



NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Namibia: Calls for change in social welfare policy

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Mayibuye iAfrica: Resistance culture after '76

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NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

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Contact us

Email: admin@ifaaza.org

Website: www.ifaaza.org

Facebook: @InstituteForAfricanAlternatives

Twitter: @IFAFACT

Instagram: @ifaa_new_agenda

YouTube: @ifaforum7740

Tel: +27 21 461 2340

Address:

Community House, 41 Salt River Road, Salt
River, Cape Town 7925

IFAA staff

Acting Director Tony Ehrenreich

New Agenda Editor Martin Nicol

New Agenda Production Editor Moira Levy

Project Manager Christine Leibach

Programme Consultant Nazeema Mohamed

Research and Events Bruce Kadalie

Administration and Finance Shamielah Booley

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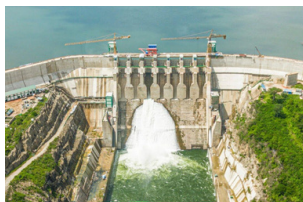


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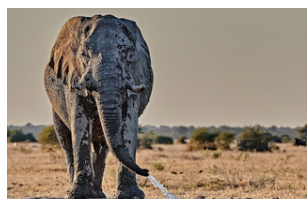
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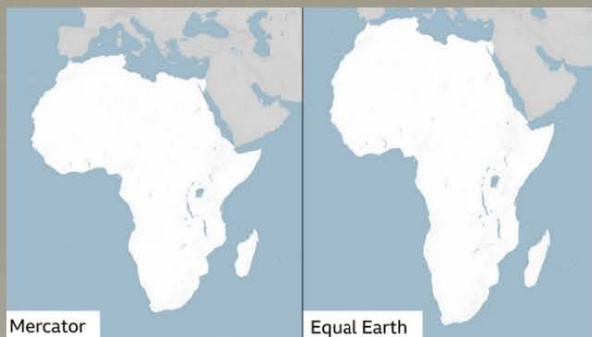
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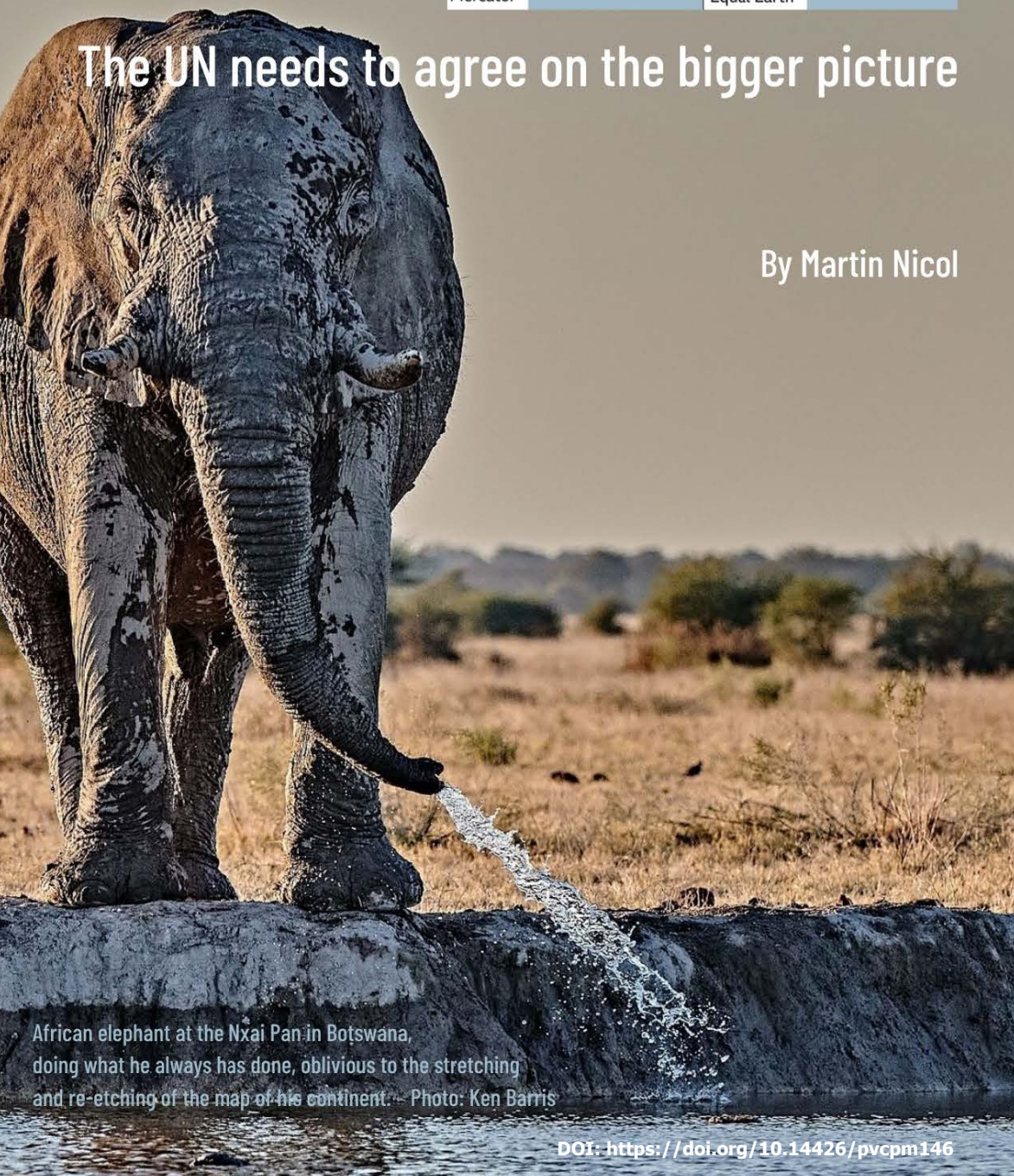


Editorial



The UN needs to agree on the bigger picture

By Martin Nicol



African elephant at the Nxai Pan in Botswana, doing what he always has done, oblivious to the stretching and re-etching of the map of his continent. — Photo: Ken Barris



In September 2026, the majority of United Nations member states endorsed a new map of the world that more accurately reflects the size of countries. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission welcomed the “more accurate cartographic representation of Africa and other regions of the world”. He congratulated the member states of the African Union for their mobilisation in support of this initiative.¹

Mobilisation on other issues has been less successful. The world has reached no agreement at all on action to address climate change, or rogue artificial intelligence (AI), or what to do about ending mounting humanitarian crises, many flamed by wars. There are more conflicts around the world today – 65 by one count – than at any time since 1946, after World War II ended.

“Changes in the world not seen in a hundred years” is the phrase used by President Xi Jinping of China to describe the geopolitical change we are experiencing now.²

The breaking world order has never been very good for Africa. Major powers have always been able to sweep aside rules that did not suit them. In many cases, they undermined rules they did not like. They did not even join many of the institutions that made up the mythical “rules-based order”. So African and international agreement on a new world map can look like quite some victory.

There was greater African scepticism when the United States President, in early September, signed a law to extend the expiry date of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The extension is just for two years, and it is not clear which African countries will continue to benefit from it. AGOA is not an agreement reached through negotiation. This was a unilateral offer of tariff-free access to the US to certain African countries (which can be changed at any time), and “terms and conditions apply”.



There are clear parallels here with the much-welcomed decision by China, earlier in 2026, to allow duty-free access for exports from African countries to China. This was announced (for the 53 African countries that have diplomatic relations with China), not negotiated. It runs for two years. It covers goods – such as raw materials – which are not subject to tariffs anyway, and many African countries (the poorer ones) already had duty-free access. Tariffs are not the main barrier for African exports to China – these include the impossibility of competing with Chinese manufactured goods (often subsidised by the state), and the presence of non-tariff barriers, such as packaging and phytosanitary requirements.

New Agenda was planning to include articles on the zero tariffs of China in this issue. But during our quality assurance process, we became aware of extensive errors in the references for the core contribution. In our experience, those sorts of errors are often the result of AI interference in the grammar and readability of the reference list. Consistency and accuracy in referencing is an absolute requirement for all content in the journal. AI has increased the burdens of the editorial team measurably, with its insertion of fake references, inaccurate titles and references that make no sense in relation to the subject of the articles.

Even the *South African Journal of Science* has had its own issues with AI manipulation of references. One of its reference lists features “Mahmood, M. University of Cape Town TB Davie Memorial Lecture...”.³ It’s surprising to see this kind of blip in the SAJS, which is cosseted by “an editorial team of ten disciplinary-specialist Associate Editors who are responsible for managing the peer review of submissions in their disciplines. The Editor-in-Chief works closely with a full-time publishing team consisting of a Managing Editor, an Online Publishing Systems Administrator and an Online Publishing Administrator led by the Scholarly Publishing Manager”.⁴



The *New Agenda* team noted that the SAJS, the noblest journal in South Africa, was an awardee – in 2024/5 – of a grant from the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) project in Africa; *New Agenda* was granted the same award in 2025/26, with a somewhat smaller support team.

This issue of *New Agenda* features an article by Sem Mandela Utoni and Mubanga Mpundu on the characteristics of government social protection grants in Namibia and whether they influence labour market participation and productive inclusion.

Judy Seidman contributes a commentary on the role and growth of resistance culture between the late 1960s and 1982, within the distinctive arts and culture discourse that emerged after the Soweto uprisings of June 1976. Her focal point is the MEDU Art Ensemble based in Gaborone, Botswana.

The article includes a harrowing account of the 1985 murders of 12 people in a cross-border raid into Gaborone by the apartheid state, including visual artist Thami Mnye. The Thami Mnye Foundation in the Netherlands, established in 1990, pays homage to an activist artist who, as a member of the MEDU Art Ensemble, utilised art as a tool of expression and communication during the struggle for liberation from apartheid in South Africa. The Foundation has provided artist-in-residence programmes to more than 130 artists from throughout Africa and countries elsewhere that are home to artists in the African diaspora. To mark its 35th anniversary in 2026, the Foundation has focused on Mnye, and in his spirit, “invited artists whose work has meaningful historical ties to South Africa, or whose artistic practice carries the echoes of its history and engages deeply with its social and cultural landscapes – continuing the dialogue between past and present through the transformative power of art,” according to the chairperson of the Foundation, Pauline Burmann.



This issue of *New Agenda* includes six book reviews.

Megan Bryer critiques two recent books on economics and capitalism. Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie considers Mahmood Mamdani's memoir on Uganda and life under Idi Amin and Yoweri Museveni. Rasigan Maharajh introduces readers to a collection of critical essays on BRICS/BRICS+. Keith Gottschalk offers reviews of Martin Plaut's controversial and challenging book on slavery in Africa over the last 5,000 years, and the unusual account of the Soviet-era advocate for African liberation, Vladimir Shubin.

Editor's note – The editor of New Agenda will be retiring after seven years in the post. The Institute for African Alternatives is looking for someone to take his place. This will be from the start of 2028, or before. We invite our readers to put forward proposals or nominations for the position.

ENDNOTES

¹ Communiqué of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the adoption of the "Correct The Map" resolution, 4 September 2026.

<https://au.int/sites/default/files/PR-%20CorrectTheMap-En.pdf>

² This formulation was used first in 2017. It featured in both of President Xi's statements to the 18th BRICS Summit, New Delhi, on 12 and 13 September 2026. See Chapter 9 of Rudd, K. (2024). *On Xi Jinping: How Xi's Marxist Nationalism is Shaping China and the World*. Oxford Academic.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197766033.001.0001>; English Edition of *Qiushi Journal*. https://en.qstheory.cn/2026-09/14/c_1213158.htm

³ Several other reference entries also incorrectly use the first name of the author as the 'index' name for articles. For example, see note 7 to Lewins, K. et al. (2025) Is silence in the face of global injustice in the "best interests" of South African universities? *South African Journal of Science*. 121(3/4), Art. 21191.

<https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2025/21191>. Note 7 reflects the author as "Mahmood" – the first name of the noted scholar Mahmood Mamdani.

⁴ See Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (2026), vacancy advertisement: Editor-in-Chief of the South African Journal of Science.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11nPRnAe23xel9nt4M_uSp7toyQjwvdBI/view?pli=1 (accessed 25 August 2026).



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Reorienting social protection for productive inclusion in Namibia

*By Sem Mandela Uutoni
& Mubanga Mpundu*

Productive social protection as a policy tool for long-term developmental outcomes is emerging as an alternative to welfarist systems that underutilise the productive potential of working-age citizens in many countries in Africa, such as Namibia.

Pupil at Oneputa Combined School, Ondangwa, Ovamboland, in northern Namibia.

Photo: John Hogg, World Bank

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14426/f09fwf70>



Reorientating social protection for productive inclusion in Namibia

Sem Mandela Uutoni is a PhD candidate in the Department of Economics, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of the Western Cape

Email: 4428536@myuwc.ac.za

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7157-1579>

Mubanga Mpundu is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of the Western Cape.

Email: mmpundu@uwc.ac.za

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4009-9151>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14426/f09fwf70>

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**Abstract**

Social protection has increasingly emerged as a critical policy instrument for addressing poverty, inequality, and vulnerability in developing economies. However, within many African contexts, including Namibia, social protection systems remain predominantly welfare-oriented and insufficiently integrated with labour market and productivity enhancement objectives. This study examines the relationship between social protection, labour market participation, and productive inclusion in Namibia. Adopting an exploratory qualitative research design, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected policy experts and practitioners, complemented by secondary data analysis. The findings indicate that Namibia's social protection system underutilises the productive potential of its working-age population because the system lacks institutionalised labour market transition pathways and remains weakly integrated with productive sectors. Additionally, low transfer adequacy constrains beneficiaries' long-term capacity for productive participation, limiting the system's ability to act as a bridge to sustainable livelihoods. The study highlights that reorienting social protection toward a structured public-private integration model, enhancing transfer adequacy, and targeting active labour market pathways can better facilitate economic participation and productive inclusion within high-inequality settings.

Keywords: Social Protection, Labour Market Integration, Productive Inclusion, Economic Development



Introduction

Social protection is an important instrument for addressing poverty, vulnerability, and inequality in developing countries (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2001; International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2022). Increasingly, scholars and international development institutions maintain that social protection should contribute to long-term developmental outcomes through human capital development, livelihood support, asset accumulation, and labour market integration, in addition to cushioning households against economic shocks (Jenson, 2009; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2015).

This holistic view has influenced the approach and design of social protection in many countries, including Namibia. This further contributed to the emergence of the concept of productive social protection, which emphasises the integration of social assistance with employment creation, skills development, productive inclusion, and income-generation strategies (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2015). From this perspective, the role of social protection extends beyond income redistribution to include economic participation, productive capacity and inclusive growth, and their potential effects.

This broad developmental framing is important in the Namibian context, where persistently high unemployment, especially among young people, widespread informality, and unequal access to economic opportunities continue to constrain labour market participation. These labour market conditions also have implications for social protection financing in economies such as Namibia, where social protection financing depends heavily on taxation and formal sector participation. Weak labour market performance creates dual pressures by increasing demand for social protection while constraining the potential for domestic revenue mobilisation (ILO, 2022).



The relationship between social protection and labour market outcomes nevertheless remains empirically contested. Social assistance may weaken labour market participation incentives where transfers alter the relative returns to employment, but predictable income support may also relax household resource constraints and enable investment in education, job search, enterprise development, and other productive activities (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2015). Evidence increasingly indicates that these effects depend on programme design and the extent to which social protection is complemented by labour market interventions, with potential implications for productivity, employability, and local economic development (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2019).

Evidence from African upper- and lower-middle-income economies remains relatively limited and in Namibia productive social protection is still an emerging concept. Existing interventions are predominantly protective in orientation with productive elements embedded in selected programmes. Against this background, the study addresses the following central research question: *How can Namibia's social protection framework be strategically reoriented to foster productive inclusion and sustainable labour market transitions?*

The study further distinguishes between two related gaps: firstly, the limited integration of social protection with the labour market and productive interventions, while the second is the limited empirical evidence on how such a transition might be structured within the Namibian context. By examining these questions through expert perspectives and existing evidence, the study contributes an empirically grounded framework for analysing the transition towards productive social protection in a high-inequality, tax-financed African economy.



Literature review

Within development economics, increasing attention has been devoted to the relationship between social protection and productive inclusion. Earlier welfare-oriented approaches often portray social assistance as fiscally burdensome and potentially distortionary to labour incentives. However, emerging evidence provides a more differentiated account of these effects. Contemporary studies demonstrate that appropriately designed social protection programmes can promote risk-taking behaviour, strengthen human capital accumulation, improve labour market participation, and facilitate entry into more productive livelihood activities (Alderman & Yemtsov, 2014; Bastagli et al., 2019). This has underpinned the concept of productive social protection whereby reductions in vulnerability are accompanied by improvements in households' productive capacity and economic participation.

The mechanisms have relevance in developing economies, where labour markets are dualistic and exclusionary, with large segments of the population concentrated in low-productivity informal activities. Under such conditions, the economic effects of social protection may overcome constraints on labour market participation, human capital investment or productive activity. This places social protection within the broader relationship between social policy and structural economic transformation identified by Mkandawire (2001).

Namibia provides an important context in which to examine these relationships. The country has developed one of the more comprehensive non-contributory social assistance systems in Africa, with social protection occupying a substantial position within public expenditure. Social assistance expenditure amounts to approximately 2.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with the universal old-age pension accounting for the largest share of this expenditure (Ministry of



Finance, 2018). The scale and composition of this expenditure raise questions concerning the outcomes generated by social protection.

Existing evidence demonstrates that Namibia's social protection system contributes substantially to poverty reduction and household welfare (World Bank, 2021). The World Bank (2021) estimates that every N\$1 spent on social assistance reduces the poverty gap by approximately N\$0.35, providing an indication of the poverty-reduction efficiency of existing expenditure. The same analysis identifies differences in the longer-term effects associated with expenditure across beneficiary groups, with interventions targeting children potentially generating returns through human capital accumulation that extend beyond immediate income support. These findings draw attention to the level of social protection expenditure, and also to its allocation, design, and capacity to generate outcomes beyond immediate consumption and poverty reduction.

This distinction is also important when social protection is considered in relation to Namibia's labour market. Existing data reflect broad agreement that cash transfers improve household welfare and consumption, but linkages between social protection and employment, skills development, entrepreneurship, and other productive inclusion pathways remain limited (ILO, 2022; OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2019). The National Planning Commission (2022) similarly highlights that social protection interventions often operate in institutional silos, limiting policy coherence and reducing their potential contribution to economic participation. These characteristics raise a broader economic question concerning whether the protective function of social protection can be complemented by mechanisms that strengthen productive participation.

Namibia's Social Protection Policy reflects increasing recognition of this relationship by emphasising stronger linkages between social protection, human capital development, livelihoods, and economic



participation (MGEPESW, 2021). This orientation is consistent with the broader literature on productive social protection and social investment, in which the economic effects of social expenditure depend on the transfers, as well as their interaction with household capabilities, labour market opportunities, and complementary interventions.

Despite this emerging orientation, the relationship between social protection and productive inclusion remains insufficiently examined in the Namibian context. Existing evidence establishes the importance of social protection for poverty reduction and household welfare, while policy and institutional evidence identifies limited integration with productive and labour market interventions. However, the avenues through which such integration could support productivity and labour market participation is less established. This study therefore addresses this gap by examining social protection alongside productive inclusion and labour market participation and situating the Namibian experience within broader economic debates concerning social protection and economic development.

Theoretical framework

This study integrates Graduation Theory, Social Risk Management (SRM) Theory and the Capability Approach to examine the relationship between social protection, productive inclusion, and labour market participation. These three perspectives address distinct but interconnected dimensions of this relationship. Graduation Theory explains how complementary interventions can support transitions towards more productive livelihoods, while SRM Theory explains how protection against risk can influence household economic decisions, and the Capability Approach considers how improvements in individual capabilities shape opportunities for productive participation. Their integration provides a framework for examining both the mechanisms



through which social protection may generate productive effects and the conditions under which these effects can occur.

Graduation Theory and productive inclusion

Graduation Theory provides a framework for understanding how social protection can be connected to productive inclusion. The theory emphasises combinations of transfers and complementary measures, including skills development, asset accumulation, financial inclusion, and livelihood support, as potential pathways towards more sustainable livelihoods (Hashemi & Umaira, 2011). The underlying understanding is that households facing multiple constraints may require both protection against immediate deprivation and access to resources to enable productive activity.

This perspective is relevant to Namibia, where unemployment and unequal access to productive opportunities constrain labour market participation and economic mobility. Within this study, Graduation Theory therefore provides the basis for examining whether, and through what avenues, social protection can be connected to skills, assets, livelihoods, and other pathways towards productive inclusion.

SRM Theory

SRM Theory, developed by Holzmann and Jørgensen (2000), provides the economic rationale for examining social protection as a tool for managing vulnerability and influencing household economic behaviour. A central contribution of SRM Theory is its recognition that poverty is not only a consequence of low income, but also of vulnerability and exposure to shocks. This theory indicates that where households have limited risk management options, economic decisions may favour lower-risk activities, at the expense of higher-return economic activities, even where these generate lower than expected returns.

Social protection can alter these constraints by stabilising consumption and reducing exposure to severe welfare losses. In principle,



greater income security may affect household decisions concerning education, job search, migration, entrepreneurship, and other productive activities. The significance of SRM Theory to this study lies in the risk-behaviour-productivity mechanism, which theorises that reducing vulnerability may expand the range of economic choices available to households and potentially facilitate participation in higher-return activities.

Capability Approach

The Capability Approach (Sen, 1999) broadens the analysis from household resources and risk to the substantive opportunities available to individuals. From this perspective, the significance of social protection depends on whether it expands individuals' capabilities to pursue valued economic and social activities. Social protection may contribute to these capabilities through improved access to health, education, nutrition, and other conditions that influence an individual's capacity to participate in economic activity.

For this study, the Capability Approach explains the distinction between having resources and being able to convert those resources into productive opportunities. This is important because income support alone may not generate productive participation where individuals continue to face constraints related to skills, health, access to markets, or employment opportunities. The approach therefore provides a basis for examining the conditions that mediate the relationship between social protection and labour market inclusion, while recognising outcomes beyond immediate changes in income or consumption.

Integration and application of the theoretical framework

Together, the three theories provide an analytical base through which social protection can be examined. Starting with protection against vulnerability, coupled with expansion of capabilities and economic choices, continuing with access to productive opportunities and lastly

productive inclusion and labour market participation. This integrated framework informed both the interpretation of the empirical evidence and the deductive components of the ATLAS.ti coding framework. Concepts relating to *liquidity constraints* and *risk aversion* were informed by SRM Theory; *skills development* and *asset building* by Graduation Theory; and *capability expansion* and *structural barriers* by the Capability Approach. The study used these theories as complementary lenses for examining the mechanisms and constraints through which social protection may influence productive participation in Namibia.



This child support unit in Namibia was funded by USAID, until Elon Musk and the Trump administration decided to halt USAID funding on 1 July 2025, severely impacting early childhood development and vulnerable youth programmes.

Photo: USAID

Empirical framework

The empirical literature provides evidence that social protection can generate outcomes beyond immediate consumption support when transfers are combined with productive inclusion measures, labour market interventions and complementary investments. The evidence



presented from Ethiopia and South Africa illustrate distinct approaches to linking social protection with productive and labour market participation.

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) demonstrates the potential interaction between predictable income support and productive livelihood interventions. PSNP evidence shows that transfers can protect household consumption and assets, while complementary livelihood interventions are needed to support income growth and asset accumulation. The Food Security Programme combined transfers and public works with credit, productive asset support and other livelihood interventions, illustrating how income protection can operate alongside measures designed to strengthen household productive capacity (Devereux et al., 2014).

In the Namibian context, the relevance of the PSNP lies in understanding how predictability, complementary support, and access to productive opportunities interact to shape household economic behaviour.

South Africa provides a different empirical pathway through the linkage between social protection, employment, and labour market participation. The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) combines temporary income support with employment opportunities, work experience, and skills development. Evidence from the EPWP revealed that participation provided short-term income support while strengthening work experience and labour market attachment among vulnerable groups, including women and young people (McCord, 2012). The South African experience provides a useful basis for examining how temporary employment and labour market interventions can complement income protection where access to formal employment remains constrained.

The two cases illustrate different ways through which social protection can be connected to productive participation. However, their



transferability to Namibia is contingent on specific institutional conditions. In contrast to Ethiopia's heavily donor-supported, agrarian, rural-focused infrastructure, Namibia features a highly urbanising, dualistic economy with a tax-financed social protection system. Furthermore, unlike South Africa's highly institutionalised public works administrative system, Namibia faces severe capacity constraints in cross-ministerial implementation and coordination. Therefore, lessons from these regional case studies can be transferred to Namibia once adapted to the local context.

Research methodology and data sources

Research design and target population

This study adopted a qualitative research design and was exploratory and interpretive in nature, focusing on understanding how policymakers, programme implementers, researchers, and development practitioners perceive the role of social protection within broader development and labour market systems. The research design was further informed by the study's theoretical and empirical foundations, which collectively emphasise multidimensional and context-specific understandings of poverty, vulnerability, productivity, and human development.

The target population for this study consisted of experts and practitioners working in the fields of social protection, labour market policy, economic development, and public policy in Namibia. Given the specialised and policy-oriented nature of the study, the research interviewed ten participants, identified through purposive sampling. Sample adequacy was guided by the principle of thematic saturation, which refers to the stage at which additional interviews no longer generate substantially new concepts or insights relevant to the research objectives (Guest et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2018).



The final sample included participants from government institutions, international organisations, civil society organisations, and academia, thereby ensuring diversity of institutional perspectives and enabling triangulation across policy, implementation, and research domains. Table 1 provides a functional breakdown of the anonymised participant profile.

Table 1: Anonymised participant profiles

Participant Code	Institutional sector	Count	Primary expertise
P-4, P-7, P-9, P-10	Government ministries	4	Social assistance, livelihoods, public policy & financing
P-1, P-2	International development organisations	2	Productive social protection, development economics, coordination & social policy
P-5	State-owned enterprises	1	Productivity, labour market, skills building & enterprise development
P-3, P-6, P-8	Independent researchers & industry experts	3	Labour-market, productivity, cost-effectiveness, private sector integration & financing

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2026).

Data collection methods

Primary data collection was executed through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted over a nine-month period between September 2025 and May 2026. Participant recruitment was initiated through formal electronic correspondence, followed by snowball sampling to access specific key informants within institutional networks. The average interview duration ranged between 50 and 70 minutes.

Institutional approval for the study was formally granted by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape (Approval No. HS24/9/26). In compliance with strict double-blind and institutional review policies, all direct identifiers have been replaced with participant codes. Participation was strictly voluntary, backed by written informed consent.

The researchers approached this study as independent development scholars with prior academic training in regional



development and economics. To mitigate confirmation bias and minimise the risk of imposing authorial inferences over participant views, systematic reflexive journalling was maintained throughout data collection.

Data analysis

Data management and analysis were organised through ATLAS.ti and operationalised through Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis framework. Raw interview audio was transcribed verbatim, followed by initial open coding. These initial codes were inductively grouped, then matched against the deductive categories outlined in the theoretical framework to generate the final analytical themes.

To safeguard qualitative rigour, the study adopted strict criteria for qualitative trustworthiness, specifically focusing on *credibility*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*:

- Credibility was secured through participant member-checking of selected transcripts and intensive data triangulation against national policy documents (e.g. Namibia's Fifth National Development Plan).
- Dependability was maintained through a transparent audit trail documenting detailed coding logs and structural transitions from code to theme.
- Confirmability was preserved by ensuring that all presented interpretations are explicitly derived from and supported by direct, anonymised participant quotation.

*... poverty trap and liquidity constraint theories
... contend that chronic income insecurity
limits households' ability to accumulate assets
and engage in productivity-enhancing
investments.*



Results and discussion

This section presents findings from semi-structured interviews as well as complementary secondary data. The analysis examines areas of convergence and divergence across respondents and data, as well as identifying the avenues and institutional conditions through which social protection can influence productive and labour market participation.

Transfer adequacy, survivalist equilibria and productive capacity

The relationship between transfer adequacy and productivity emerged as a recurring theme throughout the accounts and literature. Respondents associated transfer adequacy with the range of economic choices available to beneficiary households. Relatively low transfers were described as contributing to a “survivalist equilibrium”, in which scarce household resources are concentrated on immediate consumption, leaving limited scope for expenditure on job search, transport, skills, health, education, or small-scale productive activity. In this interpretation, the relevant constraint is not simply low income, but the limited economic space available for planning, investment, and productive risk-taking.

As one respondent observed, beneficiaries often remain focused on short-term survival because existing transfers do not create sufficient economic space for planning, investment, or productive risk-taking. The participant explained:

The shackle of poverty is often something overlooked in the debate, that poverty has a debilitating effect, that it undermines people achieving their potential. And therefore, in the broader sense, it undermines productivity. (P-8)

These align with poverty trap and liquidity constraint theories, which contend that chronic income insecurity limits households’ ability to accumulate assets and engage in productivity-enhancing investments (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008). The analysis consequently positions transfer



adequacy as central to consumption smoothing and to the economic choices available to beneficiary households. Respondents also associated transfer inadequacy with constraints on labour mobility, entrepreneurial activity, and human-capital investment, reflecting that transfer value may influence the extent to which social assistance creates scope for productive economic choices.

Reflecting this distinction between poverty relief and productive participation, another participant observed:

The other challenge is that social protection is able to reduce poverty, but it does not eradicate poverty. It is some kind of a relief measure and those ones that are lucky are able to use that support to empower themselves and get out of the poverty trap but together with social protection you also need some more transformative interventions. (P-6)

This interpretation is consistent with international evidence demonstrating that predictable and adequate social transfers can support productive investment and labour market participation. Respondents frequently drew on Namibia's Basic Income Grant pilot in Otjivero-Omitara (2008-2009) to illustrate the potential channels through which predictable income support might influence school attendance, food security, small-scale enterprise activity, and survival-driven coping strategies. Additionally, several accounts also questioned narrow conceptions of social protection as merely redistributive expenditure. Instead, they consistently framed adequately designed social protection as a potential investment in human capital, productivity, resilience, and long-term economic participation. Across the accounts, five recurring mechanisms emerged, summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Potential mechanisms linking income protection to productive participation**

Channel	Household constraint addressed	Potential productive mechanism
Liquidity relief	Immediate resource scarcity	Creates scope for expenditure beyond subsistence, including job search and productive inputs
Risk management	Exposure to income shocks	May reduce reliance on highly defensive coping strategies and expand willingness to undertake productive activities
Human capital investment	Constraints on health, education, and skills	Strengthens capabilities relevant to labour market participation
Local demand effects	Weak household purchasing power	Supports local consumption with potential spillovers to local enterprise activity
Productive investment	Limited capital for small- to medium-scale activity	Creates scope for small- to medium-scale productive investments and self-employment

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on interview findings (2026)

Institutional fragmentation and the absence of labour market transition pathways

A dominant finding was a disconnect between income protection and the institutional mechanisms through which working-age beneficiaries access productive opportunities. Respondents broadly recognised the redistributive and protective role of Namibia's social protection system, but identified limited linkages with skills development, labour market services, enterprise support, and employment opportunities. The accounts converged around the absence of structured pathways through which income security might be converted into sustained economic participation as a central constraint.

One participant summarised this gap by asking:

Productivity in the sense that linking them to economic empowerment, right? Do you have a vocational training concept around the benefitting period? Do you have access to a credit component? During my time that I'm there and after are you providing inputs ... are there market opportunities? (P-1)

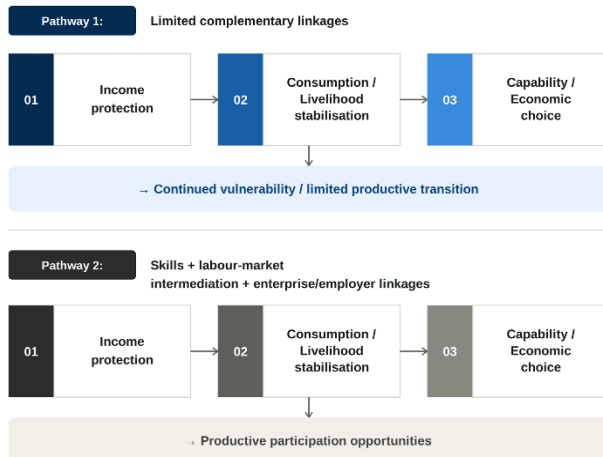
This account reflects a recurring view across several interviews where social assistance and labour market systems were perceived to operate largely in parallel, with limited institutional mechanisms



connecting working-age beneficiaries to sustained economic opportunities. This disconnect was associated with fragmentation between social assistance programmes, vocational training institutions, labour market services, and private-sector employers.

Figure 1 below illustrates how the relationship between income protection and productive participation may differ according to the presence of complementary institutional and labour market linkages.

Figure 1: Conditional pathways from income protection to productive participation



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2026)

These findings further reflect broader concerns raised in the productive social protection literature regarding the limitations of narrowly protective welfare systems in contexts of persistent unemployment and inequality (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Respondents from development and labour-oriented institutions particularly emphasised that the absence of labour transition systems limits the extent to which social protection expenditure can support productive participation. This institutional fragmentation is especially significant within Namibia's broader economic context, characterised by high unemployment, labour market dualism, and limited labour absorption capacity. In such contexts, social protection systems that are



not integrated with labour market activation mechanisms may provide limited pathways from income support towards sustained economic participation.

Employment quality and the persistence of working poverty

The third finding qualifies the assumption that labour market entry does not necessarily constitute a successful transition from social protection. A distinction between employment and employment which can generate sustained improvements in household economic security was made in the accounts and the literature. Low wages and precarious employment were identified as examples through which labour market participation can coexist with poverty.

As one respondent stated:

We have so much unemployment but if we look at those employed, even the wages that they are getting is so low and that can really explain the poverty levels and the inequality. (P-6)

The distinction between labour market participation and the economic returns due to that participation is consequential because low remuneration impacts capacity to save, invest, support human-capital expenditure, or diversify household income. Employment may therefore reduce reliance on transfers without necessarily generating sufficient economic mobility to move households beyond vulnerability. This interpretation is consistent with evidence on working poverty, labour market segmentation, and job quality, which demonstrates that employment alone may be insufficient to reduce poverty where work remains insecure, low-productivity, or inadequately remunerated (Fields, 2012; ILO, 2012; 2023; Kanbur & Svejnar, 2010; OECD, 2019; Standing, 2011).

Furthermore, respondents' concerns regarding wage adequacy reflect broader debates concerning the relationship between labour productivity, wage growth, and inclusive development (Mkandawire,



2001; Rodrik, 2016). The interview data pointed to the contradiction between employment creation and persistent poverty, suggesting that labour absorption alone cannot resolve structural inequality unless accompanied by productivity-enhancing and wage-supporting economic policies and interventions. Productive inclusion is therefore assessed not only by entry into employment, but also by the quality and economic returns of that participation.

Labour and private sector productive inclusion

The theme of the final result is the limited integration between Namibia's social protection system and the private sector. Respondents identified weak collaboration between government social protection institutions and private sector employers as a major constraint to productive inclusion and labour absorption. Several accounts noted that Namibia's social protection landscape remains heavily state and donor-driven, with relatively limited involvement of employers and productive sectors in programme design and implementation. As a result, social protection interventions remain insufficiently connected to the country's broader productive economy and employment systems.

This observation introduces a demand-side dimension to productive social protection. Skills development, income support, and labour market activation may strengthen beneficiaries' capacity to participate economically, but their effectiveness ultimately depends partly on the availability of employment and productive opportunities.

Respondents' emphasis on employer engagement highlights the importance of considering labour demand alongside beneficiary-level interventions. Echoing this view, one participant indicated that productive social protection should ultimately facilitate access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods:



Talking about productivity ... you're talking about enhancing human capabilities, ensuring that there's better access to decent work opportunities, because ... the best asset that you can ever give a poor person, from where I'm standing, is a decent job opportunity, and for those ... more inclined to go their own way ... self-employment ... enterprise development ... What you want to achieve with that is to ensure that people have access to some regular income so that they can then become contributing members under the country's system. (P-5)

The interview data also pointed to wage subsidies, apprenticeships, internship programmes, workplace training partnerships, and targeted employment incentives as potential mechanisms for linking beneficiaries to labour market opportunities. In particular, temporary wage subsidy programmes were identified to reduce hiring risks for firms while enabling beneficiaries to acquire workplace experience and labour market skills.

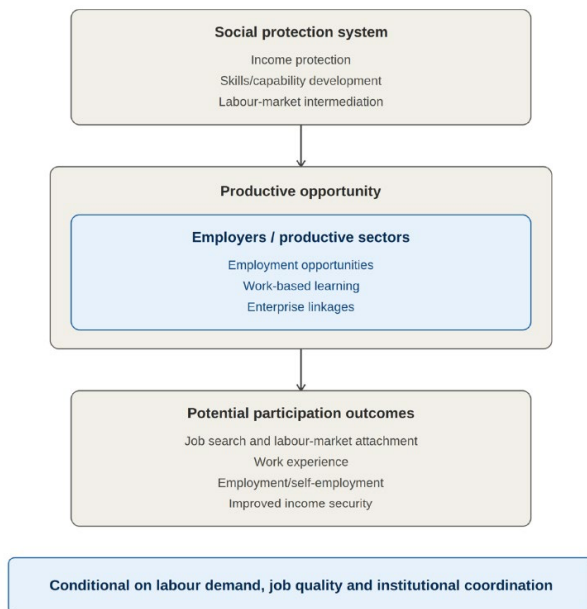
... evidence on working poverty, labour market segmentation, and job quality ... demonstrates that employment alone may be insufficient to reduce poverty.

International evidence on Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs), support these perspectives, suggesting that employment incentives, vocational training, and subsidised work experience programmes can improve labour market outcomes when appropriately designed and linked to productive sectors (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2019). From this perspective, the potential value of integration lies in strengthening the connection between social protection and sustained economic participation.

Figure 2 synthesises these relationships by illustrating the institutional pathways through which social protection may connect beneficiaries to productive opportunities and subsequent forms of economic participation.



Figure 2: Institutional pathways linking social protection to productive opportunities



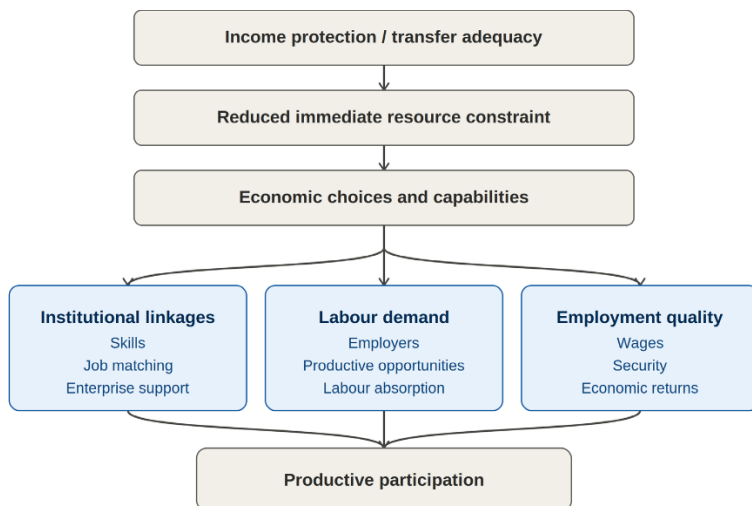
Source: Authors' own elaboration (2026) based on interview findings

Synthesis: conditions for productive social protection

Collectively, the findings indicate that productive inclusion is shaped by the interaction between household resources, institutional linkages and labour market conditions. Transfer adequacy influences the economic choices available to households and the scope for expenditure on job search, skills, and productive activity. These potential effects depend, however, on institutional pathways connecting beneficiaries to relevant opportunities. Labour market entry itself does not necessarily constitute a sustained transition where employment remains precarious or inadequately remunerated, while the availability of productive opportunities depends partly on labour demand and employer participation. These interdependencies are synthesised in Figure 3, which presents productive participation as conditional on the interaction between household resources, institutional linkages, and labour market conditions.



Figure 3: Conditional framework for productive social protection in Namibia



Source: Authors' own elaboration (2026) based on interview findings

The central finding is therefore that the productive effects of social protection are conditional. Income protection may relax immediate resource constraints and expand economic choices, but the conversion of those choices into productive participation depends on institutional linkages, labour demand and the quality of available employment. This interpretation also puts emphasis on productive social protection, which can be understood as a set of conditions through which income protection becomes connected to sustained economic participation.

Income security may create greater scope for investment in skills, job search, and productive activity, but these effects depend on complementary capabilities and opportunities.



Conclusion

This study examined how Namibia's social protection system could support productive inclusion and sustained labour market participation. The principal constraint identified is the limited mechanisms connecting income protection with skills, productive opportunities, and labour market participation. Respondents and existing evidence identified institutional fragmentation, transfer adequacy, employment quality, and limited engagement with employers as interrelated factors shaping these connections.

The findings further confirmed that productive inclusion extends beyond movement from social assistance into employment. Income security may create greater scope for investment in skills, job search, and productive activity, but these effects depend on complementary capabilities and opportunities. Similarly, labour market entry may provide limited economic mobility where employment remains precarious or inadequately remunerated. The study consequently reframes the distinction between protective and productive social protection. A consistent pattern from the data was that protection can provide a foundation for productive participation when appropriate complementary mechanisms are present.

Study limitations and future research

The findings provided by this study should be interpreted within the boundaries of its exploratory qualitative design. The specialised ten-person expert cohort provided detailed institutional and policy perspectives, but the findings are not statistically generalisable to the broader Namibian population. The study also captures productive social protection predominantly from a system-level perspective and therefore does not incorporate the lived experiences and economic decision-making of beneficiaries themselves.



A further limitation concerns the nature of the relationships identified. The study examines expert perceptions of the avenues through which social protection may influence productive and labour market participation. However, it does not estimate the causal effects of transfers, skills interventions, or labour market programmes on employment, earnings, or productivity. The proposed relationships should therefore be interpreted as empirically informed pathways for further investigation and not measured programme impacts.

Future research could test these relationships using household-level quantitative data and programme evaluations, including analysis of how transfer adequacy influences labour market behaviour, productive investment, and household livelihoods. Beneficiary-level qualitative research could further examine how recipients experience the constraints and opportunities identified by institutional actors, while localised evaluations of labour market activation initiatives could assess how these mechanisms vary across Namibian regions and labour market contexts.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Sem Mandela Uutoni is an Economics Doctoral Candidate at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), South Africa. His research explores the interplay of social protection, productivity, and cost-effectiveness, with a particular interest in examining the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure and development programmes. His broader research interests include development economics, public policy, development finance, and regional development.

Dr Mubanga Mpundu is a Senior Economics lecturer in the Department of Economics, UWC, specialising in macroeconomics and econometrics. His research critically examines the structural intersections of macroeconomic policy, public governance, and systemic poverty and inequality, with the aim of fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth across South Africa and the broader African continent.



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Mayibuye iAfrica

The emergence of resistance culture during the 1976 uprising



Just as colonialism and apartheid sought to disrupt the culture and silence the voices of the oppressed, so too did the struggle against such repression generate resistance in the form of cultural expression. JUDY SEIDMAN traces the poetry, music, writing and other art forms that emerged in the underground and exiled liberation movements following the clampdown and bannings of the early 1960s, focusing on the momentum generated in the cultural sector in the wake of the 1976 uprising.

Thamsanqa kaMnyele, untitled graphic, pen and ink, 1984 .

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14426/yhan1t40>

As politics must teach people the ways and give them the means to take control over their own lives, art must teach people, in the most vivid and imaginative ways possible, how to take control over their own experience and observations, how to link these with the struggle for liberation and a just society free of race, class and exploitation.

Dikobe waMogale Martins, 1982¹

Introduction

This article explores the role and growth of resistance culture between the late 1960s and 1982, within the distinctive arts and culture discourse that emerged around the Soweto 16 June 1976 uprising.

Today the accepted narrative agrees that the apartheid state's declaration of a State of Emergency in March 1960 outlawed political structures, and banned, jailed, and drove activists into exile. It is also common cause that by the late 1960s a new generation of cultural activists arose to challenge cultural assumptions, change perceptions, and envisage a new future. Inside apartheid-ruled South Africa, cultural activists worked in community-centred spaces, formed innovative cultural groups, and explored new theory and praxis for arts and culture. This emerging resistance culture fed into, gave public expression to, and in turn was strengthened by South Africa's June 16 youth uprising.

Poster designed by Heinz Klug with MEDU, silkscreen, Gaborone, 1980.





Yet today the growth of cultural resistance around the June 16 uprising remains a less researched aspect of South Africa's cultural and political history. This article sets out to review the experiences, creative work, and cultural theory developed by activists around the '76 uprising, and to place this within the broader context of South Africa's emerging culture of liberation. It suggests that cultural activists emerging within the intense, shifting conflux of culture and politics that characterised the '76 uprising deliberately sought out, built upon, and created a shared cultural theory, creative practice, understanding, and a vision of the centuries of cultural repression and resistance that formed South Africa, and the culture of liberation that they hoped to birth.

Background: "culture as a weapon of oppression"

From its inception, imperialist domination in Southern Africa from settler colonialism to apartheid denied conquered people's voice in culture as well as politics. Amílcar Cabral observed that imperialism can "be maintained only by the permanent and organised repression of the cultural life of the people concerned" and that "if imperialist domination has the vital need to practise cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cited in Andries Oliphant, 2020).

Across Africa, invasion and colonialism suppressed precolonial cultural practice and beliefs, from language and religion to expressions including song, poetry, artwork, performance, and dress. Franz Fanon in his seminal writing "On National Culture", describes this:

Colonial domination ... very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people. This cultural obliteration is made possible by the negation of national reality, by new legal relations introduced by the occupying power, by the banishment of the natives and their customs to outlying districts by colonial society, by expropriation, and by the systematic enslaving of men and women" (Fanon, 1967).

This could have been the blueprint for colonial and apartheid structures in South Africa. Economic and social provisions of the 1913



Natives Land Act restricted people classified as “native” (80% of the population) to 13% of the land (so-called “native reserves”, later named “Bantustans”, then “homelands”). This was accompanied by laws to suppress and control culture and social life, imposing what cultural activist and writer Andries Oliphant calls “a hierarchical system that elevated minority colonial culture as the official culture of a racist state, while enlisting indigenous African cultures for the engineering of separate ethnic identities – the latter designed to divide the African majority in a system of segregation calculated to secure white minority rule” (Oliphant, 2020, p. 2).

In Steve Biko’s words:

... the colonialists ... turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the ‘dark continent’. Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African Society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars. (South African History Online, 2026, March)

The state established a Language Board to codify the “indigenous language” of that “tribe” into a rigid official version, entrenching pre-colonial, rural, isolated and outdated usage.

The settler colonial state, and the apartheid regime that followed it dismissed cultural expression as irrelevant or trivial. “Indigenous” artworks were “native curiosities” or craft, lacking innovation, creativity, or relevance to people’s current lives. Before the 1960s, artwork by people designated “native” (later called “Bantu” and then “Black”) were excluded from museums or galleries, which were only located in “White” urban areas. Black musicians and actors were barred from performing in “White” venues; “Black locations” and Bantustans had no theatres or performance venues.

Yet there was political resistance, and also cultural resistance: Sol Plaatjie’s 1930 novel *Mhudi* (about the effects of the Land Act), Peter Abraham’s *Tell Freedom* (1954), Gerard Sekoto’s and Ernest Mancoba’s art,



songs like *Wathint' abafazi; wathint' imbokodo* ("You strike a woman, you strike a rock", sung at the 9 August 1956 women's march in Pretoria), *Meadowlands* (about the razing of Sophiatown), and many more works testify to the historic struggle to reclaim people's culture from colonial oppression and the system labelled "apartheid". The oppressor state then forbade publication, performance, and exhibition of such defiant works of art.

The main aim of the 1960 State of Emergency, in which the African National Congress and Pan-Africanist Congress were banned, was to destroy political resistance, but it also targeted cultural defiance. Trade union leader and musician Vuyisile Mini was executed for uMkhonto weSizwe activities. Writers, artists, and performers were persecuted and driven into exile, including Alex la Guma (after being jailed then banned), Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, Mongane Wally Serote, Miriam Makeba, Todd Matshikiza, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, Ernest Cole, Dumile Feni, and Pitika Ntuli. Some left illegally, some took one-way exit permits, some simply chose never to return. Many joined (or re-joined) the liberation movements in exile.

In 1969 Steve Biko summed up the reactions to the oppression:

"After the banning of the black political parties in South Africa, people's hearts were gripped by some kind of foreboding fear for anything political. Not only were politics a closed book, but at every corner one was greeted by a slave-like apathy that often bordered on timidity." (2002 p. 34)

Rebirth of cultural resistance: late 1960s to '76

From the late 1960s, Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement began to rebuild, give new meaning to, and promote suppressed South African and pan-Africanist cultures –to "find a sense of self". Biko spelled this out:



There is a tendency to think of our culture as a static culture that was arrested in 1652 and has never developed since ... that we have nothing to boast of except lions, sex and drink.... But we also have to realise that the basic tenets of our culture have largely succeeded in withstanding the process of bastardisation and that even at this moment we can still demonstrate that we appreciate a man for himself. ...A culture is essentially the society's composite answer to the varied problems of life. We are experiencing new problems every day and whatever we do adds to the richness of our cultural heritage as long as it has man as its centre. The adoption of black theatre and drama is one such important innovation which we need to encourage and to develop. We know that our love of music and rhythm has relevance even in this day. (2002, pp. 95-96)

Biko's Black Consciousness sparked new awareness, spread defiance, and mobilised students and communities. Community cultural projects emerged in Black townships and 'Bantustans', ranging from students' reading groups to workshopped theatre, music, poetry, and visual arts, created and performed by, for, and within the Black communities. This in turn fuelled the '76 uprising.

This article comprises preliminary research into the growth of cultural resistance. As such, it cannot do justice to the complex and shifting relationships between Black Consciousness, Africanist and Charterist formations and their impact on cultural activism. However, personal experience, research, and interviews that inform this article confirm that every cultural activist mentioned here has talked – often in depth – about how they experienced and negotiated these issues over time.

One key point stands out: Prior to Biko's death in 1978, and often after that, many cultural activists did not see these debates as irreparable or irresolvable conflicts affecting their cultural work. Rather, cultural activists emphasised that cultural production is grounded in, and gains strength from, community engagement in shared experience, perception, and inspiration to conceive and construct the artwork; in collective



participation in creation; and in interaction with audiences through performance, publication, and exhibition. Biko wrote:

Sekou Toure was right when he said: 'To take part in the African revolution, it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves. In order to achieve real action you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with, and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity'. (2002, p. 32)

Student leaders and activists from that period record that ANC leaders and contacts in the 1970s encouraged them to continue work within Black Consciousness student and cultural structures. Since Black Consciousness cultural groups were not banned or outlawed, these provided space for community mobilisation and defiance without bringing immediate state repression.

(This changed after Biko's death in 1978.)

Cultural activist Dikobe waMogale Martins describes his introduction to political awareness in the early 1970s:

We had a reading circle at school, so we read books that served as the impetus for black consciousness. But even then, I for one, felt that there was one dimension lacking; it was good to affirm the self, but I wanted to know what beyond this can one do in order to change South Africa. There was no military component ... Then, after that, came 1976.²

Visual artist Thami Mnye gained early political awareness from his family, who were active in the ANC in the '50s, and in the underground in the '60s. He joined Black Consciousness cultural structures in 1971 when a group of writers, musicians, intellectuals, and church members formed the Mhloti Black Theatre in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg. He described performing the leading role in Mhloti's workshopped play on Malcolm X:

Theatre gave me feelings of purpose and practical fulfilment ... standing there and towering over the little crowd of people in my township, seated, silent but nodding their heads occasionally, when I



had made another good point.... The play jerked us with something that felt like self-confidence (or shall I say aggressiveness?) and venom on our tongues.³

"After that came '76"

*Here comes June 16
Like thunderous waves,
Here explodes the wrath of centuries
Buried in me,
In us,
The march of the innocents...
Out of the faceless ghettos,
We marched.*

Extract from poem, "Out of the Faceless Ghettos," by Bachana Mokwena, 1981⁴

The trigger for the 16 June Soweto uprising was the apartheid regime's decision that pupils in Standard 5 and above in the "Bantu Education" system must study certain subjects in Afrikaans. Bantu Education was already widely viewed as oppressive. Forcing students to learn science or maths in Afrikaans, when few students or teachers could speak or read it, would cause more damage to education. On 16 June 1976, thousands of Black schoolchildren in Soweto marched under signs saying, "To hell with Afrikaans" and "We are not fighting". The police used live bullets, killing an unknown number of youths. Unrest and police violence spread throughout the country; by the end of June as many as 700 students across the country had been killed.

Poet and actor Bachana Mokwena, who was a 15-year-old high school student protester in '76, was arrested, held in solitary confinement, and went into exile in 1977. Later he said of his experience: "We learned in 1976 that the state saw language and education as a way to control us. We learned that we could, and must, fight back. And we learned that for us, culture can and must become a weapon of struggle."⁵



Drawing of Bachana Mokwena performing in 'Shades of Change', a two-person MEDU play, set in a prison cell, written by Mongane Wally Serote after the 16 June uprising. Drawing by Judy Seidman, Gaborone, 1982.



Matsemela Manaka, who later became a renowned playwright, visual artist, and cultural theorist, discovered the power of culture during the '76 uprising. Manaka was born in Alexandra Township, went to primary and secondary school in Diepkloof, Soweto in the early 1970s, and had planned to pursue a career in business. But in 1976, university commerce students were required to speak Afrikaans. Manaka registered as an external student at Madibane School in Soweto to gain a pass in Afrikaans. June 16 changed those plans. In the wake of the uprising, Manaka helped a group of students in Soweto to form the Creative Youth Association (which later became the Funda Community Centre for the Arts) in Diepkloof. Manaka began as a painter, then discovered theatre and began to write. He founded the Soyikwa African Theatre Company as the drama wing of the Creative Youth Association in 1977. A decade later, in his seminal book, "Echoes of African Art", he stated:

Since art is an integral part of a people's culture, it bears witness to a people's myths and beliefs. It is through art that we create and celebrate our lives. It is through art that we can begin the struggle for social reconstruction. Our quest for freedom is not only the gaining of political power but also economic power and then social reconstruction. An artist has a social responsibility.... Being an artist involves a consistent continuous commitment to the quest for freedom and respect for humanity. (Manaka, 1987, p. 18)

Soweto '76 also transformed how artists thought about their artwork, lives, and community transformed by the uprising. Mnyele describes his first art exhibition, "A New Day", with sculptor Ben Arnold and artist Fikile Magadlela, which was held at the Dube YMCA in Soweto, as teargas and bullets flew outside:

The exhibition "A New Day" ... happened at a crucial time, when we had to make a decision and take a stand to say: were we involved in the struggle and life around us or were we merely producing "pictures"? ... [W]e had sat around discussing what the exhibition was all about, why it had to be in Soweto and not, as is conventionally done, in town – black artists in white gallery The themes [of our art] had a lot to do with our lives as people.⁶

One student activist described that exhibition years later: "We were running from police bullets and teargas in the street, exhausted; we ran into the Dube hall, and all around us saw this amazing art. It spoke to us, who we were,



why we were fighting outside. We looked, then went back into the streets stronger, ready to go on fighting the police.”⁷

Mnyeले explained the lesson from the New Day exhibit:

*... we need no communist or agitator to tell us to know and understand that we are oppressed and exploited; that all forms of protest are an expression that the people are agreed on ... the artist is a sensitive being moved by this national grief and struggle of the community.*⁸

In 1978 Mafika Gwala wrote:

In Defence of Poetry

What's poetic

about Defence Bonds and Armscor?

What's poetic

about long-term sentences and deaths in detention

for those who 'threaten state security'?

Tell me, What's poetic

about shooting defenceless kids in a Soweto street?

...

As long as

this land, my country

is unpoetic in its doings

It'll be poetic to disagree. (1978)

Post '76 suppression of culture

Following '76, the apartheid regime targeted Black Consciousness and cultural activists. Dikobe waMogale Martins describes his experience:

We participated in the uprising ... police were looking for a number of us, and one had to flee Alexandra. So I went to Natal for the next year. And, when I came back to Alexandra at the end of 1977, I was detained because the Johannesburg police thought that I had gone out for military training. And that was not the case ...

After his release, he went to Pietermaritzburg:

*By 1978, one was a member of the Black People's Convention [BPC] within BPC, as with [the South African Students Organisation] SASO, there were basically already then two trends of thought. Some people had a bias towards the ANC and others had a bias towards the PAC. And then from this context, one was able to get in touch with members of the ANC.*⁹

In 1978 Martins was arrested, charged and acquitted for producing banned Biko T-shirts and designing the poster for Biko's funeral. In 1979 he



visited Botswana, where he contacted cultural activists working with the ANC. He was recruited into the ANC and MK and sent back to work illegally inside South Africa.

Mnyele was also sought by the police after Biko's funeral and went into exile in Botswana. There he formally joined the ANC and MK and became a leading artist and cultural theorist in MEDU Art Ensemble.

Post 1976 resistance culture

The study of the history of national liberation struggles shows that generally these struggles are preceded by an increase in expressions of culture, consolidated progressively into a successful attempt to affirm the cultural personality of the dominated people, as a means of negating the oppressor culture ... it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.

Amílcar Cabral (1970)¹⁰

The cultural regeneration around the '76 uprising led to resurgent revolutionary culture inside South Africa and the revitalisation of South Africa's revolutionary culture in exile.

As members of the '76 generation joined banned liberation movements, both underground inside South Africa and in exile, they shared insights from Black Consciousness about culture as a means to mobilise. In turn, the '76 generation connected with exiled cultural activists, embraced pan-Africanist and internationalist perspectives, and spread these amongst comrades inside the country. All of these came together to find a creative vision for a free South Africa.

Gaborone in Botswana stands nine kilometres from the South African border. Botswana has close social, economic, and cultural ties to South Africa, from labour migrancy to language and popular music. Thus by 1979 Gaborone emerged as a focal point for this reinvigorated culture of resistance, with the cultural collective that became the MEDU Art Ensemble.

MEDU is often portrayed as a cultural project of the exiled ANC.¹¹ But this label may oversimplify the dynamic melting pot of MEDU's formation.



An initial wave of young cultural activists fleeing South Africa to Botswana after '76 found and worked with ANC cultural leaders in exile, including musician Jonas Gwangwa, writer Mandla Langa, and poet Mongane Wally Serote. At the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977, also known as FESTAC '77, South African delegates held intense debates around Black Consciousness; engagement with artists' personal, political, and military expectations and experiences; building cultural links with anti-colonial, pan-Africanist, and internationalist struggles; and critically, input and cross-fertilisation with artists inside South Africa. In 1979 MEDU was formally launched as an independent art collective, with the support and encouragement of the ANC.

All these strands and processes influenced MEDU's formation and they were discussed intensively at MEDU's Culture and Resistance Conference, held in Gaborone in 1982.

MEDU Culture and Resistance Conference (Gaborone, 1982)

Amílcar Cabral wrote in 1970:

Consider these features inherent in an armed liberation struggle: the practice of democracy, of criticism and self-criticism, the increasing responsibility of populations for the direction of their lives, literacy work, creation of schools and health services, training of cadres from peasant and worker backgrounds – and many other achievements. When we consider these features, we see that the armed liberation struggle is not only a product of culture but also a determinant of culture ... it behoves the liberation movement to define clearly the objectives of cultural resistance as an integral and determining part of the struggle.

The intention of the Culture and Resistance Conference, and the concurrent Art for Social Development Exhibition, was to define the role of culture within the broad liberation movement.

Mnyele chaired the conference and Martins was national organiser for participants inside South Africa. Cultural groups and organisations within South Africa, including Ravan Press, the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA), the Community Arts Project (CAP), and the Open School, set up steering committees to contact cultural workers soliciting original work and participation in the conference. The accompanying exhibition was curated

by leading artists, including David Koloane in Johannesburg and Emile Maurice in Cape Town (Seidman, 2007, p.103).

This conference placed on the agenda the need to redefine who culture is for, who creates it, for whom, how it is created, and the necessity of creating art that embraces people's defiance and visions of liberation.



Cultural activists at the Culture and Resistance Conference, Gaborone 1982.

Photo: Mike Kahn

The Culture and Resistance Conference adopted the slogan "Culture is a Weapon of Struggle" and cultural activists emerged from it inspired to use their creative output to strengthen the liberation struggle, from the growing mass mobilisation inside South Africa to the ongoing armed struggle.

This began the conscious construction of the culture of resistance, and a vision of what should be our culture of liberation. Inside South Africa, cultural structures emerged in student organisations, community art centres, within civic organisations, women's struggles, and trade unions. From 1983, these found their feet in the UDF. Inside and outside South Africa, culture played an active role in the political and military work of the liberation movement.

Resistance culture going forward: a research agenda



Poster by Judy Seidman, on the death of Thami Mnyele in the Gaborone raid, 1985.

The first outstanding issue for research and discussion concerns how we position South African apartheid's repression of people's culture. Today, cultural scholars suggest that we should name this "culturicide" – a term coined by genocide theorist Raphael Lemkin in 1944, to describe destroying people's culture as part of the broader crime against humanity called genocide. Naming South African apartheid's destruction of people's culture as culturicide adds to a

burning discourse where culturicide is identified within the genocide currently underway against the people of Palestine –which, not incidentally, can also be seen as imposing apartheid.

Research and discussion on culturicide should perhaps be based on the Gaborone raid by the South African Defence Force on the night of 14 June 1985, described by music journalist, writer, cultural historian, and activist Gwen Ansell in a recent blog as "Apartheid South Africa's most explicit (though by no means only) public act of culturicide":

Military vehicles of the South African Defence Force rolled illegally across the border into Botswana, where regime soldiers murdered 12 people. They destroyed homes in the capital, Gaborone, where musicians Jonas Gwangwa and Hugh

Masekela had stayed (both were touring at the time). Another musician, pianist Livy Phahle, survived, traumatised, under his collapsed piano, hearing the assassins methodically shooting his brother George, sister-in law Lindi and family visitor Joseph Malaza, and checking that they were dead.

They shot visual artist Thami Mnyele in the yard outside his home, stole his paintings, and later displayed them as proof of "terrorist intent". (These works have never been recovered.) Other targets included homes and offices associated with the cultural collective Medu, which united refugees from apartheid with other southern African cultural workers.¹²

Ansell's blog asserts: "There is no doubt that culturicide characterised the apartheid state", citing the centuries of repression of people's culture in South Africa, "integrated within a totalising system of explicitly race-based repression, torture and murder".

The second area for further research should be an in-depth study of what became of the culture of resistance after the events recorded here. This study could begin with the words written by Mnyele two years before his brutal murder by the apartheid state:

...the role of an artist is to learn; the role of an artist is to teach others; the role of an artist is to ceaselessly search for the ways and means of achieving freedom. Art cannot overthrow a government, but it can inspire change.... The struggle of the artist must be rooted in that of the majority of our people. Any actual engagement in the making of change must of necessity seek inspiration and alliance with the movement of the people. This is the new generation of cultural workers that is growing inside and outside South Africa, and multiplying. Already this voice of resistance is heard.¹³



Thamsanqa kaMnyele, untitled graphic, pen and ink, Gaborone, Botswana, 1984.



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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Dikobe waMogale Martins, "The Necessity of a National Art for Liberation", paper delivered at the Culture and Resistance Festival, Gaborone, 1982 (JAS personal papers, <https://researcharchives.wits.ac.za/5-2-8-2>)
- ² Interview with Dikobe WaMogale Martins, <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv03445/04lv04015/05lv04154/06lv04159/07lv04175.htm#:~:text=Well%2C%20I%20was%20arrested%20on,Stabiso%20Ma+phlobe%20and%20Duma%20>
- ³ Mnye, T. (1982). Observations on the state of the contemporary visual arts in South Africa. JAS personal papers, also <https://researcharchives.wits.ac.za/6-2-1-1>
- ⁴ Bachana Mokwena, 1981, "Out of the faceless ghettos" (excerpt), MEDU Newsletter 1981 Vol 3, no 1; p. 3 ff. <https://researcharchives.wits.ac.za/3-2-6>
- ⁵ Personal discussion, Judy Seidman with Bachana Mokwena, Gaborone, Botswana, circa 1982.
- ⁶ Mnye, Thami, "A New Day", *Staffrider* magazine, Johannesburg, Sept-October 1980, p. 42 (JAS collection).
- ⁷ Lintswe Mokagtle, comment in discussion with Judy Seidman, 1982, Gaborone, Botswana (JAS personal papers).
- ⁸ Mnye, Thami, "A New Day", *Staffrider* magazine, Johannesburg, Sept-October 1980, p. 42 (JAS collection).
- ⁹ Interview with Dikobe WaMogale Martins, 1990.



04159/07lv04175.htm#:~:text=Well%2C%20I%20was%20arrested%20on,Stabiso%20Ma phlobe%20and%20Duma%

¹⁰ Amílcar Cabral, 1970, in a speech celebrating the life of Dr Eduardo Mondlane, leader of the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) who was assassinated by Portuguese agents on 3 February, 1969. Cabral, leader of the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, described the role of indigenous culture in national liberation movements. <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1970/cabral-nat-lib-culture.htm>

¹¹ Differing versions of “Medu as a cultural project of the ANC” range from that expressed by Mongane Wally Serote, who argued the ANC sought to embed cultural mobilisation within the liberation struggle (L. L. Nawa [ed.]. 2021, *The Formation of Medu Art Ensemble, Culture and Liberation struggle in South Africa, From Colonialism to Post-Apartheid*, Sali Publishing House, South Africa, p. 340 ff.), and alternatively Elizabeth Morton who claims MEDU intended “to try to bring the artists, gathered together, into the ‘party line’ as represented by the banned ANC (Memorandum on the Symposium/Festival of South African Arts – Gaborone, 5-9 July 1982), (JAS personal papers).

¹² See “Sisgwen” blog. <https://herri.org.za/11/gwen-ansell/>

¹³ Mnyele, T. (1982) Observations on the state of the contemporary visual arts in South Africa. JAS personal papers, also <https://researcharchives.wits.ac.za/6-2-1-1>

BIOGRAPHY

Judy Seidman is a painter and graphic artist. Born in America, she lived in Zambia from 1972 to 1975, doing occasional graphics for the South African liberation movement in Lusaka. She moved to Swaziland from 1975 to 1980, teaching at the Thokoza school for refugees from the Soweto uprising, and exhibited with sculptor Pitika Ntuli. In 1980, she moved to Gaborone, Botswana, and for five years was active in the MEDU Art Ensemble.

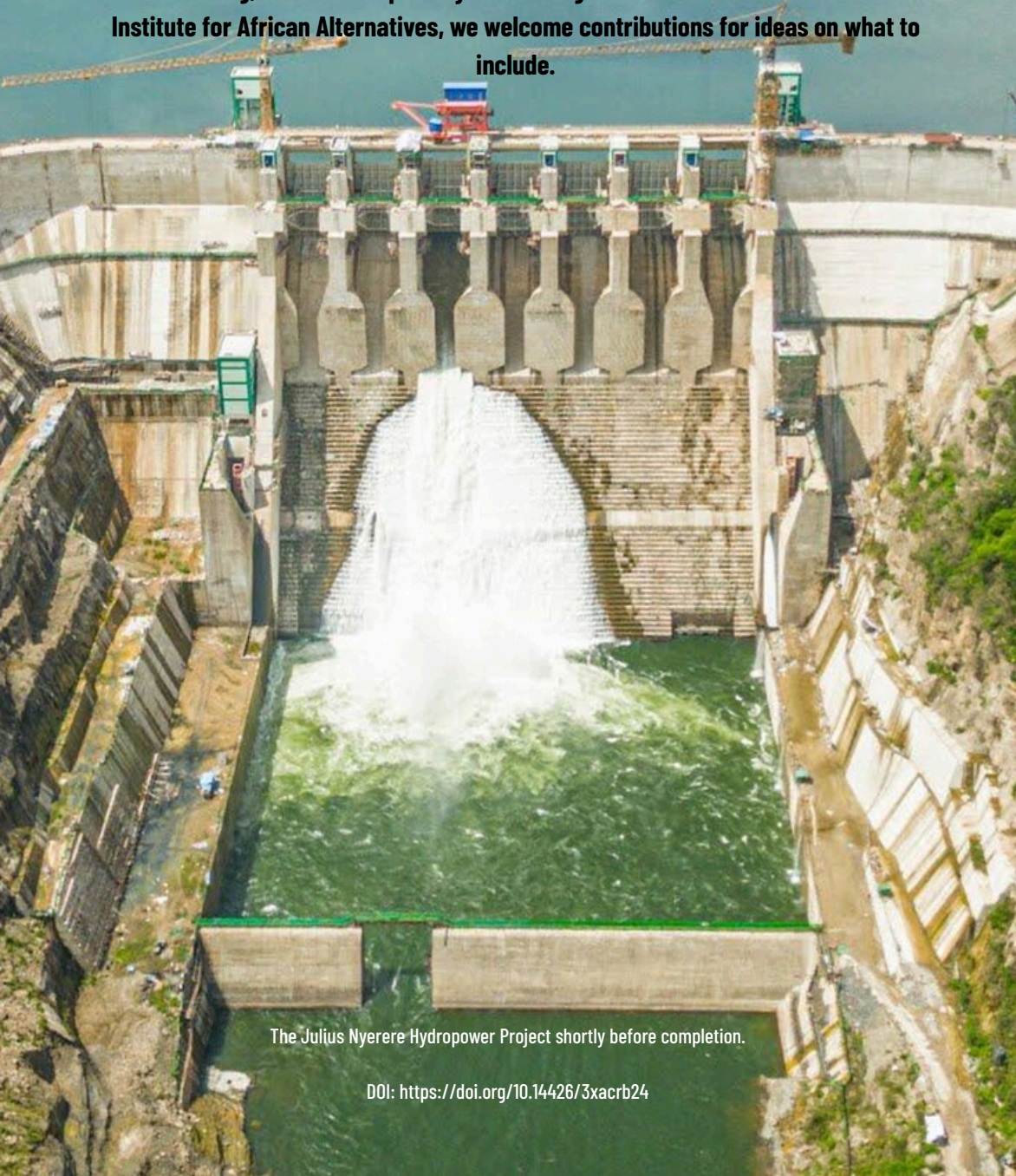


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Dateline Africa

Africa Diary 1 June to 31 August 2026

A selection of events about, and from across, the continent that are significant or interesting, or both. Compiled by the New Agenda Editorial Collective at the Institute for African Alternatives, we welcome contributions for ideas on what to include.



The Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project shortly before completion.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14426/3xacrb24>



August

22 August: Tanzania commissioned the new Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP), which has almost doubled the capacity of the national grid. More than seven years in construction, and generating 2,115 megawatts, the project was managed by Egyptian contractors on the Rufiji River at a cost to Tanzania of about \$2.84 billion (approximately R45.18 billion). Said to be the fourth biggest dam in Africa, it will provide a reliable supply of both water and power for an economy long plagued by water rationing and power shortages. The dam impounds water from several rivers in the Selous Game Reserve and will allow flood control and irrigated farming in the Rufiji delta in the south of the country. However, it is associated with extreme environmental risks.

17 August: President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa assumed the leadership of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for the 2026/27 term during the organisation's 46th ordinary summit in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal. Ramaphosa said SADC was "a story of the triumph of solidarity over division and adversity." The people of the region had stood together against colonialism, minority rule, and apartheid. Anti-migrant group March and March protested near the SADC summit venue, calling on leaders from the region to take back their citizens who are living in South Africa without proper documentation. The President said that South Africans were deeply concerned and shamed over the treatment of foreign nationals in South Africa, including cases in which people were forced to leave the country under threat of violence.

14 August: An updated assessment from the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that the Ebola disease outbreak, which was first detected in May 2026 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), had rapidly evolved into a large and geographically expanding epidemic, with sustained transmission, high mortality and an increasing risk of further international spread. This was the largest Ebola outbreak ever recorded in the DRC with 4,566 confirmed cases and 2,128 deaths to date. Continued infections among healthcare workers, extensive contact-tracing demands, high population mobility, insecurity, displacement, and restricted access were making the outbreak difficult to control. Ituri Province remained the epicentre of the outbreak, spreading from a rural gold-mining area characterised by high population mobility linked to mining, trade, and movement between communities. No licenced vaccine or specific antiviral treatment was currently available for the particular virus linked to the outbreak.



WHO response to Ebola outbreak in the DRC, 22 July 2026. The first Ebola treatment centre to be built in Bunia. Photo: Grainne Harrington, WHO

8 August: *The Economist*, a right-wing newspaper, printed a rare cover story on Sudan and called for a truce as the war entered its fourth year. For a time, Sudan was called a “forgotten war”. But *The Economist* said it was better thought of as a neglected war. “One forgets things by mistake; to neglect is a deliberate decision.” More than 14 million people have been displaced. Hundreds of thousands have died. The country has fractured into fiefdoms and scores of militias who fight against or alongside the main warring parties: the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which is the de



From The Economist 8 August 2026: "Before the war erupted in April 2023, Khartoum was a bustling city of around 7m people. Today its centre is deserted."

facto government. The opportunity for a truce has only been made possible by the war on Iran, which “has mostly made Sudan an even lower priority than usual”. Saudi Arabia (with Egypt and Turkey) support the SAF. The UAE denies backing the RSF. The argument is hard to follow, but fighting in Sudan will pause now for the rainy season. Why not stop for good?



July

21 July: The United Nations annual report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI 2026) estimated that 20% of the population of Africa went hungry in 2025, compared to 7.8% of the global population who faced problems getting enough food. Africa now has the highest number of hungry people in absolute terms. The continent is home to approximately 309 million hungry people, compared to 292 million in Asia. Still, the report shows that Africa's previously rising trend in hunger data is beginning to stabilise. The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, caused by the war unleashed by Israel and the United States, is expected to have an impact on food insecurity in the coming months due to higher energy and fertilizer prices. Food inflation and lower crop yields (due to a drop in the use of fertiliser) will have a future effect on hunger.

3 July: The Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), based in Lagos, Nigeria, announced the financial close of the US \$753 million Lobito Corridor Railway Project in Angola. The funding will support the rehabilitation, upgrade, and long-term operation of the 1,300km rail corridor linking Lobito port in Angola to the DRC. The project is projected to increase the corridor's freight capacity roughly tenfold, to about 4.6 million tons a year, while cutting the cost of moving critical minerals by an estimated 30%. Copper, cobalt, and zinc exports could reach Lobito within five to eight days, against roughly 25 days for the same cargo routed to Durban. US\$553 million came from the US International Development Finance Corporation and US\$200 million from the Development Bank of Southern Africa. AFC has 48 member countries and has invested US\$18.5 billion across Africa since its inception in 2007.



June

30 June: Weeks of violence and intimidation against immigrants to South Africa from other African countries culminated in a day of organised protests and marches against “illegal immigration”. 30 June marked a so-called “deadline” set by the anti-immigration movement, March and March, for the government to act against illegal immigration, and for undocumented immigrants to leave the country. Anti-immigrant vigilantes often fail to differentiate between documented and undocumented immigrants when harassing them. Police and private security largely succeeded in reducing violence on the day.

3 June: The Parliament of Ghana hosted the 4th African Regional Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty in Accra. The previous three conferences were hosted by Uganda. They are part of an effort to urge states to withdraw from aspects of the African Union’s 2003 Maputo protocol, which promotes gender equality and protects the reproductive and health rights of women and girls. Only South Africa and Mozambique abstained from a motion to endorse a charter for governments to withdraw from international treaties or funding agreements that promote “the LGBT agenda”, abortion, and sex education. Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has been on the rise across west Africa. A new bill passed by Ghana’s parliament imposes prison terms of up to three years for those identifying as LGBTQ+.



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THE STORY OF CAPITAL

DAVID
HARVEY



The Story of Capital: What Everyone Should Know About How Capital Works

By David Harvey

Review by Megan Rose Bryer

Verso Books, 2026, 400 pgs, R625 from Takealot

The *Story of Capital* is the product of three decades of what David Harvey calls his retrospective Marx Project, in which he investigates the relevance of Marx's writings in understanding how capital works in the world today and conceptualising what anti-capitalist alternatives are possible. Dubbed "*What Everyone Should Know About How Capital Works*", this is a reference book to guide or rather support readers wanting to understand Marx's political economy.

Harvey does this through a lens of totality, where the multiple circulation processes of capital are understood to work together at the same time, contradictions abound (p. 3). He leaves the crafting of the alternatives to us – thinkers, activists, and organisers – repeatedly posing the question of who will rescue capital from the capitalists (p. 356). Old utopias, he tells us, are useless (p. 336).

But Harvey is hopeful that alternatives are possible. As grave as his assessment of the world is, he sees in the crack a doorway to something new: "this is a moment of opportunity as well as peril" (p. 361). And right at the onset, he asserts that Marx's conceptualisation of capital – in motion in various contradictory processes (of labour power, capital, credit) in a system constantly expanding – creates a myriad of



opportunities for things to be done differently (1p. 4). This is evident throughout history in the emergence of class struggles against capital, in the Zapatista rebellions in Chiapas, in the uprisings in Soweto, in the emergent solidarity economies peppered around the globe (p. 14; p. 340).

These examples ground the theory in a world that is recognisable to the reader, and throughout the book Harvey offers such anchors. He recognises that the world is ever changing and so too must our understanding of it. In retelling the story of capital here and extending it to the realities of our times – amid ecological crisis, extreme concentration of wealth and power – he hopes to equip us with the basis to forge new and better alternatives to capitalism. He aids the reader, not via the many critiques of Marx but by returning to the original texts of *Capital's* three volumes and *Grundrisse*.

For those who question the relevance of Marx today, Harvey offers the simple retort that we still live under the rule of capital (p. 80). And so, though incomplete, Marx's theory of capital circulation and accumulation still matters. The book, though, is testament to Walter Rodney's quip that Marx matters not because of his substantive findings but because of his method of enquiry that got him to those findings (p. 69). Pertinent to today, Marx's theory of value is intended to explain the "mechanisms by which a working class which produces the value receives so little of it and is condemned to live under appalling conditions in the midst of astonishing privatised affluence" (p. 104). If for Marx this was apparent, how much more so in the context of inequality today?

For Harvey, there are three major contradictions that "threaten the future of endless capital accumulation" (p. 342) and need readily to be addressed. First, interstate and intercapitalist competition has ensured wage repression over the past 40 years, depriving, dispossessing, and alienating workers in the bottom half of the income distribution.



Technological advancements like AI suggest this will only get worse in the coming years.

Second, wealth and power have become even more concentrated in a class of billionaires, compelling fictitious capital circulation that rests on Ponzi financing. This raises the risk of asset deflation and financial collapse. And third, ecological collapse and environmental crisis is already upon us, fuelled by our unbalanced relationship to nature. Harvey's own view is that "nothing short of total revolutions" can address these contradictions (p. 343). His book is an effort to equip the reader to do so.

David Harvey is 90 years old, Marx's ideas even older. The world keeps evolving. But the contradictions of capital are as present as ever. For those looking to confront them, this book makes accessible complex theory by painting a simpler picture of the working totality of capital and while reiterating the resounding message that capital left to itself will destroy both labour and nature, the basis of its own wealth (p. 201). The onus to deploy this understanding into tangible change is left to us.

Megan Rose Bryer is a development economist, who previously worked for the public sector and is now working in Social Investing.



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IDI AMIN,
YOWERI
MUSEVENI,
and the
MAKING
of the
UGANDAN
STATE

SLOW
POISON

MAHMOOD MAMDANI



Slow Poison:

Idi Amin, Yoweri Museveni, and the Making of the Ugandan State

By Mahmood Mamdani

Review by Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie

Wits University Press, 2025, 338pgs, R380.

The two protagonists of this book are Idi Amin, president of Uganda between 1971 and 1979, and Yoweri Museveni, the president from 1986 until now. Drawing on rich official and unofficial archival sources, including an unpublished biography of Amin by his son Jaffar, Mamdani provides a background to their lives before assuming the presidency with insights into their personalities. The main focus though is on their terms as presidents and their legacy.

Mamdani's assessment of Amin unsettles dominant public images of Amin which became well established through a 1981 film, *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*, and which continued in the western media well into the 21st century. While he concedes that violence was a key part of Amin's life and strategy to win power, he debunks the image of Amin as a cannibal, a man who kept severed heads of people in his fridge, who sacrificed his son and who was a monster equal to Hitler. All these were untrue and were just part of an anti-Amin propaganda campaign. Mamdani describes Amin as a "master of theatre" (p. 117) who deliberately embraced comedic performance for its shock value. While he may have come into power with Israeli and British support, once in office, he freed himself from their control. The reader is even drawn



into admiring Amin for his mocking of the British government and its royal family.

Mamdani sees substance in Amin's rule. For instance, his land tenure reform ensured all land was public land and provided protection for those who worked the soil. He responded to criticisms of excesses under his rule by appointing "one of the first truth commissions in the world" (p. 104). The commission investigated cases of disappeared people under his presidency. The public hearings, like that of the South African truth commission two decades later, gave ordinary Ugandans the opportunity to highlight the extent of abuse of power. Most importantly, Amin turned colonial legacy, which nurtured and fixed divisive tribal identities, on its head. He instead "shaped Uganda as a Black nation" (pp. 117-118). Mamdani reflects on Amin's hero status in Uganda: "I have lost count of the number of times I have seen a poster on the back of a *matatu* (public taxi) in Kampala, with photos of Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Bob Marley, and Idi Amin, and no caption, because none seemed necessary" (p. 118).

At least three chapters are devoted to the expulsion of Asians in 1972.¹ We are given insight into why indigenous Africans in Uganda supported this. Many of these reasons are common to other countries in Africa with an Asian presence. Amin had personal experience of the "bad Asian" (p. 19) in his youth when he worked on a sugar plantation owned by one of the wealthiest Indian families. The dominant perception of Asians was that they were corrupt, exploited indigenous Africans, gave little back to the country, and did not embrace social integration. Their expulsion was central to Amin's Africanisation project.

Yet other countries did not take such drastic action. White colonial and apartheid governments in South Africa, for example, offered repatriation or assisted emigration schemes from the late 19th century to the 1970s. These came with free passages to India with bonuses on



surrender of domicile rights. In this way, South Africa got rid of at least 73,000 Indians with India's co-operation between 1902 and 1940 when the scheme was most active (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, 2020).

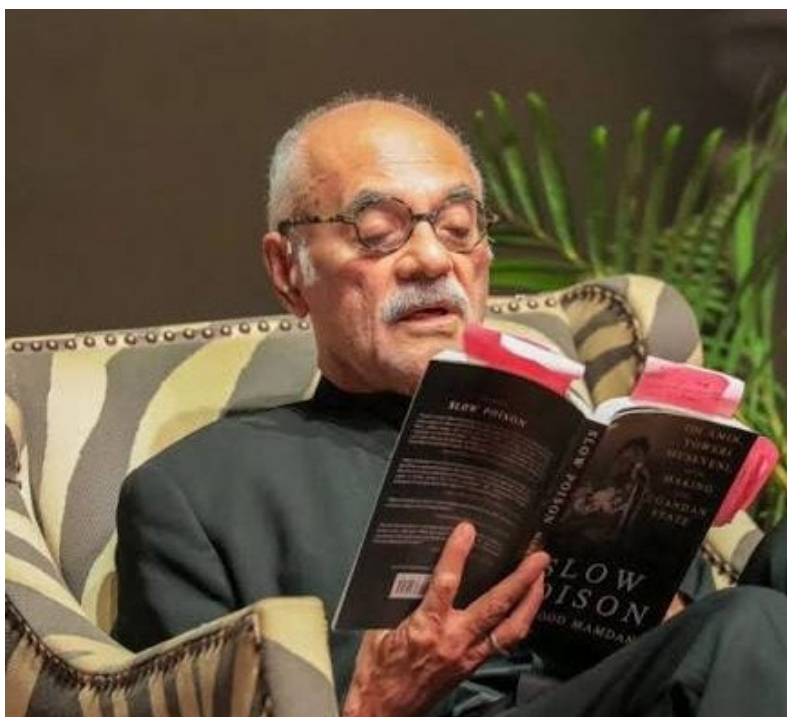
Except for noises made by the Economic Freedom Fighters the ANC-led government in South Africa, while embracing black empowerment, has never contemplated the removal of its Indian population. Their contribution to the liberation struggle and their long-established South African identity precludes such a thought. Uganda, in contrast, denied Asians the right to Ugandan nationality.

A significant part of Mamdani's discussion links Asian expulsions to the two expulsions that preceded it, after Amin fell out with the Israelis and the British soon after coming to power. The expulsion of Asians was also meant to embarrass and inconvenience Britain by leaving it the responsibility of resettling British Asians. Mamdani provides fascinating detail on how the Ugandan cabinet worked out procedures for the expulsion, the disposal of property and businesses, and the bureaucratic paperwork. Reading about the workings of the Departed Asians Property Custodian Board brings to mind the Group Areas Development Board in South Africa which, under the Group Areas Act, took control of the sale and acquisition of property of those who were disqualified from living in white group areas.

Mamdani and his family were among the expelled. While he provides very emotional details of his parents' experience, Mamdani the academic dominates the discussion, and he makes some controversial

Mamdani's discussion is linked to his overall objective of rehabilitating Amin. He argues Amin was no Hitler and dismisses stories of robbery and rape.

conclusions. He concedes that the expulsion was “one big, well-organised theft” (p. 97) and that elites benefitted from the sale and expropriation of Asian property. At the same time, he is critical of prevalent narratives of Asian “victimhood” (despite them having to leave with just £50 and unable to take most of their personal possessions). While he argues that “there was no one Asian experience,” and that the greatest consequence of expulsion was a loss of “belonging” and the acquisition of a new status as “strangers” (pp. 94-95), his account, however, favours what he regards as a majority experience. Most Ugandan Asians, he argues, “experienced the expulsion as some kind of purgatory” (p. 94) from Ugandan conditions where access to economic opportunities had shriveled. As evidence, we are given examples of how some families told him that life in Britain was better.



Mahmood Mamdani, at a reading of Slow Poison: Idi Amin, Yoweri Museveni, and the Making of the Ugandan State.
Photo: Instagram



We are dependent on one individual's account that Amin's photograph was displayed alongside those of gods in the prayer rooms of several Asian homes in Britain. As for the fate of the wealthy Indian, we are provided with an example from a fictional narrative. The evidence we are given is slight and anecdotal. What is wrong with the expelled choosing to see themselves as victims? Most experienced oral historians would engage with why stories are narrated in a particular way rather than trying to prove them to be false or true. In this regard, it would have been appropriate for Mamdani to have engaged with the project led by Dolar Vasani to mark the 50th anniversary of the expulsion. This resulted in 24 podcasts of oral narratives and memoirs, providing accounts of their lives in Uganda, personal experiences of expulsion, life in transit camps, resettlement and racism in the new countries, which are also counterbalanced by stories of success post-expulsion.

Mamdani's discussion is linked to his overall objective of rehabilitating Amin. He argues Amin was no Hitler and dismisses stories of robbery and rape. He argues that unlike, for example, in Rwanda in 1994 when Tutsis were killed *en masse*, Asians in Uganda were not killed.

Museveni fares very poorly in this book, deservedly so. The comparison with Amin leaves Amin in an even better light. Museveni the president bore no resemblance to the young man with vision that Mamdani had known. The governing principle of his presidency was how to build and retain power. Vision and desire for change and politics underpinned by morals and ethics were sacrificed. Museveni embraced tribalisation and ethnic divisions and "fragmented the nation" (p. 271).

Museveni became a "Washington Poster Boy" (p. 272) with neo-liberalism and the International Monetary Fund determining what kind of changes could be made. Uganda became central to the American "War on Terror" (253) on African soil. The most damning indictment of Museveni is revealed in the extent of corruption which the president sanctioned



himself. The financial health of the nation was undermined by the prevalence of “ghost culture,” “ghost institutions,” “ghost soldiers,” and “ghost workers” (p. 248). There are echoes of independent South Africa in the Ugandan state’s purchase of poor quality, deficient arms and helicopters accompanied by significant embezzlement.

While many scholars of African history may focus on the story of the two presidents and the failed post-independence state, what makes this book particularly memorable is how the author’s memoir is woven into an academic study of power. While his grandparents may have come from India, Mamdani’s parents were African born. Although Kampala was home, the family also spent time in Dar es Salaam. Mamdani, however, was born in 1946 in Bombay, during the family’s brief sojourn there. In a strong expression of his African identity, Mamdani laments: “From the time I became politically conscious, I remember feeling resentful, about being born in India. Why could I, too, not be born in Uganda, at least in East Africa, like everyone, I knew’ (p. 24). He lived in an exclusively Asian neighbourhood with a segregated school and social life. It was his years in America as a teenager and young adult that were the most transformative. First enrolling in engineering, he later switched to political science, and subjects such as history, economics, and philosophy opened new horizons for him. He became an activist and participated in several of the African-American civil rights movement campaigns and at Harvard he was drawn into the anti-Vietnam war movement.

He returned to Uganda in 1972, the very month that Idi Amin announced his intention to expel all Asians. Thus began a period of exile where he was employed at the University of Dar es Salaam. It is there that he joined and associated with political groupings that opposed Amin’s presidency. Once Amin was overthrown, Mamdani returned to Uganda and began a long association with Makerere University. In chapter 10 and more particularly chapter 11, Mamdani reflects on his teaching and



research vision which encompassed transformation of curricula and the nurturing of new African researchers free of dependency on external partners. To this end he was founding director of the Centre for Basic Research and, later in 2010, the Makerere Institute of Social Research. In a previous book, *Scholars in the Market Place: the Dilemmas of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989-2005* (Codesria, 2007) and in chapter 11 Mamdani repeats discussions on the deleterious effects of market-driven education and the influence of the World Bank.

In the very last paragraph of the book, Mamdani asks the questions “What lessons can we draw for intellectuals and academics on the margins of corridors of powers? What does it mean to be in conversation with those who are or will be in power and at the same time, keep a ‘safe distance’? Can one engage with power without being corrupted by it?” (p. 278). These are questions he faced in his relationship with Yoweri Museveni whom he got to know fairly well in exile and after his return to Uganda. While Museveni was building up his military power in opposition to the presidency of Milton Obote, Mamdani chose “above ground” (146) engagement. He and others strove to improve society through literacy programmes and by providing access to health facilities in rural areas. He declined an offer to join Museveni’s cabinet as a minister with responsibility for monitoring government institutions. This refusal came out of an understanding of power and how it works and the limits of individual influence. Later, he joined a commission on local government and made recommendations that were not to the president’s liking. It was “in the realm of practice” (p. 286) we are told we can find answers to his questions.

This is a book of quality which is expected of a giant scholar of Africa. It represents a sad story of a failed post-independence state and all these failings cannot be blamed entirely on the colonial legacy. There is local culpability.

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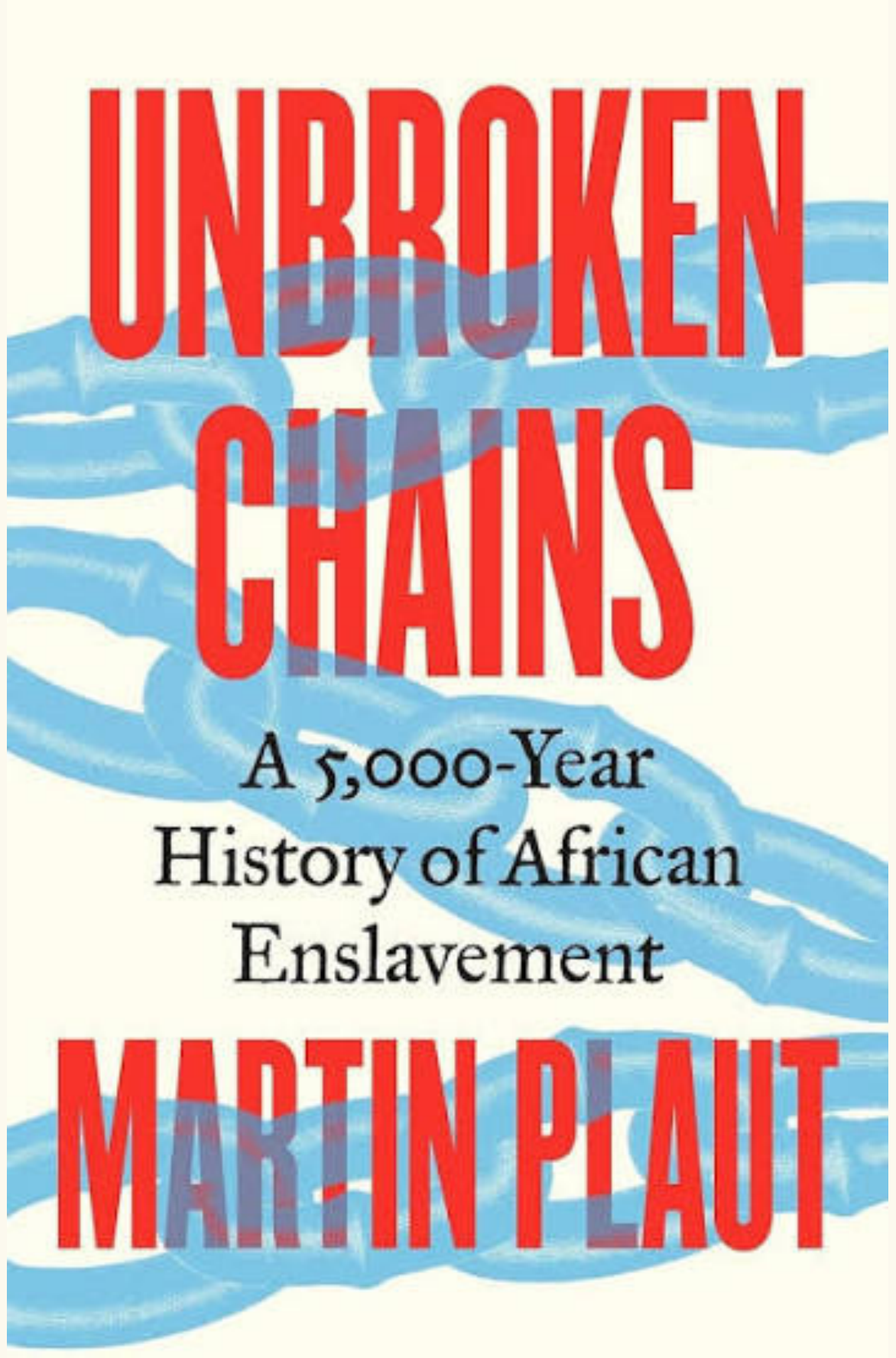
ENDNOTE

¹ The exact number of Asians expelled varies from 40,000 to 80,000. Mamdani estimates 25,000 were Asians with British passports and 15,000 of the Asians who were expelled were Ugandan citizens (92).

Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie is an Emeritus Professor and previously Senior Professor in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of the Western Cape.



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UNBROKEN CHAINS

A 5,000-Year
History of African
Enslavement

MARTIN PLAUT



Unbroken Chains

A 5,000-Year History of African Enslavement

By Martin Plaut

Review by Keith Gottschalk

Hurst & Company, London, 2025, 307pgs, R800

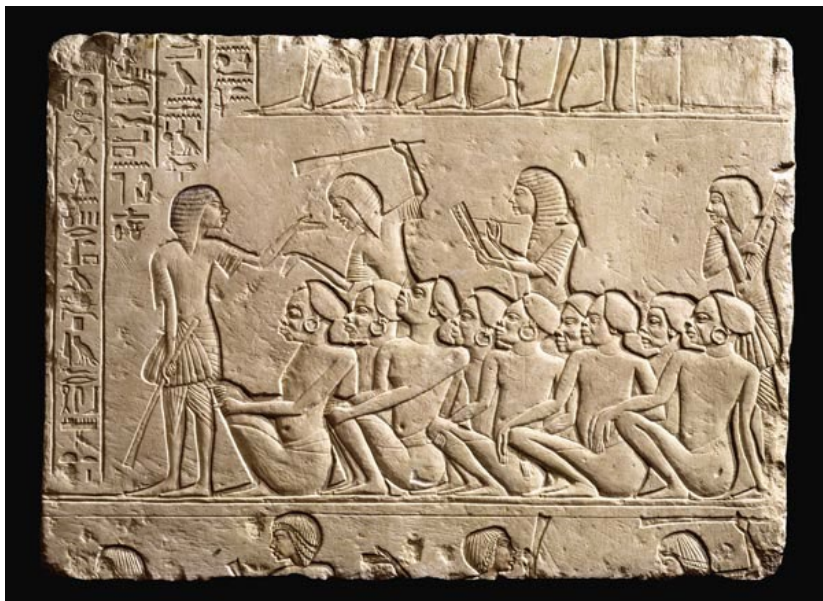
U*nbroken Chains* is the welcome, overdue history of slavery and the slave trade in Africa, through Africa, and from Africa. The known history of this stretches as far back as written and carved records. The endnotes and bibliography cover 65 pages, indicating that this was a history waiting to be written up.

The book proceeds chronologically with the Trans-Saharan slave trade, the Indian Ocean, then bifurcates into indigenous slavery, Trans-Atlantic slavery, and finally Ottoman empire slavery, Barbary slavery, and African slavery today.

The provocative dimension of this book is its debunking of several popular myths, such as that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was first and exceeded all others, and that Britain was the largest slave-trader. It is widely argued by more than one theoretical school that western wealth derives from slavery and the slave trade. Yet Portugal, which had the biggest slave-trading numbers in its history, remained the poorest country in western Europe by the 1920s, with many Portuguese leaving as migrant workers for France.

The number of victims of African slavery dwarf the holocaust. They are comparable to the entire number of people who were killed in World War Two, exceeding 40 million people.

In 1833 Britain emancipated 800,000 slaves, almost all in the Caribbean and Cape Colony. In 1903 they started freeing over two million slaves in the Sultanate of Sokoto, in today's northern Nigeria. Martin Plaut also summarises the history of Omani slaves in east Africa and their eventual freeing in the 20th century.



Nubian prisoners guarded by Egyptian soldiers armed with sticks, circa 1330 BCE. The first evidence of Nubian slaves taken up the Nile for enslavement in Egypt was carved into stone in 2900 BCE on the second cataract.

Photo: Civic Archaeological Museum of Bologna

Unbroken Chains tables three issues for debate: Why are publications on slavery so overwhelmingly limited to the “Black Atlantic”? Who should pay reparations, & to whom should reparations be paid? Why has the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said so little, and the African Union (AU) and Arab League said zero, on slavery in Africa and on the African diaspora of slave descendants in Arab and other Muslim states? There are also silences on this diaspora in histories of Iran, Pakistan, and India.



STALLINGS-No. 76

STALLINGS No. 76--THE SINEWS OF WAR: Rich merchants, accompanied by their slaves, bring bags of money to Emperor Haile Selassie as compensation for the Ethiopian merchants.

Some answers are already evident. An organised, well-resourced African diaspora, with a student and academic contingent, is a major driver of African-American and other diasporic studies – reading lists, lectures, seminars, popularisation.

A Pan-African theoretical framework also makes it difficult to campaign on issues of indigenous slavery in Africa, if Haile Selassie's Ethiopia is canonised as the greatest black kingdom. But a left, radical thought framework has no difficulties analysing the slave trading of a comprador bourgeoisie on the west African coast, nor slavery as part of feudal-style chiefly rule in the interior. UN, AU, and Arab League members selectively take up case studies that reinforce their current anti-western imperialist campaigns on other issues. They have no enthusiasm



to raise the issue of, for example, one million European former slaves in the Barbary states and former Ottoman Empire requiring compensation.

The first breakthroughs are occurring. The Indian High Court in the State of Karnataka issued a landmark judgement that Sidis (those descendants of African slaves) are entitled to be registered as statutory “Other Backward Classes” under the constitution. This entitles them to affirmative action in applying for jobs in the civil service, and admission as students to universities. This potentially benefits up to 100,000 Sidis. The 150,000 Sidis in Pakistan may be also encouraged to take up the battle on the same issue across the border. There are also practical issues about how compensation for inter-generational trauma, such as ancestral enslavement, might be paid. One likely case will be Haiti, who for two centuries had to pay “compensation” to France for the freeing of every man, woman, and child of the entire Haitian nation. Compensation here could take the form of a sovereign wealth fund. The black diaspora in Arab and other Muslim states will require creative thinking about the format of compensation. Mauretania, Mali, Niger, Libya, and the Sudan will need to open political debate on this issue, which also includes the issue of racism from paler citizens to darker citizens. Here the AU’s Pan-African Parliament, and its Economic, Cultural, and Social Council are the appropriate organs who are overdue to start raising these issues. *Unbroken Chains* is warmly recommended for every library, especially scholarly ones.

Keith Gottschalk is an adjunct professor in Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape.



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Clara E. Mattei

ESCAPE

"Offers essential
tools for
understanding
today's world."

—THOMAS PIKETTY

FROM

CAPITALISM



An Intervention



Escape from Capitalism

An Intervention

By Clara E Mattei

Review by Megan Rose Bryer

Simon & Schuster, 2026, 224 pgs, R840 from Takealot

Economics is not separate from politics. How we structure our system, its institutions, and architecture profoundly reflects political choices about who has power. This is the central argument of Clara E. Mattei's new book, *Escape from Capitalism: An Intervention*, in which she offers readers both an explanation of capitalism's harms and the claim that an escape from it is possible (p. 10). She lays bare the absurdity that economic decisions, with profound consequences for our lives, have been removed from democratic control and entrusted to supposedly neutral institutions, insulated from political interference and the democratic process.

Mattei describes the book as a broader public intervention. Expanded from her earlier writings *L'Economia è politica* ('Economics is politics'), it is an accessible read. She challenges the widespread premise that capitalism is inevitable and eternal (p. 7). Under this illusion, she argues, we have surrendered our economic decision-making to technocrats, despite the fact that early economists understood that the pursuit of macroeconomic stability was never a purely economic undertaking, but an inherently political one (p. 4). Much of the effort to present economics as a rigorous and mathematical science has involved severing it from the older discipline of "political economy" and framing it as "pure economics". Mattei seeks to place questions of class back at the



centre of economic analysis. She traces how class conflict, power relations, and exploitation were gradually stripped from mainstream economic thought, creating the impression that markets operate independently of politics and social interests.

The consequences of this shift, she argues, have been profound. Mattei exposes the political assumptions hidden within seemingly technical economic concepts. She argues that austerity, for example, is routinely justified as a means of reducing debt or restoring growth, when its real function is to “impose and reinforce a class structure” by increasing workers’ dependence on markets while protecting the interests of economic and financial elites (p. 58). Poverty, inequality, and unemployment, in her view, are not unfortunate failures of the system but outcomes by design to sustain it (p. 65). Mattei tackles the mainstream view that unemployment is a regrettable side effect of maintaining price stability. The outcry that is elicited from framing a policy choice as a trade-off between employment and profits is avoided when framed as one between employment and inflation (p. 107). Once again, she reveals the underlying conflict over class and power that economic policy often obscures, and the extent to which profit and capital accumulation are prioritised over workers’ livelihoods.

A recurring theme throughout the book is that capitalism did not arise spontaneously. It was crafted through political institutions and state intervention, and its endurance rests on our continued submission to wage labour and private ownership (p. 22). Far from representing freedom, Mattei argues that capitalism produces economic dependence by separating people from the means of sustaining themselves except through the sale of their labour.

She provides a contemporary example of how capital accumulation necessitates exploitation in the case of Israel and Palestine. The wealth of richer countries relies on the “subjugation of weaker economies” (p. 133). To be rich in one nation is to construct poverty in another. Perhaps the most radical claim of the book is that capitalism and



democracy are fundamentally incompatible. Mattei urges us to rethink democracy in practice and to question whether we can truly be free if we are excluded from decisions about the economic systems that govern our lives. The capitalist system perpetuates exploitation, suffering, and violence because these outcomes are embedded within its logic. Real democracy requires economic agency (p. 144); economic governance can no longer be shielded from public deliberation.

What is most striking and concerning from Mattei's account is her description of capitalism's compatibility with vastly different political ideologies. Mattei tells of how liberals and fascists alike have at different historical moments supported the capitalist economic order.

She rightly rejects the false dichotomy that abandoning capitalism would mean endorsing alternatives such as that of Soviet Russia or China. But despite her confidence that an alternative is possible, and the various examples of collective systems in practice a very local level that she offers, I am left with the same sense of blind optimism that many an anti-capitalist writer in this day and age touts. We are witness to a fracturing system, but the new is not yet born, and we have not yet seen capitalism effectively dismantled in any grand scale. Mattei helps the reader understand the type of power relations that perpetuate capitalism. She is at pains to point out that it is the consequence of a system and not individual greed. And she is hopeful that because capitalism is made by people it can be changed by people. This book offers a route to seeing things differently so that we may imagine and begin to construct a better world for ourselves. But I wonder how many readers not already inclined to critique capitalism will be swayed by the argument in this book that an alternative is both desirable and possible.

Megan Rose Bryer is a development economist, who previously worked for the public sector and is now working in Social Investing.



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GLOBAL SOUTH RISING?

**BRICS and the Reconfiguration of
Knowledge Systems**

Edited by
Ari Sitas • Weibke Keim



Global South Rising? BRICS and the Reconfiguration of Knowledge Systems

Edited By Ari Sitas & Wiebke Keim

Review by Rasigan Maharajh

HSRC Press, 2025, 352pgs, R420

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*It is to this struggle [over knowledge] that
Global South Rising?
so compellingly summons us all –
not as passive readers, but as active participants
in the unfinished project of decolonising
knowledge and, through it, the world.*

In the combined yet uneven terrain of global intellectual production, where the hierarchies of empire persist within the very categories through which we comprehend the world, *Global South Rising? BRICS and the Reconfiguration of Knowledge Systems* represents a bracingly necessary intervention. Edited by Ari Sitas and Wiebke Keim, this substantial volume assembles 11 chapters from nine contributors to interrogate what is perhaps the decisive question of our geopolitical conjuncture: does the ascendance of the BRICS bloc portend a genuine transformation in the global political economy of knowledge, or does it merely renovate institutional façades whilst leaving intact the deeper



structures of epistemic dependency that have historically subordinated the world majority and the global South?

This is not merely an academic exercise of institutional chronicling. Spanning the arc from BRICS's formal inauguration in 2009 through to our contemporary conjuncture, and situating this trajectory within the deeper lineage of South-South solidarity reaching back to Bandung in 1955, the collection undertakes a rigorous analysis of how geopolitical realignments intersect with – and are mediated by – the social relations of intellectual production.

The editors' introduction forthrightly acknowledges the project's fourfold rationale, situating it within a tradition of engaged and progressive scholarship whose analytical dividends become apparent throughout. The authors deploy scientometric data to quantify shifting contours of scientific and technological output across the BRICS nations, whilst simultaneously subjecting these very metrics to critical scrutiny. The volume thus functions as both empirical repository and theoretical intervention, documenting the active engagements that have enabled the emergence of BRICS, and subsequently BRICS+, as a major platform for deliberating the political, social, economic, and ecological dimensions of international transformation.

The theoretical architecture underpinning this inquiry draws productively upon the apparatus developed in the *Routledge Handbook of Academic Knowledge Circulation* (Arvanitis et al., 2023), to which several of the present volume's authors contributed. The preference for 'circulation' over 'diffusion' or 'transfer' is theoretically significant: it insists upon the possibility of reciprocities, competition, and socialisation across disparate social spaces, refusing the unidirectional assumptions embedded in diffusionist models that have historically served imperial epistemologies. Knowledge moves, but in its movement, it is transformed, as are the places and persons through which it passes.



The five methodological requirements derived from this framework – the identification of particular instantiations; the dissection and situating of knowledge spaces and actors; the grounding of channels of circulation; the determination of historically delimited moments; and sustained sensitivity to power dynamics – prove indispensable for interpreting the empirical data that pervade the collection, anchoring observation within a coherent theoretical architecture.

A principal contribution of the volume lies in its sustained confrontation with the persistence of Eurocentric epistemological frameworks. The framing compels us to reckon with what might be termed the ‘curse of epistemicide’ that besets our contemporary conjuncture of neocolonial subjugation.

Drawing upon Aníbal Quijano’s foundational articulation of the “coloniality of knowledge” and its subsequent elaboration by Walter Dignolo, several chapters document how inequality is constituted and reproduced through publication patterns, academic mobility, and the dynamic circulation of knowledge and people. The evidence reveals an unmistakable unevenness in praxis – yet this unevenness is not merely to be lamented. On the contrary, it re-emphasises the importance of plural perspectives arising from the differentiated experiences within BRICS and across world-systems, challenging the norm-setting narratives propagated by a mainstream media increasingly consolidated under conditions of monopoly and homogeneity.

The volume’s most provocative implication is that the emergence of multipolarity remains an incomplete and contradictory process. The segregation of world-systems through their differential categorisation by capital accumulation, and the international division of labour reinforced through unequal exchange, demands far greater analytical attention than it has thus far received from those who recognise



that history did not end with the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Maharajh, 2026a).

The expansion of improved productive capacities is undoubtedly necessary to redress material inequalities in the quality of life yet it remains profoundly insufficient as a defence against the violence unleashed by settler-colonial regimes and their collaborators, who seek to perpetuate their hegemony through genocide and illegal attacks on sovereign nations, including against another member of BRICS+. The volume thus enjoins us to think the economic and the epistemic together, as moments of a single though contradictory totality, in a dialectical movement that refuses to compartmentalise material and intellectual production.

Professor Sitas offers a sober and characteristically incisive assessment in the concluding chapter, questioning both the depth and spread of transformations currently emergent across the BRICS formation. Invoking the biological concept of ‘autopoiesis,’ the systemic capacity to maintain and reproduce itself as a heuristic for understanding emergent dynamics of increasing relative autonomy in knowledge production, Sitas nonetheless cautions that many initiatives and agreements reached at BRICS summits require substantially greater attention from national systems of innovation and must be more thoroughly incorporated into the research agendas of public institutions.

Empathetic listening and people-to-people engagement, he suggests, offer a pathway toward appreciating the profound changes emanating from BRICS agreements, whilst simultaneously affording deeper insight into the intransigent elements that continue to constrain transformation. This dual movement, simultaneously appreciative and critical, holds considerable promise for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and for the praxis of what Mignolo has termed “epistemic



disobedience” – the deliberate delinking from dominant narratives and a decisive advance away from the world we do not wish to perpetuate.

Yet herein lies a fundamental conundrum, and one that the volume’s contributors confront with admirable candour. As Sitas candidly acknowledges, academics of the BRICS+ have generally not found an epistemic coherence backed by sustained and longitudinal cooperative work. This verdict is borne out by the empirical record: South Africa’s national system of innovation has consistently failed to meet its stated target of allocating 1.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to research and development, nor the African Union’s goal of 1%. The Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators has measured South Africa’s Gross Expenditure on Research and Development as a percentage of GDP at a mere 0.62% for 2023/24, a figure that starkly illustrates the gap between aspiration and material capacity.

Beyond these quantitative indices, however, the volume urges us to also attend to the *quality* of investments in science and technology development, a consideration rendered all the more urgent by NATO’s recent commitment to raise member-state military expenditure to 5% of GDP. Given that the combined GDP of NATO countries stood at approximately US\$51 trillion in 2025, this implies an intended nominal outlay of at least US\$2.55 trillion on warfare, a staggering sum that lays bare the material priorities of the existing world order and exposes the ideological function of the austerity discourse in the global South. In contrast, Roshni Sahoo and colleagues have estimated that it would cost just (sic) US\$318 billion per year, or 0.3% of global GDP, to almost eradicate all extreme poverty globally (reducing the rate to 1%) (Sahoo et al., 2025).

The lesson to be drawn from *Global South Rising?* is thus both urgent and profoundly serious. We would do well to resist the austerity strictures of national treasuries and instead expand cooperation in the co-



construction of knowledge that supports endogenous development, without perpetuating the unequal exchanges that have historically structured world-systems (Maharajh, 2026b).

The flourishing of new ideas, attentive to respective nationally determined priorities yet oriented toward the collective redress of epistemicide and the improvement of the quality of life for all, including the novel inter-species relationships mentioned in the book demands nothing less than a fundamental reorientation of our intellectual and material commitments.

In this regard, the book stands as an indispensable contribution to the literature. The collective effort of Sitas, Keim, and their wide network of collaborators merits our sincere gratitude and, more importantly, our sustained critical engagement. For the struggle over knowledge is inseparable from the struggle over the social relations that produce, circulate, and legitimate it. It is to this struggle that *Global South Rising?* so compellingly summons us all – not as passive readers, but as active participants in the unfinished project of decolonising knowledge and, through it, the world. The volume reminds us that the transformation of the political economy of knowledge cannot be divorced from the transformation of the political economy of capital itself, and that both remain tasks for which we are, as yet, only inadequately prepared.

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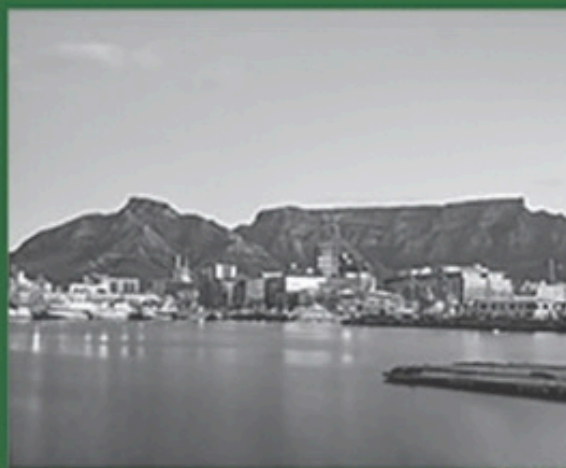


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- Rasigan Maharajh is Chief Director of the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation at Tshwane University of Technology.*



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FROM CAIRO TO CAPE



VLADIMIR SHUBIN



From Cairo to Cape

By Vladimir Shubin

Review by Keith Gottschalk

Unisa Press, 2026, 314 pgs, R380, also available as an e-book

Vladimir Shubin stands alongside Father Trevor Huddleston as one of those few international activists who devoted virtually their entire adult life to fighting for the liberation of Africa. His well-deserved Order of the Companions of O R Tambo (awarded by the President of South Africa in 2005) and the Order of the Red Star, (awarded by the Soviet Union) give belated recognition to this.

This book – his fifth – is rare if not unique in the English language literature. It gives the viewpoint and witness of a Soviet/Russian insider to six decades of struggle and lobbying to decolonise Africa; six decades of interaction with the national liberation movements. Today most of the personalities it discusses have passed on. Scholars are indeed fortunate that Vladimir Shubin is still alive, still an active scholar at 87 years old, able to write up his memoirs on so many historical and living personalities and events.

Shubin's crowded life has had twin careers. One is the genial extrovert known to two generations of African liberation movement cadres as an indefatigable organiser, the very active representative of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union



(CPSU). The other is Dr Vladimir Shubin the scholar, whose post-doctoral research is written up in at least five books. He is the activist-scholar *par excellence*.

Shubin does not consider it out of the ordinary, and barely-mentions in passing, that he speaks Russian, Farsi, Pashto, Arabic, English, and “broken” French. Indeed, his first post-school employment was as an officer-interpreter for Soviet military personnel in Egypt. In personal contact, Shubin is a mine of information on dialects in Russian and other languages.

What major themes does this book elucidate on?

First, although this reviewer has an undergraduate major in comparative government, he needed every sentence of the author’s summary of the kaleidoscope of state bureaucracies in the Soviet Union and the Party.

Second is the role and workings of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, and various peace committees: in Soviet official lexicon, “public organisations”. These “acted under the firm control of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union”. (p. 73)

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These are what one Polish anti-communist wittily nicknamed GONGOS – Government-organised Non-Governmental Organisations. Their longevity alongside the state and party bureaucracies make them significant actors in their own right.

Shubin is the rigorous, empirically focused historian par excellence. Repeatedly, this book runs strictly factual corrections of numerous other publications and websites, both Western and Soviet alike.

Of course, the Washington DC arena of power also includes what are formally private foundations, but embedded in power, with a revolving door of ex-state participants, regardless of whether their funds overtly or covertly come from state, quasi-state, or corporate sources.

Third, inevitably this narrative of six decades of events and dynamics is set against the cold war background in Asia and Africa, that is competition between the then two world powers, the USA and its colonial allies versus the Soviet Union.

Fourth, readers will also note what is not included, as in Shubin's earlier books. There are no arguments about Marxist theory here. The theoretical disputes between Western Marxism and liberalism, each running in academe for most of a decade before inevitably fizzling out, are conspicuous by their absence. The same for recent debates on the "Washington consensus". Shubin is the rigorous, empirically focused historian *par excellence*. Repeatedly, this book runs strictly factual corrections of numerous other publications and websites, both Western and Soviet alike.



Fifth, another absence is any dwelling upon the inevitable discomforts and privations of military life. Shubin barely mentions in passing that he and his young wife lived in over 20 addresses during six years during his postings in north Africa and elsewhere (p. 68).

Sixth, Shubin is firm in refuting infamous canards of anti-communist propaganda. Inevitably, he is smeared as a colonel or major in the KGB, simply because he was a high-ranking activist in the International Department of the CPSU. He repeatedly refutes the claim that the CPSU ran the South African Communist Party, which in turn allegedly controlled the ANC. He notes that the USSR gave much more funding to the ANC than to the SACP.

Seventh, he reiterates the obvious point that while Thabo Mbeki amongst other celebrities received military training and other education in the Soviet Union, they of course retained their own views on communism and the USSR, which remained in their post-1994 economic and other policies when in power in South Africa.

Last, it must be mentioned in passing that the UNISA Press needs to take more care in the printing of their books. This book has its pagination printed on the inside of each page up to page 134, thereafter on the outer margin of each page.

This book is indisputably essential for every scholarly library of African studies, history, political studies, and international relations.

Keith Gottschalk is an adjunct professor in Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape.



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Institute for African Alternatives

Contact us:

Tel: +27 21 461 2340

www.ifaaza.org

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