

Introduction

GLOBALIZATION AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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It would be bad faith, despite the present economic woes of South Africa, to speak of the apartheid era as “the good old days.” Of course this view refers largely to economics, not taking into account the fundamental societal changes since the first democratic elections in 1994. Many of the articles in this issue, while taking into account the growing pains related to global economic and social demands made on the new South Africa, dispute the “good old days” theory. Rather, they point to changes wrought, often through extreme efforts, since 1994 and suggest some ways in which the continued iniquitous influence of apartheid can finally be eradicated.

In South Africa, progress towards equality is a thorny project. The world is beset by the demands of global capitalism whose strict financial rules often put countries under intense economic pressure, leaving little room for reforms at a more local level. The basic profit-related programs of global expansionists with varied social consciousness, remain fundamentally different from those of governments.

Third World governments often just do not have the financial and political wherewithal to support both the social and political reforms needed in their countries and the economic programs required by globalization to link fully to the global economy. It has therefore been an unfortunate age for South Africa to have to embark upon reforms with a view to righting the racially based wrongs of the old apartheid state and colonial history.

The demands of global capitalism are not felt in South Africa alone. Castells (1997) has detailed the demise of the nation-state and the powerlessness of the nation-state in the world today. He emphasizes that the nation-state’s loss of power is of a fundamental nature and is a systematic, global phenomenon,

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although it has a great variety of different manifestations. The basic principle is that state control over space and time (the nation-state's way of generating domination and power networks) is increasingly subverted by global flows of capital, goods, services, technology, communication, and information. In this situation of diminishing state power, attempts to (re)construct national identities are undermined by the forces of globalization and challenged by plural identities as defined by more autonomous subjects.

South Africa is not absolved from these powerful and often contradictory forces as many of the articles in this issue show. The post-apartheid South African government has demonstrated a willingness to institute changes towards greater equality, but is often hamstrung by indecision as well as various internal and external demands. The articles reveal many concerns related to economics in the continued suffering of the majority of the South African population. They highlight the dynamics of enduring social, political, economic, historical, and other problems and detail some of the progress made regarding these issues during the decade since the demise of apartheid. In spite of some contradictions, numerous contributions to this special issue indicate some progress towards greater equality in South Africa by putting the spotlight on changes that have taken place during the last decade.

In this manner, many of the articles draw attention to the fact that there are, simultaneous with the economic demands of globalization, strong social, historical, and political demands in South Africa for reforms leading to greater equality and equity for people disadvantaged by race, class, and gender in this society. While the fields covered by the articles are by no means exhaustive, they provide a well-timed and meaningful "snapshot" of some important achievements.

The notion of historically or ethnically fixed identities is a powerful concept because it expresses a desire for "the absence of politics." Instead of negotiating political aims and goals within a confusing variety of dissenting voices, there is the allure of claiming one's birthright based on ancestry, tradition, or territorial precedence. Afrikaner nationalists and their academic collaborators used to claim, inaccurately, that white people were justified in forcing the majority of the South African population into apartheid because the white and black settlers had "arrived" in South Africa at the same time. Thus, there was no need to discuss the dreaded question of who could lay claims on the land by right of birth.

In addition, many wars were fought between white settlers (both Afrikaans and English-speaking) as the settlers moved inland during the 1800s and earlier, conquering great swaths of land in war, therefore earning the right to claim the land had been "bought by their own blood." This confused the issue of land ownership in South Africa.

Identities, included among these black identities, change with time. Black people in South Africa are still by far in the majority and were united in the

struggle against apartheid in spite of ethnic differences between them. In investigating any topic involving the identity of black people in South Africa, it may accordingly be assumed that the identities of black people are the most significant part of the identity of people in general in this country, whatever their ethnic affiliation. Approaches to investigating black identities and culture have changed in recent times, however, now often emphasizing “the end of black politics.”

For instance, Hall (1999:705) has suggested that two moments in black cultural politics have emerged, one tied to the past and one to the present. Both are rooted in history and the politics of anti-racism. The first was the moment when the term “black” was first used with reference to the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain. The term “black” then became the organizing category of a new politics of resistance among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions, and ethnic identities. In this moment, the “black experience” as a singular and unifying framework became hegemonic diminishing other racial and ethnic identities, although the latter did not disappear. In this manner, black people were positioned as the unspoken and invisible “other” of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses.

A second moment was reached when the end of the essentially black subject was perceived (Hall 1999:706). There was a recognition that “race” is a culturally, politically, and socially defined category. This involved an acknowledgment that the primary issue of race always appears historically in combination with other issues such as class, ethnicity, and gender. The representation of the black subject is therefore incomplete without references to the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity.

Racism operates by constructing impregnable boundaries between black and white people and its representations of black and white are binary, serving only to strengthen the differences between belonging and otherness (Hall 1999:707). In the new moment, as detailed by Hall, transcendence of the binary opposition is enabled. The result is what Hall calls “the end of a certain cultural innocence in black cultural politics” (Hall 1999:708).

In the new discourse, the boundaries between gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class are crossed, opening a new basis for discourse on racial politics. Applied to racial politics in South Africa, this means that the boundaries between black and white are no longer immutable but flexible, subjectively and historically defined. In its attempts to promote greater equality in South Africa, the state appears to recognize this significant aspect. What then prevents full application of this principle in South African political life? The key appears to be globalization and its demands.

Dederling focuses on the historical roots of the relation between globalization and inequality in South Africa. Dederling engages scholars who have commented on the difficulties some South African intellectuals experience in

relating to the rest of the region and the continent after a long history of institutionalized racism and oppression under apartheid. Thus, there is a sense of South African exceptionalism, often expressed in terms of the perceived uniqueness of African suffering. There is also a widely shared prejudice that South Africa may be a part of Africa geographically, but not politically, culturally, or economically.

For Dederig, the challenge of the African Renaissance is to “deracialize” the African intelligentsia. This has to be achieved by creating an awareness of “Africa-focused knowledge.” This envisaged deracialization would be incomplete without placing African-centered knowledge in a wider global historical context. If southern Africa is to be interpreted within the framework of African history as a whole, then this history cannot be understood without finding a new approach that is not preoccupied with imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, dependency, and indeed also globalization.

Lesufi’s contribution emphasizes the shortcomings of government plans for growth and redistribution in South Africa. Lesufi suggests that only the organized efforts of the poor can force the state to follow a different development agenda, based more on the need to promote the interests of the poor. In so doing, Lesufi indicates the continued importance of the political role traditionally assumed by the trade union movement in South Africa. Efforts to resist privatization, wage moderation, electricity cuts, and unsatisfactory land reform progress, while at present isolated and uncoordinated, may provide one answer to unsatisfactory progress in societal change.

The article by Liebenberg, Ferreira, and Roefs addresses the social adjustment of demobilized soldiers in South Africa, a problem faced by many African countries in recent decades. South Africa has a limited capacity to contribute to the reintegration of both the statutory (the South African National Defence Force under the apartheid regime) and non-statutory armed forces (the liberation armies) of South Africa since the democratic elections in 1994. There was also a lack of planning in the reintegration process. The article suggests cost-effective ways in which the process may be facilitated.

Marks, in a study of policing in Durban, finds that, in keeping with the representative elections in 1994 which led to a new, more democratic political dispensation in South Africa, policing has become more tolerant and democratic. However, some repressive, authoritarian, and violent responses to the public still occur.

Few social analysts would dispute the gravity of the social implications of rampant crime and violence in South Africa at present. Many ascribe the excessive and authoritarian policing style, of which remnants are still found in South Africa, to the methods of policing developed during the apartheid era. Within the ambit of understanding the relation between policing methods and crime in South Africa lies a complex set of relations involving political, psychological, and moral issues. These relations are addressed by Marks in her contribution to this volume.

Much has been written on the extent of poverty in South Africa under the apartheid regime. While high expectations regarding the alleviation of poverty accompanied the advent of the new political dispensation in South Africa since 1994, little progress appears to have been made in this regard. Maxted's article, in detailing the dynamics of what is commonly termed the poverty-environment relationship in South Africa, focuses the reader's attention on the continued existence and effects of this phenomenon. The analysis points the way to various new approaches in fighting poverty while giving the necessary consideration to the environment, both of which still occur disproportionately among the black population of South Africa and especially affect black women.

High fertility and concomitant social and economic problems are a well-documented African issue that has also made its presence felt in South Africa over many years. Naidoo's contribution reveals a recent decline in fertility in Africa and specifically South Africa. The article also provides a thorough analysis of the aetiology of the decline, which differs in many ways from that presented in traditional approaches to the subject and has implications also for other African countries. Thus "crisis-led" fertility declines may be a more convincing explanation of declining fertility in Africa than explanations emphasizing improved socioeconomic conditions.

Phatlane analyzes the events leading to the abortive attempt to enforce "independence" on Kwa-Ndebele, a small area not far from Pretoria. From the second half of the 1970s to the early 1980s "independence" was granted to the "homelands" that had been created within the borders of South Africa by the apartheid regime. The process was characterized by the failure of the Kwa-Ndebele homeland in 1986.

Phatlane contends that "Homeland independence" provided the apartheid regime with a new way of justifying the white monopoly of power in the economic heartland of South Africa. Instead of justifying discrimination against black people purely on grounds of race, it could now be done on the grounds that they were citizens of separate states. Apartheid could also be presented to the world as a system of internal decolonization.

Social and economic problems remain today in areas designated by the apartheid regime to be "independent homelands." The government does not have the capacity to fundamentally improve the conditions of poverty affecting those areas. Most analysts would agree that "independence" was originally granted to homelands with ulterior motives and that remaining problems should be resolved as expediently as possible.

In the concluding essay, Richard Harris and Pat Lauderdale take up the challenges that post-colonial states must face in the present global political and economic system. In this essay, Harris and Lauderdale focus on the impact of globalization and neoliberalism on post-colonial countries such as South Africa. They analyze the historical background and nature of the current stage of global economic expansion, considered by many critical observers to be the latest stage

of imperialism. Harris and Lauderdale reveal that the role of the state and the relationship of the domestic economy to the global economy are essential elements in determining the development of the land, resources, and general welfare of the population of peripheral societies such as South Africa.

The articles in this special issue relate to the growing body of literature on the interrelationships between “local,” “national,” and “global” conditions, particularly in the developing countries of the global south. The articles in this issue all relate in diverse ways to the present incapacity of governments, especially the South African government, to perform duties that have traditionally been their preserve, but have changed because of global demands. The articles inform the reader of the state of progress made towards greater equality in South Africa in spite of the conflicting demands made by global capital and the population of South Africa on a heavily burdened governmental system.

In fact, the articles go a long way towards forming an inventory of what has and has not been achieved in crucial endeavors by both the government and private sector to achieve reform towards racial, sexual, and class equality in South Africa. As such, they should considerably enlighten analysts of the political, economic, and social scene in South Africa since the advent of the democratically elected government in 1994.

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