

Description for general public

The apartheid systems in Southern Africa collapsed more than two decades ago, yet still approximately 65% of wealth in this very region is controlled by 10% of the entire population, and Southern Africa remains the world's most unequal region. The issue of equal opportunities for Black population was central for public debates in Sub-Saharan post-apartheid states, namely: Namibia, Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe. In all three two major mechanism aimed at mitigating effects of apartheid were adopted: land reforms and affirmative action's – Black Economic Empowerment. Interestingly, the very need to change the ownership structure, in order to allow capital accumulation for Black citizens, and consequently the emergence of a new middle class that would stabilize political systems was articulated not only by governments but also by the White population. Despite more than two decades of implementing these policies in South Africa and Namibia, their societies are characterized as the world's most unequal. On the other hand, in Zimbabwe, where the apartheid ended in 1980, the land was forcibly taken from the white farmers what caused economic downturn, and Zimbabwe was described as the fastest-shrinking economy in the world's economic history. Taking into account the above, it seems rationale not only from the academic but also social standpoint, to conduct comparative analysis of economic and political strategies aimed at improving living standards and creating economic opportunities in post-apartheid states and simultaneously to determine how these policies have affected competitiveness of South African companies and commercial farms. The answer to the question about internal/systemic (eg. corruption, neopatrimonial state), international (eg. sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, pressure exerted on African countries by international financial institutions), or institutional (eg. ineffectiveness in law enforcement, ambiguity of procedures) factors that have contributed to the ineffectiveness of implementing the affirmative policies seems to be cognitively important. Additionally, the above issues will be correlated with the very stability of Southern Africa's political systems and the fact that in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia the same political elite that had led to the political transformation remains in power and its position is unchallenged. The project's conclusions will be derived on the basis of desk research and field studies in Southern Africa conducted by the interdisciplinary research team consisted of representatives of political science and economics.