The South African transition from apartheid to the country’s first democratically elected government in 1994 is widely acclaimed as an example of a successful political transition that avoided the predicted bloodbath and political chaos. Some among the oppressed people of South Africa, however, had quite unrealistic expectations of what the new age could usher in. This has contributed, two decades later, to a wave of disillusionment and resentment in the country, raising questions about the viability of the soft South African transition. It also adds to the global debate on the nature of political transitions from dictatorship and authoritarian rule to the beginning of democracy.

Many newly founded states, which emerged in the wave of democratization that swept the globe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, are today governed by ruling elites, tempted if not driven, to govern with unrestrained power. This tendency of new democracies to slide back into some of the ways of the oppressive states they have replaced, poses the pertinent question as to how nations, comprising what Sir Isaiah Berlin aptly defined as a “crooked timber of humanity,” ought best to go about establishing lasting peace? University of Notre Dame professor James McAdams argued that “if one looks over the mountain of articles, books, and other learned treatises on the topic of transitional justice, one cannot help but come to an uncomfortable realization: for every argument that can be summoned in favor of doing more to address a past wrong, we can find an equally compelling coun-
Consideration is given in this paper to the South African breakthrough in negotiations that led to this country’s first democratic elections in 1994 and the fruits of this transition, almost two decades years later. It was relatively easy to distinguish between good and evil during the days of struggle. Today it is more difficult. We discovered that not all political leaders were neither wholly Satanic nor entirely angelic. This suggests that political leaders have an ability and capacity to respond, both out of self-interest or empathy with others, to both the carrots and sticks of history. It is this that makes peace building a trade-off that reaches deep into the psyche and identity of adversaries and political opponents, as well as into the fabric of the political process that shapes the fortunes of a nation.

With this in mind, this chapter will deal with three issues that are considered crucial for a full understanding of the nature and results of the South African transition. The first is the context of the South African political settlement, culminating in the 1994 elections. The second is the nature of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And the third is the unfinished work of the South African transition.

The Context of the South African Settlement

It is easy to forget the nature of the anticipated doom that faced South Africa in the late 1980s. It is, in turn, still a bit nerve-racking to recall the tenuous and fragile nature of the negotiations between the apartheid regime and the liberation movements that came in the wake of the unbanning of political organizations and the release from prison of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in 1990. Suspicions intensified on both sides and violence escalated into the killing fields

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of Kwa Zulu Natal and beyond, threatening to reduce the country to chaos at the very time when a settlement seemed possible.

An iconic moment came when shortly after Mandela’s release from prison, he met with General Constand Viljoen, head of the South African Defense Force. “If you want to go to war,” Mandela told Viljoen, “I must be honest with you and admit that we cannot stand up to you on the battlefield. We don’t have the resources. It will be a long and bitter struggle, many people will die and the country may be reduced to ashes. But you must remember two things. You cannot win because of our numbers; you cannot kill us all. And you cannot win because of the international community. They will rally to our support and they will stand with us.”

Mandela’s optimism concerning the stance of the international community suggested that a turning point had been reached in South Africa—there was no turning back. Viljoen was, in turn, drawn into the settlement process, eventually bringing conservative Afrikaners into the political process.

Suffice it to say, the South African conflict drew to a climax in a historic settlement, forged essentially between black Africans and white Boers. The settlement was designed to stop an escalating war that threatened to destroy the very identity, infrastructure, and promise of a nation yet to be born. Both sides to the conflict, however, through long and tedious contacts and negotiations, came to believe that new life could still emerge out of the strife that characterized the apartheid years. At the heart of the settlement was a commitment to a conditional amnesty—which was judged by a cross-section of South African political leaders to be the only way forward. In the words of the postamble to the Interim Constitution, agreed to by both sides of the political divide, it was agreed that: “In order to advance reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offenses associated with political objectives and committed in the course of conflicts of the past. To this end, the Parliament under this Constitution shall adopt a law . . . providing for the mechanisms, criteria and procedures, including tribunals, if any, through which such amnesty shall be dealt with at any time after the law has been passed.”

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3 Alister Sparks, Tomorrow Is Another Country (Johannesburg: Struik Book Distributors, 1994), 204.
Looking back on this process, Justice Richard Goldstone, who later became a judge in the South African Constitutional Court and subsequently held several important international positions, argued that: “The decision to opt for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was an important compromise. If the ANC had insisted on Nuremberg-style trials for the leaders of the former apartheid government, there would have been no peaceful transition to democracy, and if the former government had insisted on a blanket amnesty then, similarly, the negotiations would have broken down. A bloody revolution sooner rather than later would have been inevitable. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a bridge from the old to the new.”

The Nature and Mandate of the Commission

The TRC was intended to be part of a larger bridge-building process designed to help the nation move from its deeply divided past to a future founded on reconciliation, the recognition of human rights, and democracy. This placed a huge responsibility on the TRC—and yet its parliamentary-defined mandate was a narrow one. It was to investigate and document gross violations of human rights, defined in the legislation governing the TRC as “killings, abductions, torture and severe ill-treatment.” The mandate period was from May 1, 1960, when the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned and resorted to armed struggle, to the inauguration of the first democratic president on May 10, 1994.

The narrowness of the TRC’s mandate needs to be understood in the context of a number of other commissions in the country, which mandates incorporated similar objectives. These included the Land Claims Court, the Constitutional Court, the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission, and the Youth Commission. Other violations of human rights that formed part of the apartheid past, including Bantu education and forced removals, were to be addressed and corrected through legislation and policy developed by the new government.

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The Objectives of the Commission

The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act required the Commission to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding by:

- establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of gross violations of human rights . . . by conducting investigations and holding hearings;
- facilitating the granting of amnesty to persons who made full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective and which comply with the requirements of the Act;
- establishing and making known the fate or whereabouts of victims and restoring the human and civil dignity of such victims [survivors] by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations they suffered, and recommending reparation;
- compiling a report that provided as comprehensive an account as possible of the activities and findings of the Commission, and making recommendations to prevent the future violations of human rights.

Structure of the Commission

The Commission established a number of internal structures in order to carry out its multiple tasks—these included a team of people responsible for an extensive database that recorded the names and details of victims, perpetrators, and witnesses; a witness protection unit; an investigative unit; a research department; a legal unit; a safety and security department; a mental health unit; and a media and communications department. These structures were required to service the three major committees which constituted the Commission.
The Amnesty Committee

This body consisted of judges of the Supreme Court, who co-opted several lawyers to serve on the amnesty panels under them. The task of the committee was to consider applications for amnesty on the basis of the following conditions:

- The person applying for amnesty was required to appear personally before an Amnesty Committee hearing and make full disclosure of all relevant facts concerning the act for which he or she was seeking amnesty.
- Only members of state institutions, members and supporters of political organizations and liberation movements were eligible for amnesty.
- The actions for which applicants applied for amnesty needed to have had a political objective and to have been carried out in pursuit of the aims of their respective organizations.

The legislation governing amnesty emphasized that amnesty could not be extended to any person for any act, omission or offence committed for personal gain or out of personal malice toward someone. It required that the Amnesty Committee be guided in its decisions by the following criteria:

- the motive of the person who committed the act, omission or offense;
- the context of the act, omission, or offense;
- the legal and factual nature of the act, omission, or offense, as well as the gravity of the act, omission or offense;
- the object or objective of the act, omission, or offense;
- whether the act, omission or offense was executed in response to an order, or on behalf of, or with the approval of, the state, a political organization or liberation movement; and
- the relationship between the act, omission, or offense and the political objective pursued, and in particular the directness and proximity of the relationship and the proportionality of the act, omission, or offense to the objective pursued.
In brief, the TRC legislation offered amnesty in return for truth about South Africa’s past. Those denied amnesty, or who chose not to apply for it, were subject to prosecution in terms of established criminal law. Of the 7,116 applicants, 1,167 were granted amnesty. The majority of those whose applications were refused failed to meet the criteria as set out above, while a number of applicants were deemed not to have made full disclosure on the acts in which they were involved. Others chose not to apply for amnesty, hoping their crimes would either go undetected or be ignored and some, especially in the liberation movements, argued that they were soldiers fighting a just war did not require amnesty.

**Human Rights Violations Committee**

A major responsibility of the Human Rights Violations Committee was to invite victims of gross violations of human rights to inform the Commission and the South African public of these violations. This task was undertaken by sending out trained statement takers to interview victims and their families in their own languages. This information was entered into a database and investigated with a view to enabling the Commission to decide whether the disclosed information was true or not. Of the 21,290 people who submitted statements to the TRC, 19,050 were found to be victims of gross violations of human rights as defined in the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*. A further 2,975 names were identified through the amnesty process as possible victims, although not all were ultimately found to be such in terms of the legislation governing the TRC. Because of time and other restraints the TRC could not invite all victims to give testimony in public, although approximately 2,000 of the total number of victims appeared in hearings that were held in cities, towns, and rural areas across the country.

These hearings were extensively covered on radio and television as well as in all major South African newspapers. A journalist indicated at the close of the TRC that the nation “now had TRC fatigue.” He went on to say, “I cannot open the newspapers, turn on the television, or listen to the radio without being exposed to another horrific story.” Perhaps that was the good news. No South African, black or white, could again either deny that atrocities had happened or say he or she
did not know that they had happened. This provided a basis on which to build a new society, with a commitment to ensure that such things did not happen again.

Unlike the Amnesty Committee where public hearings were conducted according to established legal procedure, the Human Rights Violations Committee sought to create an opportunity for victims to tell their stories in a psychologically and socially secure space. Victims were not cross-examined or put under any kind of threat. In addition to seeking to establish what has been called the objective truth concerning their suffering, the Committee also sought to record the subjective truth or the way in which victims themselves perceived and remembered their violations.

On the basis of the information gained from victims and the subsequent investigations, the Human Rights Violations Committee made a formal finding as to whether or not the person could be regarded as a victim in terms of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*. The information and findings were made available to the Amnesty Committee when the information was relevant to an amnesty application, as well as to the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee for reparation purposes. The Human Rights Violations Committee had the additional responsibility to publish a brief synopsis of each of the 19,050 testimonies of those people found by the TRC to be victims of gross human rights violations.

The Human Rights Violations Committee also held institutional hearings for religious communities, the legal community, business and labor, the health sector, the media, prisons, and the armed forces. In addition, political party hearings were held within which all the major political parties and liberation movements gave testimony. The aim was to gain as complete a picture as possible of events in the mandate period of the Commission and to understand the role played—both positive and negative—by the various institutions and parties during the thirty-four years under review.

*The Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee*

The Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee received information concerning victims from the Amnesty and the Human Rights Violations Committees, and developed a reparations and rehabilitation
The South African Transition: Then and Now

policy to address the needs of those who had suffered in one way or another. Recognizing that the granting of amnesty denies victims the right to institute civil claims against perpetrators, the need for adequate reparations and rehabilitation became obvious. The government had to accept responsibility for the wellbeing of victims.

The Committee studied international law and policy on reparations and looked at reparation practices in other countries and situations. On the basis of this it established five components for reparations and rehabilitation:

- **Urgent Interim Reparation**: This was developed to meet the needs of victims in urgent need of assistance, which could range from the provision of a wheelchair to emergency support for medical, emotional or educational needs.

- **Individual Reparation Grants**: The Commission decided to make an individual reparation grant to each victim of gross violations of human rights. Having considered various formulae for deciding on the amount to be paid, it ultimately recommended a payment of up to R 23,023 per victim per annum (currently slightly over EUR 1,800), conditional on the number of dependents the victims had and whether the victims were living in a rural or urban area. This payment was to be made in six monthly instalments for a period of six years. It took the government five years to announce that the TRC’s recommendation would not be implemented and that there would be a one-off payment of R 30,000 to each victim (at present rates around EUR 2,400).

- **Symbolic Reparations plus Legal and Administrative Interventions**: These included the issuing of death certificates; carrying out exhumations, burials and ceremonies; erecting tombstones; expunging criminal records for political activities; declarations of death where this would assist families; the renaming of streets and facilities, memorials and monuments; and instituting days of remembrance. A major development in this category of symbolic reparations is the Freedom Park presently under construction in Pretoria.

- **Community Rehabilitation**: In addition to the suffering of individuals, whole communities were often subjected to attacks and suffering that ranged from massacres to systematic abuse as a result of army and police occupation. Community reparations were in-
tended to meet the need for health and social services, education facilities, institutional reconstruction and housing.

- **Institutional Reform**: These proposals included legal, administrative and institutional measures designed to prevent the recurrence of human rights abuses.

A President’s Fund, located in the Ministry of Justice, was established to meet these and other related needs, with contributions coming from the government, some foreign countries and individuals. To date the Fund continues to be underutilized. This is primarily because the fund was originally structured to meet the payment of individual reparations, although legislation is still not finalized for the fund to be used for community and other forms of reparation.

**The Final Report of the Commission**

The first five volumes of the Commission’s Report covered the following issues: the Commission’s mandate, structure, and methodology; the investigations and research undertaken by the Commission into gross violations of human rights in various institutions and structures of government as well as the liberation movements; reports of activities in the various provinces of the country in the pre-1994 dispensation; institutional hearings; and finally, various analyzes and recommendations made by the Commission to ensure that the kinds of atrocities of the past do not recur in the future. Two further volumes were completed at the conclusion of the final amnesty hearings: volume six provides a final report from the Amnesty Committee, plus comments and amendments to the earlier volumes; volume seven compromises short summaries of the testimony given by those whom the TRC found to be victims of gross violations of human rights.

On the eve of the first five volumes being handed to then President Nelson Mandela in October 1998, former President F.W. de Klerk went to the Cape High Court demanding that certain findings against him be taken out of the Report. In order to allow the Report to be released, the Commission agreed to black out the relevant page. The Commission had found that Mr. de Klerk failed to make a full disclosure regarding the violations of human rights committed by senior
members of his government and the South African Police. These included the bombing of Khotso House. This finding became part of the court record and was subsequently highlighted in the media.

In turn, the ANC appealed to the court to stop the release of the TRC Report in its entirety because the Commission’s criticism of the ANC’s liberation struggle. The Commission had, in fact, used classic “just war” theory to distinguish between the just cause of the ANC’s fight against apartheid and just means, which showed that some of the methods employed by the ANC—not least torture and killing in its detention camps in Angola and elsewhere—constituted gross violations of human rights. The irony is that these gross violations of human rights were acknowledged by the ANC itself in its submission to the Commission. The court overruled the ANC’s application, allowing the TRC to hand the Report to the President and to release it to the media.

The Unfinished Work of the TRC

The goals of the South African TRC were always going to be incomplete. I offer three observations in this regard, among the many concerns that warrant debate on the South African settlement:

Investigations and Prosecutions

Two questions in this regard: first, would there have been a relatively peaceful settlement in South Africa had the architects and implementers of apartheid—senior political leaders and generals—faced the possibility of extended jail sentences? The answer is probably not—and there was no Rome Statute for South Africans to negotiate themselves around. Second, why were prosecutions against those who either failed to apply for amnesty or been denied amnesty by the TRC not investigated and where necessary instituted by the state? Briefly stated, the answer is that the state has, for a variety of reasons, lost the political will to prosecute past political offenders.

For example, consider the “Amendment of Prosecuting Policy: Prosecution of Criminal Matters Arising from the Conflicts of the Past and Which Were Committed before 11 May 2004” issued by the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) with the concurrence
of the Minister of Justice and Cabinet in 2006, intended to amend section 179(5)(a) and (b) of the Constitution, pertaining to prosecutions. The proposed amendment would have:

1. Empowered the NDPP to decline to prosecute, or to offer indemnities against prosecution.
2. No longer made full disclosure a requirement, as it was in the TRC amnesty process, for indemnity against prosecution.
3. Unlike the TRC Act, it provided no measure to protect the rights of victims to be heard in response to the proposed indemnities.

In brief, the amendments to the prosecution policy opened the door to impunity. It placed South Africa in potential violation of its international law obligations. It provided perpetrators with an opportunity to escape justice without the kind of public disclosure required in the TRC. And, failed to provide victims with a legal space within which to give expression to their rights and concerns.

The International Bar Association and a number of leading South African lawyers expressed their concern at this turn of events. A coalition of South African NGOs, in turn, successfully challenged the amendment in the Constitutional Court, on the grounds that contrary to the TRC requirements, the proposed amendment on prosecutions did not require victims to be consulted prior to amnesty or indemnity being granted. Before judgment was delivered, former police minister Adriaan Vlok, former police commissioner Johan van der Merwe, and retired police officers Christoffel Smith, Gert Otto, and Johannes Van Staden received suspended sentences in a court case that lasted only a few hours, without any public disclosure concerning past atrocities.

This was followed in November 2007 by President Mbeki’s “Special Dispensation for Presidential Pardon’s for Political Offenses,” which enjoyed the support of a presidential advisory committee chaired by the official opposition party in parliament. It sought to give the prosecutor’s office the power to effect plea bargains, again without consulting victims. Once more, civil society representatives resorted to the courts, and the Constitutional Court unanimously passed judgment in favor of the civil society coalition. Without seeking to limit presidential pardons per se, the judgment stated that “given our history, victim participation in accordance with the principles and the
values of the TRC was the only rational means to contribute toward national reconciliation and national unity.” Responding to the judgment, on October 18, 2010, the government released the names of 149 offenders, for a total of 652 offenses including 339 murders and 200 counts of attempted murder, being considered for pardon.

Suffice it to say, while the South African settlement prioritized truth over retributive justice, the quest for truth, whether through the courts or by other means, continues. This is seen, for example, in the stance of Thembi Simelane-Nkadimeng who has spent twenty-three years trying to find out what happened to her sister, Nokuthula, who was abducted by the security police and has not been seen since. Speaking at a symposium on the tenth anniversary of the TRC, she observed: “I am favoring prosecutions now because it is the only option I have left, but if I had an option to sit down and talk [with Nokuthula’s abductors] I would choose that.”

Not all victims would necessarily make the same choice as Simelane-Nkadimeng. Her testimony is, however, in continuity with a survey conducted earlier which showed that black South Africans saw truth, acknowledgment, apology, and an opportunity for victims to relate their stories of suffering in public as important alternatives to both retribution and monetary compensation. The survey, interestingly, also showed that 65 percent of blacks viewed amnesty as a price that needed to be paid in return for disclosure of the truth about the past and a peaceful transition to democratic rule whereas, interestingly, only 18 percent of white South Africans saw it as such! Seventy-three percent of whites surveyed, however, concluded that apartheid was a crime against humanity—probably partly as a result of the extent of public disclosure about the past through the TRC.

The jury will always be out on just how much truth is required for victims to achieve a measure of closure on the past. What the debate in South Africa revealed is that victims are seeking more truth – as much

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truth as possible – and some form of reparation to get a measure of closure on past suffering.

Reparations and Victim Restoration

The ruling of the South African Constitutional Court in 1996, in response to the application brought by the Azanian Peoples’ Organization (AZAPO) and other victims of apartheid concerning the amnesty clause in the TRC Act, is instructive in this regard. The court upheld both the criminal and civil clauses of the amnesty clause, presenting reparations as a *quid pro quo* for victims and survivors being required to surrender their right to prosecution. It further ruled that parliament was justified in adopting a wide concept of reparations, which needs to be seen in relation to other programs of reconstruction and development. The separate judgment of Justice John Didcott is particularly important in this regard. It stated that any notion of reparations at the time needed to be indecisive for the simple reason that the government was not in a position to either assess the cost of reparations or to state whether it was possible to compensate all victims of apartheid. Often overlooked in the reparations debate, Didcott’s words are as telling today as they were in 1996, with the nature of reparations continuing to fuel the fires of debate.

This is seen in the continuing struggle for reparations by some victims who are making demands for reparations beyond the one-off payment of R 30,000 to each victim named by the TRC as already discussed. At the forefront of this quest for reparation is the alien tort law

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7 AZAPO and Others vs. The President of the RSA and Others, 1996 (8) BCLR 1015 (CC).

8 Section 2, 32 (4) of the Interim Constitution allows that no section of the Constitution, including the postscript on amnesty, should be regarded as having less validity than any other part of the Constitution. Of the nine judges, J. Didcott provided a separate concurring judgment, suggesting there is no way for the court to assess the cost involved or whether it is impossible to compensate all victims of apartheid. Arguing that the Act allows for “some *quid pro quo* for the loss” suffered as a result of gross human rights violations, he concedes that nothing “more definite, detailed and efficacious could feasiably have been promised at this stage.” His substantial argument is, however, that Section 33 (2) of the Interim Constitution allows for amnesty for vicarious liability.
cases brought before in the U.S. Court of Appeals in New York by a group of apartheid victims, in which U.S.-based multinational companies that did business in South Africa during the apartheid years were sued for damages. The court case was supported by several high-profile South Africans, including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the former chairperson of the TRC and most of the TRC commissioners. The South African government has, in turn, acknowledged the right of victims to sue for damages under the alien tort law, although it earlier opposed this action, which it feared could have a negative impact on foreign investments and as being a matter to be decided within the context of South African law and the TRC.

While the need for material reparations was a central ingredient of TRC legislation and practice, the TRC mandate sets the bar considerably higher than the payment of monetary or material compensation. This involves the need to “restore the human dignity” of victims, which involves more than any one-off action by the courts, the state, or any other agency can deliver. It entails the manner in which the people of South Africa today relate to one another, whether they were oppressors, victims or bystanders in the apartheid struggle. It has particular significance for the coexistence between those who today continue to live under the shadow of past oppression, those who continue to enjoy the riches of the past, and those who have managed to establish themselves within the new economic élite. In brief, at the center of the reparations debate is the creation of a political, social, and economic dispensation that enables the nation to promote the possibility of social decency, economic justice, and a participatory democracy.

Reconstruction and Development

The struggle continues for what is required for the restoration of the human dignity of victims of South Africa’s past dispensation. What is clear is that there is a need for economic growth, skills development, and adequate access to decent education and job creation to enable the poor to benefit from the resources of the South African economy which are not inconsiderable.

I interviewed Govan Mbeki, a veteran liberation leader and father of President Thabo Mbeki, shortly before his death in 2001. He had spent twenty-four years in a cell adjacent to Nelson Mandela on Robben Island. I asked him what it would take to repair the damage of
apartheid. His answer was decisive: “having and belonging.” “For political renewal to happen,” he observed, “the economy needs to be restructured in such a way that the poor and socially excluded [the victims of apartheid] begin to share in the benefits of the nation’s wealth.” He insisted that for this to happen, all South Africans, “both black and white . . . need to feel they are part of the new nation. Those who do not feel welcome or at home in South Africa will not work for the common good. They can also cause considerable trouble.”

The political strife of the past years in the ruling ANC party in South Africa is underpinned by increasing tension between government and business interests on the one hand and workers on the other, in relation to Mbeki’s concerns. Teachers, health workers, and others in the public services have gone out on extended strikes in demand of better salaries. There is growing discontent concerning the current brand of black economic empowerment, which trade unions see as a crude attempt at building a middle class that marginalizes and excludes the majority of black South Africans. Unemployment has increased and the gap between the rich and poor has widened since the demise of legislated apartheid. Even where the government improved its social services, the absolute level of poverty has risen. Tax adjustments have put approximately R 60 billion into the pockets of upper income earners and corporations, while trade liberalization has seen thousands of jobs lost due to tariff cuts, important parity pricing, and bilateral trade agreements. The lifting of exchange control has, in turn, helped companies that have made their wealth through South African raw materials to move their primary listing to the London and New York stock exchanges. Whatever the benefits of this liberalization of the economy, those excluded from its benefits are resentful and increasingly angry.

In brief, the international economic debate separates those, on the one hand, who favor and benefit from globalization, technological advancement, and international finance and those, on the other hand, who are unable to lift themselves out of the exploitation associated with sweatshops, the “dark satanic mills” and the ranks of the

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unemployed. These realities are tearing at the fabric of South African politics in a way not seen since the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of a democratic South Africa in 1994. Unless the country can increase economic growth, while ensuring that the poor are drawn from a “second” and “third” economy into the mainstream economy, the recent forms of discontent among South Africa’s under-classes is likely to intensify. They will probably not materialize into a popular revolution, but they would decidedly turn into what has been called “movements of desperation” with a capacity to undermine the sense of a national well-being expectation that was unleashed with the release of Mandela from prison, the unbanning of political organizations, and the advent of democracy.

Politics is about dealing with the possible. South Africa chose to deal with its “possible” in a certain way in 1994. The challenge today involves an urgency to address the gross economic disparity that characterizes South Africa—the structures and boundaries of which were entrenched in the economy of the past and perpetuated in the present. Get this one right and the deep wounds of the past are likely to heal with a little more success.¹⁰

¹⁰ The final version of this chapter has been submitted in 2011.