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Problems and Prospects of Democratic Renewal in Southern Africa: A Study of Statecraft and Democratisation in South Africa, 1994–2003

Adekunle Amuwo

The problematique

There is little doubt that South Africa's post-apartheid democratic governments (Mandela's, 1994–1999, and Mbeki's, 1999 till date) have made important strides in the delivery of much-needed public goods, values and services to hitherto marginalised constituents, races and ethno-nationalities. By so doing, the post-apartheid state has largely legitimised itself in the eyes of the people, millions of whom have only recently started to recover their citizenship (du Toit 1995:406). In a fundamental sense, the South African state has progressively sought to become constitutional and to anchor itself on the rule of law. The state, to all appearances, may be on the road to becoming a civic culture capable of taking on what Alexis de Tocqueville refers to as 'common objects of common desires'. There are, however, important socio-economic lacunae. The democratising South African state is caught between *procedural* or *formal democracy* and *substantive* or *social democracy*. The dialectics and dynamics of the latter are such that whilst some appreciable progress has been recorded in the sphere of the 'political science of democratisation', this has not been matched at the level of what Saul (in Luckham et.al, 2003:43) refers to as the 'political economy of democratisation'. Several factors have been responsible for this trajectory. These include the nature of the apartheid and post-apartheid state, particularly its enduring institutional framework, mores and values; the character of the elite-pacted democratic transition; a macroeconomic orientation anchored more on growth

than on equity and the resultant growing army of poor and unemployed/ unemployable underclasses; the preference for political stability to popular participation; a state that appears strong but which lacks autonomy in relation to historic blocs, key ethno-nationalities (like the Xhosa) and powerful groups and individuals (e.g., the Black Empowerment Group). In short, there are structural constraints in the national and international system that limit the reach of the state and the import of citizenship and, in consequence, render the state not strong enough to make unattractive other forms of public/ social allegiance and identity aside of citizenship.

We seek to critically examine the foregoing dynamics of an emergent constitutional democracy as well as the extent to which public policies have, on the one hand, made the state more autonomous, stronger and inclusive and, on the other, exacerbated its negative attributes of non-autonomy, weakness and exclusion. We also evaluate the impact of this policy praxis on the problems and prospects of democratisation. Expressed differently, beyond the artefacts of an admittedly liberal constitution; fairly representative political institutions and structures; multipartyism and gender representation (interesting and useful developments, no doubt), we are concerned to investigate the politics and economics of South Africa's democratisation process since the 1990s.

Cast within an essentially implicit comparative (Southern African) perspective, the major *problematique* is that a growing and worrisome hiatus between the post-apartheid state and key societal/non-state actors, forces and classes seems to be assuming the character of a permanent impediment to democratic consolidation. Thus, whereas there is formal democracy (in terms of institutions and procedures of a neo-electoral democracy), substantive democracy partly explicated in terms of 'the redistribution of power—the degree to which citizens can participate in the decisions which affect their lives' (Luckham et al 2003: 19) remains largely a shrinking province. Moreover, non-state social forces (particularly labour (Congress of South African Trade Unions, COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) as allies in power) have lost capacity, expertise and political clout to the state as the latter (encapsulated in a hegemonic African National Congress (ANC) government) increasingly incorporates or stifles actual and potential sites of political opposition. This is coupled with an ambivalent process of democratisation that furnishes a social gap between an institutional design of democracy (that has virtually built a politics of inclusion) and a political economy of democratisation that has multiple bridges to cross in delivering substantive democracy to millions of the dispossessed, landless and

unemployed youth and adults alike (Pottie and Hassim 2003:89 and Bastian and Luckham 2003:305-6).

We also examine problems and prospects of democratisation not so much from the prism of a formally institutionalised white political opposition as that of black political parties and civil society groups. As in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola and Botswana, the problem of a dominant or *de facto* one-party state seems to loom large on the horizon. This danger is aided and abetted by an unstated assumption (or principle) that former guerrilla combatants and exiled anti-apartheid activists have the right to cling to power for life. In the South African typology, the lack of a potent and immediate threat to the hegemony of the ANC—both from within the black and white/Indian/coloured political formations—may portend danger for substantive democracy: the seeming and palpable arrogance of the party and some of its leading lights may lead the government to ignore, if not suppress, subaltern political ideologies and policy concerns. The latter may eventually be constrained to take actions and forms that are inconsistent with democratic values (Griffiths and Katalikawe 2003:116). In the process, substantive democracy may further be imperilled.

Democracy–democratisation nexus

While democracy is nothing but an ambivalent, contradictory and complex entity, its superiority, however putative some of the time, has tended to be emphasised in the literature. Le Vine (1997: 205), taking his cue from Winston Churchill's famous description of democracy as 'the worst possible system of government, with the exception of all the rest', has argued that 'as practised in various parts of the world, including Africa, democracy is undeniably messy, often frustrating and can certainly be inefficient (and) does not guarantee that the host of problems besetting so many countries can be handled effectively'. But he underscores the salience and essence of democracy in several respects. One, government policies that emerge from established democratic processes have a fair chance of succeeding. Two, leaders that emerge from democratic consultations are likely to be able to lead. Three, political and other institutions fostered by democratic constitutions can function as expected. Finally, the point is forcefully made that 'democracy offers the kind of political flexibility that permits the resolution, if not always the solution, of potentially destructive conflicts without irretrievably rending the social fabric'.

Although there is wide latitude to speculate about the capacity and capability of democracy to achieve the foregoing elements, even in the most developed liberal democracies, there is little doubt that there would be both qualitative

and quantitative differences between states that regard democracy as a means to an end and those that conceive democracy as an end in itself. In other words, for emergent electoral democracies that seek to use deliberate and deliberative democratisation to gradually reduce a perceived democracy deficit, the road taken would be one that sees democracy as 'an unresolved and contested process', while their counterparts, content with what they already have, would opt for the notion of democracy as 'a fully achieved end state' (Luckham 2003:13). To be sure, democracy deficits are everywhere observable, but they appear to be most irritating and visible when democratic institutions tend to be constantly imperilled by a lack of democratic politics and, worse, by 'the enduring legacies of undemocratic politics' (Luckham 2003:14, 19). The latter would gradually worsen as states take the democracy project seriously by regarding and treating democracy as not just a matter of process and procedure (however correct, corrective and constitutional), but as an exercise in substantive political economy.

The following would constitute the major elements in the nexus. One, democratic politics and institutions; active citizenship and engagement; dense and intense relationships between the state and citizens through the agency of key civil society organisations as well as by the intermediary of processes (high politics of the state and the deep politics of society) that are at once creative and subversive; the politics of social equity, redistributive policies and people-friendly economic growth; prioritisation of popular participation above the maintenance of order; good institutional design; wise leadership, inclusive forms of political and institutional choices; relevant cultural values and a democratic ethos (Bastian and Luckham 2003: 15-18, 21, 40; Swift 2000; Decalo 1992: 35). Procedural democracy is an insufficient condition for the emergence, let alone consolidation, of social democracy. Yet, it remains a necessary condition in so far as 'procedural democracy can...enhance the legitimacy of democratic governments and clear the way for them to advance substantive democracy' (Pottie and Hassim 2003:63). A core element of substantive democracy is the use of organisations and institutions that citizens understand, and with which they are conversant, with a view to routinising the socially relevant values and norms of democracy (Bastian and Luckham 2003:42). In Africa, such organisations would include the 'second public' of village, town and community associations, moral, ethnic, religious and communal bodies which are more inclusive moral communities than the 'first public' of the nation-state. In view of mass poverty, democracy would begin to have social relevance only to the extent that it goes beyond its rendition as 'a system of government in which the authority to exercise power derives from the will of the people' (Bjornland et al 1992:405). Similarly,

democratisation has to be not merely a process of institutionalising democracy (however important this may be for emerging electoral democracies), but one of creating new norms of governance, of cultural change and of robustly addressing the critical issue of the unequal distribution of wealth and power in the society (Bastian and Luckham 2003:51, 23).

Standing in an unstable juxtaposition in the foregoing are elements of both the political science and political economy of democratisation. The former is rooted in institutional and structural formalism as well as in elite-driven procedural democracy. It sets much store by a widespread agreement among political elites on institutional rules from which a large majority of supposed citizens are excluded. But, in so far as formal democracy pays little more than a nodding attention to social democracy, it is regarded as only a shade better than an empty shell by the people. Swift (2000) contends that 'modern political science has inherited this distrust of ordinary people and their capacities to participate in their own self-government'. The reason is often not far to seek. Many a mainstream political scientist stresses 'questions of political management and effective elite systems of government. Participation (except passively during elections) is not to be encouraged'. What the latter does—even in developed liberal democracies—is to give a fillip to Schumpeter's copiously conservative argument (Swift 2000) that 'voters must understand that once they have elected an individual, political action is his (sic) business and not theirs. This means that they must refrain from instructing him about what he is to do'. The political economy of democratisation is about the pertinent issues of equity and power struggles. It is also about the reduction in the intensity of the poverty of the mass majority. Similarly, it concerns a dialectical relationship between political and economic power, such that 'the stranglehold of cash has led to the asphyxiation of honest public debate' (Swift 2000). It is about the perennial struggle of subaltern social classes to make the state and the political elite socially responsible and responsive. In the words of Ayogu and Hodge (2002:278), the power component of this process 'implicates governments in Africa and elsewhere to continue to rig markets as part of the repertoire of devices employed to secure political control over their population and retain power. While imposing collective deprivations, governments confer selective benefits to particular groups of the polity'. The expected *riposte* of dominated classes would be to severely contest this seemingly dominant paradigm of political and economic relations in the society with a view to gradually making the state truly democratic, that is to say, a veritable 'mutual protection association where the community protects all its members' (Baker 2000:237).

Within this context, one can appreciate the declaration of Nadia Leila Aissaovi, an Algerian activist to the effect that 'if democracy is the right to speak out and be heard, as a voice and not just a number, then I am a democrat. But if democracy is the freedom to choose between Coca Cola and Pepsi, Levis and Nike, BBC or CNN, McDonald and Pizza Hut, then I … don't want to be a democrat' (Swift 2000). There is thus an interesting interface here between the political science of democratisation and its political economy, both internationally and internally as far as the African continent is concerned. On the former canvass, the West (principally the US and the corporate world it controls) and the continent have different motives for pursuing a seemingly similar democratisation agenda: the one to maintain formal democracy or political stability; the other—at least for popular forces and their organisations—to facilitate system reforms or social transformation. The two are often mutually exclusive. As Huntington (in Hearn 2000:816) has argued, 'the maintenance of democratic politics and the reconstruction of the social order are fundamentally incompatible'. Similarly, as Hearn (2000:816) has shown, the essence of Western aid to Africa—on occasion, South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle, pre-1994—was not so much to support democratisation as to penetrate the vibrant and pluralistic civil society in order to ossify its dynamism, block prospects for fundamental or radical changes and limit damage to Western interests. Internally, formal democracy has tended to imperfectly co-exist with poverty, with the latter diminishing the prospects for democracy and, therefore, for citizenship. To be sure, democratic consolidation or social transformation necessarily has to go beyond formal democracy and, to that extent, is a project of the long haul (Amuwo 2003). Yet, a clearly delineated movement towards a post-polyarchy polity should be discernible. Otherwise, social democracy as well as democracy *tout court* would be endangered. 'The inability to substantially ameliorate acute poverty and reduce inequalities', writes Giliomee, 'puts democratic consolidation in serious jeopardy'. He adds that democratic consolidation is a tenuous process in states where 'there is a contradiction between an institutional system based on the political equality of citizens and a society characterised by extreme inequalities or a process of growing social inequality' (Giliomee 1995:101).

In the South African typology—as in much of the continent—the same largely 'captured' civil society organisations are conceptualised as constituting an important locus of critical social action capable of turning the tables against the state. Of primary importance in this respect are those organisations that, to appropriate Tripp (2000:191), 'do not have a stake in the perpetuation of politics as usual and whose very existence is contingent on more thorough going political reform'. What, for long, held out hope for some form of

South African political 'exceptionalism' was that many anti-apartheid activists saw themselves engaged in the fight for both political freedom and increased control over the economy. In other words, whilst popular franchise was a major demand, 'the key liberation movements subscribed to and spread to their poverty-stricken followers an economic, as opposed to a procedural, view of democracy' (Hearn 2000: 818, 827).

The ambivalence, contradiction and complexity of democracy on which we have remarked, come again to bold relief here. Lodge (1997:349) argues that capitalist or post-colonial class solidarities, as well as industrialisation and urbanisation, have engendered a South African civil society that 'is richer, complex and more conducive to liberal democracy than the social cohesion produced by those pre-colonial institutions which continue to shape communal life in rural Botswana and Zimbabwe', Lowe (1999:415), on the other hand, cautions that the South African civil society has been a locus of both democratic and anti-democratic struggles. As Amy and Patterson (1998:439) have demonstrated in their study on rural Senegal, civil society often has constituent parts that do not add up to a coherent and a cohesive whole. Different economic and educational experiences and multiple gender roles and social norms tend, they claim, to slow down communication, participation and the construction of trust networks in civil society. Similarly, deepening poverty worsens material divisions in civil society and drives a wedge between members and leaders alike who have access to the state and those who don't. What this scenario logically suggests is a networking of like-minded democrats and nationalists from both the state and civil society. The one is incomplete without the other.

The dynamics of an emergent liberal democracy

South Africa's hybrid post-apartheid politics has been the product of a myriad of historical, political and cultural influences. On account of procedural continuity, backward legitimacy, controlled transformation, elite-pacted democracy and transition as 'transplacement', the social reach and political import of post-apartheid politics necessarily have to be limited. The latter refers to a process where, as in Poland and Chile, amongst others, both government and opposition have more or less equal strength and learn, *willy-nilly*, the art and science of political compromise since neither of the two can, on its own, determine the future trajectory of the polity (Giliomee 1995:94). To be sure, popular organisations, such as trade unions, took an active part in the transition (Cawthra 2003:32), but that impacted little on the general orientation of the post-transition settlement as an elitist democracy undergirded by the logic of national liberation (Southall 2003:30). Political

elites, admittedly multiracial, crafted pacts that helped to minimise feared political violence and to achieve a rather unexpected electoral democracy, but seemingly at some great social costs: amongst others, containment of the radicalising or revolutionary pressures of the mass of the people and the assumption of state power by the black majority (as rightly projected), but one that remains largely divorced from economic power that continues to reside in the hands of the white minority (Southall 2003:18, 47).

The reality, not unexpectedly, has been a mixed grill. On the one hand, there is, by all accounts, a good institutional design of democracy. Anchored on the African National Congress's 'broad, inclusivist nationalism', the latter has sought to reverse apartheid's legacy of exclusion as well as the sophistication of its institutions of control and repression by developing institutions of democracy and inclusion (Cawthra 2003:49; Pottie and Hassim 2003:61). A major institution in this respect is a deliberate robust liberal constitution (considered by many an analyst as the most liberal in our global hamlet, in tandem with a rich Bill of Rights) whose provisions constitute a 'constitutionally-mandated check to concentrated power' (Butler 2003:94). These include real and symbolic concessions to minorities, affirmative actions, respect of basic human rights and political representation (including the right of citizens to participate in local level decision-making affecting their lives) and related constitutional provisions meant to improve the lot of hitherto disadvantaged racial and ethnic communities. South Africans are also protected legally through an array of legal instruments: the Constitutional Court; the Human Rights Commission; Office of the Public Protector; the Gender Equality Commission; the Heath Special Investigation Unit empowered to investigate cases of corruption and to recover lost assets and funds (Lester et.al, 2000:266). Curiously, the latter was disbanded during 2001 notwithstanding its success in either recovering or protecting some US $150 million of assets and money by the end of 1998. Furthermore, the post-apartheid government has put in place what has been regarded as the legislative pillars of a new post-apartheid labour market. These include the Labour Relations Act, the Employment Equity Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Marais 2001:193).

There is ample evidence to show that, whatever the lacunae otherwise observed, Pretoria has, within a decade, recorded monumental achievements in the areas as varied as rural and urban housing accelerated by a housing subsidy (by 1999 no less than 40 percent of approved subsidies went to women); rural and urban electrification; safe supply of water; more telephone lines; an extensive primary school nutrition programme; and free medical health for pregnant women and children under six years. On the whole,

according to a pertinent source, since 1994 on average each day 'another 1300 homes were electrified; another 750 telephones installed and another 1700 people gained access to clean water' (Marais 2001: 190). A major impetus for this 'success story' has been the country's trade union movement that has managed to retain much of its vibrancy notwithstanding its status as a partial state organisation. It has been observed, for instance, that the rate of unionisation South Africa recorded between 1985 and 1995 is one of the highest globally (Good 2002:89).

There are other interesting achievements. Careful attention has been paid by the South African constitution to salient issues such as the democratic control of the security forces, full recognition of presidential authority as well as objective civilian control of military institutions. Silva also claims that although South Africa remains largely defined in ethnic and regional terms, 'much greater national consensus has been achieved about the need to concentrate on the present and the future of the nation' (Silva 2003:103, 118).

The foregoing indices are no mean achievements for a country that was expected to implode under the weight of racial and ethnic hatred a little over a decade ago. In this respect Marais has argued that:

> enormous changes have been wrought since 1994. The progress made at the superstructural level in many respects has been astounding: the constitution, new legislation, new policies and frameworks, overhauled state structures and refurbished state systems, are examples. Hitches and logjams identified inside government are constantly being addressed, with the power concentrated at the apex of the executive apparently intended to facilitate those efforts... social delivery proceeds at a pace and in a manner unprecedented in most South Africans' lives (2001:305).

Yet, the vote for political realism and stability, moderation, pragmatism and compromise which were the buzzwords of the negotiation and immediate post-transition years (and were actually counselled) has virtually become an albatross on the neck of the ANC government. In a fundamental sense, the structural legacy of apartheid haunts the transformation agenda (Butler 2003:94). The ANC itself has, both wittingly and unwittingly, surrendered the relative or embedded autonomy of the South African state to both domestic and international capital. The point to underline is that without social transformation, superstructural changes amount to little. What this suggests is that, to borrow from Cawthra (2003:43), 'it is easier to change policies and structures than values and practices'.

Almost a decade into multi-racial elections, the post-apartheid state has hardly been able to satisfactorily resolve the structural crisis engendered by

the apartheid system. For one, the ANC's lofty objective was to use liberation politics and struggle to seize both political and economic power. But, for reasons already alluded to, what it got was a partial transfer of power. This singular phenomenon has been at the source of the dilemma of the former liberation movement. Given its undue emphasis on the state as the citadel of power in society, once it was assimilated into power rather than seizing it and transforming it as it had expected (Marais 2001:2), the ANC lost its major weapon of statecraft and transformation. For another, with a culture of suppression of dissent that it honed during the liberation struggle, the ANC has barely tolerated its alliance partners (COSATU and SACP) and other non-state organisations and actors that militate for a more pro-poor economic and allied policy framework. Whatever the merits otherwise in COSATU and SACP's continued stay in government (more in office than in power), they have allowed the ANC to combine ideological pre-eminence with organisational superiority and, *mutatis mutandis*, to treat its junior partners with scant respect and sometimes with contempt (Marais 2001:73).

While the ANC and its partners sometimes speak the same language of social transformation, the ruling elite pays little more than a nodding attention to it in practice. Good (2002:89, 94) argues that South Africa's predominant ruling elite is weakening the country's democracy to the extent that whereas 'they speak easily of the opportunities supposedly offered but seem dangerously complacent about the inequalities and injustices it entails'. A major reason for this development, for Good, is that the most important hierarchy in the ANC's decision-making structure continues to function, as in the exile days, as 'a secretive, autocratic organisation'. Expressed differently, the ANC, not unlike its counterparts in the Southern African sub-region, has been hard put to shed the toga, logic and orientation of a national liberation movement. Yet, that appears indispensable if the organisation is serious about becoming a key agent in societal transformation and modernisation. Senior officials and cadres of the party alike have to learn to abandon the culture of docile conformity and obeisance to party hierarchy and pressure the party to cultivate a culture of consent and popular legitimacy. Indeed, one reason why COSATU, amongst others, has been reined in is that the trade union organisation itself has been afflicted with the same culture of lack of authentic internal political debate. It has thus been easy for the ANC to stifle leftist critics within its ranks and amongst its alliance partners (Butler 2003:105).

At the core of the massive demobilisation of hitherto vibrant civil society organisations has been the fact that the value of direct and participatory democracy that the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) did much to propagate and diffuse has hardly become

routinised in the political system. As Gibson (2001:72) has shown, between the late 1980s and 1994, those values and expressions remained ensconced in celebratory politics. They were not 'translated into a radical rethinking of liberation theory that mapped out paradigms of social and ethical practices for a post-apartheid society'. This ideological and value gap would be exploited by the ANC which captured these narratives and celebrated the idea of people's power 'while remaining the self-appointed future negotiators'.

There is little doubt that the more or less successful demobilisation of popular social forces has aided and abetted the ANC in imposing a politics of compromise in relation to both domestic and international agents of capital and big business. Now, to understand the dominant project in post-apartheid South Africa, it is necessary to look at 'the domestication and assimilation of the key organisations of the socialist left into a neo-corporatist framework dominated by the state and capital' (Marais 2001). The introduction of the neo-liberal/conservative Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic policy framework (christened 'Greed Entirely Avoids Redistribution' by its critics, Lester et al, 2000:319) in 1996 confirmed the effective marginalisation of the Left in its political romance with the ANC. Increasingly since 1994, as the nexus between the state and capital grows, the authority and influence of ANC's alliance partners has waned even as the influence of its partners in government [Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the New National Party, (NNP)] has become substantial (Marais 2001:271).

A communist would lament that the problem of the allies is that 'ANC policy is still determined by the leadership and few grassroots members can challenge them'. The allies have not been docile or timid altogether, though. At its July 2002 Congress, the SACP agreed that the tripartite alliance should be led by the working class. It also purged itself of the pro-privatisation elements in the leadership. But there has been little beneficial effect of this bold initiative in the politics of the alliance. The ANC has not always had its way in the dynamics of the alliance, either. For instance, during 2002, the party provincial chairs sympathetic to the Left were elected in the North-West, Mpumalanga and the Free State provinces. This was reminiscent, almost in all material particulars, to the Mafikeng conference that was called in response to the unexpected severe critique of GEAR shortly after its release to the public (Lekota, a grassroots politician won the chairmanship election ahead of the late Steve Tshwete, the preferred candidate of the party hierarchy (See Kindra 2002:19). On balance, however, neither COSATU nor SACP nor the voluntary sector has been able 'to impose (its) alternative economic ideas on either the state or domestic and international capital' (Marais 2001:281). Whenever COSATU gets too vocal, the ANC and business resort to blackmail:

they tend to portray the Congress as a special interest group that does no more than protect and enhance its corporate interests and sets little store by the larger interests of the rest of the South African society.

The so-called 'Rainbow Nation' and the promised new dawn for the mass majority have suffered in the process. It would seem that as the process of transformation becomes increasingly state-driven, the country's politics is getting less consensual and more conventional (Johnson 2000:34). This is another way of saying that the negative impact of the gradual disintegration of the critical core of the civil society on statecraft and democratic consolidation can hardly be over-emphasised. The clarion call to transit from resistance to reconstruction, cooperation and transformation has tended to confuse these organisations, particularly in terms of appropriate relations with the state in the new dispensation. The new politics has also had the effect of dulling their radical instincts and sensibilities. Moreover, on account of their histories, it has been difficult to understand the notion of 'critical support' that the ANC government and its supporters demand. By subjugating some of the most critical segments of the civil and political society to the state and its market-friendly policy matrix, with no visible, clear and immediate challenge from other parties, the ANC clearly shows that it has a firm grip of power. But as Cawthra (2003:33) has noted, 'many features of the South African political economy remain much the same'. Invariably, they unwittingly get incorporated into the post-apartheid state. The problem is not so much the incorporation (to the extent that the state and civil society need each other) as that such an intimacy 'carries the risk of a potentially drab relationship that lacks the necessary dynamism of difference and contestation that can give rise to the kinds of innovations and plurality of endeavours a successful popular project requires' (Marais 2001:286).

Social engineering and its limits

To understand the foregoing, one has to come to terms with the ANC's historic capitulation to capital. What happened? Why was it so easy for the ANC, given the immense sacrifice of its many denizens, leaders and organisational chieftains on behalf of popular forces and masses, to succumb to the logic and demands of capital and capitalism? Marais offers an explanation:

> Having neglected the economic realm for decades, the ANC's resistance levels were low, particularly in an era advertised as the 'end of history'. With the organisation's earlier makeshift reference points either crushed or badly dented, its appetite for risk was weak. The low road of accommodation to orthodoxy held great appeal (2001:135).

Marais is also critical. The claim that capitalism is developing a black economic empowerment group is, for him, a weak compensation since this merely enriches the minority black capitalist class, not the general black population. By the same token, it was unacceptable both to the leadership and the ranks and file of the liberation movement that the ANC government could so easily ignore class analysis and the structural realities of the post-apartheid heritage to deal with labour 'as if the process was politically and ideologically neutral and could be appended to a set of strategies and politically palatable social objectives' (Marais 2001:136). There is no doubting the negative impact of global structural constraints and late capitalism on developing and semi-industrialising states, but the decision to vote for capital instead of the people was nothing but premeditated. Nobody entered the economic battlefield blindfolded. What is more, it is a choice that has been regularly and stoutly defended by the ANC, often against the grain of rationality and empirical evidence. By voting with its heart for market economy and with its head for the people, the ANC did some violence to the relative autonomy of the democratic state. However one explicates contemporary globalisation, it does provide some elbow room for manoeuvring and for a more nationalistic and pro-poor economic orientation than the ANC was ready to admit. A semi-industrialised state such as South Africa enjoys enough economic muscle to lessen the somewhat homogenising, hegemonising and integrating logic of globalisation with a view to getting a better deal for its capital and commerce in the international market. The ANC chose to ignore all of this and to opt for the least line of resistance. By so doing, it limits its ability to redistribute opportunity, infrastructural resources and access to productive activity and institutional power in favour of the popular classes (Marais 2001:96). The ANC has, almost *in toto*, bought into the notion that South Africa's democracy was inaugurated in an international ecology that is 'hostile to big government programme and in a global economy that prompts states to remain competitive by reducing expenditures on social welfare programmes and lowering wages' (Evans in Lester et al 2000:321). It was easy for the organisation to do so largely because it entered the pre-1994 CODESA talks and negotiations without a coherent programme committed to dismantling the structural foundations of apartheid.

The GEAR policy, welcomed by both domestic and international capital, became the ANC government's official economic paradigm as from 1996. Its main tenets and elements include export performance, foreign investment, competition and control of wage increases and interest rates, but excluding 'significant state-led redistribution' (Lester et al 2000:320, 322). What effectively comes into bold relief here is that the re-insertion of South Africa into the

circuits of the global economy acts as a 'further constraint on the capacity of democratic institutions to alleviate poverty and respond to emergent sources of insecurity and conflict' (Bastian and Luckham 2003:36). Being pro-capital is tantamount to appropriating the paradigm of exclusion and exploitation. Within this framework, there is neither 'a more far-sighted panoramic view of the routes to such states' economic objectives nor, for that matter, an adherence to a basic tenet of true reconciliation, whose logic imposes the striving to ensure that economic benefits 'are distributed as widely as possible' (Dommen 1997:491). And the major contradiction is not so much that of redressing the poverty of the majority as that between capital and labour, of which the latter is a major consequence. It is precisely because of this primary contradiction that the post-apartheid state cannot give wealth and privilege to blacks as the apartheid state did to whites (Judson 2001:67, 69).

Similarly, South Africans are forced to live with economic institutions and financial regimes designed to promote Western interests, not those of their country. Tied to this is the fact that rather than give justice to the country's black majority (as well as other non-black victims of apartheid), the ANC government has been more receptive to white pressures both from within and from outside (Williams 2001:656). On account of this, South Africa's transformation project, 'even with a radical and widely welcomed revision of its political constitution... has been more of a transition to a new social and economic order which is "acceptable" to key metropolitan and local constituencies than a radical break with past socio-economic structures' (Lester et al 2000:320). Lester and his associates add that 'it is those key local and global constituencies which make it so difficult for the new South African state to deploy the universalist notion of "development" in a way which acts against the exclusions and inequities that have been associated with the term' (2000:320).

The dynamics of South Africa's political economy is such that it does some violence to three of the most important ingredients of successful transition that one finds in the contemporary literature on democratisation: the relatively favourable internal political and societal conditions; the internally driven character of the process, and its relatively inclusive and participatory character (Bastian and Luckham 2003:6). While the structural legacies of apartheid are undoubtedly formidable, they are by no means insurmountable. But the politics has to be got right for the proposed economic solution—a supremely political question also—to be correct. From that premise, what remains is for reformers to not derail or backslide. If genuinely democratic leaders are interested in taking pro-poor social decisions and are willing to set much store by public accountability, transparency and responsiveness and by a social explication and interpretation of market injunctions, the goal of

democratic renewal would be kept in view. In the case of South Africa, 'when it left apartheid behind, (it) did not leave behind the structures and processes which generate inequality' (Lester et al 2000:322). Rather than confront this structural legacy with the seriousness and single-mindedness that it deserves, the ANC government has, on the contrary, sought relief in a wretched amalgam of a seemingly leftist discourse favourable to the poor and a rightist political and policy praxis beneficial to capital and the corporate world. In other words, whilst the ANC continues to talk 'left', it acts 'right'. In his 1990 address to the US Congress, Mandela was clear:

> the process of reconstruction of South African society will... entail the transformation of its economy. We require an economy that is able to address the needs of the people of our country; that can provide food, houses, social security and everything that makes life joyful rather than a protracted encounter with hopelessness and despair. We must also make the point firmly that the political settlement and democracy itself cannot survive unless the material needs of the people; the bread and butter issue are addressed as part of the process of change as a matter of urgency (cited in Awe 1999:15).

On May Day four years later, he had changed gear: 'In our economic policies... there is no single reference to things like nationalization and this is not accidental. There is not a single slogan that will connect us with any Marxist ideology' (Marais 2001:122).

The politics of democratic consolidation becomes severely flawed in this respect. While there is a perception that the black majority government has done fairly well in meeting some of the basic needs of the historically disadvantaged, the thinking persists that Mandela, for all the goodwill and iconoclasm he enjoyed (and continues to enjoy out of power), is 'widely considered to have failed the test of "delivery"' (Butler 2003:94). The paradoxes and contradictions have virtually become inescapable. South Africans have on their hands a democracy that is simultaneously largely elite-driven, one-party dominant (see below), progressively respectful of the constitution and the rule of law, but, paradoxically, seemingly undergirded by the politics of entitlement. The latter has, for all practical purposes, become a common denominator of former guerrilla fighters in power in the Southern Africa sub-region. Those who, yesterday, gave their prime years in sacrifice to their country and their compatriots deem themselves, today, to be entitled, in perpetuity, to political power and the immense privileges and luxuries that come in its trail. They do not mind becoming sacred cows and virtual untouchables in the process. In the celebrated Tony Yengeni case, with regard

to the multi-billion rand arms deal, a corporate analyst was worried, on the occasion of the judiciary's acceptance of a plea bargain for the ANC former Chief Whip at the point that his conviction was virtually secured, that the South African justice system may be a long shot away from being able to deal 'appropriately with well-connected and moneyed criminals'. More specifically, the case was seized upon to remind the hierarchy of the ANC of the essence of the anti-apartheid struggle. The latter was not about replacing white dominance and self-aggrandising greed with demographically representative greed. On the contrary, 'it was about legitimate government, about redistributing the resources of the country more equitably and about respect for the people' (Cf. 'The Fat Cat Mentality' (Editorial) *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), February 21 to 27, 2003, p.24).

To all appearances, a new black elite authoritarianism is developing even as the bastions and ramparts of the old order remain unassailable in certain fundamental ways. According to Good (1997:573), 'the new authoritarianism, built on predominance and power-sharing among the elites, backed by corporate power and the patriotic bourgeoisie has potentially greater permanency than apartheid'. In view of Pretoria's hegemony in the sub-region, it may be that a potent explicatory schema for the inability of South Africa to articulate a foreign policy anchored, *inter alia*, on commitment to human rights, democracy, multipartyism, let alone 'export its democratic governance, its conflict resolution models and its core democratic values' (Cawthra 2003:52-54) is because her own record is nothing but mixed—and this tends to be more supportive of authoritarian tendencies than democratic tenets.

Within this context, one can interrogate the merits and demerits of the ANC's ascendancy and hegemony. There are two emerging schools of thought on this subject. The first sees the hegemony as essentially positive to the extent that the party is perceived as playing a 'hold on' role in the country's democratisation politics. The argument is that the country needs a dominant party in the midst of a fluid multiparty system to help build enduring, legitimate and trusted institutions that, in the long run, will facilitate the construction of a robust democracy (Butler 2003:100). Furthermore, it is argued that beyond providing political stability, the ANC is needed to furnish an 'enabling environment' for the attraction and retention of both domestic and foreign investment. The hope has been expressed that 'an extended period of ANC electoral dominance, over, perhaps, ten or fifteen years, will entrench the legitimacy of democratic institutions' (Butler 2003:100). The hope is perhaps not entirely misplaced. Cawthra (2003:49-50) has contended that the ANC government's achievement in controlling political violence and entrenching democratic processes has resulted in a state system that functions fairly

effectively. Elements of a functional state include the following: transformation of the public service; provision of basic services virtually nation-wide; fiscal discipline; effective policy-making; fairly efficiently managed budgets; and deliberate and deliberative measures to make the state more transparent, accountable and responsive. In essence, therefore, the ANC's more than average performance justifies its continued hegemony, even though implementation performance (including some key departments that lack capacity to deliver) remains a sore point. The second school is a little more sceptical and cautious. Its proponents seem wary that an extremely powerful ANC capable of making its many competitors appear politically ordinary portends a grave danger for South Africa's political future—as well as for the entire sub-region, already unsettled by the political *faux pas* of a Mugabe and a Nujoma, amongst others, who seem bent on honouring their countries' constitutions more in the breach than in the observance. The major critique is that 'the ruling party (ANC) is representing itself as the state rather than as a temporary incumbent while other groups are losing the autonomy they require to compete' (Butler 2003:110). Such fears are hardly lessened by the ANC's seeming interest in party (as against state) accountability, as seen, for instance, in the on-going arms deal scandal; the emerging politics, since 2002, of silencing Leftist critics of the ANC and the Mbeki presidency both within and outside the government, and a conscious policy of promoting pro-capitalist groups within the ruling party as well as Mbeki's acolytes (Butler 2003:102, 105). To be sure, the ANC can justify its tight grip on state power on the grounds that the polity requires political cohesion and stability in order to mitigate possible negative fall-outs of a lack of national identity and incipient ethnicity (the 'Xhosa mantra,' for instance) (cf. Austin 2001:501). As Johnson (2000:35) has averred, what South Africa's democratisation agenda calls for is to seek a balance between the temptation to accumulate power ostensibly to better the lot of the poor and the cultivation of a culture of robust democracy that goes beyond electoralism (a defining feature of the sub-region, including Botswana). An important requirement for robust democracy is, in the words of Seepe (2000:29), the creation of 'an environment that encourages a flourishing and flowering of ideas... an environment that promotes robust and vibrant intellectual engagements'.

Conclusion

What the foregoing analysis boils down to is that whatever the ennobling virtues of South Africa's many superstructural achievements, a pro-market macroeconomic orientation that, wittingly and unwittingly, perpetuates inherited structural inequities and inequalities, has prevented the ANC

government from undertaking bolder and more innovative systemic reforms. Expressed differently, whilst the political science of democratisation has been important for ordinary South African folk, in view of their long march to freedom, the people's lot is likely to improve further and have a solid foundation if their leaders, spokespersons and carriers of the torch of progress will agitate for the political economy of the same polity. It is this singular phenomenon that has resulted, since 1994, in little economic growth, little redistributive economics and politics, little racial reconciliation and national unity. To the extent that this is so, post-apartheid South Africa has a long road ahead before social democracy could emerge as the only game in town. While for the first time democratisation in the country has translated to the poor having the same formal political power as the rich (Nattrass and Seekings 2001:485), the country remains, *mutatis mutandis*, 'one of the most unequal societies on earth' (Lester et al 2000:230). Similarly, whilst it is true that the ANC government inherited a fairly reasonable macroeconomic system, a fairly redistributive system (that multiple political struggles forced the apartheid government to incrementally arrive at) and a fairly low foreign debt (Lester et al 2000:242), it has hardly been able to build on it. The route to expected massive redistribution having been foreclosed, critical issues such as justice (a major component of social transformation), dignity and autonomy have received little more than a nodding attention (Manzo in Lester et al 2000:230).

In this respect, land reforms and land redistribution would need to be treated with the caution and the urgency they deserve. It is not enough to say, like Lester et al (2000:265) that the land issue is not so important (unlike in, say, Zimbabwe and Namibia) because South Africa's population is largely urbanised. Nor can the country afford to continue to handle the land issue bureaucratically or—which amounts to the same thing—in an extremely slow, painful and tortuous manner. Not only has a mere one percent of land been redistributed by 1999 (as against the 30 percent promised), during the same year only 33 out of 22,500 land claims by people who wanted to reclaim their dispossessed land were settled (Lester et al 2000:265-266). If not sped up, it may snowball into a veritable time bomb ticking away.

As in Brazil, South Africa's transition to social democracy—a social desideratum if the notorious poverty question would have to be progressively (and satisfactorily) addressed and resolved—is being blocked by a combination of powerful vested domestic and international business and capitalist interests; conservative bureaucrats and technocrats (whose incomes are staggering compared to the poverty wage that so ill-befits those lucky enough to find jobs) and elected politicians determined to preserve their control of privilege and patronage (Nattrass and Seekings 2001:494-495).

It is difficult to see how entrenched political, economic and bureaucratic interests and powers can be dislodged without a combination of intellectual work and renewed and reactivated political activism. To begin with, a rethinking is necessary in order to free the democratic and liberating energies of the country's (latent) popular social forces for democratisation. The goal would be to wean democracy from 'self-interested democracy promotion by the West and develop sustainable domestic roots' (Luckham 2003:7). In the words of Swift (2000), 'undemocratic concentration of power will always form and need dissolving. Cliques and cabals will need challenging. Civil service empires will need to be deconstructed'.

Civil society organisations, mass movements, the ANC's tripartite allies and a hopefully reactivated Pan-Africanist Congress (much assailed in recent years by leadership crisis) and similar bodies would need to recover their voice. This would be with a view to pressuring the ANC government to halt those policies 'that keep the economy growing along an inegalitarian path', one that results in 'a large section of the poor being shut out of income-generating activities' (Nattrass and Seekings 2001:495) to embrace growth with equity as well as the 'post-Washington Consensus' which advocates a greater degree of state involvement in a national economy (Lester et al 2000:47).

Furthermore, South Africa would do well with a large number of democrats—from the ranks of current political and other leaders and civil society alike—to move the polity away from the sphere of liberal imperfection (Williams 2003:2) to ensure democratic consolidation and societal transformation. 'Democracy can be installed without democrats, but it cannot be consolidated without them', write Bratton and van de Walle (cited in Haynes 2001: 31). They continue: 'democracy will truly last only when political actors learn to love it. Until elites and citizens alike come to cherish rule by the people and exhibit a willingness to stand up for it, in Africa as elsewhere, there will be no permanent defence against tyranny'. The process of political statecraft and societal transformation would no doubt benefit from sustained cooperation between the tripartite alliance and the opposition parties (Butler 2003:112). While this paradigm may help entrench South Africa's 'highly imperfect democracy', it will do little to bring the mass majority of the poor 'back in'.

As we have tried to show in this essay, the democracy in question has to be that which improves the quality of living of the people. It cannot be one that purely and simply increases the quantum of power, opulence and privileges of the ruling classes and their elastic set of hangers-on—even if it is claimed that this is being done in the name of the 'people'.

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