



NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Negotiating student power



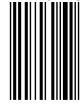
Also inside: What kind of investment and for who?
Climate justice critique of political parties

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IFAA'S STUDENT AND YOUTH DEPARTMENT



The Student & Youth Department aims to establish a community and network for progressive students and youth in South Africa.

The IFAA Forum

The IFAA Forum provides a platform for young progressives to share academic work and debate topical issues. The IFAA forum has the following objectives:

- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning among graduate students in South Africa
- Encourage interdisciplinary thinking
- Foster collaboration and communication between students and young academics
- Deepen intellectual networks between universities in South Africa
- Provide a platform for discussing progressive political/economic/social theory
- Democratise academic knowledge by opening up participation in the forum to social activists and engaged members of the public

The IFAA Reading Circle

IFAA's Student and Youth department runs regular reading circles throughout the year. This is part of our aim to deepen the youth's intellectual engagement with progressive social theory.

In 2019 IFAA will be conducting fortnightly reading groups on core concepts in political economy.

Reading Circles are convened by IFAA at the request of members of the IFAA Student and Youth Network. To become a part of our reading circle please contact Alex at studentandyouth@ifaaza.org.

The Progressive Corner

The Progressive Corner provides a platform for the dissemination of progressive theories and perspectives in a non-sectarian way. We publish essays and produce podcasts on current affairs, social theory, and political and economic history. This is a public forum for students by students.

We encourage the free and open exchange of ideas with the intention to promote critical analysis of economic and social problems confronting South Africa, the rest of the African continent, and the globe at large.

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Micropropagation of rare *Strelitzia* plants

A novel technology for micropropagation of rare *Strelitzia* plants has been developed at the University of Limpopo, by a team under Prof Roumiana Nikolova in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture.

By Prof Hlengani Siweya, Executive Dean

PROFILE OF PROF RV NIKOLOVA

Roumiana V Nikolova is a Professor of Botany in the Department of Biodiversity, School of Molecular and Life Sciences (SMLS), Faculty of Science and Agriculture (FSA) at the University of Limpopo. She is involved in teaching and supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Her research interests are in the fields of Plant Physiology and Biotechnology, with emphasis on *in vivo* and *in vitro* propagation of indigenous and valuable plants (food, medicinal and ornamental) of economic importance.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

A novel technology for *in vitro* propagation of indigenous South African *Strelitzia* plants was developed at the University of Limpopo by Faculty researchers (Prof RV Nikolova, Mr P Ramalepe and Mrs HJ du Plessis) from the Biodiversity Department. *Strelitzia* plants have horticultural potential as cut flower and garden plants, especially in drought prone areas of South Africa and other parts of the world. Some of *Strelitzia* plant species have limited availability, with market demand posing constraints in the horticultural industry.

Strelitzia juncea is a rare plant that occurs naturally in only a few localities in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The plant is difficult to propagate conventionally (by seeds or vegetatively) due to slow growth and a low multiplication rate. The new *in vitro* technology allows for the production of a high number of plants, faster growth and can provide uniform stock material all year round.

The innovation has commercial potential for large-scale production of *Strelitzia juncea* plants (or other related species) due to national and international floriculture market demand. The University

of Limpopo has been granted national (SA) and international (EPO, ARIPO and Australia) patents, and it is looking forward to commercialising this technology.

NATIONAL AWARD

The National Intellectual Property Office of the Department of Science & Technology has named Prof RV Nikolova a "Top Intellectual Property Creator" of the University of Limpopo. Former Minister of Science and Technology Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane presented her with a certificate of acknowledgement for her innovative and patented research at the 2019 IP Creator Award Ceremony held on 28 March in Pretoria. This is the first time the University of Limpopo has won this award, which is accompanied by seed funding of R605,000 for supporting further development and commercialisation of the innovation by the Technology Transfer Office at University.

PROF ROUMIANA NIKOLOVA



Prof RV Nikolova and her current research team, comprising Messrs. W Mapheto and P Mangena,

also participated in the 2018 Gauteng Accelerator Programme (GAP) Innovation Competition. The University of Limpopo, represented by the team, was awarded the first prize in the biosciences category and seed funding of R500,000 at the award ceremony on 15 November 2018 at the Innovation Hub in Pretoria.

Prof RV Nikolova and her team are currently working on scaling up the technology for commercial purposes. The success of commercialisation could

assist in local economic development, environmental sustainability and job creation. This is also in line with the national strategic objectives to support research and commercialise developed innovations in biosciences, and to promote the transfer of knowledge and hi-tech skills to young scientists in South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding and innovation support for the research and for the patenting of the technology was provided by the following organisations:

- Department of Biodiversity, School of Molecular and Life Sciences, Faculty of Science and Agriculture at the University;
- The Research and Technology Transfer Offices at the University;
- Department of Science and Technology;
- National Intellectual Property Management Office; and
- Technology Innovation Agency.

Researchers and prospective students interested in collaboration and studying Plant Physiology and Biotechnology can contact Prof Nikolova:

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Research by Institute for African Alternatives

Research commissioned by the United Nations University (UNU-WIDER) by the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) research team resulted in a research paper on minerals governance in Southern Africa. This is a summary of the key findings and recommendations.

MINERALS-BASED INDUSTRIALISATION AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT

In recent years several African governments, including Tanzania and Ghana, have promoted a “minerals-based industrialisation” path. Local procurement is a crucial component in the stimulation of upstream linkages and recent literature suggests that it presents the most appropriate “path of least resistance” that African countries should follow in order to ignite minerals-based industrialisation.

More local sourcing will result in greater demand for other products and services, increasing employment, development and diversification of local industries, increased skill and technology transfer and greater integration into global value chains. Increasing local procurement also has benefits for mining companies, including lower costs, improving supply chain efficiency and strengthening of firms “social licence to operate”. Successful implementation of local procurement policies in resource-rich economies has had immediate positive results for industrialisation in other developing economies, including Brazil and Chile.

Ghana’s minerals governance has improved dramatically since the introduction of the 2006 Ghana Minerals and Mining Act. The Ghanaian government has taken a firmer stance towards local procurement in the gold mining industry over the course of the past decade. The process of developing, adopting and implementing legislation on local procurement has been a collaborative one between the Minerals Commission and the Chamber of Mines. Beyond private sector participation, various international actors were also part of this process of collaboration, including the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The Department of Trade and Industry’s (DTI)’s Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014-2019 aims to take forward a regional industrialisation agenda to ensure Africa becomes a manufacturing and industrial power. Yet the DTI is aware of the perception that South African trade and investment in Africa is a one-sided affair, with the majority of benefits accruing to Africa’s most industrialised economy. However, the South African government can play a developmental role in encouraging South African companies on the continent to invest in local production and develop partnerships with local players.

At first glance it might seem that there is a tension between promoting South African regional interests and increased local procurement in the mineral sector. However, the low capabilities in lowly-industrialised economies such as Ghana and Tanzania suggest that there is not necessarily a long-term conflict of interests between South African producers and their continental peers. As foreign mining suppliers are increasingly being encouraged by both private mining companies and local governments to mentor potential local suppliers and engage in capacity training and skills transfer, the position of South African firms in the value chain can be leveraged for medium- and long-term local value addition.

FINDINGS

- Ghana and Tanzania have both taken proactive steps to improve minerals governance and its local procurement dimension in recent years. Ghana’s progress has been helped by international advisory bodies, the private sector and a government policy over a decade in the making. Tanzania only began this process in 2018.

- A lack of a stable definition of local procurement undermines the ability of governments to adequately monitor and encourage value-enhancing local procurement.
- South African mining investment can be leveraged for greater value-enhancing procurement with proper state and regional guidance and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tanzania and Ghana should adopt a stable definition of local procurement that contains preferences for companies that have significant participation from local citizens across ownership, management and employment, demonstrate high levels of value addition for locally transformed manufacturing products and locally controlled services, and show a geographic preference for companies located in the same country as the mine.
- Local procurement policy must be articulated in a broader macroeconomic and industrial policy that tends to the social costs of mining (including environmental and human rights infringements) and value-enhancing developmental policies related to employment rights and wages across the mineral value chain.
- The South African government could support regional hubs of specialisation, engage in policy knowledge capacity transfer and promote strategic and catalytic soft and hard infrastructure spending across the continent. In order to ensure a win-win scenario, Tanzania and Ghana may facilitate South African exports into the country, particularly with regards to capital equipment.

Can we stop wrongdoing?

By Ben Turok

New Agenda welcomes the victory of President Ramaphosa and the broad base he motivated to vote in the election. We look forward to a new government which will put integrity ahead of self interest. That there is much to do is clear from Ramaphosa's admission that state capture was the result of the ANC being captured by individuals with criminal intent.

What is most striking about the election result is the huge gap between the ANC and the opposition. In the National Assembly the ANC has 230 seats compared to the DA's 84. In most provinces the gap is even wider. It seems that the African masses have continued to vote for the party of liberation, despite serious misconduct. There is some spillover effect to the EFF, which also articulates fundamental change albeit with serious distortions.

It all suggests that the African masses hunger for an end to remnants of apartheid and its colonial hangovers. The ANC has not set an example of clean and effective governance but it continues to represent the aspirations of the people.

The question we want to address here is: given our excellent Constitution how could all this wrongdoing happen? How could dishonest businesspeople get the assistance from dishonest politicians without the system stopping it? While identifying all the individuals concerned is of the utmost importance, even more important is to ask questions about the nature of our institutions of accountability.

Our Constitution lays down checks and balances and many provisions for oversight. This is to ensure that no individual or institution acts outside



of the law or arbitrarily. Everyone is expected to act rationally and within the democratic spirit of the Constitution.

The judiciary ensures that the Executive and Parliament pass laws that are consistent with the intentions of the Constitution. Parliament exercises oversight over the Executive. The Auditor General scrutinises the financial conduct of the administration. There is an oversight body for the police and another for the intelligence services. Indeed throughout our governance system there are numerous oversight bodies and provision for checks and balances.

Most important of all, all government institutions are in principle accountable to the public.

Yet we have been witness to the most virulent manipulation of power by the Zuma faction and extensive state capture by corrupt businesspeople, both foreign and local.

Yes, we want them to be punished and soon, but we also want to know how come the elaborate system of

checks and balances broke down. This enquiry goes beyond the culpability of individuals. It is about malfunctions in the system as a whole.

Of particular importance is to enquire about the role of our political parties, especially the governing party. Why has the ANC failed to establish an independent head of the public service who would appoint director generals for departments and not the minister? Why has Luthuli House been quite so insistent on deploying its favorites to top positions throughout government, often without consideration of merit? Why is it that where oversight institutions were established, such as the Auditor General and the Public Service Commission, they were given no powers to enforce their adverse findings?

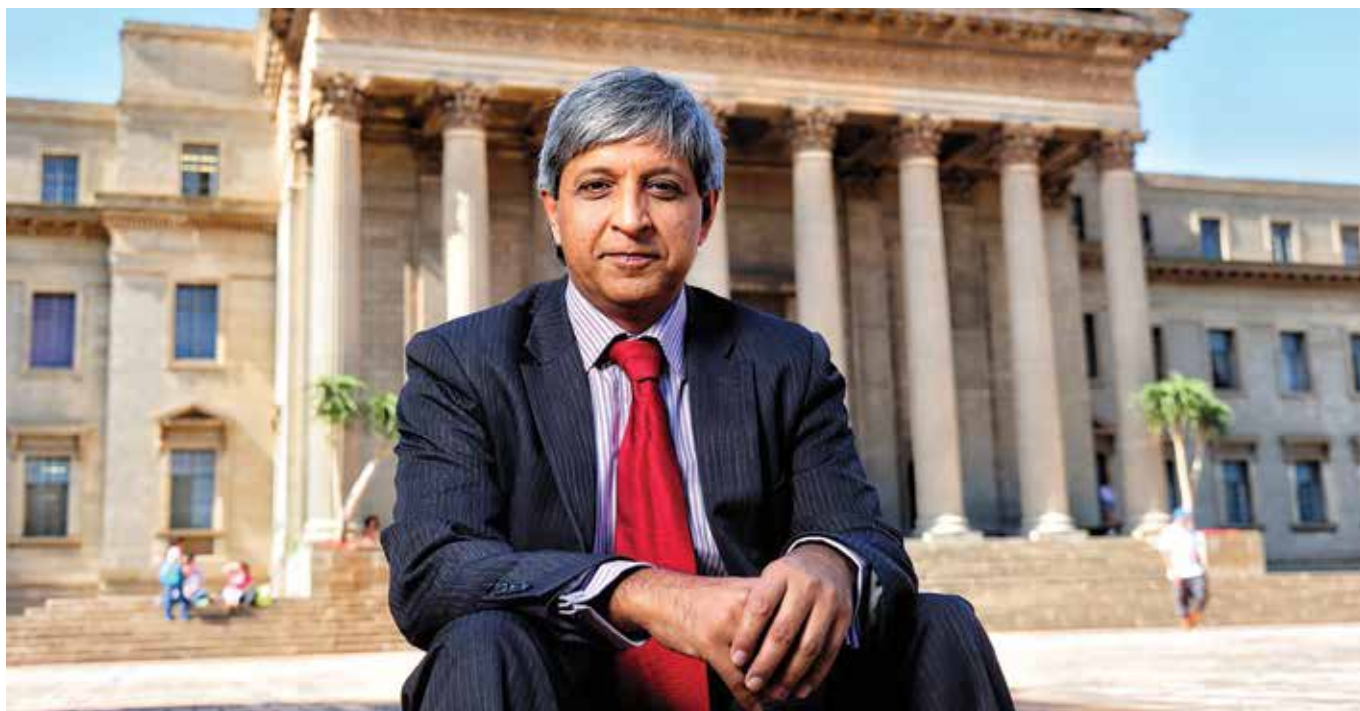
What were all the political parties doing in Parliament and outside it to uphold the integrity of public life? Were the parties not able to better monitor those who were corrupting our public finances and behaving dishonestly in business?

True, the media were always active in exposing wrongdoing where they were able to get a handle on it. But clever politicians who were corrupt seemed to have found a way to get away with it, and the Guptas seemed indifferent to what the media had to say. They appeared to regard themselves as untouchable, which indeed they were for quite a long time.

We are arguing here for a rigorous examination of the checks and balances of our democratic system so that deficiencies can be fixed. What we have experienced over the last decade must never happen again. **NA**

We need an honest conversation: An interview with Adam Habib

The *New Agenda* team interviewed the Vice Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, Adam Habib, following the launch of his latest book, *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #Fees Must Fall*.



NEW AGENDA:

Would it be correct to say that the core thesis of your book was that a legitimate student movement lost its way due to strategic, political and even moral errors. Is that a fair depiction? Would you have anything to add?

ADAM HABIB:

I think it is and I think that is a fair point. It was a legitimate movement focusing on a set of legitimate issues. It begins on issues of alienation and access. It had quick successes that

surprised us and the leaders of the movement. But it factionalised quickly after the initial successes. And certain factions picked up moral and strategic errors, and other factions were not able to stand up to that. This led to the movement losing some legitimacy. It worries me for the movement but also for the project of transformation at the university. When people write about social movements, they forget that these movements have an evolution. Progressives often love to romanticise social movements and I have been guilty of this too. But social movements

can evolve in regressive directions. People don't seem to want to see this and we need to recognise this tendency. We mustn't hide from it and must understand why it happens and how to avoid it.

NEW AGENDA:

Was the factionalism of the student movement due to opportunistic elements within it?

ADAM HABIB:

I think that is partly true, but it is not the main development. Everybody



was astonished at how quickly the student movement rooted. Everyone understood the resonance it had. We met then President Zuma two weeks before the crisis. I was having debates with other VCs and saying we are heading for an explosion. We knew this would happen but just didn't know how quickly it was going to come. Prior to our meeting with Zuma, I met a bank CEO and said: "if the universities explode you are also going to lose as you will have no graduates." When the movement exploded it also took the student leaders by surprise. Some of the other VCs blamed me for the spread because I gave the movement legitimacy and energy by spending the night with Wits students. In the book I intimate "What makes you think I didn't like that? I think this is a legitimate struggle."

Obviously, any movement has opportunists. But the real moment this movement goes wrong is with the political parties. When this movement succeeded far more than anyone imagined, the parties thought that they could use the movement for their own ends. I remember having a conversation with [then Minister of Higher Education] Blade Nzimande who thought that the ANC students had control. But [Julius] Malema [of

the Economic Freedom Fighters] also thought he had control. So all of the parties made an effort to control the movement and, in doing so, they factionalised it. Other than the ANC and EFF there were "far left" elements, remnants of WOSA [the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action], the SRWP [Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party], NUMSA [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa] who also thought: "this is the revolution". Each one began to make a play for the movement. The movement also gave rise to PASMA [Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania]. The PAC [Pan Africanist Congress of Azania] saw young kids using rhetoric of the PAC and so they organised quickly. All kinds of political parties swept in.

This factionalisation had real consequences. The thing people misunderstand about resurgent violence globally is that they think that social movements become violent when police are introduced. That is true, but it is only part of the story. Social movements also become violent when they factionalise. This is a global trend and the literature is showing it. The correlations are shocking. As factionalisation sets in, violence starts. Do you introduce the police after the violence starts? This is the question I

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... social movements become violent when police are introduced. That is true, but it is only part of the story. Social movements also become violent when they factionalise.

reflect on.

NEWAGENDA:

An interesting parallel may be the yellow vests in France. It began peacefully and then suddenly turned violent.

ADAM HABIB:

Yes, and then people think "here is a social movement to claim." And the result is factionalisation and violence.

NEWAGENDA:

You have presented your narrative of the evolution of the student movement forcibly today and in your book. How has your argument been received by the broader Wits community?

ADAM HABIB:

It has been received in three very different ways. There is a first group, which is the bulk of the academics and what I call the vast silent majority of the student base, who say they identify with my narrative and are in broad agreement. They may not agree with every element but they think the overall narrative I present is true. There is a second group that is largely associated with the SRC and political parties. They are publicly critical of the way I have taken them on. They are particularly incensed that I won't apologise for ➤

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But social movements can evolve in regressive directions. People don't seem to want to see this and we need to recognise this tendency.



bringing in the police in 2016. But I have made it clear that I would do the same thing in the same circumstances because I think it was the progressive thing to do. This freaks them out. I do that recognising that police action had traumatic consequences for students and academics. Believing I had two ills, losing the institution permanently or having a lesser evil which is the fracturing of part of the community, I took the lesser evil. Ironically, when I speak to young student leaders as individuals their view changes from their public view. Many of them accepted my position but could not say so publicly as 'it would alienate us from students'. You would be amazed at how positive my personal relationships are with individual student leaders. There is an interesting discord between their public and private opinions which worries me.

The third element is the left in the academy. Here there are two groups. The

first is the broader progressive left who I think broadly identify with and support what I am saying, although they would like me to be less vocal about it and more diplomatic in the way I engage the student movement. They believe that the trick of the moment is not to be as vocal or as bold or as outspoken as I am. The second group is the far left. There is a group of them, and, I'll emphasise, they are not a coherent bloc. They come from Maoist, socialist, postmodernist backgrounds and they coalesce around a critique of my "securitisation" agenda. But I argue that they have not articulated an alternative. My worry about them is they have gotten caught in what postmodernists invariably get caught up in. They can describe "pain" but they cannot devise a strategy to transcend "pain" and transform society and institutions.

I will end with the following question: Is the broader left correct to hold the view that I should be more diplomatic? I take a slightly different view. I think that we are in a very toxic political moment, both nationally and globally. I think it is strategically dangerous to have an engagement of appeasement. I think we will land up with making the same mistake the left made with the rise of fascism in Germany or in Spain. For me, that is the real danger. What is required is explicitly raising strategic problems going forward and this is a global issue and goes beyond #FeesMustFall. It is about how we think globally as a progressive community. That is important, and we should be bold about putting this debate on the table.

NEW AGENDA:

In your book you argue that the student movement's turn to violence and racial essentialism alienated potential supporters. While you allude to it, it seems like a story is missing from the array of reflections by academics and students alike, namely the story of the many

thousands of students who participated enthusiastically in the initial stages of the movement, yet became increasingly frustrated, increasingly frustrated with the movement at later stages.

ADAM HABIB:

I think that there are two parts to this. First, I think there is a further voice. I think there is a mainstream voice that says there is violence at our institution and that needs to stop immediately. I am between the far left and that voice. I am saying that this is a legitimate struggle. My worry with the struggle is not the objective, but its methods. I am proposing a way to continue the struggle while keeping people united. It is a slightly different voice from the mainstream. It is odd for people to hear a VC saying this. This is not a neoliberal architect speaking.

I think I articulate the voice of the silent majority of students. I think the student body is instinctively progressive. They know that the cost of higher education is unacceptably high, but they also instinctively know that the political activists are leading to a path of destruction. They want Wits to exist as an accessible and quality institution, so don't destroy it. And they say that they want to qualify and can't be expected to sacrifice this. This in-between space is where the silent majority is.

Why does the silent majority require the VC to voice their view? I think they are silenced. They are silenced by two groups. The first is the political architects within the movement. The mass meeting was used as a mechanism to silence individuals rather than to represent the views of the broader community. This comes from a vanguardism that says: "we are the revolutionary elite that understands more than ordinary people." That vanguardist approach – the belief that we know better than the collective multitude – concerns me.

The second reason is that students are alienated from party politics. The



more our parties misbehave, the more they see hypocrisy and duplicity from our political parties, the more alienated they become. I am worried about the fact that our student leadership and party activist base are learning from a compromised political class. At the heart of that political class is a belief that one can say one thing privately and another thing publicly. Young people will say one thing to me in private and another thing in public. I expose this because it undermines the core of progressive politics in our country. The left is guilty of this too. Many of the left-wing academics say to me that they do not believe in money, but then come to see me in private and threaten to leave for Stellenbosch if they are not paid more. People can give critiques of neoliberalism and securitisation, and within six months they are gone to Sweden, London, Canada. If you look at who left from our academic cohort you will see that it was not the mainstream but the “far left” who did. It is easy to write about neoliberalism from London or Canada rather than to live through these things. I wrote the book to expose this hypocrisy.

I want to say something about the international dimension of the emergence of the far right. When you start engaging in politics as a fundamentalist operation you can destroy the very basis of progressive ideals. In the 1920s (and I am quoting Trotsky on this) you have the emergence of fascism alongside stuttering mainstream capitalism. Stalin says you should treat them [bourgeois democracy and fascism] in the same way. Trotsky says you can’t as this is fascism. You may temporarily enter into an alliance with liberalism because otherwise this is fascism. The Stalinists don’t forge that alliance. The consequence is that tens of millions of Russians die.

This idea that we look for the perfect solution and that politics requires no

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When this movement succeeded far more than anyone imagined, the [political] parties thought that they could use the movement for their own ends. All of the parties made an effort to control the movement and, in doing so, they factionalised it.

strategic thinking is corrupt. This is the same mistake that progressives made in the USA by arguing that Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump are the same. I don’t like Hilary Clinton but I would take her over Donald Trump. Politics is not about the perfect solution but about making strategic choices. I call this a radical pragmatism. I suggest that people read Perry Anderson’s latest piece in the *London Review of Books* on [Jair] Bolsonaro’s Brazil. It shows how the Workers’ Party gets defeated. But it shows how Lula [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva] operated within the confines of politics and achieves remarkable things, yet [Dilma] Rousseff sadly went down holding steadfast to her values. If I was to choose a politician to get me through neo-fascist politics I would take Lula any day, regardless of his imperfections.

NEW AGENDA:

What do you think of the term “decolonisation?”

ADAM HABIB:

This is why I use the term “radical pragmatism”. I am ambivalent about “decolonisation.” I am interested in what it actually means. The view that the debate on “decolonisation” started in 2015 is nonsensical. The debate actually started around the principle of transformation. This idea that transformation is all within the confines of the paradigm of the existing order is nonsensical because when you actually listen to the content of what students want by “decolonisation” then you see that many of these are already in our plans or have already been implemented. So, the idea that there is a real break between prior efforts from progressives to transform our universities and decolonisation is untrue.

Having said that, I am not opposed to the term because of its relevance. A whole series of young people caught onto the term. In this context, do not fight the term but go with it and see where we can drive this. Let us stop debating between transformation and decolonisation and let’s get to the substance. But this is where the movement flounders. I have this dispute with Eusebius McKaiser about this because he believes that I am being unfair on the students. But why? Describing something is not the same as determining how you transcend it. This is where I find the decolonisation literature very weak, other than one or two interesting pieces. A UCT student, Brian Kamanzi, wrote an interesting article about how you can change the engineering curriculum and I reflected on this in my book. I think, however, that as a whole there is a lack of ideas.

What also frightens me is a romanticisation of the decolonisation rhetoric. People say we shouldn’t critique young people because it’s disrespectful. There is the example of the student who called for science to be abandoned at UCT. I had a debate with a left-wing academic on this, someone ➤

who reviewed my book. She argued that speaking about that incident was disrespectful. I retorted that we need to expose this. And she said that we should not discredit the debate. But my argument is that we should take ownership of our mistakes. If we don't do this then the right wing will take ownership of them and manipulate them. We need to acknowledge mistakes and rectify them. This distinguishes me from a lot of the progressive movement because I think that there is a lot of appeasement. I use the example of Neville Alexander, who people claim to draw inspiration from. But Neville was saying in 1986 that "liberation before education" was a nonsensical slogan. Many in the ANC and SACP agreed with this. This is the kind of leadership we need to assert.

There are two further parts to the decolonisation issue. The first and easy part is what you can do in the humanities. We can fix the reading list and show that black philosophers and literary figures are represented in the primary reading list. We can fix the writing of history and ensure there is coverage of African history. But we do not understand enough of the history of the rest of the world. We need to understand this from the contextual needs of African society. We need to understand the US, we need to understand neo-imperialism and the neo-imperial project, because without doing this we won't move on. My fear is that there is a whole host of other issues which are not covered by the decolonisation discourse. When people criticise us, they don't realise that the humanities dimension of decolonisation has already largely been covered. There have been significant changes in the last four years. This is the easy stuff.

There is a second part of this debate outside of the humanities. How do you deal with an engineering curriculum? We can't stop looking at how to construct bridges. But we do

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Our responsibility is to evolve the movement in a structurally progressive direction. How to do so is the real debate at the heart of South Africa today.

need to look at the social importance of bridges. Why are they being constructed in Sandton and not in Alexandra? What are the power relations that underlie the production of bridges? How do we pursue medicine if we can't speak indigenous languages? These are the issues we are very weak in.

There is also the issue of technical disciplines. We have Andrew Crouch, our deputy vice-chancellor, who comes at problems in a technicist way. He says, I need 120 points in order for a degree to be given. Where should the emphasis be? What courses should be weighted? How long should teaching engagements be? People grappling with this can't understand why they are being criticised for not transforming. The problem is that one is talking about pedagogy, the other is talking about the technical changes. We need to believe in and do both. There needs to be a bridge between technical and pedagogical notions of reconstructing the curriculum. But now we have people speaking across each other. For example, take engineering. Engineering students have a course that they need to do, and if they fail this course, which is in the first semester, then they will need to wait six months before they can do it again. This costs money. A technical

reform will ask why are we only offering it in the first term? Can we not do it as a part-time evening course in the second term? Is that a bourgeois reform? Yes, but it changes someone's life. This radical chicness which refuses to engage in technical issues is wrongheaded. I don't have all the answers but we need a conversation on this.

We have to finally deal with this belief that consultation means agreement. Students will say I don't want x in the curriculum, I want y. But with due respect, students do not yet have the knowledge to make all decisions. They should be consulted, but they should not be the sole arbiter of what is included and removed in the curriculum.

NEW AGENDA:

What do you think about the postmodern turn in the academy – alluded to earlier and how has that impacted on the student movement and academics in recent times?

ADAM HABIB:

There has certainly been a postmodern and postcolonial turn. There is something that Achille Mbembe says which is quite powerful. He is astonished at the influence of queer literature and critical race theory from the United States on the rhetoric that has emerged in South Africa. The social experience of the United States is an important experience. But the African American community in the US is a minority and not a majority. That informs the literature in particular ways. This literature and that which emerges around the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] movement in the US significantly influences the contemporary discourse, particularly around the student movement. The other thing that worries me about this is how much of this literature and how many student activists come from the core humanities framework as opposed to the social sciences framework. The core humanities lends itself more to



the description, as opposed to the understanding, of causal factors. It lends itself to postmodernism, with its emphasis on description as opposed to confronting how power is constructed and how we subvert power. This is the real substantive foundation that underlies why our discourse on decolonisation is so compromised.

NEW AGENDA:

Where should things go from here?

ADAM HABIB:

I think there are two things that should happen. First, is the role of the progressive executive: the vice chancellor cannot resolve the debate on decolonisation. VCs just don't have the nuanced understanding of the

multitude of disciplines to say what should be done in engineering, in mathematics, and so on. The real role of the executive is to say how do we create an opening for honest discourse. In our context at Wits we have made it mandatory that every school has a debate on the curriculum that includes every stakeholder, including students, academics and alumni. You don't have to change your curriculum but you must go through a substantive process that raises all the issues.

Second is the role of the progressive academic and student: have the courage to engage in honest conversations. If we do not have honest conversations and we remain at the rhetorical level, we will not resolve our problems. The last thing we want to do is to enable

access and compromise quality. This will not allow our institution to address inequality. If either access or quality is missing, then we will not get the social mobility necessary to resolve inequality. For me, stop romanticising the student movement. Our young people have the potential to be the foot soldiers of the revolution. But they could also be the foot soldiers of counter-revolution. Who do you think is behind the emergence of AfD [in Germany]? Of Italian populism? What did the youth do during the Chinese cultural revolution? There is no God-given right for young people to be radical. Our responsibility is to evolve the movement in a structurally progressive direction. How to do so is the real debate at the heart of South Africa today and this is what is being missed. **NA**



Ramaphosa wants to make it 'easier to do business', but who will benefit?

By Michael Marchant

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The 2019 South African national election has resulted in an inevitable focus on the battle for power within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and efforts by President Cyril Ramaphosa to consolidate his hold on the party, and thus the country. This in turn results in an inescapable focus on corruption and state capture and ongoing attempts to hold those implicated to account.

There is no doubt that these issues should be at the centre of the national conversation. The evidence in the public domain shows that shadowy private networks, many dating to the secretive

apartheid state¹, have criminalised state institutions to make a profit. This long tale of criminality has come at the expense of South Africans, as billions in public funds have been looted while the capacity and independence of democratic institutions of accountability have been weakened by the powerful. This makes the struggle to hold corrupt public and private actors to account and rebuild the capacity and independence of the justice system of utmost importance.

Yet this cannot be the beginning and end of the national conversation. Focusing solely on state capture risks excluding equally essential discussions on economic policy. If indeed Jacob Zuma's presidency can be described as "a lost decade", as Ramaphosa told global elites at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January², what must be done now? Beyond the 'battle for the soul of the ANC' (whatever that may mean), we must ask what a strengthened Ramaphosa would mean for the direction of the country, particularly in terms of economic policy. At the moment, the answer seems to be simple: attract investment by making

it 'easier to do business'. But what does this actually mean, and who benefits from this approach?

AN UNJUST STATUS QUO

The question could not be more urgent. Official unemployment rates rose from 21% to over 27% between 2008 and 2018, and today more than six million South Africans are officially counted as unemployed.³ Millions more have given up searching for work. This is an important contributing factor to poverty. Statistics South Africa suggests that in 2015, more than 30 million people (around half the population) lived under the 'upper band poverty line' which is a measly R1000 per month. Nearly 14 million people get less than R441 per month, meaning they are unable to afford enough food.⁴ These numbers are stark, and therefore constructing an inclusive and fair economy is imperative.

Yet there is another aspect to this injustice. Vast inequality was an inevitable outcome of apartheid's oppression and forced dispossession, and the nature of the post-apartheid economy has only served to entrench it. Recent data suggests that 10% of South



Africans own between 90-95% of wealth, while 80% of people own no wealth at all.⁵ This is even more dramatic than income inequality which itself remains one of the highest in the world. A 2014 study found that for companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the average ratio of the wage of the chief executive to the average wage was 73:1.⁶ Both measures of inequality, unsurprisingly, reflect racial divides with white South Africans enjoying higher incomes and a much greater proportion of the country's wealth.

The manner in which wealth has been, and continues to be, accumulated goes to the heart of the problem that South Africa faces, namely that South Africa is a society characterised by both vast wealth and poverty.⁷ One cannot explain these patterns of accumulation without examining the role of powerful corporations that have extracted profit at the expense of South African people. Whether it was the Dutch East India Company, Anglo-American and De Beers, or Lonmin, the rules of the game have always been set to enable extraction and profit-taking that has entrenched gross inequality.

This is why Ramaphosa's appeal to global capital investment as a cure-

all must be critically examined. It is particularly important when the path to 'investor confidence' suggests a move towards cutting regulations intended to protect workers and ensure that companies pay their fair share.

MAKING IT 'EASY TO DO BUSINESS'

While the noise of electioneering may have been difficult to cut through, Ramaphosa's state of the nation address in February 2019 was unambiguous in how the government would be appealing to big investors. A key promise in that speech, widely welcomed by big business⁸, was the assurance of a business-friendly environment to support his ongoing investment drive. Amongst other promises of reform and the need to root out corruption, the appeal to the private sector was centered around the goal of moving into the top 50 in the annual World Bank 'ease of doing business report'. South Africa currently sits in 82nd spot (and has fallen precipitously in the last decade), but in the President's words; "we will get there". But where would we be going if we moved up this list and what would the real consequences be?

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... the answer seems to be simple: attract investment by making it 'easier to do business'. But what does this actually mean, and who benefits from this approach?

One cannot help but feel that the name of the World Bank's 'ease of doing business' score is deliberately vague. It certainly seems unthreatening; why would we not want it to be easier to do business in a country with low investment, high unemployment and widespread poverty? And it is true that there are some recommendations contained in the report that are uncontroversial. For example, creating better online systems and providing clearer information to businesses, as well as reducing inefficiencies in tax payment and business registration would be positives, particularly for smaller businesses. However, the devil is in the detail. The first parties to welcome Ramaphosa's goal of moving up these rankings were South Africa's largest corporations. A closer look at the report helps explain this eagerness: the easiest way to move up these rankings is to aggressively deregulate the private sector and leave it free to reap greater profits while limiting social responsibility.⁹ As will be shown below, however, what is needed is not simply attracting corporations to invest, but ensuring they conduct themselves responsibly and accountably when doing so. »

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... the easiest way to move up these rankings is to aggressively deregulate the private sector and leave it free to reap greater profits while limiting social responsibility.

The World Bank's index seems to assume that the elimination of regulation and checks and balances on corporations can only be positive for a country. This is unsurprising given that, while it has the World Bank's name on it, it is largely drawn from the work of just two economists. One of them is free market and deregulation ideologue Simeon Djankov who oversaw a radical austerity programme in Bulgaria following the financial crisis in 2009. By 2013, Bulgarian living standards had fallen so radically that widespread protests had toppled the government. The other is Andrei Shleifer, a Harvard economist found guilty of defrauding the US government in 2004 after using his position advising Russia on its liberalisation policies to profit from his own investments in the early 1990s.¹⁰ Both are the sort of economists that are quick to recommend the slashing of budgets for social spending so as to reduce taxes on corporations and the wealthy.

The ideas behind the report are reflected in the indicators that the index is based on. This is what should be of concern to South Africans wondering what the government can

do to move South Africa up the index. Broadly, countries are rewarded for radically cutting regulation to the benefit of corporations. So the more a government cuts corporate income tax, reduces mandatory payments to labour and social funds, removes licensing requirements, or cuts any other taxes on corporations – the better a country scores.¹¹ Further, making it quicker to clear customs by drastically reducing control mechanisms to check goods and documents at borders also moves the country up the rankings. A country also scores better if it makes it easier to buy up land easily and cheaply.¹²

Put simply, the index assumes that eliminating regulations and making it easier to maximise profit will be good for 'doing business' and thus good for the country. In doing so, it reduces the policy goals of the state to what is good for corporations and makes invisible the interests of the workforce, the environment or broader society. In addition, the index is crude and tends to push countries towards extreme policies. For example, if an additional tax that employers must pay is considered cumbersome and expensive to the corporation, the logic of the index rewards countries that simply eliminate that tax. What that tax is spent on, what it means for creating a fair society, and what the human consequences of reduced revenue will be are not considered important variables.

If this sounds familiar, it should. In *The Divide*, LSE academic Jason Hickel reflects on what the World Bank index represents. He suggests that in many ways it should be seen as structural adjustment repackaged – a powerful tool from the global north to force deregulation onto poor and middle-income countries in order to open up markets for profit-taking from global corporations.¹³ It works too: many policy reforms today appear to be direct responses to the 'Doing Business' index. South Africa, via Ramaphosa's promise, is just the latest example.

South Africans need no reminder that maximised profit is often not linked to greater reinvestment or more widespread prosperity. South Africa is a prime example that a country can be set on a path that generates vast wealth and crippling poverty at the same time. There is another cautionary tale here. If this is indeed structural adjustment repackaged, we would do well to remember why such policies had to be rebranded in the first place: their consequences for human well-being, social security, poverty and inequality were so catastrophic for so many of the places where they were enforced that it is politically difficult (even for their designers at the IMF) to support. The only winners from structural adjustment and ballooning debt have been global banks and other global corporations that have benefited in the regulatory vacuum left behind.

So, if moving up this index is not the answer, what is? I would argue that it starts with an honest assessment of where the problems of poverty, inequality and joblessness come from. To do this we would do well to examine the conduct of those corporations who are already invested in South Africa. Doing so reveals patterns that speak to an unaccountable private sector that engages in wealth extraction at the expense of ordinary South Africans and the fiscus. In this context it becomes increasingly obvious that instead of rapid deregulation, we need to hold corporations more accountable, starting with demanding that they pay both fairer wages and their fair share in tax. It also requires pushing back against a global financial sector wedded to secrecy and that facilitates the siphoning of wealth out of countries like South Africa.

INVESTMENT OR EXTRACTION?

The absurdity of the purported goals of the 'ease of doing business' index are best revealed by simply examining how large corporations are conducting themselves today, both in South Africa

and around the globe. We have ample evidence that the mere decision to invest and operate in a certain country does not mean that benefits will accrue there, or even that profits will remain.

New research authored by academic Ludwig Wier and released in December 2018 points to a concerning trend of large multinational corporations operating in South Africa shifting cash offshore to avoid up to R7 billion per year in taxes.¹⁴ The study suggests that South African authorities have been consistently underestimating these losses. It also shows that while South Africa is increasingly exposed to foreign-owned firms, about 20% of these firms have a parent company in a tax haven where they can shift their profits.¹⁵ Of course, as activists at the Alternative Development Information Centre (AIDC) convincingly argue, focusing on the R7 billion in lost taxes is only part of the story. Beyond the tax lost, there is inevitably a much greater amount (around four times as much) that now sits in a tax haven instead of being paid as better wages or reinvested in South Africa.¹⁶ Corporate tax dodging thus occurs at the expense of workers, not just the fiscus.

Corporations avoid and evade tax by taking advantage of complex ownership structures and a multitude of shell companies usually registered in secrecy jurisdictions. While many large corporations now have hundreds of subsidiaries, it is commonplace that their only physical presence is a letterbox and their directors are nominees used to obscure the beneficial owner of the company.¹⁷ These structures, set up by armies of lawyers, bankers and accountants, are often established for the sole purpose of enriching corporations and their shareholders at the expense of the places in which they operate. In the middle, the financial hubs like the City of London and Luxembourg, make a killing by taking a cut from every transaction they facilitate.¹⁸ As Nicholas

Shaxson reminds us, 'tax haven' is in many ways an outdated term. These jurisdictions offer secrecy for the purposes of total escape – escape from any laws, rules and taxes that they do not like.¹⁹

Yet the story of profit shifting is just one way in which large corporations are denying South Africa vital resources. The broader issue of 'illicit financial flows' constitutes a far larger cost. One aspect of this is 'trade misinvoicing', a term that is dry enough to not get the attention that the issue warrants. It essentially involves corporations manipulating import and export invoices in order to minimise duties, get undue rebates, or simply shift cash offshore again. Think-tank Global Financial Integrity estimates that the South African fiscus might have lost up to R80 billion per year from 2010 to 2014 due to this practice – amounting to R400 billion over that period.²⁰ That could pay for South Africa's current health budget nearly twice over. It is these kinds of costs that the World Bank's report on making it easier to do business ignores.

Even if corporations are taking vast amounts of profit from South Africa and spiriting it out of the country,

the argument for investment is also based on the idea that it will bring about employment and infrastructure, both sorely needed. Unfortunately, the evidence does not back up this claim either. For example, in 2018 Action Aid conducted social audits in eight mining communities across seven provinces, and asked community members about their experience of interacting with the mining companies. A total of 79% of respondents living in those communities indicated that they had received no benefits from the onset of mining activities, with many citing the negative impacts of increased violence in communities and detrimental environmental effects.²¹

The evidence thus suggests that many corporate investors continue to find South Africa profitable but that they are not paying their fair share to the fiscus, nor ensuring that benefit accrues to the communities that work for them or are affected by their activities. In this context, slashing taxes, customs controls and other regulations at the behest of moving up a World Bank index seems at best counter-productive. At worst it invites more short-termism and the triumph of profit over all other considerations. ➤



What all of this goes to show is that South Africa's problem does not appear to lie with corporations' ability to make profit, nor that it is not 'easy' enough for them to 'do business'. For centuries, global corporations have extracted vast wealth from this country without the benefits being shared equitably. In that context, we don't need to make it easier to do business here, rather we should be demanding that business is accountable, and that any investment that is secured will not only benefit the few.

In April 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa set an ambitious target of attracting \$100 billion in new foreign investment within five years. When he next speaks of his progress, the key questions South Africans should ask are: what kind of investment, on what terms, and at what cost?

CONCLUSION – ACCOUNTABILITY AFTER ALL

At the start of this article, I suggested that questions of accountability for state capture and corruption should not occur at the expense of discussions of economic policy and the building of a more just and inclusive economy. This might risk obscuring the fact that the mechanisms of extraction for the state capture elite overlap heavily with those used by mega corporations. If one looks at the manner in which an entity like Transnet was looted, it was done through a complex network of front companies and bank accounts in a range of secrecy jurisdictions around the world.²² Yet it is precisely these types of structures and mechanisms that facilitate the type of widespread corporate looting described in the previous section.²³

But it is not in the means of accumulation of profit that the similarities end. We should also consider that we rely on the same multi-agency law enforcement framework to investigate prosecute both the crimes of state capture and corporate malfeasance.

Yet these institutions, including the Hawks, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), have been systematically undermined and their capacity eroded due to political interference.²⁴ This interference has been used to settle political scores, or simply to secure impunity for those involved in economic crimes. Regardless, it has crippled these institutions' capacity to properly investigate complex financial crimes and corruption.²⁵ In this context, those engaged in these crimes whether it relates to corrupt tenders or the looting of private entities like VBS and Steinhof are not held to account and their conduct continues unchecked.

In this context, as the country grapples with impunity and an accountability gap that has seen private and public actors loot South Africa for private gain, it would be crippling to simultaneously erode the rules that aim to keep corporations in check. This is the kind of path that we risk going down if we prioritise the 'ease of doing business' above all else. While we urgently seek to rebuild the capacity of the institutions of accountability we rely on to check government and corporate power, we should strengthen and reinforce the regulatory framework that we ask them to uphold – we shouldn't gut it.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See for example the findings of the panel for the People's Tribunal on Economic Crime in 2018. The panel, chaired by former Constitutional Court justice Zak Yacoob, held that "We would also emphasise that state capture is to some extent also a result of the corrupt activities that had gone before it. Absent the violation of United Nations sanctions [during apartheid], and the corrupt Arms Procurement Package [the Arms Deal of 1999], the kind of state capture described in the evidence would probably not have occurred. The examples of state capture mentioned here are the tip of the ice-berg." [Available at <https://corruptiontribunal.org.za/findings/>].
- 2 Ferial Hafajee, "Ramaphosa's 'nine lost years speech' impresses Old Mutual CEO at Davos", *Fin24*, [Available at <https://www.fin24.com/Economy/South-Africa/ramaphosas-nine-lost-years-speech-impresses-old-mutual-ceo-at-davos-20190124> on 10 April 2019].

- 3 "Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q3 2018", *Statistics South Africa*, 2018.
- 4 Kate Wilkinson, "Fact Sheet – South Africa's Official Poverty Numbers", *Africa Check*, 15 February 2018.
- 5 Anna Orthofer, "Wealth inequality in South Africa: Evidence from survey and tax data", *REDI 3x3 working paper* 15 June 2016.
- 6 David Francis, Imraan Valodia and Eddie Webster, "The Richest 10% own 95% - Products of an Economic and Social System", *City Press*, 31 July 2018.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Including large finance houses like Old Mutual as well as the Minerals Council (representing the interests of big mining houses).
- 9 Jason Hickel, *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*, (Penguin Random House, London: 2017).
- 10 Nicholas Ciarelli and Anton Troianovski, "Tawdry Shleifer Affair Stokes Faculty Anger Towards Summers", *The Harvard Crimson*, 10 February 2016.
- 11 Jason Hickel, *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*, (Penguin Random House, London: 2017).
- 12 The indexes and data for the 'ease of doing business' report can be found online at the World Bank's website. Available at <http://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data> on 14 April 2019.
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- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Dick Forslund, "The Marikana Massacre: wages as the blind spot in the tax evasion debate", *International Union Rights*, Volume 25, Issue 1, 2018.
- 17 Alexander Weber, Boris Groendahl and Nicholas Comfort (2019), "Money to Launder: Here's How (Hint: Find a Bank)", Bloomberg, [Available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-09/money-to-launder-here-s-how-hint-find-a-bank-quicktake>].
- 18 Nicholas Shaxson, *The Finance Curse: How Global Finance is Making Us All Poorer*, (Penguin Random House, London: 2018).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Global Financial Integrity, *South Africa: Potential Revenue Losses Associated with Trade Misinvoicing*, 13 November 2018.
- 21 Action Aid, "Mining in South Africa – Whose benefit and whose burden?", *Social Audit Baseline Report*, 2018.
- 22 "The Corporations and Economic Crime Report, Volume 1: The Bankers", *Open Secrets* (2018).
- 23 Nicholas Shaxson, *The Finance Curse: How Global Finance is Making Us All Poorer*, (Penguin Random House, London: 2018).
- 24 Professor Haroon Borat et al., "Betrayal of the Promise: How South Africa is being Stolen", *Public Affairs Research Institute* (May 2017).
- 25 "The Corporations and Economic Crime Report, Volume 1: The Bankers", *Open Secrets* (2018). **NA**

Gloom the theme of Davos conversations

By Mark Swilling

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Pessimism pervaded this year's World Economic Forum. For one thing, the three global dynamics that underpinned optimism in Davos prior to the 2007/8 global financial crisis are gone. These were the firm belief in the triple pillars of globalisation, financialisation and migration, which used to be considered fundamental to growth but which now face a backlash. In their place is, for example, climate change, which creates a real sense of doom.

Seasoned participants in the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos earlier this year referred quite a few times to the fact that there was a sense of gloom, compared to the atmosphere of optimism in previous years. The Secretary-General of the United Nations summed up the reasons for this in his address when he said, "as the challenges become more integrated, the world is becoming more fragmented". Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, echoed this when she said the single biggest risk facing the global economy is the growing trade war between the two largest economies, China and the USA. She predicted a slow-down in global growth if this trade war gets worse, with major implications for developing economies.

However, as argued by Adair Turner, current head of the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) and former head of the UK financial regulator, the real underlying cause for gloom has more to do with the fact that the three global dynamics that underpinned optimism in Davos up until the 2007/8 global financial crisis are no longer in play. These were the rock solid belief that globalisation was good for development (access to capital, markets and cheaper labour); that financialisation (i.e. faster growth

of the financial sector relative to the traditional primary and secondary sectors) is good for growth; and that migration will follow suit and won't be such a problem.

Today, there is a backlash against globalisation, financialisation led to the global financial crisis and migration is triggering racist reactions while millions float around the world stateless, homeless and precarious. Nothing has replaced the triple pillars of globalisation, financialisation and migration. Brexit, the China-US trade war and the anti-globalisation of Trump are reactive responses, rather than a reflection of a coherent strategic alternative.

The new dynamics at play that reinforce the sense of gloom are climate change, the potential impact of the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), the politics of the 'precariat' and the build-up of financial liquidity in the global financial system because of a fear of investing in case something fundamental goes wrong in the global economy.

As far as climate change is concerned, there was a general acceptance that this is a major threat and it was often referred to as the cause of a sense of gloom. Indeed, in a global threats analysis based on a poll of views of WEF participants, climate change is regarded as the threat that ➤

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Nothing has replaced the triple pillars of globalisation, financialisation and migration. Brexit, the China-US trade war and the anti-globalisation of Trump are reactive responses.



was both “most likely” and having the “highest impact”. No-one calls into question the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s conclusion that we have 12 years to trigger large-scale decarbonisation in order to prevent global warming by more than two degrees. That said, the dialogue is totally schizophrenic: sessions devoted to climate change (and related topics like post-Gross Domestic Product) earnestly validated the science and reaffirmed the need for urgent change. However, climate change and its implications were rarely, if ever, mentioned in all the other sessions on finance, economic growth, technology, regional economic dynamics and social change.

Remarkably, a panel of African presidents from South Africa, Ethiopia and Rwanda was all about foreign investment, growth and good

governance with no reference to climate change and the green economy. Only the Secretary General of the UN fully integrated economic and environmental analysis in a satisfactory way.

Given that Klaus Schwab, the Founder and Executive chairman of the WEF, wrote the book on the 4IR, it is not surprising that this was a major focus of discussions in Davos. Although no-one can tell you what the 1st, 2nd and 3rd IRs were, and despite the poor definition of the 4IR in Schwab’s book, in general the average Davosite would simply say the 4IR is about automation – replacing humans with robots. It is, in reality, far more than this, and it interacts with many other economic, socio-technical and socio-metabolic cycles.

The WEF did research on the jobs impact of the 4IR in 20 developed and developing countries and concluded that while 75 million existing jobs will be lost in the coming years, 133 million new jobs will be created.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched a report on this topic at Davos, but provided no projections of this kind. Instead, ILO head Guy Ryder argued that it is not helpful to provide projections like this because that tends to “define a future as if it is waiting for us”. Instead, he said, what will determine the outcome is appropriate policies that are tailored for each context – a much wiser approach.

This has major implications for Africa. African leaders, including Cyril Ramaphosa, repeatedly asserted their faith in industrialisation as the means to create the millions of jobs needed to harness the burgeoning African youth population. To trigger this, they argued, they need massive increases in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). When pressed on the impact of the 4IR they made very general statements about training and technology development. In reality, if industrialisation means investment in manufacturing, and if those manufacturing sectors are located in globally open, competitive

economies like South Africa, then those manufacturing sectors will be forced to be highly automated. So how will industrialisation create millions of jobs?

As we know, President Ramaphosa has set up a Presidential Commission on the 4IR. If this is dominated by South Africa’s tech giants, the real challenges will not be addressed. It is like asking an arms company to plan for disarmament. Unfortunately, none of the talks by African leaders – including the star of Davos, Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed – left me with a feeling that there is some new economic thinking coming out of Africa that is really appropriate to the African context.

This brings us to the third key cause of gloom, namely the politics of the precariat. There was a pervasive sense across many panels that “if only the barbarians were not at the gate, we could get on with the job of really fixing the problem”. In general, what this referred to was the growth in electoral support for right-wing populist politicians who were anti-establishment, sceptical of globalisation and disruptive. Brexit, Trump and the rise of the right in Europe were the primary exhibits. The more careful observers did try to explain this phenomenon by referring to the causal links between financialisation, the global financial crisis and the shrinking middle class, and now and again – thanks to the exposure at Davos of the Oxfam report on inequality – to the fact that the wealth of the top 1% since 2007 has more or less doubled. A total of 26 people now own the equivalent of 3.8 billion of the poorest people – down from 43 a year earlier.

Guy Standing, the UK economist who wrote the bestselling book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, explained at a session devoted to new ideas in economics (of which there were none) that the precariat is a new class that feels highly insecure, anxious and permanently precarious. They feel, in short, one car accident, one health

incident, one job loss in the family away from destitution.

But it is a class comprising three very different groups. The most dangerous is the white male middle- and working-class worker who feels increasingly threatened by worsening economic conditions, a growing number of people of colour who can do their jobs, and a growing number of increasingly better educated women. They are angry, reactionary and misogynistic, but nevertheless shrinking – which is the good news. The second are the migrants – homeless, stateless, mobile, insecure, angry, and prone to outbursts of anger and protest that often turn violent. They are looking for a political home, and obviously feel totally alienated by the right-wing racist parties.

The third are the educated offspring of the middle class who have been promised a better life, but cannot find jobs. They join progressive movements about social justice and an ecologically sustainable environment, and some hive off into social enterprises. They also do not have a clearly defined political home.

What Standing does not refer to is the fourth category: the distinctly African precariat comprising mainly young people who have never worked, are poorly educated, live mainly in informal settlements and are behind the so-called ‘3rd wave of African uprisings’ that have emerged in 40 African countries over the past decade or so.

Finally, there was a lot of hand-wringing about the unprecedented build-up of liquidity in the financial systems of the developed economies. In his ever-so polite but barely disguised disdain for British politicians, the Governor of the Bank of England pointed out that investment in the UK since the referendum has been flat. But don’t worry, he said, there is more than enough liquidity in UK banks to withstand even a no-deal hard Brexit. This was a positive spin on a totally bizarre situation caused by poor governance, policy incompetence and

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As far as climate change is concerned, there was a general acceptance that this is a major threat and it was often referred to as the cause of a sense of gloom.



demagogic politicians.

The negative was spoken about often by officials in the multi-lateral system and private sector financial institutions, namely the incredible build-up of unspent cash because of rising fears and uncertainties about the future. As the head of UBS put it, it is about fear that something can go wrong any minute, resulting in an instantaneous drying up of liquidity. Amazingly, these are decision-makers who do not fully understand a system that is too complex for anyone to fathom, but sense that any minute – like in 2007/8 – it can all fall to pieces. But this time, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned, the banks don’t have the wherewithal to engineer another bailout.

Yet, virtually without fail, most of those in charge of the global financial system felt confident that it is far more robust than it was in 2007, and therefore can withstand coming shocks. In particular, they point to the clamping down on the short-term capital flows that caused so much instability; and,

ironically, they see high liquidity levels as positive. But of course, high liquidity levels is the flip side of low investment levels, which causes weak growth. The IMF’s lower projections for global growth are because investors are reluctant to make long-term investments in fixed assets – the kinds of investments, in short, that catalyse growth.

In one important discussion about the future of the global economy, Adaire Turner addressed head-on how to finance the transition to renewable energy and the green economy. He argued that those who are investing in these infrastructures tend to borrow money at between 8% and 12%, which is high. However, there are trillions of dollars that are invested in so-called safe investments like German government bonds at a negative real interest rate. As the head of UBS suggested, 90% of all financial assets generated negative returns in 2018! In other words, confidence levels are so low that investors are prepared to pay for their money to be kept safe. If, however, you want to redirect these investments into renewable energy to fund the large-scale decarbonisation required by climate science and policy, you will have to find a way to provide guarantees. This is where the European Union’s infrastructure investment plan, the Juncker Fund, and similar guarantee funds, could play a crucial role. The same applies to Development Finance Institution (DFIs) and Sovereign Wealth Funds willing to accept subordinated debt in new blended finance structures aimed at redirecting finance into decarbonisation.

There were many discussions about infrastructure, with special reference to the so-called financing gap, which is usually defined as the gap between what is needed and what is being spent. It would be preferable if the gap was defined as that which exists between what is needed and the potential cash available if risk was mitigated by guarantees – what is the magnitude of the latter to leverage more investment? In the absence of any reference to the ➤

need for another Bretton-Woods-type Conference to fix the global financial system, all these discussions boil down to one simple idea: the need for public-private partnerships to unlock different types of capital in creative ways.

Well and good, but the devil is in the details. The Brazilians want none of this: with a blind faith in neoliberal economics, they are embarking on a large-scale privatisation programme to sell all the state-owned companies that are responsible for infrastructure to the private sector, in particular to foreign investors. Their model is simple: the public sector will fund social expenditure, while the private sector will fund infrastructure via the newly privatised companies. That is, of course, one option but not generally favoured in most places in the world – with China, of course, representing the polar opposite approach. Rather, the focus for most (even the Chinese) is on a creative blend of public and private funding, with DFIs playing a crucial role in packaging these deals. Obviously, the new BRICS Bank is key in this regard.

That said, by far the most interesting session on infrastructure was the one devoted to a discussion of China's mammoth so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is the Chinese Government's flagship investment and development project. It is championed by the President, and contributed to his confirmation as 'President-for-life' (to remove constraints on his ability to realise his dream project). It is the largest infrastructure development project in human history. It is the modern day reincarnation of the thinking that resulted in the construction of the Grand Canal to link North and South China to manage droughts. Forty countries have signed up, comprising 4.89 billion people: two thirds of humanity and 34% of global Gross Domestic Product. The total investment is projected to be US\$4-8 trillion.



... confidence levels are so low that investors are prepared to pay for their money to be kept safe.

The panel discussion, however, was quite critical. Firstly, there has been mission creep: any project now is part of BRI, diluting its impact. Secondly, there is growing resistance from participating countries who realise they have to pay in quite a bit, but the returns to them are less clear. Thirdly, there are massive coordination problems – regulatory regimes in each country are different, and it will take decades to harmonise customs and logistics management. What is significant, however, is the sheer audacity of the vision: it projects onto the world the construction-driven logic of economic growth that has been key to China's growth. It is an engineer's vision, but is it appropriate in a world that is shifting from physical capital to digital capital as the primary means of accumulation?

On the last day of the meeting Prof Ngaire Woods from Oxford University shared her reflections on the week's discussions, and struck a more positive note. Firstly, she argued, elites are clearly disconnected from society in general. Instead of really reconnecting experientially to personally experience what the broad mass of society experiences, they remain aloof and distant and voice surprise when society reacts in ways that were not predicted. She urged elites to reconnect with society, citing examples of Chief Executive Officers who did exactly that. I wondered whether this would force

them to realise that they should do the unthinkable – 'pay their damn taxes!', and even support increased taxation so that governments can deliver the education and health facilities that can really make a difference – this being the focus of the Oxfam Report.

Secondly, as crisis management has become almost a permanent feature of the post-2007 period and is set to continue, she has observed the decline of the alpha male CEO. The reason, she argued, is obvious: the authoritarian alpha male CEO is not as good as the more inclusive relational women CEO at managing crises. However, crisis and uncertainty also results in a pervasive desire for certainty, something the new populist alpha male political leaders promises and so wins support. So as the alpha male declines in the board room, he becomes more prominent in the cabinet.

Finally, there is a need for a new balance between interests and values. The world today is dominated by China and the USA: the USA is democratic at home (sort of), and authoritarian abroad, while China is the opposite. The rebalancing of global political power dynamics is unlikely if major powers only pursue their own immediate nationalist interests. The values of multilateralism will need to be defended and rebuilt.

To conclude, there were no new grand narratives floating down from the Davos Alps that could enlighten a darkening world. There is a deep sense of fear and uncertainty as the chattering classes go about their business with aplomb and urbane politeness. On the margins here and there, people like Marianna Mazzucato, Adaire Turner, the Prime Minister of New Zealand and Oxfam talk about more radical alternatives. But as long as judgements about the future are conditioned by what is needed to protect financial assets, satisfy the rating agencies and accelerate automation, the real challenges will not be addressed. **NA**

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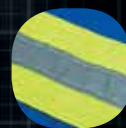
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Response to the UCT curriculum change framework

While the following two articles engage with the specifics of the UCT curriculum change efforts, similar trends are being observed at universities across South Africa and indeed globally. In this light, New Agenda feels it is important to provide space for engagement with these crucial questions in higher education, teaching and research.

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While #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements have ebbed, the desperately needed debate on university transformation which they ignited has continued to rage. Its latest flashpoint has been the December 2018 report of the Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG), which was convened by the University of Cape Town (UCT) to advance the conversation on making the curricula more socially relevant.



INTRODUCTION

Our own time spent at the University of Cape Town, while not devoid of inspiring moments, left us with a strong sense that it had not kept pace with the kind of transformation required of it. Cape liberalism's hegemony seemed undisturbed while critical ideas and curricula were confined to the interstices, and far too little had been done to include black and poor South Africans. We therefore reacted with enormous enthusiasm to the emergence of a movement arraigned against institutional racism and calling for the 'decolonisation' of the campus.

We have, however, become increasingly disturbed at the particular vision of decolonisation that has taken hold among influential representatives of that movement. In

this view, decolonisation collapses quickly into civilizational binaries: conflict is viewed as originating in the inherent oppressiveness of ideas and subjectivities associated with 'Western modernity', while solutions turn on promoting ideologies that are authentically 'black' or 'African'.

The nativist impulses that run through this way of thinking have diverse roots, some tracing to local nationalist traditions, but ironically their main inspiration is an intellectual movement that formed part of the postmodern turn in Western universities, known as postcolonialism. Postcolonialism is a notoriously diffuse body of thought, but its central thread is the contention that Western discourses, chiefly those linked to the Enlightenment, serve functions of social control and hence cannot be used to either understand or liberate populations that have suffered imperial domination.

Postcolonialism began in comparative literature departments but has spread much further afield, becoming and remaining enormously influential in history and social science. Until recently its influence within South Africa has been marginal, but that looks set to change dramatically in the wake of the student protests. To some extent the student's affinity

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of the Left.**

for postcolonialism is easy to account for. The theory makes the claim that hierarchies of race and gender are embedded into certain ideologies and bodies of knowledge as a result of their historical origins. Those ideologies continue to function as a major fulcrum of power – legitimating certain views and subjectivities and subtly excluding others.

Postcolonialism thus provides an apparently felicitous tool for understanding the informal and implicit – but nonetheless invidious – forms that racism often assumes at institutions like UCT. Moreover, by directing much of its energy at the symbolic instantiations of racism – as a postcolonial approach would advise – the student movement has become a *cause celebre* for postcolonial researchers abroad and at home.

Yet like some strands of identity politics, postcolonialism tends to disconnect symbolic and discursive concerns from material realities. This may account for why its diffusion, while widespread, has also been highly uneven – concentrated much more in elite universities. To the extent it has gained traction on poorer campuses it seems to have done so by co-mingling more heavily with vernacular ideologies like Black Consciousness and Pan Africanism. But since elite universities have tended to dominate in the coverage

and outward representation of student politics – a source of much internal strife – postcolonialism has become disproportionately influential on the way decolonisation is being articulated in spaces of power.

Arguably the subordination of the politics of decolonisation to the academic agenda of postcolonialism reaches a new extreme in the CCWG report. The working group was given fairly broad terms of reference – to document and take forward existing processes of curriculum change, to provide an ‘enabling’ environment for debate and ultimately to offer a framework to guide ongoing transformation. Official commissions of this kind tend to douse themselves in legalese and to offer findings which, however substantively political, make heavy overtures to objectivity and inclusiveness for all ‘stakeholders’.

One can’t help but admire thechutzpah with which the CCWG have absolved themselves of those dreary conventions. Their report is nothing short of a full-blooded manifesto for postcolonialism and its particular brand of decolonisation.

Its first half is mainly devoted to an abstruse theorisation of the historical significance of the student movement and the nature of power at the university, drawing on a set of metaphysical categories like the ‘coloniality of being’ and the ‘coloniality of power’. This is laid out through a series of lengthy excursions into the theories of postcolonial luminaries like Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. The finer points of this discussion are admittedly hard to appreciate since they are encased within a nearly inscrutable philosophical jargon, but the broad thrust seems familiar enough from postcolonialism’s standard repertoire: UCT is viewed as an institution moulded by the ‘epistemic structures of Empire’, which valorise ‘Western’ modes of thinking while ‘marginalising’ and

‘erasing’ both the subjects and forms of knowledge perceived to be outside its own canon.

Most of the rest of the report describes the work of the CCWG during its 18-month tenure, which mostly consisted of hosting a set of decolonial fora and seminars by prominent postcolonial academics. It concludes with various recommendations which are really a series of broad injunctions to be more mindful of the power relations embedded in knowledge production at the university.

Needless to say this approach has proved controversial. The report has been met with a fusillade of angry responses, mostly from liberals and conservatives who have intoned against its unregenerate relativism and crude ‘race-thinking’. Regrettably, critiques that begin from a position of support for progressive transformation at UCT have been much less audible, leaving postcolonialism to fill a growing vacuum on the Left of the political space on campuses. We hope here to correct this.

Since the CCWG report is so forthright about its own ideological commitments, it provides a welcome opportunity to evaluate the role of postcolonial theory in the broader movement for decolonisation, particularly its more radical wing. We will argue that its current influence is undeserved – postcolonialism offers neither a realistic means of getting to decolonisation nor an appealing vision of what it entails.

The considerable following it has already amassed owes in part to its having successfully posed as the heir of a radical tradition that runs through Biko to anti-colonial leaders like Fanon, Cabral and Du Bois before them. Our first aim is to show that this is largely a fiction: postcolonialism’s real point of origin is firmly ‘Western’. We make this point not simply to highlight the irony of postcolonialism’s own fetish for authenticity, but because ➤

we think its real biography is rather instructive. Postmodernism, of which postcolonialism is a close offshoot, took root in a period of unrelenting defeat and demoralisation of the Left, but its own effect was to entrench rather than alleviate that defeat. It acted either to belittle the struggle for radical social change entirely, or to shunt it into fruitless, mostly academic, avenues.

There is every reason to believe that postcolonialism's effect in South Africa will be similar, certainly if the CCWG report is a reliable bellwether. We will try to show that the CCWG succumbs to a narrow academic tribalism neglecting the practical support it could have offered to the movement for curriculum change in the name of advancing a misguided theory, which serves only to mystify the real causes of institutional racism and material inequalities on campuses and in the wider society.

POSTMODERNISM'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

Postcolonialism originated as part of the 'cultural turn' in social theory, which began in Western universities in the 1970s. The essence of this was not simply a flowering of interest in issues of *discourse*, *ideology* and *culture* but a full-blown swing towards these themes in a way that displaced the categories and concerns that had traditionally grounded radical scholarship: chiefly *class* and *capitalism*. This movement had various roots (see Hull discussing its Heideggerian origins on pp. 29-33), but its most significant immediate precursor was the French structuralist school of the 1950s.

Structuralism contended that individuals were mediated from reality by rigid self-referential systems of meaning. It became an early vehicle of culturalist encroachment by promoting the expanded use of linguistics and language-metaphors in the analysis of an ever-broadening array of social institutions. Structuralism gained a beachhead in Marxism through Louis

Althusser, who argued somewhat analogously that capitalism obscured its own reality by enmeshing its subjects in ideological systems produced by public and civil institutions – so-called “ideological state apparatuses”.

However, the truly untrammelled plunge into the realms of discourse occurred only after structuralism had morphed into poststructuralism. Structuralists had thought of mediating systems as comprised of relatively fixed elements and quasi-universal properties. Poststructuralists fundamentally doubted this, arguing them to be fluctuating and unstable and hence subject to the vicissitudes of history. At the same time, they also divested themselves of any lingering concerns that discursive systems may rest on or be strongly conditioned by extra-discursive institutions of any kind, whether state apparatuses or relations of production.

These new departures provided a fertile canvass for Michel Foucault's efforts to re-think the nature of power free from the shibboleths of the Old Left. Rather than emanating from the material capacities of states or classes, Foucault came to see power as operating through the medium of knowledge and as diffused throughout society.

Here we have, in the broadest of strokes, the core sociology of postmodernity – a world in which the human subject has no reach outside of the free-floating, power-laden discursive circuits in which she is embroiled. Derrida's pithy quip, “there is nothing outside the text”, is the most oft-quoted summation of this view. It's easy to see how it sustains well-known motifs of the broader postmodern movement: incredulity towards 'grand narratives', distrust of totalising systems, fetish for difference and relativism. While many today may be less willing to go all the way with Derrida, the enduring impact of the cultural turn is the idea – pervasive if not hegemonic across social science in the West – that no social

structure, no matter how apparently material, can be analysed independently of the cognitive frames and alignments of meaning and value adopted by its participating agents.

Anyone with even passing familiarity of recent campus debates should instantly recognise the extent to which postcolonial theories exist as a mere subgenre of these – eminently Western – intellectual fashions. In fact postcolonialism is really best understood simply as the application of the core apparatus of postmodernism to a specific socio-geographical setting or, in Terry Eagleton's more acerbic words, as “little more than [it's] foreign affairs department.”

Its start is generally dated to Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a professedly Foucauldian investigation of the role of essentialising tropes in the history of Western imperialism¹. The Saidian stream was subsequently enlarged by other tributaries, including the Subalterns' Studies group of figures like Partha Chatterjee and Gayatri Spivak. Subalterns were influenced by Marxist social history but gave it an avowedly postmodern twist – asserting that the cognitive frames and political strivings of the Eastern masses were unintelligible in the terms of Western sociological categories. Moreover, any attempt to apply Western conceptual tools to the former colonial world, would be to partake in cultural and intellectual imperialism. Radical scholarship thus turned on reclaiming subaltern 'epistemologies' from the South.

All of this is to say that if postcolonialism is to become a new governing ideology for South African higher education, as the CCWG seems to wish, it cannot claim that position by virtue of being any more indigenous than the supposedly colonial ideas it assails. For us its Western origins are not problematic as such, since we don't subscribe to the notion that the provenance of an idea governs its politics – but within the field itself, where that notion is axiomatic, it is



obviously a sticky subject.

Perhaps this is why postcolonialism tends to narrate its own lineage rather differently. Foucault and Derrida tend to fade out of official histories while centre stage is given to a clutch of leading scholar-activists of the anti-colonial movement, such as CLR James, Amílcar Cabral, Walter Rodney and Franz Fanon. The Latin American decolonial school – a subcategory of postcolonialism and an important touchstone for the CCWG – is particularly assertive in claiming this heritage while downplaying connections to French critical theory.² Substantively, however, there seems little to distinguish it.

HORSESHOE EFFECTS IN POSTCOLONIAL THOUGHT

The appropriation of these anti-colonial leaders is especially unsettling because postcolonialism has played such a significant role in dislodging from the academy the actual politics and intellectual traditions for which those leaders stood. Postmodernists saw Marxism – to which all of these anti-colonial leaders subscribed in varying degrees – as just another hoary “totalizing narrative,” full of Enlightenment pretension. Their postcolonial siblings accused it of worse – not only of having ineffectively resisted colonialism but of having been secretly *complicit* with it, a view parroted by the CCWG document.³

The origins of this view trace back to Edward Said who used Marx’s early writings on India as evidence of the ability of Orientalism to envelop even nominally anti-colonial thinkers.⁴ Said’s followers have doubled down, broadening the attack to include the universalist and modernising forms of nationalism that animated most anti-colonial movements. In a key text of the Subaltern school, Chatterjee indicted India’s early nationalist rulers not only for having failed to break out of the economic orbit of their former colonial power but for having

guaranteed that failure by not rupturing with its discursive orbit.⁵ Chakrabarty’s *Provincialising Europe* further emphasises that Marxist categories are applicable only to the European context, and flounder when approaching the experience of the former colonial world.⁶

This turn against the traditional ideologies of the Left is a natural outgrowth of the culturalist reinterpretation of colonialism, which was also originated, somewhat – unwittingly – by Said. Said’s *Orientalism* opened with an analysis that unveiled, with new scale and systematicity, the essentialising tropes in Western texts, but nonetheless located them within a conventional sociology – showing how ideas of the Other arose to rationalise and legitimate acts of conquest. However, at some point in the book, as an early critic put it, “the stylist and polemicist ... runs away with [the] systematic thinker” and an altogether different, and at that time novel, theory emerged.⁷ Said appears to claim that Orientalism worked not simply to *justify* the interests behind colonialism but to *incite* them in the first place.

Even as he began to inflate its causal significance, Said started to stretch the historical coordinates of Orientalism, finding its signature not simply in the modern era of imperialism, but along the whole length of the Western canon reaching all the way back to Homer. For the authors of the CCWG, incidentally, Descartes is seen as the main progenitor of civilizational chauvinism in the ‘Western mind’. They inform us that *cogito ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”) is actually best translated as “I conquered, therefore, I am” (see Hull on p.29 for the problems with this interpretation of Descartes’s thesis).

The trouble with all of this, as Al Azm pointed out, is that Said ended up with theory that bore all the hallmarks of an Orientalist distortion in the way he himself had defined it. Colonialism had been detached from its materialist predicates, lifted out of the nexus of

classes, states and interest groups and presented as the consequence of a certain ‘bent of mind’ which had been beguiling Western civilization, unerringly, since its earliest origins.

The critique incensed and clearly unsettled Said though it never really registered on the field he spawned.⁸ His followers have taken this line of thinking to its logical conclusion, effectively re-Orientalising the Global South in negative terms – depicting it as a zone in which so-called ‘Western’ categories like Reason – have no purchase, and where ‘Western’ values like liberal rights – have no appeal. Although this Othering is given a more positive inflection, in substance, as Vivek Chibber notes, it simply mimics what colonial authorities themselves came to argue, after self-defined ‘civilising missions’ turned out to be too burdensome and a rationale was needed for abandoning all pretence of spreading democracy or modernity.⁹ Postcolonial theory in its more extreme expressions thus succumbs to a horseshoe effect, ending up not far from the ideologies it seeks to reject.¹⁰

Crude essentialism has featured recurrently in the student protests (see for example #ScienceMustFall) and clearly underlies much of thinking in the CCWG. Post-structuralist jargon has lent it an air of the avant-garde, but in reality, there is nothing subversive and certainly nothing new about it. As Fred Halliday noted in a commentary on the *Orientalism* debate, the recourse to essentialising mythology was hardly a peculiar feature of colonising powers.¹¹ It had been a “prerogative of the dominated as much as the dominant” for as long as history could recall. This fact is also the best evidence for why Said and fellow culturalist interpreters of imperialism must simply be wrong. If the tendency to ‘Other’ were really a sufficient determinant of the tendency to conquer, there would be no way to explain why colonialism turned out to be such a markedly Western enterprise.¹² ➤

The reality is that no credible theory or body of evidence has ever been supplied for the claim that the history of Western conquest can be put down to an ideology or 'bent of mind'.

THE POLITICS OF POSTCOLONIALISM

The path blazed by postmodernism through the Western academy was not a mark of the strength of its ideas. Rather, it is better understood as the outgrowth of a specific political conjuncture – defined by a catastrophic defeat of the labour movement and the Left which dramatically narrowed the horizon for radical social transformation. Postmodernism proved useful in inuring intellectuals to this defeat – allowing them to believe either that the idea of social progress had been delusory to begin with, or that it could yet be achieved in the absence of movements by challenging power at its discursive roots.¹³ To its meagre credit, postcolonialism opted broadly for the second of these routes – its theorists generally aspire to inform a radical political agenda even if their ideas have never connected with a movement capable of carrying it out. In Eagleton's terms it is "a post-revolutionary discourse for a post-revolutionary world."¹⁴

South Africa and much of the rest of the continent for that matter¹⁵ never participated in the earlier stages of the cultural turn because its own political temporality was so different. Mass movements in that country were gearing up for a final battle with Apartheid at the same time that others were being ground down in neoliberalism's Northern advance. The situation today is different: two and a half decades of disappointing Tripartite Alliance rule have discredited traditional Left ideologies among younger South Africans, while the abiding absence of a mass-based opposition has stymied the emergence of a critical intellectual layer. Those of the anti-Apartheid generation

who successfully resisted lucrative posts in government and the private sector are on the way out of the academy, having left few heirs or apprentices. Meanwhile the same corporatisation of higher education which elsewhere produced a "systematic alienation of the intellect" has been well underway for decades.¹⁶

Long¹⁷ writing in this journal, has already noted how the early seeds of the cultural turn are taking radical politics at UCT in strange and unhelpful directions. Perhaps a better foretaste of what is to come is given by the CCWG report itself – which is especially useful to examine since it provides an instance both of the theory of postcolonialism and of its politics.

The overarching objective of the analytical component of the report seems to be to locate events at UCT within the broad thematic of postcolonialism – showing how Enlightenment discourses work to reproduce colonial-derived hierarchies in the knowledge system. Since the CCWG's mandate was to produce practical guidelines for curriculum reform one might have expected that this analysis would have a strongly local focus – centring on the *specific* institutions, norms, discursive practices in operation at UCT which guarantee its placement in the wider field of postcolonial knowledge production. But this isn't the approach taken. The report opens with a sweeping vista of the world-historical context of the student protests, drawn almost entirely from work of the decolonial scholar Maldonado-Torres, and it never really climbs down from this level of abstraction. In a strongly Foucauldian spirit, it sees the oppressive imprint of Cartesian ideology at work everywhere, penetrating all social relationships and defining all hierarchies at the university. But there is never any real discussion of the actual mechanisms through which these power structures operate. Power is treated as a prerogative of the

discourses themselves.

The closest the report gets to locating anything concrete underpinning the colonial episteme is through a discussion of 'disciplinarity' – undoubtedly a crucial aspect of the way knowledge production is regulated. But here again the analysis veers almost immediately into a purely philosophical register, before the real-world foundations of disciplinarity can be identified. Consequently, there is no reference made to publishing rules or career structures or any of the other institutions that enshrine disciplinary boundaries. Instead, disciplinarity is seen as arising simply from the impregnation of everything at the 'Westernized Academy' by the ideology of the Enlightenment. On the whole, the report evinces a curious inattentiveness to the particularities of UCT in the name of repeated sweeping generalisations about 'coloniality': an odd outcome for a theoretical approach supposedly founded on hostility to grand narratives.

The consequence of this is that most of the contextual details which would seem necessary for any commission to arrive at practical recommendations for curriculum change are entirely elided. There is no description anywhere in the report of the relevant institutional structures, no account of how curricula decisions are made or what systems govern who gets to make those decisions. Indeed, shockingly, there's no description of an existing curricula in the report, nor any attempt to flesh out what form a decolonised curricula may take. Considerable space is devoted to explicating the finer points of Homi Bhabha's ruminations on "liminal third spaces," but the substantial local scholarship on university reform in the post-Apartheid era¹⁸ is not graced with a single citation. In fact despite its ceaseless declamations against foreign influence on South Africa's education system, the report manages to rely overwhelmingly on

US-based postcolonial scholars while consistently overlooking far more relevant local research.

However wayward the above may appear, it is important to recognise that it is ultimately entirely consistent with what a postcolonial approach would dictate. The main thing the report seems to want to establish is that the problems at UCT need to be apprehended in terms of ‘ontologies’ and ‘epistemologies’, ‘the fundamentals of knowledge production’.¹⁹ What is meant by this is never really spelled out, but one can infer that the intention is precisely to deny that the origins of racism and systematic exclusion can be located at the level of institutions, policies or political and economic relationships. Insofar as such things feature – as in the reports on site visits to various departments – they do so merely as secondary manifestations of the transhistorical metaphysics of ‘coloniality’. More often they simply wash out entirely, much as classes, corporations and state apparatuses did in Said’s initial idealised rendering of colonialism.

This may seem in some ways dismissive, but a more robust engagement with the substance of the report is not really possible since it doesn’t proffer arguments or evidence in any conventional sense – procedures which are presumably too tainted by Cartesianism. It’s theories are thus hard to falsify, but there’s also no particular reason to believe them, certainly when they seem so disconnected from the everyday realities of the university. Reading the report, one is left to seriously question whether the authors actually *intended* to try and convince anyone. Certainly, if their use of language is any indication, they don’t seem to have cared much for being understood. The obscurantist and frankly elitist jargon of the report is another inconvenient reminder that postcolonialism still belongs more to the world of Derrida than of Rodney or Cabral.

The obvious consequence of this is that, despite the fact that the CCWG recognises its own position as political, it is unable to offer much that is useful for activists of curriculum reform. It doesn’t simply fail to broaden the appeal of the cause but doesn’t even attempt to do so, nor does it provide any of the practical information that may have helped in framing demands and setting agendas. Most seriously, it has effectively squandered the institutional opening won by the student movement by putting on the table a set of quixotic, toothless recommendations which, even should they be adopted by the Senate, have little hope of making a substantial dent in institutional racism or ideological bias. The list of these recommendations (“read with conscious intent”, “leadership with integrity”, “authentic engagement”) reads more like the chapters of a self-help book than the demands of a militant movement.

Of course, no one was expecting the CCWG to emerge with a full blueprint for curriculum reform, but at the minimum it could have framed its proposals around existing concrete demands that are widely supported – like broadening the space for African languages. Where tangible policies were less easy to specify, the report could have ensured that its recommendations were tied to some commitment of resources or institutional space on UCT’s behalf. Instead, the CCWG has effectively handed administrators a free pass, allowing them to escape with purely verbal commitments to stop spreading ‘colonial lies’ backed up by minimal actual institutional shift.

It is apparent that decolonisation means different things to different people but at a baseline it seems to denote a shift towards research and teaching that is relevant to local concerns, rooted in local knowledge producers and transgressive of the usual elitism of the university. In all of these respects the CCWG provides a poor model of decolonised intellectual

practice. Perhaps more worrying is that its approach seems fated for a politics that is thoroughly defeatist. By seeing coloniality and racism as ‘ontologically’ inscribed in the primordial matrices of South African society – rather than in concrete institutions, interests and social relationships – it ultimately fails to muster any vaguely practical vision of transformation.

DECOLONISATION FOR WHOM?

These acute limitations are directly a result of the postcolonial sociology that informs the document. The idealised, Manichean conception of power on which it rests is simply inadequate for grasping the realities of a modern capitalist society. It results not only in a mystification of the nature of social relations within the university but also in a complete inability to locate the university within a wider social field in particular to understand how it is shaped by market logics and political forces. Neoliberalism thus receives passing mention in the document but does not seriously reflect in its analysis, despite the seismic effect it has had on higher education.

Creeping marketisation of South African universities has led to a thoroughgoing commodification of education that has seen overwhelming emphasis placed on knowledge and graduate production in line with the interests of corporations. Institutional restructuring has followed in the wake of these new imperatives, leading to an inflation of administrative power and increasing application of ‘efficiency’ and performance criteria. Progressive intellectual life is strangled in this environment. Academics and graduate students are forced to compete with one another, closing off the space where collaborative and interdisciplinary scholarship may have once taken place. Returns to higher education have meanwhile grown rapidly since the democratic transition and constitute one of the structural ➤

causes of rising inequality.²⁰

If decolonisation means freeing knowledge production from forces that constrain and disarm it, then any adequate conception will have to account for these dynamics. A genuinely radical conception of decolonisation would not simply factor in capitalism but actively critique it – and in the process try to imagine a higher education system that serves something more than simply elite reproduction. The most disappointing thing about postcolonialism's monopolisation of the debate on university reform is that it seems to have so thoroughly impoverished the *positive* notion of what decolonisation ought to entail. Indeed, it is not clear that there is any positive view on offer in the CCWG report – the task of constructing one is made virtually impossible because the bounds of what is (erroneously) seen as colonial ideology are stretched so far – leaving nothing out of which to constitute an alternative. Exactly what 'epistemology' or mode of logic we should revert to once Reason and the Enlightenment have been routed has never been explained.

Hence the programme of decolonisation that postcolonialists fall back on typically amounts to no more than promoting 'marginalised subjectivities'. As best this consigns decolonisation to simply fall in line with a 'left neoliberalism,' becoming a diversity exercise concerned with the appropriate distribution of the benefits of inequality. The celebration of 'black' or African 'excellence' at the university is an appropriate slogan for this politics. At worst, it means that decolonisation will buttress the agenda of an increasingly assertive nationalism driven by disgruntled sections of the black economic and political elite. In an interesting reflection on earlier decolonisation efforts elsewhere on the continent, Southall raises a cautionary tale about making allies out of such groups.²¹ However willing to inveigh

against Western influence on their universities, the support extended by post-colonial governments to a critical education system has typically reached a sudden limit once that education system threatens to challenge domestic structures of power.

Using affirmative action policies to actively address centuries of racial oppression in our academic system will be crucial to any serious reform of higher education. But if decolonisation is to genuinely serve the cause of just and equitable social order, this cannot be its horizon.²²

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

An alternative curriculum change framework should be drawn up – one that would retain the militancy of the CCWG document while not being beholden to the theoretical views propounded by its authors. Doing so should be a priority of progressive students, alumni and academics at UCT.

The enthusiasm for change that sparked #FeesMustFall and the student movement at UCT has not completely dissipated. Yet many progressive students and academics who supported institutional reform and free education when the protests began in 2015 have seen their voice effectively drowned out by the monopolisation of postcolonialism in fora on curriculum change. A reform agenda that remains beholden to it will only serve to condemn South Africa to repeat the same intellectual trends that have played out in the West over the last several decades, without making our universities any more relevant to challenges confronting our post-apartheid reality. The fight for decolonisation needs urgently to be seen in different terms.

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Contesting the narrow approach to intellectual decolonisation, or how Martin Heidegger captured an African university

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Hull philosophically considers the report of the University of Cape Town's Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG) and concludes that it would be a sorry finale to the drive for intellectual decolonisation were UCT to impose existential phenomenology and fundamental ontology on its lecturers and students by executive decree.

DESCARTES ON TRIAL

In the 1640s, Holland's five great Calvinist universities – Leiden, Utrecht, Franeker, Groningen and Harderwijk – banned Cartesianism from the curriculum. French philosopher René Descartes' (Cartesius) search for a certain foundation for human knowledge seemed to Protestant theologians to

elevate philosophical reason above Biblical revelation.¹ Unlikely as it may sound, the senate of one of South Africa's leading universities appears, at the time of writing, poised to take the same step in 2019.

The University of Cape Town (UCT) last year published the report of its Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG),² set up by former Vice-chancellor Max Price in August 2016 in response to campus protests.³ The UCT Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning will submit it to the university's senate for a decision this year.⁴

A critical philosopher who used the method of doubt to interrogate the received opinions of his age might seem an unusual target for such a working group, but UCT's Curriculum Change Framework, which adopts a 'decolonial lens through which to effect meaningful curriculum change' (p. 18) says:

René Descartes's [sic] 'Cogito ergo sum' (I think, therefore, I am) [...] is in fact built on 'I conquered, therefore, I am' or 'I possess, therefore

I am' [...]. The coloniality of knowledge is also rooted upon Descartes's [sic] motto, 'Cogito ergo sum', which projects the only legitimate thinker as white, heterosexual, able-bodied and male.

How did the drive for decolonisation of higher education come to this? Not, it would seem, through a careful reading of Descartes. For Descartes' mind-body dualism commits him to holding that all thinkers are essentially un-bodied, let alone able-bodied (or sexed, raced, etc.). Furthermore, what is special about Descartes' premise 'I think' is that, unlike 'I conquer' or 'I possess', it cannot be doubted: after all, doubt itself is a form of thinking. This is why Descartes believes he can deduce his existence from it.⁵

SUPPORTING A BROADER SENSE OF DECOLONISATION

The last few years, in my view, have witnessed a distortive narrowing of the concept of intellectual decolonisation in >>

South African higher education circles. Instead of a promise of intellectual liberation, we are now confronted with a threat of authoritarian dogmatism.

Before coming to the narrow sense of decolonisation, let me turn first to its broader sense, which I endorse. The 'de' in 'decolonisation' indicates a removal or undoing. In the case of intellectual decolonisation, this is the removal or undoing of the effects of colonial, neocolonial and other international power relations, where, and to the extent that, these have hindered the attainment of knowledge and other worthwhile intellectual goals. Decolonisation in this sense should be important to researchers and thinkers everywhere, and deserves the support of universities worldwide.

Academics who teach and research the concept of liberty are likely to turn to the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, rather than to those of Laurence Grimald Gozlski. Is this because Kant's and Rousseau's are more correct and better argued than Gozlski's, or because, while the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth fell into decline in the 17th century, France and Prussia remained world powers well into the 20th? Political theorists seeking historical models of political association turn more often to ancient Athens and the foundation of the United States of America than to precolonial African social formations. Is this because the latter have little relevance to contemporary conditions, or because the racist prejudices of erstwhile imperialist establishments have determined the cultural-historical horizon of contemporary academics?

Asking questions like these forms part of intellectual hygiene. It enables researchers to detect and address bias, acknowledging that bias is not just a matter of individual whimsy, but often reflects one's socialisation into a community with a distinctive past. Not all researchers can attend to such questions all the time, and it would

be overly optimistic to think all effects of bias or power relations could be removed from academic work. But the value of some researchers dedicating much of their energy to questions such as these should be manifest to all.

In my discipline, philosophy, Anthony Appiah and Kwasi Wiredu are examples of researchers who have done interesting work on decolonisation in this sense. Appiah argues that one task of "ideological decolonization" in Africa⁶ must be an "archaeology of Pan-Africanism's idea of race".⁷ Tracing the origins of race-based Pan-Africanist theory in the work of 19th century American writers can help guard against false assumptions of cultural homogeneity in contemporary African philosophy.⁸

Kwasi Wiredu, on the other hand, has raised the tantalising question of whether certain philosophical questions are "tongue-dependent".⁹ In his manifesto for "conceptual decolonisation", Wiredu suggests that the dominance of colonial languages (e.g. English, French) has bequeathed a certain amount of "philosophical deadwood" to contemporary practitioners.¹⁰ For example, he has argued that a statement of the correspondence theory of truth is "conceptually informative in a philosophical way" in English, but an "uninformative tautology, sans all philosophical pretences" in his mother-tongue, Akan.¹¹ Translation between a European language and an indigenous African language can be a useful tool for excising the dead wood, in Wiredu's view. When the status of a philosophical problem or proposition (e.g. as non-trivial or *a priori* true) appears to change depending on the language in which it is discussed, this is a sign that at least one of the languages portrays the problem or proposition deceptively. Which language is at fault must then be reasoned out "on independent grounds".¹²

Whether or not Appiah and Wiredu's specific claims are ultimately defensible, their work demonstrates there are

plenty of avenues worth pursuing within philosophy which fall under the heading of intellectual decolonisation in this broad sense.

DECOLONISING WITH MARTIN HEIDEGGER

The now prevailing, narrower approach to intellectual decolonisation is, in one way, very gratifying to philosophers. In many universities, ontology (the philosophical study of what is or exists) and epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge) are arcane specialisms, the preserve of unworldly professors who argue about whether properties (e.g. shape, colour) exist in their own right or are reducible to substance, and whether to know that a proposition is true I must also know that I know that it is.

In many South African universities today, on the other hand, it is rare to make it through a seminar, at least in humanities faculties, without hearing both of these terms several times, usually in the plural: 'ontologies', 'epistemologies'. UCT's Curriculum Change Framework concludes: "Decolonising the curriculum ... must focus mainly on epistemology and underlying ontologies; the fundamentals of knowledge production. ... Ontologies of students and staff in the academy cannot be glossed over or masked; it is important to recognise that one's view of reality is embedded in one's being in the world"¹³.

Earlier on it endorses the view that "colonial ontological and epistemic logics undergird" UCT's current curricula¹⁴. Its abstruse vocabulary has been a frustration to many academics who have responded to UCT's draft curriculum guidelines.¹⁵ Indeed, mastery of this vocabulary has lately functioned as a *de facto* qualification for entry into the supposedly non-hierarchical circles which claim to be furthering intellectual decolonisation on South African campuses.¹⁶

One can do better than note that



the narrower approach to intellectual decolonisation favours a 'postmodern' or 'postcolonial' conceptual repertoire (See Reddy and Smith in this issue). The distinctive approach to metaphysics which holds that 'being in the world' provides theoretical access to fundamental ontology can be dated much more precisely: to 1927, when Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* burst onto the philosophical scene.

Heidegger's highly innovative book married the *Lebensphilosophie* (life philosophy) of theorists such as Wilhelm Dilthey to the phenomenology of Heidegger's mentor, Edmund Husserl, before the altar of a revival of Aristotle's question about the fundamental nature of being.¹⁷ The living human being is, in Heidegger's view, set apart from all other kinds of beings by the fact that its (human) being is a matter of questioning and concern for it.¹⁸ This means, argues Heidegger, that a descriptive, phenomenological tracing of the characteristic forms of concern and engagement which make up human existence should provide the alert philosopher with privileged access to the general nature of the being of that which exists, or, in other words, the way in which all the things which are actually are.¹⁹

Husserl's mistake, thought Heidegger, was to conceive of humans' being-in-the-world²⁰ as primarily spectatorial. The point of departure of Husserl's phenomenology seemed to be a detached conscious subject, calmly contemplating the various objects which entered its sensory field. Heidegger agreed with the current of German philosophy known as 'life philosophy' that humans' most fundamental interactions with the world are marked by care²¹ and practical engagement, not spectatorial detachment. Already in the mid-19th century, Dilthey had insisted on the centrality of the concept *Erleben* (experience) to the interpretative human sciences.²² In *Being and Time*,

Heidegger approvingly cites Dilthey's investigations into the *Erlebnisse* of the human life form, though he claims Dilthey's work had remained at a superficial level, not appreciating the connection between human experience and the question of being.²³

German has two principal words for experience, *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*, the latter of which incorporates the verb *leben* (to live). Dilthey, Heidegger and subsequent Heideggerians use the term *Erlebnis* when the type of experience they have in mind is practical, concern-driven, possibly non-rational rather than detached, contemplative, spectatorial. Translated into French as *expérience vécue* (lived experience), the term became a buzzword in 1960s *rive gauche* circles through the influence of the Heideggerian existentialists Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre. By the 1970s, retail houses and PR firms in Paris were researching the 'lived experience' of their customers and marketing audiences as a matter of course. More recently, 'lived experience' has entered Anglophone vernacular via 'woke' intellectual circles, in part thanks to the intellectual current Lewis Gordon calls 'black existentialism'.²⁴ This current of existentialism was heavily influenced by French Heideggerians, for example, the title of Chapter Five of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* translated as 'The Fact of Blackness' in the English edition, is '*L'expérience vécue du Noir*' ('The lived experience of the black person').²⁵

As he wrote *Being and Time* in the 1920s, Heidegger felt that the Western intellectual tradition had cut itself off from a true understanding of being *das Sein*. The blame for this, in Heidegger's eyes, lay in no small part on the shoulders of – you've guessed it – René Descartes. Descartes' philosophy, argued Heidegger, presupposed a distortive separation of humans' being-in-the-world into a worldly object of contemplation on one side and a detached human consciousness observing it on the other. This subject-

object dichotomy was something Heidegger also objected to in the work of his teacher, Husserl. While Heidegger did not deny that human *Dasein* can take up a cognitive stance towards the world, knowing was for him but one, rather peripheral, subspecies of humans' practical dealing with the world.²⁶

Descartes has subsequently become a whipping boy for Heideggerians of all stripes, who have sought to outdo each other in attributing ever more gruesome crimes to the 17th century Frenchman.

An example is the Puerto Rican writer Ramón Grosfoguel, from the influential Decolonial Studies school. This Latin American intellectual current, which includes theorists such as Walter Dignolo, Enrique Dussel and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, has created syntheses of Heideggerian existential phenomenology and world-systems analysis.²⁷ Grosfoguel agrees with Heidegger that Descartes' subject-object dichotomy and his search for a foundation of human knowledge within individual consciousness must be rejected. Then, drawing on work by Dussel,²⁸ he goes a step further with the bold claim that these aspects of Descartes' thinking are the philosophical expression of a geopolitical shift. He claims that a socially necessary condition of Descartes' adopting what Grosfoguel calls a 'God-Eye view' in his foundational deduction was the European colonial expansion beginning in 1492, accompanied by genocidal violence. Grosfoguel expresses this point by saying that "the socio-historical structural condition" of Descartes' *ego cogito* ('I think') is *ego conquiro* ('I conquer'), and ultimately *ego extermino* ('I exterminate').²⁹ Hence the CCWG's comment on Descartes' famous inference, which it claims to be at the root of 'the coloniality of knowledge'.

The distinctive philosophical framing of UCT's Curriculum Change Framework, which foregrounds access to 'ontologies' via 'being-in-the-world', ►

the call by campus activists for a turn to 'lived experience' in research and teaching, and the CCWG's animus against Descartes are, we can now see, all of a piece. The CCWG avows that 'the Latin-American perspective on coloniality' was a major influence on its work.³⁰ What is more striking to a philosophically trained reader is how tightly UCT's curriculum document cleaves to the distinctive conceptual repertoire and approach to metaphysics advocated by Martin Heidegger in southern Germany in the 1920s.³¹ Paradoxically, the narrow approach to intellectual decolonisation in South African universities is intolerant of research or teaching situated outside a highly controversial current in 20th century European philosophy.

AN HISTORICAL IRONY

Towards the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of the need for a human *Dasein* to 'choose its hero'.³² In May 1933, he announced that he had chosen his. With great fanfare, Heidegger joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party shortly after being installed as rector of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. His inaugural address stated his acceptance of the 'Führerprinzip', the fundamental principle behind the leadership structure of the Third Reich, both in national politics and in university affairs. In a hall bedecked with swastika flags, Heidegger declared himself *Führer* of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität. He set to work implementing the so-called *Gleichschaltung* – literally 'changing into the same gear' – whereby all German institutions were meant to reform in line with the new nationalist ideology.

Already in the 1920s, Heidegger had complained about the 'Jewification' (an anti-Semitic neologism used by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*) of the German academy. As rector, in 1933 he denounced a number of Freiburg professors to the *Gestapo* – the chemist

Friedberg Hermann Staudinger for pacifist tendencies, the philosopher Eduard Baumgarten for consorting with foreigners and Jews. He declined to intervene when his mentor, Husserl, was stripped of his emeritus status due to Jewish ancestry. When a member of staff expressed concern to the rector about the student *Sturmabteilung* (S.A.) units which were harassing non-Nazi Freiburg politicians in their homes, Heidegger defended the units and replied to the member of staff that they should submit more 'constructive' suggestions to him in future.³³

Though he resigned the rectorship early in 1934, Heidegger remained a committed Nazi. On a lecture tour of Italy he wore Nazi insignia. In 1935, he spoke of the 'inward truth and greatness of the movement, the German translation of which, 'die Bewegung', was commonly used to refer to the Nazi Party and its tens of millions of fellow travellers. This was in a series of lectures which he was to publish unaltered in 1953.

Heidegger's best informed contemporaries such as Karl Jaspers were convinced that he had followed a path from within his philosophy to National Socialism, rather than embracing it insincerely or distorting his thinking to fit the mood of the time. Karl Löwith believed that Heidegger's Nazism was part of the essential core of his philosophy.³⁴ There may well be truth in this.³⁵ Yet, in my view, it would not be right simply to dismiss the work of Heidegger and the Heideggerians without further philosophical engagement.

That said, it is a sublime historical irony that academics on South African campuses are nowadays berated for teaching John Locke and Immanuel Kant – liberal philosophers who admittedly have racist skeletons in the cupboard – by student and academic activists who have adopted the distinctive conceptual repertoire of the notorious Nazi, Martin Heidegger.

QUESTIONING HEIDEGGER'S THEORY OF BEING

Quite apart from his political affiliation, Heidegger's metaphysics of being – his ontology – has come in for stout philosophical criticism. Heidegger's most famous living pupil, Ernst Tugendhat, publicly renounced the philosophy of his teacher in 1976.³⁶ Tugendhat had come to the view that Heidegger's talk of 'being' was 'unsurpassably naïve',³⁷ since it overlooked the fact that the word 'is' like all other forms of the verb 'to be' has several different meanings. The word 'is' can be used to ascribe a property to an object e.g. 'the sky is blue'; but it can equally be used to say that a statement is true 'it is the case that...'; finally, in some contexts, it means the same as 'exists'. Tugendhat concluded that ontology, the study of being, must take as its starting point the multiplicity of senses which *being* exhibits.

Earlier, Rudolf Carnap had taken issue with the empty mysticism towards which Heidegger tended. Statements such as 'Die Welt welte' ('the world worlds') and 'Das Nichts nichtet' ('nothing nothings') were unverifiable 'nonsense', according to Carnap.³⁸

But it is not only 'analytic' philosophers who have expressed dissatisfaction with Heidegger's metaphysics. Theodor Adorno, stalwart of the Frankfurt School of Marxism, argued that Heidegger's preoccupation with 'authenticity' was fundamentally reactionary, designed to distract attention from the injustices of a technocratically administered society with the opium of a little conservative irrationalism.³⁹ Adorno's pupil, Jürgen Habermas, accused Heidegger's philosophy of reducing all human action to goal-directed instrumental action.⁴⁰

DECOLONISING INCLUSIVELY

The broader sense of intellectual decolonisation, which I outlined earlier, is inclusive enough to accommodate

Heideggerian theorists – those who wish to approach intellectual decolonisation by identifying the lived experience, or being-in-the-world, specific to various positions in a global matrix of domination, and thereby uncover their distinctive ‘ontologies’. Universities should have a place for Heideggerians.

But the broad, more inclusive, understanding of decolonisation which I have endorsed can also encompass many different approaches, including those of the two Ghanaian theorists I mentioned above, Kwasi Wiredu and Anthony Appiah – theorists who, if they spoke of ontology at all, would not connect it to the being-in-the-world of a *Dasein*, but most likely view it as the study of everything which is the value of a bound variable.⁴¹

A university should be able to accommodate approaches to intellectual decolonisation informed by different philosophical schools, just as it should accommodate different approaches to the subject matter of every discipline. It should also have room for a significant number of teachers and researchers who are not primarily concerned with philosophical subjects like ontology at all, as it should for teachers and researchers whose primary concern is not intellectual decolonisation.

It would be a sorry finale to the drive for intellectual decolonisation were UCT to impose existential phenomenology and fundamental ontology on its lecturers and students by executive decree.

On the other hand, University Rector Heidegger would have found it singularly appropriate.

ENDNOTES

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Nationalisation and the Freedom Charter

By Ben Turok

Ben Turok is editor of *New Agenda* and the Director of the Institute for African Alternatives.

When the ANC talks about “nationalisation”, it is necessary to return to exactly what was said in the economic clause of the Freedom Charter. This article argues that a close reading reveals that what was meant had nothing to do with seizure of resources. It was all about sharing and recovery of resources that were lost due to colonial expropriation.

With the election behind us we can now focus on the economic policies that were being advanced by the main political parties. What surprised many was the return to the issue of nationalisation by the ANC and the EFF. The ANC called for the nationalisation of the SA Reserve Bank – but the President says we cannot afford it. The expropriation of land without compensation falls broadly into the same category even though the intention is not to increase the state’s holdings. The EFF clearly wants state control of the land.

The new government will have to address these issues and it will be important to see how they justify their actions.

It has been quite common to quote the *Freedom Charter* as the basis for nationalisation. It may be instructive therefore to examine exactly what the economic clause of the Charter actually said and to try to contextualise its language in the politics of the day, 1955. For instance the Left went to great lengths to argue that the Charter was not a socialist document. Indeed the economic clause did not specify that the intention was for the state to take over the commanding heights of the economy. Rather it was to overcome the usurpation of the resources of the country by the few and return it to the “people as a whole”. There is a vast difference between the two approaches. As one of the authors of the clause, I want to try and capture the sentiments behind the words used and will examine the actual language.

THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY’S WEALTH!

*The national wealth of our country,
the heritage of all South Africans,
shall be restored to the people;
The mineral wealth beneath the soil,
the banks and monopoly industry
shall be transferred to the ownership
of the people as a whole;
All other industry and trade shall be
controlled to assist the wellbeing of
the people;
All people shall have equal rights
to trade where they choose, to*

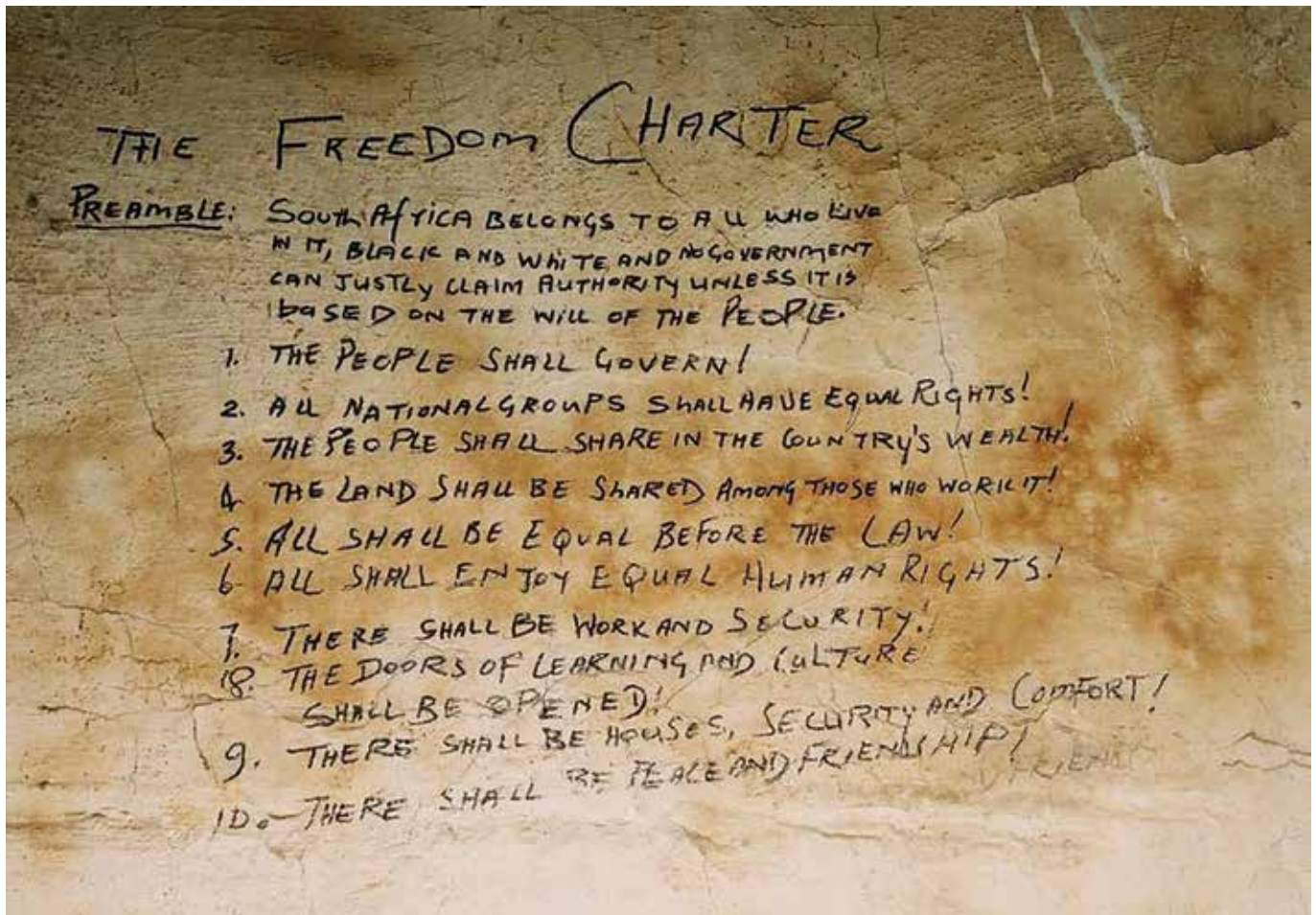
*manufacture and to enter all trades,
crafts and professions.*

The key words used are “share”, and “restored to the people”. “Sharing” implies that economic resources will not be seized, and conforms with the key opening sentence of the Charter, “South Africa belongs to all who live in it”. “Restore to the people” reflects a desire to recover the resources lost due to colonial expropriation.

The clause about equal rights shows that the Charter was strongly opposed to the state’s restrictions on economic activity of any kind on the grounds of race.

We should recall that the 1950s was a period of immense change in many parts of the world. Democracy had triumphed over Nazism in Europe, leading to social democratic parties taking power as in the UK. The Communist Party won power in China. In Africa the anti-colonial movements were about to win independence and there were advances by progressive forces in many places.

South Africa was one of the few countries where reactionary policies intensified in the post-Second World War period. Hence there was a deep sense of grievance among the oppressed majority that they were being deprived of the wealth of the country; this was a system of internal colonialism. Therefore the Charter should be seen not as an attack on



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... the Charter should be seen not as an attack on private property per se, but as redress of colonial expropriation of the wealth of the country.

private property per se, but as redress of colonial expropriation of the wealth of the country and therefore fully in line with the aspirations of the liberation movement.

On the face of it, any action taken by the new government to alter the inherited structure of the economy in a manner that benefits the people as a whole would be in line with the Charter. I read this to mean that the preoccupation with creating a black business class, that began with former president Thabo Mbeki, is not in line with the Charter which has nothing to do with replacing white monopoly capital with black monopoly capital or with tokenism in business appointments. Indeed, some would argue that the recent obsession with black ownership and management has nothing to do with efficiency or better service to society as a whole. It is not obviously doing anything to reduce mass unemployment, poverty or inequality.

To sum up, it seems that the resort to nationalisation in some of our politics is more a sign of desperation about the lack of real change in the structure of our economy rather than a panacea to our very serious real problems. Solutions become even more difficult when we consider how the Zuma years made our state dysfunctional. The idea that our state owned enterprises and certain government agencies and departments might be used to rebuild our economy is inconceivable.

We all know that the colonial legacies of apartheid remain entrenched in our economy and social order. These will not be overcome by some clever government mechanism. There must be only one criterion to guide us – will it benefit “the people as a whole”? **NA**

A climate justice critique of South African political parties

By Vishwas Satgar, Ferrial Adam and Itumeleng Mogatusi

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The authors consider the policies on climate change in the election manifestos of the three largest parties in turn, and argue that all of them fail to demonstrate clear commitment to a deep just transition to sustain life.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's election took place in a context in which inequality is worsening, costs of living are going up and unemployment is a major challenge. It also occurred while South Africa's worst drought in recorded history continues to ravage various villages and towns. All our political parties have failed to recognise the drought as a climate shock. All seemed surprised by cyclones Idai and Kenneth, another climate shock, and the devastation it caused in vast sections of our neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The science on climate change from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is clear

that as planet earth is heated through more greenhouse gas emissions (from burning coal, oil and gas) we will have more extreme weather shocks such as droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, etc. We are currently 1.2 degrees Celsius hotter than we were before the industrial revolution and are fast heading to a 1.5C overshoot unless we cut emissions over the next 12 years by 45% to 2010 levels and to net zero by 2050. In short, we have 12 years to prevent catastrophic climate change.

This climate justice critique is based on a reading of party manifestos. It applies to all political parties, while making specific critiques of the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the largest parties in South Africa's current political system.

GENERAL CLIMATE JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The climate crisis is a systemic crisis of carbon-driven global capitalism. It has its origins in 150 years of fossil fuel extraction and use by rich industrialised countries. Industrialising countries like China, Brazil, India and Russia

control substantial amounts of fossil fuel reserves today. South Africa's coal addiction also makes it a carbon criminal state. Its use of coal intensifies climate change and its impact on extreme weather events, including on the continent. More climate change brings climate inequalities and injustices through escalating food and water costs as well as job losses. Many farm workers have been retrenched as a result of South Africa's drought. Despite these stark terms, none of the parties appear to understand climate change as a dangerous contradiction driven by carbon capitalism and the need for South Africa to be a climate justice state.

The climate crisis is a complex and interconnected one, given that carbon is not just extracted but is also used as a major energy source across economies. Moreover, carbon energy use differs between sectors. In South Africa, at least 9% of emissions come from globalised agriculture. Carbon is also used in various industrial processes such as construction.

An energy transition to socially-owned renewables is just one part of the task. Decarbonising the economy is a much broader challenge. Moreover, as climate shocks continue we need new

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All our political parties have failed to recognise the drought as a climate shock.

adaptive systems that sustain life. We have to recognise the interconnections of cause and multiple effects. For example, cyclones Idai and Kenneth and their effects could have been mitigated if there were proper disaster management systems, media reporting, dam management, food sovereignty systems and health systems functioning across the country. Instead, river flooding started before Idai hit landfall in central Mozambique, dam walls failed, there was inadequate communication to warn people and disaster management systems were overwhelmed. Cholera, hunger, lack of access to health care and water stress claimed lives over and above the direct impact of the cyclones.

South Africa's drought, another example of a climate shock, has also had severe effects on society, economy and ecological relations. We have a crisis of climate leadership amongst all of South Africa's political parties and none are committed to ensuring that South Africa, the region and the continent is on a climate emergency footing.

Being on a climate emergency footing means advancing a *deep just transition* to ensure regulated, purposive, ambitious and planned reductions in carbon emissions to prevent a 1.5C overshoot. We also need to ensure the necessary adaptive systems are in place that transform energy, production, consumption, finance and public systems through democratic systemic reforms to ensure workers, the poor and



the vulnerable do not pay the price of the transition and climate shocks. Such a *deep just transition* is led by the working class and mass social forces, rooted in a red-green alliance seeking climate justice.

In addition, South Africa's parties do not understand the climate crisis as part of a larger ecological crisis. More extraction, pollution, chemical-based agriculture, waste, deforestation and over-consumption are undermining natural cycles of the earth's system and accelerating species' extinction. According to a UN report by the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPES), up to one million species of plants and animals are now threatened with extinction. Several planetary bio-physical limits, such as fresh water, land use, ocean acidification and bio-geochemical flows are being breached and capitalism's eco-cidal logic is creating a toxic and unlivable world. We need to rethink our politics from the standpoint of eco-centric ethics and the *deep just transition*.

CLIMATE JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF THE ANC

The ANC as the ruling party in South Africa has locked South Africa into the pledge and review mechanism of the United Nations. The ANC government turned its back on a climate justice approach to the historical debt owed by rich industrialised countries, to

ambitious regulated reductions in carbon emissions and is certainly not positioning South Africa as a climate justice state on the continent. Moreover, its response to the drought, as a major climate shock, has been dismal. A national disaster was declared in early 2018 after the food system collapsed, many communities were devastated by the drought and various national water projects compromised. The drought continues in South Africa and there is no leadership from the ANC-led state based on lessons learned to prepare for the next round of climate shocks. The drought and the climate crisis are not mentioned in its party manifesto.

The ANC manifesto reads as though South Africa owes the ANC a debt for the great job it has done based on a set of quantitative indicators showing grand successes and improvements. These hide more than they reveal. South Africa has an economy in deep crisis: inequality, unemployment and hunger have all increased. The ANC takes no responsibility for this disaster and crisis of social reproduction that it has led South Africa into for 25 years. Climate shocks will deepen the suffering of the majority, yet the ANC manifesto makes no attempt to bring to the fore the existential threat of the climate crisis.

The ANC proclaims a commitment to industrialisation (including for localised renewable energy technology production), the '4th industrial revolution', township economies, land ➤

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More climate change brings climate inequalities and injustices through escalating food and water costs as well as job losses.

reform, public transport, National Health Insurance etc, in a context in which state capture has fundamentally compromised the ability of the state to lead even modest reforms. According to the auditor general reports of 2017-2018, irregular expenditure in government was R72 billion. The majority of state entities audited had adverse findings. The country knows, through the Zondo Commission, how ANC factions have been engaged in state capture regarding Eskom (South Africa's monopoly energy parastatal) instead of laying the basis for a *deep just transition* to a socially owned renewable energy system aimed to resolve the challenges of Eskom and fix our water systems.

The ANC manifesto calls for gas and oil extraction in our oceans. It also understands renewables as complementary to coal. All of this is linked to the game plan of raising investment levels to R1.3 trillion over the next four years. The ANC manifesto still envisages a deeply globalised economy, driven by the interests of transnational capital. Within that it is creating space for black industrial capital, agrarian capital, cooperatives and worker ownership in the economy through employee stock option schemes. De-racialising capitalism is at the heart of its multi-class project; a little more trickle down with a slightly broader base. Ironically globalisation cannot be a development strategy let



alone a basis to transform South Africa to deal with accelerating climate change.

CLIMATE JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF THE DA

The DA failed to prepare Cape Town for its drought, despite scientifically based academic warnings. Its day-zero approach placed a squeeze on poor households and passed on the pressure of managing the drought to working class, middle class and poor households. It did not challenge water ownership and control by white agricultural interests. High water levies raised billions for the DA-led metro while working class and poor households were faced with punitive tariffs that undermine their water needs.

Day zero was about climate injustice and creating new climate inequalities. As a neoliberal party, the DA has expressed a 'green neoliberal' response to the drought which always privileges the wealthy. Hence it encouraged thousands of boreholes in Cape Town and smaller towns, something only affordable by the wealthy and which threatens the long run viability of aquifers in these areas.

The DA has a manifesto that deals explicitly with climate change and the need for a resilience plan. However, several problems stand out. First, the DA views the Paris Climate Agreement as a viable instrument for dealing with emission reductions. However, that agreement's voluntary approach

to reducing emissions and building a registry are really a "green wash". South Africa needs more than this to meet its reduction targets given the current urgency. Second, it supports fracking, nuclear and off-shore gas extraction. Like the ANC it still has a shallow conception of how to get to a zero carbon economy. Third, it has a private-sector led approach to renewable energy. Essentially Eskom must make way for independent power producers that supply the national grid and local governments. There is no real concern for workers in Eskom or for the working conditions of workers in the renewables industry. Renewable energy capital – not workers, communities, households or public institutions – is the key driver of the energy transition in their manifesto. Fourth, the DA advocates carbon capture and storage as a solution to South Africa's emission problems. This is an untried technology and a techno-fix that detracts from the need for a *deep just transition* to a zero carbon energy system.

The DA approach to water mainly reflects the interest of white, agro-industrial capital. It recognises the impact of the drought on farmers and hence champions more dams, infrastructure and policy support for these farmers. The DA does not question the fact that 62% of South Africa's water resources are controlled by these farmers. Moreover, this kind of mono-industrial agriculture failed South Africa in the drought; it collapsed. South Africa

needs a new food system based on localisation (not exports), small-scale farmers, agro-ecology and seed, water and food sovereignty.

CLIMATE JUSTICE CRITIQUE OF THE EFF

The EFF is a racist, Afro-chauvinist party, with a strong authoritarian populist streak. It is generally not clear what it stands for; it has contradictory policies and practices. One day it is for the Constitution and another day against it. One day against corruption and another day its leaders are implicated in corruption (the VBS 'bank heist' and tender hijacking in metros are examples). One day for state ownership and another for stakeholder capitalism. Its manifesto has a section on 'Environment and Climate' but it still supports a carbon, mainly coal-based and mining-driven economy.

Its commitment to addressing the climate crisis, let alone the larger planetary ecological crisis, is incoherent to say the least and its explicit target to reduce emissions by 10% in 2024 is certainly not ambitious enough. It betrays a lack of understanding of the urgency of the climate crisis and scientific necessity to cut emissions even more drastically. This is a party without any progressive values. Its general orientation is against a climate justice politics that stands for all the workers, poor and vulnerable in our society – black and white.

The energy section is probably the least progressive section of the manifesto. It has no original thinking on the energy challenge as part of the larger *deep just transition*. The EFF is state-centric in its energy approach and supports the use of mixed energy sources, including so-called *safe coal*, nuclear energy, as well as renewables. The plan outlined in the manifesto is that an EFF government will have a state-owned company take over all Eskom-owned coal mines and assist Eskom in establishing a renewable

energy division, with the energy base still anchored in coal and nuclear energy. It will also end preferential pricing to big energy users. The EFF's energy approach completely avoids and neglects the dangers of coal and nuclear. It also shows a lack of understanding of the urgency to completely break from fossil fuels and false energy solutions to ensure a rapid transition to a zero-carbon energy system based on socially-owned renewables.

The EFF is committed to a resource nationalism based on reproducing South Africa's toxic minerals-energy complex through a statist capitalism. Understanding the climate crisis in its interconnections requiring systemic alternatives to drive the *deep just transition* is absent. The EFF endorses the "One Million Climate Jobs Campaign", while still remaining committed to an energy programme centered on coal and nuclear energy, merely discrediting and making a mockery of the campaign. The EFF commits to the 'Green Revolution', as part of its understanding of agricultural transformation. The 'Green Revolution' is about productivist, corporate-led agriculture. Such agriculture collapsed during South Africa's drought and on a global scale contributes about 40% to global emissions. This is not a systemic alternative to address the challenges of building a new food system in South Africa. On water issues, the EFF merely has a narrow 'service delivery approach'. Yes, safe, clean water must be delivered to the people. But from the standpoint of the *deep just transition* our water resources are being compromised by more mining, including coal mining, which the EFF supports. An example of contradictory EFF practice is their support for the Xolobeni community's rejection of mining. This is rather hypocritical given the EFF's support for more mining in general. Corruption has affected water infrastructure delivery and the EFF is no shining example of fighting corruption. South Africa needs more than a shopping

list approach to its water crisis. It needs a people-driven water sovereignty approach to planning, managing and sharing our water commons.

TOWARDS A CLIMATE JUSTICE CHARTER FOR SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is experiencing a crisis in political leadership regarding the climate crisis. It is in this context we invite all in South Africa to contribute to the Climate Justice Charter for South Africa to ensure we hasten the *deep just transition* to ensure that the workers, the poor and vulnerable do not pay the price of climate change.

Key themes for the charter, which will be elaborated in grassroots dialogues, relate to systemic alternatives that would bring down carbon emissions and ensure we sustain life as climate shocks hit.

These themes include:

- Principles for the Charter;
- Our conception of the just transition for South Africa taking into account class, race, gender and ecological relations;
- Systemic alternatives related to land use, water, rights of nature, energy, food, production, consumption, waste, transport, housing, finance;
- The role of the climate emergency state and our international relations as a climate justice society;
- Communication, education and awareness raising to mobilise society;
- The role and form of people's power from below.

We also have an inter-generational obligation to act, now, to ensure present and future generations have a future. It is not too late to act to prevent the extinction of human and non-human life forms. We welcome further inputs to this important task.

Send inputs to Jane Cherry on copac2@icon.co.za **NA**

Nativism and narrow nationalism in South African political discourse

By Siphokazi Mbolo and Ashley Nyiko Mabasa

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The development of an inclusive South Africa based on a united, democratic, non-sexist, non-racial society needs to take the struggles and realities of the black majority further, building a radicalism that challenges white oppression, racism and all forms of inequality, while ensuring that nationalism seeks to improve the material conditions of black people, without morphing into a narrow nativism or oppressive structures, such as traditional authorities.

With a history riddled with racial and gender oppression, economic inequality and ethnic disputes, contemporary South Africa

is facing mounting and legitimate pressures to resolve profound social challenges. Multiple organisations and political groups have joined the quest to tackle racism, patriarchy, poverty and inequality. What unites these groups is the desire to be a voice for the historically disadvantaged and to build an African nationalism.

How to build such a nationalism in the context of South Africa has historically been called the “National Question”, the question of who belongs in South Africa, where and how. Currently, equality is no more than a hope as the country is one of the most unequal societies in the world. In addition, socio-economic and institutional discrimination continues to undermine the full development of the black majority. South African political groups are rightfully aligned in their pursuit for complete socio-economic and political liberation of the historically disadvantaged. However, the way some of these groups have chosen to respond to these challenges is problematic. They dwell on a racial and ethnic mobilisation centered on fear and intolerance for different ethnicities,

religions and racial groups.¹

Nativism and nationalism can be problematic in contemporary South African politics. Ncube asserts that there is a propensity among some nationalists and Afro-radicals – which in this instance would be the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and Black First Land First (BLF) among others – “to appeal to narratives of nativism and indigeneity as the indispensable basis for certain entitlements (particularly the land and its natural resources)”.² Considering the exclusionary and oppressive history of colonisation and apartheid, some of the claims lodged by these groups are justified, particularly considering the inherited inequalities from previous governments and the present-day challenge to eradicate them.

Achille Mbembe uses the analogy of “Nongqawase,” based on the prophetess of the 19th century, who called on the Xhosa people to kill all their cattle. This was done in the belief that the Xhosa ancestral spirit would subsequently resurrect and sweep away the white colonisers to the sea.³ According to Mbembe, “Nongqawuse syndrome is a populist rhetoric and a millenarian form

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South African political groups are rightfully aligned in their pursuit for complete socio-economic and political liberation of the historically disadvantaged.

of politics which advocates, uses and legitimises self-destruction or national suicide, as a means of salvation.”⁴

It is evident from contemporary politics that some political groups have dragged progressive nationalism into irredeemable disrepute for their own self-enrichment.⁵ Elsewhere we have problematised narrow nationalism and posit that such discourses replicate colonial and apartheid logics based on simplistic conceptions of who belongs and who does not.⁶ Furthermore, we have argued that these discourses do not reflect the reality of a diverse South Africa.⁷ They thus pose a threat to the realisation of a non-racial, inclusive and democratic society. This is particularly problematic for political parties which aspire to one day rule the country – such as the EFF as “their limited conception of the nation will, therefore, yield action and policy that does not account for the complexities and nuances inherent to a culturally and racially heterogeneous society.”⁸

In addition to the existence of black nationalism and nativism in post-apartheid South Africa, the chauvinist narrow white nationalist AfriForum has emerged as a conservative Afrikaner group. AfriForum is concerned with protecting the interest of the white Afrikaners and deterring South



Africa’s economic transformation. AfriForum has constantly opposed the redistribution of land among all South Africans and this shows that their narrow nationalism emerged to protect white minority interests at the expense of the majority of South Africans.

IMPLICATIONS OF NATIVISM AND NATIONALISM

Racism

In the transition to democracy, the ANC was committed to the ideals of inclusion and non-racialism. However, it is becoming trendy to constantly attack white people, regardless of their class position and ideological orientation, in the spirit of nativism and narrow nationalism. This does not mean certain attacks on white racists and organisations such as AfriForum are not justified. These organisations are gatekeepers of white privilege and are resistant to measures that would improve the socio-economic conditions of black people, such as expropriation of land without compensation. The likes of AfriForum feed into the frustrations and sometimes the hatred of white people, especially considering the white population’s historical and contemporary privilege.

Parties such as the EFF and BLF exploit strands of nativism and use

frustrations over the slow wheels of justice under the ANC to advance narrow nationalism and stoke racial tensions. We have argued previously that the use of people’s genuine struggles to advance populist agendas and to score political points misleads the public into getting stuck on differences and current problems rather than focusing on developing and practically implementing sustainable solutions to improve the conditions of black people in the country.⁹

Examples of populism and racial nationalism by these political parties can be found on social media. They are reflected in BLF’s president Andile Mngxitama’s encouragement for supporters to kill five white people for every black person killed. Mngxitama went as far as threatening to take South Africa to the dark ages of apartheid.¹⁰ Duarte asserts that racial nationalism is poisonous as it rejects non-racialism and national reconciliation.¹¹ Ncube contends that this is troublesome because “there is a certain degenerated strand of nativism that is nothing but an embodiment of racism and narrow social chauvinism of the highest caliber that can hardly be associated with the ideals espoused by some of South Africa’s most celebrated bulwarks of the anti-apartheid struggle”.¹²

What the country needs is leadership ►►

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It is evident from contemporary politics that some political groups have dragged progressive nationalism into irredeemable disrepute for their own self-enrichment.



that is targeted at resolving racial and structural tensions and inequalities that feed racism and narrow nationalism. This would require finding creative strategies to engage all stakeholders to create an equal society where there is an equal distribution of resources.

Xenophobia

One of the most devastating implications of nativist nationalism is xenophobia. Presently in South Africa in areas such as KwaZulu-Natal there are heart-breaking attacks on African foreign nationals. Such attacks have been taking place during the democratic dispensation, with government struggling to discover the root cause of these attacks and how to mitigate them. Claude Ake describes this wave of nativism as a “second” or “new nationalism”.¹³ Ake describes this “new nationalism” as “a rule, no longer

directed toward other countries but against denizens (non-citizens) living within an African state.”¹⁴ The pitfalls of such a nationalism is that it alienates itself from inclusiveness founded in the decolonisation process and promotes exclusivity among Africans.

Socio-economic inequality is a contributing factor to the mounting resentment and attacks against African foreign nationals. The way in which foreign nationals are spoken about by organisations and political leaders breeds contempt and perpetuates xenophobic attitudes. For instance, the EFF has been vocal about dismantling borders and creating an African community, yet at the same time, in their 2019 manifesto the language used to speak about foreign nationals is one of criminality and distrust. The Democratic Alliance (DA) is no better than the EFF, with the former Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba spewing harmful comments that condemn foreign nationals, for example in relation to the Alexandra protest.

Additionally, a meeting between the ANC’s International Relations Minister Lindiwe Sisulu and President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed that the ruling party believed that the problem of xenophobia was a problem of criminality.¹⁵ This simplistic conception of xenophobia is problematic as it erases accountability from political leaders and does not adequately deal with the threat that the discourses of nativism, Afrophobia and narrow nationalism poses to our country today.

Traditional authorities

The recognition of traditional authorities and land redistribution powers granted to them in the democratic dispensation is one of the cruelest versions of nativist nationalism. It undermines the political freedom of people residing in the countryside and women. Mamdani shows that under the colonial and apartheid states, South

Africa was divided into a bifurcated state – with direct and indirect rule.¹⁶ Indirect rule was presided over by traditional authorities. To enforce ethnic pluralism, urban and rural divisions, the colonial and apartheid governments decentralised their powers, using traditional leaders as instruments for control over black people. These governments collaborated with traditional authorities as they recognised the strength of indigenous rulers in socially organising black people.

What the role of traditional authorities in a democratic state should be has been disputed. Arguments in favour of the preservation of these structures claim that they form part of African culture and identity that predates colonisation. Another view contends that traditional authorities infringe on the rights of people living in rural areas and that they have historically acted as extended authoritarian structures which assisted in the oppression of black people under the colonial and apartheid governments.

The EFF, in its 2019 manifesto, showed great favour towards the continued existence of traditional authorities. Mabasa contends that, “[T]he EFF misses the point. Today’s organized traditional authorities are the culmination of colonization and of Apartheid history. Historically, traditional leaders in Africa were not attached to the ownership of the land, unlike in Europe, because the land was abundant and did not broadcast their power to their subjects”.¹⁷

The EFF’s stance on traditional authorities feeds into the gender-based violence and inequality in land ownership experienced by women. Women’s access to land and tenure security are compromised by predominately two factors; firstly, due to the legacy of racially driven land dispossession, and secondly because of gender discriminatory customary law and patriarchal interpretations of culture. This places women in rural



areas in a unique intersection between the law and traditional practices. This means that women in rural areas do not enjoy the same rights as men in rural areas and people in urban spaces.

Women's inability to access land puts them in precarious socio-economic positions where they are subject to exploitation. Women often remain in violent relationships because of poverty and unequal power relations resulting from their male counterparts owning the land. In these positions, women have little to no power to mitigate their social and material security. However, ownership of land would enable women to enjoy economic liberties and political independence. However, women in rural areas often can only access land through their relationships with men – husband, son, father, uncle, etc. Single women cannot be allocated land and are often unable to inherit it after their parents die. They are evicted from their homes. The same is true of widows after their partners die. This means that women are obliged to take the men in their lives – sons, uncles, fathers, etc as their representatives when going to talk to traditional leaders concerning important decisions about land rights. Women are not allowed to represent themselves before these structures concerning land. This means that women are excluded from key decisions taken about land rights. Even when women are included in these conversations, traditional courts are usually dominated by men who overshadow and undermine women. Subsequently, women often do not

receive impartial assistance in land disputes.

Therefore, if the EFF was committed to the liberation of black people it would be supporting the abolition of traditional authorities instead of advancing nativist nationalism and hereditary, unaccountable and authoritative structures that the very people that the party wants economic freedom for. It is questionable whether strategies to protect women by challenging discriminatory laws and abolishing patriarchal customary customs can be developed by organisations and political parties that advance strands of nativism that empowers elements of sexism, tribalism and patriarchy. Ncube affirms this by arguing that “this strand of nativism is not only a threat to ideals of gender parity that are expected of any democracy, but they also thwart any meaningful attempt to land (re) distribution”.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

For the realisation of equality in a non-racial, inclusive society, it is critical that South Africans remain vigilant and critical to ensure that no claim goes unchecked or is above criticism, whether that claim comes from a colonial or African descendant. These include philosophies and actions taken in the name of nativism and nationalism framed to be for the improvement of the material conditions of black people. This is significant, because unchecked ideologies of nativism and nationalism can be exploited to preserve oppressive structures such as traditional authorities whilst also advancing populism, racialism and patriarchy.

Last of all, it is pivotal to note that this article merely seeks to advance a more inclusive conception of who belongs. It also seeks to advocate for a united, democratic, non-sexist, non-racial and prosperous society. It does not undermine the struggles and realities of the black majority and it therefore fully

supports a radicalism that challenges white oppression and racism and all forms of inequality in our society.

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A life of liminality: my story

By Kyle Adams

The writer is studying towards a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina in the United States. He is currently a visiting intern at the Institute for African Alternatives.

During his childhood, IFAA intern Kyle Adams gradually learned that constructing a personal identity would prove difficult in an American society that is typically defined in terms of black and white. As the offspring of a brown Mauritian woman and a white American man, Kyle's phenotype was unfamiliar to many, and he was perceived as "racially ambiguous". He writes about his struggle to find personal security and belonging.

When I was eight weeks old, I flew nearly 15,000km across the world to a tiny island most Americans have never heard of – Mauritius. This country, inhabited by a mere 1.3 million people, is what my mother calls home. I've visited Mauritius ten times over the course of my life, and I'm still taken aback by the country's sheer beauty every time I land in Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Airport. Palm trees, blue ocean and towering mountains are everywhere. Even more, I cherish the opportunity to travel home to half of my extended family. My Mauritian roots are difficult to connect with when in America, so these trips have a profound

impact on my sense of identity.

My father is a white man from Decatur, Illinois, which is the soybean capital of the world. Decatur is almost entirely white. The city epitomises the Midwest feeling of being in the middle of nowhere. Flying into Bloomington Airport in a 24-person plane is quite a different experience from the Airbus we take from Dubai to Mauritius.

Growing up, I thought nothing of my parents' dissimilarities. I did not think it was strange to have both Christian and quasi-Hindu relatives. I was not confused by eating steak and mashed potatoes on Monday and chicken curry with dal makhani on Tuesday. That was just the way my family operated, and my parents never hinted that our household was different from the supposed American ideal. None of this seemed relevant until I reached elementary school, when my peers started asking questions. "Can you pass the skin colour crayon," one would say, pointing at the crayon labeled as "peach." The naïve questions eventually turned into jokes, and then the jokes turned into insults. Often I was told: "Go home and eat your curry."

Phenotypically, I probably look closest to those of Indian descent. This presumption is not entirely off-base since my mother's ancestors were in fact Indians who immigrated to Mauritius four generations before her. However, I do not identify as Indian in any capacity, nor do I know much about Indian culture. Yet I still often have to deal with the startling question: "Are you

Indian?" Although not usually done with malicious intent, this question is incredibly frustrating. I would not be ashamed to be Indian, but it's infuriating to feel as though someone has already determined my identity for me. The question does not ask what my heritage is. It asks: "Is my assumption of you correct?" Consequently, I am reduced to a singular identity and stripped of the opportunity to explain my heritage, a part of my identity of which I am extremely proud. Instead, my two options of reply are "yes" or "no".

In elementary school, I saw myself as the standard white kid living in a Richmond suburb. I was just slightly more tanned than everyone else. Even so, I dealt with the stigma of being an Indian kid during my elementary and middle school years. Fitting the cliché, recess was the most revealing time for these encounters. When picking teams for football or basketball, the two captains first picked the few black kids in our class. Of course, they were viewed as the "natural athletes". Once they were off the board, the captains would pick the scrawny white kids who remained. These were the kids who had the best houses for sleepovers and consistently brought extra Little Debbie desserts for lunch. Their parents also served on the PTA and were the "team moms" for all of the recreational sports teams. The opportunity cost of picking them made the decision easy. Meanwhile, little Kyle did not have exceptional athleticism or compensatory social capital to warrant a pick. I wasn't white enough; I



wasn't black enough. Little did I know that when I entered high school and met a large Indian community, they, too, consider me insufficient to their standards of "Indian-ness."

I tell this story – my story – because it explains why I am so passionate about one specific realm of social justice: race. In pre-school, my two best friends were a boy with white skin named Michael and a boy with black skin named Alex. I intentionally describe their skin colours in this way because that's how I thought of them at that age. They were two boys who just happened to look different. I wish I still saw people that way. My skin colour is darker than others' simply because my ancestors lived closer to the equator and thus evolved to have increased melanin levels; we're all the same under the gift-wrapping we call skin. However, my reality is that I've been heavily socialised to accept and internalise this social construct we call "race". I habitually buy into this social construct that was established hundreds of years ago when European explorers on the continent of Africa needed an explanation to enslave native Africans for economic efficiency. The difference of skin pigment seemed like the most logical way to explain this to the elites back in Europe, so they created a social construct that could be hegemonically reinforced by biological criteria.

Race ensnares us all, and the automatic differentiation of people based on their skin colour is a learned

behaviour that feels unshakeable. I grew up hugging and kissing family of both white and brown skin, yet I must continually fight to unlearn the innumerable stereotypes and biases that were planted within me and recreated by me for almost two decades. Like the vast majority of Americans (and people around the world), I also internalised the concept of whiteness and its cultural superiority. Although I had family of diverse roots, I was brought up in a Western education system that drilled the history and culture of whiteness into me. I was led to believe that the default languages, music, clothing, skin colour and overall way of life were those of white-skinned people.

Growing up, I never felt completely comfortable or accepted in any group outside of my nuclear family (I still don't). Again, I was not white nor black enough for my classmates. But I also was not the correct colour for my own relatives. In Decatur, I was clearly too dark to fit in, to the point that at my paternal grandfather's funeral I was asked if I was adopted. When I visited Mauritius, my slightly lighter skin tone and my lack of fluency in Créole Mauricien excluded me from being accepted by my own cousins as one of them. Living in this perpetual state of liminality as a child was toilsome and exhausting, and it continues to be as I grow older. For much of my childhood, I subtly resented my parents for creating me as a mixed child, and I continually

thought about how easy life would be if I had purely white or purely brown or purely black skin pigment.

However, the ubiquitous tension and frustration was turned on its head when I realised the unique opportunity my mixed identity granted me. I had the opportunity to have a hand in several communities without having to fully commit to a single one, thus becoming a "floater" among the ethnic groups I encounter. I learned to code switch with the many people from whom I hoped to earn the very slightest acceptance. I was able to talk about both hip-hop and country music in order to gain credibility and connect with people who would not have otherwise trusted me. I also began to recognise how I could use my own experiences of marginalisation to empathise with others. And towards the end of my high school career, I became very familiar with the condescending, reductive gripes that I was accepted by colleges like Georgetown, Duke and Stanford simply because of affirmative action quotas. Essentially, my uncomfortable childhood gave me a wide vantage point.

My story is one in which the social issue of racial marginalisation is impossible to ignore. But I do not share my story as a means of complaining or seeking pity. I tell my story because it illustrates the many ways in which the social construct of race taints the lives of everyone. Even the privileged white person is negatively affected, in that his/her life is reduced to a single "lived experience". The concepts of race and racism are unlikely to fade for a very long time (if ever), yet we must work to persistently problematise the recreation of race and its power over people's identities. Individuals are stripped of their autonomy if they are instantly reduced to stereotypes every time they're approached by others. It's imperative that race is publicly deconstructed. Because of my childhood, problematising and rethinking the concept of race is what I hope to do as my life's work. This is my story. **NA**



Rebels and Rage: Reflections on Fees Must Fall

Adam Habib

Jonathan Ball: Jeppestown. 2019. 238 pgs

Review by Ben Turok

The turmoil wrought by a decade of Jacob Zuma's misrule has generated some fine new books. In crime, Jacques Pauw's *Presidents Keepers* and Myburgh's *Gangster State*; in economics Mark Swillings *State Capture*, Philippe Burger's *Getting it Right* and Frederick Fourie's *Informal Sector*; and now in politics Adam Habib's remarkable *Rebels and Rage*.

If ever there was a need to demonstrate the case for participant observation Habib's book does just that. Here was a vice chancellor deeply immersed in tortuous engagement and yet able to stand back and make profound analytical observations. And he does so honestly and, at times, self-critically, yet it is clear that he behaved with enormous courage in the face of extraordinary provocation. He had the onerous responsibility of protecting Wits University while at the same time continuing to engage with protesting students. It was an impossible task.

Yet Habib is willing to acknowledge that mass action and social mobilisation are an essential component of the "strategic arsenal required for changing our world". And he concedes that "the students achieved in ten days what vice chancellors had been debating for ten years". The problem was the way the students went about it.

The students raised three concerns: at first, a fee increase lower than nine

percent, then no fee increase, then free university education. Added to this was a demand for insourcing of cleaning and other staff.

From the start of the confrontation between management and students, Habib believed that even as the students became increasingly militant, even violent, a political solution had to be found since a "security solution was not sustainable in the long term". And this even while an anarchist tradition of decision-making took root in the Fees Must Fall movement.

We cannot deal in a brief review with the details of the clashes between the students, management and security services. These are fully dealt with in the book. What is worth noting is that a small group of supporters within the academic community not only openly took sides against management, no matter how serious the situation, but also failed to condemn the violence publicly. It seems there was a great deal of duplicity in their discussions with Habib and their open interventions in support of the students.

Habib complains of the same conduct by some student leaders. In their personal discussions with Habib they were courteous and seemingly cooperative, but when addressing large numbers of students they were rude, nasty and dishonest about the

negotiations with management.

Habib makes bold to say "rage is necessary, violence is not" and he points out that students sought to justify their violence by reference to Fanon and the struggle against colonialism in general. But Habib argues there is a huge difference between the historical struggles against colonial rule and struggle in the context of a democratic society with a range of democratic institutions, even if it contains serious distortions.

Habib also raises the question whether oppressed communities are correct in framing their objectives as a "retreat into nativism", where the previously oppressed become the master, or as progress towards the construction of a non-racial, cosmopolitan society.

He makes the critical point that such questions should not be left for the day of victory but ought to be built into the policies and conduct during the struggle itself.

On these considerations, Habib remains highly critical of the conduct of the protestors, including their failure to create a unified movement with appropriate policies. "The new society is seeded in the struggle itself".

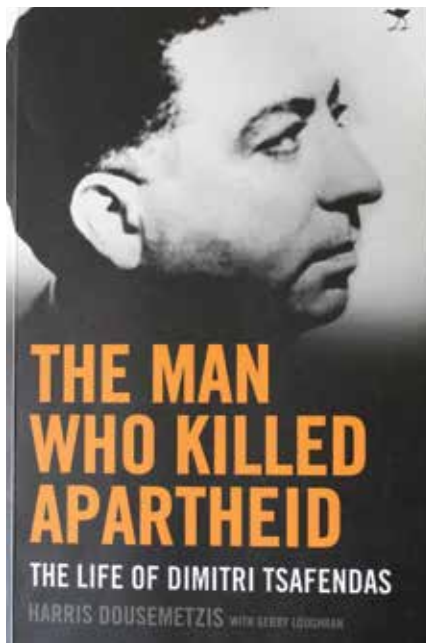
These are conclusions worth remembering. **NA**

The man who tried to kill apartheid

Harris Dousemetzis

Publisher: Jacana Books: Johannesburg. 2018. 483 pgs

Review by Moira Levy



If there is anyone out there who still buys into the elaborately crafted apartheid lie about the alleged insanity of Dimitri Tsafendas, the man who assassinated Hendrik Verwoerd, this book will at last set the record straight.

Author Harris Dousemetzis read an obituary after the death of Tsafendas in 1999. Curious, he set out to find out more, with little success. He found only four books that refer to the man who spent a lifetime in jail for killing the 'architect of apartheid'.

Despite intense international attention, all that the South African public was told was that Verwoerd was stabbed to death in his parliamentary

seat by a messenger who, it was claimed, turned out to be a madman who believed he was possessed by a giant tapeworm that ordered him to commit the crime.

That's the story generations of South Africans have been brought up on. It was a time that the world was starting to turn against Apartheid South Africa. As a result, the myth of Verwoerd the All-Mighty, god of the white race who would protect South Africa against the *swart gevaar*, had to be defended. In this context, there was the need to justify how the assassin was a white man. Even more embarrassing was how he had come to be employed by parliament with unfettered access to the prime minister, even though he had always been an outspoken Communist, declared persona non-grata by the South African authorities, and had a police record in Mozambique, where he had been imprisoned and tortured for his opposition to Portuguese colonial rule.

The authorities who interrogated Tsafendas could not allow any of this to emerge in an open court. Yet the prisoner wouldn't co-operate. He declared his revulsion of apartheid and emphasised his hope that in killing the "father of apartheid" he could help bring the abhorrent system to an end. Naked, shackled and handcuffed, he was repeatedly electrocuted, beaten viciously, held upside down out of the window of a high-rise and subjected

to all of the now well-known gamut of psychotically violent apartheid security force tactics before finally deciding to avoid the gallows by resuscitating an old story of a tape worm.

The author is one of the few people to make public the fantastic tale of a tape worm, first thought up by a friend of Tsafendas who had successfully used it to avoid being drafted into the army. Tsafendas had tried out the pretence at insanity himself, and found it worked. While serving in the navy during World War Two he developed a deep fear of being torpedoed by U-boats. It was by claiming to be the bearer of a tape worm that he was able to spend the war years safely in a range of hospital and mental health facilities.

When he tried the story out on his interrogators, it turned out to be exactly what they had been looking for. Tsafendas continued to insist on one point though: he made it clear that he never attributed the decision to kill Verwoerd to the tape worm. To the end he insisted that the decision was his own.

At no time during the four-day trial was the court presented with the cogent, lucid police statements that he had repeatedly given to his interrogators, in which he confirmed, "I did set myself the task of destroying the prime minister...I did not care about the consequences...I was so disgusted by the racial policy that I went ►►

through with my plans to kill the prime minister...I wanted to see a government representing all the South African people". These all-important documents languished in the state archives until uncovered by Lisa Key, a filmmaker who produced a documentary on Tsafendas in the 1990s.

At the end of the trial, Tsafendas was declared insane and a patient of the state president. Yet he was not admitted to an asylum and received no treatment. Instead he was first sent to Robben Island – the first and only white political prisoner to be held there – where he spent three months in solitary confinement. Thereafter, he was transferred to Pretoria Central Prison and held in a purpose-built cell near death row where he spent years listening to the final dirges of the men sentenced to death and regularly heard the gallows at work.

Herein lies the real value of this book. It confirms much of what has been rumoured, and releases into the public domain material never revealed before. But beyond that, we learn that Tsafendas's torture did not end with his sentencing. His jailers never forgot that it was he who killed Verwoerd, and brutal daily beatings continued for most of his imprisonment. Tsafendas was also apartheid's longest-held prisoner – he was incarcerated for a total of 28 years

in jail after which he spent many more years in a hospital in Pretoria and, later, in Sterkfontein asylum for the mentally challenged, where his health rapidly deteriorated until his death in 1999.

In this more than 400-pg volume, Dousemetzis finally tears apart the carefully crafted lies of Apartheid. It records 10 years of meticulous research in which he interviewed 137 people who knew Tsafendas, many who regarded him as a friend, and none of whom had ever thought of him as insane. The author also drew on 12,000 pages of documents that had never been comprehensively consulted before, including police statements, newspapers and interrogation records.

The indisputable conclusion Dousemetzis came to was that Dimitri Tsafendas was a committed life-long Communist and activist, a highly politicised person who was perfectly sane and highly intelligent. He had committed his life to the fight for justice. He mobilised for majority rule in Mozambique, joined the anti-apartheid movement in London and fought with the Communists in the Greek civil war and he had stabbed Vervoerd to death because he believed it was his political responsibility to do so.

In this work, the truth is exposed in full. And that includes his treatment by the post-apartheid government.

Instead of hailing him as one of democratic South Africa's heroes, the new government did not pardon him, free him, or even offer him amnesty (which he said he would have rejected on the grounds that it would have put him into the same category as apartheid murderers). This despite unrelenting efforts by figures like Judge Jody Kollapen, Krish Govender, the late journalist David Beresford, powerful individuals within the Greek Orthodox church, and even a submission to the TRC by Lisa Key. The latter simply elicited a letter from then Minister of Justice Dr Dlamini-Zuma. It was "her belief that Tsafendas was receiving the necessary care and attention at Sterkfontein, adding that a private facility 'could not offer the secure environment required as threats to his life are still a possibility'."

When asked during a visit by former political prisoner Alexander Moumbaris if there was anything he needed, Tsafendas simply replied that all he wanted was "his liberty". It was not to be. He died still a prisoner in Sterkfontein, a lonely, sick, deaf old man who now lies in an unmarked grave and, twenty years after his death, remains publicly unacknowledged for the role he played as a hero and a freedom fighter whose legacy belongs in the proud history of the fight that did finally kill apartheid. **NA**

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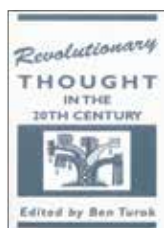
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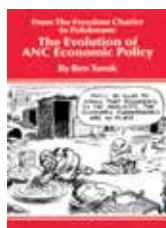
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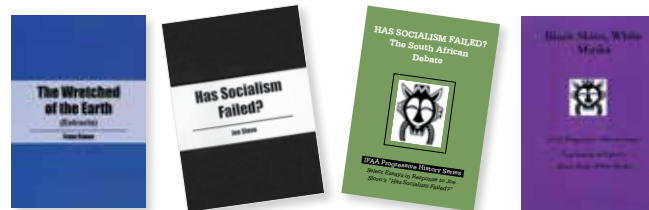
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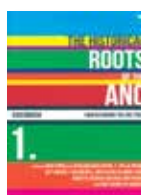
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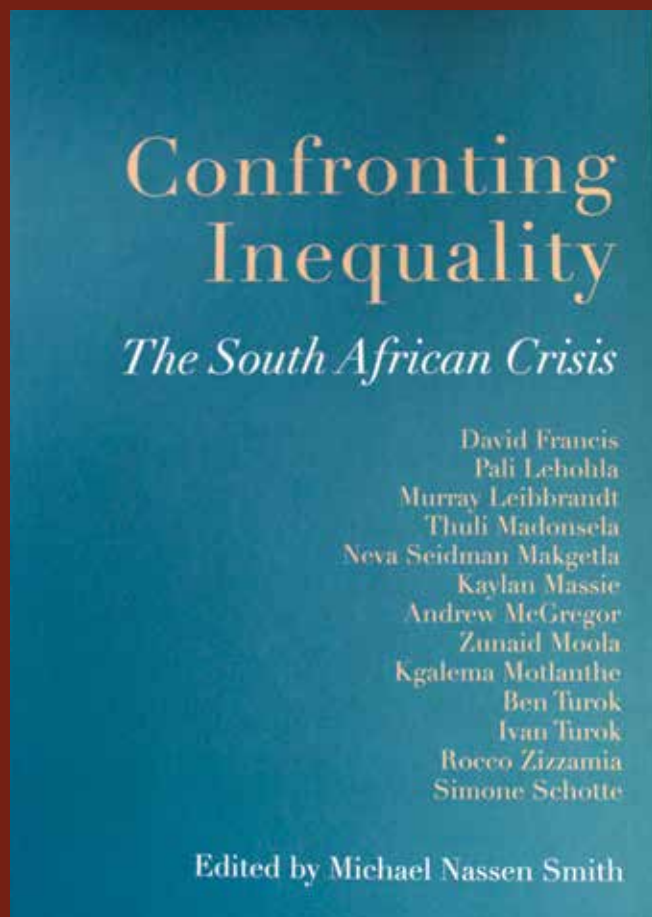
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- In terms of wealth, the top percentile households hold 70.9% while the bottom 60% holds a mere 7%.
- 76% of South Africans face an imminent threat of falling below the poverty line.

These statistics explain the continued presence of protest and unrest based on the conviction that the legacy of apartheid and colonialism in the country has not been overcome. In this context, the Institute for African Alternatives has brought together a series of papers written by eminent South African academics and policymakers to serve as a catalyst to finally confront and resolve inequality.

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