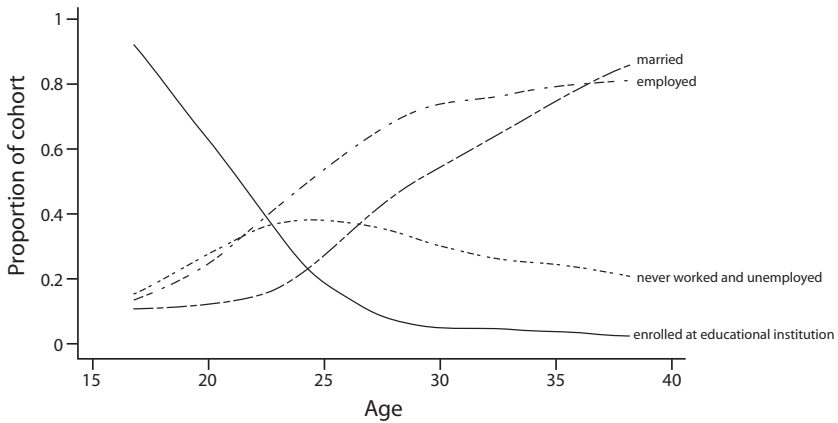
Over 90 percent of children aged between seven and sixteen are enrolled in school, though many of them are not spending anything like the full school year engaged in productive learning. Higher education enrollments are close to 20 percent of the twenty to twenty-four-year-old age cohort, but a great many students leave the system without completing a qualification. The consequence is a severe shortage of skilled people in the economy, especially in fields where mathematics is required. This reduces efficiency and drastically limits development options.

Skilled-labor shortages could be alleviated by liberalization of the immigration policy for people with higher education. The policy of the Department of Home Affairs is slowly and somewhat reluctantly moving in this direction. Politically, it is not easy in light of high domestic unemployment.

THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Over two-thirds of the unemployed have not worked before. The social consequences can be traced through figure 8, which constructs a period analysis on the basis of information in the 1997 October Household Survey. At twenty, more than 50 percent of men remain in the educational system and at twenty-four, more than 20 percent. This reflects enrollment at high ages in secondary school as well as enrollment in secondary education. Young men leaving school are exposed to a lengthy period of searching for a job; at age twenty-five, about 25 percent of the cohort are unemployed, never having had a job before. At age thirty, just over 20 percent of the cohort remain in this position. By age twenty-five, about 40 percent of the cohort has become employed and by age thirty, about 60 percent. The proportion of the cohort ever married rises with employment, with a lag. It is employment that makes young men marriageable; late exit from the educational system and a lengthy period of unemployment before the first job makes marriage late. The marriage prospects of women do not depend on employment; they depend on the number of available men. The singulate mean age at marriage for South African men in 1997 was 31.5 years; that for women 28.9.

Figure 8. Male entry into work and marriage



Source: Based on data from the 1997 October Household Survey published by Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

The consequences are these:

- There is considerable premarital fertility. Whites and Asians have low levels of premarital fertility—and marriage is earlier among these more affluent groups—but coloreds and blacks have premarital fertility rates that are 40–50 percent of the marital fertility rates at corresponding ages. Malthus would have approved of the late marriage age, but the key factor turning this fully into a preventative check—abstinence, or at least zero fertility—is largely absent in South Africa. Nonetheless, since premarital fertility is lower than marital fertility, the rising age at marriage has played a minor role in reducing South African fertility.
- Long sexually active premarital time stretches increase the risks of STD and HIV infection.
- A great many households have to support young adults for much longer periods than in societies that have close to full employment.
- Among Africans, the incidence of two parent nuclear households is low. The expected length of an adult’s working life is

short; there is late entry into employment. Mortality and morbidity rates become substantial for South Africans in their forties and beyond, with adverse consequences for incomes. Over 13 percent of women remain unmarried at age fifty, and there are many two- and three-generation female-headed households. A substantial number of children live with their grandparents off an old-age pension; AIDS mortality of younger adults will increase the number of households of this kind.

CONCLUSION

Many Malthusian and neo-Malthusian conditions can be found in contemporary South Africa. The population has increased rapidly throughout the twentieth century. Real income per capita has declined over the last twenty years; more recently it has stabilized, but the stability is precarious. The savings rate has also declined, and net savings on the part of households have almost disappeared. Recent net foreign inflows on the capital account have added only marginally to savings as a source of funds for investment. There is some pressure on savings in higher-fertility households. Rather than capital per worker being diluted uniformly by a rapidly growing labor force, it is spread over only part of it, unemployment being the fate of the remainder. South Africa's education system, despite being expensive, is inefficient and unable to supply adequate numbers of skilled and highly educated people to the labor market. Pressures for social spending have crowded out public investment in economic infrastructure. Despite rising population densities in rural tribal areas, there has been little technical change in agricultural production. Moreover, there is a candidate for a positive check in the form of an HIV epidemic, which has spread rapidly during the 1990s.

Everything we know suggests that South African mortality will rise significantly in the early twenty-first century. The incidence will vary across population groups, being lowest among whites and Asians, higher among coloreds, and highest among blacks. Better-educated South Africans will be less affected by the HIV epidemic for five reasons: they will be more informed about the means of avoiding infection, they will have

stronger immune systems, they will use tests more, they will be more likely to have the income (and medical aid coverage) for the drugs to manage the infection, and they are more likely to stick to medication programs. But this is a matter of degree only, and AIDS will take a substantial toll on South Africa's already scarce human capital.

The extent of the rise in mortality will be affected by factors under the control of South Africans and others: international medical advances in HIV/AIDS management, reduction in the price of relevant pharmaceuticals, improvements in the efficiency of the South African private and public health systems, efforts to relieve the worst of South African (largely rural) poverty, improvements in the employment prospects of the young, greater efficiency in the education system.

Two related issues have been identified as crucial in recent debate: appropriate political leadership and much greater capacity and seriousness in the public health system. Helen Epstein has published an alarming chronicle of her investigations into a clinical trial of anti-retroviral drugs that raises major questions about the administration and capacity of the public health system,³² and Edwin Cameron, in his Jonathan Mann Memorial Lecture delivered at the thirteenth International AIDS Conference in Durban, complained of a "cacophony of task groups, workshops, committees, councils, policies, drafts, proposals, statements and pledges. But all have thus far signified piteously little."³³ Similarly, Epstein concludes that South Africa has a ruler who has not adequately confronted the most deadly threat facing his country, and Cameron observes that "perhaps the most intractably puzzling episode has been our President's flirtation with those who in the face of all reason and evidence have sought to dispute the aetiology of AIDS."³⁴

Without rapid clarification of goals and a special effort to improve the focus and capacity of the Department of Health, there can be little improvement in a so far poor effort to deal with a national emergency.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea for this study came to me while reading Professor J. L. Sadie's retirement Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Stellenbosch University in 1999. Sadie's thesis is not self-consciously Malthusian, but it amounts to the statement of a Malthusian case in relation to contemporary South Africa. While our arguments overlap in some respects, they also differ substantially in scope and emphasis. Thanks are also due to Peter Perkins and Ingrid Woolard for assisting with parts of the statistical analysis.

ENDNOTES

- ¹"Malthus" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., vol. XV (1883): 344.
- ²Charles Simkins and Elizabeth van Heyningen, "Fertility, Mortality and Migration in the Cape Colony, 1891–1904," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22 (1) (1989): Table 1.
- ³J. B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856–7* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), 319.
- ⁴David Clammer, *The Zulu War* (Devon, U.K.: Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1973), 216.
- ⁵John Laband and Paul Thompson, *Field Guide to the War in Zululand and the Defence of Natal, 1879*, 2d ed. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1983).
- ⁶Brian Johnson Barker, *A Concise Dictionary of the Boer War* (Cape Town: Francolin Publishers, 1999), 45.
- ⁷D. J. Potgieter et al., eds., *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*, vol. 11 (Cape Town: NASOU, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1975), 512, 525.
- ⁸Statistics South Africa, 1995.
- ⁹South African Institute of Race Relations, *South Africa Survey 1995/1996* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1996), 52.
- ¹⁰UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, June 2000, 9 and Annex 2; <<http://www.unaids.org>>.
- ¹¹Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (London: J. Johnson, 1798; 2d and exp. ed. 1803).
- ¹²"In all groups except the Nguni it is not only justifiable but also customary to kill one or both of twins, or children born feet first, or cutting their upper teeth first, or presenting some other abnormality. Such children are regarded as evil omens who must be put out of the way as soon as possible lest they bring disaster on their families." Isaac Schapera, *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1937), 210. Custom also prohibited sexual intercourse between the birth and weaning of a child. Killing

one or both twins or handicapped children and birth spacing all served to make the survival of parents and siblings more likely in a time of famine. These customs have eroded to the point of extinction in the twentieth century as a result of urbanization and the spread of formal education.

¹³Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population*, 2d ed., trans. Carl Ipsen (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997), 206–211.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 146–147.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report*, 1999 ed. (New York: United Nations Development Program, 1999), Table 8. The sixteen countries are: Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and both Congos.

¹⁷Central Intelligence Agency, *The Global Infectious Disease Threat and its Implications for the United States* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, G.P.O., January 2000), 21.

¹⁸Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact Book*, 1999 ed. (Washington, D.C.: CIA, G.P.O., 1999).

¹⁹Freedom House, *Annual Survey of Freedom Country Ratings 1972–73 to 1999–00* (New York: Freedom House, 1999). Freedom House constructs a political liberties index ranging from one (the most free) to seven (the least free). It also constructs a civil liberties index on the same basis. “Not free” countries have a combined index of at least eleven; “partly free” countries have a combined index of between five and ten.

²⁰Central Intelligence Agency, *The Global Infectious Disease Threat*, 12.

²¹J. L. Sadie, *A Projection of the South African Population, 1991–2011*, Bureau of Market Research Report 196, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1993, Appendix A.

²²South Africa Department of Health, *National HIV Sero-prevalence Survey of Women Attending Public Ante-natal Clinics in South Africa, 1999* (Pretoria: Department of Health, 2000), Figure 1.

²³Robert E. Dorrington, *ASSA600: An AIDS Model of the Third Kind*, <<http://www.assa.org.za/committees/aids/assa600.htm>>, 2000.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Table A8.3.

²⁵Isaac Schapera, *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 143, gives *lobola* as the Nguni term for bride wealth and *bogadi* as the Sotho term.

²⁶Anthony John Wright, Murray Leibbrandt, and R. T. Bell, “Productivity Growth in the South African Manufacturing Sector: Deriving and Assessing Neoclassical TFP Measures,” in K. Kruger, ed., *Papers Submitted for the Competition to Promote Academic Research into Industrial Policy and Development in South Africa*, vol. 3A (Sandton, South Africa: Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa, November 1993), 29–30.

- ²⁷Conversion of local currencies to U.S. dollar equivalents can be done in one of two ways. The easier way is to use exchange rates. Purchasing power parity conversion establishes the number of units of the local currency that would buy the same basket of goods that one dollar would buy in the United States.
- ²⁸UN Human Development Report, 1999, Tables 1 and 10.
- ²⁹South African Institute of Race Relations, *South Africa Survey 1999/2000* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 2000), 113.
- ³⁰Johannes Fedderke, Raphael de Kadt, and John Luiz, "A Capstone Tertiary Education System: Inefficiency, Duplication and Inequity in South Africa's Tertiary Education System, 1910-93," *Econometric Research Southern Africa Working Paper no. 14*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, April 2000; South Africa's National Commission for Higher Education, *Report of the Commission* (Pretoria: National Commission for Higher Education, 1996).
- ³¹Human Sciences Research Council, *Skills Needs of the South African Labour Market, 1998-2003* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1999), 9.
- ³²Helen Epstein, "The Mystery of AIDS in South Africa," *New York Review of Books* 47 (12) (20 July 2000): 50-55.
- ³³Edwin Cameron, "The Deafening Silence of AIDS," first Jonathan Mann Memorial Lecture, thirteenth International AIDS Conference, Durban, 9-14 July 2000, 3.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, 4.

AIDS: Losing “The New Struggle”?

We have a noble task ahead of us—reconstruction of our country. We cannot afford to allow the AIDS epidemic to ruin the realisation of our dreams.

—Chris Hani, May 1991¹

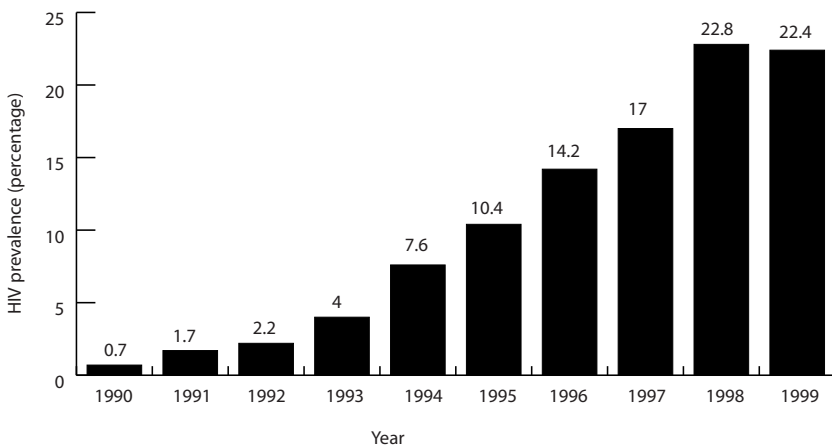
AS A POLITICAL EXILE who had lived in African countries already ravaged by the disease, Chris Hani, a major leader in the liberation movement, foresaw that South Africa’s nascent AIDS epidemic could explode and destroy the country.² He challenged fellow activists to “learn to tackle these problems head on. . . . Some of us might regard this as a diversion from the important task of transfer of power to the people,” but to ignore AIDS, he believed, *would* end their dreams.

Chris Hani never lived to see his fears realized. He was assassinated in April of 1993, while the negotiations that would transform South Africa were in progress. Had he lived, he might well have been President Nelson Mandela’s successor, and the way AIDS was handled as a national issue might well have been different. As it turned out, political leaders did not heed his advice, and the South African epidemic seems set to follow a disastrous path.

In 1991, when Hani spoke, the prevalence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), as measured in the annual antenatal HIV surveillance surveys conducted at state clinics,

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Figure 1. Annual Antenatal HIV Survey



Source: Department of Health, *Summary Report: 1999 Antenatal Survey* (Pretoria: Department of Health, 2000).

was 1.74 percent, up from 0.73 percent in 1990 when the surveys began.³ By 1999, the prevalence had risen to 22.4 percent, and 4.2 million South Africans—19.9 percent of the adult population—were estimated to be infected, according to a report released in June of 2000 by the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).⁴ There are now more people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa than in any other country in the world.⁵ While awareness of the disease is high, there is little indication that this is translating into safer sexual practices.

Why has South Africa not managed to turn the epidemic around? Why has the country not united in what former president Nelson Mandela has called “the new struggle” against AIDS? How can President Thabo Mbeki’s recent controversial stance on alternative AIDS theories, and his plea for an “African solution” to the problem, be understood against this background?

The fact that AIDS began under the old order and burgeoned under the new has immensely complicated attempts to deal with it. It is worth examining the responses to the epidemic during

the apartheid era; they go some way toward explaining the problems of today.

The initial epidemic, virtually confined to the white male gay community, surfaced at the same time as it did elsewhere in the developed world; those affected were drawn not only into the global construction of the disease as a human-rights issue, but also into the down-to-earth campaigns of gay organizations to prevent its spread. By the time this first outbreak peaked in South Africa in 1989, it was clear that, like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa faced a new, heterosexually transmitted epidemic, predominantly affecting black African communities.⁶

The racially differentiated nature of the epidemic has made it more difficult to deal with. The fact that it is sexually transmitted and that HIV is believed to have its origins in Africa have, on the one hand, fueled racist stereotypes, discrimination, and Afro-pessimism, and, on the other, prompted anger, denial, and genocidal conspiracy theories. Had the disease afflicted all South Africans equally, regardless of race, the politics of the epidemic would undoubtedly have looked different.

The apartheid regime was ill-prepared to handle the new challenge. It responded to the first phase of the epidemic by ensuring the safety of the blood and blood-product supply as soon as an HIV test was available, and by providing some funding for education campaigns, training, counseling, and research. An AIDS budget of R 1 million⁷ in 1987 grew to almost R 22 million by 1992–1993, but fell marginally the following year. This was far short of the World Health Organization's recommendations of R 143 million a year for South Africa at the time.⁸ Shrinking funds in the face of a growing epidemic stirred suspicions that the government was not taking the matter seriously, because it was now clear AIDS was going to affect blacks more than whites. Some also seemed to believe South Africa was "different" from the rest of Africa, and would not suffer the devastation seen to the north, or that the country could insulate itself from the epidemic by keeping out infected foreigners. An attempt to legislate the exclusion of people who tested positive for HIV, aimed particularly at Malawian migrant mineworkers who had high infection rates, met with

outrage from the National Union of Mineworkers, who blamed the disease on the migrant labor system itself, which provided “fertile ground for an AIDS epidemic, and the state and industry should bear the responsibility.”⁹

South Africa’s efforts to deal with the epidemic were made yet more problematic by the political circumstances in which the epidemic arrived. The mid-1980s saw the country in a state of unprecedented political turmoil and violence, with blacks bent on overthrowing the government by making the country “ungovernable.”

A major feature of black resistance was the school boycott, which saw children in some areas out of school for years at a stretch, or the schools themselves turned into “sites of struggle” for political education. “Liberation before Education” was the call. In 1986, pamphlets appeared proclaiming “The Year of No School.”¹⁰ Youth activists—the “comrades” or “Young Lions”—played a central role in the politics of 1984–1986, often in conflict with township adults, who felt they had lost control over their children.¹¹ Between 1984 and 1986, it is estimated that three hundred children were killed, one thousand wounded, eleven thousand detained, and eighteen thousand arrested on protest charges.¹² As Saths Cooper, a clinical psychologist and activist, has remarked, there was “very little normality in the lives of politicized children. No good familial relationships, no normal schooling, no integrated existence. Norm restraints were non-existent.”¹³ Whatever fragile social fabric had survived the apartheid years was torn apart by the politics of the 1980s. In the chaos that followed as an unintended consequence of the political struggle, as the sociologist Steve Mokwena has observed, “*all* forms of control were challenged. Some argue that it was the strategy of ‘ungovernability,’ preached by sections of the political movement, which is directly responsible for the breakdown of control in the townships.”¹⁴

The children of those turbulent years, now in their twenties and thirties, bear the brunt of today’s HIV/AIDS epidemic, with the 1999 antenatal survey showing over 25 percent of twenty to twenty-nine year olds, and 22 percent of thirty to thirty-four year olds, infected. Could more effective prevention campaigns by the previous government have forestalled this? Probably

not. While AIDS is inevitably politicized,¹⁵ the superheated political climate between 1984 and 1994 ensured that people of all ideological persuasions interpreted, manipulated, or ignored it to suit their own political agenda. In the words of Refiloe Serote of the Township AIDS Program: "Political and racial divisions, created and inflamed by apartheid, make everything to do with AIDS political."¹⁶

Any attempt to put conventional AIDS education into black schools—even assuming they had been functioning—would undoubtedly have been met with suspicion and hostility. Given the conservatism of South Africa's black and white parents, sex education in schools has long been problematic. What safer-sex campaigns there were provoked criticism and anger. In 1988, AIDS posters targeted separately at white and black audiences were dismissed by antiapartheid groups as "typical of government racist propaganda." Critics argued that if the government had consulted black political organizations and trade unions, a more appropriate AIDS awareness campaign could have been devised.¹⁷ In the climate of the times, however, few antiapartheid organizations would have been prepared to cooperate with the government. Non-collaboration and pressures to keep the state isolated internationally were integral parts of the opposition's strategy—a strategy that created its own dilemmas, such as South Africa's exclusion from the World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS.¹⁸

In 1993, on the eve of the transition to democracy, only a few hundred AIDS cases were reported. In the black townships, the epidemic still remained invisible.¹⁹ The AIDS scare was dismissed by many black militants as a government fabrication, the acronym said to stand for "Afrikaner Invention to Deprive us of Sex." The emphasis on condom usage raised suspicions that the real objective was to reinforce the government's "genocidal" family-planning program. Talk of safer sex seemed at the time like "a plot devised by the government, supported by the employers, and pumped through a restricted press to convince black people to have less sex, and therefore fewer babies."²⁰

Conspiracy theories abounded. In November of 1988, an article by Mzala, in *Sechaba*, an official publication of the ANC in exile, questioned the African origin of the virus. The *Sechaba*

essay suggested instead that the virus may have been developed “in the secrecy of the laboratories of many imperialist countries,”²¹ although it stopped short of Soviet accusations at the time that the virus originated in a U.S. biological research laboratory in Fort Detrick, Maryland. Other rumors thrived in beleaguered communities. Some said the virus was sprayed in police tear gas;²² others argued that it had been deliberately spread to black prostitutes by infected ex-ANC guerrillas (askaris) working for the police.²³ (Recent amnesty applications to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have mentioned the askari story, and also the possible use of HIV to eliminate anti-apartheid activists, keeping such rumors alive.)

Given the political circumstances of the time, an AIDS campaign sponsored by the apartheid government was probably doomed to fail. As AIDS activist and anti-apartheid campaigner Ivan Toms said at the time: “there is no possibility that the present government could, even if it has the inclination, run an effective campaign to limit the spread of HIV infection. It has no credibility or legitimacy whatsoever among blacks.”²⁴

The response of the white right wing served further to politicize AIDS. In Parliament, AIDS figured prominently in political infighting. For instance, Dr. F. H. Pauw, Member of Parliament (MP) for the right-wing Conservative Party, told Parliament that he was receiving reports from “throughout the country” that the ruling National Party canvassers were assuring people that black majority rule posed no threat, because AIDS would eliminate so many blacks that they would be a minority within five years. “When one bases one’s guarantees and one’s hopes of solving the problems of our country on AIDS, this is a reflection of the level to which one has sunk. . . . We do not place our hopes in AIDS.”²⁵ In reply, Health Minister Rina Venter retorted that such attitudes were far more representative of the Conservative Party, and quoted CP MP Clive Derby-Lewis as having said: “If AIDS stops black population growth, it would be like Father Christmas.” She rejected “this fooling around with such a serious matter,” and appealed to Parliament not to make AIDS a political issue.²⁶ (Clive Derby-Lewis was later sent to prison for his part in the assassination of Chris Hani in 1993.)

Right-wing newspapers insisted that "evidence" that HIV could be transmitted by casual contact meant that "low risk groups" (i.e., whites), would be in danger if the government went ahead with plans to desegregate hospitals, schools, swimming pools, blood banks, and other amenities.

Anonymous pamphlets defended the rights of whites to "survive in an AIDS sea," and demanded compulsory testing for returning ANC exiles or legislation to make AIDS a notifiable disease. One painted a picture of terrible violence as "25 million would be dead or dying by the end of the century. And up to 7 million will be raving mad before dying." In this apocalyptic vision, South Africans were urged to "support those who fight for you, even if you do not always agree with them."²⁷ One is reminded of Susan Sontag's remarks in her essay on "AIDS and its Metaphors":

The taste for worst-case scenarios reflects the need to master fear of what is felt to be uncontrollable. It also expresses an imaginative complicity with disaster. The sense of cultural distress or failure gives rise to the desire for a clean sweep, a *tabula rasa*. No one wants a plague, of course. But yes, it would be a chance to begin again.²⁸

In the antiapartheid camp, there were many grassroots community groups, churches, student organizations, and nongovernmental organizations involved in AIDS initiatives by the late 1980s and early 1990s, but their efforts were for the most part fragmented and sporadic.

The major alliance partners who were to form the new government did little. For example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa's largest trade-union body, passed a resolution in 1989 to provide education and protection for workers' rights, and to fight the social conditions that fueled the epidemic—but it was not until June of 1991 that COSATU held a conference devoted to developing an AIDS program. David Morake, the conference organizer, criticized government and employer efforts as "racist" and "counterproductive," and said COSATU recognized that "worker education is now the responsibility of the unions."²⁹ Since then, some unions have instituted AIDS programs, but, given the turbulent

political and labor climate of the past decade, attention to AIDS has been patchy and sporadic. Mark Heywood of the AIDS Law Project notes, for instance, that in a 1996 survey, the Department of Health's HIV/AIDS and STD Directorate sent out questionnaires to 150 trade unions; 12 responded. He comments that AIDS, in its causes and consequences, is an issue of crucial importance to workers, yet there has been "hardly a squeal from the official guardians of working class people," who seem "to have little time, capacity and—dare we say it—will to deal with these issues."³⁰

The African National Congress, too, had signaled its concern—but, like COSATU, had offered little in the way of concrete interventions. In April of 1990, 250 delegates, including representatives of the ANC, the United Democratic Front, the National Medical and Dental Association, and other anti-apartheid organizations, met at a conference on health and welfare in Maputo, at which AIDS was discussed. A resolution was passed calling for immediate action by "progressive" organizations in the face of the impending AIDS "crisis." Delegates were urged to play a leading role in AIDS campaigns "situated within the broader struggle for political change." Senior political leadership was urged to become involved to overcome the suspicion around AIDS that the apartheid government had aroused.³¹ It was at this meeting that Chris Hani warned that existing statistics showed South Africa to be still at the beginning of an AIDS epidemic. Despite his words, little was done. A year later, AIDS analyst Mary Crewe remarked that "one has yet to hear any of the [ANC] National Executive raise the issue of AIDS at a political rally or public meeting."³²

Since there was abundant evidence that South Africa faced a major epidemic that would disproportionately affect black communities—the future government's main constituency—the seeming inertia of the ANC and COSATU was puzzling. Some have blamed it on the fact that the organizations' personnel and finances were already overstretched by the pace of change and its demands. Youth organizations, whose members would be especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, relegated the disease to the same low position as other health issues, claiming that they

were involved in a political struggle that demanded all their energy.³³ Some have suggested that because many returning exiles were from areas with high HIV infection rates, and could themselves be infected, the AIDS issue was downplayed to prevent resistance to assimilating returnees.³⁴ Others believe that responses were slow because programs could not be imposed from the top, but needed to be developed through the cumbersome participatory style of community decision-making that had evolved in the internal antiapartheid movement.³⁵

The political priorities of the time saw issues such as housing, unemployment, poverty, and violence take center stage. AIDS, with its unpopular message of condoms and safer sex—a message necessarily overlapping with that of the government—was not going to go down well.

Black youth were particularly unreceptive to warnings about AIDS. Brutalized by the turmoil of the 1980s, they had learned to live with the fear of death. They were hardly likely to take an invisible epidemic seriously. In a survey of seventeen- to twenty-three-year-olds in KwaZulu in 1990, Dr. Darryl Hackland, KwaZulu secretary of health, found that a third of the respondents believed that AIDS was "a joke." Ninety percent said that they would never use a condom. For those caught up in political violence, AIDS was "almost a laughing matter. It's a case of eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!"³⁶ Whether the safer sex message came from the hated white government, or from their own parents and elders, whose political timidity they had ridiculed, it was clear that the militant young were in no mood for messages of caution and moderation. Even efforts to "'politicize' AIDS prevention," to make "exhortations to alter sexual behavior . . . part of a political message,"³⁷ seemed unlikely to succeed in this milieu. Politicians hoping for the youth vote avoided the issue of AIDS altogether.

So, while the ANC, COSATU, and affiliated organizations were clearly aware of the AIDS threat, a coherent plan to address the disease eluded them. In 1991, the ANC journal, *Mayibuye*, had to admit that the democratic movements' "deep commitment and sense of urgency . . . [had not] translated into practice."³⁸

By then, it was clear that interventions could not wait for a new political order. In November of 1991, the health secretariat of the ANC indicated willingness to meet with the Department of National Health and Population Development (DNHPD) to formulate a strategy. The AIDS Unit of the DNHPD convened a meeting on January 15, 1992, attended by people in the AIDS field. The participants in this meeting resolved to convene a national forum on AIDS, and to mandate the ANC and the DNHPD to set up a steering committee to plan a response to the AIDS crisis.³⁹

In October of 1992, a national conference—"South Africa United Against AIDS"—was held. The 442 delegates recommended a national strategy that would address education, counseling, prevention, health care, welfare, research, human rights, law reform, and socioeconomic issues. The National AIDS Coordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA), which emerged from the conference, was to implement a national strategy on HIV/AIDS.

The strategy was developed through an intensive program of consultation via a national and regional NACOSA network, with input from political parties, trade unions, the business sector, civic associations, churches, academics, government departments, AIDS service organizations, and others. A draft of a national AIDS strategy was developed for discussion at a strategy workshop in September of 1993. (It is worth noting that two of the eight-member drafting committee would go on to become consecutive health ministers in the new South African government—Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.)

The strategy was comprehensive, presenting a detailed plan to achieve three overriding objectives: the prevention of HIV transmission, the reduction of the personal and social impact of HIV, and the mobilizations of local, provincial, national, and international resources to fight the epidemic.⁴⁰

Confident that the new government would support its strategy, NACOSA saw itself continuing to "function as a collaborator and watch dog on the government's National AIDS policy and commitment."⁴¹ In a 1994 interview, Zuma, who had served as chairperson of the NACOSA Strategy Committee, said:

At NACOSA, it was obvious that AIDS was going to be one of this country's greatest crises—in terms of health and the economy—and that the government was not going to get around to doing anything unless prompted. So we felt that we needed to present it with a plan they could use as the basis for strategy.⁴²

After the 1994 elections, with Zuma then minister of health, the NACOSA strategy was endorsed as the National AIDS Plan.⁴³ The program was located in the Department of Health under the directorate of HIV/AIDS and STDs, the budget was doubled, and donor funds grew. With cabinet endorsement, it looked like the plan would have the multisectoral support and level of political commitment that had proved crucial in successful programs elsewhere. However, as Hein Marais comments, "such hope soon evaporated."⁴⁴

Despite the cabinet endorsement, and despite being designated a Presidential Lead Project in the Reconstruction and Development Program,⁴⁵ AIDS rapidly came to be seen as simply a health issue. The resources necessary for a plan of the size and complexity envisaged by NACOSA were not forthcoming. In part this was because AIDS failed to be prioritized in the way in which NACOSA had envisaged. But in part it was also because the new government faced the difficult task of trying to restructure the fragmented systems created by apartheid and weld together the sometimes reluctant, even obstructive, old and new bureaucrats. Tension between national, provincial, and local governments over budgetary allocations, program design, and policy decisions bedeviled implementation. Marais talks of "feuding" between levels, with mutual blame for lack of delivery. "At play, it seemed, were fascinating but debilitating struggles for legitimacy, influence and power."⁴⁶

A further dimension to the problem was the intrusion at this point of the WHO's Global Program on AIDS (GPA). Mary Crewe notes that because "NACOSA was deemed inadequate, an outside legitimating body—the GPA—was called in."⁴⁷ The GPA program not only emphasized priorities different from NACOSA and required even more money to implement; it also talked of an "African approach," as if the continent were a homogeneous whole. Rather than strengthening the government plan through collaboration with NACOSA, the GPA shook

the confidence of local groups and blurred responsibility for implementation. Crewe believes these problems have dogged the anti-AIDS initiatives ever since.⁴⁸

In a political situation still on the boil, one could hardly expect to find programs working as they might in a stable democracy with a nonpartisan, trained, and experienced bureaucracy. By 1996, the AIDS Plan was in serious difficulties. Two years into its implementation, not only had HIV prevalence climbed from 7.6 percent in 1994 to 14.2 percent in 1996, but the ideal of "South Africa United Against AIDS" had not been realized. At all levels, there was discord and disarray.

A major review of the AIDS strategy in 1997 also drew attention to the lack of political leadership on the issue. Rose Smart, head of the Health Department's National HIV/AIDS and STD Directorate, wrote: "Despite the impression internationally that there is significant political commitment in South Africa to addressing HIV/AIDS, in reality this was found to be limited (with few exceptions) to the Minister and the Department of Health."⁴⁹ This deficiency has remained a central weakness in South Africa's AIDS program.

The credibility of the government's AIDS strategy was also dented by a series of scandals and blunders, beginning with the Department of Health's commissioning, in 1995, of a musical, *Sarafina II*, which was intended to take the AIDS message to the public in a popular form. It was a disaster on a number of levels. An inappropriate, all-star, big-budget production, it cost a whopping R 14.2 million.⁵⁰ The expenditure was unauthorized, there were irregularities in the tendering process, and the message it was intended to convey was far from clear. The media and opposition parties had a field day reporting on the issue, but it also served to drive further wedges between government and AIDS organizations.

The organizations pointed out that, at a time when funds were scarce, the money could have been better spent on smaller local projects with a better understanding of AIDS issues. Most of all they resented the increasingly non-consultative way in which Health Minister Zuma made decisions, and that they were expected to refrain from criticism.⁵¹ According to Morna Cornell of the AIDS Consortium, a body representing over two

hundred organizations working in the AIDS field, the consortium had tried to take up its concerns about the play with the Health Department in a constructive way, but had eventually gone public and assisted the Public Protector in his investigation of the matter. Cornell found the government's response to criticism particularly disturbing. It raised questions about the relationship of NGOs and the government. Many AIDS service organizations (ASOs) relied on government funding and felt unable to challenge the Health Department. Despite the minister's stated commitment to transparency and accountability, the ASOs were feeling increasingly marginalized by her actions. Some even felt that the funding cut to ASOs from R 19 million to R 2 million in 1998 was partly motivated by spite directed at a sector that had tried to hold her to account.⁵²

Sarafina II was a watershed event in the relations between the government and civil society. Its effects were succinctly put in a NACOSA briefing to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Health (September 3, 1996): "*Sarafina II* has done immense damage to individuals and organizations active in the AIDS field. The process was not transparent and this has resulted in a rift between the Department of Health, NACOSA and the NGOs, as well as public derision about and hostility to HIV/AIDS work and programmes."⁵³

The damage could probably have been repaired if the department had learned from the fiasco. Instead it seems to have staggered from one controversy to another, alienating even some of its most solid erstwhile supporters.

While investigation of the *Sarafina II* matter was still in progress, the government found itself embroiled in yet another major controversy surrounding their support for a suspect AIDS drug, Virodene PO58. The drug, an industrial solvent (dimethylformamide), had previously been tested in cancer therapy, but abandoned as ineffective and toxic. When a team of researchers at the University of Pretoria noticed Virodene had antiviral properties, they administered the drug to a number of AIDS patients, without clearing its use via the normal ethical and scientific protocols. On January 22, 1997, the researchers attended a cabinet meeting with patients who had purportedly seen their full-blown AIDS reversed by the drug.

After receiving a standing ovation, the researchers asked for a grant of R 3.7 million for further research. They claimed it was necessary to take the unusual step of going directly to the cabinet, after the “AIDS research establishment” had blocked their work because they refused to share their patent rights.

In the saga that unfolded over the following year, allegations of government financial involvement, repeated rejections of Virodene’s credentials by the Medicines Control Council (MCC, the country’s drug regulatory authority), and pleas by people with HIV/AIDS to be allowed access to the drug vied for headlines.

Like *Sarafina II*, Virodene succeeded in dividing those who should have been united in the fight against AIDS. This time not only the department of health, but the whole cabinet, including the deputy president, Thabo Mbeki, was embroiled, and in a scientific matter on which they were ill-equipped to pass judgment. The initial elation on the part of people with HIV/AIDS that a cheap cure might have been found, their desperation to get access to the drug, and their anger and despair when they realized how threadbare the claims were increased their skepticism about government AIDS initiatives.⁵⁴

The opposition Democratic Party (DP), which ultimately called on the Public Protector to investigate the ANC’s alleged financial link with Virodene, exchanged bitter words with the ANC over the affair. The health minister, Zuma, at one stage said that “the DP hates ANC supporters. If they had their way we would all die of AIDS.”⁵⁵ An article by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper, *Rapport*, noting that two-thirds of those with HIV/AIDS were in sub-Saharan Africa, 2.8 million of them in South Africa, wondered if “those who kicked up all these duststorms” around Virodene “did not have precisely these results in mind.”⁵⁶

Many had hoped that President Nelson Mandela, like President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, would spearhead the South African AIDS program. In fact, Mandela seldom addressed the issue in South Africa, even though he did make a major speech on AIDS at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in February of 1997: “When the history of our time is written,”

said Mandela, "it will record the collective efforts of societies responding to a threat that has put in the balance the future of whole nations. Future generations will judge us on the adequacy of our response." He concluded his speech by saying South Africa's National AIDS Program, conscious of the need "to put the effort to combat AIDS on a higher plane," had "made the call for 'A New Struggle!'"⁵⁷ It was a stirring message, but unfortunately one he seldom repeated from South African platforms.

AIDS workers hoped that a speech by Mandela to be aired on national radio and television stations on October 9, 1998—billed, somewhat portentously, "Ten Minutes to Save the Nation"—would help focus public attention on the issue. There was deep disappointment when Mandela delegated the job to Thabo Mbeki. (The address, filmed at a Salvation Army Children's home, with Mbeki sitting stiffly in his crisp business suit and tie, surrounded by HIV-positive children, had obviously been designed for Mandela's more informal style.) In the speech, Mbeki said nothing new, although he did admit that "we have closed our eyes as a Nation, hoping the truth was not real." He added: "Nothing can prevent infection except our own behavior." The point of the speech was to draw people into a "Partnership Against AIDS," a program that had been launched the previous month. Commenting on the speech, Mary Crewe said it contained "no programme direction, no promises of action, no direct strategies." But the point that really rankled was Mandela's nonappearance. Crewe writes: "Why did he fail the nation?" Mandela had never made AIDS a priority, and his failure to participate in the program "undermined the whole exercise. Why should the skeptical nation take AIDS seriously, when the President doesn't?"⁵⁸

A number of commentators have suggested that Mandela was uncomfortable talking about AIDS, and concerned that he would upset people by being too forthright. Given his age and the sexual conservatism of South Africans, this was undoubtedly a factor in his avoidance of the topic.

On one of the rare occasions on which he did publicly address the issue, at a World AIDS Day rally at Mtubatuba in KwaZulu-

Natal in 1998, attended by Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, Mandela commented that “because it spreads mainly through sex, prevention requires of us that we speak of it in a way [for which] our traditions, our cultures and our religions provide little guidance.”⁵⁹

In September of 1998, the government held an “AIDS crisis summit” to launch a new “Partnership Against AIDS,” meant to revitalize South Africa’s flagging program. The minister of health was late, and Mbeki made a brief appearance on the way to open a World Athletics meeting.

Opposition politicians suspected the partnership was a pre-election ploy to reassure voters that the government was doing something, but Crewe saw a different message—that, having realized the epidemic was beyond their scope, the government was saying that it had called the “partners” together to tell them this. “It is now over to you. . . . [W]e will not, in any meaningful or accountable way, take responsibility for this epidemic any longer.”⁶⁰

Further controversies have surrounded the provision of antiretroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV. With a predominantly heterosexually transmitted epidemic, women of childbearing age were commonly infected, and stood a 25–35 percent chance of passing the infection on to their babies. In industrialized countries the use of AZT (zidovudine) administered from the fourteenth week of pregnancy, and to the infant for the first six weeks, in conjunction with cesarean delivery and formula feeding, has reduced the MTCT rate to virtually nil. While the regimens favored in such countries would be both too expensive and too difficult to administer in developing countries, a short course of AZT from thirty-six weeks of pregnancy and for six weeks to the infant has also been shown to lower transmission substantially,⁶¹ and recent research suggests that a new drug, nevirapine (Viramune), may achieve even better results with just a single dose during labor and one dose to the baby within seventy-two hours of birth. Given the humanitarian considerations and the fact that such prophylaxis can be demonstrated to be highly cost-effective by comparison with repeated hospital care for an infected infant, the case for antiretrovirals seemed clear.⁶²

Nevertheless, in October of 1998, Minister Zuma announced that she and her nine provincial health ministers had decided not to make the drug available and to discontinue planned pilot projects to test it.⁶³ Replying to *Sunday Times* criticism, she pointed out that the government's priority was prevention. "The AZT treatment will have a limited effect on the epidemic, as we are targeting individuals already infected."⁶⁴ As critics were quick to point out, the *prevention* of MTCT was the object of using AZT, but Zuma was adamant. Even after Glaxo-Wellcome, AZT's manufacturer, drastically reduced the price of the drug, Zuma insisted it was too expensive, given that the intervention would also require testing, counseling, formula feeding, and technical support.

James McIntyre and Glenda Gray, directors of the Perinatal HIV Research Unit at Soweto's Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, wrote of their concern that attempts to discuss the issue constructively had been "overshadowed by inflexible public statements by the Minister's spokesperson, including questioning the political motives of those who advocate MTCT prevention strategies." They noted that while South Africa guaranteed free maternity treatment, and free treatment for children under six years, including expensive hospital procedures, it "specifically excludes the provision of a R 300–R 400 drug treatment which prevents half the cases of paediatric HIV."⁶⁵

The AZT issue angered not only local AIDS workers but also those around the world. *Nature* carried a report that researchers were considering boycotting the prestigious thirteenth International AIDS Conference, to be held in Durban in July of 2000, if the government did not relent.⁶⁶

In the Western Cape, provincial health authorities decided not to follow national policy. In January of 1999, they went ahead with pilot projects to provide AZT and free formula at two clinics in Cape Town communities with substantial HIV infection levels. Politically this was easier in the Western Cape, which did not have an ANC provincial government, and therefore was more independent of pressure from the center. It did, however, open the Western Cape to accusations that "it was playing games with the lives and hopes of vulnerable people," and of making AIDS "a political football."⁶⁷ The Western Cape

branch of NACOSA disagreed; it felt that the MTCT initiative had at last given some meaning to the much-vaunted idea of a partnership against AIDS.⁶⁸

By 1999, Zuma's position had become untenable. The health minister had stonewalled on AZT, become embroiled in bitter battles with the pharmaceutical industry,⁶⁹ failed to consult or answer to the AIDS constituency, and presided over a series of minor and major public-relations disasters.⁷⁰ She felt increasingly embattled. As the media, the opposition parties, and the leadership of many ASOs were predominantly white, it was perhaps inevitable that Zuma would respond to their criticism by accusing them of racism, a tactic journalist Mark Gevisser terms "ill-advised," provoking "anger and derision" from blacks themselves.⁷¹

After the 1999 election, Zuma was named minister of foreign affairs—and the AIDS community heaved a sigh of relief. Her replacement, Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, appeared more approachable, arranging early on, for instance, to meet with NACOSA, with doctors involved in MTCT prevention, and with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. Within weeks of Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang's appointment, she organized a trip to Uganda to review their nevirapine project and to investigate how the country, much poorer than South Africa, had managed to bring their AIDS epidemic under control. At a news conference on her return she declared: "We came back as a South African delegation absolutely inspired, absolutely motivated. If Uganda can do it, so can South Africa. We have fought many battles. We can't be defeated by a virus."⁷² In a country where state AIDS campaigns had been stodgy and pedestrian, lacking in vision and bold enthusiastic leadership, Tshabalala-Msimang's approach was refreshing. There were hopes that confrontational stalemates would end and partnerships become possible.

In her first press interview in June of 1999, Tshabalala-Msimang had already said that finding ways to ensure a sustainable AZT program for MTCT prevention was being examined. "We will have to put our heads together to find all these answers and I will consult widely."⁷³ Then, in his address to the National Council of Provinces, Thabo Mbeki, now president,

ushered in a new phase in the AZT debate, saying that, as there was a large scientific literature on the toxicity of AZT, he felt it would be irresponsible not to heed these warnings. He asked the minister of health, as a matter of urgency, to establish "where the truth lies." He also urged council members to consult "the huge volume of literature on this matter available on the Internet so that all of us can approach this issue from the same base of information."⁷⁴

Mbeki's caution following the Virodene debacle was understandable, but the evidence on the Internet would surely simply have reinforced the urgent need to make AZT available. It was endorsed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, and the Medicines Control Council of South Africa, and was on the essential drugs list of the WHO. Despite this, Tshabalala-Msimang herself was later quoted as saying AZT weakened the immune system and posed the danger that "mutations" might lead to mothers producing children with disabilities.⁷⁵

AIDS activists were irate, saying the attitudes were unconstitutional, misinformed, economically unsound, and "morally bankrupt." Dr. Hoosen M. Coovadia of the University of Natal, who was to chair the AIDS 2000 Conference in Durban, called the government's response "quixotic," noting that they "stand on their own, in conflict with every informed opinion, including my own, in South Africa." These were "amazing statements with no basis in fact." He was unsure of the source of their information, but suggested they may be the result of "bad advisors or a preoccupation with the pharmaceutical industry's impact on South Africa."⁷⁶

Hopes that there would be some attempt at "damage control" over the president's statement were dashed by a series of subsequent events leading up to the AIDS 2000 Conference in July. In the face of rapidly rising infection rates, and the disarray among the forces that should have been collaborating to turn the tide, AIDS organizations had repeatedly called for a multisectoral national AIDS commission, along the lines of that operating in Uganda, to address the problem. There were hopes that a new South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) might fulfill this role. However, when Deputy President Jacob

Zuma launched SANAC on January 14, 2000, public reactions ranged from indifference to despair. Instead of the envisaged council of experts, SANAC appeared to duplicate the existing Interministerial Committee and the “sector” representatives of the partnership initiative. Of the fifteen cabinet ministers and government representatives, many lacked any real interest in the AIDS issue, as their performance on the Interministerial Committee, established in 1997, had demonstrated.

The sixteen sector representatives were an odd assortment. The six-hundred-plus NGOs and ASOs that dealt with AIDS had one representative, an American unaffiliated to any of the major NGO umbrella bodies. High-profile organizations like the AIDS Law Project and the Treatment Action Campaign were not represented. There were three members representing sport, the hospitality industry, and “celebrities,” and there were two traditional healers—but no scientists, no medical practitioners, and no representatives from either the Medical Research Council or the Medicines Control Council. For those who had hoped for a strategic think tank, a muscular body that could actually take control and drive the program forward, the council was a bitter disappointment. Given the desperate situation—the government estimated there were 1,700 new HIV infections a day in the country—what was needed was not another “sectorally representative” talk shop.

The dust had barely settled on this fracas when it became clear that Mbeki’s skepticism about AZT extended to a wider mistrust of the whole “science of AIDS.” Apparently, while trawling the Internet he had come up with pages like *virusmyth.com*, where a small network of AIDS dissidents publish alternative—and discredited—theories of the epidemic. Among these theories is the belief that HIV—if it exists—is a harmless “passenger” virus, that AIDS is a “lifestyle” disease, where, for instance, recreational drugs, or even AZT, cause the breakdown of the immune system, and that the increased morbidity and mortality of the disease in Africa result from poverty, which aggravates old disease patterns.

Mbeki’s inquiry into these alternative theories, and their protagonists—like Peter Duesberg, David Rasnick, and Charles

Gesheker—led him to set up the "Presidential International Panel of Scientists on HIV/AIDS in Africa." In a pamphlet explaining its purpose, the Ministry of Health said that the panel would explore "all aspects of the challenge of developing prevention and treatment strategies that are appropriate to the African reality." The ministry noted that the inclusion of dissidents, who believed that AIDS was "due to lifestyle factors such as poverty and malnutrition" rather than HIV, had "caused uproar among the scientific and medical fraternity." But since orthodox treatments had met with little success against AIDS in Africa, "blind acceptance of conventional wisdom would be irresponsible."⁷⁷

The thirty-three-member panel consisted of both dissident and mainstream scientists, including some of the best-known on each side. At their first meeting in May, just two months ahead of the AIDS 2000 Conference in Durban, Mbeki appeared to hope that the scientists could reach some kind of compromise position. But science, unlike politics, is based on a method that tests hypotheses and ruthlessly discards what does not fit the facts; its aim is not consensus. One panelist commented: "The absurdity of this panel is without question. . . . The president wants to know that we came to an agreement."⁷⁸

Then on April 3, 2000, Mbeki took the unusual step of sending hand-addressed letters to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair, U.S. President Bill Clinton, and other world leaders, setting out his position on the epidemic.

The letter was an impassioned plea to revisit the African AIDS epidemic. Its tone so stunned the Clinton administration, apparently, that they checked to see if it was perhaps a hoax, and attempted to suppress it lest it spark international controversy, according to the *Washington Post*, which published a leaked copy of the letter.⁷⁹

In the media flurry that followed, the content of the letter was often distorted to suggest, for instance, that Mbeki had said outright that HIV did not cause AIDS. Were that the case, much of Mbeki's letter would not make sense, since the government prevention and vaccine programs that he outlines depend on AIDS being a sexually transmittable disease with a viral etiology.

In the letter, he compared AIDS in the West—a declining epidemic, “largely homosexually transmitted,” where relatively few people have died—with AIDS in “Africa.” A rapidly growing, heterosexually transmitted epidemic, it seemed destined to kill tens of millions of people—a “uniquely African catastrophe.” Given the differences, “a simple superimposition of Western experience on African reality would be absurd and illogical.” South Africa’s task, argued Mbeki, was “to search for specific and targeted responses to the specifically African incidence of HIV/AIDS.” To exclude dissident opinions from this search would be to “freeze scientific discourse on HIV/AIDS at the specific point this discourse had reached in 1984.”

In reality, of course, it was the dissidents who were frozen in the 1980s. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of Mbeki’s letter was his intemperate defense of this embattled minority, portrayed as fighting to have their voices heard against a world guilty of terrorizing and intimidating them, much as the “racist apartheid tyranny” once did in South Africa.

Mbeki’s letter provoked strong reactions locally and internationally, ranging from shock and outrage to derision. When the president visited the United States in May of 2000, some feared that the AIDS issue could swamp the wider agenda. The *New York Times* wrote that critics were in something of a quandary. “Most seem to have decided that the best offense is to give no offense, an approach they say is being counseled by the Clinton administration.” There were fears that Mbeki would become stubborn if he were pressured.⁸⁰

During the visit, Mbeki avoided controversy. He set out the government’s conventional AIDS strategies and pointed to the real problems, financial and infrastructural, that providing antiretroviral therapy would create. He flatly denied that he had ever said AZT was ineffective—“pure invention”⁸¹—or that HIV did not cause AIDS, but did say that the African epidemic presented particular and unique problems. Clinton appeared to have sympathy with Mbeki’s problem, especially regarding the unaffordability of drugs: “We’ve got to get them to him. He’s got to be able to afford them.”⁸² Jane Silver of the American Foundation for AIDS Research in Washington com-

mented: "Finally the world is focusing on AIDS in Africa. Part of the challenge is making sure it is not sidetracked."⁸³

The world was indeed focusing on AIDS in Africa. The AIDS 2000 Conference, the thirteenth in the international conference series, was to be held for the first time on African soil—the epicenter of the pandemic—with Durban itself in a province where 33 percent of women in the 1999 antenatal survey had tested HIV-positive. But the controversy kicked up by Mbeki had turned AIDS in Africa into a front-page story.

Back home, scientists, embarrassed and concerned by Mbeki's stance in light of the upcoming conference, had tried to cool things down. A few supported him. Professor Dan Ncayiyana, editor of the *South African Medical Journal*, wrote that the HIV/AIDS link "side show" had obscured Mbeki's main argument about the unique nature of the African epidemic. Ncayiyana suggested South Africans had not yet attained sufficient maturity to debate deeply divisive national issues without the need to attribute malice, dark conspiracy, insanity, or imbecility to the opposing side.⁸⁴

Increasingly, though, there were calls for Mbeki to leave science to the scientists. William Malegapuru Makgoba, president of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, wrote of the "lengthening list of politically driven decisions regarding the South African AIDS crisis," and warned that South Africa was "rapidly becoming a fertile ground for the types of pseudoscience embraced by politicians."⁸⁵ Professor Hoosen Coovadia, chairperson of the AIDS 2000 Conference, and two colleagues made a similar plea for Mbeki to keep clear of the scientific debates,⁸⁶ and were met with a swinging attack from three cabinet ministers—Tshabalala-Msimang (health), Ben Ngubane (arts, culture, science and technology), and Essop Pahad (minister in the president's office). South Africa, they said, "lies very much at the periphery of the global knowledge system." In their efforts to retain acceptability with their global peers, Coovadia and his co-authors, products of a "small town mentality" and "journeymen rather than geniuses," portray the issue as "false Africanism versus scientific globalism." In the process they "reveal themselves as village boys returned from

the big city, desperately afraid of looking like the people who surround them.” Coovadia and his colleagues would never be satisfied with “anything short of provision of antiretrovirals in the public health system.” The ministers concluded: “Here we draw a clear line between informed and responsible recommendations on therapeutic interventions by scientists and standing out as the frontline troops of the pharmaceutical industry.”⁸⁷

It was clear that once again the old bogey of the pharmaceutical industry was clouding the debate. Since Zuma’s time, relations between the government and the industry had been strained.⁸⁸ Activists advocating access to drugs, and their international supporters, were sometimes dismissed as being part of an industry conspiracy. Even efforts to reduce the costs of AIDS drugs to Africa have been greeted with suspicion and distrust.⁸⁹ The words of Parks Mankahlana, head of communications in the president’s office, convey something of the government’s attitude:

The tragedy is that HIV/AIDS is not going to succumb to the machinations of the profiteering pharmaceutical companies and their propagandists. Like the marauders of the military industrial complex who propagated fear to increase their profits, the profit-takers who are benefiting from the scourge of HIV/AIDS will disappear to the affluent beaches of the world to enjoy wealth accumulated from a humankind ravaged by a dreaded disease.⁹⁰

Just days later, in response to a letter—from a high court judge, the chairman of the AIDS 2000 Conference, the Anglican Archbishop, and the head of the Methodist Church—appealing to the president to provide AZT for pregnant women, Mbeki, too, appeared to suggest a conspiracy. “I am taken aback,” he wrote, “by the determination of many people in our country to sacrifice all intellectual integrity to act as salespersons of the product of one pharmaceutical company.”⁹¹ The notion of a pharmaceutical industry conspiracy is shared by some in the dissident movement, who believe mainstream scientists are, “largely unwittingly,” part of a vast scheme to sell anti-AIDS drugs.⁹²

The scientific panel met for the last time on July 3 and 4, 2000, having supposedly thrashed out their differences in closed

Internet debates and discussions since May. The final meeting was expected to come up with decisions and suggestions based on the panelists' deliberations.

Finding common ground was difficult. Just how difficult is suggested by Mark Schoofs, one of the few journalists invited as an observer. He reports that David Rasnick, a dissident with whom Mbeki had been in close contact, proposed that all HIV testing be banned. Stunned South African scientists asked whether that should include testing the blood supply. Rasnick responded: "If I had the power to outlaw the HIV antibody test, I would do it across the board."⁹³ Rasnick also denied seeing "any evidence" of an AIDS catastrophe, despite testimony of African physicians to the contrary. While the Ministry of Health publicly applauded the "robust" debate, in private, Schoofs says, health department officials "veered between amazement and ridicule" at the outlandish positions taken by dissidents.⁹⁴ In the end the panel was a face-saving exercise; its main substantive outcome was a decision to reassess the accuracy of the ELISA test, used internationally to check blood for HIV antibodies. Dr. Helene Gayle, one of the panelists and head of the AIDS Center at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, told journalists that the decision had been taken because people in South Africa were concerned about the accuracy and validity of the test.⁹⁵ AIDS workers were predictably furious, not only at the waste of money and resources, but at the message it sent. What point was there in urging people to go for counseling and testing if the panel was suggesting the tests were not accurate? Those who had tested positive might now believe their results were false.

Controversy around the panel was overshadowed, however, by the publication in *Nature* of the so-called Durban Declaration. The journal noted that the declaration was a response to the "massive consternation among all scientists, doctors and many others in the international community" who work in the AIDS field. In an effort to set the record straight on the causal link between HIV and AIDS, five thousand scientists, including local members of the president's panel, Nobel Prize winners, and directors of leading research institutions and medical societies, signed the document: "Curbing the spread of this virus

must remain the first step towards eliminating this devastating disease.”⁹⁶ Dr. James McIntyre, one of the signatories, said that while the declaration was a clear statement of the views of the scientists, it was “not intended to be combative but to move the debate along.”⁹⁷

That was not the way it was seen in government corridors. Rumors of government threats to withhold research funding unless South Africans removed their names from the list were symptomatic of the worsening situation.⁹⁸ Tshabalala-Msimang said the declaration was “an elitist document” signed exclusively by health scientists—“You can’t have a certain exclusive group of people saying this is what we believe about HIV and AIDS.”⁹⁹ Coovadia responded: “Science is elitist.”¹⁰⁰ (One of the underlying tensions in the whole debate, indeed, revolves around the government’s apparent belief that it is possible to have “science by consensus.”) It remained only for Parks Mankahlana to say: “We have never seen this kind of intolerance and we don’t want people bringing intolerance to South Africa.”¹⁰¹ He warned: “If the drafters of the declaration expect to give it to the President or the government, it will find its comfortable place among the dustbins of the office.”¹⁰²

With the world’s media now focused on Durban, President Mbeki delivered the opening address to the AIDS 2000 Conference. Those who had hoped he would distance himself from the dissidents were disappointed. Instead of clarifying his position, he sidestepped the issue by concentrating on the role of poverty in ill health and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa.¹⁰³ A substantial portion of his speech repeated findings of a 1995 WHO report, which argued that the world’s biggest killer was “extreme poverty.” Mbeki referred in passing to criticism leveled against him for asking questions—“akin to grave criminal and genocidal misconduct”—but did not directly address the controversy, except to say that the ELISA test was to be reassessed.

He did, though, after listing the enormous health problems of Africa, say: “One of the consequences of this crisis is the deeply disturbing phenomenon of the collapse of the immune systems among millions of our people, such that their bodies have no natural defense against attack by many viruses and bac-

teria. . . . [I]t seemed to me that we could not blame everything on a single virus."

This is open to different interpretations. If Mbeki is saying that poverty, ill health, and malnutrition make people vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, his position is unexceptionable.¹⁰⁴ But he could also be heard as echoing the dissident position of, for instance, Charles Gesheker, who teaches African history at California State University in Chico, who believes Africans are dying of "the indigenous diseases of impoverished lands" that have been "dressed up as HIV/AIDS," and reclassified.¹⁰⁵ Of course, it is true that people are dying of "old diseases," but that is the nature of the epidemic, which destroys the immune system and makes the infected vulnerable to whatever diseases exist in their environment. While the dissidents may refuse to see a "new" epidemic, the people in affected countries often noticed the new pattern even before Western epidemiologists. For instance, in East Africa, the disease they called "slim" because it emaciated its victims, while resembling the wasting diseases of old, struck far more people, especially young adults, and far more rapidly led to death. The overflowing hospital beds confirmed their views.

Those gathered in Durban were deeply disappointed by Mbeki's speech. Their frustration partly explains the rousing reception given to the South African High Court judge Edwin Cameron when he addressed a plenary session of the conference.¹⁰⁶ Openly gay, HIV-positive, and a longtime AIDS activist, Cameron, after praising the new regime as "a shining example to Africa and the world" in its commitment to human rights and democracy, went on to say that it had "at almost every turn mismanaged the epidemic." Its "grievous ineptitude" had left South Africa with one of the fastest-growing AIDS epidemics in the world. There had been "task groups, workshops, committees, councils, policies, drafts, proposals, statements and pledges. But all have thus far signified piteously little." Even more puzzling was President Mbeki's "flirtation with those who in the face of all reason and evidence have sought to dispute the etiology of AIDS. This has shaken almost everyone responsible for engaging the epidemic. It has created an air of unbelief amongst scientists, confusion among those at risk of HIV, and

consternation amongst AIDS workers.” Cameron quoted Mamphela Ramphele, ex-vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, who had said that giving official sanction to skepticism about the cause of AIDS was “irresponsibility that borders on criminality.”

The rousing applause suggested that Cameron spoke for many in the audience. Coovadia commented afterwards: “I am deeply concerned about the uniformity of the criticisms that have come from this conference and the expressions of solidarity with Cameron. There is strong disapproval of government.” He warned that the gap between government and its critics could not be bridged, and was in fact widening.¹⁰⁷

In his closing address, former president Nelson Mandela urged people to make every effort to bridge that gap. “In the face of the grave threat posed by HIV/AIDS, we have to rise above our differences and combine our efforts to save our people. History will judge us harshly if we fail to do so, and right now.” While he talked of Mbeki as a man who took scientific thinking seriously, and of a government committed to the principles of science and reason, he deplored the way peripheral debates had distracted attention from the real life-and-death issues with which AIDS confronts the world. Experience in countries like Senegal, Uganda, and Thailand proved that HIV/AIDS could be prevented by providing young people with information about abstinence, safe sex, the use of condoms, and the early treatment of sexually transmitted infections. It was a plainspoken, no-frills statement of the facts. Apart from calling for large-scale actions to prevent MTCT, his strategy was not much different from that outlined by Mbeki. But his plea to move from rhetoric to “action at an unprecedented intensity and scale,” and his call to mobilize “all of our resources and alliances, and to sustain the effort until this war is won,” touched a chord. The audience stood to applaud his address.¹⁰⁸

For those who had hoped that Mandela’s speech would mark a turning point and that we would finally see “A South Africa United Against AIDS,” the months since the conference have been disappointing and frustrating. Mbeki failed to say unequivocally that HIV causes AIDS, and he increasingly came

under attack for retreating into semantics, conspiracy theories, and bad science.¹⁰⁹

In the face of mounting criticism, his own constituency finally stepped in. COSATU, the SACP, and even some elements in the ANC have publicly asserted that HIV does indeed cause AIDS.¹¹⁰ In the words of COSATU president Willie Madisha: "The link between HIV and AIDS is irrefutable, and any other approach is unscientific and, unfortunately, likely to confuse people."¹¹¹

As it became clearer that Mbeki's position was not only widening divisions between the ANC and its alliance partners but also damaging him personally, both at home and abroad, he at last backed down. In October of 2000, he informed the ANC's national executive committee that he was withdrawing from "the public debate" on the science of HIV and AIDS.¹¹²

While Mbeki's withdrawal represents a tactical retreat, rather than a recantation, it should serve to put South Africa's AIDS program back on track. Hopefully, it will also close an unhappy chapter, in which AIDS has exposed the fragility and fault lines of the new democracy and threatened Mbeki's vision of the country as the lodestar of an African Renaissance.

ENDNOTES

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Education and Democracy in South Africa Today

INTRODUCTION

IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA, schooling first became a government function in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the rise of the nation-state. But it was only in the decades after World War II that governments throughout the world became sensitive to the need for nondiscriminatory and multicultural forms of schooling.

Until recently, South Africa did not fully participate in these developments. Under apartheid, public education was a privilege that whites alone fully enjoyed. Only since 1994 has the nation faced the challenge of establishing a nondiscriminatory and nonracial network of public schools.

This delayed embrace of democratic norms has had one positive benefit: it has allowed South Africa to learn from the mistakes as well as the successes of other countries. But at the same time, the experience of apartheid has left the country with an enormous task: to meet fully these new educational challenges.

The legacy of apartheid is well known.¹ Racial classification was used to structure unequal access to educational provision by a government representing a white minority. Under apart-

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heid, the ideology of Christian nationalism found added expression in a segregated schooling system that had the effect of maintaining an established class and racial hierarchy.

The democratic government of 1994 inherited an unevenly educated population. White students, though formally well trained in disciplinary terms at some schools, only escaped an ethos of racial intolerance with effort. Black Africans had to overcome the burden of Bantu Education, which deliberately neglected education in science and mathematics and rested on a racist anthropology designed to generate cheap labor for what remained a colonially organized economy.² Colored and Indian students were also treated as presumptively subordinate minorities. Though apartheid has been dismantled, its effects are still evident in a population that is desperately undereducated and, in many respects, *miseducated*.

The democratic approach to education initiated in 1994 is grounded in the Constitution and its principles of nonracism, nonsexism, and equality of access. In applying these principles, we face three dilemmas: first, as the government seeks to distribute resources fairly, it finds growing inequality to be a barrier. Second, the South African population is ill-equipped in science, mathematics, and technology, and therefore poorly prepared to meet the challenges of globalization. Third, the sustainability of quality schools depends in large measure on the sustainability of a democratic ethos in civic life and, therefore, thriving partnerships between the core institutions of civil society. Many sectors of our society are bereft of a democratic culture and simply lack the core institutions of civil society. The question, therefore, is how are the educational institutions of South Africa to conduct themselves in order to respond to the challenges of growing inequality, globalization, and a fragile democratic ethos?

STATE AND SCHOOLING

One of the features of the South African transition is the absence of a radical rupture with the past. It was a negotiated change, not a revolution in the classical sense.³ One consequence of a negotiated change is that reforms must proceed

with inherited assets and liabilities. The deracialization of schooling had to be evolutionary, and every positive step toward this end required an act of political will.

The educational initiatives of the democratic government, legitimated by a Constitution adopted in 1996, initially had to depend on bureaucracies that were still segregated, unequal, and inefficient. One of the first tasks of the government was to transform these bureaucracies into rational institutions, subject to fiscal discipline and professional norms of performance. A new system of governance, introduced in 1995, made a single nonracial national department responsible both for higher education and (in a co-governance arrangement with the nine new provinces) also for primary and secondary schooling. While considerable progress has been made, there is still more that needs to be done.

The democratic purpose of the new state's educational mission derives from the Constitution of 1996. Section 29 of the Constitution is the foundation of education policy, establishing the fundamental right to an education. Subsection 1 reads: "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible." The fundamental right to a basic education belongs to all persons, children and adults, and it is a peremptory right—it is not qualified (as is the right to further education) by language about reasonable measures and progressive availability.

The gap between constitutional mandate and social reality is, not surprisingly, still wide. In order to fulfill its educational mission, the new democratic government must uproot and reform a system that, over decades, skewed education in favor of whites and to the disadvantage of blacks. The legacy of apartheid is perhaps best illustrated by the formal education figures for 1995, a year after the democratic government took over. At that time, 19 percent of the population had no formal education at all.⁴ Within this group, black Africans accounted for a staggering 92 percent of the uneducated. Most of these uneducated black Africans were in the rural and poorer provinces of the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and the North West and Northern

provinces. The majority of the formally uneducated—61 percent—were women. Figures for the following year indicate that 24 percent of the population had some primary schooling, 34 percent some secondary schooling, and 12 percent had reached grade 12, the finishing year of high school. Only 6 percent of South Africans had some form of post-high-school qualification.⁵ Not surprisingly, these figures follow a racial pattern.

International experience suggests that to alter these patterns will take some time. Since 1994, South Africa has committed the largest single segment of its national budget to education. By 1999–2000 the budget appropriation for education was R 48.5 billion (or U.S. \$7.02 billion), constituting 22 percent of the national budget and 7 percent of the gross domestic product. In a study of returns to educational spending undertaken by Nancy Birdsall and Lesley O’Connell, South Africa nevertheless compares unfavorably with countries such as Brazil. This suggests that the country’s outcomes are low relative to its investments.⁶ Poor retention, high rates of failure, and insufficient attention to the teaching of technology, science, and mathematics are among the reasons for the low returns.

In the cooperative governance arrangement stipulated by the Constitution, South Africa’s nine provinces are responsible for primary and secondary schooling; they therefore receive and spend the largest portion of the national education budget. Most of the funding—89 percent in 1999–2000 on average—goes to teachers as salaries, leaving 11 percent to be devoted to the acquisition of books, educational materials, programs, technology, infrastructure, and operations. Though it is by no means the only reason—poor planning and misspending being others—such a high level of spending on salaries leaves many schools with insufficient resources for maintaining infrastructure and launching new capital projects. Historically wealthier schools, having an infrastructure of volunteers, local philanthropists, and fixed assets, are in a much better position than those that have no such advantage; the vast majority of historically disadvantaged schools tend to be black. Furthermore, schools are permitted to charge fees, and those in wealthier neighborhoods can successfully ask for enough resources to attract the better teachers and finance a superior infrastructure.

The Department of Education has set an ultimate target of 80 percent of total revenue to be spent on teacher salaries—a decrease of nearly 10 percent from the 1999–2000 average. Some of the provincial departments are moving toward this target, but others are not yet able to. There are serious problems with the provision of support materials, such as school stationary, and with capital projects, including school maintenance.⁷ The capacity to invest more resources in these areas is critical to improvement in the learning environment, and the Department of Education is committed to holding provinces to the new target. The better use of existing levels of resource allocation is the only manner in which improvements in education can be brought about.

While the democratic government has equalized spending for all learners on a nondiscriminatory basis, it has not been able in the short run to redistribute the unequal assets built up under apartheid. National Norms and Standards for School Funding, a policy instituted in October of 1998, tried to address the problems of public funding for schools. It created new exemptions for parents unable to pay school fees and provided state subsidies to some private schools. In essence, the norms “required wealthier schools to contribute more financially to the running costs of schools than schools in poorer communities.”⁸ State subsidies to private schools were made conditional on a range of criteria, including enrollment, fees, and number of students graduated. The norms established for the first time a rational basis for allocating scarce resources.

Education was made universal and compulsory in 1994. Since then, enrollment has soared.⁹ In 1997, out of a total South African population of 38 million, over 12 million learners were enrolled in public schools and 236,213 in private ones. The October Household Survey of 1999 notes that in their sample of 30,000 households nationwide, 95.4 percent of learners who should be in school were indeed in school.¹⁰ Since 1994, 2,500 schools have been renovated and 1,000 new ones built.¹¹ As a result, the survey found, more people believed they had much better access to basic education than ever before. That belief is important, since it enhances the public’s trust in government-run institutions. Graduation rates for 2000 are promising; 7 per-

cent more students graduated from high school in 2000 than in 1999.

In 1998, the new government introduced a new program, Curriculum 2005, based on “outcome based education” (OBE). This curriculum transformed the training of teachers and improved the content of classes. In order to succeed, the new curriculum needed a major investment in the training of teachers and the production of textbooks and other learning materials. Many poorer schools lacked either the resources or the will to make the necessary investments. Educational publishers produced new OBE-based textbooks, but poor planning resulted in their late delivery in 1999. In any event, there was no certainty that books would reach students in the remoter parts of the country. Recently, the government streamlined Curriculum 2005 by specifying curriculum content and substance more precisely in order to make reform more practical. The textbook difficulties of 1999 were not repeated in 2000, and should not be allowed to happen again.

The key variable in quality education is the ability and commitment of the teachers. It is an indictment of South Africa’s past that 36 percent of all teachers and 40 percent of women teachers fail to meet the basic requirement of a three-year tertiary-level qualification.¹² Underqualified teachers are concentrated in precisely those regions that, given their educational performance, can least afford to have them. In wealthier provinces, such as Gauteng and the Western Cape, 13 percent of teachers are underqualified, while in the poorer provinces, such as the Eastern Cape and the North West, for example, the percentage of underqualified teachers jumps to 31 and 35 percent, respectively. The province of KwaZulu-Natal, an intermediate province in terms of economic indices, has the second highest level—34 percent—of underqualified teachers.¹³ Student-teacher ratios vary similarly between richer and poorer provinces. We therefore agree with Debbie Budlender’s conclusion that deficiencies in the quality and distribution of teachers are “severe.”¹⁴

In-service training opportunities for teachers have dramatically expanded since 1994 as a result of tertiary-level and nongovernmental interventions. However, the poor educational

foundation of many teachers already in employment has limited the possibilities for improving the quality of instruction in science, mathematics, and technology. Pre-service training is also restrained by the low level of high-school achievement in mathematics and science, especially among black African learners. An inappropriate balance between humanities and science training continues today. In another indication of the depths of the problem, a specialized "education in science" degree at one South African university has not attracted the number of applicants hoped for. However, R 2 billion has been requested from the treasury to improve mathematics and science teaching in schools.

Considerable effort has gone into the reform of teacher training and educator development. Teachers' colleges are being incorporated into universities. By 2001, about twenty-five universities and technical universities will offer teachers' education programs at a degree level (as opposed to the hundred and fifty higher-education institutions that offered this program previously). The Employment of Educators Act of 1998 defined norms and standards for the "ideal teacher" as a basis for employment and assessment of performance. This, together with the South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995 and the National Education Policy Act of 1998, defines the content of the curriculum for the training of new teachers and educators. R 120 million has been set aside for upgrading the National Professional Diploma in Education, a two-year qualification. R 70 million has been set aside for the retraining of teachers (either in or out of service) who are not formally trained for the discipline in which teaching competence is required.¹⁵

Universities and technical colleges will be trying to attract students in a context of great economic uncertainty. In recent years, the salaries of civil servants, including teachers, have barely kept up with inflation and cost-of-living indices. The government nevertheless anticipates that the demand for new teachers over the medium term will increase, partly as a result of the high AIDS-related mortality rate among teachers. Despite the grim circumstances, a recent *Independent Survey of Teacher Motivation* indicates a heartening rise in the morale of teachers in current employment,¹⁶ which can only improve

more once salaries go up, the result of new teacher-training initiatives become evident, and employment opportunities improve.

Changes in the quality of the educational system at the same time produce changes in what the public expects from the system. Public-opinion surveys consistently show a strong interest among parents, black and white, seeking a good education for their children.¹⁷ Despite high unemployment and also a high rate of underemployment, South African adults still regard education as an invaluable asset. Their faith is well-founded: a recent report by the Council for Higher Education shows that the greater a group's level of education, the lower their level of unemployment and the higher their income. There is no doubt that it pays to acquire a decent education.

To get it is, nevertheless, a struggle for the poor. It is important, therefore, to get a perspective on the magnitude of the challenge by starting with a narrative of schooling in rural South Africa, a world of hidden misery and poverty.¹⁸ Apartheid had a devastating effect on the farm schools attended by black students. Hendrik Verwoerd, then minister of education, devised policies that were meant to stabilize the labor force—not educate children. His interest was in social control. He wanted to dam up the black population in rural areas and to keep young black people from migrating to the cities. These policies produced farm schools that were poorly funded and organized, serving a segment of the population that already suffered from social conflict, poor labor relations, high impoverishment, and endemic violence.¹⁹

At the poverty hearings conducted in 1998, one parent poignantly expressed a consequence of this legacy: his school-age children, he explained, must “travel something like seven kilometers—about four hours a day” in order to get to school.²⁰ “They walk on their feet to and fro . . . [my daughter] is always tired. Because we are not equal, some parents are able to give their children money for buses, but others cannot.” We should add that when these children arrive at school, it is likely that they will enter a building that is in poor repair. They will probably not have access to clean water to quench their thirst. They will probably find it hard to concentrate on account of

poor nutrition. They will have little protection from the weather. The teacher may be struggling to teach children of different grades in one class without proper learning materials.

The School Register of Needs conducted by the Department of Education in 1996 found that farm schools were the most poorly endowed of all schools in the country.²¹ There are about 4,600 farm schools in the country, catering to some 600,000 learners. About one in five schools in South Africa is a farm school. The South African Schools Act of 1996 defined all farm schools as public schools, which made them subject to the financing and governance provisions that apply to other public schools. But before these provisions could take effect, the provincial ministers of education had to conclude agreements with the owners of the farms on which the schools were located. According to the 1996 legislation, these agreements were to have been concluded six months after the act was passed. In practice, this proved impossible, leaving some farm schools in a legal limbo, without the protection of the parties involved, although rapid progress in this regard is being made with the cooperation of farming associations.

In the cities, the persistence of the old class structure, combined with the introduction of user fees, graded though they are toward redistribution, have enabled wealthier neighborhoods and schools to pay teachers more than what the government pays and to reduce student-teacher ratios. Access to quality education depends on access to financial resources—and these remain unequally distributed. The black middle class naturally wish to send their children to the best public and sometimes private schools. As Nicoli Nattrass and Jeremy Seekings point out, the African middle class has grown significantly over the last ten years, commanding a greater share of the national income.²² With greater levels of disposable income, they can increasingly afford to pay the fees commanded by the wealthier private and public schools.

While the urban poor remain trapped in poverty, the October Household Survey of 1999 reports a modest improvement in the average living standards of urban dwellers. Unemployment is down from the 25.2 percent registered in 1998. More households have access to electricity (69.7 percent in 1999 compared

to 62.2 percent in 1996) and to running water (65.9 percent and 62.2 percent in 1999 and 1996, respectively). But literacy among those over twenty showed only marginal improvement, probably as a result of the consistently low enrollment figures in adult learning classes (in 1996 only two million adults out of a potential pool of thirteen million were registered in such classes).²³

THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

South Africa has a higher-education system consisting of thirty-six universities and technical universities (“technikons” in the South African lexicon). These serve a domestic population of some thirty-eight million people. Some universities have attracted students from other African countries as well. All of these institutions have been affected to varying degrees by colonialism and apartheid. There are considerable strengths at some individual institutions and in some individual departments. For example, South Africans with medical, engineering, and information technology degrees from some universities are in high demand globally. It is not a system without virtue.

There are nevertheless many problems with higher education generally. As Charles Simkins has noted, levels of enrollments and rates of graduation remain low: “since the 1950s, the ratio of degrees conferred by universities to university enrollments has fluctuated between 10 and 15 percent,” a comparatively low figure, according to the World Bank study.²⁴ Students are therefore spending more time than necessary on their studies, clogging up institutions and wasting scarce resources. In part, their difficulties reflect the inadequacy of prior training, a matter upon which we have already remarked.

Another problem is the curriculum itself, which does not adequately prepare students to meet the challenges of globalization. It is clear that unless South Africans are trained to use effectively modern instruments of communication, and to master what Anthony Giddens calls the constant reconfiguration of “time and space,” they face exclusion from an economic world that increasingly relies on the rapid communication of knowledge and information as its *raison d’être*.²⁵

We assume that a reformed curriculum must place a greater stress on mathematics, science, and technology, and that tertiary institutions are the best places to teach these subjects to young students and adult learners. This is a logical assumption, but we must guard against a mechanistic and narrow form of education, geared only toward market requirements. We would argue that students ought to receive a well-rounded education in the humanities as well as the sciences. The effective citizen is someone who knows his or her country's history, arts, and literature, and not just mathematics, science, and technology. It is a question of finding the right balance.

The evidence suggests that South African tertiary institutions are still struggling to achieve this balance. "The proportion of degrees," Charles Simkins writes, "awarded in the mathematical, natural, and engineering sciences has dropped from close to 25 percent in the mid-1960s to little over 15 percent in the 1990s."²⁶ While the enrollment of black and especially African students has risen since the 1980s, most of them have been majoring in the humanities and arts. A Council on Higher Education report, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape*, notes that "disappointingly few African learners are achieving the Senior Certificate higher grade in Mathematics and Science . . . limiting enrollments in these degrees."²⁷

A third problem is the decline in overall enrollments in higher education. South African tertiary institutions have more capacity than they currently use, which is wasteful. This is partly a consequence of the poor performance of the country's high schools and the escalating costs of higher education. The Council on Higher Education recently made a number of recommendations on how to remedy the situation.²⁸ They suggest diversifying institutions of higher learning; amalgamating multiple institutions into single entities; improving the assessment of learning, teaching, and research performance; and introducing a four-year undergraduate degree in the arts and sciences.

Universities and technikons are state-funded but nevertheless independent institutions. Their senates make academic decisions, and their councils administer everything else. That is how it should be. However, these institutions must face up to some key questions: How can they help address the central problems

of this society, which are poverty, crime, and disease? How can they help reduce the high rates of adult illiteracy? How can they increase their student populations? How can the government help them train more teachers in science and mathematics?

In the course of 2001, attention will be paid to five areas of critical concern to government:

- A rational remedy for the illogical and misguided planning of universities under apartheid, based as it was on race and not national need. Greater diversity in institutional specialization must be found, and universities are being asked to redefine their missions to find a more logical fit between what it is they can provide and national and regional need.
- Improvement of what are described as “throughput rates” (graduation in the normal period allowed) and the quality of degrees. To improve “throughput rates” requires better student preparedness and an improved fit with the curriculum on offer. To promote quality requires both regular internal and external audits of university performance. There ought to be greater opportunities for the mobility of students from one university to another.
- The building of increased graduate-level (masters and doctoral) capacity in the system. The present level of graduate-level enrollment—18 to 20 percent—must increase. This would benefit the skills shortage in the country as well as the recruitment of quality faculty at universities.
- The building of management, administrative, and leadership capacity, and—especially for black people and women of all races who have attended university and technical college—managerial aspirations. As it is, South Africa has difficulties filling senior managerial positions and faces the prospect of having to find about thirteen new vice-chancellors over the next five years due to the retirement of present incumbents.
- The effective regulation of private institutions of higher learning and foreign universities establishing a presence in South Africa. Competition is good, but appropriate public/private partnerships can produce greater benefits for both sectors

involved in the higher education system than unbridled competitiveness.²⁹

SCHOOL AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Obvious though the point may be, it is worth emphasizing that schools, colleges, and universities are living social institutions, not simply buildings and infrastructure. They are inhabited by those who teach, those who learn, and those who administer the standards of study. These individuals comprise organic communities, large and small. In the era of the modern state, these communities are supported by a government whose function it is to provide administration, resources, and philosophical guidance.

It was not always like that. Not so long ago, educational institutions were not the responsibility of the state. Churches and voluntary associations of various types took responsibility for educating individuals, usually for their own sectarian ends. Formal education as we know it today was long a privilege of aristocrats and well-to-do merchants. Religious authorities taught the children of the rich and powerful. Charity schools were set up for the schooling of the poor. So education mirrored the class divisions of society.

When the South African state was first formed in 1910, it assumed responsibility for a system of education that was racially differentiated. Its first concern was the welfare of whites. Successive governments deliberately used the education system to Anglicize Afrikaners. This process has been well documented by historians, and there is no need to repeat the details here.³⁰ Over time, governments differentiated educational institutions more and more so that, under apartheid, a Byzantine arrangement of government bureaucracies developed, which became the democratic government's inheritance. At the same time, under apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s more and more schools were opened for blacks, as so-called Bantu Education rapidly spread.

The reason for this, according to Jonathan Hyslop, was the increasing urbanization of black people. Schools for black children were an instrument of social control, a means of keeping

kids off the street. The black school became part of a broader network of control agencies, including the pass office and police station. Churches that played a role in black education were carefully monitored and nongovernment agencies narrowly restricted to charity work. Still, we should be careful with generalizations, as Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje showed in a classic study of the rich civil life of Langa, a Cape Town black African township. The black school was part of the state apparatus of repression, and suffered the fate as a consequence of the assault on all civil life in townships in the 1970s and 1980s.³¹ The democratic government inherited the black school not as a place of learning, but as a place of struggle and resistance. This pattern applied less in colored schools, especially in the Western Cape, and even less in Indian schools; but it applied nonetheless.

The same was not true for white schools. The typical English-language white school was left alone to get on with the business of educating the next generation of corporate, university, and professional leaders. These schools were supported by churches and temples, corporations and foundations. High-school graduates found themselves well trained to enter the English-language universities, which prided themselves on their Oxbridge lineage. Their leaders did not think much of Afrikaner nationalism, or Afrikaner-based rule. Some of them resisted state interference in education, particularly the racial restrictions on student enrollment and staff hiring. In the 1980s, English-language universities, including the universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand, and Natal, were roiled by conflict between students and the police.³²

It was a battle between cultural and political elites. The mainly Afrikaner police disliked the English students for their privilege and their disloyalty, which explained the viciousness of the police actions. In turn, the actions of the apartheid state alienated even further the civil infrastructure that stood behind the universities, the feeder high schools, and alumni of institutions of long academic standing. By contrast, Afrikaner institutions were conspicuously silent.

The story of the Afrikaans-language schools begins with the effort to resist Alfred Milner's Anglicization effort, the devel-

opment of the Afrikaans language in the 1920s, and the rise of Christian nationalism in the 1930s.³³ This nascent Afrikaner ethos was more Prussian than Nazi. The points of emphasis were rote learning, obedience, loyalty, narrow cultural advancement, and a deliberate inculcation of misinformation and ethnic prejudices about their black, colored, Indian, and, to a lesser degree, Anglophone white fellow countrymen and women. It was a campaign of “disinformation” about the “other.” It was supported by a civil society infused with the spirit of Calvinist theology, embodied in the powerful Dutch reformed churches.³⁴ But there was more. The many newspapers, corporations, youth associations, and local government agencies affiliated with Afrikaner nationalism formed a complex web around Afrikaans teachers and students.³⁵ The apartheid regime, in short, could boast of a vibrant civil society—but only for Afrikaners. It lacked what a true democracy needs: an open and diverse civil society, loyal to the values of the Constitution, and disloyal to the government if it violates these values.

The conclusion we draw is this: strong schools need a strong—and strongly democratic—civil society. Around every school should be built an infrastructure of churches, voluntary associations, nongovernmental organizations, and the institutions of local governance. Schools are at the heart of a civil society and have therefore little choice but to get involved in community development. There are good examples of efforts of this kind, such as Zerilda Park Primary School, located in a poverty-stricken and crime-ridden area of Cape Town. Zerilda Park won an Impumelelo Innovations Award in 2000 for its community-improvement projects. These provided jobs, increased parental involvement, reduced crime in the neighboring area, and improved the school (in teaching quality, in student-teacher ratios, in availability of resources, and the like).³⁶ With the help and support of the new government, schools such as these provide for a decent social life.

South Africans are engaged in an effort to reconstitute social cohesion under trying and difficult circumstances. Education is a key part of that effort. As Francis Fukuyama recently argued, contemporary societies must elaborate a new mode of social cohesion.³⁷ Old values have lost their anchors because of fam-

ily disintegration, inequality, and the decline of social certainty. In South Africa, large-scale poverty, crime, and disease provide the circumstances for the re-norming of society under democratic conditions. The Right thinks that tougher policing and leaner and meaner government will do the trick. The Left imagines that socialism remains a possibility. Ordinary citizens are left wondering how to remain law-abiding under democratic rules and yet survive.

A recent report titled *Values, Education and Democracy*, which will be the main subject of discussion at a conference in 2001, specified some of the ethical values necessary to rebuild social cohesion in a democratic South Africa: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honor.³⁸ The authors of this report argue that these values are important for the intellectual and emotional development of the individual, and that they are also influential in defining a democratic national character. The report is emphatic about the responsibility of schools in this regard. A democratic society flourishes when citizens are informed by a grasp of their history and current affairs and when they are encouraged to explore ideas to their fullest. The South African schooling system must provide an environment that nurtures informed and thinking citizens.

At the same time, the system must face up to some hard choices. The value of equity requires that priority be given to schools located in the most disadvantaged areas of the country, where the majority of the population lives. There is no other way to invest in the nation's future. The education and training of all of South Africa's people is critical for the country's prosperity in the twenty-first century and therefore it is in everyone's interest to ensure that this occurs.

The value of tolerance would be best promoted by deepening an understanding of the origins, evolution, and achievements of humanity, on the one hand, and through the exploration and celebration of that which is unique in South Africans' cultural heritage on the other. It also requires taking a firm stand against racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination at every school. The report recommends that panels of historians, archaeologists, and human biologists be appointed to make recommendations regarding the strengthening of history teach-

ing and teacher training. Furthermore, it recommends exposure to, and participation in, the visual and performing arts (the latter including dance, theater, and music), literature (written and oral, building on and cultivating a strong storytelling tradition), and the organization of sporting activity. As a first step toward supporting arts activity, the report recommends that an artist-in-residence program be started at schools.

Regarding multilingualism, the report recommends that learners be instructed using their native tongue, or their native tongue and English. A policy of multilingualism is encouraged in which students learn one of the following official languages, in addition to English and Afrikaans: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, or isiZulu. Ideally children should learn the official language of the province in which their school is located. Where more than three languages are designated as official languages, parental choice should prevail.

The report notes the lack of a strong reading and debating culture in the country and in the schools. What ought to be promoted is a thirst for knowledge and a receptiveness to new ideas—the value of openness. Students should learn to ask penetrating questions and be taught to debate ideas. Schools can make a contribution to developing a stronger reading and debating culture if these desirable activities are strongly promoted by teachers.

The shift from apartheid education to education for a democracy requires a move from the value of authoritarian discipline to the value of accountability. In this respect, the report underlines the importance of teaching as a vocation, not just as a job. Through leadership and value-based conduct, a fellowship between educators, learners, administrators, trade unions, and professional associations ought to develop that ensures that quality learning and teaching take place.

The final value is social honor. This is about cultivating a sense of pride in being identified as South Africans. Individuals should become comfortable with both a local identity and a national South African one. The report recommends that the national anthem be taught and sung, the national flag be prominently displayed, and an oath of allegiance be declared. It offers

a text for response and debate. The report also recommends that these be supported by the teaching of a civic history of the democratic South Africa, with a focus on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

None of these reforms by themselves will create a more democratic South Africa. But they are a good place to start—and a good reason to be optimistic about the future.

ENDNOTES

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²In this essay we refer to whites as people of largely European descent, coloreds as people of European, Asian, and African descent, Indians as people of Indian descent, and black Africans as people of west and central African descent. The term “black” is a generic one for all colored, Indian, and black African people and does not necessarily refer to color.

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- ¹⁸See Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) and May, ed., *Poverty and Inequality in South Africa*.
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- ²⁴See Charles Simkins, “Can South Africa Avoid a Malthusian Positive Check?” in this issue of *Dædalus*; Mamphela Ramphele and Henry Rosovsky (co-chairs), *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise/The Task Force on Higher Education and Society* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2000).
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- ²⁹Interview with Nazeema Badsha, Deputy Director General, Department of Education, 4 December 2000.
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Science and Technology in South Africa: Regional Innovation Hub or Passive Consumer?

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND GLOBAL CURRENTS

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IS CHARACTERIZED, above all, by an explosive growth in knowledge, coupled with equally striking developments in technology. This has permitted access to knowledge and information on a scale never before experienced. There are, of course, other characteristics of the twentieth century that are less palatable; for example, the overwhelming role of ideology, which led historian Eric Hobsbawm to label the period 1914–1989 the “Age of Extremes.”

The advent of the twenty-first century finds the nations of the world still grappling to adjust to changes in circumstance and organization. The certainties of the Cold War, and of a bipolar power distribution, have given way, at least for now, to unipolar dominance. At the same time, a growing number of regimes stress the value of “lean government,” flexible production, and an aggressive entrance into the global markets for products, processes, and financial and human capital. A new globalization has taken shape, enabled by the rise of the information and communication technologies (ICTs). A “new economy,” based on the convergence of hitherto separate service sectors, now

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competes with the resource and manufacturing sectors of the “old economy.” Given the new forms of management, organization, and acquisition of wealth, the term “knowledge economy” has gained currency. The ability to marshal appropriate information, to interpret it, and then to put it to work on the factory floor and in the boardroom is no longer simply a desirable goal; it is essential to the success of almost every sector of today’s economy.

The extent to which the base of knowledge has grown may be measured through the growth in the number of scientific publications and patents, the number of individuals employed in research environments, and the amount of money spent worldwide on research and development. Yet, while the influence of technology becomes ever more pervasive, billions continue to exist on the margins of this “knowledge economy,” relying upon subsistence farming to eke out their daily nourishment. The gap between the wealthy North and the generally impoverished South remains and worsens.

The need to create a strong scientific and technological base has not been lost on poorer countries struggling to boost growth in their economies; examples include Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea, and also India, Brazil, and China. Any plan to develop a local technological capability requires a substantial financial investment. To move up the innovation ladder takes time, talent, and cooperation between the public and private sectors to have any prospect of success. Innovation is increasingly seen as the key to future prosperity.

Despite some signs of rapid growth in the scientific and technological sectors of countries in the developing world, the gap between developed and developing nations remains considerable. For example, lists of published scientific papers per capita contain no developing countries in the top fifteen, though countries with very large populations, such as China and India, do achieve ranks within the top fifteen in terms of the absolute numbers of publications. With regard to global expansion in the number of computers and access to the Internet, while there is much evidence of accelerated growth in developing countries, these countries have twenty times fewer computers than those falling in the middle-income bracket.¹

At the vanguard of the knowledge revolution are the ICTs and biotechnology. Computers have played a key role in those molecular sciences that are likely to produce advances in agriculture, food technology, and human and industrial waste treatment. In the arena of fundamental science, the Human Genome Project has completed a preliminary mapping of the DNA sequences of the human body. It is widely recognized, particularly in the scientific community, that the judicious use of genetic modification promises major benefits in the arena of applied science.² But where should developing countries choose to concentrate their scarce resources? Do they invest in fundamental sciences, in hopes of creating a local base of knowledge, or do they instead spend money on importing basic technologies that neither threaten jobs nor harm the environment?

It is against this background that any assessment of the state of science and technology in South Africa must take place. Over the past decade, the newly democratic country has emerged as a fully accepted member of the world community. But membership in this club comes at a price; it requires living up to global standards—especially in the areas of science and technology.

In what follows, we will survey the current state of science and technology in South Africa, with special reference to the role that they should play in shaping the nation's future. We will look first at a number of historical issues. Since education is a field central to any assessment of a country's prospects for scientific and technological development, we will explore the origins and likely future for education in South Africa. The fate of science and technology is determined to a large extent by national policy and its statutory instruments, so we will also pay special attention to those parts of the national system of innovation (NSI) upon which the state has direct influence.

In conclusion, we will stress that science and technology must flourish if South Africa is to compete successfully in the new global economy. A foundation of industrial growth, science and technology can also help South Africa tackle a number of its socioeconomic problems. We therefore suggest that South Africa should strive to become a regional hub of innova-

tion, underpinned by a robust scientific and technological culture.

THE HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

South Africa is the largest economy in Africa, accounting for some 40 percent of continental GDP. Gauteng Province, the home of the gold and base minerals industry, and the manufacturing and financial services sectors, itself contributes 40 percent of the nation's GDP. Manufacturing is the largest contributor to GDP,³ but extractive industries dominate foreign earnings—and financial services are growing more rapidly than either manufacturing or mining.

The country is a leader in some technologies; for example, extracting oil from coal. It uses world-class technology in sectors like clinical medicine, deep mining, armaments, information technology, forestry products, and food processing. Quite successful as a technology adopter, it is nonetheless a net importer of technology.

Industrialization really began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, after the discovery of diamonds and gold. Around these two precious minerals arose vertically and horizontally integrated mining combines, accompanied by the growth and solidification of apartheid labor relations. In the process, the country became largely self-sufficient in raw materials, with the exception of oil. By the time of World War I the industry was sufficiently developed to serve as a source of supply to the Allied war effort. This act was repeated in World War II, when the country was effectively quartermaster to the British Army. Subsequently an industrial base was laid down, along with a set of science research councils and producer research agencies.

The advent of formal apartheid in 1948, and the subsequent conflict between the government and its foes, led to a militarization of the economy and efforts to make South Africa self-sufficient in its supply of energy and weaponry. The conventional arms industry is one example of the country's technological sophistication. Mission-driven research within the state research sector was successful in producing weapons of mass

destruction, since the scientific expertise existed, money was no object, and morality was never an issue.

South Africa has a well-developed ability to acquire and adapt technologies and then to apply these on a large scale. For years a “total onslaught” mind-set drove costly and polluting but effective projects that produced nuclear weapons, light, medium, and heavy weapons, command and control systems, military vehicles, missiles, pilotless aircraft, lifetime extension programs that retained the capability of obsolete weapons systems, decision support tools for operational research, liquid fuels, and chemical feedstocks.

Given the bunker mentality of the apartheid regime, shortage of funds was no object. Whatever the state needed, it bought, overtly or covertly. Technologies from abroad were adopted, adapted, and extended. What has been referred to in another context as “a constructed crisis” forced local industries to move from imitation to competitive innovation.⁴ As a result, the arms industry, for example, has begun to export some systems to leading multinational aerospace companies.

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a negotiated settlement between the white minority and black majority found the country with a large military industrial complex, but a generally uncompetitive economy. Economic sanctions coupled with protectionist policies had led to a generally inward-looking manufacturing sector that operated with obsolescent technologies and low skill levels.

A number of statutory science councils were established in the period prior to 1994. Their goals were to fund and carry out research, to promote human resource development, to provide a standards and testing service, and to develop and transfer various technologies. In the main, the work in agriculture supported the interests of large ranchers and crop farmers. Medical research was focused on the diseases of affluence rather than the primary health-care system. The Council for Mineral Technology (MINTEK), the state agency responsible for the mining industry, in effect subsidized research and development in this sector. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was a component of the military-industrial com-

plex, and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) was very much a part of the ideological state apparatus.

In the post-apartheid era, the science councils have undergone a measure of restructuring, coupled with a review of their aims. There are presently nine councils, which are supported by some \$250 million under the parliamentary Science Vote. This money is distributed according to the advice of the National Advisory Council on Innovation. After the 1999 annual review of the budget allocation, it was agreed that the country faced a health crisis and that the budget of the Medical Research Council should be doubled over a three-year period. A shift in emphasis is evident.

Scientists, engineers, and other professionals in research and development were, and to a large extent still are, white and male. Much of the research and development in science and technology, prior to 1994, served the aims of the apartheid government, as manifested, for example, in the considerable resources that were devoted to research and development in weapons systems, control electronics, material of various types, dye to place in water cannons, and biological and chemical warfare. Little is known of the circumstances under which this work was pursued, and there is clearly a need to conduct such sociological research. What were the debates of the time? With whom did scientists engage internationally, and with what agenda? Limited details of the nuclear weapons program have emerged, as have some aspects of the biological and chemical weapons program, the latter largely through testimony in the current High Court trial of Dr. Wouter Basson, still in progress in Pretoria. Basson, head of the apartheid government's chemical and biological warfare program, faces charges of murder and fraud. Examples of the more than a hundred charges are his alleged supervision of the development of poisons for government assassins, and the establishment of a military front company to produce cigarettes laced with anthrax, poisoned chocolate, and sugar containing salmonella.

Despite these apparent crimes against humanity, the apartheid regime fostered an impression of "normal" scientific and technological development. While an international academic boycott of South African universities had some impact, indi-

vidual scientists found ways to keep in touch with colleagues abroad, particularly those in the West. At that time, government expenditure on research and development (GERD) was around 1.2 percent and probably higher, if one includes the secret military and nuclear budgets. Since that funding served the interests of fewer than one-seventh of the population, the effective GERD spent for whites per capita would have placed the country on a par with Australia or New Zealand. This implies, and interviews confirm, that science in the service of the white minority was generously funded under apartheid.

From the mid-1980s on, the agencies funding research development tried to identify excellent individuals, fund them well, and permit them considerable freedom in the structure of their research programs. The emphasis was on research that was world class. Industry and academe remained relatively far apart, except in the military sector. This highlights the dichotomy that was South Africa: pockets of excellence within a sea of poverty. Prosperous white enclaves coexisted with wretched black regions cursed with filthy water, high infant mortality, and diseases of privation.⁵

Six years following the advent of democracy, the extent of internal disparities remains stark: for example, the Gini coefficient (a measure of the amount of inequality in income distribution) is second only to that of Brazil. It may take up to two decades for the gap to close, since schooling by default still serves to reproduce the inequalities, and education is notoriously slow to change. Worse, however, is the damage that apartheid wrought on the social fabric. The forced removals off the land and consignment of unskilled black people to rural ghettos has had consequences that endure to the present day. The struggle against poverty now replaces the struggle against apartheid as the order of the day.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY⁶

There exists a close interrelationship between South Africa and its neighbors, politically and economically, and no account of

the place of science in South Africa can be complete without an examination of regional currents in science and technology.

The Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) originated in 1980 as a political and economic response to South African domination. The nine founding countries were Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Angola, and Mozambique.

In 1993, Africa as a whole had an estimated seventy-two thousand research and development specialists, of whom approximately eighteen thousand were in South Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa accounted for nearly 60 percent of the research and development specialists, and in the SADCC probably in excess of 90 percent.

The SADCC, with the assistance of the international community, assigned the primary responsibility for research in different sectors to different countries. Zimbabwe was given responsibility for food security, Angola for energy, Botswana for livestock research, Swaziland for human resource development, and so on. As a result, most of the region's states did not invest in a comprehensive overall science and technology program, despite the pleas of some SADCC scientists, technologists, and administrators.

One recent study, by Keto Mshigeni and colleagues, found that a complex interaction of the effects of war, hyperinflation, structural adjustment policies, unbalanced terms of trade, and devaluation of currencies had eroded industrial capacity throughout southern Africa.⁷ Only four states could lay claim to an official science and technology policy at the time of the study.

Following the independence of Namibia and the lifting of the ban on the liberation movements of South Africa, the SADCC in 1992 became the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The original nine states have since been joined by Namibia, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, making up a population of around 185 million, with a GDP of U.S. \$182 billion.

Within the SADC, around two hundred entities support and promote research and development in science and technology. By and large, these institutions are staffed with highly qualified nationals, many with advanced degrees earned in North America

or Europe. A significant investment in high-level expertise has been made, and while there has been some emigration of scientists, engineers, and technologists to the West, a significant number remain in the SADC.

Science, Technology, and Development

Over the last forty years, a rich literature has evolved on appropriate technology and the economics of development. A pertinent example in the context of Africa is the science and technology policy overview by Osita Ogbu, Banji Oyeyinka, and Hasa Mlawla.⁸ They make the argument that technology drives development: “African economies require deep technological revolutions to bring about rapid structural shifts . . . [within] an enabling macroeconomic environment and the ways . . . [this] interacts with an effective technology policy.”⁹ For them, technology is central to the process of development, and long-term structural change is driven by technology.

Implicitly, they advocate national systems of innovation, with the state providing the regulatory, physical, human, and social infrastructure. In some states, these systems are in place, but elsewhere they have all but collapsed. Scientists face the very real prospect of becoming deskilled, since they lack the necessary equipment and other resources to work in their fields of specialization.

With dependence on foreign donors, precisely who sets the research agenda in some countries is unclear. The imbalances of power have led some researchers to remark that “we have moved from being hunter-gatherers to data gatherers,” who merely perform basic tasks that mainly benefit researchers in the North. On the other hand, a network of SADC Centers of Excellence has been established to train a new generation of scientists carrying out relevant research.

The South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology recently issued a call for proposals for science and technology projects that would involve South African/SADC cooperation. The advertisement drew some ninety responses rather quickly, despite the modest funds available. This suggests that the basis for cooperation is real. Scientists in sub-Saharan Africa acknowledge the relative strengths of South

African science; they recognize the relevance of much work in the biological sciences and are keen to participate when they can.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE VERSUS CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCE:
EDUCATION AS A CASE STUDY

The ability to engage with science and technology as technique while ensuring their beneficial nature demands a scientifically literate and technologically fluent society. Regrettably, it must be acknowledged that, pockets of excellence aside, science and mathematics are poorly taught in most South African schools. In the North West Province, fully half of those who teach science at a grade twelve level do not themselves have depth in the discipline beyond this level. School performance is highly variable, with disparities closely mirroring economic position and race. In science and mathematics the (black) African¹⁰ majority remains underrepresented, and this inequity in turn reproduces itself in higher education. Proportionately, the majority is underrepresented among those who pass the gateway subjects of science and mathematics, by a factor of at least fifteen.

South Africa was one of the few developing countries to participate in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the results of this comparative ranking of educational systems were a foregone conclusion. The country was ranked last of all “competing” nations. This finding had the merit of alarming decisionmakers. Not only is South Africa lowly ranked in the World Competitiveness Report, but its school system is likely to keep the country at the bottom. Of course, the TIMSS, which is based on aggregation, disguises considerable variation within the school system. Top-class engineers, scientists, medical practitioners, and actuaries emerge from the schools, some of which have facilities equal to the best anywhere. The point is the wide disparity in quality.

At the moment, the South African education budget is being eroded by inflation, the bulk of current spending goes to salaries, and attempts to improve the system are necessarily lim-

ited. One of the legacies of apartheid is a mass education system without appropriately qualified teachers. Estimates suggest national shortfalls of up to twelve thousand high-school science and mathematics teachers.¹¹ The supply of new teachers in these subjects will remain low in the near future: South Africa's universities produce only one hundred high-school mathematics and sixty science teachers annually. Colleges account for another thousand and six hundred more diploma holders, respectively. At these rates, it will take up to a decade to meet current needs.

This picture is perhaps too gloomy. Two things must be remembered: first, educational change is always a slow process, no matter where it is effected. Second, the need to destroy apartheid structures has slowed the process further in South Africa. Racially divided institutions had to be merged. The government had to repeal old legislation and pass new laws to regulate education and training. In 1997, the reform known as Curriculum 2005 was introduced with some haste. A short-term review was effected in mid-2000 and it provoked considerable debate. The recommendation to increase the time allocated to languages and literacy in the early years met with wide approval; however, the recommendation to shut down the learning area of technology precipitated widespread resistance. This opposition came from the small group of technology educators who organized a vocal lobby. But interestingly, it came also from the trade-union movement that appeared to feel that the curtailment of technology as a separate learning area amounted to short-changing the population. After all, the argument went, if S&T is important, how could government be dropping the "T"?

Still, some progress is being made. The number of students enrolling in science and mathematics classes in high schools is increasing. And where conditions of stability prevail, good results are achieved in these subjects. There is compelling evidence that the creation of a science and mathematics atmosphere in schools can encourage pupils and teachers. There is also evidence that prospective teachers can be enticed to enter the fields of science and mathematics by means of financial incentives and the development of appropriate graduate teach-

ing programs. There is now a high level of consensus that the national government must act to drive considerable resources toward these key areas.

The wider policy framework has been set; all concerned are grappling with the curriculum. It is possible to set attainable targets; one could, for example, double the number of high-school graduates with good grades in science and mathematics from the black community within three years. Within five years, one could ensure that all high-school teachers have attained pedagogic content knowledge pegged at a second-year university level, and so on. This takes funding, but most important it takes political will and a change of attitudes toward teaching as a profession.

One mechanism employed in other African countries has been the application of "manpower" planning, in which the government awards fixed numbers of scholarships in fields such as medicine, engineering, and science teaching. This is not always a popular measure, but it does work. Another approach would be to introduce obligatory community service for those graduates who receive state support for their higher education. This too is a way of steering more highly qualified persons into school teaching. This latter measure is under discussion, the precedent having already been set in medicine, where doctors fresh out of medical school must complete two years of community internship as a requirement for registration.

THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR

It will come as no surprise that the marked variation in quality to be found in the school education system is mirrored in tertiary institutions. These include universities and technikons, the latter being institutions offering qualifications that are strictly vocational. At present, South Africa has twenty-one universities and fifteen technikons.

Apartheid has left an indelible stamp on the universities of South Africa. The Extension of Universities Education Act of 1959 made provision, paradoxically, for the restriction of access by blacks to the existing universities, whose overwhelmingly white staff and student composition were forthwith to be

entrenched by law. A number of new universities were established, each intended exclusively to serve a particular population group (Xhosa-speaking blacks in the Transkei and Ciskei, Zulus, Batswana, coloreds, Indians, and so on). Students of color were not permitted entry into the historically white universities except by special permission of the minister, and such permission would be granted only if the degree program the student wished to follow was not offered at that person's "own" ethnic institution. There were two exceptions among the set of universities existing in 1959. The University of Fort Hare, which hitherto had a cosmopolitan composition in terms of the act, was now restricted to serve only Xhosa-speaking blacks. And the University of South Africa, a distance-learning institution, would continue to serve students irrespective of color (political prisoners included, at least after a court battle).

Over a period of more than three decades, the black universities were subjected to constraints, imposed enthusiastically by their executives, senates, and councils, that restricted their offerings in the sciences. Engineering was permitted at only one ethnic university (the University of Durban-Westville, open to students of Indian descent). Virtually no provision was made for growth in the natural sciences and technology. The black universities were regarded as primarily teaching institutions, with no encouragement to develop active research programs.

It is therefore not surprising that, when the first democratically elected government in South Africa took office in 1994, there existed a sharp dichotomy between what were now referred to as historically white universities (HWUs: eleven in total), and historically black universities (HBUs, of which there were ten). Research productivity was concentrated in the former set of institutions, and research activity in the sciences and engineering overwhelmingly so. There was also a pecking order among the HWUs, with four of the eight accounting for a full 70 percent of all research publications.

A major focus of the present government, as well as of statutory bodies such as the National Research Foundation, has been on redressing the gross imbalances between the HWUs and HBUs, through earmarked funding and through efforts to attract black students into engineering and the sciences. The

challenge is at least as great as that faced in the schools; universities across the country try to entice to their institutions the small numbers of black matriculants with qualifications in mathematics, physical science, and biology.

In 1995, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) predicted that black student numbers would steadily increase through the late 1990s. This has not happened, and the battle between HWUs and HBUs for this coveted group of students has become an uneven one. The HBUs, with few exceptions, are wracked by student unrest, financial problems of major proportions, and a lack of administrative capacity at middle and upper levels. They are thus at a distinct disadvantage when competing with many of the HWUs that have well-developed and sustainable graduate and research programs, which they are able to offer in an environment of administrative and financial stability.

The NCHE concerned itself with matters of governance, finance, and access. Out of its deliberations arose a new statutory body, the Council on Higher Education. Provision was also made to establish a student loan program, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. The area that NCHE did not consider was that of purpose. The higher education sector is highly autonomous, with each institution operating through its own council. Government influence over the strategic planning of the institutions is minimal, despite the fact that the state provides large subsidies and also channels research and publication funding to the sector. Linking higher education to national needs remains a pressing concern.

That student enrollments have plummeted at some major historically black institutions, while black student numbers have soared at the old white technikons and universities, is tantamount to the making of policy. These changes are dramatic enough for David Cooper to have described the phenomenon as a "skewed revolution."¹² For the best part of four decades, it has been dictum among economists of education that developing countries should target national investment at the basic education level, since this offered the highest social returns. Previous World Bank orthodoxy has been eloquently challenged through a new World Bank study that argues for greater invest-

ment in higher education.¹³ This study asserts that participation in the knowledge economy requires a vibrant higher education system that is socially responsive, in close contact with industry, and able to produce top-quality graduates.

Recently the Council on Higher Education appointed a task team to investigate the future size and shape of the universities and technikons. The report seeks to reshape the higher education sector in a rational manner, and argues for consolidation of the thirty-six existing institutions into a few larger conglomerations that display greater differentiation.¹⁴ There would be three tiers of institutions: "bedrock," mid-range, and research oriented. An additional recommendation with far-reaching implications is the removal of the automatic research subsidy and its replacement with earmarked funding. The report shies away from making recommendations for specific institutions and does not set hard enrollment targets for science and technology. It does recommend adopting a four-year model, which is similar to that found in the United States, coupled with a change in the status of some institutions, turning them into liberal arts colleges.

The report also comments on gender disparities, but without offering concrete suggestions. South Africa is still a male-dominated society. Under apartheid, however, white females were fairly equally represented in many academic fields, though not at the leadership level. This does provide some basis for more general role modeling, but carries some racial distortion with it. Neighboring Botswana, ostensibly also male dominated, has a remarkable absence of gender stereotyping in science and technology: a strong state simply channeled students irrespective of gender into fields in which there were shortages. There may be lessons here for South Africa.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Prior to 1994 there was little in the way of a science and technology policy for South Africa. Possibly under the influence of a lobby within the African National Congress, or through a desire to dismember the previously all-powerful Department of National Education that held responsibility for scientific re-

search, the new democratic government established a Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology (DACST). At first sight this department is the wonderful merging of C. P. Snow's "two cultures," but the reality is somewhat different. Given the constitutional prescription of a smooth transition, with maintenance of services and pensions, the functions of the old government were in large measure taken over by the new. This meant that DACST had within its corridors large units dedicated to language (English and Afrikaans), translation services, the state archives, and scores of museums. Few resources existed to set and implement high-level policy for science and technology or for arts and culture. Bringing the two cultures into harmony would have to wait.

The first major policy statement by DACST was the March 1996 white paper on arts and culture, followed six months later by *Towards the 21st Century: The White Paper on Science and Technology*.¹⁵ By this time, work was also underway on a Research and Technology Audit,¹⁶ and the National Research and Technology Foresight (NRTF), which sought to identify trends in emerging technologies and their likely value to the country, had been launched. The white paper advocates a "national system of innovation" that represents the government's vision for science and technology within the context of its overall economic policies. Innovation is defined as the application in practice of creative new ideas. It thus implies more than research and development. Key features of the proposed national system of innovation are the emphases on multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary, spanning the natural, human, and health sciences, and ensuring cooperation among government, industry, and research institutions, with a higher profile for applications-based research.

The white paper also recommended the establishment of an innovation fund, which was eventually launched in 1998. This fund entails competitive bidding for large grants in areas selected for their relevance to the government's agenda for social reconstruction. The main areas of funding include new research in biotechnology, information and communication technologies, adding value to raw materials prior to export, and crime prevention. This fund has thus far made grants for 41 projects

that involve a total of 101 cooperating entities, including science councils and universities, with some limited industrial involvement. Annual grants in the range of \$160,000–\$800,000 are renewable for a maximum of three years. In this way, the government has encouraged researchers to develop edible vaccine-bearing fruits, drought resistant cereals, and new metal alloys. The social sciences have not been neglected: researchers have also been funded to investigate crime patterns and to devise better means for the deployment of limited police resources.

In 1999, the government completed its NRTF.¹⁷ In most areas, the country was found to be ahead of developing countries, but behind the industrialized West. The foresight study developed four different scenarios for the future: “Frozen Revolution,” “Innovation Hub,” “Global Home,” and “Our Way is the Way.” The first describes a situation in which implementation seriously lags behind expectations. The remaining three scenarios present variations on the theme of an open or closed economy.

Which scenario will actually prevail? To an extent all four, but as the title of our essay suggests, we prefer the possibility of turning South Africa into an “Innovation Hub.” In this scenario, partnerships joining research institutions and industry become the focal point for stimulating economic growth. There are, however, also signs that the “Our Way is the Way” scenario has accurately captured some of the sentiment of the time. The HIV/AIDS controversy, discussed below, reflects such thinking. We shall solve it in our own way, goes the line of the health officials. The etiology of the disease will be determined locally, not globally. In “Frozen Revolution,” interpretation depends upon vantage point: for the labor activist, anything short of a socialist state might be inadequate, while for the investor the slow rate of privatization of state assets is equally unacceptable. “Global Home,” on the other hand, is a situation where the economy is completely liberalized and open to the ebbs and flows of international trade, finance, and commerce. It is the borderless state, in which the market is sovereign.

Whether government, industry, or higher education will steer investment accordingly is at this stage impossible to tell. Gov-

ernment policy with regard to science and technology requires further scrutiny and analysis. The government's current emphasis on applied research also raises questions about the place of research that does not fit into areas of current funding. These questions are better considered after reviewing the general condition of science and technology in South Africa today.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TODAY

South African expenditure on research and development in 1997 was 0.7 percent of the GDP, a figure between half and a third of the leading economies of the world. South Africa's GERD/GDP ratio is similar to that of Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Chile, and Brazil. South Africa's share of innovations and high-technology activities as measured by patents is relatively low.¹⁸ For example, in 1996 the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office registered some 250 patents that originated in South Africa. This compares with 600 from Israel and 1,800 from Australia.

Research output is also relatively low, but in line with the investment in research and development. Roughly 0.5 percent of research papers listed between 1990 and 1996 in the Science Citation Index originated in South Africa. In 1995, clinical medicine made up 27 percent of these, while 11 percent were in the fields of plant and animal science, 10 percent in physics, 7 percent in chemistry, and 5 percent in geoscience. Biology and biochemistry yielded 5 percent, ecology/environment 3 percent, and molecular microbiology 2 percent. There were particular strengths in such niche areas as ornithology, anthropology, and archaeology. South Africa is credited with some 17,000 scientists and engineers active in research and development. Over the period 1992–1996, it ranked twenty-seventh in the world in number of citations of published papers, being slightly behind Argentina but ahead of Hong Kong, Mexico, and Brazil.¹⁹ According to Foundation for Research Development (FRD) statistics, South Africa contributes 37 percent of the output from Africa, ahead of Egypt and Nigeria.²⁰

Local potential for international South-North cooperation was examined in a study that sought to identify world-class

institutions and researchers who could engage in collaboration with European Union peers.²¹ Potential in the areas of biotechnology, agriculture and fisheries, biomedicine and health, and sustainable resource management was identified, though the main concern of those surveyed was "lack of funding and high costs of research." The most existing European Union cooperation was with Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, while internationally the major collaborating nation is the United States, with Switzerland the third most important.

The somewhat modest comparisons with the developed world should not, however, be allowed to create a skewed picture of the state of research in South Africa. The establishment in 1985 of the FRD, which was later to become the National Research Foundation (NRF), constituted a fundamental shift in state research funding policy, and the existence of a system in which high achievement was clearly rewarded in turn served as a catalyst for the expansion of research activities within the tertiary institutions. Central to the FRD's approach was a system for assessing the quality of researchers, rather than research projects, the rationale being that one could expect researchers of undisputed standing to engage in high-quality research.

Though it has been instrumental in the growth of the research corps in the country, the funding policy of the NRF stands in sharp contrast to the policies of DACST, with its emphasis on applied research. It is understandable that much of the debate around research directions and policies has centered on those endeavors that are best suited to addressing the urgent industrial and socioeconomic needs of the country. But it is as well to bear in mind that research of high quality is not possible in a society in which the passion for discovery is absent. Whatever arguments might be advanced for the encouragement of research along utilitarian grounds, the absence of the excitement that accompanies the search for the new will eventually lead to a blanket of dullness extending over the entire research enterprise as a whole, with research becoming more of the "D" and less of the "R" in R&D.

There are particular areas of scientific endeavor in which South Africa enjoys a privileged status by virtue of its geo-

graphical location. These areas provide unparalleled opportunities for research, while at the same time, the country, as host and guardian of these unique opportunities, carries a dual responsibility of steward and research pioneer.

A prime example is in the domain of botany. The Western Cape on its own contains one of the six floral kingdoms into which the world's flora is divided. This is the Cape Floral Kingdom, so rich that it contains more botanical species than the whole of Europe or North America. A further example may be found in the area of research into hominid evolution, in which South Africa has for more than seventy years been a focus for research. The country possesses an unparalleled wealth of hominid and early human fossils, which provide compelling evidence in support of the "Out of Africa" theory, which locates Africa as the origin of *Homo sapiens*. As a result, UNESCO has declared the entire region around the Sterkfontein Valley a World Heritage Site.

Africa, while comprising almost a quarter of the habitable land surface of the globe, contains very few World Heritage sites, and for this reason too the recognition given to Sterkfontein is to be welcomed. Yet more exciting finds have been made. Just this year at Drimolen, a site in the Sterkfontein Valley, geologist Dr. André Keyser unearthed the most complete skull yet excavated. This discovery is that of an extinct female hominid, as well as a large male jawbone, around 1.5 to 2 million years old, and both the remains of precursors of *Homo sapiens* who nevertheless would have shared the area with *Homo sapiens*.²²

The excitement of this unique heritage has to be tempered by the observation that, sadly, the field of palaeoanthropology is attracting very few young South African scientists. Funding in the area is nowhere near desired levels, and such rich resources are threatened with becoming, in the words of Keyser, "laboratories for foreign scientists." Sterkfontein throws into sharp focus the question as to how this country intends to shape a science policy that will ensure the preservation of its cultural heritage and will ensure also that its own scientists and intellectuals play leading roles in uncovering the mysteries of science.

A third example is to be found in the discipline of astronomy. Like palaeoanthropology, it is not a branch of science that is

relevant to our economic needs or to industrial development, and therefore forces one to consider it on its own merits. South Africa has a long history of outstanding research in astronomy, going back at least to the early nineteenth century. John Herschel was instrumental in making astronomy a respected science in South Africa around the 1830s, and ever since then it has gained prominence. The view of the southern sky provides a laboratory that, while not unique in the world, ensures together with the record of outstanding research and the excellent observing facilities such as that at Sutherland in the Northern Cape that astronomy retains a position of high profile relative to other disciplines in South Africa.

The government, through DACST, has given its support to a joint South African/Polish/American initiative, the result of which will be the construction of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) at Sutherland. The huge (10 meter) telescope will be the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere, and the second largest in the world. Operation will begin in 2004, and will ensure that South Africa retains its favored place in the astronomical community.

The question of whether to support fundamental research, and if so, in which areas, nevertheless remains a vexed one for the scientific and engineering community. It crystallizes around the following tension: through the country's particular history, a culture of independence of research has developed, and consequently a number of local researchers are among world leaders in their fields. Questions are asked, though, about the national benefits that such stature brings. The research community in turn feels that it is being asked the impossible: namely, to demonstrate the link between its fundamental research, applied research, and possible products in the marketplace. This cost-benefit approach is regarded by scientists as being incompatible with the nature of the scientific enterprise. Perhaps what this comes down to is the following: if applied research is the (socially) desired activity at universities, then who trains the applied researchers? Who provides the concomitant theoretical skills? Somewhere in this cascade are research physicists, chemists, and mathematicians who can adequately equip the applied scientists. But what research shall these scientists

perform if their ability to prepare the applied researcher is to remain sharp?

These questions will have to be answered before there can be agreement about the basis for the funding and development of research. Applied and basic research are, of course, not mutually exclusive, and could profitably exist side by side—but only in the context of a comprehensive plan.

HIV AND AIDS: A CASE STUDY

In recent times, science and politics have nowhere clashed more emphatically, and with such profound consequences, as in the area of research into HIV and AIDS and the development of appropriate strategies. The first example goes back to 1998, when a group of medical research scientists claimed to have developed a drug that halted the development of HIV into AIDS. This product, given the name “Virodene,” was marketed to the new cabinet, which appeared to accept the “scientific” evidence and showed complete faith in the scientists, despite vigorous refusal by the Medicines Control Council (MCC) to license the treatment. The stand by the MCC was eventually vindicated when it became evident that the drug contained a potent and highly toxic industrial solvent.

Attitudes to the crisis arising from the spread of HIV and AIDS in South Africa, and in Africa generally, have led to a controversial standoff between politicians and scientists in South Africa. This situation in many respects encapsulates the state of scientific research in South Africa and public and official attitudes toward it. President Thabo Mbeki fired a salvo across the bows of mainstream science by declaring, in an open letter to selected heads of states on the issue of HIV/AIDS, that “a simple superposition [*sic*] of Western experience on African reality would be absurd and illogical.”²³ The president went on to question the causal link between HIV and AIDS, in this way aligning himself with the so-called dissidents within the scientific community who posit social and environmental factors as being central to the development of AIDS in individuals. The controversy deepened with the publication of the Durban Declaration by five thousand scientists from around the world, in

which scientific arguments for the link between HIV and AIDS are authoritatively presented with copious references to the scientific literature. The scientists declare the evidence as “clear-cut, exhaustive, and unambiguous.” In an article published in *Science*, Dr. Malegapuru W. Makgoba, president of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, is more direct in his criticism of the stance taken by Mbeki, which he feels is informed by “pseudoscience.”²⁴ He further decries the undermining of science and the scientific method at a time when South Africa is struggling to establish a strong scientific research base.

It is true that AIDS is devastating African society, and in some countries up to a quarter of their middle classes have died. A pandemic of this scale is paralleled only by the great influenza epidemic of 1919, the smallpox epidemic that ravaged Latin America in the sixteenth century, and the Plague.²⁵ By questioning the orthodoxy regarding HIV and AIDS, President Mbeki opened himself to ridicule. The controversy split the science community, with a group supporting the president purely out of political loyalty. That the split is not solely on ethnic grounds may be the only heartening aspect of this debate.

WHITHER SOUTH AFRICAN SCIENCE:
WHAT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE?²⁶

That South Africa is now, willy-nilly, a part of a global environment emphatically influenced by science and technology cannot be in doubt. What is open to debate is the country's response to the challenges of this new environment. There are at least two options. On the one hand, the government could aim at ensuring the country's ability to develop its own intellectual and technological resources and to compete with its global neighbors on equal terms. Alternatively, it could choose to define itself as a consumer, not a producer, of advanced technologies.

Of course, the choice will and must be influenced considerably by local history, and by a sober view of the problems that face government, industry, and civil society generally. The country has a reasonably sophisticated communication, energy, and technological infrastructure, which in turn reflects the

degree of industrial development in the country. Two examples will suffice: in the aeronautical industry, the country produces world-class pilots and airframe health-management systems, while the software industry is a leader in accounting packages and Internet security. The high levels of skills in these areas grew out of military programs. To continue to foster such innovation in the face of protests from foreign governments about unfair competition may become difficult, if not impossible.

The government recently launched a Technology and Human Resources for Industry Program (THRIP), housed in the Department of Trade and Industry. THRIP seeks to boost competitiveness through promotion of applicable research. It brings together universities and other research-and-technology organizations with industry on a one-to-one funding basis. The state grant must be matched with industry funds that promote applicable research. The current annual level of state funding stands at some \$30 million and is growing.

There are a number of strong universities, many of whose researchers are world class and able to attract local and international research funding and graduate students of high quality. Sectors of industry are world leaders. The fledgling Academy of Science of South Africa, established in 1996, and counting among its members the finest scientific minds in the country, is poised, too, to play a major role in the promotion and development of the sciences in the country.

These circumstances make clear that, while South Africa is labeled as a developing country, there exists a considerable difference between the state of its scientific and technological establishments and those to be found in countries at the bottom end of the socioeconomic spectrum.²⁷ However, prospects for the overall development of skilled researchers and technicians will remain weak for some time to come, and the AIDS disaster exacerbates the problem. Another weakness is the bias toward short-term planning, and the tendency to rely on offshore research and development to solve local technical problems.

The quality of components within the South African economy, and of the graduates produced in this country, can be inferred from the serious shortage of skilled individuals in the informa-

tion technology (IT), managerial, and technical sectors. It is estimated that the shortage of IT skills in South Africa may be the worst of all major emerging economies. Developed economies such as those in Western Europe face similar skills shortages, ranging from between sixty thousand and two hundred thousand workers; in South Africa it is estimated that currently there is a shortage of twenty-five thousand IT professionals in a total pool of around forty-five thousand. South African professionals are highly in demand in the developed world, resulting in a brain drain that exacerbates the problem.²⁸ While some “brain gain” is occurring, local immigration policy mitigates against this.

Higher education has a central role to play in ensuring that the country’s technological needs are met, and in ensuring too that the country develops a competitive advantage in the global economy and the knowledge economy. The country’s pressing social problems, as well as staff shortages in certain sectors of industry, would appear to support the view that it is the applied sciences, and vocationally oriented programs in science and technology, that must receive government support. Such a view, while superficially altruistic, takes no account of the manner in which science and technology function, particularly at the higher levels. There is an increasing interconnectedness between different scientific disciplines, and a constant interplay between fundamental and applied science, which would render hopeless any attempt to formulate a science and technology policy comprising only elements of applied science, neatly cut off from the nutrient that is fundamental science. Such an approach may well work in the short term, but it is unsustainable, and doomed ultimately to sterility, for it is within fundamental science that one finds the building blocks of new technologies. A local example will suffice: could one rapidly apply genetic modification technology to develop drought-resistant cereals without the essential supporting environment of research microbiologists, soil scientists, and entomologists? We think not.

It is important also, when considering the most appropriate focus of scientific education and research, to bear in mind the place of scientific pursuits as an integral part of the intellectual well-being of the country. No country can hope to develop a

cohort of science and technology professionals, let alone professionals of high quality and commitment, in an environment that is devoid of attempts to develop an appreciation of science in civil society. Fundamental to all scientific activity is the element of curiosity; to diminish its importance by limiting policies to a narrowly utilitarian focus would be the equivalent, say, of declaring that the only art worthy of support is that of direct commercial benefit (advertising and the like). In both cases, the effect would be the same: a society with no cultural vibrancy.

As it is, there is an element of anti-intellectualism in South Africa today, an indifference or even antipathy toward science in particular that augurs ill for the future of science in this country. Without a thorough recognition of the central place of science in our culture and economy, without a culture of respect for science in which we venerate our scientists as we do our sporting heroes, and without recognition of the fact that we can, and should, be participants in the global growth of science, the development and sustenance of a critical mass of scientists in schools, industry, and universities will be an unattainable goal. Thus, a well-balanced range of scientific activities in schools, universities, research laboratories, and industry serves a dual purpose: of securing our competitiveness and our ability to address our problems, and ensuring an intellectually healthy society. In this way, too, we ensure that universities, being engaged in the full spectrum of academic activities, are more than simply technical colleges and are in a position to contribute at the highest scientific and technological levels.

LOOKING FORWARD

If South Africa is to choose the path of full participation and innovation, it must consider what mix of ingredients will best ensure success. There is a great deal that can be done with the appropriate amount of funding for the sciences, but money is merely a necessary, and not a sufficient, condition. There is already concern that South Africa may lack a number of scientists adequate to ensure that universities are able to carry out their essential functions, and to ensure the requisite growth of

research activity. The solution to this problem cannot come from within; the problems in the country's schools are such that, for some time to come, the number of students enrolling in science and engineering programs will not increase dramatically, if at all. It is therefore unlikely that South Africa's own universities can produce the new teachers these universities need.

In addition to substantially increasing funding for research, the government must begin to recruit scientists from abroad, starting with South African scientists currently teaching elsewhere, but including scientists from other nations as well. Such an approach, far from being in conflict with policies of equity and redress, will in fact allow equity goals to be achieved sooner than would otherwise be the case. A sufficient number of first-class scientists will help train a new generation of South African researchers, engineers, and industrial innovators. Precedents exist, such as the development of Taiwanese and Korean industry alongside a deliberate and unprecedented growth of the scientific academy in these countries.²⁹ The object is to garner a critical mass around particular missions: e.g., simulation modeling, database development, nonlinear processes, and "pharming." This is a process of brain gain, a phenomenon not unfamiliar to South Africa, which in the past used this approach to develop its energy and armaments capabilities. Elsewhere in the SADC, brain gain from other African states is "normal," albeit not without social and political sensitivity. Scientists are a mobile group: they have been so for more than a century. They move to where the intellectual grass is green and growing. They appreciate the collateral benefits of personal security and well-being, culture, and the natural environment. Large financial reward is not the only lure. Governments may encourage this inward flow with direct financial inducement, but there are more subtle ways of marketing. One is through the promotion of networking, either by supporting peer-to-peer research or through conferencing. DACST is effecting modest efforts at such networking through the stimulation of both South-South research (the SADC project) and South-North research (the Lead Program).

Perhaps a stronger thrust against poverty and its associated damage is needed. This is an agenda that makes sense in the SADC context and that could lay the basis for meaningful cooperation. One of the mechanisms for promoting such cooperation is through higher education, which the SADC Protocol on Education and Training seeks to foster. It requires the SADC states to set aside a quota of 5 percent of places for students from other SADC states. Some South African universities have already exceeded this level. There is recognition that the country is tied to the region, and that local progress depends upon both global and regional relationships.

Tertiary education and high-level research are long-term investments, and there are no shortcuts or cheap solutions to ensuring a truly viable research sector. South Africa spends 1.2 percent of GDP on tertiary education, and 7 percent on education as a whole, the latter making up 22 percent of the government's budget. The view has been expressed that the tertiary education share of GDP needs to grow toward the 2 percent mark.

Business and donors must play their role in promoting this shift. What is certain is that a culture of innovation cannot succeed without a dramatic increase in basic research and higher education expenditure. The Council on Higher Education's recommendation to replace "blind" research funding with earmarked funds is at first glance a welcome move that has long been awaited. However, the parallel recommendation that institutions continue to receive the same levels of subvention presents the government with a difficult decision. One cannot specifically designate a portion of funding and at the same time maintain overall funding levels without tapping additional resources. Since the blind component runs at some 15 percent of the money given to higher education, the advice is by implication a request to increase higher education spending by at least 15 percent. It remains to be seen whether this actually happens.

Realization of the "Innovation Hub" scenario depends on regional stability and a willingness to take risks. Neither is assured. What the government can count on is a relatively strong foundation in science, in technology, and in some industries. Like Korea and Malaysia, South Africa now has a host of

domestic multinationals that have made their mark on the world stage. It is an interesting list, comprising two distinct groups: the first, and best known, includes those based on natural resources (Anglo American, Anglogold, Sappi), while the second set are service providers (Old Mutual, Didata, Investec, SA Breweries). Between these two lies the ground in which research and development may come together to produce new industries, and where science and innovation may thrive. That is the space to watch.

ENDNOTES

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Stealing the Show? Crime and its Impact in Post-Apartheid South Africa

ON SATURDAY NIGHT, JUNE 13, 1998, four young African men from Alexander township broke into a house in a neighboring suburb. The young men, who had been drinking heavily, found a white suburban family, the parents and two young children, sitting down to dinner. Armed with handguns, they shot both parents dead, and raped the daughter while the son cowered in the bathroom. The attackers left in the family car and were arrested later that night when the vehicle was spotted outside a nightclub in central Johannesburg. The accused were subsequently linked through fingerprint records to a number of other serious cases in the same area over a lengthy period.¹

The incident provoked a brief but sharp response. Local residents mobilized to close streets, lobby politicians, hold prayer meetings, and circulate a petition calling for a return to the death penalty. In the eyes of most whites, the incident had clear racial overtones—it reinforced the stereotype of criminals raping and pillaging without punishment, a prospect the ideologues of apartheid had long warned would be one consequence of African rule.²

Since South Africa is a country riddled with violent crime, the case caught the headlines for only one day, and then faded. Yet the incident illustrates the impact crime has on South African

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society today. For whites, the persistence of violent crime undermines their confidence in the new order. Crime is the reason most frequently cited for emigration.³ The case also illustrates the inability of the police—over twenty serious incidents had passed before an arrest was made—to prevent and control lawlessness.⁴

While this case grabbed public attention, most cases do not. Despite the grimness of the details, one crime cannot convey the pervasiveness of criminal behavior in South Africa. And the case is also misleading: whites, while undoubtedly suffering higher victimization rates than most communities around the world, do not suffer the highest victimization rate in South Africa. Those who suffer the most from violent crime are poor and African—the very people who can least afford to be victimized.

The case is misleading in still other ways: recent research on the characteristics of interpersonal violent crime suggests that while a majority of South Africans fear violent crimes perpetrated by strangers, they are more likely to be victimized within their own homes, by people they know. The prevalence of these forms of violence suggests that more effective systems of crime prevention are urgently needed. Alcohol is widely available—and widely abused. So are firearms. More and more crimes are crimes of violence—and increasingly, they are crimes with lethal consequences.

At the same time, the new democratic regime has had to cope with a rising number of organized criminal groups. The emergence of these groups is the result of multiple causes, which only now are beginning to be properly understood. One factor, at least, is clear: the growing presence of foreign criminal organizations is forcing the South African syndicates into increasingly sophisticated domestic networks in order to remain competitive.

These developments have had a profound impact upon society. As the incident described at the outset illustrates, crime continues to be a major worry for white South Africans. Two issues dominate public attention: attacks against white farmers on their land; and new attempts to control the legal ownership of firearms in South Africa, a highly contentious issue with

strong political undertones. An exaggerated fear of crime serves as a key factor isolating whites, and to some extent the African middle class, from the rest of the society.

Issues of safety are likely then to continue to dominate every facet of life in South Africa. High walls, barbed wire, and ever-present security guards serve as reminders of the white public's fears. What remains to be learned is the real extent of crime in the country—and whether the number of crimes has in fact increased or decreased.

COUNTING THE COST

Most researchers assume that official crime statistics—that is, those collected and released by the South African Police Service—provide a poor indication of levels of crime in the country. This is because official statistics never seem to match the personal experiences of citizens (and their friends and neighbors), and because crime statistics are often, unsurprisingly, manipulated to serve political purposes. A recent moratorium on the release of crime statistics illustrates the new government's extreme sensitivity to the issue. In announcing the ban, the government blamed flawed statistics that required improvement, but the timing of the moratorium, in the context of negative publicity about crime levels, suggests political considerations were a factor as well.

The result is that few South Africans believe official statements about the levels of crime. The moratorium has only undermined public confidence further. Whites in particular view government as evasive when it comes to talking about crime. For example, the majority of citizens in the country's capital city, Pretoria, when asked whether they believed government and police statistics about changing crime levels, showed little hesitation in answering in the negative. In particular, white residents of the city were more likely than others to be skeptical of government's pronouncements on crime.⁵ These opinions pose a serious challenge for policymakers. Doubt as to the validity of official crime data, when and if they are again released, makes it difficult to convince the public that the police are having any success in reducing crime.

Despite the doubts, however, there is growing evidence that official crime statistics, for some categories of crime, and for more recent time periods, may in fact be relatively accurate.⁶ More is now known about the nature and extent of crime in South Africa than at any time in the country's history. It is not enough, but it constitutes a start. Most important in this regard is the conducting of a number of victim surveys—effectively a survey of a representative portion of the population to determine the average citizen's experience of crime—to complement official police statistics.

Still, it remains difficult to measure precisely the extent of lawlessness. As do other countries, South Africa records crimes in two stages. Victims and bystanders report individual incidents, and the police file a subsequent report on them. An accurate measure of crime in any jurisdiction thus depends on a certain measure of trust between people and police. In effect, most citizens are willing to report a crime to the authorities only if they believe that something can and will be done about it. In South Africa, given the historic conflict between people and the police, trust has been hard to establish. For the majority of the country's citizens, at least before 1990, the police were instruments of repression, so reporting crime to them seemed to be (and in many cases was) of little value.

For this reason, determining accurate crime trends before 1994 is probably impossible. In any event, the country had eleven police agencies—the South African Police, plus ten homeland police forces—across which the quality of recording criminal incidents varied dramatically. At the time, crime categories were racially based (for example, “rape: black man on white woman; murder: colored man on colored woman”). A measure of the overall volume of crime for the pre-1994 period is also inflated by race-based “offenses”—such as those under the notorious pass laws determined by apartheid legislation—that would not normally be considered crimes in other jurisdictions.⁷

Given these factors, determining when crime began to increase in the country is well-nigh impossible. But the issue is of some political importance—foreign and domestic observers often suppose that crime has increased dramatically from April of 1994 onwards, and has continued climbing. Reasonably reli-

able pre-1994 data (such as the figures on murder) suggest, however, that crime began to increase in the mid-1980s, when the country was in a state of near-civil war.⁸

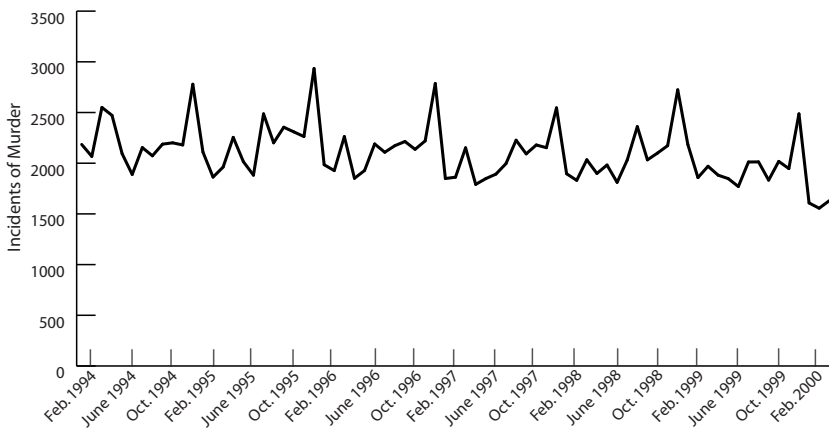
More accurate data since January of 1994 (when the various databases were amalgamated and recording improved) shed more light on recent trends. These data can be broadly divided into three categories, which, while not all-encompassing, allow a useful overview of current trends. The first category is that of *violent interpersonal crime*, such as murder, assault, and rape, in which the victim is in direct physical contact with the offender. The second category, *property crime*, includes ordinary theft or burglary, with no contact between the victim and the offender but property stolen, with the victim not present when the crime is committed. The third category, *violent property crime*, includes all forms of armed robbery and is characterized by contact (often physical) between the victim and the offender, with the aim of acquiring property.

Each of these three categories has been marked by significantly different trends. They demonstrate the frustrating complexity of the phenomenon, which makes it hard to know whether the “war against crime” is being won or lost. However, some important provisional conclusions can be drawn.⁹

The data on *violent interpersonal crimes*, for example, are contradictory. Incidents of murder have fallen, while the number of murder attempts, assaults, and rapes has slightly risen. The number of murders in South Africa has been slowly declining since January of 1994, with March of 2000 showing the lowest number recorded since 1994 (see figure 1). The total of roughly 1,500 murders for that month translates into 55.3 incidents for every one hundred thousand citizens during the course of 1999.

However, care must be taken in interpreting these statistics. Some cases of murder—it is difficult without detailed analysis of a large number of individual cases to determine how many—are in fact cases of culpable homicide or manslaughter (in which death was not intentional or was the result of negligence) that have been recorded as murders. This is a relatively limited phenomenon; the on-scene assessment by the investigating police officer that a murder has been committed generally proves

Figure 1. Murder: January 1994–March 2000



Source: The data are drawn from the database of the Crime Information Analysis Center, South African Police Service, Pretoria. The data from January of 2000 are calculated from the crime ratios per one hundred thousand inhabitants of the population. Raw data for this period have not yet been released.

accurate. It should also be noted that the South African murder figures represent both what would be termed first and second-degree murder in American jurisdictions.

All violent interpersonal crime in South Africa displays significant seasonal patterns.¹⁰ Murder, for example, increases dramatically in December of each year and is at its lowest point in June and July (illustrated by the peaks and troughs in the murder trend in figure 1). These seasonal patterns, which are particularly pronounced for serious assault, give valuable insights into causal factors of high levels of crime in the country, and are considered in greater detail below.

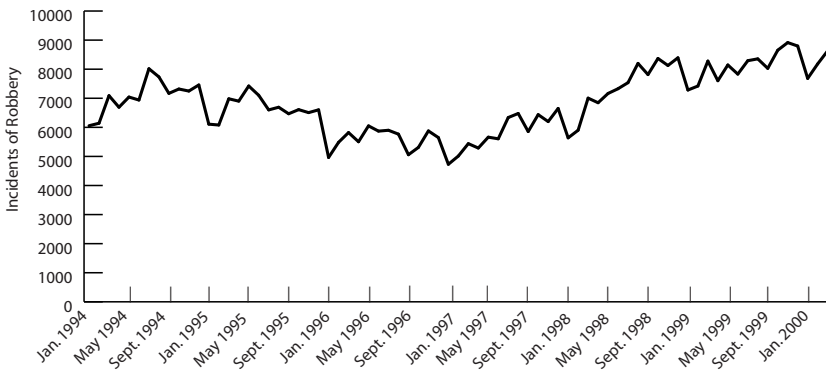
Cases of serious assault (defined broadly as a physical attack with some kind of weapon) have been increasing steadily since January of 1994, peaking in December of 1999 with over thirty thousand reported incidents. That means 595.1 cases of serious assault were reported per one hundred thousand citizens in 1999. It is probable that this represents both an actual increase as well as a greater propensity for citizens to report cases to the police.

The number of rapes that take place in South Africa has been a source of great controversy. Rape activists have rightly questioned the official figures that show, depending on the seasonal pattern, the number of reported rapes to vary between three thousand and six thousand a month. On average, for 1999, there were 119.1 reported rapes and attempted rapes for every one hundred thousand citizens (which includes men). Victim survey data suggests that only one in three rapes is reported to the police. But this begs the question of whether women who would not report being raped to the police would do so to an anonymous survey interviewer. On the other hand, some of the statistics used by anti-rape campaigners seem to exaggerate considerably the prevalence of the crime. One prominent television advertisement, which suggested that only one in thirty-six rapes was reported (and which subsequently raised the ire of President Mbeki), leads to the unlikely conclusion that perhaps over half of all South African men will perpetrate a rape in their lifetime.

Property crimes, such as the theft of motor vehicles (at between eight thousand and ten thousand incidents a month), have remained largely stable, contrary to public perception, since January of 1994. There are, however, two exceptions. The first is a steady increase in residential burglary, particularly in the last two years—the number of reported incidents peaked at just over twenty-five thousand incidents a month at the end of 1999 (that is, 663.4 per one hundred thousand citizens for that year). The second is a dramatic increase in ordinary theft since the beginning of 1998. This is not generally a well-reported crime, and the expansion in reporting is probably due almost entirely to the greater availability of mobile phones in the country, and their theft.¹¹

The most significant increases in reported crime are to be found in the category of *violent property crimes*. The crime category of aggravated robbery includes all types of armed robbery. Cases of armed robbery have shown worrying increases over the recording period, particularly over the last year (see figure 2). While robberies of banks and cash-in-transit heists have declined, largely because of more effective security and the arrest of prominent criminals, this decline has had

Figure 2. Aggravated Robbery: January 1994–March 2000



Source: The data are drawn from the database of the Crime Information Analysis Center, South African Police Service, Pretoria. The data from January of 2000 are calculated from the crime ratios per one hundred thousand inhabitants of the population. Raw data for this period have not yet been released.

almost no impact on the overall trend, due to the small number of such crimes (there were 476 bank robberies and 214 cash-in-transit heists in 1998).

Increases in aggravated robbery are due in part to increases in vehicle hijacking (which make up about one-fifth of reported cases of aggravated robbery). Some emerging evidence suggests that a significant number of hijackings, perhaps one or two out of every ten, are fraudulently reported to the police, with car owners assisting in the “hijacking” of their cars in order to claim insurance compensation. There has also been a disturbing new trend of armed attacks on citizens in their homes. The most widely publicized of such incidents have been attacks on white commercial farms and smallholdings in many of the country’s rural areas. There were 769 such attacks during 1998, a 77 percent increase over the previous year, when there were 434 attacks.¹²

UNEQUAL VICTIMIZATION

While the data outlined above gives an overall indication of crime trends, it does not provide any insights into who are the

majority of victims. Unsurprisingly, some South Africans are victimized by crime more than others—the threat of victimization, as is the case in all other countries, is determined by where individuals live and work and how they go about their daily lives. Given that apartheid sought above all to protect whites, race remains a significant factor in determining the likelihood that someone will be victimized by crime.

The media often make it seem as if whites are the primary victims, and blacks most often the criminals, in South Africa today. Attacks on commercial farms feed this perception. Here the perpetrators are generally black and the victims generally white; moreover, the highly politicized issue of who owns and has access to the country's land is seemingly at stake. While this issue is a serious one with serious political implications—particularly given that in some quarters these crimes are interpreted as an attack on the Afrikaner people themselves—such murders make up a tiny proportion (142 in 1998, or 0.6 percent of the total number of murders, 24,875, for that year) of all the country's violent crime.

In 1998 the South African government conducted a nationwide victim survey to determine both the extent of crime and who are its victims. The survey suggested that Africans were more likely to be the victims of violent crime than were other South African citizens. In addition, the data suggested that specific types of crime were more prevalent in some areas than in others; while race is critical to understanding victimization patterns, this is only because racial divisions remain linked to levels of wealth, style of life, and places of residence.¹³

Not only the extent but also the impact of crime varies across the society. In short, those who can least afford to absorb the costs of crime are most often its victims. In the vast majority of crimes of violence, the victims are African and poor. This conclusion is based on a measure of the proportion of each socioeconomic and race category victimized; it is thus untrue to suggest that Africans are the majority victims simply because they are in the majority. The costs of crime are higher for poor people given that they have few resources to cushion themselves from its effects.¹⁴ The poor are seldom able to pressure the government to secure their safety. As in other societies, it is the

middle and upper classes who press for police protection—even though such groups, despite their fears, are far more likely to suffer crimes of property, rather than crimes of violence.

The fact that African people are more likely to be victimized by violent crime is not new. An analysis of South African Police statistics in the late 1980s show that Africans were twenty times more likely to die by murder than whites. SAP data for the 1980s show whites to be the victims of only 4.2 percent of rapes and 2.8 percent of murders.¹⁵

This disproportionate risk of violence for poor people is also illustrated by a hospital-based survey of nonfatal injuries due to external causes in Johannesburg and Soweto between 1989 and 1990. Among victims of interpersonal violence, 22 percent were colored (8 percent of the denominator population), and 68 percent were African (62 percent of the denominator population).¹⁶

The residential segregation enforced under apartheid ensures that crime remains concentrated in poor and African neighborhoods. A victim survey of Johannesburg conducted in 1997 found that Africans living in townships or informal settlements were not only more exposed to violence in the course of property crimes, but also more exposed than whites to such interpersonal crimes as assault, murder, and rape. More than three-quarters of the victims of these crimes in Johannesburg were African; in the case of murder and rape, the vast majority of victims lived in the townships.¹⁷

In addition, the use of violence in the course of property crimes is more of a threat for African victims than for other groups. Violence was used in 20 percent of burglaries reported in the Johannesburg victim survey. One-quarter of African burglary victims experienced violence, compared to only 9 percent of white burglary victims in the city.¹⁸ Similarly, in Durban, between a quarter and a third of victims living in townships and informal settlements reported the use of violence in a criminal incident, while this was the case for only 14 percent of victims living in the suburbs.¹⁹

Data for the cities of Cape Town and Pretoria replicated these findings.²⁰ For example, data for Pretoria shows clearly that 22 percent of all Africans in Pretoria were victims of

violent crime between January of 1993 and April of 1998. This is in contrast to 5 percent of whites and means that Africans' chances of becoming victims of violent crime are four times higher than those of whites.²¹

It is likely that over time, as patterns of wealth and ownership in the society begin to shift, so too will patterns of victimization. In the near future this has important political implications for government; a new and emerging African middle class, like their white counterparts before them, will demand a more efficient system of criminal justice and law enforcement.

COMPARISONS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND CAUSES

One of the key controversies in South Africa's crime debate is how the country compares to other jurisdictions in terms of crime. Measuring South African crime levels against those in other countries is a controversial business. The government has been sensitive to criticism that the country is the "crime capital of the world" and has suggested that international comparisons on the currently available data are inaccurate. There is some truth in this. Many developing countries do not disclose their reported crime levels (if indeed they collect statistics at all) and so South Africa is seldom measured against similar countries. Only a handful of African states submit crime statistics to the international police organization Interpol.

On the available data, however, South Africa fares badly—hence the government's sensitivities. The country appears to have more serious levels of violent crime than states that have a comparable socioeconomic status, such as Brazil or Argentina. Thus, South Africa has, on the recorded statistics, the highest murder rate in the world—the 1997 Interpol data show a figure of 121.67 murders and attempted murders per one hundred thousand citizens. Of this total, the proportion of attempted murders is 53 percent. The only countries that come close to this are Jamaica at 40.96 (although no attempted murders are recorded in that country's statistics); neighboring Namibia at 48; Russia at 19.9 (although with a far lower proportion of attempts); Swaziland, 18.95; Brazil, 16.95; and Venezuela at 19.76, which excludes attempts.²²

Despite the problematic nature of the statistics, there is little doubt that South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world. This trend is consistent for almost all other crimes of violence, including rape and armed robbery. In the case of armed robbery, South Africa has the dubious distinction of having the world's highest rate.²³ But what are the particular characteristics of violent crime in the country?

Three important factors, which apply to a significant proportion of the country's violent crime, can be isolated: first, the fact that a surprising number of both victims and offenders of interpersonal violent crime are under the influence of alcohol; second, in a significant number of cases, victims and offenders of violent crimes are known to each other, indicating that much violence occurs in the home; and third, the use of firearms means that many crimes of violence have lethal consequences.

Research linking excessive alcohol consumption to interpersonal violent crime in South Africa is at a relatively early stage—but it is likely to have a significant (if not uncontroversial) impact on policy. A survey of victims conducted in the country's rural areas in 1998 documented a close connection between alcohol and crime.²⁴ The survey found that in just over 70 percent of all assault cases, the victim, the offender, or both were under the influence of alcohol. In the cases of murder and sexual assault (including rape) the survey found that in approximately 45 percent of such cases victims, offenders, or both were under the influence of alcohol. A separate study found that 53 percent of murder victims in the Cape metropole in 1996 had high blood alcohol levels, as compared to 30 percent of victims tested in Los Angeles between 1970 and 1979.²⁵ More recent research, which has included the testing of the urine of criminal suspects, has also found a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and violent crime in South Africa.²⁶

These studies provide some insight into possible policy alternatives, including, most critically, the more effective regulation of underage drinking. Overall consumption of alcohol in the country is not in itself a problem—South Africa ranks about tenth in the world for the level of alcohol consumption, although it rates first for the average annual rate of growth per capita of alcohol consumption.²⁷ Of more concern is “the over-

whelming evidence that large numbers of South Africans do not use alcohol responsibly.”²⁸ Binge drinking is a particular problem. This is most prevalent among young urban men, who make up a significant proportion of the criminal population: on current estimates 30 percent of these men drink at dangerous levels, compared to 6 percent in England and Wales.²⁹

Under apartheid, alcohol was seen as a means of

establishing and maintaining economic and social control, particularly on the farms, mines and in urban industry. Employers on wine and other farms in the Cape, and in the merging diamond and gold mines to the north, issued alcohol to attract and retain workers from rural areas. The “tot” or “dop” system is still practiced today on a large number of wine farms in the Western and Northern Cape Provinces [which now have extraordinarily high levels of interpersonal violent crime]. It takes many forms, including partial payment in lieu of wage and the provision of alcohol to supplement wages both during the week and over weekends.³⁰

In townships, municipal beer halls were established by local authorities to help finance township development.³¹

Excessive alcohol consumption appears to be an important contributing factor to violence in the home. South African survey evidence shows that the kinds of crime most citizens are likely to fear are those associated with being attacked or robbed by a stranger. Contrary to general public opinion, however, a majority of all violent crimes takes place between people who know each other. Most of these incidents of crime occur within people’s homes or at places of entertainment. The South African national victim survey found that in just over 60 percent of all cases of serious assault and sexual assault (including rape), victims knew their offenders by name, and approximately another 20 percent knew their offenders by sight.³²

The fact that alcohol plays some part in violent crime and that it occurs in the home or at places of entertainment goes some way in explaining the prominent seasonal crime patterns outlined in the previous section (see figure 1). All categories of interpersonal violent crime are more likely to occur over holiday periods—notably around Christmas and Easter—when people

are at home and alcohol is presumably more freely available. These factors are of course only a partial explanation of South Africa's violent crime rate, and are indeed contributing rather than causal factors (see below), but they do allow a better understanding of the high levels of interpersonal violent crime in the country as well as its specific seasonal patterns.

If the statistics on the links between alcohol and crime provide startling reading, the same applies to the role of firearms in crime in South Africa. There is little doubt that the use of firearms has made more lethal the encounters between offenders and victims.

In 1994, 41.5 percent of all reported murders were committed with firearms. By 1998 this figure had risen to 50 percent.³³ A survey of the causes of death in ten urban mortuaries found that firearms are now responsible for 26 percent of all non-natural deaths in these areas—this figure equaled that for traffic-related deaths. A full 87 percent of firearm-related deaths are homicides. The majority occur at night and over the weekends, when alcohol is also often involved.³⁴

The availability of firearms has also had a dramatic impact on violent property crimes such as armed robbery. Indeed, firearms have upgraded the violence and reduced the skills required to carry out many crimes of property. A good example is the theft of motor vehicles. Breaking and entering requires some skill to override increasingly complex electronic security systems. Hijacking a vehicle, by contrast, requires only courage and a gun. The available data shows this trend quite clearly. In 1998, 85 percent of all serious robberies were committed with firearms, up from 76 percent in 1996. Measured as a ratio, cases of robbery in which a firearm was used increased from 126.4 per one hundred thousand citizens in 1996 to 177.7 per one hundred thousand citizens in 1998.³⁵

Significantly, the number of firearms now available on the illegal market appears to be increasing. There are generally two sources for illegal weapons in South Africa. Some are smuggled in from Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where civil wars ensure a plentiful supply of weapons—and also a need for quick cash. Others come from local arms caches established during the struggle against apartheid. At the

same time, there has been a dramatic upswing in the movement of firearms from the legal to illegal market. In 1994, 15,309 legal firearms were lost or stolen; by 1998, that number had doubled to 30,220.³⁶ This trend correlates almost exactly with the increase in aggravated robbery illustrated in figure 2.

Still, neither alcohol nor the availability of guns by themselves accounts for high levels of crime.³⁷ The causes of crime in South Africa have been widely debated. Most commonly, as we have seen, the problem is blamed on a “culture of violence,” which has resulted from years of apartheid brutality, the breakdown of family units, lack of respect for others, the subordinate position of women, and a propensity, given the country’s past, to settle disputes violently. In addition, some observers blame a breakdown of the criminal justice system and poor policing. Still others point to unemployment and the inherited social and economic inequalities of the society.

One significant and often underestimated factor is the fact that apartheid depended on a double standard of law and order—one for whites, another for blacks. It is hardly surprising then that many South Africans now maintain a healthy skepticism about rules and those who enforce them.

It is no surprise that all South Africans refer jokingly to having goods “redistributed” when they are stolen. Some whites, meanwhile, feel alienated from the new regime, and there is some evidence that this has increased certain types of criminal activity. Companies, for example, report that there has been an increase in corruption and theft at the middle-management level in the financial-services industry, although there are no overall figures to illustrate this. “Whites steal because they no longer believe they are contributing to something they believe in, after the dream of the rainbow nation has faded,” was the comment of a senior manager involved with fraud investigations at a large insurance company.³⁸ These are complex and little-understood factors for which there appears to be no immediate policy remedy, apart from the more general aim of building a more inclusive society in which all can participate as the political transition proceeds.

There is, of course, some link between South Africa’s transition and the growth in crime that has accompanied it. But it

would be dangerously simplistic to argue that crime is primarily a *consequence* of the transition: indeed, as a review of the above issues suggests, there is strong evidence to suggest that its roots lie in the apartheid system, which the transition has had to dismantle. There is, nevertheless, little doubt that increases in criminality from 1990 are consistent with other countries undergoing a transition to democracy: as change proceeds, society and its instruments of social control—formal and informal—are reshaped. The result is that new areas open up where crime can flourish. Nowhere is this clearer than in the development of more organized forms of criminality in the country.

AN EMERGING CRIMINAL NETWORK

A detailed review of the nature and extent of organized crime has now been conducted by the government. This shows there to be approximately eight hundred criminal groups operating in the country. The police have identified just under twelve thousand primary suspects whom they believe to be involved. About one-third of organized criminal groups' operations are confined to a single province; the remainder operate countrywide. Just under three hundred of the syndicates are believed to operate either throughout the African continent or internationally.³⁹ What was once hardly regarded as a problem—there was no organized crime unit in the South African Police Service until 1995—has now become a challenge of significant proportions.

Before 1994, organized criminal activities (not including the criminal activities of the state itself) were poorly developed. The country was largely cut off from the world and engaged in a near civil war. While criminal organizations were used by both sides to smuggle weapons and disrupt opponents, political considerations were always predominant.⁴⁰

Domestic organized crime groups grew rapidly once apartheid was ended. In the absence of immediate opportunities for formal employment, some veterans of the struggle for power turned to crime. It is no coincidence in South Africa that those areas of the country that experienced the highest levels of political conflict—parts of KwaZulu-Natal and the townships

to the east of Johannesburg—now have among the highest levels of syndicated criminal activity. In KwaMashu, north of Durban, for example, young men who once fought apartheid have turned to crime, quickly dominating local gang structures and, ironically, forging alliances with ex-members of the KwaZulu Police, who now staff the local police station. In the town of Nongoma in northern KwaZulu-Natal, the seat of the Zulu Royal House, criminal groups engaged in protection rackets and the smuggling of arms are closely interlinked with local politicians, local chiefs, the police, and taxi operators.⁴¹

The need to move illicit goods has meant that the largely unregulated transport sector in the country has served as a breeding ground for organized crime. There has been a dramatic expansion in the number of minibus taxis. Rival taxi organizations now bribe state officials and employ “hit squads” to eliminate potential competitors.

The growth and consolidation of a few powerful groups in the taxi industry constitute a classic case of the overlap between legitimate and illegitimate business (found in many societies other than South Africa) in the development of organized crime. Given their mobility, taxi operators are key players in smuggling networks across the subcontinent. Attempts to regulate the industry are often undercut by official corruption and lax policing.

At the start of the transition in 1994, state structures, including the police, were temporarily weakened. Border controls were relaxed, and international tourism was expanded. South Africa became more accessible to the international community. As a result, foreign criminal groups have moved aggressively into South Africa. The Russian Mafia is now involved in money laundering operations and in cross-border smuggling, and the Chinese Triads now smuggle abalone, rhino horn, and ivory. Nigerian crime syndicates now dominate the trade in cocaine and are involved in sophisticated fraud scams.⁴²

The lack of stability in the subcontinent as a whole, and the ongoing civil wars in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have also fostered criminal activities in the region. Resource accumulation, the desire for profit, and a breakdown between what is considered legal and illegal by political actors

have ensured that protagonists in these civil wars are vulnerable to manipulation by outsiders. International arms merchants hawk illicit arms. Syndicates try to acquire mining concessions and to smuggle diamonds and other precious commodities. The result is often a complex system of payoffs and protection fees, and an equally complex overlap between legal and illegal activities. These have involved both South African and international criminal groups.

Greater exposure to, and competition from, the established international criminal groups active in South Africa has been one of the factors that have contributed to the increasing sophistication of South Africa's indigenous organized crime groups. Before 1994, for example, the six or seven largest crime syndicates that controlled the narcotics trade in the Western Cape province were constantly engaged in self-destructive turf wars. This made them more vulnerable to police action, in part by creating an environment in which informers were relatively easy to recruit. Rival gangs also used the criminal justice system to neutralize their opponents by laying criminal charges against them.

With the opening up of South Africa's borders after the 1994 election, and with the realization that foreign crime syndicates were likely to exploit the new situation, most of these Western Cape syndicates decided to establish a cartel. Their aim was to reduce turf wars, to order bulk shipments, to distribute the drugs in prearranged proportions at agreed prices, and to allocate distribution areas according to a set of agreed principles. Called the "Firm," the cartel substantially changed the nature of organized crime in the Western Cape. By 1996, enormous profits had been generated, which needed to be laundered and invested. Members of the Firm started buying fixed properties in rural areas along the Cape coastline. Some of the more assertive syndicates (described as "gangs" in the Western Cape) that formed part of the Firm, such as the Hard Livings, set up branches of their gang in many communities and towns, and also struck alliances with Chinese Triads and the Sicilian Mafia.⁴³ Local agents of the Hard Livings were provided with seed capital and cars to run the drug trade. The leadership merely collected the money and coordinated the trade.

In addition to the increased structure and organization of many criminal groups, they have learned to utilize modern technology to their advantage. Through the corrupting of police officers, some criminal groups have equipped themselves with radio receivers that allow them to listen to police communications. They are often forewarned of police raids and road-blocks. It has even become common for teenage “runners” (street-corner peddlers of narcotics) to be equipped with cellular phones.

The increasing sophistication evidenced by many indigenous criminal groups is clearly not something peculiar to South Africa. What makes the situation challenging is the rapidity of the increase in crimes such as hijacking, armed robbery, and cross-border smuggling that are generally perpetrated by organized criminal groups.

STATE AND CITIZEN RESPONSES

The South African government has increasingly defined crime as a key danger to the consolidation of democracy. Police reform, which initially had concentrated more on legitimizing the police in the eyes of the communities they once oppressed, has begun to take on a harder edge. A new elite unit has been formed to fight organized crime, and large-scale anticrime operations are now the order of the day. Attempts have also been made to increase the efficiency of the justice system (although huge problems remain in this area), and to strengthen the punishments for serious criminal offenders through the introduction of a system of minimum sentences.

It is too early to tell whether or not these initiatives will have substantial impacts on the overall level of crime. There are some positive indications; the number of serious robberies in the first few months of 2000 seems to have leveled off. Still, local policing remains generally weak, which does not bode well for the future. In any case, we have shown that interpersonal violent crime in South Africa characteristically occurs in the home and involves alcohol abuse—and these are not factors easily addressed by tougher policing and harsher punishments.

The hard-pressed citizenry, however, appears more than pleased with the government's new response to the problem of crime. Recent survey evidence suggests that the majority of the population agrees with the tougher statements coming from government ministers and senior officials with respect to crime.⁴⁴ The outcry around crime from the white middle class is now more muted, as government has stepped up its effort to counter the problem and all citizens have adapted their lives to take account of security issues.

Currently, public debate is dominated by two interrelated issues: the regulation of legal firearms, and the continued attacks on white commercial farmers. The government wants to limit the number of firearms, both legal and illegal. Proposed legislation provides for stricter controls on gun ownership, in the hope of reducing the flow of legal firearms into criminal hands. The draft legislation has been met with a storm of protest from an increasingly well-organized gun lobby. It argues that government has failed to enforce current legislation (which is true), and that more controls on legal gun ownership will not inhibit the flow of firearms into criminal hands (which is not true). The debate is politically charged, since many white gun owners see it as an attempt to disarm them—even in the face of continued attacks on their farms. Ongoing incidents and the brutality associated with them have had a dramatic impact on whites living in rural areas in the country. While the once powerful (and formerly state-funded) national farmers' union has lobbied the government strongly on the issue, its own base of support has fragmented. On the farms themselves, smaller and more conservative unions are holding sway in some areas. Attacks on farmers hold the potential of being a powerful mobilizing tool—something not lost on opposition parties. For the moment, however, most farmers have begun to protect themselves, doling out “jungle justice” to offenders who are caught and building strong local security networks without federal support.⁴⁵

The country continues to experience outbursts of vigilante action. A group called People Against Gangsterism and Drugs is probably the most prominent vigilante movement.⁴⁶ Another vigilante group, Mapogo a Matamaga, has existed for some

time in the Northern Province, spreading its influence to cities in Gauteng. Meanwhile, private security companies police neighborhoods in cities like Johannesburg and Durban, and also protect some suburbs. A key challenge for the government is to control these sometimes violent nongovernment organizations.

CONCLUSION

Curbing crime remains one of the key challenges of post-apartheid South Africa. The problem, as this essay has attempted to show, is a complex one with multiple dimensions. Thus, on one hand, more effective policing responses are required to counter organized crime in the country; on the other, more appropriate interventions to undercut the causes of the country's high levels of interpersonal violent crime are required. State responses have only been partially successful in both areas.

It is accurate, however, to say that the problems of crime in the country will not be easily solved in the short term. While the most positive sign is the decline in the country's homicide rate, it is slow and steady, rather than dramatic and immediate. But it represents the reality that reductions in all categories of crime are unlikely to be achieved overnight.

In the meantime, high levels of crime have important political consequences. For whites, they are a key factor eroding confidence in the new democratic order; for the majority of South Africans (who are also more likely to be victimized), crime undermines the promise that democracy brought of a better life.

ENDNOTES

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In Search of Safety: Police Transformation and Public Responses in South Africa

INTRODUCTION

DURING HIS TERM OF OFFICE, President Mandela laid great stress on the need for reconciliation and on the importance of developing a new South African patriotism that would shape the “rainbow nation.” The newly elected government, inexperienced and cautious, concentrated on consolidating its political authority and on formulating new policies that would transform South Africa.

The assumption of the presidency by Thabo Mbeki in June of 1999 saw a shift of emphasis from reconciliation toward transformation and delivery. A more realistic debate ensued about the nature of the inequalities in South Africa and how best to address them. More effective delivery, particularly for those who felt that the new democracy had not benefited them, became a key objective. Mbeki adopted the style of a hands-on chief executive officer to whom ministers had to account for the effective running of their departments. This approach has already had an impact on policing and on public perceptions. But the complexity of the task at hand is such that neither tried-and-tested policing strategies from elsewhere in the world nor a “strong hand” approach are likely to succeed in reducing crime

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significantly unless policing strategies are tailored to meet the specific needs of South Africa's divergent societies. Attempts have been made during the past six years to do just that. The steps that have been taken to transform policing have contributed to stemming the rising crime rate. However, the high levels at which such stabilization is taking place continue to be unacceptable to citizens.

Debate in South Africa therefore continues to be dominated by concerns about the high crime rate. Diversity makes solutions to this problem difficult to come by. President Mbeki has on more than one occasion enunciated his view that South Africa is a country of two nations.¹ His assessment is primarily informed by the stark contrasts between the material conditions under which different communities live in South Africa. Although such a bipolar analysis can only partially explain the complexity of South Africa's social and political makeup, the "two nations in one" view does highlight the many contrasts and differences that exist. Development economists have referred to South Africa's economy as a combination between a First- and Third-World economy. Political analysts have referred to the tensions between traditionalism and modernity and to the contrasts between the norms espoused by South Africa's modern liberal-democratic constitution and those represented by traditional institutions.²

It is estimated that approximately 25 percent of South Africa's voters presently live under traditional authority, primarily in black and rural areas. The notion of traditional hereditary leadership, which is widely accepted in South Africa, stands in stark contrast to what the norms of a liberal-democratic constitution require—namely, elected leadership. Those who have accepted the normative framework of a liberal-democratic constitution often regard it as a given that only the institutions of state, such as an independent judiciary, can dispense justice fairly and thereby provide stability in a democracy. However, for those who are strongly influenced by traditional norms, these institutions of state seem inflexible, alien, and an obstacle to properly dispensing justice.

A survey conducted in the Eastern Cape Province during mid-1999 found that just under half of all respondents and 75

percent of rural respondents supported alternative or traditional forms of punishment.³ The Eastern Cape, which has a population of about 6.3 million people, has a large rural population in which traditional leaders continue to play an important role. The survey showed that 23 percent of the respondents agreed that “politicians should influence courts’ decisions on what sentence to impose and in finding accused persons guilty or not.”

To complicate the issue further, the alienation from the state that black urban township dwellers experienced during years of apartheid rule persuaded many to take the law into their own hands during the 1980s and early 1990s. They organized popular forms of justice through street committees and “community courts.” This form of “people’s justice” addressed the legitimate security needs of many communities in which the police were seen as oppressors.

If South Africa consists of “two nations in one,” should the state regard itself as an agent of modernization and social transformation? Should the objective be to persuade and presurize the traditionalists and those who adopted their own forms of “community justice” in the past to exchange their systems of policing and dispensing justice for the norms and institutions of the new Constitution? Such an approach could well lead to tensions and even further alienate large parts of the population from the constitutional regime.

Since 1994, the approach of the new government has been very clear. It has demonstrated its commitment to create a constitutional “Rechtsstaat” and to ensure that the transformation of South Africa happens within lawful limits. The Constitution has therefore become an agent of modernization, but not without concomitant tensions. The tensions between constitutionalism and traditionalism remain as real today as when the new government was elected in 1994. Then, as now, the dilemma for the government was how to maintain stability within the limits of a liberal democracy, especially when the norms and institutions of this democracy remain unfamiliar and “foreign” to large sections of the population.

These are some of the considerations that policymakers in the new government had to take into account in 1994 when they

embarked on a course of transforming the police and the criminal justice system of South Africa. At that time there was little appreciation of the extent to which the rapid and relatively peaceful transition from an authoritarian regime toward a democracy was likely to weaken state institutions before they could become stronger again. Nor was it expected that a rapid rise in crime rates would soon become a central concern. There were more immediate concerns that had to be addressed—not least the need to rely on a discredited police force to maintain order while a reformed police force was being established.

POST 1994: LEGITIMIZING THE POLICE “FORCE”

The liberal use of force had been central to policing under the apartheid regime. This was true not only of the white South African Police (SAP), but also of the other police forces that existed in the country. When the new government took over in April of 1994, there were ten independent police forces in each of the black African “homelands.” The KwaZulu and Bophutatswana police were notorious for their harsh policing of antiapartheid activists, perhaps because they were closely tied to Pretoria and the SAP.

The majority of South Africans had been policed more for control than for crime prevention. As a result, large sectors of South Africa’s population, particularly black South Africans, regarded the police force as racist, oppressive, and illegitimate. The new ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), had undertaken very little research on policing issues prior to 1994. The focus had been on the military and other departments. The party had few members who could fill policing roles in a new South Africa. This meant that the country’s existing police forces would, by default, have to play the leading role in transforming themselves. This was not a promising recipe for success. But there was no workable alternative.

Given the history of policing in the country, it was obvious that the SAP could be used effectively by the new government only if two conditions were met: if the police became more accountable to those whom they policed; and if the people came to see the police as legitimate agents of the new regime.

The new government set about addressing these challenges immediately. First, it formed a single new national South African Police Service (SAPS), consisting of approximately 130,000 officers. Second, it appointed an old-order police officer who did not have a tainted record to direct the new national police service. Third, the leaders of the new government, from President Mandela on down, went out of their way to praise the police and urged citizens to accept them as their new protectors. For example, President Mandela joined Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, and Pik Botha, the former National Party Foreign Minister, in urging Soweto residents to cooperate with the police, driving through the city's streets in an open truck to make the point dramatically.

As the government's own White Paper on Safety and Security put it:

The immediate challenge of the new government in 1994 was to create a legitimate police service out of the eleven police forces constituted under apartheid. Along with this challenge, political leaders had to ensure that the police would support the new democracy, rather than oppose or undermine it. Key to this process was ensuring that the police in the future would act in ways which won the trust of citizens who had once feared them.⁴

To this end, the government tried to involve local communities in the policing of their neighborhoods. In each of the 1,200 police-station areas across the country, the government created Community Police Forums (CPFs). Community representatives as well as police officers served on such CPFs. The government hoped that black townships that had established their own forms of vigilante justice would embrace the reformed system of "legitimate policing."

At the same time, officers were asked to take training courses on human rights as part of the stress on creating a new style of "democratic policing." At first, officers were wary of the new policy initiatives. Many white police officers waited to see how more sweeping changes in the structure might affect their future careers. Morale suffered. A lethargy set in, which could partly be explained by the many uncertainties that white police officers now faced. Among many black members of the police

forces, meanwhile, there was an expectation that they could expect more power and responsibility, as well as rapid promotion and better pay. The fears and anxieties of whites mixed uneasily with the heightened expectations of blacks.

The effectiveness of community policing forums has been much questioned. Within the SAPS, many officers regarded them as a necessary evil, required to bring citizens in contact with the police, but having little impact on the day-to-day conduct of policing. Tensions quickly arose between community representatives and police officers. In many areas, the community representatives demanded that the police do what they told them to. Almost always, the police refused. Legally, they were generally on solid ground, but that only reinforced the impression that the community forums were simply “toy telephones” with no real power.

Within the police agency itself, those charged with community policing assumed growing importance. The new minister had brought with him a group of civilians, largely lawyers and academics, with little practical experience of policing. By 1996, in accord with the new Constitution, a civilian secretariat had been formed to advise the minister, assure civilian oversight of the SAPS, and monitor police performance. The secretariat was headed by a civilian who in theory had a rank and status equal to the national commissioner of the SAPS. This was a recipe for conflict. The police interpreted it as one more indication that they were not fully trusted.

By 1996, serious problems had begun to develop. The quality of the new national police force was wildly uneven. Only one out of four detectives in the new force had received any formal training. Only one in ten had more than six years of experience.⁵ As a result, the new force had trouble solving criminal cases and bringing the criminals to justice. Research conducted in 1998 showed that some 2.2 million crimes were reported to the police, but only 259,000 cases (or 12 percent) resulted in prosecution or in a guilty plea by the accused person.⁶

Those skilled officers who did serve in the SAPS mainly serviced parts of the country that had been classified as “white.” In 1994, three-quarters of the country’s police stations were situated in white suburbs and business districts.⁷ The vast ma-

jority of interpersonal violent crimes, however, occurred in townships and black rural areas.⁸ By 1998, policing in some black regions was in a state of virtual collapse. In KwaMashu, just outside Durban, for example, the police were often drunk on duty and linked to crime in the area: they had close ties to local gangs and were regarded by some as being partisan toward supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party.

In a 1997 Victims of Crime Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the way the police were handling crime in their neighborhood. Nationally, respondents were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied (39 percent) than satisfied (38 percent) with the police.⁹ Public surveys conducted between 1994 and 1998 suggested that there remained a clear distinction between how whites and blacks viewed the police. Whites were more inclined to trust the police, but thought service was deteriorating. Blacks were more likely to mistrust the police, but regarded the emergence of democratic governance as bringing some improvements in police service. Since then, there has been a convergence of black and white views. Safety has become a key issue for all citizens. The police are now regarded by all racial groups as performing poorly in their fight against crime.¹⁰

The government did not, at first, have a coordinated response to the problem of rising crime. Finally, in 1996, it unveiled the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), although an overarching approach to controlling and preventing crime such as the NCPS did not necessarily mean a more focussed approach. For a period of time, the government's response was partly to deny that crime was a problem and partly to respond in an *ad hoc* fashion. The result was an overwhelming frustration with government's inability to concede openly that crime was prevalent.

RESPONSES TO RISING CRIME: 1996–1999

As popular worries about crime grew, antigovernment protests increased, and a number of new nongovernment anticrime groups began to mobilize. These ranged from vigilante organizations to groups launched by big business. The government's first

response to this growing pressure was to co-opt the most vocal of the new anticrime groups.

The most prominent of these groups was “Business Against Crime” (BAC), an alliance of white businessmen. While BAC originally lobbied the government, it soon began to channel resources *to* the government. Initially, the relationship was uncoordinated—the BAC alternately pressured officials and offered resources to the police. Over time, the relationship stabilized, and agreements were struck as to what issues were of priority for business intervention.

At first, the SAPS accepted almost all offers of assistance. The result was an array of new projects, often defined by the donors rather than by the immediate priorities of the police service. The partnership between business and government climaxed with the appointment to the SAPS of a prominent South African businessman, Meyer Kahn from South African Breweries. While Kahn was appointed as chief executive officer of the SAPS, he did not replace the national commissioner of police, George Fivaz. Kahn’s role and status, and his position in the chain of command, were never entirely clear. Kahn’s appointment, however, did placate the business community.

Ironically, it was a much more sinister anticrime initiative that exerted the most powerful influence on government thinking in these years. A vigilante group calling itself People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) had been operating since the mid-1990s in the Western Cape province. While it had originally targeted drug dealers in former colored townships on the periphery of the city of Cape Town, trying to frighten them out of business by targeting their homes with crudely made bombs, the group grew increasingly militant under the growing influence of radical Muslim leaders. They began to target government buildings, particularly police stations, as well as prominent tourist areas in the heart of Cape Town.

When PAGAD’s targets had still been drug dealers in colored townships, the national commissioner of police, Fivaz, had tried to convince the group to cooperate with the police. They ignored his pleas. And after PAGAD had placed bombs in the center of white Cape Town, the government was compelled to modify its strategy.

Vigilante violence was not confined to PAGAD. In many of the poorer urban black townships there was a resurgence of vigilante action against suspected criminals. For example, in Guguletu, a predominantly black township on the outskirts of Cape Town, a surge in crime during 1998 led to the community taking action against “criminals.” Alleged rapists, murderers, burglars, and thieves were physically assaulted and paraded naked down the streets of Guguletu. The state deplored the lawlessness—but also replaced a number of local police officers in an effort to restore public confidence in the government’s own police force.

Under apartheid, many black communities had welcomed vigilante groups as legitimate organs of local law and order. After 1994, however, public opinion shifted: groups that engaged in vigilante action in post-apartheid South Africa did so at the risk of being labeled “bad” by the state, and also by formerly sympathetic members of local communities. This shift occurred despite the inability of the state to provide a safe and secure environment for many black communities. Most people wanted every community to adhere to the new legal order, and to rely on its criminal justice system. However, when that system failed to secure the safety of citizens, vigilante groups sprang into action.¹¹ Some citizens came to regard the new Constitution as favoring the criminal instead of the victim.

The Department of Justice and the courts faced similar challenges. A legal system that was primarily shaped by Roman, Dutch, and English law had to be made more accessible to the majority of South Africans. The South African Law Commission offered the following explanation for the high levels of support that alternative forms of justice enjoyed among black South Africans:

Over the years, South Africa’s formal legal system has been perceived by certain sections of the population, notably black South Africans, as illegitimate (because of its association with the apartheid government), as repressive (through its implementation by the police force) or as an expensive process in which the cost of justice is prohibitive. For many, a foreign, dominant, Western legal system is seen to be superimposed on an intuitive, indigenous

legal system. It is seen as alien, inaccessible and inappropriate for dealing with conflict which most South Africans experience in their daily lives.

Many of the peculiar problems facing the black community stemmed from the largely ineffective administration of the justice system in black areas. The legal problems, as well as problems of social adjustment encountered by urban blacks, were not being solved. It is therefore not strange that people resorted to self-help in the form of unofficial or folk institutions. In urban areas different forms of community courts were instituted. "Community courts" has become the contemporary term used when referring to popular justice structures, such as street committees and yard, block or area committees operating in urbanised African townships and informal settlements.

Effective government is largely dependent on a legal system that is respected by those it is intended to serve. The challenge facing the democratic state is therefore to ensure that the justice system is acceptable and accessible to the larger community. A great need exists to create an alternative but uniform system where the resolution of community disputes can be handled much more effectively and in less time than in formal courts.¹²

Frustration about the legal system also existed among members of the police, albeit for different reasons. Many of them deplored the new constraints imposed by the Constitution, arguing that their hands were tied in the fight against crime and terrorism. Some argued as well that detention without trial should be reintroduced for specific types of offense. The police certainly seemed unable to cope with many crimes relating to urban terror: many cases were poorly investigated, and few suspects, as we have seen, were arrested.

Within the government some officials stressed the importance of *preventing* crime. In 1996, the government had adopted the National Crime Prevention Strategy, which sought to focus all of the resources of government toward both improving the functioning of the criminal justice system and preventing crime. However, the NCPS brought little practical improvement. Many came to regard it as a soft and ineffective alternative to real crime control.

Those South Africans who could afford it increasingly turned to private security firms. While private forms of security have

enjoyed an increased popularity in many countries, in South Africa the industry has been one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, with an annual expansion rate of 30 percent since 1970. By 1999, the estimated turnover of the private security industry exceeded R 10 billion per year, a total close to the national police budget (R 15.3 million for the 1999–2000 budget year).¹³

Like affluent whites, many South African blacks lacked confidence in the new criminal justice system. A survey conducted in the Eastern Cape province during 1999 showed that only a minority of black and colored respondents thought that the criminal justice system had improved since 1994, or that the new government had done a good job of fighting crime.¹⁴ The Eastern Cape province has traditionally been a stronghold of the governing party, the ANC. Any ruling party would be concerned about such a critical response from its core supporters.¹⁵ The only reassuring finding of the survey was that the fear of crime in the Eastern Cape had not yet eroded public confidence in the Constitution and the rule of law.

But the lack of popular confidence in the police force, combined with a perceived lack of government support, led in the 1990s to a precipitate decline in police morale. There were more and more cases of police corruption. Some officers turned to crime. Overall, discipline weakened.

By late 1998, the problems were glaring. Hardly a day went by without media coverage of poor police performance or police involvement in crime. The police themselves were increasingly under attack by criminals, reflecting the viciousness of the battle on the streets: in 1997, 224 police officers lost their lives, the majority while off duty.¹⁶ While crises in parts of the country were contained through national intervention, local station service delivery deteriorated. The stage was set for a change.

1999: A PENDULUM SWING

The period immediately before the second general election in June of 1999 saw the police on the defensive in almost all areas. Policing was widely criticized in the media, and the opposition

focused on crime as one of the key issues in its campaign. Softer approaches such as prevention and partnership, which had been in vogue only a few months before, were now seen as hopeless responses to a national crisis.

Overall levels of violent property crime, such as armed robbery and hijacking, peaked in October of 1999. Around nine thousand such incidents were reported that month. There were also reported increases in theft and ordinary street robbery. Even in categories showing no increases, the level of crime remained unacceptably high: in 1999, there were between two thousand and three thousand murders a month, between fifteen thousand and thirty thousand serious assaults a month, and between three thousand and five thousand rapes reported to the police each month.¹⁷ There was no sudden and dramatic increase in crime before the election. There was, however, a significantly better understanding of the nature and extent of organized crime in the country, and a feeling that a tougher response was required.

The most significant result of the new mood of crisis was a proposal to create a new police agency, completely independent of the SAPS. The police suggested establishing a large new federal organization similar to the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation. Rejecting this idea, the president and ministers opted for creating a smaller investigative unit situated in the Department of Justice instead of in the Department of Safety and Security, which supervised the SAPS. This was a significant move—it signaled not only a new government commitment to fighting crime, but also a growing recognition that the police might not have the appropriate skills to win the fight.

Government statements on crime assumed a harder edge after the election with the appointment of a new Minister for Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete. The new minister traveled widely across the country meeting police officers and strongly speaking out against crime. The thrust of his message was that criminals would be treated harshly, and that police officers should use every legal power to fight crime. Indeed, Tshwete sometimes went further, both in public and in private, urging treatment that was clearly outside of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Criminals were to be shown no mercy. Tshwete has

also raised the option of constitutional change to support the fight against crime, a change that many police officers, at least at the senior level, strongly favor.

Tshwete's statements tapped into a deep vein of public resentment around crime. His claim that unpunished criminals had more rights than victims provoked surprisingly little opposition. Public surveys suggested that citizens were entirely in agreement with the minister, believing that a harsh response against crime was necessary.¹⁸ If there had been any doubts before about the government's commitment to ending crime, Tshwete had effectively quelled them.

The police minister was not the only politician to tout a "harder" approach to crime. Elected members of Parliament, irrespective of their party affiliation, also called for a crack-down on crime. New laws making it harder for accused persons to post bail were widely endorsed, despite the fears voiced by some critics that the constitutional rights of suspects were being eroded. Such critics were now regarded as "soft on crime."

As a result of the government's new stance on crime, official oversight of the police was scaled back. The Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD), established in 1994 to investigate police misconduct, including deaths in police custody or by police action, found its standing weakened after the minister's statements. The ICD investigates serious abuses: since 1994, there have been frequent reports of deaths in police custody, some of which resulted from torture or ill treatment. In 1997 alone 5,300 cases of assault were lodged against the police. In the first ten months of 1998, the ICD received 607 reports of deaths in police custody or as a result of police action.¹⁹ But now, Tshwete's remarks implied, the ICD was performing a disservice by trying to protect criminals rather than victims.

Another casualty of the government's tough new talk was the civilian Secretariat for Safety and Security. Established to advise the minister and monitor police performance, its very existence suggested that the police could not be wholly trusted. Under Tshwete, the post of secretary was downgraded, and the secretariat was restructured.

Despite such symbolic gestures, Tshwete actually changed little about the government's approach to criminal justice. While

morale improved, there was no effort made to repair the structural weaknesses of the police force.

The government did, however, appoint a new commissioner of the SAPS, Jakkie Selebi. An outsider to policing, Selebi was a former diplomat with a good record. He was also close to the president and thus a figure of significant political weight. Selebi focused on 274 police station areas that generated more than 50 percent of the country's crime. He introduced highly visible police actions in these areas, such as roadblocks and cordon-and-search operations. One potential problem with these operations was that they might continue to disempower station-level managers and not lead to dramatic improvements in police service delivery at the local level. But a politically powerful and black commissioner had options open to him that were not available to the former white commissioner. He was certainly in a position to confront more effectively the powerful black police unions and to criticize poor performance. Equally, he could defend the police in senior political circles in a way that a former policeman who had served the apartheid order clearly could not. This bodes well for some improvements in policing.

It is too early to say what progress may be made under Selebi and Tshwete. What is clearly needed is a police agency that acts with greater confidence in fighting crime, that has the support of its political masters, and that at the same time respects the rights of those whom it polices—the guilty and the innocent alike.

CONCLUSION

The South African Police under apartheid enforced illegitimate laws brutally. The coming of the democratic order entailed substantial changes in how the society was policed. Initially these changes focussed on ensuring that the police were more legitimate and more accountable. Oversight was introduced and community police forums were established at the local level. For many black people, policing seemed to improve—if nothing else, it became less brutal and intrusive.

But questions of legitimacy and accountability are no longer the central issues of the day. While it is likely that these would

have faded in any event as the democracy matured and the various players worked more closely together, increases in crime in the country have acted as a catalyst for this process. But increases in crime have also resulted in a strong lobby within the police to weaken not only the civilian oversight functions but also the democratic legal framework for policing the country. Ironically, the more successful the police and other law enforcement agencies are in the short term, the weaker the case will be for making changes to the existing legal framework, with its strong Bill of Rights.

It will take perhaps another decade to recruit and train a generation of police officers who have no experience of apartheid. The danger until then is that the fight against crime will lead to ongoing paramilitary responses. If the latest law enforcement initiatives do not show success, and this is possible given that much crime in the country has social and economic roots or requires sophisticated investigative skills, then more forceful crackdowns are possible.

Since 1999, the new “gloves-off” approach to fighting crime has also produced some positive results. When there is a noticeable increase in the number of high-profile success stories by the police, the public is persuaded that the police have a firmer grip on crime. But there has not yet been a noticeable trickle-down effect experienced by the average citizen at the police station level.

Will levels of crime continue to be reduced in the years to come? The relatively free reign organized criminal groups have had is likely to be curbed. The murder rate has shown a drop in every year since 1994. However, the levels of crimes that are typically linked to a collapse of the social fabric, such as child abuse, rape, drug consumption, and assaults, remain alarmingly high and in some cases show continued increases. The same applies to those crimes that are influenced by poverty, unemployment, and South Africa’s notorious propensity for violence, such as robbery. A reduction in these crime categories will require concerted efforts by far more role players than the police.

If economic growth and job creation meet their projected targets during the next five years, a stabilization, albeit at high

levels, in most serious crime categories can be expected. However, this is likely to take much longer with respect to those crimes typically linked to a damaged social fabric or to poverty and unemployment. Public pressure on the police for improved service delivery will continue. The gap between the public's expectations of safety and the actual levels of crime that they experience will continue to be wide and serve as an ongoing source of pressure for police reform. Such public pressure should increasingly focus on the actual quality of police reform if it is to contribute meaningfully toward more effective policing and an eventual reduction in crime levels.

More training will have to be provided to enhance management skills and investigative techniques, and ongoing racism will have to be addressed. Accountable and professional policing with an adherence to constitutional norms is what the public expects. This may be a tall order, given that more than 90 percent of the present members of the police received their basic police training and orientation under the former regime or in the various former "independent" territories. Transforming the police is always a task fraught with complex problems—even more so when it has to happen during a period of fundamental political and social transition. In South Africa the task remains incomplete and the challenges are daunting.

ENDNOTES

¹Statement at the opening of the debate in the National Assembly on "Reconciliation and Nation Building," Cape Town, 29 May 1998, <<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1998/sp980529.html>>: "One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations."

²Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, *Afrikaner Afrikaan* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1999), 95.

³Martin Schonteich, *Justice Versus Retribution: Attitudes to Punishment in the Eastern Cape*, ISS Monograph Series, no. 45 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, February 2000), 3.

- ⁴*In Service of Safety: White Paper on Safety and Security*, Pretoria, September 1998, 4.
- ⁵*Ibid.*, 5.
- ⁶Martin Schonteich, *Assessing the Crime Fighters: The Ability of the Criminal Justice System to Solve and Prosecute Crime*, ISS Paper 40, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, September 1999, 10.
- ⁷*In Service of Safety: White Paper on Safety and Security*, 5.
- ⁸Antoinette Louw and Mark Shaw, *Stolen Opportunities: The Impact of Crime on South Africa's Poor*, Monograph Series, no. 14 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, July 1997).
- ⁹Statistics South Africa, *Victims of Crime Survey, 1998*, Statistical Release P0342 (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 1999), 105.
- ¹⁰See, for example, Rod Alence, "The Democratic Transition and Crime in South Africa: The Record of the 1990s," *Nedcor ISS Crime Index* 3 (2) (March–April 1999).
- ¹¹Daniel Nina, "Dirty Harry is Back: Vigilantism in South Africa—The (re) Emergence of 'Good' and 'Bad' Community," *African Security Review* 9 (1) (2000): 20.
- ¹²South African Law Commission, *Community Dispute Resolution Structures*, Discussion Paper 87, Project 94, Pretoria, 1999, 3–5.
- ¹³Jenny Irish, *Policing for Profit: The Future of South Africa's Private Security Industry*, ISS Monograph Series, no. 39 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, August 1999), 1.
- ¹⁴Schonteich, *Assessing the Crime Fighters*, 42.
- ¹⁵The June 1999 general election results showed that the negative views on crime fighting were not held with such intensity that support for the ANC was withheld. It received 74 percent of the vote in that province.
- ¹⁶South African Institute of Race Relations, *South African Survey, 1999–2000* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 2000), 79.
- ¹⁷Figures obtained from month-to-month comparison supplied by the Crime Information Management Centre, South African Police Service, Pretoria. It should be noted, however, that overall statistical increases and decreases in crime levels generally have little impact on the political and public perception of the problem—it is as likely that an accumulation of high-profile criminal events such as the bombs in the Western Cape, the hijacking of prominent individuals, and a spate of cash-in-transit heists in the country shaped these perceptions as much as any sober examination of the available crime statistics.
- ¹⁸*Human Sciences Research Council Quarterly Survey, 1999–2000* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, March 2000).
- ¹⁹*Amnesty International Annual Report 1999*, 304–307, <<http://www.amnestyusa.org/ailib/aireport/ar99/afr53.htm>>.

It is impossible to conceive of a continent as beset with controversy as Africa. Even its name has certain controversial implications. Is Africa a racial term?—as Ali Mazrui has argued. If so, perhaps the continent should be known as Africa-Arabia. Or, would Africas be more suitable?—a name suggested by Alfred Silbert. By way of contrast, no one today uses “Asia” to suggest a continental consciousness. Rather, one speaks quite explicitly of the Japanese, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, and so on, each designation being clearly understood to pertain to the characteristics of that particular national identity alone. And although “Latin America” evokes a collective image, it nevertheless provokes no controversy, for each nation of Central and South America is perceived as a distinct entity, with a distinct past, present, and future. . . . The African states are unquestionably aware of the pluralities that characterize their continent. The crucial question, however, is: Do the African states perceive of these as impediments to the coalescence of mutual interests and the evolution of a common role and a common stand in international affairs? More important, *have* they developed a common personality, have they evolved and articulated shared interests in this arena?

A. Bolaji Akinyemi

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Repackaging the Past for South African Tourism

TOURISM TO SOUTH AFRICA is not merely a business. It is also about the packaging of images that represent the society and its past. In the 1990s, the tourist industry consolidated an image of South Africa as a “world in one country.”¹ With the ANC in power, the industry continued to invite visitors to “discover our new world”—and also gaze on the “ancient rituals” of “Olde” Africa, exploring a “culture as fascinating as it is diverse.”² While in post-apartheid South Africa museums, monuments, and textbooks were scrutinized for their depictions of society and its past, tourism continued to provide a “safe haven” for a “troubled history that glorifies colonial adventure and a repudiated anthropology of primitivism.”³

In the late 1990s, South African policymakers recast themselves as the leading proponents of an African Renaissance. They wished to repudiate stereotypes of backwardness and primitiveness. President Thabo Mbeki, writing in South Africa’s top-selling travel and tourist magazine, *Getaway*, called for a departure “from a centuries-old past which sought to perpetuate the notion of an Africa slowly condemned to remain a curiosity slowly grinding to a halt on the periphery of the world.” Mbeki stressed instead Africa’s monumental structures (“the Egyptian sphinx and pyramids”; “Great Zimbabwe”), artistic creations (“the Benin bronzes of Nigeria”), places of learning (“Timbuktu of Mali”; “the ancient universities of Al-

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exandria of Egypt, Fez of Morocco”), and its heroic armies (“Omduruman in the Sudan”).⁴ These images of Africa stood in stark contrast to the images elsewhere in the magazine, which promoted “wilderness experiences” in the “nouveau bundu.”⁵

This essay focuses on three sites that attempt to promote South Africa as an “African” cultural destination: cultural villages, township tours, and the African theme park Ratanga Junction in Cape Town. The cultural village is fast consolidating itself as a new genre of cultural museum, incorporating previously marginalized people into the tourist route. The township tour turns curiosity about the country’s recent past into voyeurism. Meanwhile, at Ratanga Junction, where local revelers partake of tourism’s African images, an African past is depicted through the desires and fantasies of colonialism.

MARKETS OF AUTHENTICITY: CULTURAL VILLAGES

The world of the wild has long beckoned foreigners to visit South Africa; so has the promise of seeing “natives in tribal setting.”⁶ But in recent years, a vast new industry has been developed in all corners of the country, as urban and rural communities have sought to present a heritage that has until now been “hidden from view.” Unveiling “old traditions” and “historic sites” for the tourist gaze, these new destinations present a grand celebration of a South Africa at last freed from bondage.⁷

Encounters with living cultures are arranged in a congested marketplace of sites and routes, jostling with each other to take their place as the authentic representation of the past. The tourist in quest of the “real Africa” is able to select from a range of options. Across the countryside, shops, markets, and roadside stalls sell curios and crafts, sometimes made by workers in local communities. In urban centers, the visitor may savor “local cultural traditions” in a momentary encounter.⁸ Or striking into the interior, taking “the road that the tour guide uses to take visitors deeper into the valleys,” the explorer can visit a “native village.” The tourist thus steps into the imagined archaeological tracks of “early explorers” and “white pioneers” in a well-rehearsed colonial encounter.⁹

These villages offer the tourist portable, snapshot histories—culture at your fingertips—that give the illusion of knowing the whole. In KwaZulu-Natal, cultural villages have a long genealogy. The “first authentic Zulu village,” KwaBhekithunga, was set up in the late 1960s on a farm between Eshowe and Empangeni. In a “guarantee of authenticity,” Zulu families here invite tourists to “share their home.” KwaBhekithunga has since been joined by Thandanani Craft Village, Simunye Cultural Village, Phezulu Safari Park, and Dumazulu Traditional Village. The latter, located near Hluhluwe Game Reserve, is devoted not only to presentations of Zuluness, but also portrays separate Ndebele, Swazi, and Xhosa abodes “in order to maintain individual identities.”

But the most popular of all Zulu resorts is unquestionably Shakaland, developed between 1986 and 1988 on a film set from the television series *Shaka Zulu*. Visitors are immersed in a tourist anthropology of Zulu identity, from the moment of being greeted on arrival by a warrior-gatekeeper to the Zulu cultural lessons given inside of the “Great Hut” by a “cultural advisor,” who explains the “‘Zulu’ way of doing things.”¹⁰ By the beginning of the twenty-first century, KwaZulu-Natal had become a veritable “Zululand Zig Zag” of cultural sites, as the region was reimaged as the “Kingdom of the Zulu” and a “Province of Colour.”¹¹

The displays of culture in KwaZulu-Natal are replicated in ethnic representations in other parts of the country. “Authentic Sotho lifestyles” in the form of traditional beer “from a calabash,” Sotho dishes, and the “marabaraba rural rhythms” can be encountered in a visit to the Basotho Cultural Village in Phutaditshaba.¹² In Mpumalanga, at a cost of R 2 million, a pair of financial executives, working together with a local community leader, have created a Shangaan village where “ethnic damsels show tourists their traditional African dancing skills.”¹³

The crowning accomplishment of “South Africa’s New Tourism” is Lesedi cultural village. Not only is Lesedi in easy reach of Johannesburg, but, like Dumazulu, it offers a range of ethnic experiences. At Lesedi you are offered the choice of moving in with a “real Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, or Zulu family.” It is this

unique combination of the Western and the multiplicity of the traditional that Lesedi presents as its prime appeal, simultaneously offering the tourist the facade of the “traditional homestead,” but with a “distinctly Western modern interior” where the polished cow dung floors do not smell.¹⁴

In this dazzling array of cultural villages, culture and history are brought together in a timeless zone as a kaleidoscope of frozen ethnic stereotypes that correspond with dominant tourist images of Africa. The essence of the cultural productions in all these “theatres of memory,”¹⁵ where identities and histories are scripted, rehearsed, and performed, is to reproduce dominant media images of Africa as composed of distinct tribal entities. Each village reproduces a specific ethnic stereotype that has its genealogy in colonial encounters, the creation of administrative tribal units, and displays in imperial exhibitions across Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Zulu thus appear as a distinct “warrior nation,” the Xhosa as “proud,” and the Pedi as “warm-hearted.”¹⁶ Visitors are allowed to witness distinctive tribal ceremonies and to participate en masse in daily programs of secret, ancient rituals. Yet for all these ethnic characterizations, there is a common imagery of rhythmic music and dance that, without exception, the villages offer as the highlight of the tourist encounter. It is the correspondence between the nineteenth-century images of pulsating tribes and the performance of “ethnographic spectacle”¹⁷ that produces notions of authenticity and enables tourists to enthuse that the tribal village is the closest they can get to “the real Africa.”¹⁸

But the reimagining and repackaging of traditions are also being directed at South Africans. Before 1994, the idea of tourism was foreign to most black people in South Africa. The notion of a journey was usually associated with migrant labor. It was ridden with “mental and emotional trauma,” a “series of anxieties to be endured” without the time and space of “pleasure of movement.”¹⁹ Despite the growth in international tourism, domestic leisure tourism is the major source of tourist revenue. While reliable and current statistics on tourism are difficult to obtain, a government-commissioned report indicated that of the more than forty million arrivals in 1996, more than 77 percent were South African.²⁰ Beyond these statistics,

domestic tourism is encouraged as part of the process of nation-making.

Visits to different cultural villages are presented as a way to know oneself, to learn about the “other,” and to become a nation. While he was president of the Free State, Mosiuoa Lekota visited the Basotho Cultural Village to find out about “authentic Sotho lifestyles”; Zoliswa Sihlwayi, from Soweto, went to Shakaland to become “aware of his own culture”; the performers at Shangana were “proud to be able to share their culture”; and Xhosa-speaking schoolchildren were invited to go to Xhosaville to “learn their culture as part of community development.”²¹

Tourist images of an African past have protruded into the real world of land restitution. Group identities have formed the basis of land claims launched by the government’s land reform program set in place by the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994. “Communities” were entitled to claim land if they could show that their rights to it were “derived from shared rules determining access to land held in common.”²² In addition, successful land claimants, assisted by their lawyers and an array of nongovernmental organizations and consultants, have quickly turned to tourism as the basis of reconstituting communities on restored land. Tourist routes, curio outlets, game lodges, and living museums have all been suggested as the passport to community development.

In March of 1999, in a ceremony presided over by Mbeki, 50,000 hectares of land within the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park were handed over to the “southern Kalahari San” after a land claim had been launched in 1995. When the claim was lodged, many of the “southern Kalahari San” were performing as indigenous bushmen in the setting of a private game park, Kagga Kamma. At Kagga Kamma, the tourist could “fly in” on an “overnight Safari,” in a “Jurassic Park” adventure, to the “timeless world” of the bushmen.²³ Through listening to “Khoisan history . . . condensed into a five-minute account,” witnessing their nakedness, and fondling their children, the visitor is led to believe that he or she is contributing to the survival of the bushmen.²⁴ The terms of this performative “bushman” identity were based on the patronage afforded by the owners of Kagga

Kamma, without which the “bushmen” would simply have been part of the marginalized rural poor of the northern Cape. These relations of patronage had been in place since at least 1936, when Khoisan people were displayed as “living fossils” at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. In 1995, the southern Kalahari land claim based itself indirectly on the ethnological and anthropometric research conducted in 1936 by a team of University of the Witwatersrand anthropologists and linguists in preparation for the Empire Exhibition.²⁵ The successful claim for land in the southern Kalahari emphasized continuities with an aboriginal past, closeness to nature, and a racialized identity of a people “frozen in an artificial time,”²⁶ first performed in Johannesburg in 1936 and later transferred to Kaggga Kamma.

The successful land settlement regarding Pafuri, the far northern region of the Kruger National Park, won by the Makuleke community in the Northern Province, was also based on a group claim. After being forcibly removed in 1969 under apartheid’s Bantu Authorities Act, the Makuleke, a “community” under the Land Restitution Act, were given back the title to Pafuri. Under the terms of the settlement the Makuleke agreed not to occupy the land, enabling it to remain a conservation area of “preserved wildland,” with the proviso that the Makuleke benefit from new tourism development.²⁷ A key component of this proposed economic encounter with the tourist trade is to develop a “living museum.”

Since its emergence at Skansen in Sweden in the 1890s, the “living museum” has sought to present a nation in microcosm through live performances in an open-air setting.²⁸ In the 1990s, the Skansen model was brought to Africa through the Swedish-African Museum Program (SAMP), when the open-air museum in Dar es Salaam embarked upon a series of “Ethnic Days.” The building of dwellings, preparation of dishes and drinks, discussions of history and culture, and performances of “traditional dances” were all part of separate ethnic days for different groups.²⁹ In spite of an awareness of the dangers of emphasizing ethnic separateness as well as the possibility that these ethnicities were created under colonialism as administrative units, the events of these ethnic days lend themselves to tribal understandings of national heritage, where the “traditional

way of life of . . . particular ethnic group[s]" is displayed.³⁰ In the Northern Province, the Makuleke and their consultants are equally aware of the dangers of stereotyping and conforming to outsider views of Africa. In spite of this awareness, it is the models of Shakaland, Dumazulu, and Simunye as stimuli of job creation and bearers of development that are referred to, with "other projects" filling in the "heritage . . . gaps."³¹ In a significant departure from the conventional model, however, the Makuleke proposals call for the creation of an "interpretive centre,"³² thus creating the possibility for notions of static cultures and ethnicities to be contradicted and challenged, rather than memorialized and fixed in a cultural village.

ROUTES OF CULTURE AND STRUGGLE: TOWNSHIP TOURS

If the cultural village depicts rural snapshots of culture, where ethnicity evokes the bucolic and timeless, then the townships, created by apartheid on the margins of its cities, are presented as sites of "living culture," "political resistance," and "modern life."³³ For tourists in search of more than an ethnic performance, the tour through these dormitory locations may offer the "experience . . . of a true African township." A "safe guided walk" through the "whole township" with an excursion through "an original historic hostel" presents the opportunity to "learn more about the migrant labor system (1958–1994)."³⁴ The township is not portrayed in a sanitized fashion in a "postcard panorama." Instead, here tourists might see moments "where butchers shoo flies away from sheep's heads, starving dogs sprawl listlessly in the road and children dig in piles of trash."³⁵ In urban South Africa, there seems to be no apparent need for the staging of reality, when township life seems to offer unmediated scenes of continued harshness and deprivation.

Nevertheless, the urban edges of South Africa are traversed by routes and pathways in which life is put on show and scripted into a special genre of the township tour. As in the cultural village setting, these tours are configured as journeys across the African frontier, to go "where no man has gone before." These tours open up "the other side of the color line," enabling the post-apartheid adventurer to enter areas "previ-

ously inaccessible to whites.”³⁶ These sightseeing jaunts, striving to reflect the experiences of the majority of South Africans, promise a “first-hand experience of the township,” where the tourist could “interact with the people.”³⁷ What might have started off as a means for foreign visitors to experience “the other side” has also turned into a field of cultural encounter among South Africans, where townships are presented for “the eyes of the whites.” White South Africans now feel able to experience the “real” Africa at home, previously thought of as “possible only in countries north of South Africa.”³⁸ In a profound case of irony, South Africa’s arms manufacturer, Denel, began sending its executives on tours of the very townships whose popular uprisings its ammunition and military hardware once sought to crush.³⁹

Township tours offer sensory samples of ethnic diversity, visual traces of apartheid’s deprivations, and memorials to resistance. These three elements invariably form part of each township tour in a variety of permutations and with differing emphases.

Soweto is the location of what is perhaps the crowning achievement of all township tours. Most townships appear nondescript and anonymous to the tourist. But Soweto is presented not only through its relentless rows of regimented housing but also as the place where the struggle against apartheid was reignited in the 1970s. A tour of Soweto offers visitors a glimpse of “crammed rooms and makeshift beds, clothes hung on coat hangers above the sleeping space, and roofs with the lacy pattern of rust and zigzagged with illegal electrical connections.”⁴⁰ From this repetitive urban sprawl, tourists—approximately one thousand per day—are directed to sites that confirm Soweto’s media-created resistance pedigree. Capitalizing on these prior memories, tourists are bussed on a “March to Freedom,” from the Hector Petersen Memorial Square to Vilakazi Street, where the homes of Mandela and Tutu stand. Included on this heritage trail are Morris Isaacson School, where the uprisings of 1976 broke out, and Kliptown, site of the Freedom Charter’s adoption. Onto this legacy of repression and resistance Soweto tourism has grafted a sense of cultural Africanness. At a variety of restaurants and shebeens tourists can sample African “tradi-

tional fare”: “dumpling, tripe, pap, spinach, vetkoek, samp and beans.”⁴¹ Just below the Mandela house in Orlando West, the Ubuntu kraal, a “popular tourist spot,” offers a shebeen, crafts for sale, and a variety of cultural events including “traditional dancing.”⁴² These tastes, rhythms, and mementos of tradition bring the tourist back to the essence of Africa, providing relief from the specter of history.

Almost invariably on the township tour, the “Struggle Route” gives way to the “Shebeen Route.” In order to attract tourists seeking the African spectacle, the township is presented as an extension of the rural village in an expression of timeless ethnicity. The aim of one township tour based in KTC, an informal settlement in Cape Town, for instance, is “to present the Xhosa-speaking people’s culture, customs, beliefs, traditions and daily activities, and to show the way they have adapted from rural to urban life.”⁴³ The voyage of discovery into the township incorporates essentialized African alternatives to the well-worn tourist paths of mountains, sea, and scenic beauty. Tourists “spoilt” with “African warmth” go across the threshold of a “typical township home,” imbibe “traditional African beer (*umqombothi*)” at a shebeen, partake of “African cuisine,” and gaze upon “hawkers at work” and “a performance by a traditional Healer/Sangoma.”⁴⁴ In a bizarre cultural switch in which the modern is cast as ancestral, tourists are able to participate in a “traditional ‘Xhosa picnic’”—held outdoors when the weather is fine—where “alfresco meals” are cooked over open fires.⁴⁵

Once tourists have eaten and drunk their fill of Africa, they make their way to the nearby craft center to purchase memories of an African experience. In an aesthetic genre constructed by older trade circuits in ceremonial African art and artifacts, as well as by ideas of functionality, decorativeness, and domesticity long unchanged, the township tour meets tourists’ expectations of African crafts. To authenticate their products as traditional, the craft center has to ensure that the producers appear as local and indigenous and that the items produced appear handmade using local knowledge and skills.⁴⁶ If the producers are seen in situ, they appear in traditional costume, ready to demonstrate the function of the object. Craft objects created to meet European expectations come to stand for

ethnicity, meeting the visitor's desire for real things that mark African life. In Grahamstown, tourist demand for crafts resulted in a search for tradition among township residents. Empowerment projects, which had begun the manufacture of recycled objects out of plastic garbage, soon switched to "traditional beadwork,"⁴⁷ finding a ready market in local and overseas tourist outlets. Beads, which entered Africa through trade, are now sold back to European tourists as exotic, symbolizing an "encounter with a romanticized vision of traditional, pristine Africa."⁴⁸

In the urban setting of Cape Town, there was one genre of community tour that deliberately set itself apart from mainstream cultural tourism: the tour initiated by Western Cape Action Tours to sites of political struggle against apartheid. These are tours conducted by ex-combatants in the ANC's military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe, who take tourists on a route described as "an appreciation of a long history of social engineering, of political, social, and economic oppression." In addition, the tour attempts to uncover the "good" that occurred "alongside this oppression."⁴⁹ The guides present themselves as embarking along with the tourist on a journey filled with emotion, knowledge, and lived experience. Tourists are taken to colored and African townships and shown how buffers were created between them. In these townships, they meet members of the community spearheading development projects, are given an escorted field trip to sites where young guerillas fought heroic battles against the apartheid state, and are shown where black people were confined to single-sex barracks in dormitory townships.

There is the ever-present danger that these may be only embellishments upon what is essentially a township tour with all its traditional dressings. Visitors are introduced to "traditional medicine" at a "traditional herb store," are given the opportunity to "taste local culture" by sipping *umqombothi* (a "traditional brew"), and pay a visit to "bead bedecked sangomas" in the KTC informal settlement.⁵⁰ It might be that on the edges of the tourist gaze, the sites of resistance and remembrance slide almost uneasily into the world of cultural difference. Yet the tour is styled as an "appreciation tour" and demands re-

spect, not voyeurism, from the visitors. Indeed, the tour resists being framed as a “township tour.” This tour has the potential to construct a new cultural map of the city, focusing on the traces of urban resistance. Premised on a notion of prior unity between African and colored people, the tour poses questions about successive attempts at racial division and social engineering.

THE WILDEST PLACE IN AFRICA: RATANGA JUNCTION

While the cultural village and the township tour are presented in the tourist universe as the regions of authenticity, the theme park belongs to the space of fantasy. South Africa’s first major theme park opened its doors in December of 1998. Taking the off-ramp to Century City, one leaves the western zone of Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, with its “foreign patina”⁵¹ and an overwhelming impression of a European heritage, and ventures into a themed environment, Ratanga Junction, which markets itself as the wildest place in Africa. As in the cultural villages and township tours, impressions of Africa constitute the driving theme of the Ratanga experience, creating a memory of having visited an African place.

In order to journey across the imperial bridge into Ratanga Junction, and to be permitted to pass beyond the guardhouse—where all of one’s “film requirements” are available for purchase—one has to buy a visa. This allows one to enter Ratanga Town, located on an island in the center of the complex and “restored to its original splendor.” Here the Ratanga Officers Club offers one a drink in the members’ bar, the Casa Sophia is a “splendid café” in the ruins of the Italian embassy, and in the Old Market Place, the Moosa family of Ratanga allows one to “relax and enjoy the passing spectacle” while partaking of their spicy samoosas, flying fish, and other “secret treats and eats.” On the island one can also discover the secrets of the Walled City with its river pirates, smugglers, and Kashmiri spices. Passing the “Marrakesh style bustling market” of Salim Pasha’s Souk takes one to the Ratanga River Cargo Services. Here, in the vicinity of Skeleton Bay, one has the option of catching the boat or joining the East African convoy and taking

the road train for a “‘perilous’ drive into uncharted territory” to one of the many rides that Ratanga Junction offers. At Crocodile Gorge the visitor can “shoot the rapids through the valley of fear”; Monkey Falls invites one to take a “death-defying plunge into the abyss”; and, at the most notorious ride, the Cobra, one can travel at “100 kilometers per hour at four times the force of gravity . . . absolute terror never felt so good.” Across the bridge on the Congo River, amidst a carefully arranged set of skulls, is the site of the wreckage of the airplane that crashed in the jungle, the survivors establishing Ratanga Junction. Adjacent to the crash site is the ride that evokes one of the “real” founders of Ratanga Junction, Monastery Mining and Exploration: on the Diamond Devil Run one is “out of control on a runaway train” in a dilapidated mine.⁵²

In this wild world of spectacle at Ratanga Junction there seem to be arbitrary, somewhat haphazard notions of reality and society operating. There is a relative lack of narrative continuity between the different sites in Ratanga Junction. In addition, there seems to be an absence of explicit, authentic markers and signifiers, located in real time and space, such as museums, or any association with known individuals or events. The experience of Ratanga thus places the emphasis on consumption, giving the impression that its depictions are purely marketing ploys that have little or no association with the real world.⁵³

However, Ratanga Junction reflects a very real world. In the first place, the theme park, seemingly outside the city’s ambit, grew out of a series of land deals and financial transactions. Secondly, Ratanga Junction represents a translocation of imagined pasts of Africa into a real space, which one can see, partake of, and domesticate. Finally, the theme park presents itself as more than mere fantasy. It seeks to place these images of Africa into a world of science and education, where schools have been offered the opportunity of an “Edu-Venture.”⁵⁴

Ratanga Junction is owned and operated by Monex, a company that started its life in the mid-1980s as Monastery Mining and Exploration, a diamond mining operation in the Free State. In 1992, Monex started looking into the possibility of building a theme park. The opportunity to go ahead with the project

arose in 1995 when it joined forces with the property developer ILCO Homes.⁵⁵ ILCO Homes was deeply in debt at the time in spite of a R 4.9 million out-of-court settlement paid to it by the state because of land in District Six that had been expropriated. This land, from which people had been removed under apartheid, had been purchased by ILCO Homes in 1989. The chair of the District Six Civic Association, Anwah Nagia, slammed the deal as “immoral,”⁵⁶ a flagrant case of “profiteering from apartheid.” At almost the same time ILCO was compensated for the land, the company was taken over by Boland Bank, which then transferred the shares it acquired to a nominee company, Pro-Mark Network. Keith Watkins and Martin Wragge, who were Monex shareholders, later procured this company.⁵⁷ ILCO became part of Monex, and Martin Wragge became the majority shareholder and managing director.⁵⁸ By September of 1995, plans for the rezoning of land bordering on the N1 motorway were approved, enabling Monex to build a complex called Century City. Newspapers reported that Cape Town was on track for its “own Disneyland.”⁵⁹ Despite a R 2.1 million operating loss between June and December of 1995, toward the end of 1996 Monex was showing strong signs of recovery “due to restructuring and opportunities presented by Century City.”⁶⁰

These opportunities at Century City were primarily centered on the development of a theme park. On the basis of quite narrowly defined economic criteria, the theme park was projected to turn a profit, despite costing some R 350 million.⁶¹ According to Wragge, consumer studies had shown that “entertainment centers like Disneyland flourish when times are tough and get even better when they improve.”⁶² In South Africa, a weak currency meant that many families could not afford to travel abroad to experience European and U.S. theme parks.⁶³ More broadly, the construction of a theme park set Monex firmly in what it called the “experience” or “fourth” economy (the first three were termed agrarian, industrial, and service), “where consumers in increasing numbers will spend increasing amounts of their disposable income in pursuit of ‘immersive’ experiences which they can make their own.” Through places like Ratanga Junction, Monex aimed to “create, design, pack-

age and deliver these ‘immersive’ experiences . . . in a world without boundaries.” From designing cartoon strips to creating laser shows in the Libyan desert for Muammar Gaddafi’s birthday, staging pop concerts, and building a theme park of Africa in Africa, Monex sees itself at the cutting edge of this new economy.⁶⁴

In this new immersive economy, where “fantasy has no fixed geographic location,”⁶⁵ Ratanga Junction is a tightly bound localized enclosure that is both within and set apart from the metropolitan surrounds. Displaced from the urban setting, it presents precolonial Africa as the place of the exotic, the oriental, the secretive, and the uncharted. There is a history of “the Orient”: “a taste of the East” on Spice Island and an encounter with the “Raj” at the Ratanga Officers’ Club “overlooking the jungles of Lake Ratanga.” In this precolonial past, people of Africa hardly exist. It is a time of the ancients, tradition, and primal fear.

Moving into the colonial past at Ratanga Junction, the images of Africa created by colonial modernity reign supreme. Explorers can take a swinging-boat ride on the Congo Queen, a ship adorned with “gigantic African masks” that “overshadows its surroundings.”⁶⁶ The Congo evokes an “uncivilized” zone meant to “epitomise the binary distinction between the civilised West and its primitive Other.”⁶⁷ Likewise, the walled and birded images that adorn the architecture and walkways of Ratanga Junction draw on a familiar colonial trope, the epic of the lost city, a legendary place of prior nonindigenous settlement, characterized by wealth, glory, and powerful rulers. As the African Renaissance attempts to reappropriate archaic and exotic images into a postcolonial iconography, their continued representation at the wildest place in Africa recalls the genealogy in the real world of the colonial imaginary.

While Monex would be the first to admit that they have “not perfected the formula for Ratanga Junction,”⁶⁸ they have pioneered the field of the themed environment in South Africa after apartheid. Theme parks in general have been places of “safe and nonthreatening” holidays, offering “sharp contrasts with the constraints, regimentation, and normative burdens of . . . everyday existence.”⁶⁹ In South Africa, Ratanga Junction has

necessarily taken on an added responsibility. It provides a holiday from apartheid's continuing legacies and the stresses and strains of a society in transition. This is not a place that encourages contemplation. Visitors are invited to "just do it, accept it and have fun."⁷⁰ The themed images of Africa are naturalized into the fun fair atmosphere and visitors are expected to imbibe them without question.

The African holiday backdrop provides the setting for a South Africa whose African images are still rooted in the colonial paradigm and the early South African intonations of the African Renaissance. While these two tendencies seem to be diametrically opposed, at Ratanga Junction they are merged.

MEMORIES OF AFRICA IN THE TIME OF THE RENAISSANCE

Postcolonial tourist ventures drew upon familiar fantasies of "nativist authenticity," in which the basis of indigenous life continues to be the tribal unit, designed as traditional.⁷¹ The tourist theming of South African society continues in the age of exploration and discovery, primarily through the cultural village and the township tour. The irony of South Africa's modernity is that the country is still mapped and memorialized for international and domestic tourists as a sequence of routes from tribe to tribe in rural and urban settings. While Ratanga Junction might not be an obviously ethnographic theme park, its image economy is rooted in the same idea of primitiveness and the discovery of a "Dark Continent left behind by progress."⁷²

Notwithstanding the perspectives offered by the Makuleke and Western Cape Action Tours, it might seem there is no escape from the tourist gaze for local initiatives seeking to benefit from the spreading effects of international tourism. Often they remain peripheralized.

Yet, ironically, we have been given a hint that perhaps the tourist gaze can be subverted. An advertisement for the South African Electricity Supply Commission (Eskom) appeared on SABC television in 1998. Aboard a luxury bus driving through a seemingly deserted countryside is a group of American tourists. Suddenly they spot a hut with painted murals that signify it as Ndebele. The bus screeches to a halt, allowing the tourists

to disembark and acquire their piece of much-valued Ndebele culture. After negotiating the price of the pots, the tourists extol the traditional authentic virtues of their purchases. They board their bus well satisfied that they have acquired a piece of Africa, unmistakably authentic, at a bargain price. The Ndebele women, who had made the sales to the tourists in a seemingly unsophisticated manner, then disappear into the hut. There, inside the hut, is an electrically powered industrialized assembly line, operated by knowing workers. The workers together with the vendor laugh gleefully at the accomplishment of their success in manufacturing and selling tradition. After a short run, this advertisement disappeared from South Africa's television screens. Was this merely routine? Was it because of cultural stereotyping of the tourist dollar, rather than "the native"? Or was it that the level of perception shown in the advertisement about the processes of ethnic creation and cultural objectification made it subversive enough to be suppressed? We suggest the latter.

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ENDNOTES

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reviews of travel books and equipment, a readers' forum, several competitions, columns by regular and guest writers, and an extensive "shop window" where tourist providers can advertise their products (which comprises almost half the space of a 270-odd-page magazine).

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