

## THE DILEMMA OF JUSTICE IN A MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETY: THE SOUTH AFRICA EXAMPLE

**Anas Elochukwu**

Department of Chinese Studies  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
ae.elochukwu@unizik.edu.ng

&

**Innocent-Franklyn Ezeonwuka**

Department of History and International Studies  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
if.ezeonwuka@unizik.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

South Africa boasts the unique credential of being the only country in the world where apartheid, the most extreme form of racism, has ever existed. Apartheid engendered deep divisions among the two major races in the country---- blacks and whites. Although it formally ended twenty years ago with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first fully democratically-elected president, the historical racial divisions it created still run deep and, by being sharpened from time to time by the glaring inequalities in the economic conditions of the races, challenge the genius of the country's political leadership. These inequalities, which have not perceptibly contracted in the first two decades of majority rule, cast brooding shadows upon the country's future. The blacks who make up the majority of the population have been demanding reforms that will radically integrate them into the mainstream of the economy, which, to their dismay, is still predominantly "white." This paper looks at the dilemma in attempting to enforce the blacks' right to distributive/restorative/transitional justice for the economic marginalization they suffered under apartheid. Towards achieving a balanced study, this paper deploys both quantitative and qualitative methods, not overlooking several primary and secondary sources of information. While positing for an equity-based socio-economic transformation in domestic South Africa, credible minds should help the country's transformation by dissuading misinformation.

**Keywords:** South Africa, apartheid, blacks, whites, Nelson Mandela, dilemma, justice, marginalization.

### **Introduction**

In a heterogeneous society, the task of nation-building is often a difficult one. A society is described as heterogeneous if its cleavages are reinforcing rather than crises-cutting. These cleavages are the objective social differences in ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, geographical, or even professional affiliations existing among the constituent groups.<sup>1</sup> These cleavages are highly emotive issues and are the fault lines usually invoked to keep the groups apart from one another. The elite classes make the most use of the invocation of objective cleavages in their pursuit of political interests; for the degree of solidarity enjoyed by an elite class largely depends upon the intensity of the mutual animosity existing between the exploited classes.

The differences in the aspirations of constituent groups often impede efforts to build consensus on most issues of national development. Often, there is more than one agendum pursued in the melee of national politics. Heterogeneity encourages and feeds centrifugal tendencies. While some countries have been able to harness the differences among their constituent groups for effective national development, others have failed. The United States, for example, is a good case of a country that has been able to harness its differences for effective national development. On the other hand, Belgium is a good case of countries that have had to struggle to contain disruptions caused by cleavages. This moderately rich country often make international headlines with the high quotient of bickering in her national politics. Her political leaders tend to be perpetually kept apart by their linguistic (Dutch-French) and sectarian (Catholic-Protestant) differences. South Africa's problem with cleavages is more glaring in the black-white economic dichotomy than in the struggle for political power by the races, since blacks' huge population advantage has made the inter-racial struggle for power a non-issue since the collapse of apartheid twenty years ago. China's success in keeping its cleavages from being very disruptive (this is a fact, despite the recent upsurge in religious fundamentalism in the Muslim-dominated regions) is largely attributable

to the Han ethnic group's disproportionate population size *vis-à-vis* all the other ethnic groups combined. Han predominance gives Chinese leaders pretty little to worry about in mobilizing the population behind nation building objectives.

The end of the Cold War seems to have unleashed the fury of cleavage upon mankind and his civilization, inducing seminal comments on the future of both. Among the seminal comments are those by Samuel Huntington<sup>2</sup>, George Fukuyama<sup>3</sup> and Joseph Nye Jr.<sup>4</sup>

Objective social cleavages can (and often) create and enforce inequalities among groups. Inequality in the distributive system is the commonest, but its victim is not necessarily the minority as has been proven by minority white's predomination in South Africa's economy. In a society where one of the ethnic or racial groups commands an absolute advantage over the rest, the cleavage of ethnicity or race can, as argued by Stephen Gelbs, be "a determinant of both poverty and inequality."<sup>5</sup> The greatest challenge in governing a heterogeneous society is how to balance the divergent interests and demands of the disparate groups. Balancing these interests and demands is an art best learned in conflict studies. But in some race-cleaved societies, such as South Africa, social fragility can come under severe strains and remain so for long. South Africa's race cleavage is a legacy of apartheid, which flourished for more than half a century on the reinforcement of divisions among the constituent racial groups. While the system that limited black participation in the sharing of political power has been reformatted to the satisfaction of the blacks, the economic system still structurally disenfranchises blacks. This paper, therefore, looks at the dilemma faced in the efforts to give blacks wider access to the economy. South Africa is a country whose survival as a country looks seriously threatened by the legacies of its racially abused past. It is the only country to have experienced apartheid, a kind of racism whose cornerstone was "the doctrine of white supremacy."<sup>6</sup> Apartheid acquired its global notoriety probably from the fact that it was the only form of racism to have ever been practiced as a state policy. Its closest cousin is Hitler's theory of the racial superiority of the Aryans. It became a state policy with the National Party's electoral victory in 1948 and lasted till 1994 when Nelson Mandela became the first president to be elected in a multi-racial election. By the time it was abandoned as an official policy in 1994, apartheid had created a citizenship of races.

The deep divisions threatening the fabric of inter-racial harmony between South Africa's black and white populations are creations of the socio-political and economic systems left behind by apartheid. These divisions remain, despite all the efforts and sacrifices that Nelson Mandela and his successors, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma have made to further the cause of reconciliation over apartheid crimes and encourage inter-racial harmony. Because the scars of apartheid run so deep, governance has been difficult and reconciliation slow. The economy, though robust and among the world's first 20, operates under severe strains as a result of these deep-seated racial divisions. Consequently, the major challenge for governance since the blacks took over political power in 1994 has been how best to deracialise the economy without provoking the ghost of apartheid into resurgence.

The issues that menacingly tested the resiliency of the country's majority rule immediately after 1994 were wealth redistribution reform that should give the blacks wider access to the control tower of the economy, land reform that should reduce white holdings of fertile lands in favour of the disenfranchised majority (blacks) and thirdly, accountability for and reconciliation over, the heinous abuses committed during the dark, murderous decades of apartheid. With these issues, South Africa stood on the brink of civil war and military coup as Mandela took over the reins of power on May 10, 1994. Some white irredentists as well as some black ethno-cultural dissidents actually prepared to instigate a civil war. Transiting from one system of rule to another is often fraught with two important dangers: the danger of the old guard fighting to maintain the status quo and/or regulate the speed at which reforms should move and secondly, the danger of the new guard fighting to eliminate all the vestiges of the old order through brutal repression of the old guard. Both of these two cases create a thesis versus antithesis scenario. The conflict between the forces of change and those of continuity is an icon in the evolutionary growth of human society. The change accompanying the transition may be the result of an arbitrary decision made by the ruling elite, such as the opening of China's economy to outsiders in the late 1970s. In this case, the onus of ensuring the success of the transition particularly resides with the elite class

who are expected to use their control of the apparatuses of state power to “impose” acquiescence to the impending change. The Communist Party of China has been successfully using its control of the apparatuses of state power to force through reforms towards their desired directions (CPC reforms, however, are known to have encountered resistance from some regions and vested interests. This, however, does not mean that the initial demand for change must originate from the top. It can move in a down-up direction. But sometimes the change may result from a compromise---forced or voluntary-- - between the top contenders for power, such as happened in the abandonment of communism in the former Soviet empire of fifteen countries. In this second scenario, the initial demand for change originates from intra-elite or intra-alliance rivalry.

The transition from apartheid rule to multiracial democracy which took place in South Africa in 1990s was produced by the combined exertion of force by these two scenarios: if the leadership of the National Party refused to be influenced by domestic and international pressures for change and if the dimensions of the moral power exercised by the anti-apartheid forces, particularly after the end of the Cold War did not become a potential threat and rival to apartheid’s brutal force, apartheid would have survived its terminal year of 1994. Where the issue under contention in the change demand scenario is democratic governance, these two dangers, as argued by Jo Beall, Stephen Gelb, and Shireen Hassim, may be cured with “stabilisation of the democratic regime.”<sup>7</sup> This is what has happened in South Africa since the collapse of apartheid.

The decision to end apartheid in a nation whose economy was flourishing even without the active participation of its majority black population carried the hope of the birth of a new nation whose future prosperity would depend upon the unfettered participation of all citizens, irrespective of skin colour, in the task of nation building, as well as the hope of a vibrant African nation which would “not only address the yawning distribution gap between black and white within [its borders], but ... would also be able to pull the rest of the continent forward to reduce inequality between black and white nations at the global level.”<sup>8</sup> The new nation was given the nickname “rainbow nation”, not only because of the racial mix of its population---blacks, whites, mixed, Asians, but also to express the optimism held for the ability of the citizens to live in harmony, despite their racial cleavages.

The great expectations that accompanied the birth of a race-compatible nation were tempered by the uncertainty about the ability of the people to forbear from carrying over the mutual animosities of their apartheid past to the new dispensation. When the transition failed to abort as had been widely and reasonably feared in some quarters, it was hailed as a miracle. Even the election through which Mandela became president was a one-horse race. Nonetheless, the National Party (which had ruled since 1948) and the other ‘opposition’ parties decided to run candidates. Their participation helped to give the election the semblance of democratic mutism it needed.

### Reflections

Two decades have passed after the end of apartheid, with “no longer any threat facing the constitutional order from die-hards, whether white or black and the survival of the non-racial regime is no longer in question.”<sup>9</sup> But those economic cleavages carried over from the apartheid decades of social exclusion have not been either completely eliminated or made less conspicuous in the living conditions of the respective races---the whites remain rich; the blacks remain poor. With these cleavages remaining active, “there is potential for increasing *instability* which could move the society away from its tenuous equilibrium.”<sup>10</sup> However, the fact that no war or a serious political crisis, resulting from distributive politics, has occurred in the country is a testament to the genius of political leadership of the country.

On 10 May 1994, Mandela became president of a country whose post-apartheid future was hemmed in by uncertainties. At his ascension to power, there was uncertainty about the future of both the economic and political systems. Also, there was uncertainty about race relations. It was an attempt to hedge these uncertainties that exposed him to the accusation by a good number of his compatriots, particularly black South Africans, of sidestepping the problems of wealth redistribution and land reform during his presidency and concentrating most of his attention on interracial reconciliation. This accusation is not totally unfounded.

However, one of the salient issues that should not be overlooked in South Africa's post-apartheid history is the fact that Mandela was but a transitional president, used to achieve a smooth transfer of political power from a minority to a majority. If he had made a false move, either the country would have been plunged into a civil war, or the multi-racial democracy that he risked everything to give his country would have been truncated with a white-sponsored military coup. So, his awesome power of anticipation should nullify the insinuation that he was a coward who flinched from addressing the crimes of apartheid. He should not have been expected to make the whites (Afrikaners) who surrendered power, albeit reluctantly and committed to a future in which they were not likely to regain political power "via the ballot box," think they erred in agreeing to the launch of a dispensation in which they would be antagonized as a minority. Mandela was aware that the issue of economic justice was an issue which, if pursued so vigorously during the transition negotiations, would have torpedoed the skillful compromise that ended minority white rule. Since the whites were not defeated in a civil war or forced to give up power; they could only have given up power under a transition that would guarantee retention of most of the privileges they had enjoyed in the old order. Also, even the threat from IFP was no less potential.

According to *The Economist*, the African National Congress (ANC) "inherited an economy that was virtually bankrupt, following decades of mismanagement, international sanctions, and violent protests"<sup>11</sup> when it received the baton of political power from the National Party in 1994. Its poverty and unemployment figures were sombre for the blacks. This economic situation was probably one of the major factors that made it difficult and dangerous for Mandela to take some radical measures to remedy some of the economic injustices he has been accused of hedging. Mandela faced the dilemma of the questions: should he first heal the sick (the economy) before feeding the hungry (blacks)? Or should he first try to feed the hungry before healing the sick? Then, as it still is, it was clear that the menacing vigilance of the rightist fringe of Afrikaner nationalism was still "a clear and present danger". Thus, if he were to try to shoot blacks up into the cockpit of the economy as was being demanded, he would likely be trying to solve a problem by creating an even bigger one.

Mandela's government, all the same, tried to solve the gross economic inequalities of apartheid with an ambitious socialist programme called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) was the key component of this black empowerment programme. The need statement of RDP reads as follows:

*Our history has been a bitter one dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid, sexism and repressive labour policies. The result is that poverty and degradation exist side by side with modern cities and a developed mining, industrial and commercial infrastructure. Our income distribution is racially distorted and ranks as one of the most unequal in the world - lavish wealth and abject poverty characterize our society. The economy was built on systematically enforced racial division in every sphere of our society. Rural areas have been divided into underdeveloped Bantustans and well-developed, white-owned commercial farming areas. Towns and cities have been divided into townships without basic infrastructure for blacks and well-resourced suburbs for whites. Segregation in education, health, welfare, transport and employment left deep scars of inequality and economic inefficiency. In commerce and industry, very large conglomerates dominated by whites control large parts of the economy. Cheap labour policies and employment segregation concentrated skills in white hands. Our workers are poorly equipped for the rapid changes taking place in the world economy. Small and medium-sized enterprises are underdeveloped, while highly protected industries underinvested in research, development and training.*<sup>12</sup>

A central objective of the RDP was "to deracialise business ownership and control completely through focused policies of Black Economic Empowerment."<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, the RDP and its key component, GEAR appeared to have only worked at cross purposes. While the RDP aimed at empowering the economic victims of apartheid with a massive provision of social amenities like affordable houses, water, medicals, and electricity, the GEAR aimed at reining in the macroeconomic problems with stringent fiscal measures. By cutting down on its spending under the

GEAR, the government could not raise enough money to adequately finance most of the election promises it made under the RDP. Consequently, the dichotomy in the economic conditions of the races remained largely undisturbed when Mandela left office in 1999.

Once the government became unable to meet the expectations it had raised under RDP, the agitation for more radical reforms became louder. In 1997, the Black Business Council met in Stellenbosch to brainstorm how to achieve the vision of the economic empowerment of blacks. In the following year, it set up a commission of inquiry into the performance of the RDP. The commission in its report lamented that,

*Seven years after democracy, despite significant achievements by government on many fronts, the vision articulated in the RDP has not been realised. Most studies suggest there has been virtually no change in the overall inequality and wealth. The result is that black people remain in poverty and marginalised from ownership, control and management of economic activities. This crisis is hindering our growth prospects and our competitiveness as a nation.*<sup>14</sup>

The only post-apartheid problem that Mandela dared to confront frontally was reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims of apartheid injustice, and this was a problem to which he dedicated most of his five years in office. His reconciliation-without-vengeance policy earned him global plaudits but irked a cross-section of the country's black population. He was obsessively concerned about how to achieve inter-racial harmony in the first few years of the multi-racial democracy. In fact, seeing his government as an interim one that could not deal with certain knotty issues, he decided to leave well alone on the issues of wealth redistribution and land reform. He had even before his inauguration as president made it abundantly clear that his government would not witch hunt the perpetrators of apartheid crimes in the new dispensation. After casting his vote in the 1994 elections, he said, "We are ... concerned about the minorities in the country - especially the white minority. We are concerned about giving confidence and security to those who are worried that by these changes they are now going to be in a disadvantaged position."<sup>15</sup> However, his persistent appeals for forgiveness of past sins did not sit well with a sizeable number of his black brethren. Thus, some of them would not pass up any opportunity to vent their disenchantment. For example, at the final of the rugby World Cup in 1995, they booed him for appealing to them to support the national team which at that time was one hundred percent white. In short, those blacks could not understand why he was preaching reconciliation at the expense of accountability for apartheid crimes. "They booed me! My own people, they booed me when I stood before them, urging them to support the Springboks [South Africa's rugby team]!" he said sometime later.<sup>16</sup>

To achieve his sublime dream of helping the country forgive and heal its painful past, Mandela 1995 established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Headed by Nobel Peace Laureate, Desmond Tutu, this commission helped a lot in putting a safety valve on the pent-up emotions and revenge impulse that built up under apartheid repression. Had Mandela chosen to avenge the abuses he and other blacks suffered under apartheid, perhaps, South Africa might have plunged deep into a civil war, with the possibility of disintegrating into two countries, one black, the other white. In fact, the ultra-rightist fringe in Afrikaner Nationalism looked forward to this possibility as the country inched close to multi-racial democracy.

The commission, whose core mandate was "to help deal with [the abuses that] happened under apartheid,"<sup>17</sup> operated under the government of national unity that guided the country in its first five years of exit from apartheid. The law that established the commission noted that it was "a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation."<sup>18</sup> The three committees of the commission worked in an interlock, with complaints of abuses committed between 1960 and 1994 investigated by the human rights committee, then remitted to the Reparation and Reconciliation Committee, the second committee which formulated ways to rehabilitate and possibly compensate victims who could benefit from a President's Fund funded by Parliament and private contributors. (Wealthy white entrepreneurs were expected to dominate the list of private donors). The third committee called the Amnesty Committee considered

applications for amnesty for abuses committed during the apartheid era from both whites and blacks. The ANC which filed complaints of racial abuse represented both blacks and Indians and Coloureds.<sup>19</sup> Of course, there were good reasons to fear that a civil war might erupt as the country took the last step of its retreat from apartheid. However, fortunately, the choice of Mandela, the “giant of history,” made that forgiveness and reconciliation, rather than revenge, should define the inter-racial relationship in the new dispensation was able to keep the urge for revenge in check. In fact, it was largely his involvement in the transition politics that brokered the fragile peace that suffused the brooding atmosphere of fear in the immediate post-apartheid years.

But did the TRC achieve its objectives? To a large extent, it did, for through its efforts the victims of racial repressions (who were mostly blacks) were able to divert their accumulated anger and initial impulse for vengeance to the confession and reconciliation forums it established. It was not a magic wand, yet, as observed by Gabriel O’Marley

*When scrutinising the TRC, one must be cognisant of the inevitable shortfall of any legal or institutional response to the pain and suffering engendered by a mass atrocity. The TRC was a construct of compromise and was implemented by public officials who, despite relatively substantial resources, were inhibited by political and temporal restraints. Its fallibility was guaranteed from the outset. Despite this shortcoming, it was the process of the TRC, however flawed, not the product (a five volume report) that acted as a form of catharsis for some. Fear of legal action, coupled with the prospect of amnesty, was at the heart of the TRCs method of fleshing out the truth. There was no requirement for the perpetrators to apologise and many of them continue to this day to live comfortable lives, as they did in the apartheid years.<sup>20</sup>*

Mandela’s reconciliation efforts were a great sacrifice that laid the foundation upon which the (fragile) inter-racial harmony one sees in his country today exists. His sacrifices for this harmony explain the torrents of eulogies that attended his death.

It was stated in the foregoing that Mandela only solved one of the three major challenges that faced his country in the post-apartheid period. The other two were left to be attended by his successors. Since 1999, when Mandela left office, after successfully restraining the loud demands for retribution for apartheid crimes, South Africa has been grappling with how best to respond to the persistent demands for effective reforms that will enforce affirmative action in favour of those who were banished to the side-lines by apartheid’s socio-economic and political system. These demands concern the structural lop-sidedness in the distribution of wealth and privileged positions in the economy and land ownership. The urgency of the need to restructure the economy has been advised even by the World Bank which in 2013 reported that “South Africa has one of the world’s highest unemployment rates, high poverty levels, endemic inequality and a dual economy characterized by an informal low-end economy existing alongside a developed, high-end economy.”<sup>21</sup> But to address this demand for economic justice, the government run by blacks finds it difficult (and sometimes, tricky) to take certain desirable actions. This is because it knows that they could set both the economy and the social structure crashing along a similar path gone by neighbouring Zimbabwe. One of the few things about which there is little or no doubt at all in South African politics is the fact that any hasty attempt to reformat the country’s economic system will be vehemently resisted by the whites, with the predictable consequence of unleashing an economic haemorrhage that can make Zimbabwe’s crisis look like child’s play.

Concern over the lop-sidedness in the wealth distribution system in South Africa has been both a moral issue and a political football; but for ANC (the party that has ruled the country since 1994 and is likely to dominate national politics in the foreseeable future), the concern has been more over the latter than the former. This is so, considering that the party has mostly exploited the calls for economic justice and democracy to mobilize mass support behind itself for electoral purposes. Yet, the leadership of the party has had cause to complain about the lop-sidedness which is too glaring to be disguised. For example, in 2012, President Jacob Zuma complained about how “the structure of the apartheid-era economy has remained largely intact... [and how] the ownership of the economy is still primarily in the hands of white males as it has always been.”<sup>22</sup>

Arguably, what most Africans are demanding is wider access to the white-dominated economic system. They are asking for affirmative action, which in the context of their country's current conditions is a euphemism for purging the economy of its white domination in land ownership and executive headship of key industries. Some of these demands want the government to increase taxes on the mining industry or nationalize some industries. But the government (which, of course, is synonymous with the ANC party), may not dare concede to this call for the nationalization of key industries, such as mines because it knows that any ill-advised or premature interference with these industries can cause very serious hiccups to the whole gamut of the national economy. This fact has already been investigated and confirmed by research it set up in 2012.<sup>23</sup>

The gap between the economic status of South Africa's whites and blacks is intolerably wide. As noted by Palash Ghosh, "There is indeed a deep racial economic chasm in South Africa that democracy has failed to fix. One-half of the overall population (which is 80 percent black) remains trapped in poverty."<sup>24</sup> An average white worker earns seven times his black compatriot.<sup>25</sup> So, there is a crying need to empower the blacks. But the major danger in trying to get the two races to sit side-by-side in the cockpit of the economy is the possibility of setting off a concatenation of events that may lead to a total dislocation of the economy.

There is little or no doubt at all that with a relatively low level of education and expertise in economic management (which is a heritage of apartheid), the blacks are likely to find it difficult to run the economy as efficiently as whites who, thanks to apartheid, boast a higher level of education and expertise. Consequently, for a long to come, white economic domination will remain a sine qua non for the economy to grow. So, whatever reforms must be made to empower the blacks should be slow and cautious. Cyril Ramaphosa, one of the few blacks to have crawled up to the commanding height of the economy and one of Africa's entrepreneurs on the Forbes list, began his rise only after apartheid ended two decades ago. If he could achieve this much in a space of twenty years, it shows that the country should make haste slowly in liberalizing the economy for wider black participation.

Mbeki once lamented that,

*[His country] is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. ...The second and larger nation ...is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure.*<sup>26</sup>

He, therefore, suggested that the efforts to remedy the balance in the economic positions of the races should involve a Marshal Plan-type sacrifice of resources and privileges by the whites. He specifically suggested this should be done in a manner that would mimic the generous financial aid of \$600 billion that West Germany spent on helping East Germany during the first five years of their reunification in 1989. While strongly supporting the idea of restructuring the economic arrangement, he cautioned that steps must be taken to prevent the fulfilment of the prediction that "black advancement equals a white brain drain" and "black management in the public service equals inefficiency, corruption, and a lowering of black empowerment means white brain drain as has happened in neighbouring Zimbabwe."<sup>27</sup> Mbeki's first economy-second economy dichotomy conception toyed with inflaming passions over apartheid injustices, albeit unwittingly.

Land redistribution is the other delicate problem Mandela tactfully dodged. Land redistribution is an equally delicate issue in the other southern African countries of Namibia and Zimbabwe where colonial rule, like apartheid, created a property-ownership system that left most of the arable lands in the hands of minority white populations. So, as with the previous problem examined in the foregoing, a false move can also harm the economy.

South Africa where blacks who make up 70% of the population control only 7% of arable land has been in a quandary over how best to peacefully transfer most of the arable lands from whites to blacks. The

tortuous negotiations that ended apartheid rule inserted a “willing seller, willing buyer” clause in the final agreement on the establishment of a multi-racial democracy. That clause has, as widely expected, made it difficult to effect transfers. According to The Economist, land reform has been “frustratingly slow and ineffective,” with only a very small amount of land having changed hands since 1994.<sup>28</sup> The white negotiators must have taken a cue from the Lancaster House Agreement which also made land transfer exceedingly difficult in Zimbabwe.

Arguably, the crises in Zimbabwe will be child’s play in South Africa should the government give in to the widespread frustrations on the slow pace at which the land reform programme has been moving. Again, this is because a potential for civil war is clearly possible. Apartheid created a peculiar socio-economic condition before it was toppled two decades ago. Unlike in Zimbabwe where blacks gained the command of both the political and economic systems immediately after their country regained independence in 1980, in South Africa apartheid ensured an iron-white grip on the economy; and loosening this grip is a task that will require whole commitment, persuasion, and diplomacy. Besides, unlike Zimbabwean whites, South African whites evince a deeper emotional attachment to the idea of permanent residence in their country. With white settlement in South Africa being about 500 years older than that in Zimbabwe and with the South African white population being larger than Zimbabwe’s, it will be easier to have a white exodus out of Zimbabwe than it will be out of South Africa. Again, as with the challenge of wealth redistribution, a false move will only kindle latent animosities between the races.

### Conclusion

The need for a radical restructuring of South Africa’s society is urgent. While much has been achieved in the area of political integration, little has been achieved in integrating the blacks into the mainstream of the economy. But the modus operandi for this desirable integration is tricky for the political leadership. The challenge is how to respond to the demands for greater participation in the economy by the majority of those who were side-lined under apartheid in a manner that will not incur serious resistance from the whites, who have evinced a reluctance to let go of their pre-eminence in the economic sector.

The blacks’ marginalization in the economy of the country did not escape the attention of perceptive observers even before apartheid officially ended in 1994. One of them Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigerian president, noted at that time that:

*With the demise of apartheid and the correction of gross mis-structure and the underperformance of the economy, the social malaise brought about by the policy of apartheid will remain for some time. Deliberate efforts will have to be made to deal with the social problems of the “new” South Africa. It is now being recognized by all concerned in South Africa that the problem is not that of changing the captain of the boat but changing the engine and reorganising the crew. That reorganization may inevitably lead to a change of the captain but, all in all, fears will have to be allayed and expectations will have to be moderated.<sup>29</sup>*

The slow pace at which the issue of justice over apartheid legacies has been addressed is already impinging upon black solidarity, with the monolith, ANC bearing the brunt of black frustration. More and more blacks are getting disenchanted with the party because they feel it is pandering to the preachment for interracial harmony and giving little attention to their demands for the dismantling of the economic structure carried over from the apartheid era. The disgruntled blacks seem to be seeking answers to questions like this one: should the economic stability be maintained at the expense of black empowerment? Some of them have even deserted the party. So far, the most prominent of those that have deserted the party is Julius Malema, the expelled firebrand president of ANC Youth Wing, who led some young supporters away to form a black irredentist organization called the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This organization, fascinated by Mugabe who has done what it expects its own country to do about land expropriation, vocally demands “the expropriation of land [from whites] without compensation and the symbolism of land occupations, given the history of dispossession in South Africa.”<sup>30</sup> Without doubt, the demands for economic justice such as the one being impetuously made



by EFF are a bad omen for the sustenance of the fragile interracial harmony one sees in South Africa. EFF's radicalism even tends to exceed the limits of its primary grievance, for it now denounces Chinese investments in the country as well.

Black leaders like Molema should not forget the fact that it is much easier to concede political power than it is to concede economic power. Yet, without a palpable satisfaction of black demands, the bitterness of apartheid will be hard to eliminate. A trending referral is the Elon Musk-instigated accusation against the Cyril Ramaphosa South African government of 'land genocide against South African white farmers' citing certain 'racist ownership laws,' leading to Donald Trump cutting certain US aid to the country. This has even cascaded into the expulsion of the South African ambassador from the US. What may appear as an innocent land reform from the government to its citizens as economic transformation demands may have been construed in another light?

The dilemma of justice also can lead to deeper state involvement in the economy, a development that can, in turn, lead to vehement resistance from the white right wing and mock the ideals of economic laissez-faireism. Since the whites will not willingly part with junks of their 'hard-earned' wealth, the government should adopt measures that, while empowering blacks will not disempower the whites. A co-habitation of opposites should be pursued here and the wealth redistribution should be as indirect and non-confrontational as possible.

Finally, it should not, for any reason whatsoever, be concluded that achieving black integration into the mainstream of South Africa's economy should be a task that should be done in a hurry, in the first two or three decades of multiracial democracy or even in the next fifty years. Change always comes with patience, perseverance, pain, and sacrifices. So, both the blacks and whites should be willing to give up parts of the expectations they had when they signed the death warrant of apartheid in 1994.

## Notes

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