

# State and Nation



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*The final edition of Focus for 2014 recapitulates and analyses some of the issues which have arisen in the past year with a view to adding new and alternative assessments of South Africa's development as a constitutional state.*

But we begin with a commemoration. This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. It was, as the American historian Fritz Stern wrote, "the first calamity of the twentieth century, the calamity from which all other calamities sprang."<sup>1</sup> Although the events in Sarajevo were remote from southern Africa, the war which erupted in Europe had major repercussions even in South Africa, beginning with the armed rebellion in 1915, as a consequence of South Africa's entry into the war. South African conquest and occupation of German South-West Africa would eventually develop into a long-standing feud between South Africa and the international community when the matter of Namibian independence arose.

**Jack Spence** focuses on the problems around crisis management during the First World War. For Spence one major obstacle to successful management of the crisis was the division of the great powers into two hostile camps, the Triple Alliance *versus* the Triple Entente. He argues further that the balance of power, successful as it was in maintaining order in the 19th and early 20th centuries was, by 1914, relatively inflexible. He poses the question of what lessons, if any, the failure of crisis management, both before and during WWI, have for the current international scene. For Spence, old-style crisis management has had to give way to a regime of constant and sophisticated management based on the recognition that crises of one kind or another are likely to remain a permanent feature of the international landscape. (Indeed, the ongoing regional problems in the Middle-East can be traced back to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the course of WWI, and will be with us for the foreseeable future.)

**David Everatt** reflects on Gauteng and the arrival of uncertainty. He argues that the 2014 election was the most contested in Gauteng's history and that "substantive uncertainty" appears to have arrived in Gauteng. He is not solely concerned about the politics of the 2014 elections, but more about their consequences. For Everatt, when votes are analysed at municipal level using provincial ballots, it is notable that the ANC got 49% of the Tshwane vote, 52% in Johannesburg, and 55% in Ekurhuleni. Everatt argues that the Gauteng ANC leadership may have to contemplate the possibility of governing Gauteng, but not ruling one or more of the major municipalities that form its core. He concludes that if this were to happen, then governance will take centre stage and the notion of "autonomous but interdependent" spheres of government will become a key object of focus.

**Wim Louw** considers the problem of electoral reform in South Africa. Much has been said and argued about the problems of accountability in the PR system. But Louw cautions that changing the electoral system is not a solution to solving general problems around accountability. Something more is needed.

**Gavin Keeton** considers the problem of inequality in South Africa. He draws the necessary distinction between wealth and income. And then poses the question: Why does inequality matter? In a discourse familiar to most economists, he juxtaposes the views of Kuznets with more recent views of Thomas Piketty. And he considers the implications for South Africa. His thoughtful account extends to a consideration of raising taxes and reviewing social grants. But, following Servaas van der Berg, Keeton argues that fixing South Africa's education system is necessary to reduce both unemployment and inequality. He concludes that it is only with greater political will and focus that we can address these problems.

**Tom Lodge** reviews public education and the public health sector. He is forthright in his concerns about our public education system. Comparing South Africa to other African countries, our public education is relatively well resourced. Why, then, have we not been able to do better? The great achievement in public health over the last seven years or so has been the halting of the death rate from HIV/AIDS and, Lodge argues, while there are still serious short-comings in the provision of healthcare, it's a qualitative and quantitatively different picture from education. He poses the central question: Why is this so?

**Anele Mtsweni** reviews the key institutions and policies which go to make up the legislative and strategic interventions for youth development. This survey covers some seventeen years since the first development of a National Youth Policy. But the harsh conclusion is that there is neither a degree of policy coordination nor sufficient evaluation and monitoring to suggest that these policies have been successful.

**Gavin Davis** reviews some of the ongoing dramas currently taking place at the SABC, specifically around the Board. He argues that the capture of the SABC by factional interests is mirrored in the politicization of other state institutions important for President Zuma's political survival.

**Peter Franks** discusses the crisis of the South African public service. Franks reviews the history of the civil service since 1995, but his conclusions are deeply disquieting. Nearly two decades of cadre deployment and redeployment, inadequate training, management and discipline, and the increasing evidence of the corruption of public funds and processes, have been met by increasing service delivery protests and the dislocation of labor relations. For Franks, this is a critical moment for South Africa with a public sector wage bill at least 11.5% of GDP – which is nearly three times that of South Africa's BRICS partners (Brazil and Russia). His impassioned plea that the DPSA look carefully at the campaign to assert ethical standards within the public service, is one which will find great resonance with South Africans.

We conclude with reviews by **Anthony Egan**, **Dennis Davis**, and **Dickie Davis**.

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Notes

1 Cited in Clarke C, *The Sleepwalkers* (HarperCollins 2014) pxxiii