

# Review

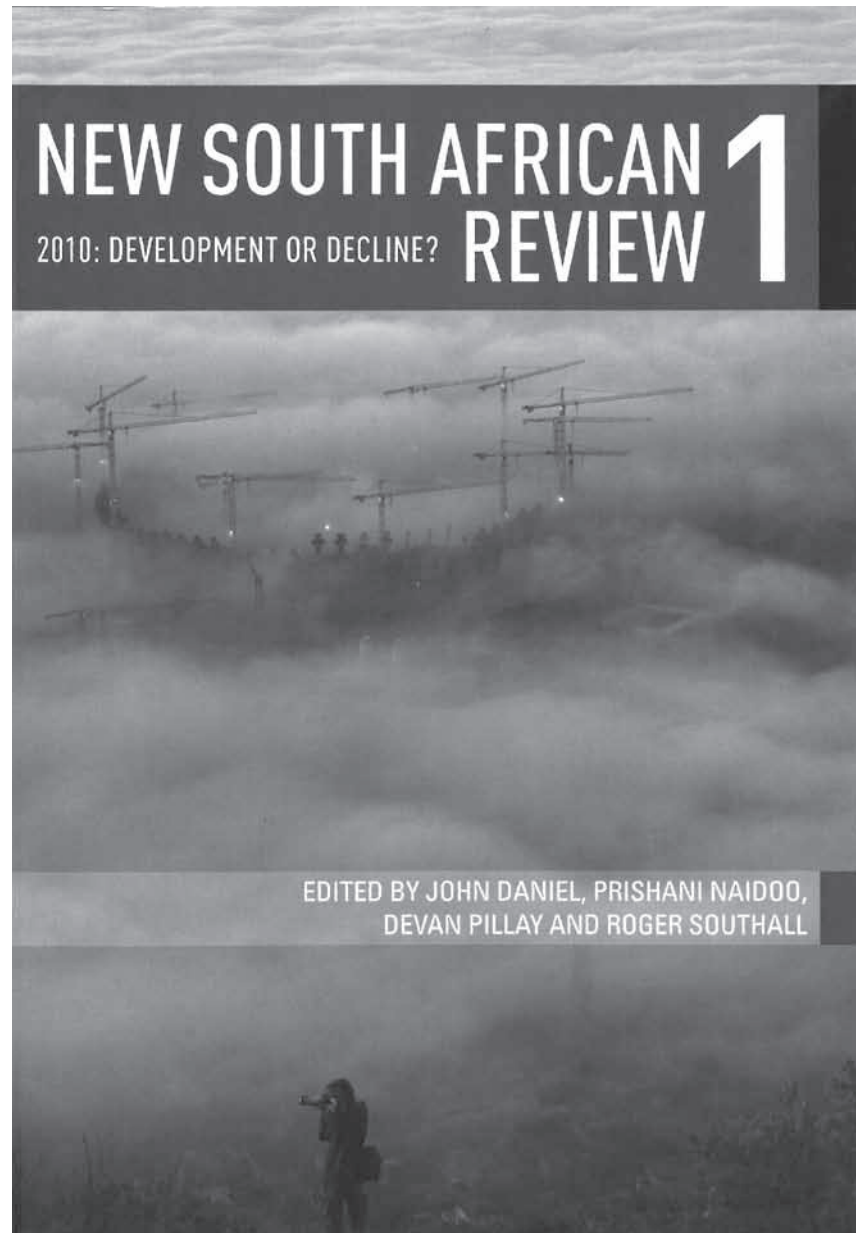
*New South African Review 1*  
*2010: Development or Decline?* (Wits University Press, 2010)

Reviewed by *Zwelethu Jolobe*

The *New South African Review 1* has successfully revived the scholarly tradition of the seven-volume *South African Review* of the 1970s and 1980s, which provided invaluable insights into the dynamics of politics and society under apartheid.

The context within which this new review is launched, as the contributors note, is significantly different. South Africa has experienced four successive governments headed by African National Congress (ANC) presidents Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma; southern Africa has experienced such a devastating AIDS pandemic that one in three people who die of AIDS in the world are laid to rest somewhere in southern Africa; and South Africa is now the 13th biggest troop contributing country to international peace missions, 'with the largest women's contingent deployed and one of a handful of countries incorporating women into combat positions in the military'.

The contributors also stress important continuities. South Africa continues to have a weak industrial base, depending heavily on mining and raw minerals exports; the country continues to face high levels of unemployment, and these increased levels, particularly in the low-income sections of the population, have aggravated the deep socio-economic inequalities carried over from apartheid. The review deals with these issues in a frank, honest, informative but very accessible manner.



The central question posed by the editors is whether post-apartheid South Africa has embarked on a path of sustainable socio-economic and political

progress. In so doing the book reflects on the achievements, controversies, problems and challenges facing South Africa after apartheid.

*New South African Review 1* is organised into four sections. The first deals with issues related to the economy, ecology and sustainability.

Neva Makgetla and Seeraj Mohamed discuss the impact of the global financial crisis on the South African economy. Mohamed argues that the consequences of South Africa's choice of neo-liberal macro-economic and financial policies have proved to be disastrous. He argues that 'unless there is a huge effort to address industrial decline in South Africa and new economic policies implemented to support industrial growth and transformation, the majority of South Africans will face an increasingly bleak economic future.'

Makgetla shows that the global financial crisis has simply aggravated a depressed labour market characterised by high joblessness and inequality.

Scarlett Cornelissen discusses the economic consequences of hosting the FIFA World Cup, arguing that it is 'indicative of the misplaced priorities of an enclave elite, which are out of sync with the interests of an increasingly impoverished majority' while Mark Swilling and Mike Muller introduce the concept of 'decoupling' whereby economic development is decoupled from negative environmental impacts and resource extraction.

The second section deals with politics.

Anthony Butler examines the state of the ANC under President Jacob Zuma, noting that it has been characterised by continuity in policy but change in political style. Butler stresses that Zuma's ANC has to a large extent been 'weighed down by the negative effects of Mbeki's rule: poor public services, deep political antagonisms, a mature HIV/AIDS epidemic, a seemingly intractable unemployment crisis, a dysfunctional state, and the spread of extensive patronage systems linking politics and the state with business.'

Prishani Naidoo discusses local political struggles for the delivery of basic services, and through a case study of the City of Johannesburg, she examines the state's attempt at indigent management. She explores some of the contestations that emerge over what constitutes state and individual responsibility in struggles for the delivery of basic services.

Colin Hoag's chapter discusses the challenges of reform at the Department of Home Affairs, stressing that efforts at reform must involve substantial and sincere consultation with street-level officials and those who represent them, particularly at trade union level.

The contribution by Loren Landau, Tara Tolzer and Aurelia Wa Kabwe-Segatti shows how migration continues to shape the social dynamics of South Africa.

The third section addresses issues related to education, health and land reform.

Peter Vale sets the tone with a fascinating chapter on the historical development and contemporary state of the humanities and social sciences in the academy, showing that what has happened to the humanities in South Africa mirrors a global trend.

Kezia Lewins continues on this issue and examines how the higher education sector has fared in terms of transformation, equity and social justice. Lewins reflects on both student and staff transformation, and draws meaningful connections between them.

Louis Reynolds explores what it would take for the National Health Insurance and associated reforms to contribute to making universal health care for all South Africans a real possibility. The contributions by Sam Kariuki and Doreen Atkins focus on issues of rural development and new options in land reform respectively.

The fourth section deals with issues related to crime.

David Bruce describes how murder and related forms of violence

are the primary contributors to the overall problem of crime in South Africa, and Jeremy Gordin explores the problem of awaiting-trial prisoners. Bruce disaggregates national crime statistics according to race, gender and age and shows several continuities from the apartheid period. Gordin discusses the failure of the criminal justice system, and the need for alternative systems that is able to deal with crime in a context of social and economic inequality.

Zosa de Sas Kropiwnicki writes on the trafficking of children from Zimbabwe and South Africa through the border town of Musina; while Terry-Ann Selikow and Graham Gibbon show how, through the voices of young women and men in an urban township, 'the most intimate aspects of life are commoditized'.

Selikow and Gibbon argue that the 'growth in consumerism, spurred on by globalization and modernity in post-apartheid South Africa, and the accompanying pressure on young people to acquire and publicly display material goods', have led to an increase in the commoditisation of sex. The logic of the market, they argue, thus touches all aspects of life.

This collection of essays is provocative and informative and argues the potential of a post-apartheid society premised on social equity. Thus it continues the tradition of the *South Africa Review* and has an exciting list of contributors based primarily at the University of the Witwatersrand. This inaugural volume offers 20 diverse contributions in a compelling and relevant publication that will appeal to all audiences interested in engaging the multiple issues facing post-apartheid South Africa. <sup>18</sup>

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