

THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE STATE-SOCIETY NEXUS

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If we are to talk about a 'new' intellectual movement, the question is begged: what happened to the 'old' intellectual movement? What happened to the thinkers who inspired and led our struggle against colonialism, apartheid and exploitation? What has happened to the thinkers who gave substance and guidance and, in many cases, practical leadership to our attempts to undo the past and forge a new future?

In pursuit of answers to these questions, the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), in partnership with the Liliesleaf Trust, hosted a roundtable in March 2015 with the theme 'The Role of Intellectuals in the State-Society Nexus'. Inputs were provided by a range of thinkers, including Ibbo Mandaza, Ben Turok, Ari Sitas, Ayanda Ntsaluba, Xolela Mangcu, Joel Netshitenzhe, Tshilidzi Marwala and Nomboniso Gasa, as well as provocative and piercing contributions from the attendees.

This publication aims to put the inputs and debates at the roundtable further into the public domain, and simply records the contributions of the main speakers, the respondents, as well as the discussion from the floor. The rigorous debate at the roundtable spilled out of the boundaries of the event itself and encouraged a number of thinkers to provide additional material for this publication: Z. Pallo Jordan, David Moore (with Tshilidzi Marwala) and Desiree Lewis.

The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), which was publicly launched as a think tank in March 2011, was founded by a group of South Africans with experience in research, academia, policymaking and governance who saw the need to create a platform for engagement around strategic issues facing South Africa. MISTRA combines research and academic development, strategic reflections and intellectual discourse, and applies itself to issues such as economics, sociology, governance, history, arts and culture, and the logics of natural sciences.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
PREFACE	8
INTRODUCTION	10
OPENING	13
Welcoming Remarks – Nic Wolpe	13
Introductory Remarks – Mcebisi Ndletyana	14
PART ONE: The Intellect of Power and Power of Intellectuals in sub-Saharan Africa	17
The Role of Progressive African Intellectuals – Ibbo Mandaza	18
First Response – Ayanda Ntsaluba	24
Second Response – Xolela Mangcu	27
Discussion	31
PART TWO: Theorising the South African Renaissance Ideal	37
Theorising the South African Renaissance Ideal – Joel Netshitenzhe	38
Response – Ben Turok	50
Discussion	54
PART THREE: Humanities and Social Sciences in Unravelling the Dynamics of Class, Race and Gender	61
Humanities and Social Sciences in Unravelling the Dynamics of Class, Race and Gender – Ari Sitas	62
First Response – Tshilidzi Marwala	71
Second Response – Nomboniso Gasa	74
Discussion	79
PART FOUR: Some Additional Thoughts	89
Intellectuals, Science, and South Africa's National Democratic Revolution – David Moore and Tshilidzi Marwala	90
The Role of Intellectuals in the State-Society Nexus – Z. Pallo Jordan	100
Academy-Based Feminist Intellectuals and the Nexus of State, Globalisation and Civil Society – Desiree Lewis	110
CONTRIBUTORS	126

PREFACE

The very name of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) expresses precisely the *raison d'être* of the Institute – to encourage strategic reflection on the challenges facing South Africa, our region, our continent and the globe. There are many who seek to give blow-by-blow sound bites on events and issues of the day. Our focus is on taking the long, strategic view and drawing down from that the possible scenarios for tackling the problems of today as well as tomorrow.

In this spirit, MISTRA sees itself as encouraging a new intellectual movement in South Africa, one that to some extent at least sits back from the fray and provides independent, incisive, long-term thinking and analysis on where we have come from, where we are now and where we are going.

However, if we are to talk of a 'new' intellectual movement, the question is begged: what happened to the 'old' intellectual movement? What happened to the thinkers who inspired and led our struggle against colonialism, apartheid and exploitation? What has happened to the thinkers who gave substance and guidance and, in many cases, practical leadership to our attempts to undo the past and forge a new future?

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On behalf of the MISTRA Board of Governors, I would like to express our profound thanks to the speakers and participants at the roundtable, to the trustees, management and staff of Liliesleaf, and to the management and staff of MISTRA who made the roundtable and this publication possible. We are also, of course, extremely grateful to the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) who made the event and publication possible and to all those donors who continue to support MISTRA. An intellectual movement needs not just intellectual resources, but more practical ones as well.

Professor Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo
Chairperson
MISTRA Board of Governors