

South Africa's Democratic Consolidation in Perspective Mapping Socio-Political Changes

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Abstract

Twenty-six years after South Africa's elite-driven transition to liberal democracy, this essay analyzes the values and attitudes of the public and (parliamentarian) elites to assess the country's democratic consolidation. It presents evidence that—despite singular exceptions—the South African public has followed in the footsteps of its leaders by adopting more liberal values and attitudes than it previously held. The essay identifies the challenges to consolidation as being primarily political in nature: a lack of consensus on macroeconomic policy among ruling elites as well as weakened institutional capacity to implement policy. The resultant problems plaguing service delivery and the lack of socio-economic advancement have damaged many South Africans' confidence in both their government and democracy. While these challenges continue to loom large on the political horizon, it cannot be confirmed that South Africa's democracy has been consolidated.

Keywords: Democratic consolidation, political economy, South Africa, values.

South Africa has experienced significant social, political, and economic changes since the start of its transition to liberal democracy twenty-six years ago. It is to be expected that such immense changes would be accompanied by value shifts among both the South African public and its leaders. These value shifts may or may not indicate continued support for liberal democracy. This very support (or lack thereof), of course, will determine the future of the country. Thus, value change in South Africa is essential to the study of democratic consolidation.

It is necessary to look at how the state—and the elites who direct it—shape the overall political direction of the country. South Africa's transition from

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white minority rule to democracy, in itself, is not enough to establish and consolidate a liberal democratic state and nation. For South African democracy to be truly successful—unlike its predecessor—the new regime must serve the interests of the entire nation in a manner compatible with and conducive to the liberal values of the South African constitution. This may be challenging in a divided society that faces many socio-economic expectations and hurdles.

Democratic Consolidation

It is to be expected that countries that transition to liberal democracy will experience value shifts in political, economic, and social spheres. Since values, beliefs, attitudes, and personal preferences are likely to inform political and other expressions, value shifts offer the opportunity to analyze in which direction a changing society may be headed. In a young democracy, the question may be whether democratic consolidation, indeed, is occurring.

The conceptualization of consolidation has been notoriously problematic and its operationalization even more so. In simple terms, Giuseppe di Palma posed the question: “At what point ... can democrats relax?”¹ Expressed differently, when is it certain that the institutions, rules, and constraints of democracy will outlast any challenge and that democracy is accepted generally as “the only game in town,”² meaning that no other type of rule is considered legitimate?

To answer the questions, scholars have focused on three main areas of study: structural contexts (including state autonomy); the values and attitudes of the public and elites (the majority of both groups must believe that political change should occur within the bounds of the rules and constraints of the democratic system); and the behavior of the public and elites (major actors do not attempt to overthrow or impede the democratic process).³ Although this essay touches upon issues of structure and behavior, the main emphasis is on values and attitudes.

The essay compares the moral and social values of the public and elites with the democratic ideal embodied in the famously liberal South African constitution. It also evaluates support for democracy as well as the nature of this support—be it intrinsic or instrumental.⁴ The focus on values in no

¹ Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 141.

² Larry Diamond, “Introduction: In Search of Consolidation,” in *Consolidating the Third World Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-Han Chu, and Hung-Mao Tien (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xiii-xlvii.

³ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Towards Consolidated Democracies,” in *Consolidating the Third World Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-Han Chu, and Hung-Mao Tien (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 15.

⁴ Support for democracy can be either intrinsic (based on the political ideals and values associated with democracy and thus whether political rights and civil liberties are upheld), or instrumental

way implies that this is the only or even the best way to study democratic consolidation. The study of values, however, makes a vital contribution to the existing scholarship. To be sure, it is not enough for democratic institutions to be installed in a country. Free and fair elections do not guarantee the other goods expected of liberal democracy, such as comprehensive protection of the rights and freedoms of groups and individuals, a civil society and political parties that are inclusive and pluralistic, a civilian-controlled military, the rule of law, and accountable government. In short, consolidation requires not only the institutional infrastructure of democracy, but also the satisfactory function of the democratic regime.⁵

Samuel J. Valenzuela suggests that, when assessing consolidation, it is helpful to study the factors that undermine the functioning of democratic regimes: the “possible perversions” that may “undermine the end of the democratic process, i.e., the authority of democratically elected governments, and can detract from its means, i.e., from the fairness as well as the centrality of the electoral mechanism as a route to form governments.”⁶ However, given the fact that every political regime is characterized by a value system⁷ which informs political action, it also makes sense to study the values, beliefs, and attitudes that may ultimately lie at the root of “possible perversions” of the democratic system. Indeed, problems for the functioning of democracy may emerge if powerful actors do not subscribe to democratic values.⁸ The study of values and political culture—the “attitudes, sentiments, and cognitions” that inform political decisions and actions⁹—therefore becomes essential to the prediction of political outcomes.

All political systems eventually will face serious crises, and a strong democratic political culture is needed for democratic regimes to survive them.¹⁰ This is true in a general sense, but arguably is of greatest importance with regard to new democracies in the developing world that often have all

(based on economic outcomes: how well the system delivers socio-economic goods and improves living standards). See Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, “Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?” *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 3 (2001): 447–474.

⁵ Diamond, “Introduction: In Search of Consolidation,” xiv, and Samuel J. Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions,” Working Essay #150 (1990), <http://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingessays/WPS/150.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2016).

⁶ Valenzuela, “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings.”

⁷ Seymour Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 71.

⁸ Andreas Schedler, “Measuring Democratic Consolidation,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, no. 1 (2001): 72.

⁹ Lucian Pye, *Communication and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 78.

¹⁰ Robert Allan Dahl, “Development and Democratic Culture,” in *Consolidating the Third World Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-Han Chu, and Hung-Mao Tien (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 34.

the required institutional infrastructure of liberal democracy, yet experience challenges concerning its operation. These countries often experience democracy as “shallow, illiberal, and poorly institutionalized.”¹¹

Thomas Carothers has argued that many new democracies, in fact, are in a “Gray Zone,”¹² characterized either by feckless pluralism or dominant power politics. These countries may have elections that regularly replace elites, yet these elites tend to have a similar political culture of inefficiency and self-serving policymaking. Alternatively, Gray Zone democracies may have a dominant party that remains in power in the long term and succeeds in blurring the lines between party and state. The ruling party uses the state’s resources for its own ends and weakens the state through corruption and patronage. In both cases, the state becomes weak and inefficient, while the public grows disaffected with the elites and politics, in general. The essay analyzes South Africa’s democratic consolidation with these political phenomena in mind.

Historical Context

Early in 1990, South African President F. W. de Klerk announced the beginning of the end of apartheid. The costs of maintaining the system of racial segregation and white minority privilege were staggering. The price to be paid in money and lives had become unacceptable, and the future benefit to whites doubtful. Thus, on February 2, apartheid’s last head of state announced to his parliament the repeal of the ban on black resistance movements, the pending release of Nelson Mandela from prison, and a negotiation process aimed at including black South Africans in the country’s political processes.¹³

As dramatic as de Klerk’s announcement was, the South African government already had implemented reforms to the apartheid system from the 1970s onward. In its attempts to meet the demands of a growing economy and to temper black resistance, labor restrictions were abandoned and spending on black education was increased.¹⁴ Still, pressure on the system continued to build from inside and outside the country. At home, the government faced increasingly violent resistance as well as socio-economic demands that resulted from rapid urbanization and widespread unemployment. At the same time, the cost of the apartheid bureaucracy—which had to serve four race groups separately—and the regime’s security and defense placed an enormous

¹¹ Diamond, “Introduction: In Search of Consolidation,” xv.

¹² Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002): 9.

¹³ Ben Turok, *From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane: The Evolution of ANC Economic Policy* (Cape Town, South Africa: New Agenda, 2008), 41, and Bronwen Manby, “South Africa: The Impact of Sanctions,” *Journal of International Affairs* 46, no. 1 (1992): 195.

¹⁴ Anton D. Lowenberg, “Why South Africa’s Apartheid Economy Failed,” *Contemporary Economic Policy* 15, no. 3 (1997): 63-64, and Manby, “South Africa: The Impact of Sanctions,” 197.

financial burden on the government and tax payers.¹⁵

When South Africa's economic boom drew to a close in the mid-1970s, economic troubles exacerbated dissatisfaction with the regime. A state of emergency was declared in 1985 as the government tried to suppress ongoing violent protests with brutal military measures. As the crisis and the state of emergency continued into 1986, the government lost all international credibility. South Africa now faced intensified sanctions and disinvestment, ultimately leading to a debt crisis, the collapse of its currency, and an unstoppable outflow of capital.¹⁶

Although the apartheid regime's military strength enabled it to remain in power, the cost of maintaining the bureaucratic and military apparatus would have been counterproductive as it would have continued to erode the real income and living standards of the very people who were meant to benefit from it. In the late 1980s, President P. W. Botha was replaced by De Klerk, who began to dismantle the expensive and inefficient system.¹⁷ With the collapse of the Soviet Union—a major source of financial and military support for the resistance movements—the path was cleared to negotiate an exit strategy. Over the next four years, 280 political leaders from approximately twenty-six different groups (including nineteen political parties) negotiated South Africa's future in a multiparty forum known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa).¹⁸

Late in 1993, South Africa's political elites decided on an Interim Constitution and, in 1994, a Government of National Unity (GNU) took effect under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) and President Nelson Mandela. After a further two years of negotiation in the Constitutional Assembly, the final South African Constitution was adopted in 1996. The new constitution ensured proportional representation in a multiparty system as well as extensive rights and freedoms as stipulated in a Bill of Rights.¹⁹

In addition to the negotiation of South Africa's new political system with its political freedoms and human rights, there was much debate surrounding the country's economic future. It was readily understood that, when the ANC took power, it would inherit all the socio-economic poverty and inequality

¹⁵ Lowenberg, "Why South Africa's Apartheid Economy Failed," 67-70; Newman Kwadko Kusi, "External Imbalance and Structural Adjustment: South Africa in the 1980s," *South African Journal of Economics* 61, no. 4 (1993): 290; and Stuart Jones and Jon Inngs, "An Overview of the South African Economy in the 1980s," *South African Journal of Economic History* 9, no. 2 (1994): 1.

¹⁶ Lowenberg, "Why South Africa's Apartheid Economy Failed," 67-68; Manby, "South Africa: The Impact of Sanctions," 197-208; and Kusi, "External Imbalance and Structural Adjustment," 290.

¹⁷ Lowenberg, "Why South Africa's Apartheid Economy Failed," 68-70.

¹⁸ Turok, *From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane*, 42.

¹⁹ Hendrik J. Kotzé, "The State and Social Change in South Africa," *International Social Science Journal* 163 (2000): 79-94.

created by apartheid. Many leaders of the liberation movement supported Marxist or socialist values and thus were in favor of extreme state intervention in the economy and the redistribution of wealth. The ruling National Party (NP), however, was in favor of a market economy in which property rights would be guaranteed and the role of the state would be limited. In the end, it was decided to balance the socio-economic needs of South Africa's poor with a market economy. It remained to be seen whether the new government would be able to realize South Africans' hopes for social and economic advancement, given the political and economic constraints under which it would have to operate.

The Importance of Elites

Elites in many societies play a crucial role in the making of public policy as well as in the process of democratic consolidation. In fact, it is often the elites who initiate and manage the process of democratization, with the expectation that the public will follow where they lead. This is certainly the case in South Africa, where the transition was driven by a small number of influential political leaders who arduously negotiated the country's new dispensation among themselves.²⁰ Democratic South Africa, with its exceptionally liberal constitution, is the end product of the elite negotiations discussed above. Elites remain key to the direction in which the fledgling South African democracy heads next.

The elites are "those persons who hold authoritative positions in powerful public and private organizations and influential movements and who are therefore able to affect strategic decisions regularly."²¹ Both Harold Lasswell and David Easton²² remark that elites are key decision makers concerning the allocation of scarce resources within society. They also play an important role in the transmission of values and the setting of agenda. It is largely the elites who identify, define, and frame public policy and choose how to address related issues. The way in which elites interpret and frame political events for the public goes a long way toward influencing public opinion and eventual public policy. Public policy-making processes are thus likely to reflect the values and preferences of the elites.

The role that the elites play in public policymaking and democratic

²⁰ Hendrik J. Kotzé and Cindy Lee Steenekamp, *Values and Democracy in South Africa: Comparing Elites and Public Values* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2009), 2.

²¹ John Higley, G. Lowell Field, and Knut Grohølt, *Elite Structure and Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 17.

²² Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), and David Easton, *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

consolidation can be problematic in many ways. For example, it is important that the ruling elites embody a balance of social forces. If not, they run the risk of being challenged by counter-elites who represent (or claim to represent) marginalized social groups or movements. At the same time, a degree of consensus among elites is necessary with regard to democracy's continued desirability as well as the developmental path the country is set to follow. John Higley and Michael Burton²³ maintain that no liberal democracy ever has emerged without a "well-articulated, internally accommodative, and relatively secure political elite," which they describe as follows:

Structural integration is extensive in the sense that overlapping and interlocked communication and influence networks encompass and tie together all influential factions and sector elites, with no single faction or sector elite dominating the networks. Value consensus is extensive in the sense that, while factions and sector elites regularly and publicly oppose each other on ideological and political matters, their actions over time suggest an underlying consensus about most norms of political behavior and the worth of existing political institutions. Elite persons and factions accord each other significant trust, they cooperate tacitly to contain explosive issues and conflicts, and their competitions for political power have a positive-sum or "politics as bargaining" character.²⁴

Finally, a degree of congruence also is needed between the values of elites and those of the public for representative government to be successful.²⁵ The elites require a degree of support from the masses to stay in power and carry out political and socio-economic programs. Elites, therefore, need to appeal to the values and political interests of the public. Failure to do so may result in either a loss of power or the need to revert to authoritarian measures to keep it. Taking all of the above into account, the study of values becomes pivotal for an understanding of social, political, and economic events in South Africa and how these forces are likely to shape the country's future.

Survey Data

The survey data of the Center for International and Comparative Politics (CICP) enables a thorough study of value change in South Africa. Since 1990, the center has administered the World Values Survey (WVS), which measures

²³ John Higley and Michael Burton, *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵ Kotzé and Steenekamp, *Values and Democracy in South Africa*, 2-4.

public attitudes and values. The WVS is a global initiative that currently includes six waves of study (over a period of more than thirty years), with a seventh wave expected in 2017. South Africa has participated in all six completed waves (1981, 1990, 1995, 2001, 2006, and 2013).

The CICP also has conducted its Opinion Leader Survey since 1990. This study identifies and interviews South Africa's most influential opinion leaders from various sectors, including (but not limited to) parliament, religious organizations, the media, the business world, and the civil service. The Opinion Leader Survey has been conducted nine times: in 1990, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2007, and 2013 (the latter surveyed only parliamentarians). The WVS and the Opinion Leader Survey are longitudinal studies in which respondents are questioned on a range of subjects, including values and attitudes relating to democracy and democratic consolidation.²⁶ Many of the items included in the elite questionnaire were taken from the WVS, which makes it possible to compare the values and attitudes of the public with those of its leaders.

The WVS, from which we draw our public data, is weighted to accurately reflect the South African population. The data are within a statistical margin of error of less than 2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. For the elite surveys, a positional sample was used for the selection of respondents (except members of parliament—they were randomly sampled). Unlike public surveys, elite surveys cannot be used to generalize about a larger population. The elite surveys aim to provide insight into the changing values and attitudes of South Africa's key decision makers in various fields. The surveys, therefore, retain their usefulness in this regard, despite not being representative of all segments of society or of South Africa's political spectrum. In fact, it is rarely the case that any society's elites are representative of its larger population.

For the purposes of the present investigation, the main focus is on the two latest public and elite datasets: the WVS of 2006 and 2013, and the Opinion Leader Survey of 2007 and 2013. Reference is made to earlier data where applicable. The number of respondents included in the WVS datasets is 2,988 (in 2006) and 3,531 (in 2013) South African residents over the age of sixteen. We analyze only parliamentary elites, as they are primarily responsible for the political direction of the country. The 2007 dataset included 100 members of parliament and the 2013 dataset, 142.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-13.

²⁷ In the 2007 dataset, approximately 52 percent of the respondents were members of the ANC, 25 percent were DA members, and 7 percent belonged to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The rest of the sample belonged to various other small parties. In 2013, approximately 44 percent of the members of parliament who were interviewed belonged to the ANC, 41 percent to the DA, 10 percent to the Congress of the People (COPE), and 5 percent to the IFP. The samples were not weighted and are not representative of each political party's proportion of seats in the national assembly.

Political Economy: The Problem of Expectations

In 1994, the new democratic South African government inherited all the socio-economic problems of apartheid as well as newly liberated South Africans' expectations for a brighter future. The ANC government intended to balance socio-economic needs with market forces. Unfortunately, this balancing act opened deep divisions between those within government who emphasize social justice and those who advocate neoliberal policies. The result has been a plethora of contradictory economic policies and consequent economic paralysis.

The ANC government's first attempt to balance diverging needs took form as the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), initially designed by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). In its attempts to address poverty and inequality, the RDP called for social spending and redistribution, leading to fears that it would damage South Africa's balance of payments and heighten inflation, while scaring off investors and creditors.²⁸ The RDP was plagued by problems of implementation that would haunt all succeeding policies. The program's goals were broad and vague, requiring the efficient coordination of several governmental departments. However, the RDP ministry lacked the authority to coordinate other ministries, which tended to resent the RDP, as they had to help fund it from their budgets.²⁹ Although the RDP would reach significant milestones,³⁰ it hardly made a dent in poverty and inequality and did not stimulate economic growth. In 1996, it was closed as a separate entity and incorporated into the office of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who had very different policy ideas.

Mbeki launched a new economic strategy, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan. GEAR was not the product of the inclusive consultative process the government had promised but instead was associated with Mbeki's top-down leadership style. Under Mbeki (president from 1999 until 2008), neoliberal economic policies were initiated in the hope of attaining growth and job creation. It was necessary to reintegrate South Africa into the global economy, and the implementation of market-friendly policies was vital to building relationships with multinational corporations and Western

²⁸ Turok, *From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane*, 56-59, and Vinothan Naidoo and Annelie Maré, "Implementing the National Development Plan? Lessons from Co-ordinating Grand Economic Policies in South Africa," *Politikon* 42, no. 3 (2015): 410.

²⁹ Naidoo and Maré, "Implementing the National Development Plan?" 416, and Andre Kraak, "Horizontal Coordination, Government Performance and National Planning: The Possibilities and Limits of the South African State," *South African Journal of Political Studies* 38, no. 3 (2011): 352.

³⁰ By 1998, spending on education and healthcare had increased significantly, service delivery had been expanded, more than 53,000 people were benefiting from land reform, and the government was on track to build one million new houses. See Kotzé, "The State and Social Change in South Africa," 84-85.

powers.³¹

GEAR thus focused on correcting macroeconomic fundamentals such as the budget deficit, the balance of payments, and inflation. A new era of fiscal discipline was introduced, accompanied by tax reform and more transparency in administration. Instead of nationalization, GEAR called for the privatization of parastatals and greater flexibility of the labor market.³² Additionally, black economic empowerment was supported through the transformation of public and private institutions. The benefits of creating a large black middle class were expected to trickle down to the poor.

Although both the RDP and GEAR had social objectives, in reality, GEAR's fiscal and monetary prudence often was at odds with the social spending of the RDP. The now marginalized leftist political actors criticized Mbeki's centralized (some would say authoritarian) leadership style and accused GEAR of reflecting abandonment of the poor. The official stance, however, was that GEAR would enable the government to reach its social goals faster by luring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and accelerating growth.³³

While the government attempted to balance RDP and GEAR objectives, it also entertained the idea of the developmental state: a state that prioritizes economic development and creates effective instruments with which to attain this goal.³⁴ South Africa would combine government intervention with market economics to achieve state-led growth.³⁵ However, unlike many authoritarian developmental states of the past that could intervene in their economies and societies with little care for civil liberties or human rights, South Africa would have to implement a model of the developmental state that could achieve growth without violating democracy or human rights.³⁶ It remained unclear how the developmental state could work in the South African context.

Mbeki's policies led to a higher than usual 4 to 5 percent growth rate,

³¹ Philip Mohr, "Economic Policy and Performance and the Consolidation of Democracy," in *Democracy under Construction: Patterns from Four Continents*, ed. Ursula J. van Beek (Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik, 2006), 226, and Willie J. Breytenbach, "The Presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki Compared: Implications for the Consolidation of Democracy in South Africa," *Africa Insight* 36, nos. 3-4 (2006): 178.

³² Janine Aron, "Macroeconomic Policy and Its Governance after Apartheid," in *After Apartheid: Reinventing South Africa?* ed. Ian Shapiro and Kahreen Tebeau (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 137, and Mokoko Piet Sebola and Nghamula Nkuna, "Globalisation and the Political Economy of Development in a Democratic South Africa: A Critical Realist View," *Journal of Public Administration* 49, no. 3 (2014): 931.

³³ Turok, *From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane*, 115-136, and Naidoo and Maré, "Implementing the National Development Plan?" 411.

³⁴ Chris Landsberg, "State Attributes: South Africa as a Declaratory Developmental State through Diktat?" *Journal of Public Administration* 50, no. 3 (2015): 566.

³⁵ Breytenbach, "The Presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki Compared," 180.

³⁶ Ndwakhulu Tshishonga and Kealeboga J. Maphunye, "South Africa's Trajectory towards a Democratic Developmental State: A Human Development Perspective," *Journal of Public Administration* 46, no. 4 (2011): 1237.

while keeping inflation and the budget deficit at historically low levels. However, the level of job creation associated with the developmental state did not materialize.³⁷ To address GEAR's shortfalls, the government launched the Accelerated and Shared-Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2005. Better economic conditions enabled more social spending as well as skills development and investment in infrastructure. AsgiSA also was meant to improve coordination among the different departments and spheres of government. This proved difficult, however, as there was no strong central capacity to drive priorities and ensure quality control. Additionally, infighting within the ANC as well as the onset of the global financial crisis curtailed AsgiSA's implementation.³⁸

At this stage, black economic empowerment had changed the face of South Africa's institutions, creating a sizeable black middle class and black elites who extended their control over institutions. However, policies for black empowerment did not relieve mass poverty. Thus, Mbeki's policies were perceived as elitist and a betrayal of the poor, despite the fact that welfare spending had been extended. Furthermore, Mbeki's renewed emphasis on the "two nations"—one white and wealthy, the other black and poor—and the empowerment of the latter, signaled a move away from the racial reconciliation of Mandela. The policy of preferring to hire black South Africans began to alienate minorities from the state. Racial polarization took the place of the concept of a "rainbow nation," and this polarization had the potential to weaken trust in government for those who were not black.³⁹

In addition to alienating minorities, preferential hiring policies clashed with the strict meritocracy associated with the developmental state. In contrast to a "small, inexpensive state bureaucracy staffed by the best managerial talent available,"⁴⁰ the rapid transformation of South African institutions often was characterized by cadre deployment and corruption. Rather than the "building of capable public bureaucracies in order to implement capacity-enhancing public services,"⁴¹ South African institutions encountered an experience and skills deficit that weakened increasingly bloated and expensive institutions.⁴²

³⁷ Breytenbach, "The Presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki Compared," 182, and Jeffrey Frankel, Ben Smit, and Federico Sturzenegger, "South Africa: Macroeconomic Challenges after a Decade of Success," *Economics of Transition* 16, no. 4 (2008): 640.

³⁸ Kraak, "Horizontal Coordination, Government Performance and National Planning," 352-353, and Naidoo and Maré, "Implementing the National Development Plan?" 412-419.

³⁹ Breytenbach, "The Presidencies of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki Compared," 177-180.

⁴⁰ Maurice O. Dassah, "Developmental State as a Model for Africa's Development: Is Its Emergence Imminent?" *Journal of Public Administration* 46, no. 1 (2011): 590.

⁴¹ Theresa Moyo and M. Mamobolo, "The National Development Plan (NDP): A Comparative Analysis with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Programme and the Accelerated and Shared-Growth Initiative (ASGISA)," *Journal of Public Administration* 49, no. 3 (2014): 950.

⁴² Philippe Burger, "Facing the Conundrum: How Useful Is the 'Developmental State' Concept in South Africa?" *South African Journal of Economics* 82, no. 2 (2014): 172.

Frustration with the situation mounted and those within the ANC alliance who favored socialist policies—the South African Communist Party (SACP), Cosatu, and the youth leagues—threw their weight behind Mbeki’s rival for power, Jacob Zuma. The lack of confidence in Mbeki and his government culminated in his removal as ANC leader in 2007 and the premature ending of his term as president in 2008.⁴³ Eventually, he would be replaced by Zuma. Zuma’s ascendancy over Mbeki has been described as an ANC rebellion against the latter’s pro-market policies. Others have interpreted it as a clash of personalities rather than of principles or policies, as neoliberal practices have not disappeared under Zuma, despite his supposed socialist leanings. Indeed, Tom Lodge refers to the change in leadership as “the culmination of a patrimonial transformation of the ANC,”⁴⁴ and points to the rent-seeking behavior that has become common within the ruling party.

Under Zuma’s leadership, the new Department for Economic Development (DED) produced the New Growth Path (NGP), which generally addresses the same issues as AsgiSA, but with more focus on social equity. The NGP also considers job creation to be the yardstick of success, however its emphasis is on “better” jobs⁴⁵ rather than on low paying or insecure employment (which may arguably be better suited to South Africa’s massive unskilled labor force). As with the RDP, the NGP faces problems of coordination as, once again, there is overlap between the functions of the DED and other departments. This has led to confusion and jostling for power in the absence of a lead ministry with overall authority.⁴⁶ The matter is further complicated by the National Development Plan (NDP)—drawn up by yet another new body, the National Planning Commission (NPC)—which was supposed to function in conjunction with the NGP, but appears to have taken precedence over it.

The NDP stipulates the key measures for South Africa’s development for the period 2013–2030. It does not hark back, however, to the RDP policies of redistribution. The NDP—under the leadership of Mbeki’s old Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel—aims to develop human capital, but emphasizes private-sector-led growth and job creation. It therefore leaves little room for the concept of the developmental state. It furthermore has been condemned by labor organizations as simply a new version of GEAR, under the leadership of a neoliberal Mbeki loyalist (Manuel).⁴⁷

⁴³ Roger Southall, “Understanding the ‘Zuma Tsunami,’” *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 121 (2009): 317.

⁴⁴ Tom Lodge, “The Zuma Tsunami: South Africa’s Succession Politics,” *Representation* 45, no. 2 (2009): 136.

⁴⁵ Naidoo and Maré, “Implementing the National Development Plan?” 414.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁴⁷ Moyo and Mamobolo, “The National Development Plan (NDP),” 948-954; Naidoo and Maré, “Implementing the National Development Plan?” 408-424; and Landsberg, “State Attributes,” 571.

Twenty years after the closure of the RDP ministry, the South African government is no closer to deciding on a coherent macroeconomic policy: it is still trying to balance social justice expectations (NGP) with elements of neoliberalism (NDP). The success of either program depends on sustained and cohesive support from within the ANC alliance, which seems unlikely: although opposition parties, the business community, and the nongovernmental sector have expressed support for the NDP, the SACP and labor organizations are unenthusiastic.⁴⁸ The latter continue to demand a program of state intervention and nationalization, despite the inefficiency of many state departments and parastatals.

The above overview of democratic South Africa's political economy highlights two main obstacles to the country's future political and economic success: first, there is a lack of consensus among political elites regarding macroeconomic policy. South Africa's contradictory policies highlight its "conceptual confusion"⁴⁹ over development and what the role of the state should be in this regard. The ANC's alliance partners remain in favor of socialist policies that offer a radical restructuring of the economy in the name of social justice. A policy of nationalization and extreme redistribution is entirely incompatible with the international neoliberal status quo (with its emphasis on free markets and guaranteed property rights) as well as with the creation of a developmental state. The lack of consensus is clear from the many clashing policies the government has produced and failed to implement effectively since 1994. Without newfound consensus, it is unlikely that any proposed policy will succeed, including the latest NDP.⁵⁰

A second problem is capacity: regardless of the type of policy the state means to implement, the lack of a strong, autonomous, central authority to coordinate all the (sometimes unwilling) actors leaves the state struggling to meet the socio-economic goals it sets for itself. There appears to be a lack of capacity with regard to exercising control over social and economic interactions, which has been exacerbated by the rapid transformation of state institutions. Not only has the civil service lost thousands of highly skilled personnel in the transformation process, but also it must compete with the private sector for technocratic expertise.⁵¹

Another factor that has damaged capacity is corruption, including among high-ranking officials.⁵² This, too, appears to be the consequence of the rapid

⁴⁸ Jakkie Cilliers and Hanna Camp, "Highway or Byway? The National Development Plan 2013," *African Futures Essay*, no. 6 (2013): 1-16.

⁴⁹ Michael Cardo, "The Problem Deeper Than Greedy Elites," *Business Day Live* (March 23, 2016), <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/letters/2016/03/23/letter-problem-deeper-than-greedy-elites> (accessed March 27, 2016).

⁵⁰ Landsberg, "State Attributes," 573.

⁵¹ Cardo, "The Problem Deeper Than Greedy Elites."

⁵² Landsberg, "State Attributes," 574.

transformation of South Africa's institutions as well as the political rivalries of the country's top leaders (each of whom appoints loyal cadres to key positions). Service to the public therefore has become politicized, with bureaucrats often lacking skills and experience. Corruption is rife and service delivery, slow. Some analysts have gone so far as to claim that South Africa's transition has been hijacked by predatory black elites who loot the economy with little concern for the poor.⁵³ Michael Cardo calls South Africa "a neo-patrimonial welfare state—a vehicle for redistribution and patronage, now captured by vested interests."⁵⁴

South Africa has a score of 44 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions index (2016),⁵⁵ placing it 61st among 168 countries. At first glance, this might not appear to be excessively worrisome. However, evidence suggests that corruption in South Africa is having a devastating effect on development and service delivery and that the perception of corruption among South Africans is worsening. According to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (2013), over half of South Africans (54 percent) thought that corruption in the country had increased greatly over the previous two years. Furthermore, 65 percent of South Africans thought corruption in the public sector was a serious problem (only 4 percent thought it was not a problem). When asked about the level of corruption of each sector in South Africa, respondents thought the worst offenders were parliament (70 percent), civil servants (74 percent), political parties (77 percent), and the police (84 percent). Religious bodies (24 percent) and the military (11 percent) were perceived as the least corrupt.

The perception of corruption as a serious and endemic problem is bound to have political, economic, and social costs. Corruption negatively affects the "ethos of good governance which eventually results in the erosion of public confidence and trust in the democratic process."⁵⁶ The erosion of public confidence, in turn, can lead to a population that is unwilling to cooperate with the government and institutions whose members serve only those who pay bribes. It is, in short, a road to anarchy. Transparency International's data⁵⁷ on South Africans' perception of corruption within the public sector bodes ill for public confidence in state institutions. This is confirmed by the WVS data

⁵³ Mark Anstey, "Marikana—and the Push for a New South African Pact," *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 37, no. 2 (2013): 142-143.

⁵⁴ Cardo, "The Problem Deeper Than Greedy Elites."

⁵⁵ A score of 0 indicates a highly corrupt country and 100, a very clean one. See Transparency International, "Corruption by Country/Territory," https://www.transparency.org/country/#ZAF_DataResearch (accessed April 18, 2016).

⁵⁶ Hendri Kroukamp, "Corruption in South Africa with Particular Reference to Public Sector Institutions: The Evil of All Evils," *Journal of Public Administration* 41, no. 2.1 (2006): 211.

⁵⁷ Transparency International, "Global Corruption Barometer (South Africa)," https://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/country/?country=south_africa (accessed April 18, 2016), and Transparency International, "Corruption by Country/Territory."

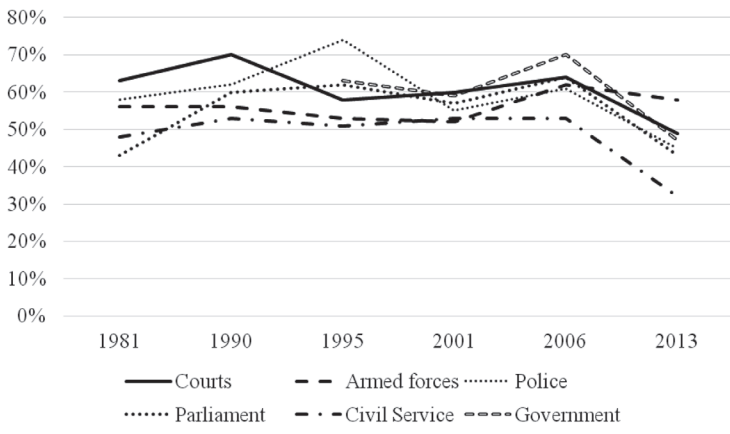
presented in figure 1.

The public’s confidence in state institutions largely mirrors its perceptions of widespread corruption in South Africa. The institutions believed to be the most corrupt also enjoyed the least confidence among the South African public in 2013: approximately 45 percent of South Africans had confidence in the police, 43 percent in the parliament, and only 32 percent in the civil service. The level of confidence in the civil service was the lowest in the history of the WVS in South Africa: South Africans had less confidence in the civil service than during the last turbulent decade of apartheid. Conversely, the military, perceived as the least corrupt, enjoyed the highest level of confidence (58 percent).

To compare the public’s confidence in state institutions with that of elites, we calculated the mean levels of confidence in the state. In 2006 (the era of Mbeki), the public had more confidence in the state (16.9) than the elites (16.0). As may be expected of those who daily direct the ship of state, ANC parliamentarians had higher levels of confidence in the state (17.7) than the opposition (13.8). The same was true in 2013: ANC parliamentarians had greater confidence in themselves (18.0) than did their rivals (13.5). However, public confidence in state institutions had fallen to 14.6, while the mean for parliamentarians, in general, was 15.5. Thus, there is every indication that the lack of capacity and autonomy among state institutions is resulting in political costs—especially among ordinary citizens.

The economic costs of corruption can be a deterrent to domestic and foreign investors and have a particularly devastating effect on small businesses, which cannot afford to pay bribes. Corruption’s negative impact on business and investment naturally has a damaging effect on economic growth, development, and job creation. Additionally, the social costs of corruption include the

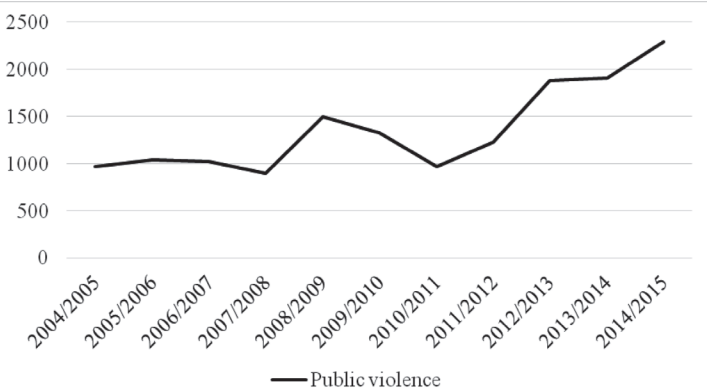
Figure 1. Confidence in State Institutions



retardation of service delivery, which affects the poor most strongly. The seriousness of these conditions is illustrated by the overall increase in public violence and protests linked to poor service delivery (figures 2 and 3).⁵⁸

Another key development has been nationwide student protests (Fees Must Fall) against tuition fees. For the first time in South Africa, social and digital media (Facebook, Twitter, and instant messaging) were used in large-scale mobilization of the public: students protesting against rising fees and decreasing government subsidies for higher education (even though public funds have been used to increase civil servants’ salaries and upgrade the president’s private residence).⁵⁹ The possibility exists that social media may be opening a new public sphere in which people can agitate for social change. However, it is not yet clear how this new sphere will affect democracy in the long term.⁶⁰ Social media users—who tend to be young people—are not

Figure 2. Incidents of Public Violence



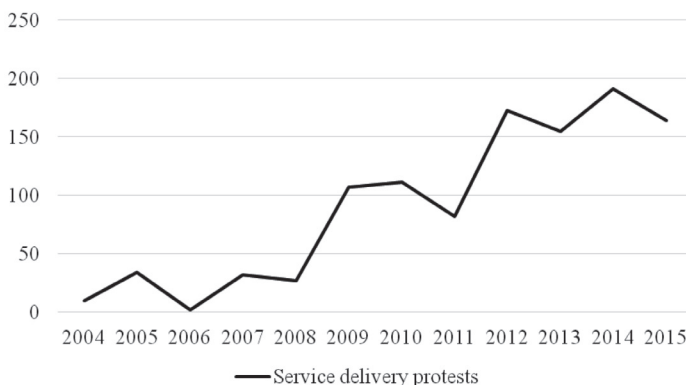
Sources: South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), *South Africa Survey 2013* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 2013), 781, and SAPS, *Annual Reports* (2014-2015), <http://www.saps.gov.za/about/stratframework/annualreports.php> (accessed August 15, 2016).

⁵⁸ Figure 2 includes service delivery protests, labor protests, and political violence. Figure 3 includes major service delivery protests directed at municipalities, excluding protests over councilor candidates, demarcation, and industrial action. At the end of 2016, 137 protests were recorded. See Municipal IQ, “Service Delivery Protests in 2016,” *Press Release* (February 1, 2017), http://www.municipaliq.co.za/index.php?site_page=press.php (accessed April 15, 2017).

⁵⁹ Sandile Lukhele, “South Africa’s Student Uprising Signals Wider Social Upheaval,” *Africa Conflict Monitor*, December 2015, and Gareth van Onselen, “R1.6bn---What President Jacob Zuma’s Bloated Cabinet Costs You,” *Times Live* (November 23, 2014), <http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2014/11/23/r1.6bn---what-president-jacob-zuma-s-bloated-cabinet-costs-you> (accessed August 18, 2016).

⁶⁰ Barend Lutz and Pierre du Toit, *Defining Democracy in a Digital Age: Political Support on Social Media* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37-53; Regarding Fees Must

Figure 3. Municipal-Level Protests Regarding Service Delivery



Source: Municipal IQ, “Service Delivery Protests Up in This Election Year,” Press Release, May 11, 2016, http://www.municipaliq.co.za/index.php?site_page=press.php (accessed August 15, 2016).

necessarily representative of the larger population. It is possible for militant minorities to use this tool to agitate for interests that are not widely supported. Also, it is worrisome that people may be protesting for change instead of voting for it. Whereas the Fees Must Fall movement initially had widespread support among students and university staff, the movement has become characterized by a laundry list of demands, an unwillingness to negotiate (indeed, an open rejection of compromise, in general, and of Codesa’s compromises, in particular), and outbreaks of violence and racism.

In addition to increased protest action, widespread corruption—as well as the perception of corruption—can lead to a culture of dishonesty and greed.⁶¹ In other words, corruption can erode liberal values—not just trust in the democratic process, but also trust among different groups in society. Figure 4 illustrates how the public feels about various instances of corruption.

On a scale from one to ten, respondents in the WVS indicated how justifiable they found the following practices (one indicating it was never justifiable, and ten, always justifiable): claiming government benefits to which one is not entitled; avoiding a fare on public transport; cheating on one’s taxes; and accepting a bribe. Figure 4 presents the mean figures for each practice. In 2006, the mean was below three for each instance of corruption, but by 2013, the means had doubled to four or more. In each instance, the public has become more amenable to corrupt practices. Although the public decries corruption in

Fall, see “Social Justice Network Condemns Hate-Speech, Violence at Wits Protests,” *Times Live* (April 9, 2016), <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2016/04/09/Social-justice-network-condemns-hate-speech%E2%80%9A-violence-at-Wits-protests> (accessed October 7, 2016).

⁶¹ Kroukamp, “Corruption in South Africa,” 211.

Figure 4. Free Riding (Public)



government and politics, it appears that the practices of corrupt officials are eroding the formerly high personal standards of honesty among the public, possibly creating a culture of corruption.

The problems besetting the government's economic policy formation and implementation have had negative effects on the economy and the public. Economic development requires the state to be able to perform expected functions such as improving human capital, delivering important public goods, and facilitating the effective and equitable functioning of the market. In the event of a return to the concept of the developmental state, government also would have to create "new state institutions that will act as agents in the quest for long-term development; it must facilitate the establishment of relationships between traditional and unconventional players within the economy."⁶² In a developmental state, the commitment to development comes first and all other concerns follow. Without autonomy and capacity-building, neither a developmental state nor economic growth, in general, are possible.⁶³ The lack of state capacity and autonomy would bedevil even a coherent macroeconomic policy, much less contradictory ones.

Social and Moral Values

Social and moral values are indicative of the degree of social cohesion and social capital to be found in a society. Social capital can be understood as the social structures (organizations and networks) people use to mobilize and cooperate in civil society. Such cooperation is believed to foster a set of values

⁶² Landsberg, "State Attributes," 567.

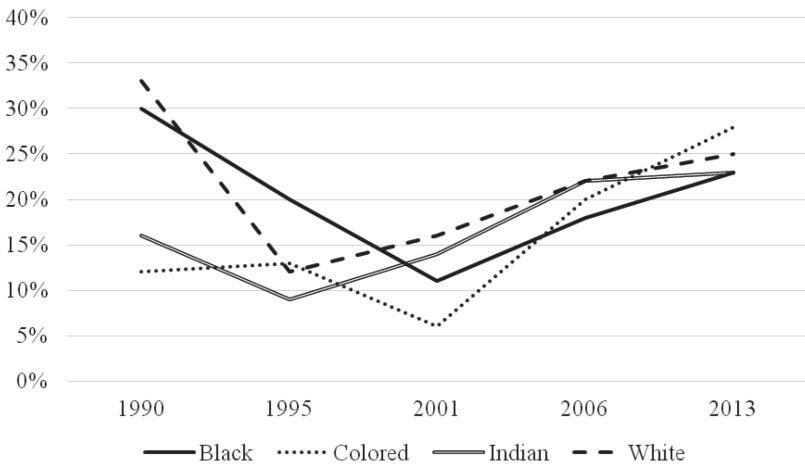
⁶³ Cardo, "The Problem Deeper Than Greedy Elites"; Dassah, "Developmental State as a Model for Africa's Development," 592-593; and Landsberg, "State Attributes," 568.

that is beneficial to society: trust, tolerance, and reciprocity.⁶⁴ These values, in turn, are considered vital to the endurance of democracy: a democratic society needs tolerance for opposition groups and those who hold unfamiliar or even offensive beliefs, if everyone is to enjoy equal citizenship and if elections are to be free and fair; a democratic society also requires trust within and among communities so that civil society has the capacity to check the power of the state.

Figure 5 illustrates the levels of generalized trust (the percentage of people who believe that most people can be trusted) found among four different South African communities.⁶⁵ The period of political transition and the early democratic era led to a substantial drop in trust, especially among black and white South Africans. A turning point was reached in 2001: trust among all groups rose and has continued to do so. However, South Africans recently have experienced a series of much publicized race rows started on social media, some of which have resulted in court cases.⁶⁶ It remains to be seen whether these fresh racial tensions have dented levels of trust.

Unlike trust, social tolerance (figure 6) indicates a more worrying trend for South Africa, particularly with regard to tolerance of immigrants. Forty-one percent of respondents indicated they would not like an immigrant or

Figure 5. Generalized Trust

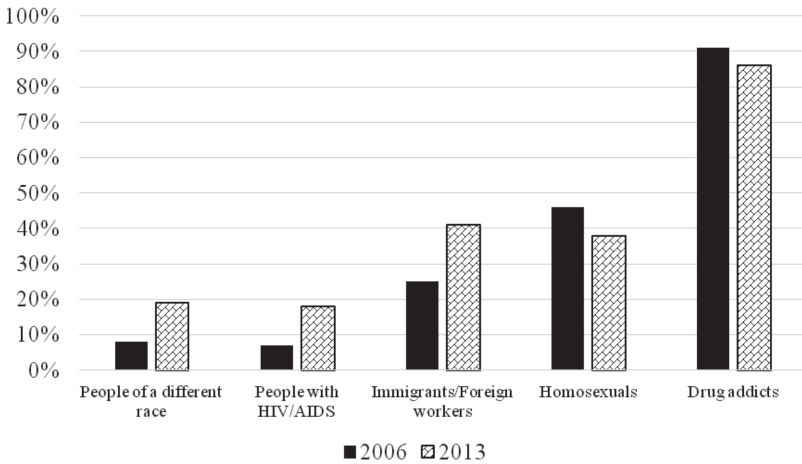


⁶⁴ Kenneth Newton, "Social Capital and Democracy," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5 (1997): 575, and Kotzé and Steenekamp, *Values and Democracy in South Africa*, 119-120.

⁶⁵ The communities in question are based on race, which unfortunately remains a significant social cleavage in South Africa and therefore an unavoidable unit of analysis in the social sciences.

⁶⁶ Qaanitah Hunter, Thanduxolo Jika, Jan-Jan Joubert, and Bianca Capazorio, "Jail the Racist," *Sunday Times* (January 10, 2016), <http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/stnews/2016/01/10/Jail-the-racist> (accessed August 23, 2016).

Figure 6. Social Tolerance



foreign worker as a neighbor (compared to 30 percent in 2001 and 25 percent in 2006).⁶⁷ Intolerance of immigrants is disconcertingly high. The elites are far more tolerant than the public in this regard: those who did not want immigrant neighbors declined from 13 percent (2006) to 8 percent (2013). Intolerance toward people of a different race also has more than doubled among public respondents: from 8 percent to 19 percent (close to the 2001 figure of 23 percent). In contrast, only one to two percent of elites are intolerant of other races.

As a further indication of how far public attitudes may be removed from the values of the constitution and elites, respondents were asked how they feel about the following controversial moral issues: homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, euthanasia, and the death penalty. The South African constitution provides equal rights for all, including homosexual people and women. This has led to the legalization of contentious activities such as same sex marriage and abortion. At the same time, capital punishment has been found unconstitutional, as it violates the rights to life and dignity.⁶⁸ Although prostitution and euthanasia remain illegal, the potential exists for their future legalization. All these moral matters continue to elicit controversy and debate.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Data not shown.

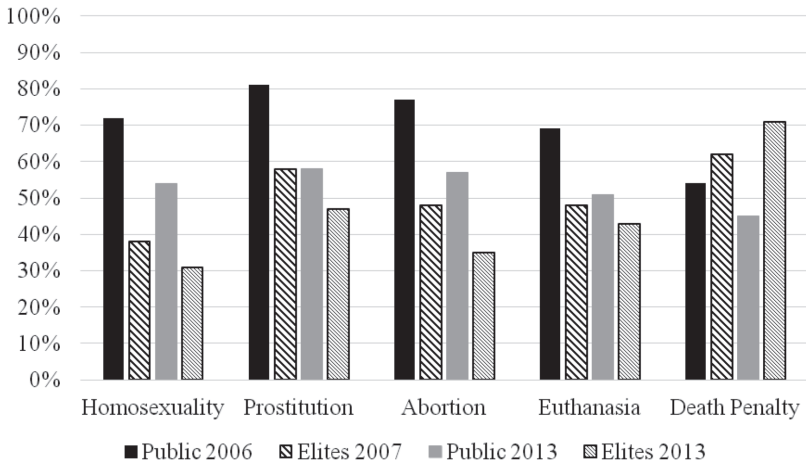
⁶⁸ Monica Laganparsad, “Church Welcomes Gay Couples but Still Refuses Marriage Rites,” *Sunday Times* (South Africa), February 28, 2016, 5; Bongwiwe Mncwango and Stephen Rule, “South Africans against Abortion,” *HSRC Review* 6, no. 1 (2008): 6-7; and Clive Plasket, “Human Rights in South Africa: An Assessment,” *Obiter* 27, no. 1 (2006): 9.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of prostitution, see Jhalukpreya Surujlal and Manillal Dhurup, “Legalising

Figure 7 shows the percentage of people who think the acts above are never justifiable.

Elites always have been more liberal-minded than the public regarding the moral dilemmas in question. That being said, in most cases, there is evidence that public attitudes are softening with regard to what sometimes is perceived as the offensive rights of others. The public has followed the elites' lead on all but one issue: the death penalty. Over half the public (54 percent) thought capital punishment was never justifiable in 2006. However, in 2013, this figure dropped to 45 percent—a small majority thought capital punishment was sometimes or even always justifiable. Thus, support for the death penalty increased among the public, while over 70 percent of elites strongly opposed it. There is little doubt that South Africa's high violent crime rate is the reason for public approval of harsh punishment for criminals.⁷⁰

Figure 7. Moral Attitudes



Support for Democracy

Support for democracy can be either intrinsic or instrumental, based on the political ideals of democracy or on expectations of economic outcomes.⁷¹

Sex Workers during the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup™ in South Africa,” *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, supplement (September 2009): 79-97. For a discussion of euthanasia, see Chris Bateman, “Judge Nudges Dormant Euthanasia Draft Law,” *South African Medical Journal* 105, no. 6 (2015): 432-433.

⁷⁰ Moyiga, Nduru, “Death Penalty: Calls for the Return of Capital Punishment in South Africa,” *Inter Press Service* (June 7, 2006), <http://www.ipsnews.net/2006/06/death-penalty-calls-for-the-return-of-capital-punishment-in-south-africa/> (accessed March 2, 2016).

⁷¹ Bratton and Mattes, “Support for Democracy in Africa,” 448.

Carlos Garcia-Rivera et al., and Pierre du Toit and Hendrik Kotzé⁷² present evidence that South Africans expect their democracy to deliver socio-economic goods such as houses, education, and employment. We confirm these findings in table 1. The importance of the constitution for South Africans also can be seen in table 2.

Although South Africans value their constitution and prize their hard-won right to vote in elections, most of their immediate concerns about democracy are socio-economic in nature. South Africans therefore appear to lean toward an instrumental view of democracy: the system is useful if it provides socio-economic improvement. This is problematic if one keeps the troubles of South Africa’s economic development in mind. Indeed, dissatisfaction with South Africa’s socio-economic performance appears to have led to less support

Table 1. Characteristics of Democracy (Public Data)

Essential Characteristics of a Democracy	2006	2013
Equal opportunity in education	1	1
Basic necessities such as shelter, food, and water for everyone	2	4
Equality of vote in elections	3	3
Jobs for everyone	4	2
People choose their leaders in free elections	5	7
Elected officials try to do what people want	6	8
A prosperous economy	7	10
Women have the same rights as men	8	5
People receive state aid/help for unemployment	9	12
Civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression	10	11
Individual human right to dignity	11	9
Complete freedom for anyone to criticize government	12	6
Government taxes the rich and subsidizes the poor	13	13

Table 2. Importance of the Constitution (Public Data)

Importance of the Constitution	Black	Colored	Indian	White	Total
Mean	7.38	7.24	8.15	7.22	7.37
Median	7.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	7.00
Standard Deviation	1.968	2.268	1.730	2.078	2.008

⁷² Carlos Garcia-Rivero, Hendrik J. Kotzé, and Pierre du Toit, “Political Culture and Democracy: The South African Case,” *Politikon* 29, no. 2 (2002): 169, and Pierre du Toit and Hendrik J. Kotzé, *Liberal Democracy and Peace in South Africa: The Pursuit of Freedom as Dignity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 52-57.

for democracy overall. As service delivery fails and trust in President Zuma declines, support for democracy wanes. According to the Afrobarometer’s 2015 data, approximately 61 percent of South Africans were willing to forego elections if they could have a nonelected government that guaranteed basic services, such as housing, jobs, and safety.⁷³ Table 3 illustrates the same phenomenon of declining support for democracy:

Table 3. Support for Various Political Systems

Support for Various Political Systems	1995	2001	2006	2013	Difference
A strong leader who does not bother with parliament and elections	34.4	32.7	43.7	60.3	16.6
Experts, not government, making decisions according to what they think is best for the country	49.0	49.8	59.8	66.9	7.1
Army rule	24.6	20.8	32.4	50.4	18.0
A democratic political system	91.9	90.2	90.2	72.0	-18.2

Support for a democratic political system has decreased noticeably, especially over the period 2006–2013. Support for other systems of rule has increased, and this, again, is especially marked in the 2006–2013 period.

Conclusion

This essay has evaluated South African democracy in the context of its elite-driven transition and political economy, and identified serious hurdles to the country’s economic success. There is a clear lack of consensus and clarity with regard to the economic direction in which South Africa should be heading. This has led to several contradictory and confusing policies, each with a different group of supporters. Even if South Africa’s elites could decide on a coherent strategy for growth and development, its implementation would remain problematic.

Overly rapid transformation has led to a skills and experience shortage in public service. High levels of corruption and cadre employment have delivered another blow to the capacity of the civil service to implement policy—even if it had one. Our indicators show decreased confidence in state institutions

⁷³ Rorisang Lekalake, “Support for Democracy in South Africa Declines amid Rising Discontent with Implementation,” Afrobarometer, dispatch no. 71 (February 9, 2016), 2, http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r6_dispatchno71_south_africa_perceptions_of_democracy.pdf (accessed April 6, 2016), and Marianne Merten, “As Service Delivery Fails, Support for Democracy Declines,” *Daily Maverick* (February 9, 2016), <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-02-09-afrobarometer-as-service-delivery-fails-support-for-democracy-declines/#.Vv0aeFJKVQ4> (accessed March 31, 2016).

across the board. The only state institution that emerges from our analysis with a degree of public confidence is the military—the very institution with which the public has the least contact. Our figures also show that, despite the declining public confidence in state institutions, parliamentarians—especially those in the ruling ANC—remain positive about the state. Consequently, there is a worrying disconnection between the views of the ruling elites who think highly of their own abilities, and contrary opinions among the public.

Public loss of confidence in state institutions appears to be provoking a general lack of faith in South Africa’s democratic system. It would be wrong to argue that South Africans do not have an appreciation for democracy’s intrinsic political ideals, but they also expect socio-economic advancement. As the government fails to deliver on economic development and service delivery (as well as safety and justice), public confidence in democracy as a form of government declines. Perhaps this is unsurprising in light of corruption and cadre deployment, which have blurred the lines between the ANC and the state to a point where South Africa risks slipping into the Gray Zone. Some people are conflating the ruling party’s failures with those of the system. Others question or openly reject the compromises of the elite pact that brought South African democracy into being.

Our analysis of moral and social values sheds further light on the quality of South Africa’s democracy. These values indicate to what extent South Africans have embraced the values of the constitution. Our figures show that parliamentarian elites are much more liberal than the public. We would argue, however, that this is not indicative of undue incongruence between the values of the public and those of the elites. The data indicate that, in most cases, the public is following in the footsteps of their liberal leaders regarding values. Not only has trust increased among South Africans, in general, but also citizens have become more accepting of lifestyles that are not necessarily their own. Yet, clear leadership is needed to address rising levels of intolerance, especially toward immigrants. There has been much progress where moral and social values are concerned, yet South Africa is not out of the woods.

Given the challenges discussed above, it cannot be said that South African democracy has been consolidated. South African society is still in a process of rapid and sometimes dramatic change. Although there have been improvements and achievements since the end of apartheid, serious problems remain. In addition to some of the worrying moral and social attitudes to which South Africans sometimes adhere, there are warning signs that South Africa might be slipping into a “Gray Zone” of dominant power politics. It is too soon to know whether democracy will survive these challenges and potential crises to gain consideration as “the only game in town.”