

Book Reviews

Daniel, John / Naidoo, Prishani / Pillay, Devan / Southall, Roger (eds), *New South African Review 3: The second phase — tragedy or farce?* Johannesburg: Wits University Press 2013, 342 pp.

As the title indicates this publication is the third issue in a series of reviews. The first issue was subtitled *2010: Development or decline?* (2010) and the second was *New paths, old promises?* (2011). These publications are edited in the Department of Sociology at Wits University as part of its Strategic Planning and Allocation of Resources Committee (SPARC) Programme. The series is intended to be a revival of the *South African Review* edited by the South African Research Service and published by Ravan Press in the 1980s and early 1990s. Arguably one of the best known of these series was issue seven edited by Steven Friedman and Doreen Atkinson, *The Small Miracle: South Africa's negotiated settlement* (1994). The latest publication should also be seen as direct competition for the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) regular publication, *State of the Nation*.

The *New South African Review 3* is organised into four parts, namely Party, Power and Class; Ecology, Economy and Labour; Public Policy and Social Practice; and South Africa at Large. The four editors introduce each of the sections, consisting of 16 chapters in total. The book's format appears to be that of a yearbook but it is not linked to a specific year. It is therefore not in the same category as for example the South African Institute of Race Relations' annual *South Africa Survey*. The *Review* is organised around a theme, albeit very general in its formulation, and in the case of the third issue it is also not applicable to all its chapters. At the same time, though, it is not a yearbook as the choice of chapters and their *foci* are on the latest developments. The publication can, however, not stand in isolation as a complete book but must be viewed together with the earlier issues. Moreover, and as with edited publications more generally, the challenge of coordinating or integrating chapters also applies here. Though the editors present a strong sociological tradition within a leftist social democratic or even socialist intellectual sentiment, not all the authors use the same points

of departure or lines of argument in their chapters. At the same time it should be said that possibly the strongest dividing factor in the current public debate is the role of the private and public sectors in macro-economic policy. A characteristic of this publication is how tangible this debate's influence is in three of the four parts.

The discussions are strongly influenced by the Marikana massacre, an event that social scientists still find difficult to fully analyse, despite its assumption of symbolic significance. In his introduction Devan Pillay describes Marikana as the epitome of the transition's tragedy as well as a part of the global tendency of uneven development. According to Pillay, Marikana presents a racialised form of the problems associated with global capitalism, rendering it thus a local form of racial capitalism. It resembles Neville Alexander and the Worker Organisation for Socialist Action's description of *apartheid* which was presented as an antidote for the South African Communist Party's (SACP) 'colonialism of a special type'. Pillay's line of thinking extends to capture the South African economy in a 'minerals-energy-finance complex' driven by a 'power elite'. This introduction situates the book in a sociologically left, critical position towards the (African National Congress) ANC-as-government and the private sector.

Parts one and four deal with topics closest to conventional Political Science and International Relations while part two is mainly concerned with economic matters and part three with public policy issues. The chapters by Roger Southall and Susan Booysen on the power elite in South Africa and the ANC's regeneration respectively are not only empirical in nature but present also important conceptual and theoretical questions for Political Science in South Africa.

Influenced by C Wright Mills' work on the 'power elite' Southall describes the latter as the segment of society "who has the capacity to make the *decisions* that structure the continuations of patterns of such inequality. This demands that we examine institutions" (p 22). Southall distinguishes between the political and corporate elite. The former he defines "by the nature of its decisions. Generally, these are both *national* in their implications and *formative* in that they shape policy and outcomes" (p 25). Though the key determinant is therefore influence in decision-making and the nature of decisions, in the discussion Southall reduces it to positional-institutional considerations: what are the key government positions? It presumes that influence and decision-making are directly derived from institutional hierarchies,

which are open for contestation both empirically and theoretically. It does not consider influential persons — such as Deng Xiaoping or, in South Africa, Joel Netshitenzhe or Pallo Jordan — because of their status or reputation. It also does not allow for extra-governmental influence such as Luthuli House (including the National Executive Committees (NECs) and individuals such as Gwede Mantashe or Baleka Mbete) in South Africa.

Regarding the corporate elite, Southall acknowledges that it is much more difficult to identify them but then suggests two sets of data as proxies for power: the investments of the super-rich and the remuneration of the best-paid business leaders. Southall combines these data with the (Johannesburg Stock Exchange) JSE-listed finance and mining companies that constitute 52.3 per cent of the JSE's market capitalisation. It amounts to an assumption that personal wealth and capitalisation in terms of shares value are equal to influence and therefore that mining is the key sector of the elite. However, if sectoral contributions to South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are used as an alternative indicator, then mining and quarrying contributed five per cent to the GDP at the end of 2013 while the sector of finance, real estate and business services contributed 21.5 per cent.¹⁾ Which one of mining's approximately 30 per cent of the JSE or its five per cent contribution to the GDP is the most accurate indicator of its relative corporate power?

Susan Booysen focuses on the ANC in the period 2012-2013 and raises the questions: how did the ANC build and regenerate its power since political liberation, and is it now in decline? The basis of her discussion is her book, *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power* (Wits University Press, 2011). Her objective was to identify and expound on the mechanisms used by the ANC for its power regeneration, and to assess the process. For this purpose Booysen identified seven mechanisms, including its embodiment of the identity and aspirations of many South Africans, being a movement of the left, its two-phase transition, its liberation history, its internalisation of opposition, its ability to mobilise support after elections and its control of state power (p 40).

Booyesen's argument about the ANC's regeneration can be contested, because regeneration presumes a cyclical process of decline and revival to its original state of affairs. Such an assessment or prediction of the ANC's revival is certainly not shared by many. The argu-

ment also makes assumptions about political power — are the seven mechanisms also the sources of the ANC's power? Are they objective criteria of party-political power in South Africa and can other political parties gain similar power or is power contingent and dependent on each party's own history?

Booyesen's chapter is most relevant for the book's subtitle, *The Second Phase*. On pages 50-52 she discusses its central significance and it is therefore worth noting her interpretation. She refers to the ANC's notion of the 'two phase revolution' but ascribes the 'second transition' as a Marxist phrasing by the (African National Congress Youth League) ANCYL. This characterisation was defeated at the ANC's National Policy Conference (July 2012) in favour of the 'second phase of the transition' (p 50). If one looks at the original policy document the original phrase was explained as follows: "[H]aving concluded our first transition with its focus on democratisation over the last eighteen years, we need a vision for a second transition that must focus on the social and economic transformation of South Africa over the next 30 to 50 years".²⁾

Booyesen's presentation of the debate has to be revisited. It would be more accurate to state that the SACP (and not the ANC) developed the two-stage revolutionary theory in the 1960s, consisting of the national democratic and socialist revolutions. Though the ANC acknowledges the two stages as the foundation of national liberation it is not expected to be involved in the second stage. On the other hand, the notion of a first and second transition should not be regarded as synonymous with the two revolutionary stages or phases. The transition (irrespective of number) is the first stage and therefore the 2012 Conference proposal, strongly supported by President Zuma in his opening speech, was suggesting that the outstanding element of the first stage was economic transformation. Opposition at the Conference argued that the 'transitions' were foreign concepts in the ANC lexicon and could be confused with the two stages — hence the decision of the "second phase of the [first] transition" as the second part of the first stage. It was not a decision about socialism but about economic transformation within a predominantly capitalist system.

The editors' decision to incorporate this debate in the book's title correctly acknowledges how pivotal it is in determining South Africa's future and how many policy and social issues can be reduced to the tenets of this public discourse. For these reasons the *New South*

Africa Review 3 deserves close reading.

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Endnotes

1. Statistics SA. 2014. Gross domestic product, Fourth quarter 2013. Statistical releases P0441, pp 5, 9.
2. ANC. 2012. The second transition?: Building a national democratic society and the balance of forces in 2012, A discussion document towards the National Policy Conference, p 4 (Available at: <http://www.anc.org.za/docs/discus/2012/transition.pdf>).

Habib, Adam, *South Africa's Suspended Revolution: Hopes and Prospects*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press 2013, 305 pp.

With South Africa celebrating its 20th anniversary of negotiated transition to a democratic dispensation, this book could not have been published at a more poignant time. Offering a robust and often compelling analysis in explaining the push and pull factors that have shaped the country's political, economic, social and cultural landscape, Adam Habib locates his thesis within an historical-structural analytical framework. Not only does this assist the reader in developing a critical understanding of the domestic imperatives that underlined South Africa's transition, but it also provides a sobering view of how changes in global post-Cold War structural realities informed the dynamics of our own transition. This is to be found in the balance of power "as a variable informing the choices and decisions of actors in South Africa's transition" (p 27), as Habib puts it. Using this as the basis for the overall argument of the book, he highlights that the configuration of the balance of forces had manifested itself in two distinct but related ways: on the one hand how the parameters of the negotiated settlement were informed (bearing in mind their inadvertent but inevitable impact on decision-making and policy processes in the Mandela Administration and the early years of the Mbeki Administration); and on the other hand how the evolution of these processes informed the crucial outcomes of the African National Congress' (ANC) elective conference in Polokwane in