The Politics of Transition in South Africa: Report on a Faculty Seminar

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South Africa has long been in the limelight, especially after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, as a result of worldwide disapproval of and opposition to the white minority government's policy of *apartheid* and, more recently (since 1990), as a result of the constitutional negotiations to end *apartheid* and to establish one-person-one-vote democracy. For political scientists, South Africa is a particularly interesting topic because it is one of the world's most extreme cases of a divided society and because, if the efforts to establish a stable democracy turn out to be successful, South Africa will be an exemplar for other racially and ethnically divided countries. At the same time, however, the studying and teaching of South African politics face unusually difficult problems as a result of the rapid pace of developments since 1990 and the great complexity of the issues facing the country.

The purpose of a 1992 faculty seminar on South Africa was to explore long-term political developments and current issues in South African politics and to provide background and resources for faculty teaching and research. It was held in conjunction with the APSA Annual Meeting in Chicago and supported by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The seminar was especially valuable because of the participation of three prominent South African political scientists: Vincent T. Maphai of the University of the Western Cape and Hermann Giliomee and Robert Schrire of the University of Cape Town. Three main topics were discussed, following brief introductions by the South African guests: historical developments leading to the current, post-1990, phase of negotiations (Maphai and Giliomee); constitutional negotiations and the prospects for agreement (Schrire); and the outlook for national integration

and stable democracy after a constitutional settlement (Giliomee). While there were disagreements on details and nuances among the South African participants, they shared a cautious optimism about both the short-term and long-term political future of their country. Several of the other participants also brought considerable prior knowledge, often based on direct research experience in South Africa, to the seminar and made excellent contributions to what turned out to be very lively discussions.

The short reading list that I distributed to the participants prior to the seminar emphasized the most up-to-date books and articles. It included two books: Robert Schrire's (1991) *Adapt or Die,* a thorough, largely chronological, account of developments since 1978, and Donald L. Horowitz's (1991) *A Democratic South Africa?,* containing a detailed analysis of South Africa as a deeply divided society and a set of controversial constitutional proposals based on his "vote-pooling" theory—a preferential voting system, a presidential form of government, and federalism. The four articles that I assigned dealt with the African National Congress (Ottaway 1991), the National Party and its Afrikaner clientele (Giliomee 1992), an assessment of the chances for a democratic settlement by Giliomee's and Schrire's University of Cape Town colleague David Welsh (1991), and my critique of Horowitz's constitutional proposals (Lijphart 1991). Two further recent publications should be added: Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba's (1992) *Comrades against Apartheid* on the ANC's and the South African Communist Party's activities in exile and Michael MacDonald's (1992) article, which is sharply critical of both Horowitz's vote-pooling and my power-sharing proposals.

In order to stay in close touch with

South African developments as they unfold, three periodical news summaries can play a useful role. Recent issues of these were circulated during the seminar. The most detailed is *This Week in South Africa,* a weekly publication containing both news items and editorials from South African newspapers and other media. It is distributed by the South African Embassy in Washington for the eastern part of the United States and by the South African Consulate-General in Beverly Hills for the western states. The other two are monthly publications: *Southern Africa Review,* compiled and edited by Intro Communications in McLean, Virginia, and *Focus on South Africa,* published by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria.

A number of earlier volumes retain considerable value for teachers and researchers interested in South Africa and which—or parts of which—can still usefully serve as reading assignments in college courses. The most important of these is the monumental *South Africa: Time Running Out* by the Study Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa (1981), based on research funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. It contains a comprehensive review of the country's history, people, economy, politics, and relations with foreign countries, as well as recommendations for United States policy. Several shorter books have been published in order to update the analysis in *Time Running Out.* Schrire's (1991) book mentioned above is one of these. Another volume in this series that deserves special emphasis is *All, Here, and Now* on black politics in South Africa during the 1980s by Tom Lodge et al. (1991). Another major book, published in 1981, is Theodor Hanf et al.'s *South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change,* based on a massive opinion survey held in the late 1970s.

The many books and articles by

Heribert Adam, the most outstanding non-South-African expert on South Africa, are all worth perusing, but his *South Africa without Apartheid,* co-authored with Kogila Moodley (1986) is especially worth recommending. Robert M. Price's (1991) *The Apartheid State in Crisis* is an excellent analysis of political change from 1975 to 1990. L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan's (1991, ix) *Hope for South Africa?* is a controversial "conservative" interpretation of South Africa, which the authors themselves describe as differing "radically from the regnant academic orthodoxy." And, at the risk of immodesty, I should like to add my own *Power-Sharing in South Africa* (Lijphart 1985).

All of the books mentioned so far have been published in the United States and are, therefore, easily accessible for American teachers and students. In addition, of course, there are many relevant publications that have appeared in South Africa. Two that I should like to single out are *Critical Choices for South Africa,* edited by Robert Schrire (1990), the first of a series of books on the main issues facing the country in the 1990s, and *Politikon,* the official journal of the Political Science Association of South Africa, issued twice a year since 1974.

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Making Political Activity a Requirement in Introductory Political Science Courses*

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Knowledge of and participation in America's political institutions is at an abysmal level. Those between 18 and 25 are particularly unlikely to participate in political activity. It is difficult to see how the major issues confronting America domestically and internationally can be dealt with in the context of a massive state of civic illiteracy.

As one vehicle for combating civic illiteracy, as an introduction to political participation, and as a mechanism for teaching political skills, we have developed a political activity project as a component of our Introduction to American Government course at Wayne State University. Our model assumes that informed political participation changes the participant and improves the capacity of the political system to solve problems. It is also based on the idea that civic literacy and participation in the political process require information regarding basic issues and political structures as well as political skills derived from experience.

Informed participation is crucial. The system's ability to start dealing with key issues then encourages further participation leading to civic literacy.

In order to implement this concept, students in our classes are required to earn at least 25% of their