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# Whatever happened to the post-apartheid moment?

Past hopes and possible futures for southern Africa

Peter Vale



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James Gutinyu. Photo © Nick Sireau/CWM

### **About the author**

Peter Vale is Nelson Mandela Professor of Politics  
at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

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# Whatever happened to the post-apartheid moment?

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# Preface

This essay looks at southern Africa in the fourth year of the third millennium and explores what futures lie ahead for the region and its peoples. A decade ago an exercise of this kind would have been thought unnecessary – indeed untoward – because the ending of both the Cold War and apartheid promised to deliver southern Africa from its fractious past. Seamus Heaney famously wrote at the time that hope and history had rhymed.<sup>1</sup>

It is a cliché to say that the future was not what we expected it to be. In southern Africa, hopes of peace and prosperity have been dashed. This issue underpins this entire essay; but so too does the view that other futures are still possible. Thinking aloud about the region, its past and its future, represents an opportunity to give form (or rather forms) not only to present uncertainties, but to the future itself.

There have been a number of exercises that look towards the region's future. The most famous of these, at least in the public domain, is the exercise conducted by the Institute for Global Dialogue in 2002,<sup>2</sup> in which I participated. Borrowing from the techniques offered by scenario-building, versions of southern Africa's future were sketched out. The first scenario sketched a region dominated by internecine conflict between the states of southern Africa; this was called 'Danger, Ingozi, Kotsi'. The second, called 'Market Madness', portrayed a regional future dominated by entirely free and unfettered markets linked to a world in which market forces were supreme. The third scenario, called 'Regional Renaissance', envisioned a region in which strong leadership would help to reverse economic decline and poverty by sharing the goals of social democracy and economic justice. The fourth scenario, 'The Slow Slide', traced a trend towards neo-patrimonialism and clientalism throughout the region. Finally, scenario five – 'Poor but Proud' – described a region, with weak governments and under-developed civil society, which was disengaged from the international community.

In the second part of this essay, I too outline possible futures for the region on the basis of the arguments – historical and other – that are made in Part One. To be frank, I have done this with certain

nervousness: scholarship cannot seek to predict the future and only the most foolhardy of scholars attempt to do so. However, scholars can try to interpret the past, explain contemporary events and, very tentatively, suggest what might happen if the present trends continue – although often, of course, they do not. It is not intended that the futures set out here should provide quick and easy gratification to the sound-bite mentality which drives policy punditry in South Africa and elsewhere. If anything, they show that there are no ready answers to southern Africa's myriad challenges.

When I was invited to participate in this project by the Catholic Institute for International Relations, my initial response was to decline. I had spent nearly 15 years thinking about the region and trying to engage with its politics. My own intellectual interests had drifted towards social theoretical issues, and I had just completed a dense (and somewhat overly theoretical) book on southern Africa; a book that focused particularly on South Africa's approach to regional security.<sup>3</sup> This had however left me with the uncanny feeling that hidden within its chapters a shorter, more immediate, work was waiting to escape. Between these new covers, then, that escapee may well be found.

I hope this essay will be received in the spirit in which it is offered. As any reading of the burgeoning literature in African studies would suggest, an acute tussle is under way over the nature and scope of knowledge. Of particular importance in this conversation is the issue of who can write on Africa and African topics. I cannot escape either my own past or who I am. So, yes, this essay is written from a particular experience of the region and its ways – but I hope that my own political and intellectual concerns for social emancipation and the region's people will shine through in what follows.

The above point also raises an ancillary, but important, question: where in the world does South Africa, the region's newest state, belong? Once, especially during the Cold War, the answer to this question was clear – it belonged with the West, those white-centred states that opposed communism as much, it seems fair to say, as they opposed the liberation of what many still call the Third World. Indeed, apartheid's longevity – the point was often made – was contingent on the support that the minority received from the West. After the ending of apartheid, many expected this to change, but alas it has not. In a perceptive foreword to the catalogue for South

African sculptor Brett Murray's 2002 exhibition 'White like me', Ivor Powell writes:

For all the lip service of African National Congress politicians to African traditional customs and values, the new South Africa is as powerfully written by the dominant global white discourse as ever was the old. We buy into American economic and cultural values and aspirations as enthusiastically and as unreflectively as we buy into the compromised values of Westminster and United States democracy, not to mention abstract notions like justice and fair play. We educate and define knowledge and achievement almost exclusively in terms derived from the imperialist hegemony of the Western 'white' powers ... <sup>4</sup>

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This essay is for my friend John Barratt – gentleman, scholar, progressive Catholic.

*Peter Vale  
Grahamstown, South Africa, January 2004*

# Part One

*“Reality always presents proliferating multiplicities”*

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri<sup>5</sup>

As the Cold War ended southern Africa seemed destined to change. This was confirmed months later when F W de Klerk made his famous speech to the last minority-ruled parliament declaring his determination to end apartheid. It seemed as if the deepest obstacle to regional peace and prosperity had been removed. The world’s basket-case region, as southern Africa was sometimes called, appeared poised to change its fortunes. At last, its people might be given the opportunity to reach towards the miracle social and economic formulas that had developed in the Pacific Rim and, earlier, in Europe. Throughout the region – indeed throughout the world – there was much talk of southern Africa’s long-outstanding peace dividend. As importantly, it seemed that destiny had delivered a rare victory of the triumph of the human spirit – this time over the scourge of racial discrimination. The campaign that had been ignited by the abolitionists, that had united mankind against both Hitler and apartheid, was finally over. In the long march of liberation politics, the ending of apartheid was a victory that could be shared by the peoples of the world. Hidden beneath the jubilation, however, another victory was celebrated by the powerful, the rich and other global elites: a victory for rational social ordering, for the power of neoliberal economics, and for the averred ‘common sense’ of utilitarianism – the three perspectives on social relations that have come to dominate political discourse and practice in the early 21st century.

The direction in which these would take southern Africa was difficult, if not impossible, to see in the mood of optimism that marked the times. Instead, the passion felt for South Africa and the identity with the suffering of its people drew the world towards the idea that a new southern Africa would rise from the old. In this new political place, it was hoped that borders and boundaries would matter less than would the rights of people. In southern Africa the future would belong, as South Africa’s Freedom Charter boldly claimed, to its entire people.

Explaining why this has not happened is a major concern of this essay. Our interest is, however, also with the future – what can happen in southern Africa given its turbulent past and the rich tapestry of its peoples. In order to explain and predict, this essay ceaselessly asks questions. The target of these questions is the institutionalised social relations that have generated the great discrepancies in wealth and power that mark the region's past and present, and that threaten its future.

## **Past tense, future perfect**

Although the ending of both the Cold War and apartheid ignited optimism in the early 1990s, not a small part of this enthusiasm was a function of the wave of democracy that was sweeping many corners of the world, including southern Africa. In quick time Zambia (October 1991) and Malawi (May 1994) turned away from the routine one-party African state – the form of domestic politics that had characterised the region for more than two decades. Under the banner of multipartyism and the norms represented by liberal democracy, both these countries returned new presidents to office.

Elsewhere in the region, other promising developments were afoot. In Namibia, negotiations leading to the country's first multiparty elections brought an end to the long diplomatic stalemate. To the north, the damaging war in Angola edged towards peace. Across the sub-continent, in Mozambique, another war drew to an end as the Renamo rebel group and the Frelimo government committed themselves to elections. As these events unfolded, the energy released by South Africa's own successful transition reinforced the sense of regional optimism. Indeed, southern Africa's position as Africa's hope for the future became an incessant theme in innumerable international discussions.

Given these developments, it is not surprising that the early and mid-1990s was a 'golden age' for the idea of a region structured around states – and for planning for its future. Anticipating South African membership, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference re-invented itself as SADC – the Southern African Development Community, in which all the member states pledged themselves to a fully multilateral future in a region where colonialism, racism and apartheid had previously held sway. As the SADC looked towards deepening its interest in the security and



political sectors, commentators and politicians happily suggested that both a regional army and regional parliament were within the SADC's grasp. In addition, a regional police academy was mooted, an institute to explore possibilities for integrating electrical power in the region was established, an idea for the common training of regional diplomats was advanced, and the promotion of naval cooperation to protect the region's maritime resources was prioritised.

In 1995, ministers from the European Union and the SADC met in Berlin in the centenary year of the convention that had sanctioned the division of Africa into separate territories. At this second Berlin gathering, ministerial groupings agreed to promote closer trade, and to foster and deepen political and economic contacts across, and between, the two regions.

But southern Africa was less than it pretended to be. For one thing, formalised relations between the region's sovereign states – for all their commonalities – were not, nor ever had been, close and intimate. Rather, their relations were impersonal, always contractual, notwithstanding the ritual tributes paid to solidarity and struggle. One particular relationship – that between South Africa's president Nelson Mandela and his Zimbabwean counterpart, Robert Mugabe – exemplified the tension. Always terribly formal, the personal and professional intimacies necessary to draw the region's strongest economic poles together were simply absent. The explanation for this is to be found in the relationship between the African National Congress (ANC) and Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Popular Front (ZANU-PF) party. While rhetorical expressions of comradeship abounded, history revealed something else. During the 1960s and 1970s, the ANC and ZANU-PF were engaged in fierce struggle. The ANC's chosen partner in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was defeated in Zimbabwe's March 1980 independence poll. In that event, it took all the diplomatic skill of a youthful Thabo Mbeki to convince Mugabe and ZANU-PF that the ANC was a serious political player in the struggle for South Africa.

Nevertheless, the enthusiasm for renewal and the passion for building a new region in the early 1990s invariably over-shadowed more sober analyses of the prospects for regional cooperation or, indeed, the lessons of history. So, as an example, the tension between Mugabe and Mandela did not prevent South Africa and Zimbabwe

(and others) from agreeing to cooperate on a number of regional initiatives. The most famous, perhaps, was the intervention in September 1994 by three southern African presidents – Quett Masire of Botswana, Mandela of South Africa and Mugabe of Zimbabwe – in the simmering conflict over political renewal in Lesotho. Using the then fashionable notion of preventative diplomacy, the three presidents agreed on a course of action which aimed to return the elected government to power.

The path to the decision, however, was strewn with the kind of rumour and speculation that had made for so much of the region's troubled past. It also witnessed the use of intimidation by South Africa. The country's crack paratroopers, stationed in the neighbouring Free State province, were dropped, in full sight of the citizens of Lesotho's capital Maseru, on the South African side of the border. This was a re-play of an old apartheid ruse; as in the past, sadly, it was also the harbinger of violence.

High-handed intervention like this was not the only face of a new regional purpose during the region's golden age. Southern African civil society, often hidden below the region's ruling elite, suddenly bloomed. Reaching across borders in entirely new and promising ways, the idea of strong civil society was revitalised as a counterweight to the authoritarianism that characterised the region's politics. At SADC ministerial and heads-of-government meetings, civil society set up noisy and boisterous talk-shops in the proverbial opposite side of town. But their most spectacular success was the silencing of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe during a visit to South Africa. This happened in August 1995, shortly after Mugabe first savaged the common law rights of homosexuals in Zimbabwe. South Africa's vociferous and increasingly confident gay community took to the streets of Johannesburg. Their protests during a meeting of the region's governing elite entirely silenced Mugabe, at that time one of the region's most influential leaders.

However, this vitality and solidarity did not last long. The departure of talented leadership for government and the private sector, especially in South Africa, weakened the impetus towards trans-regional civil society. Hopes that single-focus groups could deepen cross-border civil society continued in tiny pockets – a university conference here, an exchange of sympathisers there, a panel of experts somewhere else – but, by 1997, hopes that a new

impetus could be brought to the life of the region by civil society were all but over.

Slowly, at first, but quite perceptibly in the late 1990s, the region seemed to be drifting apart again. The optimism of the golden age briefly flared in July 1998 when Nelson Mandela, then still South Africa's president, married Graca Machel, the widow of the former Mozambican president, Samora Machel. At the time there was talk, especially in South Africa, of the symbolism involved in uniting the elites from the two neighbouring states. But this was the stuff of fairy tales, most of it linked to the deep affection that many in the region felt towards Mandela and, indeed, towards his bride.

If the region's golden age was over, it took an almost quintessential act of old-fashioned southern African violence to announce its demise. This occurred in September 1998, when South Africa invaded Lesotho. While multilateralism offered the operation the fig leaf of respectability, the event was both an assertion of state power and a reassertion of the hegemony of the new South Africa on the affairs of the region. For all the optimism of the golden age, the politics of the region – state politics, in particular – had found it necessary to bring the region's people to heel. Disorder in Lesotho reflected poorly on markets – especially on the foreign investment markets that South Africa was desperate to access.

There is slightly more here, however. This turned on the region's newest member. South Africans – of all colours and persuasions – held (and continue to hold) caricatured views of the region and its politics. These have proliferated because, too quickly and conveniently, South African elites look past the region towards other worlds. Moreover, South Africa's histories and its teaching have encouraged the country's people to forget that their own identities are deeply embedded in the region. Even more tragically, the economic rationality and derived insecurity that dominate everyday life in post-apartheid South Africa encourage limited perspectives of the region. As a result, most matters concerning southern Africa have been reduced to issues around economic performance and state security.

Why did southern Africa lose the momentum offered by its golden age? Explanations abound, but invariably return to an uncomfortable political truth: interests – especially if these are defined in terms of sovereign nationalism – will trump ideas every time. Beyond the

rhetorical gestures, southern African states are not prepared to share sovereignty and a life together: this, more than any other issue, is the great failure of regional purpose.

## **Past perfect, future imperfect**

To fly across the face of southern Africa is to see a different world from the one laid out on political maps. In flight, southern Africa is one and undivided: its mountains and rivers, its rough savannah, its grasslands and its deserts reveal a unity which state-based politics defies. Yet state-based politics not only divide the region but also chart the most important, and the most intimate, conversations on its present and its future. This is a familiar condition, of course – but what adds tragedy to this everyday irony, is how seldom the idea is questioned. If we are to understand what became of the post-apartheid moment, we must explain why a particular form of politics, state-centred politics, has this powerful hold – why states, not people, are southern Africa's political referent.

Southern Africa is made up of 14 states – Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. But this is only one of many classifications we can bring to bear on the region and, indeed, on its states. For instance, while the 14 are members of the SADC, five have an additional life within a separate regional grouping, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the world's oldest customs union. Its members are South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia and, in an age when the fostering of trade is thought to be a desirable public good, SACU's century-old achievement is considerable.

There are also other ways of dividing and classifying the countries of southern Africa: eight of them – South Africa, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland, Namibia and Mozambique – are members of the Commonwealth (Zimbabwe was also a member until December 2003). In this clustering, the region also enjoys a particular distinction: Mozambique is the only non-English-speaking member of this association of former British colonies. And there are further, parallel classifications of the region along similar historical lines: Mozambique and Angola are Lusophone countries, connected both to each other and to a family of former Portuguese colonies.

These classificatory rituals – rituals determined by the procedures of international relationships and used by governments and the bureaucracies that make and support them – imply how arbitrarily states and their groupings arise. This suggests that, despite appearances to the contrary, states are not one and the same forever – their identities shift with time and circumstances because they are socially constructed. This lesson is desperately important for this essay. It means that there is no iron law that determines (or predetermines) that politics must be conducted by organised states. Humans are social creatures and sociability – not politics – sets both the course of, and the associations that make up, society. In their daily lives, for instance, individuals enjoy not one but many identities – as men and women, as parents and children, as black and white, as heteros and gays, as workers and bosses, as salt-users and non-salt-users.

In stressing the importance of this social construction of individual and political identity, it is important to appreciate that this view is not uncontested. Each moment of unfolding is steeped in myths that are given both lie and life by the power of history. ‘People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them,’ the black American writer James Baldwin once wrote.<sup>6</sup> So, all people (and societies) are prisoners of the conditioning that shapes the world into which they were born, and in which they live.

Whatever their political weight, sovereign states were not natural to southern Africa. Created first in Europe, the force of European culture ensured that the migration of the state was inevitable; and where culture failed, fire-power or commerce completed the state-building process. The formal history of the region has been the history of its white settlers and their legacy, and historical accounts of southern Africa have given scant attention to the forms of social organisation that existed before European settlement. Nevertheless, it is clear that many communities, which resembled modern states, and loosely enjoyed the attributes defined by the conventions attributed to modern states, functioned in pre-modern southern Africa.

The role of these communities is integral to a political conversation whose day is still to come. The ground clearing for this is already under way: the idea of indigenous knowledge and other tellings of history, so popular in contemporary academic debates, promises to yield significant insights for popularisation and further

myth-making of pre-modern society. As in the past, these will invariably generate new styles of political organisation; but we must recognise that the fate of the modern state system, not a wished-for alternative, is what immediately counts in the region's politics.

Mention modernity and its politics in southern Africa, and attention automatically turns to South Africa – the region's first modern state. These words (and their ordering) have been carefully chosen: notice that they do not read 'the region's first modern African state'; nor do they read 'the region's first independent state'. Both these honours belong, not to South Africa, but to Tanzania, which was granted sovereign independence by the British on 9 December 1961.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, South Africa played the most important formative role in the building of what Larry Bowman called 'the subordinate state system of southern Africa'.<sup>8</sup>

To appreciate how this happened, we must turn to the early European settlement at the Cape of Good Hope: an event that is generally thought to have occurred in 1652, and that brought together state and southern Africa. While his particular mission was to serve the interests of Dutch commerce and that of the Almighty, Jan van Riebeeck, who is said to have commanded the first outpost in de Kaap de Goede Hoop, introduced routines of social ordering that mimicked state form. He did this by administrative control and surveillance that, together with other procedural arrangements, helped to secure a sovereign European community from an unknown African hinterland.

This background offers the first glimpse of the structure that would come entirely to dominate social relations in southern Africa. This was sovereignty both as a form of physical separation and as a means to settle the contestation of ideas. To succeed, sovereignty had to support numerous 'lives'. Three of these are of immediate importance. First, as a distinctive form of social organisation, sovereignty secured the idea of domestic independence. With time, this was to become the all-important 'right to domestic jurisdiction' and its conceptual twin, 'non-interference' in the affairs of others; apartheid South Africa relied on both to defend itself. In its second life, and following upon the insights offered by the sociologist Max Weber, sovereignty provided states with the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. This, too, was well used by apartheid's rulers. And through a third life, sovereignty looked outwards to the

world beyond: in this role, it constructed a southern Africa of states.

As these political lives of sovereignty were turned into administrative practice, boundaries (both real and imagined) grew between different political units in the region. Appreciating this, and the historical context in which it took place, explains why early states in southern Africa were so closely bound up with issues of colonial identity and race. Successively, those who came from Europe brought with them multiple forms of fear and, yes, manifold forms of prejudice across a line that was socially cast by skin colour.

But one other issue is central: in securing its partnership with capital, sovereignty developed another life – exploitation for economic gain fostering further the privileges of birth. The consolidation of sovereignty in southern Africa occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Its spark was the South African War, but the long term consequences for the region and its politics were to last beyond the four-year duration of that conflict. The formation of the Union of South Africa, the single most important outcome of the war, first disciplined and then codified social relations in southern Africa into states. It drew to the forefront of politics a single idea: modern states offered the only possible form of social mediation and, if they mimicked their European counterparts, they could also provide both security and material wellbeing.

All other states in southern Africa were modelled on South Africa and its sovereign status. While Tanzania was the first to follow with its independence in 1961, the state which was to be the most influential and troublesome in the region – diplomatically-speaking – was the state called after the quintessential servant of the British Empire, Cecil John Rhodes: Rhodesia. Borrowing from his ideas (especially his views about the so-called superiority of European values) and, ironically, from the republicanism of the American Revolution, the white minority in that country declared unilateral independence in 1965 – a move that was not recognised in international law. This move was to mould a distinctive and strong political, administrative and military configuration in the heart of the region.

But it was Tanganyika (as Tanzania was then called) that showed that the rules of the sovereignty game, for all their appearance of permanence, could be continuously negotiated. A step-child of the colonial era – it had also once been a German colony – the country

came to independence on 9 December 1961 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere (known throughout his life as Mwalimu – teacher: he was trained as such in Edinburgh). At independence, the country had a poor infrastructure, little industry and few educated citizens. Nonetheless, with great enthusiasm, Nyerere (and his then Tanganyikan African National Union party) set about consolidating and constructing a state by building a nation out of people with diverse identities. This determination to unite peoples shifted the debate on sovereignty in southern Africa in important ways. This came with the incorporation, following an abortive coup, of the island archipelago of Zanzibar into the sovereign arms of Tanganyika in 1964. The equanimity with which this was received both in Africa and elsewhere showed that sovereign borders in the sub-continent, while they could be agreed at independence and held as sacrosanct by the Organisation of African Unity, were not always settled.

The decolonisation of the states of southern Africa followed in a cascading process. The independence of Zambia (1964) was followed by the independence of South Africa's closest neighbours – Botswana (independent in September 1966), Lesotho (October 1966) and Swaziland (1968). On the offshore islands the coming of sovereign independence was less traumatic than on the mainland states. On each occasion, independence was celebrated as an almost naturally occurring event – a common sense political response to the demands of modernisation and the hope for development (economic and other). Through this process, sovereign and national states – if they were independent – were seen as the only acceptable path for the organisation of social life in southern Africa. In the heat of victory and the joy of celebration, many issues were left for future generations to decide. Immediately, all possible divides were mediated by the state and its nation-building project in which institutions, like national universities and development plans, would blur the lines between politics, people and the only possible order offered to social life, sovereignty.

## **Cold war, hot peace**

The Cold War, like colonialism before it, cast a deep shadow over the affairs of the region. Although geographically distant from the cockpit of Cold War tension – central Europe and South East Asia – southern Africa was quickly drawn into the division of the world



into two camps, one championed by the Soviet Union, the other by the United States.

The effects of the Cold War were keenly felt in (the former) Rhodesia. As already noted, a unilateral declaration of independence had been declared by the white minority. Although technically well organised, highly armed and, given their immediate goals, politically cohesive, their capacity to survive was limited. For one thing they were isolated from their strongest cultural linkages and economic partners, the British, and with the passage of time, from the wider international community. More perilously, perhaps, they had to rely for support on an increasingly embattled South Africa from whom, in many and quite significant ways, they were estranged. And, most importantly, a war of national liberation – the second Chimurenga, as it was called – sapped their limited resources and stretched their manpower.

The war itself, and the evocation of the term, Chimurenga, were important for the wider purposes of state-creation. With deliberate intent, the term sought to recall an earlier struggle between black and white that had taken place in the 1890s. This reinforced the idea that the conflict in the country was for an already-established place, a demarcated country, a bureaucratic state which whites insisted on calling Rhodesia, and which blacks called Zimbabwe. Few questions were asked about the socially constructed nature of this entity and, importantly, as the crisis deepened, few remembered that the minority-ruled white state was little more than 50 years old.

Paradoxically the second Chimurenga showed something else, too: the sovereign borders which separated one southern African country from another meant nothing when it came to conflict. This was an event of great consequence for the idea of sovereignty and statehood in southern Africa, but it would take 20-odd years to show it. To both understand this point and appreciate its importance, we must return to the Cold War and the long simmering issue of Portuguese colonialism. Although baffling to the logic of regional state-making, the decolonisation of Mozambique and Angola was sparked by an event which occurred not in Africa, but in Portugal.

A military coup in Lisbon in April 1974 speeded both Mozambique and Angola towards independence. In the former, a political movement, Frelimo (the Mozambique liberation front), that had strong roots in European communism, prepared to govern the

country. This was an event that was watched with great trepidation by the minority government in South Africa with its strong anti-communist and racist ideology; it was followed with even greater apprehension by the illegal minority in Rhodesia. Eventually, the government which came to power in Mozambique permitted the cross-border activities of Zimbabwe's liberation movements. This formal breach of state sovereignty was repaid in thousand-fold violence by the Rhodesians. They sponsored and mobilised dissident Mozambicans to conduct a war against the government in Maputo. While this breach of sovereignty suggested the fragile roots of the region's states and their constructed sovereignty, southern Africa's fully porous borders would, henceforth, be constantly breached in the conduct of its politics.

Unlike Europe where borders are tight, tidy and turnstiled, southern Africa's are the polar opposite. It is easy to understand why this is so. Borders in southern Africa were arbitrarily drawn. In some cases, as in Europe, rivers marked the border – so, South Africa's borders with Zimbabwe and Lesotho are set by the Limpopo and Caledon rivers respectively. But in most other cases, the formal state borders which demarcate one southern African state from another are little more than lines on a map – drawn at the first Berlin Conference and unchanged for over 100 years. So although southern African states maintain that they are sovereign, this has often been more in fiction than in fact.

This mix of political fact and sovereign fiction generated great tragedy in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. The form it took was South Africa's destabilisation of the region: a decade-long campaign waged with great violence against the people of the region, in the name of defending sovereignty. Borrowing the cross-border techniques of the former Rhodesia – in some cases, using the very same soldiers and surrogates – South Africa used its considerable military power to strike deep into the sub-continent. At the same time – and this is only one of innumerable paradoxes that runs through a southern Africa constructed around the notion of sovereignty – it erected electric fences on its borders. While we cannot know for certain the cost of South Africa's destabilisation, 1989 estimates suggested that it cost US\$45 billion in material damage and other forms of destruction and took, probably, 1.5 million lives.<sup>9</sup> The long term result was a deepening of a core

paradox: while southern Africa's states pursued sovereignty, it was effectively honoured more in its breach than in its practice.

Ten short years ago the ending of both apartheid and the Cold War promised to deliver much to the region. Not only were the long years of struggle said to be over, but many believed that the moment had arrived for the region to turn its political energies towards the real tasks of liberation – education, health and welfare. Looking back over the years, and the optimism of that time, it is easy to understand why expectations outstripped the capacity to deliver.

The promise of a new beginning was premised on the idea that the region could be lifted from its multiple political and social maladies by the admission of South Africa into the regional state system; the peace dividend promised by the ending of apartheid and the Cold War; the continuance of development assistance to the states of the region; and regional multilateralism. But not one of these conditions could (or would) develop in the prescribed or expected manner. Why?

For all the pageantry, pomp and pronouncements of South Africa's new place in the order of regional things, the country was a reluctant regionalist. Not only were the bureaucrats responsible for making the first links into the region's multilateralism drawn from the country's apartheid past, but economic discourse within South Africa had turned its attention away from the region. As a 1994 report issued by the African Development Bank noted: 'What is clear is that for South Africa national interests are paramount, while regional issues are secondary and likely to remain so.'<sup>10</sup> This emphasis on South Africa's own interests, rather than on developing a common regional purpose, ended any hope that the region could become more than the sum of its separate sovereign pieces.

Extensive politicking had moved South Africa's post-apartheid government, and the economic mandarins that would serve its first two presidencies, away from its socialist (some might even have thought, Keynesian) inclinations. For decades the ANC had pledged to follow an interventionist economic role if it came to power, but once in office, the ANC drew on economic rationality, national interest and state sovereignty to feed its policy. So, for instance, South Africa favoured the Southern African Customs Union over the Southern African Development Community, and negotiated a free trade agreement with the European Union.

South Africa's failure to commit itself fully to the region compounded an already difficult economic situation facing other states in the region. The ending of the Cold War confirmed the shift in international development assistance away from its neo-Keynesian developmental goals towards market-driven neoliberal economics. The effect throughout the region – apartheid South Africa excluded – was devastating, coinciding as it did with South Africa's policy of destabilisation. The condition of the region's poor was seriously affected as public spending on health, education and welfare plummeted. In addition agriculture, once considered to be the region's economic saviour, was drastically affected.

The ANC-dominated Government of National Unity in South Africa showed an early resolve to follow a home-grown variant of structural adjustment: this is known as GEAR (Growth, Economy and Redistribution). This was a further signal to its neighbours that the new government was unwilling to bear any of the burdens of regional reconstruction. South Africa's assistance to the region's recovery would, the new government made clear, be based on the emerging international consensus over trade. In response, the country's entrepreneurial class – then still mostly white – set out to 'conquer' (as they frequently put it) the region's markets. More than anything else, perhaps, this signalled the very real continuities in policy between the regime of the last apartheid president, F W de Klerk, and the presidency of his successor, Nelson Mandela.

The rapidity of the new South Africa's conversion to the core tenets of neoliberal economics caught many in the region and in the world by surprise. Southern Africa's people and their governments had sacrificed much in the cause of ending apartheid. Exiled South Africans had lived, been educated and worked in every one of the region's states. This sentimentality aside, southern Africa had helped to ensure that South Africa's transition was the very success that the world had come to applaud. The tale, probably apocryphal, is told that at the end of his first official visit to the new South Africa as a guest of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mwalimu Nyerere, the leader who had contributed more than any other in the cause of South Africa's exiles, was locked out of his Johannesburg hotel because, the tale concludes, the budget for his visit had expired.

However, a deeper, more profound and paradoxical analytical oddity had been thrown up by South Africa's policy choices. This

reaches into the core of contemporary politics at both local and global level. The ascendancy of neoliberal economics as the dominant form of social organisation, and the forceful discourses that have driven this, have corroded the relationship between state and citizen throughout the region (as they have throughout the world, incidentally). Bluntly put, national states are unable to defend the material interests of their citizens. As public spending on education, health and welfare has been cut back, one 'life' of sovereignty has been weakened, not strengthened – and this has happened at a time when the public rituals of democracy have changed. This move has jargonised political practice, retarding rather than advancing democratic prospects in a world of growing inequalities, deepening poverty and ideological stridency.

The coincidence of a weakening of the capacity of the state to deliver and the rise of ritualised forms of democracy has compounded two deep and fractious issues in Zimbabwe. First, for all the celebration of multiracialism that followed upon its independence, the focus of nation-building in Zimbabwe has been directed towards one racial grouping only. Secondly, and bound up with the first, the political process in Zimbabwe – a process once hailed as democratic – has focused on a single ethnic group, a single political party, and a single national leader. Because of the country's centrality, both in the region's geography and in its mind, this alignment of what we might call national exceptionalisms has been disastrous for the region itself. Zimbabwe is a crisis of past behaviour, a crisis of sovereignty and a crisis of ritualised democracy. Like Haiti, Zimbabwe is suffering from a form of political autism, to borrow a forceful metaphor from Peter Dailey.<sup>11</sup>

This image offers an opening to transport some of Dailey's thoughts on Haiti towards the Zimbabwean crisis. Consider these: in both countries, a predatory national democracy has narrowed economic and other opportunities for the bulk of the people. In both, government and the ruling party are the primary routes to power and wealth. In Zimbabwe, as in Haiti, the corrupt forces of law and order (and the military) operating in the service of the ruling party, have fuelled mounting human rights violations. And in both, the independence of the judiciary, the universities and other institutions has been steadily eroded. This simple comparative technique lends itself to a gloomy conclusion – Zimbabwe is Africa's

Haiti. Its endgame promises to be long, difficult and terribly compromising both to its citizens and the entire region.

Zimbabwe seems, therefore, to symbolise the dashed hopes for the moment when hope and history rhymed, to recall Seamus Heaney's compelling image. But what the on-going crisis in Zimbabwe has also done is to finger the inadequacy of organising the affairs of southern Africa through its states. In a perverse way the inability of the other states in the region to stem the tide of events in Zimbabwe, notwithstanding numerous efforts at intervening, reinforces this unhappy conclusion.

So, the question of what to do in (or for) Zimbabwe has been corroded by sovereignty and national interests, and demonstrates the limitations of contemporary forms of democracy. Policy responses to political autism are invariably hemmed in by the tangle of history that has made both the region and its state system the permanent prisoner of the force of sovereignty. Charting a way forward for Zimbabwe has raised searching questions over both the form and content of politics in southern Africa. But what the Zimbabwean crisis has also illustrated is how the sheer passion for the region that was so prevalent during the anti-apartheid struggle has been wasted. Reviving this passion is the direction to which we now turn.

## Old world, new world

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims in return for foreign investment and trade to promote accountability, good governance and peace in Africa. Although these goals seem clear, less certain are the means for getting there. For instance, the documentation that established NEPAD is both vague and shallow – the product of political and diplomatic compromises that have been necessary to give it both form and acceptability. In every way, then, NEPAD is the victim of the very process of multilateralism it seeks to promote. Given the necessity to conform to the dominant forms of multilateralism, it was unlikely that NEPAD could deliver a new, or an alternative, economic or political paradigm. Instead, running through NEPAD is a market-inspired notion of deal-driven social ordering – sound corporate behaviour for further and continuing economic engagement. But the 'how' question immediately looms large: how is good behaviour to be monitored, and how is foreign economic engagement to be measured?

Much has been made about the idea of 'monitoring governance'. This idea is not new, of course, but NEPAD has moved the conditionalities attached to aid and investment into the political chambers on the continent. Put differently, Africans themselves will draw up the conditions for economic and political behaviour that will satisfy international investors, and they will simultaneously monitor these. In this process, the 'peer review mechanism' will play an important role in judging the political behaviour of African leaders and their governments. What form this mechanism would take was the subject not only of heated political speculation, but some disagreement among those who signed up both to the spirit and the letter of NEPAD. In the event, Mbeki's idea of a small review panel of eminent persons – judges, retired politicians, academics and the like – triumphed with the appointment of a group of eminent Africans in May, 2003.

Can this be effective? The stuff of sovereignty is riddled with failed efforts to move or even nudge the domestic politics of others. If censure or diplomatic pressure fails, what is next? Contemporary multilateral theory, as the ideas behind NEPAD show, patently believes that economic rationality will eventually curb the political behaviour of miscreants. But the volunteerism attached to NEPAD means that undemocratic or authoritarian states, like Zimbabwe, will simply not join. So NEPAD, like most other clubs, will be populated by like-minded members. But if the exclusivity of the club is one set of issues around NEPAD's future, another is the routinised politics of contemporary multilateralism which is ... well, no politics at all! When stripped of its livery and its jargon, contemporary multilateralism operates as a series of technical responses both to constitutionalism and protocol – it is wholly depoliticised, entirely lacking what Adrian Leftwich calls the 'intensity of and immensity of the dramas of politics'.<sup>12</sup>

For southern Africa's people, as opposed to the region's states, the flowering of globalisation's discontents has yielded a series of acute dilemmas, as much as they have rekindled old memories and fears. For many across the region, the hard-won battle to capture the state has been undercut by the erosion of national sovereignty. For others, however, the willingness of regional governments to readily comply with the requirements of neoliberal capital has tarnished the idea of nationalism. It has raised serious conceptual and practical questions

over the idea of nation-building as the primary goal of emancipatory politics.

NEPAD is an excellent example of the narrowing of popular participation within a series of disciplinary codes represented by market economics and liberal democratic practice. Rather than representing a new moment in the liberation of Africa and its people, NEPAD, like Tony Blair's 'Third Way' upon which the idea rests, is more what has been called a 'New Authoritarianism'.

Can this change? Unwilling to promote a sense of a common regional purpose beyond the level of gesture, southern Africa is a conservative region populated by conservative states – states that are disinclined to share the sovereignty that both constitutes and divides them. Instead of extending the sense of emancipation outwards and into the region, state-centred concerns continuously close out the possibility of developing a southern African region in which people matter more than national interests. Although the ending of apartheid appeared to offer numerous cues to alter this social form, the brutal truth is that the states of the region continued to live up against the region's people, not with them.

The post-apartheid notion of freeing southern Africa, of achieving regional peace, of extending parliamentary democracy, of liberating people – or a host of similar post-Cold War images and platitudes – underestimated the gravitational pull of state sovereignty. It also misunderstood that the very shifts that championed change in the region also allowed for the continuity of sovereign purpose. So, for example, the rush to establish a 'Rainbow Nation' – to intentionally draw upon the trope first introduced by Desmond Tutu – called South Africans towards a nationhood that, to all intents and purposes, had not previously existed. In the space that this call opened up, policy-makers quickly urged that rationality provided the most important guide to South Africa's international, regional and other policies.

This has great significance for the future of southern Africa. Is the notion of the region to be a technical one – a series of administrative tools that measure progress within the parameters and jargon of multilateralism? Or is southern Africa to be something more – a place of passion, of common identity, of continuing liberation?

During the long and difficult years of struggle the idea of region raged with emancipatory passion. Today, in the hands of a



bureaucratic class, southern Africa is associated with the protocols of summitry, of flags, of all the narrowing techniques of present-day diplomacy. This has had a profound effect in post-apartheid southern Africa and on the idea of southern Africa. The idea of building a common region is continuously mediated by the dulling routines of state sovereignty. In other words, states – not people or their passions – control the idea of region. To recall Adrian Leftwich's phrase, the regional project has been removed from the 'intensity of and immensity of the dramas of politics'.

If the process and procedures of sovereignty and multilateral politics cannot return the region to its people, what can?

# Part two

History suggests that education might help. At each moment in the unfolding of southern Africa's political drama, universities have demonstrated the facility to engage the past and to offer trans-regional ways forward. It is all too easily forgotten that a South African university, Fort Hare, trained the first generation of the region's political leaders; that, in its heyday, the University of Dar es Salaam was the global centre of the politics of emancipation; that the founding of the University of Zambia carried the hopes of a generation of regional bureaucrats and administrators; and that the National University of Lesotho trained many of those who now lead South Africa's and other regional governments. But these institutions have greatly suffered the onslaught of state nationalism and, more recently, of market economics. Where they should have offered both explanations and understandings – not to mention a new vision – for the region and its future, southern Africa's universities have been increasingly complicit in the rise of a managerialist agenda that has been shaped by power and money. It will not be easy to change this: the corrosive purpose of neoliberalism has put pressure on freedom of thought and expression. If these institutions further falter, especially in South Africa, the region's powerhouse of ideas and knowledge, the prospects for the generation of intellectual originality and emancipatory politics looks poor.

## What's to be done?

Rekindling the region's long record of struggle and engagement, successively, with colonialism, racism and apartheid remains a possibility but, as these pages have suggested, political times have changed. The rising and flourishing of market economies and the technocratic class have pushed politics and the agendas that drive them further and further from the gut-wrenching passion that brought millions onto the streets of the region's cities to protest and, later, to celebrate freedom and independence. So in the wake of political consumerism, the great issue of our times is fraternity. At what price, southern African solidarity?

This now seldom-asked question stands at the heart of any understanding of southern Africa's future. If states and the

sovereignty upon which they rely have failed the region's people, where is the place of struggle over identity, self-definition and projection into the future to be found? Rooted in the region's rich tradition of critique, this question opens a subversive moment in this discussion. Subversive it may well be, but it fingers a central question – identity – and opens in its wake another uncomfortable question: is there anything in southern Africa, beyond the disciplining routines of state policy and its making, that is worth dying for?

Finding an answer to this is tricky because it demands that we think beyond the conceptual framings that have made southern Africa what it is. However, the failure of states in the region demands that we think long and hard about what may lie beyond the surface of regional politics.

Paradoxically, the behaviour of states has already pointed a way to the future. The opening up of sites which offer an exchange of sovereignty is much in vogue: peace parks,<sup>13</sup> spatial development projects and the sharing of power grids. These have been forcefully promoted as a rational way to resolve regional tensions, to dissolve ecological worries, to create jobs and to grow the region's economy. All these, it is often asserted, will deepen the prospects for regional peace and community. But do these go far enough? Do they announce new forms of social control? Do they seek only to empower the already empowered, and weaken further the already weakened?

The husbanding of common resources of water by the region's states also raises the same kind of questions. The region's states have long recognised that drought, which has dogged their development, does not recognise state boundaries. But until ways can be found to manage the consequences of drought and flooding in the region, southern Africa will remain vulnerable to crop failure and food shortage. The management of water represents both a conceptual and policy challenge to southern Africa because it challenges the very manner in which the region has been constructed and administered. Consider this: the idea of southern Africa has turned on the power of sovereign boundaries rooted in colonial practice. As a result, the symbols of its development and sophistication – its industries and urban sprawls, its developed mine-heads – are all located at places that are distant from adequate supplies of water. So, economically rich South Africa has to import water from an economically poor but water-rich country like Lesotho. Multilateral efforts to manage water

resources in southern Africa are said to deliver a new understanding of the issue, but this is more easily said than done, as the following example shows.

In 1995 SADC heads of state adopted a protocol on shared watercourse systems that aimed to develop close cooperation for judicious and coordinated utilisation of regional watercourses. To succeed, this approach will require a range of political and legal adjustments, and the crafting of new policy directions in each southern African country. Additionally, the links between sustainable water resource management and agriculture, power generation, wildlife, protection of the environment, food security and the priorities of economic development must also follow in each of the 14 member states before the full benefits of the protocol will be realised. As in other areas of policy-making, water resource management needs to be integrated and coordinated with plans for economic growth, development, and the environment. This suggests how sovereign politics in each country will have to be lined up before the region's people can enjoy the overall benefits of joint water concourses. The implementation of sound community-centred policy is difficult when sovereignty is located at a distance from water.

The prudent path to managing this issue lies, surely, in the opposite direction to that programmed by states, their sovereign protocols, and narrow multilateralism: water must enjoy no sovereign value – no, this is wrong, water must enjoy a pan-sovereign value: it must become the region's only boundary. Putting water at the centre of the regional discourse will emphasise the community of interests among the region's peoples, and reinforce the interests of its states in preserving the region's most valuable and most vulnerable resource. A southern Africa organised around the centrality of water will not and cannot replace a region of states, but a politics of community in which water is at the centre can surely operate alongside existing states. This type of dual suzerainty calls for a political imagination which, until now, states in the region have been unwilling to show. However, as the ecological crisis in the region deepens, as it will, the need for new community-centred forms of managing scarce resources will increase.

Ideas like this suggest that, for all its sense of state-directed coherence, the present southern Africa is the product of colonial accident. It sustains itself with, and between, what Clifford Geertz

has called 'bundles of competing traditions [which] have [been] gathered accidentally into concocted [national] frameworks'.<sup>14</sup> The evidence of this is everywhere to be seen. It is witnessed on the streets of South Africa's cities where pavements are stacked with curios made, not in South Africa, but in its neighbourhood; it is to be found in the number of citizens from South Africa's 'near abroad' who occupy key positions in the government of the 'new' South Africa and the sectors – commercial, financial and academic – which support it. European settlement and sovereignty gave southern Africa its current form; the question is, how long will it be before the many 'other' southern Africas that lie hidden beneath the surface – beneath the way in which the region is presently constructed – begin to emerge? Can another form of region arise from the requirements of a new 'identity politics'?

Appreciating alternative theoretical and practical futures will enable more such 'social bundles' to be drawn towards the region's political surface. Archaeological research, for instance, suggests that across southern Africa, cross-border identities exist: these predate and, perforce, defy the fragmentation created by sovereign borders. Take, for instance, the Zanzibari community who live in the South African port city of Durban. Their story is a microcosm of the story of the region and its people. Captured by slavers in 1873, a hundred or so Zanzibaris were liberated by British warships and sent to Natal as indentured labourers (so exchanging one kind of slavery for another, of shackles). Shortly afterwards a further 500-odd were shipped in to join them. While their Muslim faith probably saved them from full integration into the local community, their strong sense of identity and difference has kept them secure in who they are, and what they want.<sup>15</sup>

More commonplace examples, however, dramatically underscore the prevalence of robust communities that lie below the state: take, as an instance, the region's African indigenous churches. These groupings are characterised by extensive cross-regional bonding, and highlight the potential for further growth of communities across the sub-continent. One of these, the South African-based Zionist Christian Church, with its extensive following across the entire region, presents a compelling example both of developing identity and community-in-formation beyond national borders. The lasting impact of this cross-border Pentecostalism is of course wholly

uncertain, but recognising it opens an interesting comparative point that goes to the heart of the region's possible futures.

There is little chance that states will simply wither and die. The institutionalisation of the sovereign processes offered by state practice are simply too great to believe that this could happen. But, if the 'other' southern Africa flourishes – takes form, if you like – it can come to co-exist alongside state processes. Put differently, the social and political sedimentation deposited by the region's states (and the system they have bequeathed) will not vanish – but it will be increasingly forced to find ways to co-exist alongside other forms of social organisation.

Indeed, the route to southern Africa may be in forms of association that are still to be discovered, named or imagined. These lie beyond the discourses of state power, beyond contemporary multilateralism with its controlling and technical jargon, and beyond the holding power of sovereignty with its ritual of exclusion. To raise the idea of alternative pathways to regional unity and new forms of community and belonging, however, runs the risk of counter-pressure (even counter-force) from the disciplining legitimacy of state policy which relies on the legitimacy of sovereign violence.

There is nothing new in this, of course: the making of southern Africa has been a brutal and brutalising experience whatever the myths of the history of sovereignty suggest. Counter-pressure from sovereignty may slow the emergence of a new southern Africa but the time for an alternative 'region of the local' will come.

What shape can this take? Consider these four visions of southern Africa's future.

## **Gated southern Africa**

The region's present trajectory has widened, not narrowed, the divide between a rich and well developed South Africa and its comparatively poor neighbours; within South Africa too, of course, the divide between rich and poor has grown. A GATED SOUTHERN AFRICA will be characterised by a deepening of this social injustice, economic inequality and political exclusion – and, as now, this future state of regional affairs will be justified by the idea of economic globalisation. Regional relations will, therefore, be a neighbourhood version of the global state of affairs where the United States is the world's hyper-power.

The region will therefore keep its head above neoliberal economic water by the favourable image enjoyed in the world by its richest and most powerful state, South Africa, the region's unilateralist powerhouse but ironically, too, its most compliant state. In this future, the national interests of South Africa will entirely outweigh the individual (or, indeed, the collective) interests of southern Africa's other states: as a result, the region's people will be trapped by the limitations that have been offered to them by neo-patrimonial politics. Although 'democracy' will be the catchphrase that protects the practice of South Africa's politics, both at home and abroad, it will essentially mean the right to vote in regular elections. The right to wealth will be determined by the strength of political connections, irrespective of skin colour. Policy priorities in the region follow from those in fashion elsewhere. So, South Africa will be able to consolidate its position as the regional hyper-power by relentlessly pursuing a market-driven ideology under ever more technically-driven controlling codes like accountability governance and transparency.

The effect of this strategy on the affairs of the region will be devastating. More than anything else, southern Africa will be characterised by the idea of 'Fortress South Africa' or 'South Africa versus the rest'. Migration will become a central focus of South African policy. The press of migrants to the country from throughout the sub-continent will grow to a torrent. For global elites, the policing of South Africa's borders will become a more and more important security concern. As a result, draconian laws, backed by apartheid-style electric fences, will be put in place: a gated South Africa will face out towards its neighbours. This kind of social relationship – a 'gated' country in a region of poverty – will be replicated within South Africa, too. Some places – the Western Cape is an obvious example – will slowly detach themselves from the rest of the country. Opulent enclaves such as these will stand in contrast to the poverty prevalent in the rest of the country and the region. Other footprints of affluence will be evident in South Africa. Further gated communities will arise: once again, they will divide a rich minority from a poor majority and, as elsewhere, they will be policed by the country's most profitable business, the security industry.

Formal multilateralism – the process of coordinating relations between three or more states – will not be possible in this future

region: following from the South African example, the region's elites, as now, will have failed to share state sovereignty. Nevertheless, a potent strain of regional exchange will continue: trade. Ironically, the drift of this policy will further favour the century-old Southern African Customs Union which will be underpinned by – and indeed further underpin – South Africa's hegemonic role in the region. South African traders, the country's retailers, and its manufacturers will reach deep into the region under conditions which are entirely of their own choosing and making. As a result, they will be, as now, both extractive and rapacious.

Entirely dominated by South Africa and its affluence, resources and wealth flows in the region will be, as they have been historically, southwards. As the region's transmission belt towards the world beyond, South Africa will discharge a service – but at a price in dollars, of course.

## A home for all

In a southern Africa which is A HOME FOR ALL, the current states in the region will lose their hold on the lives of southern Africa's people. The region's people will share a sense of common identity, speak a common *lingua franca* and share a common set of security concerns: these will focus around access to the stuff of survival in the region, like food and water.

Unlike the regime of surveillance and social control that marks GATED SOUTHERN AFRICA, the region will be characterised by patterns of exchange which are rooted in everyday practice. Political life will turn on the restoration of patterns that reflect quotidian rhythm; this will require a political openness and, more importantly, administrative imagination on the part of leaders. To create this kind of non-sovereign space will require completely altered patterns of association which will reach right across the sub-continent. What might these look like? How can they come about?

Changed imaginings of the region have already yielded interesting ideas. One of these was offered by the South African leader Mathews Phosa who looked towards a common authority – an 'economic bloc', he called it – which would join the Mpumalanga province of South Africa with both Swaziland and the southern provinces of Mozambique. The reasons for his plea underscore the ideas that add force to the appeal of a regional 'home for all'. These are that the



indigenous people of this rich trans-national triangle are united by blood and a common language; and that the locality engages in an exchange of goods, labour and contraband. Similar ideas have surfaced elsewhere in the region: so, for example, South Africa's Northern Cape province might conceivably be linked with Botswana. The effect of processes like these would completely reconfigure the region's political geography, opening the way to create a southern Africa which is a 'home for all'.

Appreciating the importance of southern Africa's rivers, not as a mechanism to reinforce sovereign division, but as a means to promote social and regional unity, also provides a significant and interesting way of making the region a 'home for all'. Administratively, this will require balancing the many competing needs for water and using the everyday role that water plays in the lives of both communities and individuals to augment a sense of the community of the local. Through the sharing of information and by regular communication between those who are affected, some small steps have already been taken in this direction. But these efforts remain the captive of the distance created by state sovereignty and its policy routines. To abolish this political distance the sovereign national borders which now separate river-bank communities must be eradicated and their administration brought under the control of grassroots democracy.

Bringing politics closer to the local will certainly open the space for the innumerable expressions of irredentism that appear to have threatened the region's modern form of politics. However, to overcome the destructive potential of this sectionalism requires that local control be coupled to functional responsibilities in the areas of water, or an agricultural policy which is truly common. The success of this vision of the future will require multiple and over-lapping forms of authority. So, for southern Africa to become a 'home for all', the region will have to fragment further but will be knitted together by a vision of a people-centred future based on respect, cooperation and negotiation.

How might authority in this broad-based southern Africa be distributed and mediated? Difficult to say – but what is clear is that the failure of sovereignty to deliver community from above has opened the necessity for a new form of belonging which lies beyond the imagination presently offered by the region's states.

For visionary thinkers this 'home-for-all' future, a revitalisation of a common regional purpose, begins with the understanding that southern Africa is not a facsimile of Europe: the region's states are not replicas of their European counterparts. There is no hope for a prosperous and peaceful region in the 'forced' forms of multilateralism which are under-written by the techniques of international law and the logic of legal contract. These cannot deliver a southern Africa that is both caring and sharing for the entire region's people.

## **Ecumenical southern Africa**

Located between the extremities represented by GATED SOUTHERN AFRICA and A HOME FOR ALL, it is possible to see another future for the region. In this third option, the region's states share the burden of administration with other kinds of social formation. We will call this ECUMENICAL SOUTHERN AFRICA. What possible forms might it take?

As was predicted in the late 1980s, the region might develop into a column of linked conurbations that run from Cape Town in the south, through Johannesburg in the region's centre, on towards the copper fields of Zambia and then to Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This chain would be tethered to other urban conglomerations: in the east, Durban in South Africa's Kwa-Zulu/Natal province and, further north, westwards towards Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC. The chain itself and its individual links will become centres for development – local first, but later regional. Although strange, these developments are not beyond the realms of the possible: on the contrary, they could confirm what is already a documented fact of regional life – that southern Africa is essentially an urban not a rural community.

In this future megalopolis, rapid population growth will outstrip local resources and administrative capacity. As a result, a growing number of environmental and social problems will arise in the areas of housing, water, sanitation, power, and transport services. Despite the lure and the lore of the city, the supply of jobs will not keep pace with the arrival of migrants from other parts of the region. This will lead to further problems of social segregation and growing economic inequality which will be cast, as it is now, along a political divide determined by migration.

Managing the tension that will follow, and dealing with the growth of extensive, makeshift, and shanty settlements on the outskirts of the region's chain of mega-cities, will require great sociological imagination. It will also require the political adventure and daring that recognises that states alone can no longer solve these issues – and neither can market-driven economics. Only the devolution of power and the accompanying authority to raise taxes can create the essential administrative weight necessary to form governing partnerships between states and other administrative units.

A complementary form for 'ecumenical southern Africa' might conceivably be to develop partnerships with other forms of social identity like the religious groupings that have already engaged our attention. By establishing revenue-raising and governing partnerships within the region's states, new forms of politics will have to be developed. These will require new and acceptable tests of social parity because the security of the region's politics and its people cannot be guaranteed by current patterns of inequality.

This ecumenical future would signal the end of the currency that the idea of sovereignty has enjoyed over the affairs of the region. In a curious way, a southern Africa in which state-based sovereignty was only one feature of its political make-up would turn the regional clock back to its historical heyday – its encounter with an early form of globalisation. In the late 19th century, southern Africa was a region of states, of social movements, and of business interests which competed and often complemented each other. This was when the likes of the imperial entrepreneur Cecil John Rhodes was matched against the influence of figures like the Afrikaner leader Paul Kruger, and Lobengula, the second and last chief of the Matabele. In this future, southern African authority and identity would lie alongside and, indeed, rest one upon the other. Both individuals and communities might well associate with one or more of the region's social and administrative formations. In many ways too, this has already happened: take, for example, the hypothetical miner from Lesotho living in South Africa. He is a citizen of Lesotho; probably a member of South Africa's powerful National Union of Mineworkers; and an active member of the region's 3.7 million followers of the Roman Catholic faith.

In an 'ecumenical southern Africa' the formalities and routines currently associated with multilateralism will fall away. Sovereignty,

especially state sovereignty, which has been influential for close on a century, will be replaced with multiple, often over-lapping forms of authority. As the old certainties and allegiances represented and secured by the pull of sovereignty fall away, people and the communities they make (and which make them) will seek out new and multiple forms of belonging.

## Greater southern Africa

Entirely different in its appearance is the fourth view of the region's future, which we will call GREATER SOUTHERN AFRICA. It represents the triumph of technocratic modernism. It is focused on correcting the disorderly fashion in which the region has developed. This approach aims to secure and integrate by taming rampant nationalism and other social forms which feed disorder. At its heart is the sharing of sovereignty – the development of a regime of multilateral order that balances divergent interests. How can this future work?

As we have already noted, multilateralism involves the coordination and balancing of relations between three or more states. Multilateralism turns, however, on a set of agreed-upon rules and principles which guide states and their interaction. To succeed this entails a willingness to reduce particular claims to sovereign independence – a reduction, in other words, of individual policy-making and the national autonomy which facilitates it. To build a 'greater southern Africa' will require a concession of the national claims of the region's states and a pooling of sovereignty.

The result will be an entirely new form of multilateralism in the region: one that looks towards an intense form of institution-building in order to reinforce the political and economic integration of the region's individual states. To succeed, this will have to counter the predisposition towards South Africa's hegemony and leadership of the region.

Are there historical examples of his kind of integration? Certainly, the integrative course of action which has been under way in Europe from the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 offers a helpful guide as to what, within limits, a future southern Africa might look like. So, for instance, a future southern Africa could be administered by a 'High Authority', as was the ECSC. This body would be a functionally-specific committee of

specialist officials who would exercise extensive executive power over the day-to-day affairs of the region. Patently, then, this future region will be more administered than democratically governed.

Nevertheless, the High Authority would have to be responsible to a directly elected Southern African Parliament which could exercise oversight and budgetary control. This parliament would, perhaps, elect an executive body to initiate regional legislation and to exercise further control over the functionaries in the High Authority. The detailed stuff of legislation and lobbying would reside in the committee system of the Southern African Parliament. An extensive committee system, as an example, would also be responsible for the accountability and transparency of government and, in budgetary terms only, seek to ensure the principle of subsidiarity. A president of Greater Southern Africa would be directly elected to serve a single term of, say, no more than seven years in office.

In this future there would obviously be a single regional citizenship and a common currency; and every citizen would be entitled to live and work anywhere in the region. Southern Africa's administrative and political apparatus would be underpinned by a series of trans-regional institutions and pressure groups – universities, semi-government bodies, professional associations, NGOs, stock exchanges, trade unions and the like.

As the citizenry exercise their rights in this 'greater southern Africa', however, they would find themselves bound up in a maze of municipal edict, administrative regulation and regional legislation. As in other places – the United States and Europe are good examples – the move towards an internally borderless political community is invariably caught in a web of inter-linking agreements and accords on every aspect of life and commerce. This future, irrespective of whether it is called federal or functional, is a lawyers' paradise and, if anything, the development of legal codes often becomes entirely disempowering to individual citizens. They also will increasingly find themselves subject to rule by the authority of 'experts' whose power to create the future is amplified by the ironic idea that they are thought to be above politics and that, therefore, they are more effective and professional.

Notwithstanding its efforts to reposition itself, the rationale for the existing regional body, the SADC, was shattered when apartheid ended. The SADC's failure to carve a path towards deepening

sovereign integration in the region explains why it is held in such contempt by opinion-makers, both in the region and beyond southern Africa. It is therefore not surprising that the region's politicians are either condescending towards the SADC or use it as a dumping ground for regional issues – especially in security matters – which are without resolution. To bring southern Africa's people and its politics under control – which would be the lasting goal of a 'greater southern Africa' – would require a new and more virulent form of multilateralism.

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This essay has argued that southern Africa is continuously invented, negotiated and constructed. The monopoly role played by sovereignty and its partner, capital, in the making of the region has, however, been ruptured. As a result the power of state-making – its myths, its appeals to blood, its continuous reinvention of particular pasts – has lost its purchase on the lives of a people who are in search of new forms of identity.

As the past and the present show, the politics of southern Africa are unending: there is no end to its history. The challenge, both for the region, and those who care for its people, is to claim a new future by looking beyond what is currently thought possible.

## Notes

- 1 See Seamus Heaney's 'Address: Hope and history' in *The visit of Seamus Heaney to Rhodes University in honour of Malvern van Wyk Smith*, mimeo pamphlet produced by the Department of English, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, August 2002. The phrase comes from Heaney's poem *The cure of Troy: A version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1991): 'History says, Don't hope / On this side of the grave. / But then, once in a lifetime / The longed-for tidal wave / Of justice can rise up, / And hope and history rhyme.'
- 2 De Villiers, R (ed) (2002) *Southern Africa 2020: Five scenarios*, Institute for Global Dialogue, South Africa.
- 3 Vale, P (2003) *Security and politics in South Africa: The regional dimension*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder (Colorado) and London.
- 4 Foreword by Ivor Powell to *White like me*, a catalogue produced for Brett Murray's exhibition as winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist award for 2002.
- 5 Hardt, M, and Negri, A (2000) *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 6 In the essay 'Stranger in the village' from *Notes of a native son* (1955).
- 7 By the term 'independent' I mean the handing of power by the former colonial powers, during decolonisation, to the citizens of these countries and territories. The position of South Africa is ambiguous in this respect. Although a sovereign state, South Africa was ruled by the white minority until 1994.
- 8 Bowman, L (1968) 'The subordinate state system in southern Africa' in *International Studies Quarterly*, 12: 3.
- 9 Johnson, P, and Martin, D (1989) *Apartheid terrorism: The destabilisation report*, a report for the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on southern Africa, James Currey for the Commonwealth Secretariate.
- 10 African Development Bank (1994) *Economic integration in southern Africa: Executive summary*, Harare.
- 11 See Dailey, P (2003) 'Haiti betrayal' in *New York Review of Books*, 27 March 2003.
- 12 Leftwich, A (ed) (1995) *Democracy and development: Theory and practice*, Polity Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 13 Also known as Transborder Conservation Areas: these are large areas which straddle the borders between two or more countries and cover large scale natural systems encompassing one or more protected areas.
- 14 Geertz, C (1973) *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*, Basic Books, New York.
- 15 See 'Unshackling the Zanzibaris' by Hazel Friedman, *The Mail & Guardian*, South Africa, 16 February 1996.



## **Whatever happened to the post-apartheid moment?**

When apartheid ended in the early 1990s, a wave of optimism swept over southern Africa. A decade on, hopes of peace and prosperity for the region have been dashed.

In this Comment, Peter Vale, Nelson Mandela Professor of Politics at Rhodes University in South Africa, examines the dynamics that continue to shape the region – and looks ahead to where southern Africa might go from here. In doing so, he presents a challenge for the region and for those who care for its people – ‘to claim a new future by looking beyond what is currently thought possible’.



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