

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# ***The stubborn past: NP questions about ANC rule***

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**The Rise and Fall of Apartheid** by DAVID WELSH

Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2010. Pp. 647,  
£27.99 (pbk).

**South Africa: the rise and fall of apartheid** by NANCY CLARK and WILLIAM H.  
WORGER

Harlow: Longman (2nd edn), 2011. Pp. 232, £15.99 (pbk).

**Ending Apartheid** by DAVID WELSH and JACK SPENCE

Harlow: Longman, 2011. Pp. 248, £21.99 (pbk).

**The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power**  
by SUSAN BOOYSEN

Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011. Pp. 512, £29.49 (pbk).

**The Politics of Necessity: community organizing and democracy in  
South Africa** by ELKE ZUERN

Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. Pp. 242, \$29.95 (pbk).

### INTRODUCTION

Apartheid lasted forty-six years. The ANC, presently celebrating its hundredth year, has been in power for considerably less than half that time, yet that is a span which allows us to pose questions comparing the dynamics of its own rule with those of the National Party (NP). Obviously, there is a fundamental difference between the NP and ANC regimes, with the latter enjoying the domestic and international legitimacy which so fatally eluded the white minority government. For all its

faults, the ANC is very properly credited with having played a (if not 'the') major role in liberating South Africa, and for continuing to preside over a democracy, albeit a turbulent one. Nonetheless, the past simply does not go away. The ANC itself admits that democratic South Africa retains too much of the likeness of apartheid, notably with regard to the persistence of high levels of socio-economic inequality, alongside white wealth and black poverty. Some draw 'unlikely parallels' between NP and ANC rule (Maylam forthcoming), while others come forth with siren calls that the ANC is wasting its historic opportunity to address apartheid's ills and that its days in office are limited. Moeletsi Mbeki (2012), brother of the former ANC president, has warned that the ANC is rapidly approaching its 'Tunisia moment', when mounting discontent fuelled by the economy's limited ability to fund social grants will lead to a popular disjuncture with the ruling party. Many point to an ANC whose longevity in office will be threatened by the demographic time bomb represented by an alarming rise in the number of uneducated, unemployed and unemployable youth.

A juxtaposition of the various books under review here allows us not to answer but at least to address some of these issues. Three of the books, of which the major offering is by David Welsh as sole author, track the rise and fall of apartheid, their aim being to explain how and why the system of minority rule met its end in 1994. In turn, Susan Booysen's magnum opus on the ANC provides a highly detailed account of how the party reproduces itself in power, her thrust being to suggest that it will match if not exceed the NP's longevity as a government. In contrast, Elke Zuern outlines the 'politics of necessity' of South Africa's poor, and proposes their determination to forge a 'substantive democracy' which, by implication at least, could lay the basis for an 'Algeria moment'. In sum, the question we can pose is whether these various offerings – all of them valuable – can assist us in answering a question which, although in many ways unanswerable, is nevertheless regularly asked: how long will ANC rule last?

Ironically, the book of which Booysen's work on the ANC most reminded me was Heribert Adam's classic *Modernizing Racial Domination: the dynamics of South African politics* (1971). It is a common theme of many analyses that, after clamping down successfully on the mass campaigns of the ANC and the rival Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) from 1960, apartheid entered its heyday. This is well expressed by Nancy Clark and William Worger. Prime Minister Vorster's harsh measures, they relate, restored investor confidence, foreign investment more than doubled between 1962 and 1973, and white immigration – which

slumped after Sharpeville – resumed. The economy then launched into a boom, with annual economic growth averaging 6% over the decade. As a result, ‘Smuts’ earlier dismissal of apartheid as impractical and impossible in the 1940s rang hollow by the end of the 1960s’ (Clark & Worger 2011: 66). Adam (2011: 53), writing towards the end of this period, was impressed by two facets of the regime: first, its sheer strength relative to its black opponents; and second, its increasing willingness under Vorster to make pragmatic accommodations to Verwoerdian ideological strictures of racial apartness in order to combine growth with stability. Vorster’s rule was driven by a means-end rationality, and its pragmatism overrode the ideological implications of racial beliefs. Far from the regime being run by ideologues blindly fumbling towards their inevitable end,

they are effective technocrats, who are establishing an increasingly unshakeable oligarchy in a society where the wealth of an advanced industrialization in the hands of the few whites coexists with the relative deprivation of the non-whites (*ibid.*: 181).

Central to his analysis was the lack of African working class power, its crucial weakness being lack of organisation in the absence of trade unions or urban political parties, and (Adam: 183) accorded compensatory potential to the homeland concept which might serve as a ‘union substitute even for the urban worker’. South Africa was ruled by a ‘pragmatic racial oligarchy’. But things were not quite as they seemed, and only two years after his book was published, the Durban strike wave erupted, presaging the subsequent development of black trade unions, soon followed by the youthful political uprising in Soweto. To point to Adam’s lack of predictive powers is not intended to embarrass him. Throughout the decades that followed he braved much criticism for analyses which continued to explore the dialectics of apartheid. But it is to say that in underlining the staying-power of the regime, his judgement of 1971 was very much one of its time.

Although very differently located in the post-apartheid era, Booysen’s thrust regarding the ANC is not dissimilar. She continuously admits the difficulties, many of them self-inflicted, confronting the ANC in power, and concedes that support for the party is slightly lower today than it was ten years ago, let alone in 1994. Yet her fundamental thesis is that the ANC is a sufficiently rational organisation to overcome its various challenges and deficiencies. In essence, Booysen declares a love affair with the ANC, and proclaims her belief in its long-lasting hegemony. Perhaps, in Adam’s terms, she is describing a ‘pragmatic party oligarchy’. Will there be another reviewer in forty years looking back to

how wrong she turned out to be? Or will she earn retrospective praise for enormous foresight? At this stage, we obviously don't know, although we might gain some idea from returning to analyses of apartheid.

#### APARTHEID IN RETROSPECT

It all looks so inevitable now. Apartheid was an impossible project, its ultimate end guaranteed by a potent mix of internal contradictions and rapidly changing global circumstances. Perhaps the regime had some considerable capacity to postpone its end, but the reality was that when it came to the crunch, the country's white rulers had little option but to forge as good a deal as they could and to abandon minority rule for democracy. Nearly two decades on, the outlines of the story are now highly familiar: the NP's triumph over Smuts' United Party in 1948; the early elaboration of apartheid via such measures as the Population Registration Act of 1950 and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951; the evil genius of Hendrik Verwoerd, the constitutional manipulations during the 1950s required to deprive the Coloured people of the vote, the attempts to reverse African urbanization, and the promotion of separate development. Then there is black response – the radicalisation of the ANC, the development of mass struggle, the formation of the Congress Alliance, and the regime's response via the Treason Trial, Sharpeville, the subsequent banning of the ANC and PAC, and imprisonment of their leaderships. So it goes on through the terrain of the politics of exile, the revival of trade unions in the 1970s, Soweto, the triumph of Congressional politics via the United Democratic Front as an effective surrogate for the ANC, escalating economic pressures on the regime, and internal fractures within Afrikaner Nationalism. There is so much more to tell, of course. However, the overall point is that the essentials of the story are now extremely well known, severely circumscribing the freedoms of those bold or foolhardy enough to provide an overview.

The shorter the treatment, the less scope for originality. Much depends on the audience to which a book is being directed. Thus when we direct our attention to a shortish work such as *South Africa: the rise and fall of apartheid* by Clark and Worger, the question is less what originality they might demonstrate than whether it is well done for a popular or student audience, and in what ways, if at all, it might differ from similar texts. In this case, the book is backed up by a reproduction of thirteen documents, starting with the manifesto of the ANC Youth League in 1944 and ending with Mandela's speech on his inauguration as

president in 1994, which provide a valuable supplement, perhaps for postgraduates doing essays, along with a useful guide to further reading. Overall, it is a highly competent, if rather conventionally politically correct, account, inclining towards moralistic judgements on the NP and uncritical renderings of the role of their opponents. In short, it is safe for the children.

The comprehensive nature of the magisterial book penned by David Welsh, similarly titled *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, enables us to apply quite different criteria. As Keith Robbins notes in his prologue to *Ending Apartheid*, also authored by Welsh in tandem with Jack Spence, Welsh is a quintessential 'insider', someone who lived through the entire span of NP rule, and who as professor of politics at the University of Cape Town became a highly shrewd observer of the South African scene. In their bibliographic review, Clark and Worger mention Welsh's book (published two years earlier) as reflecting the Cape 'liberal' tradition of South African historiography. In this they are undoubtedly correct. Yet their further judgement (Clark & Worger 2011: 175) that it is 'relentlessly political' in its focus, 'with little or no mention of blacks', is, frankly, an unworthy calumny, rather suggesting that they have not read it. Certainly, the particular strength of the book does lie in its deep understanding of the political dynamics of NP rule, but Welsh also provides outstanding chapters on the black experience prior to apartheid (Ch. 2), 'The decline and rise of the black opposition' (Ch. 4), 'The Soweto uprising and its consequences' (Ch. 5), and 'The growth of black resistance in the 1980s' (Ch. 8), as well as a treatment of the negotiation process in which the histories of white and black actors are skilfully interwoven. Yes, there is much that is inevitably familiar in Welsh's book, for there is much about the topic that is now formulaic. However, the book goes well beyond the ordinary, notably, I would suggest, in its superb treatment of the fracturing of Afrikaner Nationalism. Unsurprisingly, the perspective offered is largely reproduced and ably compressed in *Ending Apartheid*, alongside additional chapters (presumably authored by Spence) on 'South Africa and the world', and an epilogue dealing with post-1994 developments. Both books are written in a highly accessible manner, with *The Rise and Fall*, in particular, being a joy to read.

Welsh opens with a masterly analysis of the coming of apartheid, essentially an overview of white politics and black response from 1910. Yes, unambiguously, the focus is 'political', and there will be many who question the lack of attention to how mining capital shaped the politics which followed from 1910. But for Welsh, the essence of the politics lay

in the response of the Afrikaner people to defeat by the British. The issue that presented itself to Afrikaner leaders in the post-Union period was ‘should the white “nation”, made up of Boer and Brit, consist of “one stream” or “two streams”’ (Welsh 2010: 4)? The first stream, that of inter-white reconciliation, came to be associated with Louis Botha and Jan Smuts; the second, more specifically Afrikaner nationalist, with J. B. M. Hertzog and the NP in its first incarnation. Given that 40% of Afrikaner voters supported the NP in its first contest in 1915, it was evident that if a majority of Afrikaners, together with some reasonable support from English speakers, could be captured, then the NP could take control of government, especially given the distortions of the post-Union first-past-the-post electoral system which gave greater weight to voters in rural constituencies (where the less urbanised Afrikaner population tended to predominate). This was true in both 1924 and 1948, when in both years the NP beat Smut’s South African/United Parties in terms of seats but not in terms of votes. Welsh reminds us that in 1948 the UP–Labour Party alliance won 53% of the vote compared with the 39% of the NP–Afrikaner Party alliance, yet the latter won a small majority (five) of seats to put it in office. No wonder, then, that a constant cause of the NP in power was to consolidate its electoral majority – in particular by abolishing limited common roll voters’ rights held by Africans and Coloureds in the Cape in 1936 and 1956 respectively, as well as by granting six seats to whites in South West Africa after 1948, and lowering the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen in 1958. Not that Welsh is suggesting that Smuts’ UP was anything but racist and conservative, but after a survey of the role of the Afrikaner Broederbond in creating an Afrikaner cultural elite and harnessing the services of Afrikaner intellectuals to fashion a quasi-theological ideology of national separatism, he proffers the interesting comment that, by 1948, the NP had developed into a ‘finely honed machine, a classical mobilization party or liberation movement, of which Africa was to see many more’ (*ibid.*: 25). He also comments that whereas the segregation of the pre-1948 era served the major sectors of white society, in ‘an ad hoc, even pragmatic or instrumental way’, apartheid was yoked to an ‘ideology of nationalism and religious particularism’ which made a significant difference to the way in which it was implemented (*ibid.*: 47).

Welsh presents apartheid as passing through three overlapping phases: (1) 1948–59, the entrenchment of NP power and extension of discrimination; (2) 1959–66, the introduction of ‘separate development’ as a ‘positive’ version of apartheid, designed to mask the neutralisation of African urbanisation by presenting the ‘self-government’ of

homelands as an alternative to integration of racial subordinates into a central polity; and (3) from 1966 onwards, the quickening erosion of apartheid and Afrikaner solidarity (*ibid.*: 52). Each period is treated elegantly and comprehensively. What I would like to highlight here, however, is the manner in which he treats how the regime continuously accommodated its ideology and policies to changing circumstances.

Verwoerd may have been ‘dogmatic and inflexible’, but ‘he was anything but stupid’, and while he was infuriated by Harold Macmillan’s ‘Wind of change’ speech in February 1960, he understood the basic message that his racial policies were unacceptable to the world, and hence initiated an adjustment by retooling ‘apartheid’ as ‘separate development’ (*ibid.*: 67). Incidentally, he relates the story, told to Verwoerd’s biographer in 1995 by Koos Potgieter, formerly chief whip of the NP, that two days before he died, Verwoerd told him that apartheid was impractical and could not be implemented – yet changing the policy at that time was not politically feasible (*ibid.*: 81). Welsh regards the admission with scepticism, yet goes on to suggest that John Vorster, who succeeded Verwoerd, also reached the conclusion that apartheid was unworkable, yet had neither the courage nor vision to undertake a radical revision of policy (*ibid.*: 83). Nonetheless he ‘deconsecrated’ apartheid in the significant respect of arguing that the cardinal principle of the NP was the ‘retention, maintenance and immortalization of Afrikaner identity within a white sovereign state’, and apartheid was merely a means of bringing it about. This deeply offended Jaap Marais, leader of the Herstigte National Party, the right wing party which had broken away from the NP (for by now the *verligte* versus *verkrampte* feud was in full swing), who recognised it as heralding a ‘pragmatic approach that would violate the principles that Verwoerd had sought to cast in iron’ (*ibid.*: 84).

Significant reform, when it came, was driven by P.W. Botha, who succeeded Vorster in September 1978. Botha’s reformism, writes Welsh (2010: 209), was ‘bounded by a commitment to separate development’, and modifications to policy would be in accordance with NP principles. His obsession with groups never wavered, and although disingenuous, ‘it created a framework within which neo-apartheid could evolve’. This implied in turn that he could not move beyond a view of the ANC as an essentially Xhosa movement. Nonetheless, although ‘no closet liberal’, some of his reforms – notably the grant of statutory recognition to African trade unions in 1979 and the abolition of influx control in 1986 – ‘tore down significant institutional and ideological pillars of apartheid’, while others like the introduction of the Tricameral

Constitution in 1983 sought to shore it up by pragmatic adjustments 'but failed calamitously and produced unintended consequences that actually eroded it' (*ibid.*: 210). Right wing revolt, soon swelled by the 1982 breakaway of the Conservative Party of Andries Treurnicht, 'signaled cracks in the inter-class, urban-rural coalition that had been constructed by an earlier generation of Afrikaner nationalists' (*ibid.*: 223). Divisions were not neatly along class lines, for many individuals clove to Verwoerdian prescriptions, and there was growing intra-Afrikaner ferment. Turbulence was greatest amongst the three Afrikaans churches, in which conservative establishments were increasingly to be challenged by younger theologians and clergy, culminating in the adoption by the General Synod of the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) in 1986 of a statement, *Church and Society*, which acknowledged the forced division of peoples as theologically unsound, apartheid as unjust, and condemned racism. Meanwhile, although Afrikaans business remained largely mute, it had its own divisions, with larger-scale capital (the Sanlam, Rembrandt, Trust Bank and Nasionale Pers groups) increasingly coming to perceive that apartheid was becoming a handicap to the expansion of business internationally and across colour lines domestically: 'business, in other words, was bursting out of the seams of nationalism' (*ibid.*: 196).

Botha, of course, twinned his reformism with a major securitisation of the state, and the adoption of a 'total strategy' to confront the rise of internal protest and the increasing military threat represented by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the ANC, backed internationally and militarily by the Soviet Union and Cuba in Angola and Namibia. However, his personal truculence made him particularly resistant to 'foreign meddling' (Welsh 2010: 236), even by supportive Western leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and with his disastrous 'Rubicon' speech in 1986 it was clear that his reformism had run out of steam. True, by now he had given permission to his senior officials to engage in secret contacts with Mandela, and proceeded to meet him in 1989, yet he was never able to bring himself to concede the conditions necessary for negotiation with the ANC. That was to be left to F. W. de Klerk.

Welsh's handling of the negotiations processes is judiciously even-handed. The general theme is, of necessity, the continuously shifting relationship between the ANC and NP, punctuated as it was by the determination of Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) not to be marginalised. He is broadly sympathetic to the IFP, and regards its exclusion from the key Groote Schuur and Pretoria meetings



in 1990 as a major error (Welsh 2010: 394) while being deeply critical of Buthelezi's subsequent spoiling tactics. Similarly, he allocates blame for the carnage which resulted from ANC and IFP hostilities in Natal equally between the two movements, although he regards their foot soldiers as guilty as their leaders. But while there is little complaint that the ANC and Mandela can have in his treatment of the negotiations, the major strength of his analysis lies in his convincing portrayal of the role of de Klerk.

De Klerk, Welsh argues, was prepared to move ahead of his NP constituency, but realised that that to move too fast would leave him vulnerable to cries of betrayal and an exit of NP MPs to the right. The CP, since 1989 the official opposition, represented a significant electoral threat, which de Klerk skilfully blunted by calling the March 1992 referendum to test white opinion on whether negotiations should continue, confident that when it came to the crunch he could rely on the support of the Democratic Party (DP) to counterbalance the right. Meanwhile, far from orchestrating 'third force' violence to attack the ANC, de Klerk was actively misled by right wing elements within the military which were making every effort to disrupt the negotiations. In response to revelations made by the Commission led by Judge Richard Goldstone in November 1992, confirming criminal activities by senior officers, backed up by further investigations by Lieutenant-General Pierre Steyn, de Klerk responded with the 'Night of the Generals,' the dismissal of some twenty-three officers, including two generals and four brigadiers (Welsh 2010: 473). Welsh makes the case that de Klerk negotiated the very choppy waters of right wing revolt with considerable integrity, also giving credit to General Constandt Viljoen, a much admired figure on the right, who was to admit in 1999 that he had considered a coup, and could have raised some 60,000 men and 'taken the country in an afternoon', but appreciated that there was no wisdom in doing so. Viljoen was thereafter to play a key role in channelling right wing dissidence into legal and electoral channels, notwithstanding the dangerously destabilising antics of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB). Ultimately, Welsh (*ibid.*:575) concludes, the role of political leadership was crucial in ensuring the ultimate success of the transition: 'both Mandela and de Klerk went far out on a limb, well ahead of their followers, to persuade them that negotiation was the only realistic option'.

Welsh worries about the difficulties of establishing democracy in a country still deeply divided along lines of race. Under the ANC, he admits, constitutional forms have been maintained, but 'a single-party

dominant system has become entrenched', so that while South Africa is now a vastly better place than under apartheid, its democracy is of poor quality (*ibid.*: 578).

#### THE ANC AND DEMOCRACY

The notion of South Africa as a 'dominant party democracy' has become central to the understanding of the post-apartheid party system and its implications for the relationship between ruling party and state. The notion of 'party dominance' is, to be sure, a contested one, and because its thrust is that dominant ruling parties are overbearing, the ANC has rejected the application of the description to its own case as politically hostile. Perhaps this is why, in *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power*, Booysen avoids significant discussion of party dominance, even while her central argument is, precisely, how the ANC uses its standing as a ruling party to reproduce itself in power. Frankly, few better elaborations of T. J. Pempel's thesis (1990) of dominant party systems as 'uncommon democracies' can be imagined. Indeed, Booysen has produced what is undoubtedly the outstanding analysis of the post-apartheid ANC as a political party.

Booyesen's book is underpinned by unrivalled trawling and tracing of ANC policies over the years, highly valuable tracking of opinion polls and electoral data, intensive distillation of news reports and, not least, extensive interviews with major and minor ANC figures, members of government and civil servants. Importantly, too, it is as much a 'bottom-up' analysis, focusing upon ANC activities at branch, regional and provincial level, as a 'top-down' one highlighting leadership roles and contestations. It is simply packed with valuable data, charts and diagrams, and for that reason alone will become an important reference work for years to come, although this comes at some considerable cost to the reader's digestion, and with a marked tendency towards unnecessary repetition.

Booyesen frames her analysis around the contest between Mbeki and Zuma at the ANC's 52nd National Congress at Polokwane in December 2007, the Pandora's box of intra-ANC factionalism that the defeat of Mbeki opened up, and the subsequent rocky road leading the ANC to Mangaung (Bloemfontein), where at the end of 2012 Zuma will either be re-elected as party president for a second term or displaced by another. The years 2009–11, she writes, ushered in a maelstrom, during which new forces emerged which could threaten to derail the preceding post-apartheid periods of 'undisputed, uncontested hegemony of the monolith, the colossus that the ANC has been for many years'. Her aim

is to portray 'the contradictory reality of a historically profound organisation that is simultaneously omnipotent *and* racked with internal organisational and national governance weaknesses'. On the one hand, it is hugely factionalised, and increasingly distant from its constituency; on the other, 'it retains both a direct and powerful interface with the people and the ability to muster spectacular election victories' (Booyesen 2011: xiii). She proceeds to demonstrate how the ANC has presented itself across its four faces of political power: as a movement-organisation; in relation to the people; as a competitive political party formalising power through elections; and as a party in command of most of the state (*ibid.*: 3). Simultaneously, the ANC's retention of legitimacy and power is anchored in its concurrent operation on two parallel tiers of democracy. The first is its participation in a representative, multiparty democracy wherein inter-party electoral contests formalise ANC dominance, with the ANC enjoying the added impetus of its positioning as a 'liberation movement'. The second is the world of ANC internal and Tripartite (ANC-SACP-Cosatu) Alliance democracy, where the ANC relates directly to the people and where the most profound and fierce battles of South African politics play out (*ibid.*: 5).

Booyesen provides an analysis of the intra-party revolt against the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, who in many ways did a remarkable job not just in steering the ANC to major electoral victories in 1999 and 2004 but in forging a reasonably competent state machinery and putting the economy on a sound footing. Yet in so doing, via the erection of a centralised state, Mbeki precipitated Polokwane by losing touch with the party, while simultaneously alienating the left and launching political and legal attacks on perceived competitors to his authority. Eventually, in seeking to become a three-term president of the ANC at Polokwane (even though he would have to stand down as state president come the next election), he totally misread the extent of party revolt against him while attempting to 'save South Africa from Zuma', a man he thought totally unsuited to become his successor. His displacement at Polokwane was therefore brought about by an alliance of the aggrieved, who took their revenge by dismissing him from office at the first opportunity, before subsequently falling foul of a cacophony of emerging battle lines under the Zuma presidency. The key point for Booyesen is that the ANC was not just an ordinary political party, but a 'party-movement' which simultaneously embodied the role of *being government* with constituting itself as a *popular revolt against government* (my italics).

This dualistic nature of the ANC is further elaborated in the second section of the book, consisting of three chapters on the

ANC's ambiguous relationship to popular power, the undoubted highlight of her analysis being Ch. 4, 'Power through the ballot and the brick'. This depicts how the waves of community protests which afflicted South Africa from (notably) the time of Polokwane on, fuelled by high unemployment, rising inequality and poor service delivery, and overwhelmingly directed at ANC-run local and provincial governments, were nonetheless matched by affection for the ANC. Protest came to 'uniquely complement electoral action', whereby citizens vented their anger at the ANC, while subsequently endorsing it in later elections – the 'dual repertoire of protest and voting' (Booyen 2011: 129).

When it comes to elections, the ANC constitutes a formidable force, with at national level the electorate consistently endorsing the party with 63–70% of the votes cast. Yet the ANC suffered setbacks at the 2009 general elections and the 2011 local government elections, and there is an increasing sense that its status as the party of liberation (of which the ANC makes constant electoral use) is vulnerable, and that the electorate might start punishing it for corruption and management. Yet despite relative ebbs and flows, the ANC has retained its 'juggernaut status', as detailed by Booyen's stories of its introduction of floor-crossing (by somewhat dubiously constitutional means) to take advantage of confusion within opposition ranks (before banning it again, once the job had been done), by exploiting divisions within the (New) National Party to hasten its unlamented demise, and above all, to affirm its power by administering a bitter lesson to the Congress of the People (Cope), the party which emerged from the belly of the ANC after Polokwane, in protest against Zuma's rise. The ruthless tactics used by the ANC to defeat Cope in the 2009 election (and thereafter to exacerbate its internal divisions by luring its adherents back into the ruling party) have confirmed the dangers of stepping outside accepted boundaries of internal party dissension.

As the ANC's aura as a liberation movement fades, so it comes increasingly to rely on its performance in government. The bottom-up removal of Mbeki and the election victory of 2009 reinvigorated the ANC and led to renewed popular trust that the ruling party's governance undertakings would lead to definitive change. However, the post-election governance dividend has been modest, and while the Zuma presidency has closed the gap between government and party, this has imported intra-ANC and Alliance contests into the state. Meanwhile, the Zuma ANC has proved unable to overcome the legacy of 'lack of state capacity, slow realization of turnarounds, increasing evidence of

state corruption and mal-governance' that lessen the prospects for state proficiency (Booyesen 2011: 357).

Many of the themes which infuse Booyesen's work similarly underlie Zuern's account of community organising and democracy in South Africa. Central to her analysis is a de Tocquevillean view that reasonable social and economic equality is necessary for the maintenance of meaningful political democracy. That South Africa has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world bodes ill for the quality of democracy – hence, argues Zuern, the significance of demands made by poor people via social movements from the ANC government, their struggles framed in particular as protests against Mbeki's neo-liberal economic policies. Suffice it to say here that she notes major continuities between the late apartheid and post-apartheid periods. The 1980s saw the rise of the civics as organisations of popular struggle against apartheid, only for the ANC to seek to appropriate their history and to incorporate their structures and membership into its ranks. Nonetheless, 'a surprising range of civic actions from the late 1970s are still being employed three decades later' (Zuern 2011: 23).

The process of liberalising authoritarian regimes, she argues (pace Tarrow 1994), opens up space for popular mobilisation, only for incoming democratic regimes to engineer a demobilisation of social movements once liberal democracy has been achieved. Yet popular demands for substantive democracy are not easily denied: social movements regroup and engage in new struggles with authority. Zuern takes us through the various phases of this process in South Africa, highlighting how it is fraught throughout with ambiguities: from the use of revolutionary rhetoric by the South African National Civic Association (SANCO) through to its leaders' reluctance to directly challenge the ANC, and from the ANC's introduction of local government electoral reform, allowing for the election of constituency-based (ward) councillors in order to provide voice to demands from the ground, through to its disinclination to allow these councillors any political independence. The ANC's efforts to infiltrate and control social movements have led to splits within the latter, while under Mbeki in particular, the centralisation of governmental authority led to dismissal of social movements as 'ultra-left'. The effective incorporation of SANCO by the ANC, in turn, led to a resurgence of movements such as the Treatment Action Campaign and the Anti-Privatization Forum, which have employed a wide range of tactics including illegal actions.

Zuern (2011: 136) echoes Tarrow (1994: 347) that 'disorder and democracy are not opposed', and concludes that we are seeing in South

Africa that social movements are ‘not merely challenging and threatening the old but also participating in the construction of something new’ (*ibid.*: 167). Yet, in her concluding pages, she steers clear of the big questions that have continued to confront – and confound – the social movements: should they forge an opposition party? If so, around what programme? And what should their relationship be, in particular, to Cosatu and the ANC?

#### PRAGMATIC PARTY OLIGARCHY?

In attempting to pull diverse strands of these different books together, it is useful to return to the question of whether the ANC is a ‘pragmatic party oligarchy’. Welsh suggests that Adam’s focus on the means-end instrumental rationality of the apartheid regime was exaggerated. Certainly, the NP had a Verwoerdian master plan, and when this proved unworkable, the government demonstrated considerable flexibility in making adjustments to the ideological framework and thus maintaining the oligarchical essentials of Afrikaner ethnic domination and white minority rule. Yet time proved that pragmatism was not enough to secure the edifice, whose political foundations were to be eroded by the subterranean forces of trade union organisation and popular protest, as well as the international changes which Welsh and Spence (2011: 145) elaborate: the changes in post-Second World War structures and norms; the external pressures imposed by the great powers, the exiled liberation movement, international organisations, and Third World and African states in particular. Pragmatic adjustments to racial oligarchy may have extended the life of the regime; in retrospect, some of them eased the way forward to democracy – yet any suggestion that the regime was in overall control of the process is surely erroneous.

As I have suggested above, there is an uncanny echo of Adam’s early perspective in Booysen’s treatment of the ANC. Certainly, she cites a host of ifs and buts, but the central thrust is that, overall, the ANC is in charge of its destiny, and is pretty much capable of responding to anything that is thrown at it. She has skilfully depicted how it is ‘regenerating’ itself in power, yet this fails to tackle the issue that the dominance of dominant parties does eventually come to an end: they seem either to implode under social and economic pressures (Sweden, India, Mexico?), or have to resort to authoritarian tactics to maintain their rule, a process which brings their democratic credentials into serious question (Malaysia?). In South Africa, the 1994 election signalled the shift from the racially skewed dominance of the NP to the

democratic dominance of the ANC. Certainly, the electoral demographics in South Africa are more favourable to the ANC than ever they were to the NP (even within the racially restricted franchise of its time). Yet whether the ANC is capable of regenerating itself in perpetuity is, in my own view, and certainly in that of Moeletsi Mbeki, more open to question than Booysen seems to allow. It is, after all, a very rapidly changing world we live in, and the capacity of incumbent governments to 'regenerate' themselves in power looks increasingly fragile everywhere.

Central to Welsh's account is how the NP's adjustments to its programme continuously needed to surmount the threats posed by the political right. Booysen's argument about the regeneration of power is well taken, but, in view of the potential threat posed from below and from the left in the form of Cosatu possibly linking up with social movements, we would be foolish to mistake it as indicating the ANC's eternity.

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