

One “noncause”: public opinion. “There is strong support for capital punishment everywhere in Asia where the issue has been studied—whatever the execution rate,” Johnson notes. The push for abolition tends to come from the “very top of the power structure.” It’s a delicate irony: Democracies tend to do away with the death penalty, despite widespread support for it.

OTHER NATIONS

South Africa’s Staying Power

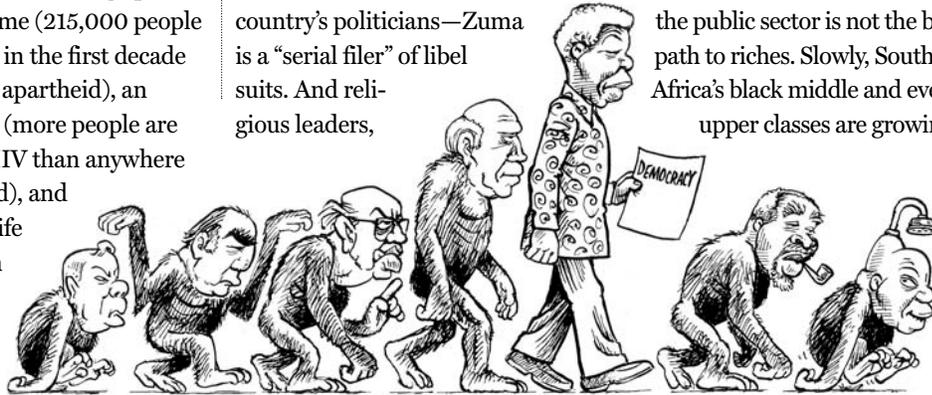
THE SOURCE: “State of Play: How South Africa Became South Africa” by Matthew Kaminski, in *World Affairs*, July–Aug. 2010.

IS THE YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN democracy at risk of falling apart? Widespread crime (215,000 people were murdered in the first decade after the end of apartheid), an AIDS epidemic (more people are infected with HIV than anywhere else in the world), and a government rife with corruption (the current president, Jacob Zuma, disbanded the police’s anti-corruption unit upon taking office) certainly stain the miracle of the peaceful transition to full democracy in 1994. But though the political system is “borderline rotten,” the fruit around the pit is healthy, argues *Wall Street Journal* editorial board member Matthew Kaminski. An independent press, a large nongovernmental organi-

zation (NGO) sector, religion, and private business are all thriving. “These ingredients give hope that South Africa will be able to consolidate its still fragile democracy,” Kaminski writes.

In South Africa’s democracy, only one party, the African National Congress, wins elections. But the ANC’s power does not go unchecked. A robust civil society grew out of the movement that ended apartheid; its various parts—newspapers, activist organizations, churches—have become “surrogate checks and balances to complement those that are ostensibly provided in the constitution.” There are more than 26,000 registered NGOs, and many are effective at both providing services the government doesn’t and advocating for better policies. Active news media get “under the thin skin” of the country’s politicians—Zuma is a “serial filer” of libel suits. And religious leaders,

communist ANC and the formerly all-white business community. In 1991, after his release from prison but before he became the nation’s first president, Mandela said, “The private sector must and will play the central and decisive role in the struggle to achieve many of the [transformation] objectives. . . . We are determined to create the necessary climate that the foreign investor will find attractive.” As president, Mandela governed accordingly. The ANC “inherited a debt-ridden state, a closed economy, and a strong but white-dominated private sector. In a few years, budgets were balanced, trade opened, the rand made convertible, and numerous state companies sold.” Before the global recession began in 2008, growth had averaged five percent per year. In contrast to the situation in other African nations, in South Africa, the public sector is not the best path to riches. Slowly, South Africa’s black middle and even upper classes are growing.



A critic of President Jacob Zuma depicts the evolution of South Africa’s democracy.

such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, are among the ANC’s loudest critics.

A growing private sector is another stakeholder the ANC must now answer to. With Nelson Mandela’s leadership, the transition from apartheid fostered warm relationships between the once quasi-

Over time, economic growth will “produce voters who yearn for responsive government that won’t endanger their livelihoods,” Kaminski believes. In the end, the ANC’s economic policies may someday lead to its own downfall, as the political system stabilizes and more parties emerge.