This publication is the outcome of a conference marking the beginning of South Africa’s third decade of democracy hosted in November 2014 by the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) and the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). The conference was entitled 20 Years of South African Democracy: So Where to Now?

The main focus of the conference was projective reflections into the next two decades of democracy. It aimed to deal with the theoretical perspectives underpinning the state of South Africa in two decades of democracy and, most importantly, prospects for the future. This publication covers the following main themes of the conference:

- Reflections on Historical Moments
- The South African Political Economy
- Values, Nation Formation and Social Compacting
- Innovation and Transdisciplinary Knowledge for Action
- Building a Capable Developmental State

Contained herein are inputs from a wide range of prominent South African and international thinkers, practitioners and activists. Some are in the form of prepared papers and others are taken from transcripts of presentations. They are presented in the hope that the thought-provoking and incisive discourse that took place at the conference can contribute to the continuation of a discussion that, by its nature, can have no end.

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This publication is the outcome of a conference – marking the beginning of South Africa’s third decade of democracy – hosted in November 2014 by the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) and the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). The conference was entitled *20 Years of South African Democracy: So Where to Now?*

In the twenty years since South Africa made the transition from apartheid to democracy, much had been achieved to transform society, informed by the injunctions of the Constitution, which formally guarantees equal opportunities without regard to race, gender and other social fault-lines. This period has seen some improvements in people’s quality of life and tentative steps towards national unity and social cohesion. Yet, much work lies ahead in realising the aspirations of many South Africans who still experience the effects of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Much has to be done to build a capable developmental state and active citizenry able to manifest in practical terms the narrative of ‘Africa Rising’ on the southern tip of the continent.

The conference focused primarily on projective reflections into the next two decades of democracy, informed, firstly, by key historical moments in the build-up to the transition, and secondly, by the experiences of the last 20 years. It aimed to deal with the theoretical perspectives underpinning the state of South Africa in two decades of democracy and, most importantly, prospects for the future.

Some of the questions the conference sought to address included:

- How do we internalise with common purpose what has been learned since 1994?
- What are the remaining structural deficiencies to be overcome in order to lead to growth with development?
- What can be done to translate the vision and programmes of the National Development Plan into purposeful action by all stakeholders?
- What is the dynamic relationship between national unity, social cohesion and socio-economic advancement?
- Where is South Africa getting it right and wrong in terms of economic
growth and development?
• What can be learnt from other democratic transitions and countries that have sustained high economic growth rates and social inclusion?
• What is the combination of 'big ideas and bold actions’ that South Africa will need to embrace to launch onto a new developmental trajectory?
• What kind of a society do the youth of today want?

The conference also dealt with the issue of 'The Global Economy and Africa’s Positioning', but that is the topic of a separate MISTRA research project and its outcome is to be published in a separate volume. This publication covers the following main themes of the conference:

• Reflections on Historical Moments
• The South African Political Economy
• Values, Nation Formation and Social Compacting
• Innovation and Transdisciplinary Knowledge for Action
• Building a Capable Developmental State

Contained in this volume are inputs from a wide range of prominent South African and international thinkers, practitioners and activists. Some are in the form of prepared papers and others are taken from transcripts of presentations. They are presented in the hope that the thought-provoking and incisive discourse that took place at the conference can contribute to the continuation of a discussion that, by its nature, can have no end. The infusion of our past and our present into our future cannot help but ensure that the pertinent and pressing questions canvassed at the conference can continue to engage our minds as we grapple with the task of making our future worthy of the sacrifices of our past.

We trust that this publication will contribute to the conversation taking place about how, together, we can improve the human condition.

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