

# REVIEW

*State of the Nation South Africa 2004-2005*

Edited By John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman

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This, the second of the HSRC's annual *State of the Nation* publications, assesses government performance based on President Mbeki's State of the Nation speech in 2004. The President's speech provides a tool for opposition parties and civil society to hold government accountable to an extensive government delivery programme that contains very specific targets and time frames. The book offers an important analysis of President Mbeki's second term and a balance sheet of the major achievements and setbacks relating to the pertinent issues facing South Africa in its second decade of national transformation and democracy. The book is divided into four parts – politics, society, economy, and South Africa in Africa – with a brief summary of each part providing a wealth of information about South Africa's past, present, and future. Written by a mix of senior and junior scholars, and members of civil society, the chapters are of uniformly high quality.

The introductory chapter by the editors contains important general arguments about Mbeki opting for a third-way style social democracy and raises issues for further research in terms of whether South Africa is a developmental state like South Korea. Malaysia serves as the model. The editors devote their attention to the obstacles to South Africa's progress towards the status of a developmental state. These include problems of state capacity because of deficiencies in human resources development in the public service; the racial disjunction which continues to shape opportunity and attitudes and leads to a lack of national coherence; the global and African environment and globalisation, which limit options.

Part one, on politics, examines race and identity, the state of parties post-election 2004, ANC dominance and the opposition, rural governance, corruption and the state of the public service. Zimitri Erasmus tackles the issue of race and identity and the growing phenomenon of xenophobia. She argues that race is socially constructed and intersects with other areas of inequality and identity. She notes that being white no longer automatically conveys race privilege. Although the new black elite has been able to escape race discrimination poor black Africans continue to be subjected to it. Erasmus also shows how South Africans, black and white, use race not only to exclude black Africans from elsewhere on the continent from access to certain rights but also to violate their humanity. In this instance race now intersects with nationality and citizen rights, giving rise to xenophobia.

The issue of race also plays an important part in the elections, write Southall and Daniel, as they focus on the question of ANC dominance. However, their focus is more on declining electoral participation because of what they believe to be popular disillusionment with aspects of government delivery. The apathy could

also be attributed to complacency among the black population and lack of appealing opposition parties. Lungisile Ntsebeza follows with an examination of government's attempts to democratise local governance. Ntsebeza is perturbed by the tensions between a Constitution that enshrines democratic principles, modelled on liberal democratic lines of representative government on the one hand, and the wide-ranging powers given to an inherently undemocratic hereditary institution of traditional leadership on the other. Sam Sole deals with the issue of corruption and comments on government's efforts to roll it back, but warns of general levels of immunity in the political sphere, especially because of the rise of a new black capitalist class. Vino Naidoo reflects on the apartheid inheritance, and notes the transformation of the public service in line with the new South Africa on the basis of historical political factors of culture and change.

The second part of the book deals with societal issues. The focus is on crime and policing, the defence force, the state of schools, women, HIV and AIDS, the Muslim community in a post-apartheid South Africa, the arts, and the archives. The social dynamics and the myriad issues that need to be dealt with remain a challenge in the second decade of democracy. As far as Ted Leggett is concerned, the two most important issues to South Africans are crime prevention and job creation. And there is a need to change the social conditions of poverty and unemployment that generate crime, instead of simply trying to lock up all the criminals. Len Le Roux and Henri Boshoff examine how, through affirmative action and voluntary service packages, the predominantly white and male character of the apartheid defence force was eliminated. However, budgetary constraints and the high level of HIV / AIDS in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) constitute the biggest threat to its deployment potential and operational effectiveness.

Linda Chisholm notes the changes and progress that have been made in South Africa's schools to overcome the legacy of apartheid. But the quality of schooling remains a challenge, especially in rural areas. Tim Quinlan and Sarah Willan focus on leadership by the President and the Minister of Health as a source of problems in containing the AIDS pandemic. The statements by the Minister of Health, they write, show a lack of decisiveness about how to use knowledge gleaned from the statistics and the impact of the anti-retroviral programme. They accuse the government of having used the HIV / AIDS issue for electioneering purposes in 2004.

Goolam Vahed and Shamil Jeppie examine the diversity of the Muslim community in the context of rapid social, political and economic changes in the past 10 years and Lynne Maree examines the state of the arts after ten years of democracy. Maree gives an overview of privilege and prejudice in the arts sector during apartheid, which continues today. The appointment of Pallo Jordan as Minister of Arts and Culture gives hope to a sector where racism and racially structured thinking are still the order of the day. Seán Morrow and Luvuyo Wotshela, writing about the state of the archives and access to information, raise the importance

of archives to any society interested in its past and its future. On a progressive note, Shireen Hassim appraises the new South Africa's readiness for gender equality and the creation of special institutions for advancing women's interests. She cautions, however, that the increased representation of women might not lead to a congruent representation of the policy interests of disadvantaged women as members of Parliament are accountable to their party rather than directly to an electoral constituency.

The focus on the economy is important, as the authors have read into the President's speech a turning point in government economic policy, particularly on the crucial issue of poverty alleviation. The President promised an expanded role for state and state-controlled enterprises in the campaign to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014. The last six chapters, on the economy, touch on the crucial issues of transformation of ownership in South Africa – black economic empowerment, unemployment, poverty alleviation, inequalities and service delivery. From Stephen Gelb's overview of the economy to Benjamin Roberts's review of poverty policies, the chapters point to the political centrality of the assault on poverty, which is vital to South Africa's democratic project. The final two chapters assess South Africa's foreign relations with Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The authors dismiss suggestions that Nigeria and South Africa have hegemonic tendencies in their respective regions. In the final analysis Sachikonye, like most observers, reinforces the perception that South Africa's quiet diplomacy with Zimbabwe has been ineffective and ambivalent, proving that South Africa is not a regional hegemonic power.

The book's major strength lies in its use of critical analysis of South Africa's economic, social and political progress to judge whether government is performing and whether the politicians are delivering. However, it would have been much enriched by a powerful conclusion analysing the role of civil society. A country undergoing changes, as South Africa is, needs a strong civil society to guard against authoritarian tendencies. Whilst the President has given targets and time frames, who is going to check on government performance and accountability and ensure that government keeps its promises?

Despite this omission, the book is a valuable resource for readers seeking to understand South Africa's past, present and future policies on transformation. It is particularly useful for students of South African politics, civil society, and anyone who wishes to celebrate the achievements of the first ten years of South Africa's democracy, the way it has dealt with apartheid's past and the challenges of growth that lie ahead.

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