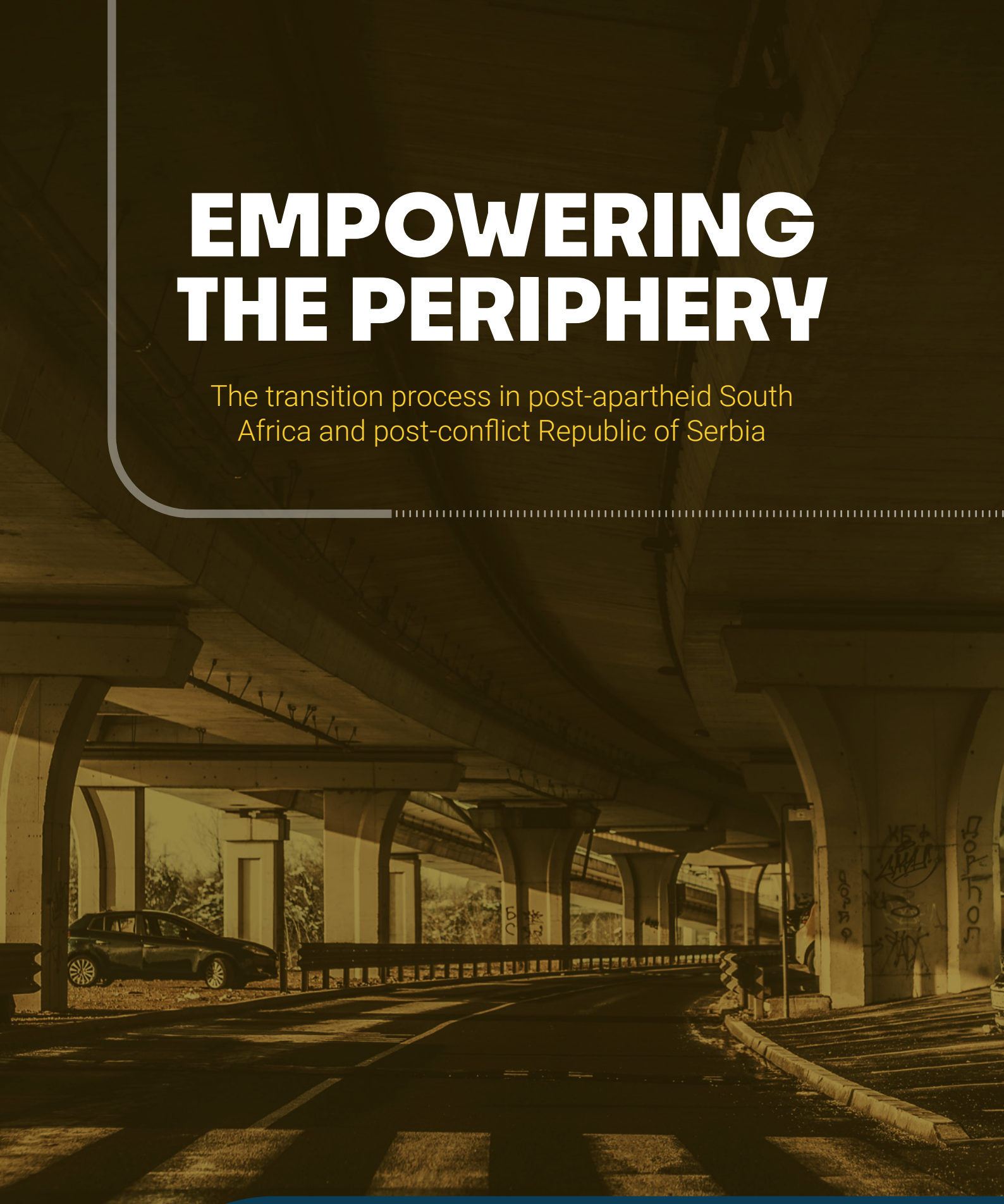
EMPOWERING THE PERIPHERY

The transition process in post-apartheid South Africa and post-conflict Republic of Serbia



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Introduction

This article provides a comparative analysis of processes of post-conflict transition in South Africa and the Republic of Serbia – from apartheid to democracy in post-1994 South Africa, and from socialism to capitalism in post-1989 Serbia.[1] It assesses the reach and limitations of each transitional project, with particular attention to the problematics of colonialism, racism, and mode of incorporation into global capitalism. We use this analysis to draw broader transformative implications.

Although South Africa and Serbia are separated by geographical distance and cultural difference, a comparison of their recent transitions is justified on several grounds. First, and most fundamentally, such a comparison appreciates that Africa is the cradle of humankind. Our shared origins remain enshrined in our genetic code – as recent archaeological evidence shows – but also in our cultural and economic DNA. This has moral, scientific, and political implications, including as a reminder that our fundamental similarities transcend overt differences of geography, culture, and race.

Second, Serbia and South Africa have in common a history of colonization, though that history is unevenly recognized and confronted in each. In both countries, the traumatic experiences of colonialism have left profound structural imprints with economic, political, and social implications that persist and that continue to reproduce themselves (Berend, 1996:17).[2]

Third, and importantly, the post-apartheid transition in South Africa and the post-socialist transition in Serbia have in common certain profound failures. Each has failed to address economic instability, the dysfunctionality of state institutions, widespread crime and corruption, and social and economic polarization. Moreover, among the countries' respective populations, each transition has generated widespread disenchantment with both internal and external actors. In spite of their attempts to modernize, develop, and stabilize, and in spite of their economic and human potential, both Serbia and South Africa remain crisis-ridden societies on the global (semi-)periphery.

The designation "peripheral" refers to a country's level of economic development; the strength of the rule of law; the degree of corruption; and the depth of political, economic, and social polarization. Yet it is also linked to the extent of that country's power to participate in shaping internal and global processes and to defend

[1] Serbia (reluctantly) became an independent state as a result of the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, a socialist federation that had attempted to create a homeland for diverse ethnic groups on the basis of "brotherhood and unity".

[2] In relation to Serbia, Ivan Berend points out that the Western Balkans have remained fixed on the European periphery, notwithstanding a century of rebellion against backwardness, a number of different revolutions, and the transition from capitalism to socialism and back to capitalism. In South Africa, enduring racial and social divisions testify to the continuous reproduction of fundamental strands of the colonial order.

against detrimental external impositions, including by pursuing a developmental path that has been selected autonomously on the basis of an internal consensus. As peripheral states, South Africa and Serbia feature in the international arena primarily as objects of external processes, rather than as subjects actively participating in shaping the global order.[3]

In other words, in peripheral states, internal economic, political and social fissures are accompanied by limited autonomy and a high degree of vulnerability in respect of external processes and actors (including financial institutions, powerful states, and their military, intelligence, and media complexes), as well as by low self-esteem and self-confidence. Confronting this predicament requires considering alternative strategies of development or *empowerment*.

Fundamentally, empowering entails inventing and rethinking responses to the internal challenges of the current crisis, including by evaluating the competence and responsibilities of key internal actors. In order to generate internal political energy, this exercise must be focused on fulfilling the needs of the majority and affirming the common good.

In addition, however, empowering has an international and cross-national dimension. It recognises the need for a new voice to emerge: a new and forceful voice for sanity and non-violence. This new voice must represent the victims of the current world order – a world order which is disturbingly polarized, which is wracked by dangerous conflicts (particularly, at present, in Ukraine), and in which the most powerful few may decide the fate of humankind. Empowering thus means imagining and creating a New South, one that connects distant neighbours of the same fate and that is able to participate in shaping the world order. This, in turn, means articulating alternatives that can transcend the dominant neoliberal paradigm and the socioeconomic deadends produced by that paradigm.

Finally, and relatedly, a comparative analysis of Serbia and South Africa is valuable because both countries participated in constituting the Global South as a recognizable international actor. Serbia, as part of the former Yugoslavia, was one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, while South Africa, as a regional power, has been "the leading African voice in the Global South" in multilateral forums, particularly as an advocate for "African solutions to African problems" (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2019).

[3] The cases we have selected exemplify the fact that even regionally powerful countries are exposed to the influence of external actors and global processes. In particular, South Africa enjoyed the status of a continental power in the 1990s.

Seeking new transformative perspectives

> *"To believe in the possibility of change is something very precise. It means that we believe in the reality of choice. That there are choices. That we have the power to choose in the hope of altering society for the greater good".* (John Ralston Saul, The Collapse of Globalism, pp. 4-5).

At the current juncture, comparative research of transitions in South Africa and Serbia proceeds amid an intricate web of global uncertainties, both chronic and acute, which collectively are the devastating result of climate change, pandemics, violent conflicts, and the neoliberal economic paradigm. This compounding crisis has produced contradictory reactions, reflecting sharp divisions between the beneficiaries and the victims of global capitalism. Thus hand-in-hand march doomsday fears and "moral amnesia"; disillusionment or anger and "radical indifference"; bewildering feelings of impotence and reckless acts of violence; stubborn adherence to the TINA (There is No Alternative) creed and, elsewhere, signs of a revival of the voices of the Global South, seeking new alternatives and possibly paving a way to a New South.

The current moment is characterized by complex contradictions and by inconsistencies between political proclamations, (international) legal norms, and actual practices. It is also characterised by a lack of transparency about the locations of power and the structures through which power operates. Together these impede critical thinking and transformative action.

On one hand, optimism about the global state of affairs is bolstered by statistics showing a historic decrease in the number of inter-state conflicts.[4] But a numerical decrease in violent conflicts does not guarantee peace, particularly if it is accompanied by systematic and "infinite development of armament" – that is, by the "infinite preparation for war" that has preoccupied states since the end of World War II (Virilio & Lotringer, 1983: 31, 91-95, 157). Uncritical optimism forgets current global levels of military expenditure (at an all-time high), the increasing sophistication of weapons of mass destruction, and the "normalization" of the idea of "limited nuclear war". Indeed, as the current war in Ukraine demonstrates, humanity has never been closer to nuclear annihilation.

[4] Paul Krugman warns that statistics can be misleading, saying, "Anyone who has seen how economic statistics are constructed knows that they are really a subgenre of science fiction" (quoted in Saul, 2005: 50).

Similarly, an evaluation of the present situation must acknowledge the recent and unprecedented growth in material wealth, which has improved material standards of living for most people. As Steven Pinker (2011) states, human beings have never had it better: historically, the present is the best of times. But the underside of this material growth is unprecedented, brutal, social inequality[5] and the extreme poverty of 860 million people.[6] The environmental consequences of growth and of the unrestrained logic of consumerism cast another serious shadow over the "best of times".

Recent technological advances offer impressive testimony to human creativity, with achievements spanning – as A.C. Grayling notes (2021: 1) – from the tiniest world of atoms to the infinite world of space. But the capacity of these new technologies to advance the common good is matched by their unprecedented destructive potential and alienating power. This is particularly the case insofar as new technologies lack embeddedness in clear and strong ethical foundations, particularly concerning their continued contribution to the development of the war machine, their prospective contribution to the emerging practice of digital discipline and repression, and the relation of intelligent machines and man.[7]

Democracy and the protection of human rights are celebrated but, at the same time, are disabled by citizens' limited capacity for collective action (Streeck, 2016: 20, 37). In fragmented, polarized societies, devoid of solidarity, the efficient protection of citizens has been heavily eroded. Unrestrained egotism has largely superseded any sense of community. Democracy itself has little bearing on the existential predicament of citizens when the state's redistributive functions have been severely limited and its tasks taken over by private, profit-seeking actors (cf. Chipkin, 2021).

Democracy is increasingly estranged from the legal sphere as well as from the economic sphere. Various trends – the selective application of the rule of law in foreign policy, the imposition of unconvincing moral justifications for military interventions pursued in the name of democracy, and the "policing of the media" – evince the erosion of freedom. They also suggest that citizens are losing the capacity to recognize the link between internal and external authoritarian tendencies (and criminal tendencies) – that is, to see through hypocrisy and respond constructively.

Capturing these contradictory tendencies requires taking a complex inventory of internal and external reality. However, while complexity cannot be ignored, it cannot easily be addressed.

The current moment seems to require us to recommit to the elementary values of liberty, equality, and fraternity (now disfigured by policed liberty, growing inequality, and violent fraternity), enriched by *satyagraha* and *ubuntu*. In addition, it requires the development of diagnostic capacities that can incorporate new knowledge and insights across relevant disciplines (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021) in order to increase the choices and interconnections available to us.

[5] According to the World Inequality Report, "The richest 10% of the global population currently takes 52% of the global income, whereas the poorest half of the population earns 8.5% of it… Global wealth inequalities are even more pronounced than income inequalities. The poorest half of the population barely owns any wealth at all, possessing just 2% of the total. In contrast, the richest 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth." See Chancel, L. et al., *World Inequality Report* 2022, World Inequality Lab. Available at: https://wir2022.wid.world.

[6] See "'Terrifying prospect' of over a quarter of a billion more people crashing into extreme levels of poverty and suffering this year", *Oxfam International*, 12 April 2022. Available at: https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/terrifying-prospect-over-quarter-billion-more-people-crashing-extreme-levels-poverty. Speaking on Trafalgar Square in 2005, Nelson Mandela said, "Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times – times in which the world boasts breathtaking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation – they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils" (quoted in Saul, 2005: 231).
In 2022, due to a four-year drought, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine, twenty-two million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia faced starvation. At the same time, millions of dollars were poured into the arms industry, fuelling and escalating conflicts. See "Horn of Africa Drought Places 22 Million People at Risk of Starvation, Says UN", *The Guardian*, 19 August 2022. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/20/drought-in-horn-of-africa-places-22m-people-at-risk-of-starvation-says-un.

[7] A bizarre illustration of this relation is offered in "Chess robot grabs and breaks finger of seven-year-old opponent", *The Guardian*, 24 July 2022. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/jul/24/chess-robot-grabs-and-breaks-finger-of-seven-year-old-opponent-moscow

A synthesis is needed that can help generate emancipatory practices, cutting through apathy, anger, and indifference. That synthesis must articulate the present contradictions and therefore must evade what Johan Galtung calls the "tyranny of number two": the iron law of either/or, which entrenches such dichotomies as good versus evil, democracy versus authoritarianism, and heroes versus villains. Transcending the either/or logic requires providing persuasive presentations of the depths and multifarious sources of danger, mobilizing "militant despair", and also capturing inklings of new "possibles" (Sarr, 2019).

The current crisis and its failed mastering have reopened major questions concerning the nature of the human species and its capacity to survive (Koestler, 1978: 2)[8] and concerning the nature of the current crisis of neoliberal global capitalism, a system that at this moment can neither be "rectified nor replaced" (Streeck, 2016: 35, 59). Also reopened are questions about the power of the transnational class (TNC), of financial institutions, and of hegemonic states and their military, intelligence, industrial, and media complexes; all of these actors shape and frame the world and define its fate.

Finally, there are questions about the imposed – and newly re-imposed – division between the East and the West. This division disregards the South, and it ignores the fact that the East itself comprises a number of different Easts, the West several different Wests (Chakrabarty, 2000: xiv). It also erases the extent and variety of historical interpenetrations and interactions among cultures and civilizations, disfiguring history and inserting artificial distance.

For the periphery or peripheries of the world, the present situation requires battling through the fog of disfigured history and current complexity to forge clearer responses to the question, "what kind of society are we striving for?" (Saul, 2005: 11, 61). This kind of clarity does not require belying the complexity of truth by taking sides. Instead, it requires recreating spaces that are conducive to nuance, to non-violent alternatives, and to understanding societies "on their own terms". Such spaces will help ease, even if not resolve, the global crisis.

[8] Koestler (1978: 2) writes, "A dispassionate observer from a more advanced planet who could take in human history from Cro-Magnon to Auschwitz at a single glance, would no doubt come to the conclusion that our race is in some respects an admirable, in the main, however, a very sick biological product; and that the consequences of its mental sickness far outweigh its cultural achievements when the chances of prolonged survival are considered."

Empowerment and transcending the dominant narrative

Clearing the path toward defining an empowerment strategy requires dealing with the dominant narratives that have intervened in the self-perception, self-understanding,[9] and self-confidence of the peripheries, which are frequently viewed and defined through the eyes of the Center. Reversing the gaze will, among other things, challenge the dominant narrative that has been reproducing itself over time, militating against the tendency of that narrative to reduce vast and diverse spaces to a single story composed of "treacherous clichés, stereotypes and pseudo-certitudes" (Sarr, 2019).

The Center (West) had and retains the power to frame, which it has used to explain away the developmental consequences of historical circumstance and reduce the periphery's structural problems to innate insufficiencies. Complex social structures and processes in the peripheries are treated as purely technical matters, awaiting resolution by Western experts, while the human subjects implicated in these dramas have no histories (Mbembe, 2021) or, in the case of *Homo Balkanicus*, have "more history than they can consume".

The Balkans, as well as Africa, are ghosts "haunting Western culture" (Todorova, 2009). They have commonly been associated with "backwardness" and "violence", and they have been viewed as places without future or hope, "an outside worlds deemed to translation, mutation, conversion and catching up" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). These associations have had devastating and long-lasting implications for Balkan and African self-understanding and self-confidence, contributing to an interiorized inferiority complex which, among other things, reduces the ability of these two regions to reflect on their present situation and envision the future for themselves. The West has become the supreme authority; Western tutelage and recognition are celebrated and pursued.

Unfortunately, Balkan representations of Africa and African representations of the Balkans are almost equally discomforting and overlook the similarities between post-colonial Africa and post-socialist Europe. African political and intellectual elites often use the concept of balkanization as shorthand for a tendency towards violent territorial fragmentation or the inability to build a functioning state,[10] while, in the collective Balkan imaginary, Africa represents the paragon of failure and comparison with it implies an insult. Africa is an entity that has nothing to do with, nothing in common with, and nothing to offer to the distinctly more developed Balkans, which are, after all, part (if only geographically) of Europe.

At the same time, peripheral regions have served as laboratories for experimentation and for the application of solutions developed elsewhere, primarily in the West. The non-West has long

[9] Peter Wagner (2012) problematizes modernity as self-understanding, centering on collective "interpretative actions" and autonomy.

[10] For example, according to Achille Mbembe (2000: 261), "The colonial boundaries are… said to have opened the way to the balkanization of the continent by cutting it up into a maze of microstates that were not economically viable and were linked more to Europe than to their environment". What is surprising is that balkanization carries the same negative connotation among African nationalists, who apparently overlook the fact that European balkanization liberated many peoples from colonial rule.

been treated "primarily as a place of parochial wisdom, of antiquarian traditions, of exotic ways and means; above all, of unprocessed data. These other worlds, in short, are treated less as sources of refined knowledge than as reservoirs of facts" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012: 1), and solutions to the problems of these crisis-prone entities must therefore come from the outside.

More broadly, the dominance of Euro-American approaches – and of stereotypes of the Other as perceived by the Center – has entrenched a vision of the single "common" future which silences all "outside" voices. The "end of history" narrative shaped the transformative strategies adopted after the fall of apartheid in South Africa and after the end of socialism in Serbia. Radical transformation was traded for seemingly endless transition(s), defined by (isomorphic) mimicry and guided and supervised by the Center. Insecure and vulnerable, post-apartheid South Africa and the former Yugoslav republics turned to prescriptions developed and promoted by the (un)holy trinity of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, though, in the case of the Balkans, the leading role was reserved for the European Union.

Assumptions of empowerment

The structural and narrative challenges facing peripheries, as discussed in foregoing sections, frame the dual aims of new strategies of empowerment. First, an empowering strategy aims to generate effective, creative, and transformative initiatives – to contribute, in other words, to developing answers to the crisis and solutions to the problems created by the post-apartheid and post-socialist transitions. Second, an empowering strategy aims to create anew the voice of the South, of the world peripheries, in shaping of the global order.

Any strategy of empowerment depends on revisiting old assumptions and developing new alternatives that are informed by these dual imperatives. The project of refining these assumptions can help modify or even transform the dominant paradigm of economic and political power, or may otherwise help enable constructive resistance.

Specifically, defining the assumptions of empowerment entails the following:

1. *Re-reading the country's own history.*
   Historical re-reading must strive for accuracy. This means abandoning stereotypes and casting off restrictive concepts which, though they pretend to universalism, were formulated in specific historical circumstances. Re-reading must seek to rehabilitate the experience of one's own principles and practices of community-building, economic functioning, relating to others, and relating to nature. It must also seek to recognize the political and cultural processes of longue durée that perpetuate internal division, submission, and conflict; these require systematic, collective engagement if they are to be transformed.

2. *Understanding the "workings of prevailing system of global capitalism" (Robinson, 2014), including the reach of that system and the form of its current crisis.*
   It is necessary to understand the power wielded by global capitalism, the hierarchies that it imposes, and the limitations on economic and political autonomy that it conditions. This includes consideration of the erosion of normative standards (as evinced by the unrestrained application of double standards and the selective application of self-serving rules in place of laws) and the erosion of democratic practices. Together these have created a post-democratic, post-truth world.

3. *Diagnosing the country's own failures, achievements, and potential along the path of transition.*
   A proper diagnosis must find the balance between dwelling in a distorted or oversimplified past and dwelling in a misunderstood present. It must also balance among individual and collective interests, defining the measure of global integration and de-linking through the participation of citizens in shaping the vision

of a desired society. In diagnosing past failures and achievements, two tasks are particularly important: to recognize the historical structural patterns that survive political and institutional change; and to contextualize the development of institutional patterns in the government and bureaucracy, precisely by situating them in the local-global matrix. The imperative to diagnose the country's potential, on the other hand, entails revealing the possibilities that exist for expanding the manoeuvring space afforded to autonomy, choice, internal cohesion, and democratic participation. This, in turn, means de-legitimizing the TINA creed.

4 *Filtering the experiences of Others who have achieved success in domains important for building a functional and capable state.*
Relevant experiences for study might include, for example, the Finnish educational system, the Cuban health system, the Chinese model of civil-service recruitment, and New Zealand's attempt to "re-regulate where deregulation had gone too far" (Saul, 2005: 214). Filtering entails synthesizing one's own experiences and practices with those of other countries, in accordance with a consensually derived vision of the desired society. A transformative synthesis could serve such imperatives as zero tolerance of corruption, equality and care, participatory democracy, respect for own identity, or the creation of an ethical code that can be applied to new technological developments.

5 *Seeking new alliances within and beyond the boundaries of geographic regions, including alliances based on shared histories (such as histories of subjugation, exploitation, and colonization) or common status (such as among peripheries).*
Among other things, the path of seeking new alliances might lead to the revitalization of the Non-Aligned Movement in some form or to membership in rising regional organizations – BRICS Plus, for example, could become a "meeting point". Whatever their precise organizational form, such alliances must empower states in the Global South to act with greater sovereignty and autonomy. The emergence of the New South could be a step towards a moral, political, and economic corrective, the missing link required to reconcile the contradictory outcomes – the achievements and the disasters – of the neoliberal Western formula of development.

In short, empowering requires diagnoses and policies that can help create a society of engaged, participative, and respected citizens whose interests receive adequate political representation. Among other things, it equips new political actors with enhanced capacity for synthesis: for filtering, integrating, and implementing the useful lessons of one's own experience and the experience of others. It also enhances the capacity of political actors to articulate a transformative agenda; to Stop! and critically think through problems and possible alternative practices in the realms of economy and politics; and to decide to reject a technological possible if it could endanger human liberty.

There are clear benefits to embedding the necessary diagnosis in a comparative analysis of two countries on the global periphery. The comparative exercise can reveal common patterns and outcomes across difference and distance; it can generate new insights, generate new modes of cooperation and solidarity, and give a stronger voice to the quest for alternatives. It can thereby contribute to empowerment: to the ability of peripheral states to resist external impositions, particularly those which perpetuate structural traps, and to exercise autonomy and participation in decision-making at the national and international levels.

1. Re-reading one's own history

A re-reading of South African history should include three historical sequences: the pre-colonial period, apartheid, and the anti-apartheid struggle.

a Among some contemporary African intellectuals, South Africa's pre-colonial history is invoked uncritically as a romantic past, free of conflict and injustice, or even as the only foundation of authentic identity. However, in the dominant, external, reading, pre-colonial history is discarded as irrelevant to the present predicament or is filed away as a backward historical phase, in line with the paradigm of linear progress.

Yet recent advances in archaeology and anthropology reveal the limitations of the linear historical matrix. Attention and research should be dedicated to the pre-colonial South African past as a reservoir of diversity – and even of progressive and sophisticated practices – in the realms of economy, social organization, and the human relationship to nature.[11] Ivor Chipkin (2022) writes:

"If we compare, for example, European society at the Cape in the 18th and early 19th century with Nguni societies before Shaka, what is striking is their political sophistication by modern standards. Whereas Company rule in the Cape did not know the rule of law, Nguni society was rule-bound. Whereas European society was riddled with race-thinking and with race, Nguni societies easily integrated strangers, even white ones. Whereas Cape society was a slave-owning and trading one, this was a practice largely unknown among the Mthetwas, the Zulus and the Ndwandwe."

The learning framework is broadened, and the quest for alternatives is advanced, by exploration of the full variety of answers, unrestricted by cultural and historical hierarchies. Critical analyses of the past can help cultivate additional sources of inspiration and self-confidence.

b The colonial past, in its brutal apartheid form, has received extensive analytical attention. What remains is to reveal the anomalies of the apartheid system, an understanding of which may help elucidate apartheid's ambivalent legacies in the present. For example, one

[11] Graeber and Wengrow (2021: 5, 140) argue that a linear understanding of human social evolution prevents us from recognizing the diversity of social organization. It prevents us from perceiving the full array of flexible arrangements – ways of dealing with difference, modes of coexistence – available to us, especially those that are not based on domination and subordination but instead on hospitality, care, and creativity. For Graeber and Wengrow, this is equally an argument that we should take seriously both the social thought and the human institutions that originated outside Europe.

striking anomaly is apartheid's marriage of extreme racial division, discrimination, and brutality with the elements of an exemplary welfare system. By 1994, "each of the three pillars of post-apartheid redistribution was in place: a very high proportion of poor children were enrolled in secondary school, the tax system was progressive, and poor men and women enjoyed generous old-age pensions in retirement" (Seekings, 2002). It may be instructive to ask how this paradoxical combination contributed both to post-apartheid economic development and to the persistence of racial division and inequality.

c The struggle against apartheid is an extremely important historical chapter of liberation. However, the romanticized aspects of the struggle, implications of policies that have been overlooked or simply abandoned but have been constitutive for some of the present transformative practices, limitations, and require scrutiny as well. This needs to be done particularly, in the realm of economics, i.e. Unveiling the roots, foundations of creeping neo-liberalism, of sustained social (racial) and economic (structural) inequalities that were enabled by the decisions made during the period of post-apartheid state building.

Similarly, various liberation-era policies were decisive for the transformative practices and structural limitations of the present. However, the romanticization of the anti-apartheid struggle has sometimes shielded them from critical scrutiny. Particularly deserving of critical attention are decisions made in the economic realm during the period of post-apartheid state-building: in those decisions may be uncovered the roots of creeping neoliberalism and of sustained social (racial) and economic (structural) inequality.

a Europe, the Balkan countries, and Serbia in particular have resisted labelling their past as "colonial". For Serbia, this is a means of clinging to European identity – for colonization is a phenomenon that belongs to the non-European world, as Maria Todorova (2009) argues.[12] This evasiveness is also one manifestation of the awkwardness – to put it mildly – with which Western Europe relates to the Balkans, treating the region's southern parts (the "Western Balkans") as a non-European part of Europe. And part of Serbia's uneasiness with its own complex identity stems from its inability to fit neatly into the East–West divide or into the European–non-European divide.

It is interesting that analysts of colonial endeavours in the Orient, like Edward Said, have been similarly evasive, omitting to consider that Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule in the Balkans shared fundamental similarities – in its operation and in its outcomes – with colonial practices in the non-European world. In our view, the concept of colonization is delimited geographically only as a matter of convention (solidified by the establishment of international law) and the Balkans were indeed subject to one form[13] of colonization.

The recognition of this colonial history is crucial to providing historical context for enduring structural patterns in Serbia and the other Balkan countries. For Serbia, as it searches for a path to consistent and stable development, the challenge is fully to accept its complex historical identity. Among other things, this requires understanding the legacies of (Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian) colonialism: the antagonisms that it sowed (manifesting itself in "nesting orientalism"); the structural

[12] On the other hand, when the framework of colonization was first applied to analyse Russian practice towards non-Russian groups, the concept of "internal colonization" was devised to bridge a gap in earlier understandings of colonization.

[13] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper (2010) show that different forms of colonization are related to multiple histories of empire.

impediments to economic development that it created; and the internal forces that it released, some of which have been inimical to attempts to create a community of southern Slavs.

b The Yugoslav brand of socialism was perceived as a "Third Way", as "socialism with a humane face". Yet, while its federal arrangements attempted to negotiate ethnic diversity and ensure the fair representation of minorities, they failed to constitute a Yugoslav nation. The self-management system reached out towards democratic forms of government but was hindered by the party bureaucracy, while the liberalised economy was subject to international turbulences and ultimately to a debt crisis (Woodward, 1995).

Nonetheless, if and when the Cold War was transcended, Yugoslavia was expected to be at the head of the queue to integrate with Europe, because of its industrialized and growing economy, its strong and extensive welfare state, its open borders and political and intellectual situation (relatively liberal among communist countries), its prestige as a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement, and its relations with the European Economic Community. Instead, when the Cold War ended, Yugoslavia broke up violently – and, labelled as the main culprit, Serbia was reduced to a pariah state.

The shocking breakup of the Yugoslav state was eventually followed by the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević's regime, which in turn initiated Serbia's (never-ending) transition, based on shock therapy. A careful, rational evaluation of the socialist legacy was never carried out in Serbia: the dimensions that called for preservation, or reform, were never consciously filtered from those that needed to be discarded. Such an evaluation is necessary to resolve the crisis of the neoliberal turnabout, because it is necessary to allow visions of a post neoliberal order to surface.

2. Understanding the workings of the prevailing system of global capitalism

Globalization in its neoliberal form, construed as a process and as a network of actors, is often a decisive force in moulding the path of internal economic and political transformation in peripheral countries (Robinson, 2014; 2020). Globalization has connected the world, has contributed to material wealth, and has spurred technological advances. It has also transformed the nature, functions, and reach of the nation state, particularly in the realms of redistribution, welfare, and security. Indeed, it has promoted privatization (of everything) and austerity; it has reduced the power of labour protections; and, by celebrating greed and "possessive individualism", it has undermined solidarity and social cohesion. In these respects, globalization has become an obstacle to emancipatory practices and to the autonomy of choice.

Moreover, the main actors in the relevant processes are neither accountable nor fully transparent. Those actors are financial institutions; the TNC and its members (usually including some local elites), some of whom command financial assets larger than the budget of a small state; and digital industries, which, with intelligence complexes, participate in disciplining and controlling citizens.

Given both the positive and the negative dimensions of globalization, several questions should be asked about globalization's operation and effects in both South Africa and Serbia. Which elements of the TNC are active in each country and where do they intersect with the national elite? How has privatization and economic liberalization been carried out? Which policies were conditioned by international financial institutions and who benefited from them? Which dimensions of the transition were externally imposed and what were their social costs? To what extent does the state retain its redistributive capacities? If the state is captured, is it captured by local actors (by the ruling party, for example, or by big business), or by transnational capital and its agencies, or both?

Understanding internal-external dynamics requires understanding the nature of global neoliberal capitalism, including its contradictions and its current crisis. Forging this understanding will allow the development of realistic visions of, and realistic strategies for, transformation, and it will allow new internal actors of resistance to emerge.

3. Diagnosing own failures, achievements, potentiality in the present

Both South Africa and Serbia defy clear categorisation. They are depicted variously as states on the verge of failure, as fragile states, as captured states, as weak states. Their ambiguous status reflects the mixed outcomes of the transitions undergone by each: in each country, transition has achieved some successes but has not attained all its aims. Indeed, in both countries, transition has failed to establish the level of functionality and stability that is required to satisfy a majority of citizens, to surmount the internal crisis, and to weather the consequences of the compounding global crisis.

Serbia, for example, is deeply polarized – politically, socially, and economically. Serbian society operates without a sense of community and without an internal consensus about key national goals and interests. Social indicators reflect growing class inequality,[14] a growing urban–rural divide, extensive poverty,[15] a high mortality rate, dramatic brain drain,[16] corruption,[17] criminalization, and increased family violence. The process of privatization – one of the core axes of the transition from socialism to neoliberalism – entailed the unprecedented plunder of social and state property by the new capitalist class: foreign and transnational capital were allowed to appropriate land, water, mineral, financial, and media resources, all of which are crucial for autonomous development and for economic and political sovereignty.

[14] The richest twenty per cent of the population have ten times the household income of the poorest twenty per cent. In the Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index, Serbia is ranked last among European countries and eighty-fourth of all 154 countries included. See "Serbia is Among the Countries with the Highest Inequality in Europe, while the Burden of the Crisis is Paid by the Poorest", A11 Initiative for Economic and Social Rights, 16 October 2020. Available at: https://www.a11initiative.org/en/serbia-is-among-the-countries-with-the-highest-inequality-in-europe-while-the-burden-of-the-crisis-is-paid-by-the-poorest. Oxfam's 2022 Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index is available at: https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621419/rr-cri-2022-111022-summ-en.pdf;jsessionid=97C8B5934995F52915997C1C74414AC5?sequence=6.

[15] 450,000 (6.9 per cent of the population) live in absolute poverty and approximately two million (29.8 per cent of the population) are at poverty risk. See Centre for Democracy, "In Serbia an Increasing Number of Poor", 19 February 2022. Available at: www.021.rs.

[16] On the 2022 Human Flight and Brain Drain Index, Serbia had six index points (zero is low, ten is high). See "Human Flight and Brain Drain Index 2022", *The Global Economy*. Available at: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/human_flight_brain_drain_index. According to a survey carried out by the National Youth Council of Serbia in August 2022, fifty per cent of Serbian youth want to emigrate. It is estimated that about 500,000 people left Serbia between 2007 and 2019, and, in 2019, the European statistical bureau estimated that about 4,000 people were leaving Serbia each month, although Covid-19 slowed and even partly reversed that trend. See Tanja Vidovic, "'Brain Drain' and Serbia: How to Retain Them", Danas, 10 September 2019. Available at: danas.rs.

[17] In Transparency International's 2021 *Corruption Perceptions Index*, Serbia ranked ninety-sixth of the 180 countries included, with a score of thirty-eight out of 100. See Corruption Perceptions Index 2021, Transparency International. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021.

Rachman (2022) describes South Africa as living under an "incompetent government leading a state about to fail", as reflected by rampant corruption, a high crime rate, and mass structural unemployment. Although South Africa is considered a middle-income country, many of its citizens live in conditions of moderate to extreme poverty. Fifty per cent of South Africans live below the poverty line, while around thirty per cent live in households defined as ultra-poor (Seekings & Nattrass, 2015). Poverty persisted after 1994 because economic growth was neither sufficiently rapid nor sufficiently inclusive to create work for low-skilled, unemployed men and women. In the post-apartheid era, racial divisions manifest in the extreme disparities in wealth and lifestyle between whites in gated communities (see Chipkin, 2020) and the impoverished majority of black South Africans. In response to poverty, the dysfunctionality of state institutions, and the corruption of political actors (the ruling African National Congress is increasingly characterised as a "criminal organization"), civil unrest is not uncommon (Chipkin, 2020). In addition, since 2008, internal contestation in the African National Congress has become a source of debilitating violent political conflict (Chipkin & Vidojevic, 2022).

Like Serbia, South Africa has insufficient capacity to retain its wealthy citizens and educated youth.[18] On the other hand, and in spite of its deficiencies, South Africa is a "regional powerhouse" (Rachman, 2022) and an attractive location for migrants from elsewhere in Southern Africa: other countries in the region have their own economic crises and political tensions but lack South Africa's comparatively strong infrastructure and relatively vibrant economy.

[18] Safety concerns, rolling blackouts, corruption, and economic stagnation are among the reasons that high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) choose to emigrate. Data from New World Wealth and Henley & Partners suggests that approximately 4,500 HNWIs have left South Africa over the past decade. See Haldane, M., "Wealthy South Africans Are Leaving in Droves", *Moneyweb*, 6 May 2022. Available at: https://www.moneyweb.co.za/financial-advisor-views/wealthy-south-africans-are-leaving-in-droves/.
According to the United Nations's 2020 International Migrant Stock report, there were 914,000 South Africans resident abroad at the end of 2020, up significantly from 786,000 in 2015. See "Here's How Many South Africans Are Leaving for Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the UK", *BusinessTech*, 21 August 2022. Available at: https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/616761/heres-how-many-south-africans-are-leaving-for-canada-new-zealand-australia-and-the-uk.

4. Learning from and appropriating successful experience of Others

Self-reflection requires learning from others and appropriating the principles of successful practices in the most important domains, such as in public administration, the education and health sectors, and the judiciary. The appropriate kind of learning is embedded in a strategy of choice, in turn based on a clear prioritisation of needs and informed by a clear conception of the state's role in protecting and caring for its citizens and their environment.

In reality, however, foreign models – usually Western models – are imposed on transitional countries, and their application often becomes a form of uncritical mimicry. Thus an assortment of foreign experts have visited Serbia to reform the (still inefficient) public administration, while the education system is perpetually under reform. None of the various judicial reforms have eradicated corruption and inefficiency, and the health system has been ruined by brain drain, corruption, and privatization.

In South Africa, foreign models had similarly poor results, though they were adopted in a different context. Public-sector reform took a particular form in post-apartheid South Africa, where anti-apartheid activists regarded the existing public administration as illegitimate because of its role in apartheid. The central question for the post-apartheid government was not how to optimize efficiency in the public sector but how to "smash" it Lenin-like – or at least transform it entirely, according to the African National Congress's Strategy and Tactics (Chipkin and Lipietz, 2012: 5).

Nonetheless, in the 1990s, South African policymakers became increasingly preoccupied with practices and models that were ascendant internationally. In particular, principles of New Public Management dominated during the reorganization of the post-apartheid civil service. The results of these reforms can be seen in some areas of South Africa, where the poor live in under-serviced informal settlements and the upper-middle class live in gated complexes that are highly securitized and increasingly self-sufficient.

Given these examples, the common good is best served not by imitation or mechanistic re-application but by careful strategies of learning from and adapting relevant experiences elsewhere. What must be mastered is a fine-tuned combination of lessons from experiences both past and present, both national and international.

5. Seeking new alliances

Self-reflection requires learning from others and appropriating the principles of successful practices in the most important domains, such as in public administration, the education and health sectors, and the judiciary. The appropriate kind of learning is embedded in a strategy of choice, in turn based on a clear prioritisation of needs and informed by a clear conception of the state's role in protecting and caring for its citizens and their environment.

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