

IN THIS ISSUE

Twenty years of democratic South Africa inspires many scholars to look back, reflect on the achievements and failures and take stock of the current situation, maybe even to cast a view on possible future scenarios. This issue of the *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* is one of many efforts to engage with social realities in the context of a post-*apartheid* society; a society, where controlled change with the negotiated transition to regular democratic elections in a multi-party pluralist setting resulted to some extent in changed control. We are confronted with socio-economic, as well as political realities affected by and facing the challenges of structural legacies. The transitions and transformations documented re-alignments within a social and political framework, but often rather modified instead of transcended the previous systemic boundaries. The lack of fundamental shifts towards a genuinely people-centered development stands in strong contrast to the new elite policy and the relative privileges secured by its beneficiaries in the echelons of state and administration and the private sector. The emerging trends have been dubbed by some scholars as the 'limits to liberation'.

The aim of this special issue is to contextualise the efforts, hopes, aspirations, declared goals and the setbacks, measured against the expectations with regard to different sectors, and cross cutting issues pertinent to contemporary South African society. Other books and journals will offer similar, more or less ambitious perspectives. Predictably, not many of the analyses will resort only to uncritical praise songs and merely hail the achievements of the first two decades under a democratic political system. But as few will be similarly simplistic by only condemning or dismissing what has been achieved so far, as limited as it occasionally might seem to be. One should always keep in mind that as a point of departure there was nothing good in the so-called good old days. Hence democratic South Africa, with all its limitations and setbacks, remains a step forward. Twenty years on, for many in South Africa, life remains not good, but for many it is better than before. However, has South Africa done as well as it could have if there had been a more determined political will and a governance agenda serving indeed the ordinary people as a top priority?

As in most cases of soul-searching examination, it is rather easy to share critical observations and to put a finger on failures in delivery. Examples and evidence in the South Africa of today abound. The contributions in this issue testify to such a sobering reality. They are also guided by a commitment to provide constructive reflections beyond mere condemnation, exploring the reasons for the limitations and seeking explanations for failures

in delivery. As is the nature of such stocktaking exercises, the emphasis is on a summary of policies and their effects over the last 20 years rather than primary research with new results on specific aspects. We thereby offer a mapping and accounting with regard to the current state of South African society and government policies.

Sectoral and cross cutting issues dealt with in the following articles include the state of constitutional democracy (*Raymond Suttner* and *Henning Melber*), trade and economic policy (*Brendan Vickers* and *Mzukisi Qobo*), foreign policy (*Garth le Pere*), gender policy (*Yolanda Sadie*), the public service (*Yvonne Muthien*), the state of national reconciliation (*Janis Grobelaar*), the ongoing challenges of xenophobia with regard to the educational system (*Saloshna Vandeyar*) and the stereotyping in the case of the FIFA World Cup 2010 as one of the most prominent international events and a showpiece for the democratic South Africa (*Suzanne Francis* and *Monique Emser*). To round off this issue, we have also included an analysis of the most recent elections (*Roger Southall*) and an essay by *Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gathseni*, which places South Africa in the context of continental African aspirations and thought. As always, the contributions are complemented by several book reviews on recent publications supplementing the thematic focus.

Finally, it is once again a sad occasion to pay tribute to a colleague, who as a scholar and activist has contributed so much to bring about democratic South Africa through his personal commitment over almost half a century. *John Daniel*, who inspired so many of those building the democratic society, has finally lost his battle against cancer earlier this year. We remember him as a truly democratic intellectual, whose lasting contribution to a post-apartheid South Africa during his student activism days, in subsequent exile and finally after returning home deserves full recognition by one of his closest friends — *Hamba Kahle John*.

Henning Melber and Maxi Schoeman