



*Sibonginkosi G. Mazibuko,
Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and
Monene Mogashoa*

This journal issue comes at a time when the South Africa government in particular is promising a radical transformation of the economy after twenty years since the end of administrative apartheid. This promise comes at a time of increasing unemployment and popular frustration with the trajectory of the South African national project. At the continental level in general as well as the local South African level in particular, African people are faced with a number of both opportunities and challenges from various angles. The continent is in the midst of a promising economic growth despite rising levels of poverty and inequality. The general elections that took place in May 2014 in South Africa presented an opportunity for the country to display once more its commitment to democracy and resilience in political tolerance that it has shown over the past similar periods. Economically, the labour strikes in the mines present both opportunity and challenges: opportunity in that the mining industry can use this time to improve the workers' conditions of employment in terms of wages and accommodation and thus foster good labour relations. Similarly, labour has an opportunity to prove itself not only as mere wage earners but as active constructive participants in the country's economy. At the same time, these conditions present an opportunity for (political) parties to better understand the dialectics of the state, labour and capital.

On the other front, the country faces many challenges. Those entrusted with the responsibility to maintain law and order have become law unto themselves. People have lost their lives at the hands of a brutal police force. To us, this brutality cannot be solely the responsibility of individual police officers. Many locate this brutality in the whole system that is pervaded by coloniality. In this regard, we can only think of Samora Machel's words:

The people do not in fact distinguish us from the colonial army by the colour of the skin or the vernacular or words we use. Our attitude towards the masses and our respect for them is the touchstone that marks us off from the troops of aggression (in Munslow, B., Samora Machel: *An African revolutionary*. Zed Books: London, 1985:50).

At the same time, we have seen the Public Protector's Report on the expenditure the country incurred while constructing and renovating the State President's private residence in rural Nkandla of

KwaZulu-Natal. While the arguments rage between the parties – government, public protector and the constructors, the project has cost the country millions of rands¹. No one wants to accept responsibility. In the face of rising poverty, inequality and unemployment in the country, to what extent this will affect the country's constitutional democracy, and place 'democratically' elected leadership under the spotlight, remains to be seen in the long term.

As contradictions play themselves out, South Africa has adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) as the national project, and replaced the neo-liberal macroeconomic strategy of GEAR (the growth, employment and redistribution plan adopted in the mid-1990s by the government) with a similar strategy, the New Growth Path (NGP). It only remains to be seen whether the replacement of one neo-liberal policy with another will yield the required results.

Fundamental to these issues is that the country grapples with the difficult tasks of land reform. Since independence from settler-colonialism, there has not been a clear way out from the quagmire presented by the vicissitudes of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation. The vast majority of the previously oppressed are still without land either for residential or for production. While the country's policy-makers struggle to explain the source of the challenges as the economic structure of distribution, we take the view that the problem is more of the structure of ownership, which the state must address.

The biggest challenge for South Africa, and probably for the many emerging economies of the global South, is the blind faith in western thinking. As Jacques Martin points out in his book, *When China rules the world: The rise of the middle kingdom and the end of the western world* (2009), we are unable to think of the world beyond the West. We are not able to contemplate other models of development beyond what the West has to offer. What this means is that the emerging economies have to begin to seriously challenge the structure-agency and make this fundamental in their policies. The articles in this issue make similar inferences.

Olufemi tries to capture these issues in 'Negative statecraft and the social worse-offs in the modern African state: Exploring the concept of political utilitarianism for ethical leadership and governance'. This author argues that the problem of negative statecraft has persisted in Africa, causing a negatively upward shift in the general curve of poverty as well as the 'social worse-offs' on the continent. Olufemi argues that a constitutional emphasis on political utilitarianism, a derivative from normative utilitarianism, largely addresses the problem. Just as normative utilitarianism reduces the rightness or wrongness of human conduct to the extent and intensity of the good produced or failed to produce, to satisfy the greatest number, political utilitarianism also analyses the performance or non-performance of political leadership in Africa by the extent and intensity of the good produced, or failed to produce, to benefit the greatest number.

In 'Does FDI promote economic growth and development? Evidence from Latin America and Africa?', Seid investigates the importance attached to foreign direct investment (FDI) in the growth and development process that has led many countries to lay emphasis on various efforts to attract FDI. These countries have introduced policies that include fiscal and financial incentives, tax holidays, import duty exemptions, low interest rate loans and subsidies to foreign firms. This, in turn, leads global trends in FDI flows to be increased steadily and tremendously in both quality and quantity. The author concludes that FDI does not have significant positive impact on economic growth. Second, human capital, investment, infrastructure, good macroeconomic policies and openness to trade are found to be important determinants for long-run growth for the countries considered. Third, for FDI

to be a noteworthy provider to economic growth, it is important to increase absorption capacity by improving the level of democracy, increasing and improving transport infrastructure and following appropriate economic policies. And fourthly that FDI has positive impact on human development.

Another factor that impacts on development is increasingly technology. In ‘The relationship between access to information and communications technology (ICT) and poverty in South Africa’, Horn attempts to locate the relationship between access to ICT and poverty in South Africa in order to establish whether any meaningful correlations exist. The paper attempts to identify those areas in South Africa that are characterised by both high levels of poverty, and low levels of access to ICT. There is a strong negative correlation between the geographic spread of access to ICT and the geographic spread of poverty in South Africa.

Mgalama takes the technology factor further in ‘The role of agricultural extension services in socioeconomic development of east Africa: A critical review’, and specific to agriculture. The paper outlines a number of recommendations including but not limited to strongly involve stakeholders in technology development and transfer. This will assist farmers identify their felt needs rather than the needs being determined by extension service providers.

NOTE

1 South African currency – one USA dollar equals ten South African rands.