

LAUNCH ISSUE

VIEWES AND ANALYSIS FROM THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

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**SPRINGTIME  
IN ALGERIA**

**MEETING  
MIGRANTS  
IN GAO**

## A Truth Commission for Zimbabwe?



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# Dear reader



*Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai greets President Robert Mugabe during ceremonies marking the 29th anniversary of independence in Harare on April 18, 2009.*

Welcome to the first issue of The African.org. We hope you will find a lot of food for thought, comment and analysis about what is happening in Africa today and what it means for our future.

Many Africans are wondering about what is happening in Zimbabwe, now that there is a semblance of calm and political reconciliation. Zimbabwe has indeed been top of the agenda of our continent's institutions and front page news for many months.

In our cover feature, we have chosen to take an in-depth look at Zimbabwe and the implications of the new dispensation. We ask the question whether Zimbabweans should now be looking back to the abuses committed in the past. Should crimes against opposition activists or anyone with divergent views be punished or should a general amnesty be proclaimed to make sure the country could look towards the future and not dwell on the past?

Another article on Zimbabwe looks at how ordinary Zimbabweans are going to have to learn to live in a normal society again – one where money is changed in a bank and not on the black market, where civil servants do their regular jobs and not resort to moonlighting and where the judiciary is respected. To complete our coverage of the Zimbabwe situation, we take a look at the reform of the army and police force – undoubtedly one of the toughest issues the present interim-government needs to address.

In our feature on the recent South African elections, specialist commentator and analyst Prince Mashele looks at the outcome of the 22 April poll and what it means for the political future of the country.

Independent Algerian journalist Ghania Mouffok also gives us a tender and yet very incisive look at her home country, following the re-election of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in presidential elections. In our regular feature "My Story", researcher Issaka Souare gives his personal account of travelling in far northeastern Mali and meeting would-be illegal immigrants, hopeful to reach the shores of Europe, their imagined Eldorado.

We also take a look at the background of the crisis in Madagascar; Darfur following the indictment of President Omar Al Bashir and the misconceptions regarding the threat of climate change.

In our business section Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank (ADB) gives us his views and analysis on how the global economic crisis is affecting Africa and explains what institutions like the ADB are planning to do about it.

Enjoy reading The African.org and please send any comments or suggestions to [magazine@issafrica.org](mailto:magazine@issafrica.org) or to myself [llouw@issafrica.org](mailto:llouw@issafrica.org).

Liesl Louw-Vaudran  
Editor

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#### Editor

Liesl Louw-Vaudran

#### Managing Editor

Keto Segwai

#### Editorial Board

Paul-Simon Handy

Wafula Okumu

Hennie van Vuuren

Issaka Souare

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Poppie Mputhing

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Berouk Mesfin

#### Publisher

Institute for Security Studies

Block C, Brooklyn Court,

Veale Street,

New Muckleneuk

Pretoria/Tshwane 0181

PO Box 1787

Brooklyn Square 0075

Pretoria/Tshwane

South Africa

Tel: +27 12 346 9500/2

#### Publishing House

Marketing Support Services

7 Lower Terrace Str

Menlopark

Pretoria

0081

Tel: +27 12 346 2168

#### Advertising

Advertising requests to be sent to

Barbara Spence: [barbara@avenue.co.za](mailto:barbara@avenue.co.za)

#### Notes

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# Our contributors



**Dianna Games** is director of Africa@work, a research and consulting company based in South Africa. She writes about how remittances from abroad had sustained many African families. She cautions that that this lifeline appears under serious threat as African migrant workers are either being retrenched or taking salary cuts in developed countries due to the global economic crisis.



**Ghania Mouffok** is an independent Algerian journalist. She writes about the situation in Algeria in the aftermath of presidential elections that brought back the 79 year old Abdelaziz Bouteflika to power with a controversial 90 per cent plus votes.



**Prince Mashele** is head of the Crime, Justice and Politics Programme at the ISS. Mashele argues that the recent South African elections have effectively produced a three-party dominant system. While he sees the three parties – the African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE) consolidating their gains in the future, he reckons the same could not be foreseen for the other parties.



**Jean-Jacques Cornish** is an independent South African journalist specializing in African affairs. He writes about challenges facing the new government in Zimbabwe. He acknowledges that the international community appears willing to come to the assistance of the newly reconstituted unity government. He however argues that such assistance is dependent on President Robert Mugabe's show of commitment to the letter and spirit of the government of national unity.

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### Rest of Africa

#### Keto Segwai

Institute for Security Studies

Tel: 012 346 9500/2

Fax: 012 460 0997/8

Cell: 076 933 2132

ksegwai@issafrica.org

## Guinea-Bissau goes to the polls

The presidential election date has been set for 28 June 2009 in Guinea-Bissau – close to four months after the assassination of the country's president, Bernard Joao "Nino" Vieira, on 2 March 2009. The assassination, which followed that of the army chief of staff Tagma Na Waie, was expected to lead the country into a state of political chaos.

However, the country has been relatively stable despite isolated reports of attacks and arbitrary detentions. The transitional government, led by the former speaker of parliament, president Raimundo Pereira and the country's prime minister Carlos Gomes Junior from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), has been working to ensure that stability is maintained until the elections take place.

In terms of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau, the elections were supposed to be held on 2 May, 60 days after the president's assassination. However it was decided to extend the transitional period to allow for voter registration and to facilitate a free, fair and transparent election in the country. According to Prime Minister Gomes Junior, the decision to hold the elections in June was taken in consultation with all relevant groups in the country.

## Elections in Somaliland

Though originally scheduled to take place on 31 August 2008 and after having been postponed numerous times, the breakaway Republic of Somaliland is due to hold elections on 29 September 2009.

On March 29 the Guurti (Somaliland's upper house) approved by 42 to 35 and 1 abstention for the Presidency to remain in power until elections are held. This was a setback for the Kulmiyeh opposition party, who advocated the government's dissolution. The election will be a test case for Somaliland's young democracy and if held freely and fairly, some observers believe the international community may well reconsider its position towards Somaliland.



## 13th African Union Summit

– June/July 2009

The 13th African Union (AU) summit of Heads of State is scheduled for 1 – 3 July 2009, however a venue for the Summit has not yet been finalised. Mauritius, Libya and Ethiopia have all proposed to host the AU summit.

The summit was originally meant to be held in Madagascar, but had to be moved following the March 17 coup d'état. The decision to move the summit was based on the suspension of Madagascar from the AU in terms of Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU, which provides that: "Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union". This is not the first time that the AU has shown adherence to Article 30; both Mauritania and Guinea (Conakry) have recently been suspended from the AU following military coups in those countries.

The theme of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly will be: "Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security". The first members of the AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL) are expected to be elected during the July Summit in order to facilitate early operationalisation of AUCIL.

*Mauritius, Libya and Ethiopia have all proposed to host the AU summit.*



*President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and the current African Union chairman.*



# The ball is still in Mugabe's court

Jean-Jacques Cornish

**SOME GREEN** shoots of recovery have lately shot through in Zimbabwe. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai told a rally of supporters from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that there is no going back on the country's unity government.

He accepted that insults will continue to be traded between the ruling Zanu-PF party and the MDC. But he insists: "We need each other." Explaining the relationship between the former belligerents, Tsvangirai said: "There's nothing Mugabe does without me approving and there's nothing I can do without Mugabe approving."

The Director General of the South African Department of Foreign Affairs Ayanda Ntasiluba declared his government to be well pleased with the way president Robert Mugabe and Tsvangirai were working together. But it must be said Pretoria's credibility on matters Zimbabwean is at best jaundiced.

Yet South Africa is one of a pair of Zimbabwe's neighbours – Botswana, the most outspoken critic of Mugabe, being the other – that has quantified the financial aid they will give Harare.

The \$150 million dollars promised by each of these countries will not pay Zimbabwe's public servants for a year. But it is a substantial start.

Statements by two Nordic visitors to Harare must have been music to Mugabe's ears. Norway's Environment and Internal Development Minister Erik Solheim said he was there to see how he could help the new government.

Ula Tornaal, the Danish Minister of Development and Co-operation, said she was looking at how her country could help pay functionaries' salaries. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wished Zimbabweans well on their national day last month – a sentiment that has not been expressed from Washington in many years.

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group has

adopted an inveterately critical and isolationist line on Zimbabwe. Yet its latest report calls for a rethink on the "wait-and-see" attitude adopted by the international donor community.

It feared this might cause the beleaguered president or the army to entrench themselves again, returning to violence, repression and catastrophic economic policies.

"Some old-regime elements seek to cause the new government to fail out of fear of prosecution, loss of power and its financial sinecures, hatred for Tsvangirai or the MDC, or a genuine belief that they are the guardians of the country's liberation," the ICG report said.

"They are thus continuing to provoke and frustrate the MDC, as shown by such actions as continuing arrests and detention of MDC activists, refusal of police to carry out some government orders, efforts to drive out the last few hundred white farmers by continued farm invasions, and stalling on the appointment of provincial governors, as well as reconfiguration of ministerial powers."

The ICG said there was "a real risk of a coup" and a possibility of Tsvangirai being assassinated, despite the support of the army's middle and lower ranks for the unity government.

By saying it is time for a change of heart on recognising Zimbabwe's new inclusive government, both the ICG and Mugabe's neighbourhood friends apparently overlook that the donors will continue to provide humanitarian aid – despite the vituperation from Mugabe and his henchmen. However, they cannot re-institute development assistance until there is a palpable change of heart from Zanu PF. Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutumbara admits that farm invasions have continued unabated.

Tsvangirai himself said he would not accept chaos on agricultural land.

While not endorsing the ruinous farm invasions that have caused more than half of Zimbabwe to rely on international food aid for survival, the MDC has always been ambivalent on the issue of land ownership.

Faced with the evidence, Tsvangirai said he would have to "distinguish between criminal activity and land reform".

In her final weeks as Secretary of State for Africa in the previous US administration, Jendayi Fraser spelled it out: America would not engage Harare as long as Mugabe was president – even in a power sharing capacity.


Hillary Clinton's good wishes notwithstanding, there is no indication the government of President Barack Obama has changed its mind.

Britain, the greatest provider of humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe, despite being Mugabe's scapegoat for all its ills, has tacitly taken a similar stance. The European Union has also promised to keep its distance until it has proof of a new mood in Harare.

Tendai Biti, Tsvangirai's man as finance minister, joined his SADC counterparts at the World Bank spring meeting in Washington at the end of April.

Regional finance ministers will support him in holding out the begging bowl to the Bretton Woods institutions for financial assistance to reboot Zimbabwe's ruined economy. Washington has said it is on track to meet its commitment to double development aid to sub-Saharan Africa by 2010. Last year it reached \$7,6 billion and its goal for next year is \$8,7 billion.

If Zimbabwe is to benefit from this there has to be a whole lot more from Zimbabwe. Dramatic political developments there have not changed the reality that the ball remains in Mugabe's court.

The ultimate test of whether he really cares is whether he is finally prepared to go. 



# African leaders at Zuma's inauguration

Photo's AFP



Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma (Right) takes the oath as he is sworn in by Chief of Justice Pius Langa (Left) as South Africa's fourth President on May 9.



Equatorial Guinea's president Teodoro Obiang Nguema and wife Constancia Mangué de Obiang arrive for the inauguration.



Even royalty could not afford to miss the ceremony. King Mswati III of Swaziland attends in the company of one of his numerous wives.



Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, previous wife of Jacob Zuma, and former foreign minister also attended. She now the minister of home affairs.



# Should Zimbabweans be looking back?

Zimbabwe is just emerging from almost a decade of painful political strife and economic hardship. As people are picking up the pieces of their lives and trying to build a better future, some are asking what to do about the past. Should we punish those who caused us all this suffering? Or should we let bygones be bygones? The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission following decades of apartheid abuses comes to mind. But Zimbabwe is not South Africa, write **Max du Plessis and Jolyon Ford**



*Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe.*

**COMPELLING** arguments have been raised for and against a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for Zimbabwe. Some propose 'bury the hatchet, not the past' in aid of national healing, while others caution that such an instrument to bring about peace could lead to a war of words amid a fragile transitional period.

Suggestions that a truth commission may be valuable in facilitating peace for Zimbabweans stem from two premises. First, that human rights abuses in its modern history have been serious,

widespread, persistent, deliberate, systemic, and conducted largely with impunity. Second, that it is right in principle and prudent for peace prospects that these abuses be formally and publicly acknowledged - and addressed in a way that arrests impunity and affords victims justice and due redress, without threatening the possibility of a legitimate transition without serious resistance and conflict - now or in future.

Fundamental to any transitional justice strategy confronting human rights abuses is to define what constitutes

'the past'. The following three 'categories' roughly describe the immediate past in relation to which a TRC might be constituted.

- Zimbabwe has been plagued by almost a decade of political violence, intimidation, displacement and destruction. It kicked off with the February 2000 constitutional referendum, escalated with the June 2000 elections, and has continued ever since. These violations spiked around elections including the March 2008 poll and its aftermath. Since October 2000, legal impunity for violators has purportedly been assured through clemency, amnesty and indemnity orders.
- Since 2000, acts of violence, displacement and property loss associated with spontaneous - as well as state-sponsored - invasions of mainly white-owned commercial farms have been recorded.
- Many human rights abuses have been linked to Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 which led to the forcible displacement of 700 000 people (UN 2005).

Of course, state human rights abuses were also rife in Zimbabwe's history during earlier periods - the colonial era (pre-1965), in the former state of Rhodesia (pre-1980) and throughout the 1980s with political violence raging, in particular the Zimbabwean army's gukurahundi campaign in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in 1983-4 that was marked by claims of grave crimes and massive abuses.

These periods pose a more difficult question as to whether any formal mechanism should attempt to deal with the allegations of abuse. These periods in Zimbabwe's past are arguably unresolved and 'unprocessed' - neither truth nor



justice, reconciliation nor redress has been attempted or obtained – and represent a possible future source of demands and disunity. However, to include these periods in the initial mandate of a new commission carries the risk, in a still fragile setting, of reopening ethnic fault-lines.

## A Zimbabwean truth commission: Why?

‘Truth commissions’ are normally official (state-authorised or sponsored), non-judicial fact finding bodies – a once-off event, with a limited lifespan and mandate. They focus on victims and investigate or receive information on abuses over a specific period of time. They normally produce a report with recommendations for reparation and redress, and send out a message of ‘never again’.

Since 1974 numerous truth commissions have been established by states – with or without the assistance, encouragement or say-so of international actors – either to support peace processes or to promote democratic progress in post-conflict societies.

There is no unique formula for implementing effective transitional justice: a truth commission is but one option and should not be automatically resorted to as a ‘first aid kit’ as part of conflict resolution. However, it is still worth debating the pros and cons of a TRC for Zimbabwe.

## The case against a TRC: moving on, leaving the past alone

Suggestions for a formalised TRC process assume that it is not sufficient to simply leave the past unresolved. However, some

have argued that one should generally ‘curb the enthusiasm’ about truth commissions. So, a deliberate decision not to pursue any formalised process is also a possible option for Zimbabwe.

### Leave the past behind

One argument goes that peacebuilding should be ‘centred in the will of the people’ as it is quite possible that the overwhelming view in society might be that the past should simply be left alone. Some societies such as Spain after General Franco drew a ‘thick line’ between past and present and moved on, apparently successfully, without any particular structural mechanisms for reconciling with the past.

### Forgive and forget

US researcher Rosalind Shaw challenges the purportedly universal benefits of verbally remembering violence, arguing that ‘social forgetting’ may be an equally valid strategy. Shaw’s research in Sierra Leone revealed that despite pressure from NGOs and human rights activists for a truth commission, most ordinary people – who were tired, afraid and too well acquainted with ‘the truth’ of the violence – appeared to prefer a ‘forgive and forget’ approach.

### A waste of money

There are other problems too. A TRC could squander precious time, money and (if handled poorly) perhaps a once-only opportunity for sustainable peace.

### Source of conflict

Depending on its timing and tone and the prevailing political balance, a TRC (and the process of designing it) could create a new venue of dispute. It could

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“Depending on its timing and tone and the prevailing political balance, a TRC (and the process of designing it) could create a new venue of dispute. It could then itself become a source of renewed conflict ... and could also be used as a political tool to disproportionately apportion blame on one side”

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then itself become a source of renewed conflict, fragmentation and disintegration as constitution-making processes in transitional societies sometimes do. Any TRC could also be used as a political tool to disproportionately apportion blame on one side; or could threaten or antagonise powerful and influential persons upon whose co-operation a fragile national unity depends.

### Wrongful redemption

It could partly redeem and legitimise the previous regime by enabling its representational portrayal in an ordered institutional process.

### Reconciliation compromised

Some see the notion of reconciliation as already compromised in Zimbabwe. Archbishop Pius Ncube has branded the cycles of abuse and impunity in Zimbabwe ‘cancerous’, arguing against amnesties and calling for prosecutions to educate future generations. And just two years ago a Zimbabwe Human



*Zanu-PF supporters flexing their unbridled power on the streets of Harare prior to what turned out a one-horse rerun.*

Rights NGO Forum report stated that Zimbabweans are ‘cynical’ about reconciliation; that the concept has been ‘widely devalued, perhaps irrevocably’ and ‘remains polluted as a result of its expedient political manipulation and its failure to deliver meaningful results’.

#### Appeasing elites

Internal and external political factors influence the shape and choice of peace institutions. Care should be taken that ‘transitional justice options’ and institutional models (such as TRCs) reflect local demands. They should not be selected to appease international expectations, concerns and demands. Nor should they formulaically follow rule of law ‘prescriptions’ rather than what is really needed – and wanted – on the ground. Truth commissions are not to be implemented, regardless of the circumstances. Some argue that it should be established whether such an exercise has popular support

among ordinary people not just local or international NGOs or other elites.

#### False sense of resolution

South Africa’s experience has been hugely influential in the TRC debate. But foreign experts or donors may fail to appreciate that South Africa’s experience is not necessarily apposite to Zimbabwe’s very different history. No TRC model can simply be transposed directly from one situation to another. ‘Reconciliation’ needs to be defined within a specific historical and cultural context. There is a risk that such institutions are foreign models ‘lost in translation’ or are cosmetic only, giving a false sense of resolution.

#### Grassroots reach

A great part of any TRC process is understood as symbolism and ritual, but to fulfil their function new institutions dealing with common experiences need to reach and be reached by the grassroots

level. World Bank studies note that ‘supplying institutions is not enough: people must want to use them’. These observations suggest that a TRC would be meaningless without a concerted (and expensive) public engagement and education programme. Weighed against other priorities, it may not be viable in the near future.

Thus, when there is a relatively high level of awareness about the state’s role in abuses (coupled with power-balancing issues, the need to avoid creating new avenues of friction, general fatigue, fairly widespread communal implication in violence, legal complications from past pardons and amnesties, and resource shortages), it is at least arguable that Zimbabweans may legitimately indulge in deliberate ‘social forgetting’. Victor de Waal’s impression of Zimbabwe’s first decade after 1980 is that society as a whole decided to simply move on, at least in relation to the Rhodesian era, leaving the past behind.



## The case for a TRC: addressing the past for the future's sake

However, most experience in other societies points the other way, especially where there are concerns about who gets to decide what is 'forgotten'. The passive response to Rhodesian-era abuses has left many legacies still affecting Zimbabwe today, including a culture of impunity.

And even if it could be proven that most Zimbabweans are 'cynical' about reconciliation, this does not preclude a TRC. Instead, it depends on the form and practice of any such institution, the possible positive community response to any visible international sponsorship of such a process (rather than more 'government business'), and the prevailing political situation at the time.

Various factors call for the establishment of a TRC as an element of a comprehensive approach to transitional justice.

### Legal duty

There is probably no 'right to truth' in international law, but one fundamental principle suggesting some formal justice mechanism is the well established international legal duty on the Zimbabwean state (whichever regime is its custodian) to not only refrain from violations but to afford remedy and reparation to victims of human rights abuse, by at least attempting investigations.

### Courts compromised

Criminal courts in any country that has been subjected to oppressive rule are likely to be severely weakened, if not entirely compromised. There may be such a degree of complicity by members of society that it is virtually impossible

to prosecute all offenders. In any event, mere prosecutions, even if politically possible, do not necessarily achieve reconciliation or reduce tension. By their nature, trials moreover 'paint an incomplete picture of the past' or even distort history.

### Symbolic closure

The most obvious objective of an official truth body (TRC), is that an accurate record of the country's past be established, uncertain events be clarified, victims be assured of recognition, and the silence and denial regarding human rights violations be dealt with. Such processes can achieve a measure of symbolic closure enabling a corrected history more on one's own terms and an institutionalisation of the memories of the period of abuse (for therapeutic as well as principled reasons). The process is partly aimed at reaching an institutionalised common memory or national consensus on how the past is to be remembered. This is in contrast to denial and deliberate or non-deliberate forgetting.

### Never again

The 2008 MDC policy on justice is that 'the right to know' extends from victims to the whole of society 'to become a collective right ... to ensure that violations are recorded in history so as to prevent their recurrence'.

### National healing

For many victims no new 'truth' will emerge, but formal acknowledgment of their truth can be vital in individual and group healing, forestalling division, and enabling peacebuilding. However, as Jeong has rightly pointed out, knowing

'the truth' of what took place is a necessary condition for forgiveness, but not a sufficient condition for reconciliation and peace.

### Reparation tool

In addition to seeking the truth, such a commission can be a platform for addressing matters of principle and ensuring grievances do not undermine peace prospects. Such commissions can also serve as a vehicle to go beyond establishing the truth – mainly to attempt reparation – not merely financial or in-kind compensation, but broader notions of restitution, rehabilitation, satisfactions and guarantees of non-repetition.

### Forum for forgiveness

Truth commissions serve as a forum for forgiveness and for formal recognition of victims, to help them reclaim their dignity. Perpetrators are afforded a formal mechanism to renounce their violent deeds. 'Reconciliation' may mean many things – but it is essentially about (re)-building civic trust and shared commitment to normative values, including putting past differences aside. There is already arguably this consensus on fundamental moral norms in Zimbabwe, even if they have been breached for some time.

### Chanelling tensions

A truth commission can serve to 'civilise' and channel tensions in a way that can reduce the potential for violence. It can describe institutional responsibility for human rights abuses and propose specific reforms. Truth commissions can thus be cathartic and promote reconciliation, lifting the lid on human rights

abuses, ending denial that might still persist in certain sectors of the community, creating visible distance from the abusive era and enabling forward movement. It can also help to focus on the bigger picture and move away from apportioning individual guilt where this is paralysing peace.


### There are compelling factors that suggest a need for a TRC in Zimbabwe

- The consistency and level of state intimidation and brutality
- The use of legislative instruments to sanction state violence
- The politicisation of the judiciary

- and the prosecution authority
- The partly covert nature of direct state abuses and indirect state-instigated violations
- The large number of low-level perpetrators especially among youth militias
- Secrecy and denial on the part of the regime
- A culture of impunity reinforced by pardons and general amnesties over many years
- The lack of remedial and redress options

The question remains: where will Zimbabweans place themselves in relation to politics and principles of justice in the current interim phase – and who

gets to decide for Zimbabweans on these issues? Now that a legitimate transition process is in place, a correct balance needs to be struck between forward momentum and an adequate pause on past injustices.

However, the prospect of a truth commission should not be postponed while ‘politics’ runs its course: what it offers by way of compromise can assist in ensuring a legitimate transition is possible. Of course, any choices about the features of a Zimbabwean TRC will necessarily reflect the political compromises and stresses that accompany a transition from autocracy to democracy. 

[Read the full report on www.the-african.org](http://www.the-african.org)

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“Research in Sierra Leone revealed that despite pressure from NGOs and human rights activists for a truth commission, most ordinary people – who were tired, afraid and too well acquainted with ‘the truth’ of the violence – appeared to prefer a ‘forgive and forget’ approach”

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## Arguments for and against a TRC for Zimbabwe:

### Against:

Leave the past behind  
 Forgive and forget  
 It's a waste of money  
 May be source of conflict  
 Reconciliation is compromised  
 False sense of resolution  
 May only appease elites

### For:

State has legal duty to probe abuses  
 Symbolic closure  
 Sends message of ‘never again’  
 Facilitates national healing  
 Can serve as reparation tool  
 It's a forum of forgiveness  
 Channels tensions to curb violence



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# Learning to play by the rules

An entire generation of Zimbabweans has suffered the impact of economic implosion and political violence. How to get them back into a normal society? How will they learn to play by the rules?

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**Jackson Madzima**

The economy of Zimbabwe has been in free fall for the past eight years. Together with that, people have suffered because of a violent political situation that has affected everyone. This will have many long-term repercussions. Many analysts have looked at how to rebuild the economy, the delapidated infrastructure and the governance systems. But probably the most daunting challenge will be to rehabilitate ordinary Zimbabweans to move from an extraordinary to an ordinary situation.

From a criminological perspective, the challenge will involve a huge effort to change the mindsets of a people who have lost all hope and trust in government and in its law enforcement and security institutions.

They can no longer trust institutions that should be their own, having been so severely brutalised by those same institutions.

It has been shown across the world that regions and countries that experienced devastating civil wars and conflicts take a long time to recover – notably due to the social consequences of this conflict. It damages future trust in systems that affect people's daily lives. It can also lead to future criminal behaviour.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has already drawn a positive link between conflict situations and the rise in organised crime.

What are the ingredients for future organised criminal activity in Zimbabwe?

On the one hand a significant number of youth have been trained to use weapons, have been armed and ordered to kill their political opponents. They are told that they are allowed to fight against those who hold different views, as enemies. Perhaps inadvertently, they are being trained to expect to reap where they did not sow.

At the same time, a large number of civil servants and ordinary citizens have had to learn to survive on resources that are beyond their meagre salaries – by demanding bribes and being active in the cut-throat parallel market. This situation inevitably sets the stage for future criminal behaviour.

Big business has also had to learn to develop strategies that are blatantly

# cover story

Zimbabwe

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"Now that the situation is showing signs of normalising, it is unlikely that individuals and businesses that have been hustling for a decade will suddenly begin to do things properly."

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*For the MDC supporters the writing is on the wall – all they want is 'A new Zimbabwe, a new beginning'.*



criminal in order to survive the melt-down. In fact, some have been charged for offences ranging from fraud to doing brisk business in the parallel market. Smuggling of goods in and out of Zimbabwe is common. There is little business sense in trading ethically and exclusively in the formal market because as it stands, profit is only possible when dealing with contraband. Now that the situation is showing signs of normalising, it is unlikely that individuals and businesses that have been hustling for a decade will suddenly begin to do things properly. It is conceivable that the smuggling networks that sprung up in the last few years will evolve with the advent of a new dispensation. As seen in other parts of the world, criminal groups thrive on illegal businesses and illegal markets provided by chaotic political and economic situations. For example, the mafia in the United States thrived and consolidated their business in the wake of the Great Depression.

South Africa's violent past set the tone for current criminal behavioural patterns. The blurring of political and criminal behaviour during apartheid entrenched a culture of invincibility on the one hand and impunity on the other. It is clear that the disruption of family units through forced removals and political violence during South Africa's past provides one explanation for the high incidence of violent crime. It is argued that the distrust for authority and lack of respect for the rule of law during apartheid fed into the culture of violence.


A similar scenario is currently replaying in Zimbabwe, with the rule of law ignored, families being violently displaced and state machinery being turned against the people. The resultant poverty and marginalisation of some people are leaving many with no



- An illegal circulation of firearms and other weapons – most of them allegedly to arm militias via state security agents. Some opposition members and ordinary citizens at one stage reportedly started purchasing arms to protect themselves from militia attacks.
- Innumerable illicit dealings by individuals, highly placed government officials and businesses.
- Rife corruption – on one level by politicians and on the other by underpaid public officials.

- A myriad of economic and financial crimes, particularly those committed by corporate entities as they tried to survive the economic situation no longer controlled by supply and demand.
- A formal economy that is still smaller than the shadow economy.
- A collapsing public security and law enforcement regime as well as ineffective governance oversight mechanisms
- A bankrupt government whose resources are being siphoned by corrupt officials or diverted for political expediency
- Massive brain drain emanating from migration of skilled citizens into the Diaspora.
- An unemployment rate of above 80%.

certainly be an option for those who will not fit into the new political and economic system. As it stands, the situation will be bleaker for those who have lost everything in the prevailing chaos.

Many other factors come into play. With the international isolation of Zimbabwe, the government has had no option but to look at alternative sources of funds in order to ensure its survival. Association with shadowy figures and other rogue governments became the only viable option. Mafia figures thrive in these conditions where they can sponsor a government so that its eyes are turned away from their activities. The notorious Chinese and Russian mafia are known to like using this strategy for establishing new markets or consolidating existing ones. Therefore, it is hardly alarmist to suggest that the region should expect to contend with a surge in organised crime centred on Zimbabwe. 



*The protesters' demands are unambiguous.*

# Financial Crisis and Fragile States



International policy-makers have been faced, for the past few years, with issues relating to climate change, energy security and fragile states, though not to the same extent. But if climate change and energy security can be considered the latest concerns, the issue of fragile states has been on the table for decades. The common characteristics of these states include weak policy and institutional capacities, political instability, corruption as well as high and unsustainable debt burden. Historically, the link between political instability and a recession is very thin. This brings to mind certain critical questions. What are the main challenges facing fragile states within the

context of the global financial crisis? How can the Bank best assist fragile states to address these challenges without disrupting their transition towards political and economic recovery?

As the financial crisis hits the world, fragile states are bound to face more challenging times. At a time when they are still dealing with the challenges resulting from the recent surge in food and fuel prices, they are now forced to cope with the direct effects of this global crisis. Additionally, the drop in global commodity prices constitutes a concern for fragile economies as this translates into significant revenue drain from their natural resources. Fragile



states rely heavily on foreign aid from donors and due to the financial crisis, there are fears that many donors could re-evaluate their budgets dedicated to development aid in order to focus on the economic problems they are facing at home. But there is no doubt that cutting aid will only negatively affect programs currently being implemented in fragile states to help reduce poverty and boost development. With little room to maneuver, fragile states need additional donor resources in order to ensure that their recovery efforts are not unduly disrupted by the global financial crisis.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) Group understands this and it is well placed to channel those additional resources, having institutionalized a framework – the Fragile States Facility – to address the special needs of fragile states. The Fragile State Facility (FSF) is a special purpose financing vehicle to support integrated responses in fragile states, including state and capacity building, technical assistance, support for fiscal budget as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction of physical and social infrastructure, budget support operations, arrears clearance, employment creation and support to vulnerable groups – women, children, the elderly and the disabled. The Bank would also require additional capital to meet the demonstrated needs of fragile states.

As at the end of April 2009, the FSF had about 647.79 million Units of Account (UA), equivalent to US\$ 968.49 million, obtained from the African Development Fund and the 2008 Net Income of the African Development Bank Group. About UA 323.18 million or 49.9 percent of the UA 647.79 million was committed as at the end of April 2009 on arrears clearance, budget support operations as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in fragile states. Since its creation, the Fragile States Unit (OSFU) has been instrumental in following up on commitments made by donors to the fragile states in Africa.

In its efforts to assist fragile states, OSFU continues to forge effective partnerships with regional and non-regional organizations involved in development activities in Africa. Through these partnerships, the unit is undertaking economic and sector work

aimed at better understanding the causes of fragility and identifying the necessary tools that are required to turn around such countries, as well as the operational tools to effectively deliver programs and services in support of fragile states, especially within the context of the global financial crisis.

OSFU is also partnering with other Bank organizational units to support operations under the Conflict-Affected Countries in Africa (CASA) initiative, which aims at assisting four of the Bank's core fragile states in Africa. The assistance to these states will include re-establishing an enabling environment for private sector activities; strengthening small- and medium-sized enterprises that are crucial for job creation at country level; rebuilding financial markets and institutions; and expanding options for private sector participation in the infrastructure sector. OSFU is seeking to mobilize additional FSF-resources from partners, particularly bilateral donors.

The Bank has committed to remain engaged in all its regional member countries, especially in fragile member countries. There is hope that the support of the Bank and other international stakeholders will substantially contribute to efforts to help fragile states overcome their numerous development challenges. In the face of the crisis, the recent G-20 Summit dedicated \$US 50 billion to support developing countries, and fragile states are expected to benefit from this package. The international donor community understands that in the face of this global crisis, it is imperative that their commitments be maintained, if not stepped up, in order to alleviate the negative impact of the crisis on the economies of fragile states and the risk of not achieving the already jeopardized Millennium Development Goals.



[www.afdb.org](http://www.afdb.org)





South Africans voted overwhelmingly in favour of the ANC in elections held on 22 April 2009. With 65,89% of the votes the party just fell short of a two-thirds majority of the vote. **Hennie van Vuuren** warns that all parties should stick to their promises when it comes to ridding the country of corruption

## stick to your promises

THE MEMORY OF politicians are often as short as their election promises are long. An example is the speed with which the elected – and electorate – forgot an election undertaking by the ruling party in 2004 promising to strengthen the Scorpions as part of its proposed anti-corruption drive. Fast forward five years and the Scorpions have been legislated out of existence. This despite it featuring prominently in what the African National Congress (ANC) billed its ‘peoples contract’, during the last national poll.

The ANC is hardly alone in policy flip-flops on the corruption issue. Witness the 2004 opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) battle cry against corruption juxtaposed to the party’s ongoing reluctance to lead the way in disclosing its funders. Donors of political parties want access and influence

– and a party that wrest control of the Western Cape from the ANC was a good bet if this might gain access to lucrative provincial government tenders.

This fact makes the policy positions of parties – likely to form a government or participate in a coalition – very important, as they have access to State power that is often easily manipulated. For the rest one relies on smaller opposition parties to help keep a check on power by using their voice in legislatures, and on public platforms to help expose obvious venality. However, for the electorate it remains difficult to separate politicians of relative integrity from the individuals who make up the mafia-like elite within business and government who actively seek to undermine the constitutional value of open governance.

It is important to recognise the role corruption has played in political mobilisation in the run-up to the elections. Corruption is not necessarily the most important issue in the mind of most voters, but there is a growing realisation that it’s a crosscutting issue which impedes service delivery, undermines the rule of law and deepens inequality. The swagger of wealth suggests to the poor that the powerful have ‘eaten’. However, instead of engaging the electorate on the substantive issues about values and integrity – we have seen a ‘Zumafication’ of the corruption issue.

While corruption and clean governance feature in most party manifestos, opposition parties have concentrated most attention on ANC President Jacob Zuma and allegations of corruption levelled



Photo AP/John Robinson

*A future voter at an election rally in Pietermaritzburg.*


against him. Personalising the war on graft clouds the larger and more important issue – that of strengthening institutions and deepening ethics in public life.

The National Prosecuting Authority's decision to withdraw corruption charges may have left a cloud hanging over Zuma, but for the opposition it was a massive blow in their over-investment in one political celebrity. Similarly, the Zuma matter has necessitated the ANC to push the corruption issue on to the back burner. It is one of the top policy issues for the party, but on the campaign trail it was feared the more one discusses the issues, the more attention one places on the corruption charges levelled against the ANC President. Voters therefore heard noise about dealing with corruption in the awarding of tenders and jobs for

party cadres, but little else from the ANC.

The party with possibly the most detailed anti-corruption plan is somewhat (un)surprisingly the Congress of the People (COPE). However, it remains difficult for the time being to reconcile its manifesto promises with the role of its leaders who occupied public office until recently and whose past actions in part now necessitate policy reform. One need only think of the blind spot many party leaders have when it comes to the issue of a comprehensive enquiry into the corruption riddled multi-billion dollar arms deal – something which smaller opposition parties such as the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the Independent Democrats (ID), among others, favour.

The real measure of integrity in South African political life is unlikely to be found

in party manifestos that remain littered with inconsistencies. Rather, it is going to be up to citizens, civic groups and the media who are willing to engage in a forthright debate on accountable governance and the values of an open society as envisioned by the Constitution. This needs to happen in local communities as much as it does when allegations arise of corruption in multi-billion rand national tenders. The tone is ultimately set by the electorate who largely gets the leaders it elects. It is time we realise that the political parties will follow us, but it is up to all South Africans to lead the way, every day after the elections. The more we demand from the powerful and embarrass them for abusing power, the better the parties, their manifestos and the leaders who write them will become. 

The results of South Africa's recent general elections hold a number of lessons for political parties in the country. While the ANC and the two opposition parties, the DA and COPE, did well, smaller parties need to have a serious rethink, writes **Prince Mashele**

# A three-party

THE RECENT ELECTIONS of 22 April 2009 continue to set South Africa apart as a relatively functioning electoral democracy on the African continent. Elsewhere, the announcement of results is often followed by disputes declared by participating parties, claiming irregularities. Strikingly, no single opposition party has cried fowl following the South African poll, except for the usual complaints about the lack of sufficient resources to put up a formidable fight against the ruling party.

Interestingly, the elections have produced a number of winners and losers. The top three political parties have all won in one sense or another: the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA) and the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE). It is smaller parties that had to pull out handkerchiefs to wipe their tears following the announcement of the results.

While the ANC has failed to secure a two-thirds majority, it has still performed beyond expectations. It should be borne in mind that the party has gone through a turbulent 2008. It fired a president and two provincial premiers (in the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape), and some of its prominent leaders broke away to form the

new kid on the block, COPE.

While grappling with all this, the ANC also had to stampede in and out of courtrooms in support of its leader, Jacob Zuma, who faced serious criminal charges. Yet the ANC still managed to secure 65.89% of the national vote and to retain its position as the ruling party in all provinces but the Western Cape. This is no minor feat.

Although squeezed between the ANC and COPE, the DA still managed to secure 16.66% of the national vote, which is a substantial improvement from 12% in 2004. The party ran an effective campaign and implemented a working political strategy. The ANC's failure to discreetly deal with its internal problems last year has made it possible for the DA to snatch a simple majority in the Western Cape. South Africans will now have the opportunity to compare the performance of provinces run by the ANC with the one governed by the DA.

Formed only four months ago, COPE scored 7.42% of the national vote and secured a position as an official opposition party in five provinces. No party formed after 1994, has ever broken this record. In fact, all political parties born

of democratic South Africa have failed to secure a mere 5% of the national vote. It is for this reason that COPE should raise its arms and shout hurrah!

On their part, smaller parties need to return to the drawing board. All of them have performed badly in the elections, which is a sign of rejection by the electorate. There are two principal reasons why these parties have fared dismally: (1) the failure to craft a modern political outlook and (2) an inability to grow beyond the founder leader. The first reason chiefly affects parties such as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), while the second reason relates to the likes of the United Democratic Front (UDF), Independent Democrats (ID) and others.

The PAC seems stuck in the old politics of sentimental Africanism, an anachronistic conception of Africanism fixated on the thirst for land for the sake of land. The party has failed to adapt both its theoretical and practical politics to the current political context in South Africa and beyond.

On its part, AZAPO is yet to make its philosophy of black consciousness





Photo AP/Jerome Delay

*ANC supporters at a rally in Johannesburg cheer as they listen to their presidential candidate, Jacob Zuma, at the height of the competitive electoral campaign.*

a phenomenon that is relevant to post-apartheid South Africa. The approach of leaning on past politics seems to be losing appeal. Voters ask a simple question: if we vote for you, what will you do for us, and do you have the capacity to deliver on your promises? They don't ask if Steve Biko is your political ancestor or not.


Since the UDM and ID broke on to South Africa's political scene, they have failed to build a solid support base, and have thus suffered serious setbacks in the recent elections. Their common problem is the failure to recruit into their ranks credible and high-profile leaders other than the founder leaders of the parties. As a result, they don't inspire voter confidence

that they possess the necessary capacity to govern a province, let alone the country.

On its part, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) got position four in the national vote. Nationally, the party secured 4.55% and 22.40% in its traditional stronghold province of Kwazulu-Natal (KZN). To careful observers, it has long been clear that the IFP is a sick patient in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) fighting for its political life. The tragedy of the IFP is that the older its leader gets, the faster the party drifts into irrelevance.

Ironically, the IFP's reliance on Zulu nationalism is the main explanation behind the ANC's overwhelming victory in KZN. Before casting their vote, a

universalist Zulu had the following question to answer: do I want a Zulu (Jacob Zuma) to become South Africa's President or do I want to prevent the death of a Zulu nationalist party (the IFP)?

In the end, we see some kind of realignment of South African politics into a three-party dominant system, where there would be an overbearing ruling party (the ANC) and two kicking-and-screaming opposition parties (the DA and COPE). Only time will tell how long this picture will hold and what it will take for the ANC to lose its dominant position. Whatever happens, it would be safe to conclude that democracy is still alive and well in South Africa. 

# Beyond the al-Bashir arrest warrant

What would be the next step for the Sudanese government following the ICC arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir, asks **Godfrey Musila**

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) decision to issue an arrest warrant on 4 March 2009 against President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan for war crimes and crimes against humanity has sparked substantial international debate. Among others, the debate has touched broadly on the legal and political implications of the arrest warrant and in particular the fate of the stalled Darfur peace process, the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) with South Sudan, other peace arrangements in place and the forthcoming elections in that country.

The government of Sudan has been defiant in the face of the warrant, making three main arguments consistently: that

Sudan is not party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and that Sudan is not bound by its decisions; that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), an essentially undemocratic institution cannot purport to subject Sudan to an institution it has not accepted; and that Sudan, as a sovereign nation, is in a position to address the situation in Darfur through its institutions, including the judiciary it claims is independent, able and competent. For their part, the African Union (AU) and the League of Arab Nations have condemned the issuance of the arrest warrant as prejudicial to peace efforts arguing that the UNSC should

deploy article 16 of the Rome Statute to suspend the ICC proceedings.

Given the above context, there are now primarily two strategies open to Sudan vis-à-vis the ICC process: (1) to reject the Court completely and see how matters unfold or; (2) engage the Court through available legal avenues. Diplomatic measures, while useful in shoring up support among various constituencies, do not advance Khartoum's ends as long as the matter remains before the judicial process at the ICC.

This piece does not dwell on the first strategy, which has to date been the mainstay of Khartoum's approach to the ICC. Coupled with aggressive diplomatic demarches, the government of Sudan has deployed this strategy deftly until now. However, rejection and refusal to recognise the ICC has its limits.

At least two reasons necessitate a rethink of strategy. First, the fact that rejection and aggressive diplomacy has not prevented the ICC from proceeding against identified suspects, having properly acquired jurisdiction over Darfur by UNSC Resolution 1593 in terms of article 13(b) of the Rome Statute. Secondly, the demand by Khartoum, AU, Arab League and others for an article 16 deferral action has a limited prospect of success. At a political and diplomatic level, the decision has to garner nine out of 15 votes at the UNSC, including



*A moment of reckoning for President Omar al-Bashir?*

the P5 (or none using their veto power). The fact that China and Russia are amenable to such action does not guarantee success.

Moreover, Chapter VII (UN Charter) legal criteria have to be met. When referring the matter to the ICC, the UNSC had found that the situation in Darfur constituted a threat to international peace and security. It can be argued that the same criteria apply to a deferral decision with the effect that a deferral decision depends on one of two conditions: that there has been a fundamental change on the ground in Darfur (therefore the situation no longer constitutes a threat to international peace and security), or that continuing the ICC process is a greater threat to international peace and security than deferring it and that on a balance, deferral is the more desirable action.

On many accounts, the situation in Darfur has clearly deteriorated since 2005, more recently with the expulsion of humanitarian organisations. Therefore, it would take a good measure of sophistry for the UNSC to convince the world that the threat to international security no longer exists. Deploying the second plank of the argument would be interpreted as the UNSC bowing to pressure from Khartoum and the UNSC is unlikely to want to send the message that it acted in vain in the first place, even if the deferral is only temporary.

It is suggested that for these reasons, the second strategy, that of engagement of the ICC is worth pursuing. Article 17 of the Rome Statute, the 'admissibility clause' provides the legal avenue for such action by Khartoum. In terms of article 17, a state that is a subject of proceedings is allowed to raise an objection before the ICC to the effect that for a number of reasons, the ICC cannot properly continue with proceedings that are underway. The state would argue that there are, or have been investigations



*Amid tension that has gripped most of Sudan, life must go on. A woman displaying her harvest in Kholiat village near Kadugli in central Sudan.*

or prosecutions touching on crimes that the ICC is investigating or prosecuting. However, this presupposes that domestic law enforcement is functional and that there is a genuine process to deal with relevant crimes. Khartoum has recently suggested that this is the case: that there are 'investigating committees' probing crimes committed in Darfur. It is suggested further that a law criminalising war crimes has been introduced.

Only Sudan has standing to make these arguments motivating why the ICC should not continue. Recently, an application by a group of NGOs from Sudan making materially similar arguments was rejected by the ICC for lack of standing. However, to appear before the ICC, it presupposes that Sudan acknowledge the ICC, a fact that it has so far refused to do. Nevertheless, engaging the ICC has its merits. It allows Sudan to make the arguments that it has so

far been making in political fora before one that really matters, and which can act on it.

It would be difficult for the ICC to insist on proceeding if Sudan were to make a strong case before the Court, suggesting that it (Sudan) is both able and willing to investigate and prosecute. In terms of complementarity, the ICC's jurisdiction is only triggered when the state is either unable or unwilling to genuinely investigate or prosecute. When such proceedings are instituted after the ICC has commenced its work, the Court would have to defer to a genuine national process. It is however up to Khartoum to convince the ICC as much. That means engaging the Court. In view of the limited prospect of article 16 deferral, as argued above, and given that the ICC process cannot just be wished away, the article 17 option seems attractive. It remains to be seen how the matter unfolds in the coming weeks and months. ■





# We need more weather stations

Africa is the continent that produces the least amount of Green House Gases (GHGs), yet it has the most to lose when it comes to climate change. It has the least ability to cope and it is more vulnerable since millions of Africans depend on the vagrancies of nature for their livelihood, particularly those dependent on rainfed agriculture, writes **Jakkie Cilliers**

To some the effect of climate change in Africa will be apocalyptic. For example, a 2007 study by the CNA Corporation, largely consisting of former US military staff, warns that: “The challenges Africa will face as a result of climate change may be massive, and could present serious threats to even the most stable of governments. Many African nations can best be described as failed states and many African regions are largely ungoverned by civil institutions. When the conditions for failed states increase – as they most likely will over the coming decades – the chaos that results can be an incubator of civil strife, genocide and the growth of terrorism.”

Such crass misinformation and lack of

rigour do not stand up to analysis. Resource competition need not be a source of conflict, but can equally serve as a basis for co-operation and the development of shared management systems. This is most evident when reviewing the co-operative arrangements that govern Africa’s rivers such as the Nile and Zambezi Basins and others. The management of resource competition is, in many senses, the basis of social coexistence and to suggest that scarcity and competition will necessarily lead to chaos, war and instability is nonsense.

Many factors impact on the probability of armed conflict. The role of income, natural resource endowment, population characteristics, ethnic and religious fractionalisation, education levels, geography,

as well as previous conflicts, are all factors that constrain or could facilitate conflict.

An exhaustive review of the ecological sources of conflict done by the Institute for Security Studies some years ago found that ‘... there is no generic ecological conflict-factor in sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, there is a tremendous variety of ecological issues that are relevant to conflict analysis. These include scarcity or abundance of natural resources, environmental change, production and marketing of natural resources, and the sharing of benefits from natural resource-exploitation.’

While climate wars may not be upon us, many challenges present themselves that will be intensified and exacerbated by our changing global climate, and that

of Africa in particular. To be able to meet the minimum GHG targets recommended by the scientific community (2 tons per person per year by 2050) implies a tenfold reduction in per capita GHG usage by the biggest per capita polluter, the USA. The extent of political effort, resources and global mobilisation required for such an achievement might not be self-evident. At national level it is comparable with the Manhattan project that produced the first nuclear bomb.

Internationally the willingness to work together should be demonstrated by what followed immediately upon the terrorist attacks on 9/11 – an opportunity subsequently squandered. It certainly requires concerted action through the UN General Assembly, the Security Council and of course at COP15 – the United Nations Climate Change meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009. Countries need to invest in a substantial manner in alternative sources of energy – an effort that cannot be left to the market alone.

For its part, Africa needs a green revolution – not only to feed itself, but also to soak up GHGs and stem the advance of deserts in the north and south. Much is already in motion, for example the 'Great Green Wall' will involve several stretches of trees 7 000km long and 15km wide from

Mauritania in the west to Djibouti in the east, to protect the semi-arid savannah region of the Sahel, and its agricultural land, from desertification.

But Africa also needs to invest in population control, for ultimately it is increasing populations that are driving unsustainable development and African population growth will be the largest in the years that lie ahead.

A review of the scientific literature makes it clear that the science upon

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"To suggest that scarcity and competition will necessarily lead to chaos, war and instability is nonsense"

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which climate change patterns are predicted for Africa, such as that regarding changes in rainfall and run-off, is not comparable to that available in much of the rest of the world. As a result, the projected implications of climate change for Africa may yet change. In fact, comparatively little is known about Africa's role in the global carbon cycle. According to researchers at South Africa's Centre for Scientific

and Industrial Research (CSIR), writing early in 2007: 'We currently do not know whether Africa is a net sink or source of atmospheric carbon, and have only vague indications of the continent's temporal and spatial patterns of carbon exchange.'

Africa contributes only 3 per cent of the global fossil fuel carbon emissions that are responsible for rising atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations despite being home to 14 per cent of the world's population. In contrast, Africa plays a globally important role in fire and land-use carbon emissions. Yet much of the continental assessments of Africa's carbon dynamics are primarily model-based with large uncertainties. Clearly much needs to be done to improve the amount and quality of climate change information available from Africa, implying a substantial investment in meteorological weather stations, satellite observation and the like as some estimates are that the continent has an eightfold deficit in these capabilities. If Africa is to deal with the problem, it needs to understand and measure it more accurately than is currently the case – hence the initiative launched by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to establish an additional 50 000 meteorological stations on the continent. ■



*The bitter adversaries in the Madagascan power play: ousted president Marc Ravalomanana (left) and incumbent president, Andry Rajoelina .*



# MADAGASCAR

## roots of turmoil

The coup that ousted Madagascar's elected president reflects political and social tensions related to the island's colonial legacy, says **Stephen Ellis\***

The overthrow of Madagascar's elected president Marc Ravalomanana on 17 March 2009 is the latest setback in long-term efforts to establish political stability in the Indian Ocean island. These date from as long ago as 1972, when demonstrations by young people in the capital Antananarivo and other cities brought down the government of Philibert Tsiranana, the country's first president after independence from French colonial rule in 1960. One of his successors, Richard Ratsimandrava, was assassinated in 1975 after only six days in office.

Madagascar's instability derives in large part from the combination of extreme poverty (the fate of some 70% of its people) and the fact that the island has one of the world's highest birthrates (the

population has increased from less than 3 million around 1900 to 6 million in 1960, to 20 million today). The arrival of large numbers of young people every year looking to join the job market has created a volatile atmosphere in Antananarivo.

Indeed, control of the urban mob has long been a significant factor in national politics, and was instrumental in the process that led to Marc Ravalomanana's ousting and replacement by the former mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina. Behind this social phenomenon lies a factor rarely spoken of in public: that many of Antananarivo's urban poor are the descendants of slaves. The institution of slavery was formally abolished under French colonial rule, but the stigma of slavery continues to be a factor in social

and political life. Andry Rajoelina himself, however, comes from an upper-class family in Madagascar's quasi-caste society.

The 17 March coup – which followed weeks of violence in which more than a hundred people were killed – has reverberations far beyond Madagascar. It is a blow to the African Union (AU), which has been arguing that unconstitutional changes of government as blatant as this are not acceptable. Madagascar is the fourth African country in less than a year – following coups in Mauritania and Guinea, and the murder of an incumbent president in Guinea-Bissau – to experience a military takeover or something close to it. The political fixes that have occurred in Kenya and Zimbabwe since the start of 2008 are hardly more respectable.

The AU has now refused to recognise Andry Rajoelina, who was inaugurated on 21 March, as Madagascar's new president. So too have the United States government and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional grouping to which Madagascar belongs. This international rejection will make it difficult for Rajoelina to ensconce himself in power. Such lack of legitimacy also raises fears of even more widespread and destructive violence.

## The pressures of change

A number of factors, both immediate and longer-term, lay behind the removal of Marc Ravalomanana. His main opponent Andry Rajoelina was as mayor of Antananarivo able to rally the support of many young people in the city. This is the latest example of crises in which demonstrations and violence in the streets of the capital have played

a key role: comparable events occurred in 1972, in the mid-1980s, and the early 1990s.

Indeed, this series of dramas includes the moment of Marc Ravalomanana's own rise in 2001-02, when he used his position as mayor of Antananarivo as a base to contest the presidency against the incumbent, Didier Ratsiraka. The presidential elections in 2001 were rigged against Ravalomanana, but with the clear support of most of the island's population at the time he eventually prevailed. This raised hopes that Madagascar had turned a corner in its search for stability and constitutional rule.

Ravalomanana was elected to a second term in 2006. But even as president he continued to pursue his interests as one of the country's leading businessmen, and there is no doubt that this contributed greatly to his downfall. For example, he appointed former managers of his companies to government positions; and rival business people found themselves being frozen out

of lucrative markets. It was sometimes difficult to know whether policies were implemented because they were good for Madagascar or just for one or other of the president's businesses.

Ravalomanana treated the country's existing political class with something close to contempt, and made it clear that he regarded the armed forces as an unnecessary expense in an island that faces no serious threat of foreign invasion. He also made a grave error in negotiating with a South Korean company that wanted to lease an enormous agro-business concession to grow food for export. This raised fears over land tenure in a country where people are intensely attached to their ancestral land. The deal was abandoned on 19 March, too late to save its architect.

These excesses alienated many Malagasy, including the provincial political bosses who had emerged in the 1980s and 1990s only to be sidelined during Ravalomanana's nearly

*Who is the most popular: ousted president, Marc Ravalomanana (left) or military-installed Andry Rajoelina (right)? Presidential elections could perhaps be the best arbiter in this political impasse.*



seven years in power. There are important regional and ethnic dimensions in this process. Although all Malagasy speak the same language, there are distinctive regional identities. A stock-in-trade of political bosses is ethnic mobilisation, sometimes associated with calls for a federal constitution. Ravalomanana had attempted to trump this ethnic appeal by recourse to a centralised government and a business-friendly economic policy. It now appears that in doing so he underestimated the power of the established political class that he rejected; and that Andry Rajoelina, in addition to his urban power-base, was able to enlist the support of many of its members.


In the context of Madagascar's history of political crises, the present tumult is one of the few occasions when the people of the central highlands (about a third of the total population) have not been pitted against those from the coastal areas (*côtiers*). But if the power-struggle continues, as now seems very likely, this ethnic factor could reappear once more. What is happening

in rural areas and provincial towns could play an important role in the outcome.

### The hand of power

Marc Ravalomanana's supporters are adamant that France, the former colonial power, played a significant part in the coup of 17 March. There had, after all, been a series of disputes that led to the removal of the French ambassador in July 2008. Indeed, some circumstantial evidence exists that the accusation is credible. Andry Rajoelina was given asylum at the French embassy in early March, when his campaign was running out of steam. The army mutiny in his favour that immediately followed - and projected him into power - was led by lower-rank soldiers who had received substantial payments from an unknown source. However, France has condemned the coup. French policy-makers appear to have been somewhat surprised by the strength of international condemnation of the political change in Madagascar.

Andry Rajoelina, now sworn in as

Madagascar's president and promising elections within two years, will have difficulty in stabilising the situation. His true support base is narrow, and he is beholden to an unstable military and to a number of political barons more experienced than he, with provincial power-bases of their own. Marc Ravalomanana is presently in South Africa, but he continues to have significant support, not least from the churches, which are an important institution in Madagascar. The troubled island's crisis is not over. 

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\* Stephen Ellis is Desmond Tutu professor in the social sciences at the Free University Amsterdam, and a senior researcher at the African Studies Centre, University of Leiden. He is the co-author (with Solofo Randrianja) of *Madagascar: A Short History* (C Hurst & Co, 2009), and (with Gerrie ter Haar) of *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (C Hurst & Co, 2004)



Photo Reuters





# Algeria

## in springtime

Photo stock.xchange (Amine Meriem)

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### Ghania Mouffok

**SPRING HAS COME** to Algeria. The sky is blue and forgiving, the air is fresh, vacillating between the cold breeze coming from the Mediterranean and the warm wind of the Sahara. I find myself, like many of my compatriots, thinking of holidays. I want to flee the spoils we are promised for the future: oil and disappointment.

I want to flee the giant posters of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, elected at the age of 79 for the third time, with a score – much disputed and discussed – of more than 90% of the votes. The posters continue to hang along the main highways like a witness to an election campaign we'd rather forget, so bad was the vulgar trickery and pay-offs in this

Algeria where democracy still remains only a façade.

I wish to flee the endemic unemployment that destroys part of our active population and locks them up in a social solitude. According to the ministry of employment it is 11.8%, but independent sources estimate unemployment at more than 35%. Meanwhile prices are rising



constantly: a 17% increase for vegetables, 22.4% for lamb, 22% for chicken.

Inflation burns the pockets even of those lucky enough to have a job and we can only imagine the crisis that is still to come, despite the reassuring statements of our leaders who pretend that the world economic crisis will pass us by. Yet it is clear that the oil price has cut our foreign

earnings in half. And we need these foreign earnings. As an example, Algeria is one of the world's biggest importers of wheat; 200kg per inhabitant per year at a cost of between 4 and 5 billion dollars per year.

We also import our medicines, our cars, our spare parts, our clothes and even our security arsenal. The latter consists of police cars à l'Americaine, wooden clubs, helmets, boots, bullet-proof vests, uniforms and all the other things that have become the only means of communication between the population and those who govern us.

The entire Algeria is crisscrossed by police roadblocks that have become to us as normal as the air we breathe in a country living under a state of emergency since 1992 – the date of the cancellation of our first and only multi-party elections in the country, won by the now banned Islamic Salvation Front.

Ever since that time, mass public protests are prohibited, independent trade unions are tolerated but harassed through judicial means, and even wanting to flee the country and risk your life in a small dinghy heading for Europe has become a crime punishable by law.

As the space for social dialogue and negotiations diminishes, revolt becomes the only mode of communication between the society and government. There are sporadic, violent and destructive outbursts of revolt in all the regions of the country, like the wave of anger of the youth in balaclavas who burn public property and confront with stones the police armed with batons and tear gas, before being tried by a judiciary without any mercy.

This violence has become the only popular resistance for many. Even if it looks harmless on the surface, it is still a clear symptom of the crisis that is

plaguing Algeria: our drifting towards an uncertain future.

We haven't managed to overcome the civil war, even if the intensity of the violence we experience today is incomparable to what we lived through in the '90s with its endless mourning, its massacres and forced disappearances.

The politics of national reconciliation led by president Bouteflika and wanted by the military – the real power in Algeria – only amounted to a general amnesty for soldiers and armed Islamic militants, both shrouded in the same debilitating silence. Now we're not allowed to talk about it. It's against the law.

Reduced to "a national tragedy" the Algerian past still suffers from its taboos; its losses without any compensation, which is now made impossible; from its disappeared without tombs, from its memory without justice – a memory filled with holes between the past and the future like bombs that are yet to explode.

Meanwhile, turning a blind eye to this terrible situation, president Bouteflika offers to the 300 to 400 men still rebelling in the inaccessible mountains – where the army and rebels still fight without any witnesses – to again give themselves up and benefit from the National Reconciliation Law...

How can one then ignore the analysts who say that in order to continue, the Algerian regime needs to maintain a certain level of violence? It needs this to install fear in a society that nevertheless still resists giving in to the oil barons who are taking over, looting and corrupting us with their monstrous 4x4 vehicles on our dirt roads.

It is summer and the air is like velvet. I find myself thinking of a vacation to flee this country, which, unfortunately, hasn't had its Mandela. 🇩🇿



# Sudan and Chad Until next year?

The Chad/Sudan conflicts appear to defy the dictum that he who pays the piper calls the tune. The two governments find themselves in a dilemma of heavily funding each other's rebels whom they ironically cannot control. As fighters on both sides of the border take their customary rainy season break end of May, **Richard Cornwell** argues that these rebellions have an internal logic and dynamics of their own.

Photo courtesy UNMIS





**THE REBELS OF** the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) on May 4 began an attack in the east of the country, with the apparent objective of taking over the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. This was the latest of a series of offensives launched over the past five years from the east of the country and the neighbouring Darfur region in Sudan. It came only hours after the signature in Doha of yet another agreement between the Sudanese and Chadian governments to desist from providing support to each others' rebel movements. Chadian president Idriss Deby Itno's government instantly complained to the UN Security

Council, which subsequently condemned any forceful destabilisation of Chad.

Within a few days the rebel columns had been defeated by the more sophisticated air and ground forces of Chad, aided by French intelligence reports. In the course of the following week Chadian aircraft and helicopters launched raids across the Sudanese border covering troops in what were termed "hot-pursuit" operations. Sudan, in turn, complained, protesting its innocence, and eventually the diplomatic noise died down, the risk of direct hostilities between the two countries apparently having dissipated.

A few days later, the Sudanese rebels of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), mounted their own offensive in North Darfur, claiming success against Sudanese forces. Khartoum has long accused the Chadian government of supporting and supplying the JEM, so this was represented in the media as merely the latest bout in a long-running proxy war.

The weather will now take a hand in matters as the arrival of the rainy season puts an end to major campaigning in this particular conflict zone. Battle will doubtless be rejoined later this year or early next, however, whatever deals are

*Civilians in Chad and Sudan are caught in the crossfire.*



Photo Johann Hattingh/UNMIS



Photo UNWIS

“Chadian aircraft and helicopters launched raids across the Sudanese border covering troops in what were termed “hot-pursuit” operations. Sudan, in turn, complained, protesting its innocence, and eventually the diplomatic noise died down.”

brokered in the meantime between Chad and Sudan.

The latest agreement between the governments of Sudan and Chad was no more likely to hold than its predecessors. Its premises were just as flawed, in that they assumed that an accord between Khartoum and N’Djamena would

suffice to end the violence across their mutual, and largely imaginary, border. Both governments have an interest in portraying the rebellions against them as being sustained principally by foreign sources. To some extent the international diplomatic community is willing to play along with this fiction, being far more

comfortable with a situation in which formal states rather than a plethora of unstable alliances of non-state actors, each with their own ill-defined agendas, are the principals.


Chad’s rebels, though they have received intermittent support from Khartoum since at least 2004, are driven principally by the desire to overthrow the incumbent government in N’Djamena, as were the successful insurrections of Idriss Deby in 1990 and Hissene Habre in the 1970s, both supported by Khartoum from rear bases in Darfur. But as in these previous instances, the rebellions were driven by calculations of an essentially Chadian nature.

When the Darfur rebellion began in earnest in 2003 it soon intersected with longstanding grievances among communities across the border in Chad, and the displacement of thousands of war fugitives further accelerated the development of a regional conflict zone. President Deby Itno, however, continued in alliance with the Sudanese government until this began to threaten the stability of his domestic ethnic power-base, and only in 2005 does the Chadian government seem to have begun its semi-official support to the

Darfurian rebels. Khartoum then stepped up its efforts to remove the government of Deby Itno by providing aid, equipment and bases to the motley groups of rebels opposing his regime.

In early 2008 the rebel assault on N'Djamena almost succeeded, being beaten back only with difficulty and with a certain degree of help from France and Libya. Like their Darfurian counterparts, Chad's rebel factions have been riven by internal feuding and rivalries, have splintered and coalesced

around ill-defined political programmes, the reconciliation of which defies the attempts of mediators.

The Sudanese and Chadian governments continue to provide conditional and deniable support to each others' rebels, but are unable to control them. These rebellions have an internal logic and dynamics of their own, and a comprehensive peace treaty is likely to prove elusive, especially in that it will require two authoritarian and corrupt regimes to share power in ways they currently find unacceptable. 

*Women and children in Darfur bear the brunt of the crisis.*





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# Africa's **way out** of the crisis

The global economic crisis is having a devastating effect on Africa: exports are suffering, mines are closing down and thousands of jobs are being lost. It now also emerges remittances to Africa are being cut by up to 30%.

**Liesl Louw-Vaudran** spoke to Mr Donald Kaberuka (left), president of the African Development Bank, in Tunis

## **Initially there was the impression that Africa would be isolated from the global financial crisis?**

In the beginning people were saying: this crisis is not for us, it is for others. My thinking then was no, this crisis will reach us through secondary level channels. It will take time to reach us, but it will. So we set up a committee of five ministers and five governors of central banks. This committee met twice in Cape Town and Dar es Salaam and drew up recommendations which we gave to the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and which we fed into the G20.

The analysis is very clear of what has happened between November and now: real GDP growth on the continent has been cut by half, to 3.5%. This might look like an innocuous number, but it means two things:

- In many African countries population growth is 2 to 3%. If you have economies growing at the same rate that basically means there is no growth, because whatever growth you're having is being eaten up by a growing population.

- The second implication is that for Africa to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); you need a growth rate of 7%. So if you fall below that 7% the MDGs are compromised.

## **Are all countries in Africa going to be hit by the crisis in the same way?**

Africa has 53 countries and the number I'm giving you is an average.

However, one of the most worrying aspects of the crisis is that the large economic engines of the continent have been the hardest hit: Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and others. Why is this important?

Nigeria is 60% of ECOWAS. Slow down the economy of Nigeria and you slow down the neighbourhood. These engines were hit through several channels, but mainly through exports; in the case of South Africa minerals, Nigeria oil and in Kenya it was mainly tourism and other exports like flowers.

I was in Zambia recently and I requested the president Rupiah Banda to visit the

Copperbelt, which I did. What I found was \$8000 a ton of copper in November, and now \$3000 ... there has been a huge impact: the mines are struggling badly. Energy and transport costs are high and at \$3000 it is hardly worth it. So if people say the crisis is not for us, they should look at the figures.

## **What about the banks?**

We have not had a banking crisis or banking failure because the banks are not exposed to toxic products. But if the private sector starts to suffer – in the oil sector or the mining sector – there is no way the banks can escape it. Banks lend to these clients and as the clients fail to pay, they have less money to lend.

## **How has the ADB reacted to the crisis?**

We have done three things: we are practically doubling our lending; we provide trade finance and we make liquidity available.

But in the end what we are doing is a drop in the ocean. I will give you some confidential information. Though I'm not sure how you give confidential information





<< (Left) Kaberuka and aides touring a copper mine in Zambia.

to journalists? (laughs) The requests we are getting at the bank for urgent help is something I have never seen before. And the requests are from unexpected countries. Some are coming to look for a billion, some half a billion to support the budget, because the drop is sudden. So I'm going to ask our governors to give us additional instruments that are best adapted to times of crisis. The instruments we have at the moment take time: you submit your proposal and you get your funds in six months. However, the requests we have now are very urgent.

**You said you are going to double your lending. What is the state of your balance sheet and how far can you stretch it?**

All the strategic areas of the bank are still in the comfort zone, unlike the Asian Development Bank, for which the G20 is asking a 200% capital increase. For the American Development Banks, and for us the resolution says: demonstrate the need. My answer is as we stand now, true, we still have headroom. Without the financial crisis, we would not have needed a general capital increase until 2013. But now we need a general capital increase much earlier.

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"The requests we are getting at the Bank for urgent help is something I have never seen. And the requests are from unexpected countries. Some are coming to look for a billion, some half a billion... to support the budget, because the drop is sudden"

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**Commercial banks seem so reluctant to give loans. Are you talking to them to find some kind of solution? Or is that not your mandate?**

We certainly are investing in banks – second and third tier banks, because these are the ones we are interested in – and we encourage them to lend to small businesses. Commercial banks must decide for themselves what are the risks. But I disagree with you that they haven't been lending. It's a question of concentration, they've only been lending to certain sectors. That's what we're trying to change. Many of these companies on the continent have to find the balance between debt and equity and I'm not sure if piling debt on them is the best solution. They should be more selective.

**Are there any indications of when the crisis will end?**

I've been in this business for a long time and if there is someone who knows when we hit the bottom, I'd be very surprised. I've heard figures from one to five years.

There are some imponderables here: the first is whether all these fiscal stimuli are actually creating confidence that will get credit moving again? Are they creating confidence fast enough? I don't know.

The second imponderable is whether the internal demand in the Chinese economy can move fast enough to compensate for weakening international demand. The Chinese economy was very much driven by export demand but it has plenty of internal potential.

**What lessons can we in Africa learn from the current crisis?**

There are definitely lessons to be learnt. One issue, which is very important to note is that if this crisis happened 20 years ago it would have found a continent in great crisis. However, many countries internally have over the last number of years been doing the right thing. They are better placed to deal with the crisis than what would have been the case 20 years ago. I'm saying this so we don't



draw the wrong conclusions from the crisis. We shouldn't now abandon market reforms, abandon integration, abandon globalisation ... these things have made the continent much stronger in the face of external shocks. The deficits are much more contained and the banking is better capitalised to withstand these shocks.

But Africa has certain structural problems. Firstly, there is an excessive reliance on commodities. Zambia depended on copper in the seventies, it still does. When there is a recession they suffer. The same goes for Katanga and other regions.

Secondly is the very poor state of infrastructure. The mines I saw in the Copperbelt not only suffer because of low prices, but also because of power outages and bad roads. On this same road I travelled to Ndola, what do you see? Trucks and trucks transporting copper. You can't carry copper and expect the roads to last. When they depend on world prices and profit margins decrease, this becomes a problem. We must definitely reduce the cost of doing business because we can't control international prices.

Thirdly is this issue of internal trade, this definitely has to improve.

**On the last point, you were at the launch of the North-South Corridor last month in Lusaka. Do you believe these initiatives can make a difference?**

These initiatives are absolutely marvellous. We have pledged \$600 million in the next 5 years on the North-South corridor. However, what worries me about these corridors is the slow progress on man-made barriers – papers, bureaucracy...

The second concern is maintenance. We need more road maintenance. We are told that to construct 1km of road on an easy terrain costs \$600 000 and \$1 million on complicated terrain. So imagine if there

is no maintenance what it costs to rebuild these roads every year?

At the same time we are told that to construct 1km of rail is \$1 million. I believe we really need to rehabilitate our railways in Africa.

**Have the big projects like the promised huge Chinese infrastructure projects in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo gone ahead despite the crisis?**

Many projects large and small have been cancelled or scaled down and we, as the Bank, have in many cases picked up some of the projects.

However, I remain optimistic: one aspect of the crisis is that for years people have been saying Africa is high risk, but more money was lost on Wall Street than in Africa in the last two or three decades. It is clear there has been a systematic undervaluation of Africa's assets because we are supposed to be so high risk. We're hoping that when the markets recover we will continue attracting investment. Our banks are safer, we are better regulated.

**What about remittances from those in the Diaspora sending money back home to their families?**

Remittances are definitely hit by the crisis. For some countries like Ghana for example, remittances are more important than the combined value of foreign aid and exports.

They're also much more predictable and politically insulated. The figure we've received is a decline of up to 30%. However, we have to wait until the end of the year to see a clearer picture of this decline.

**Apart from the present crisis, are you concerned about the impact of global warming and environmental change on African economies in the longer term?**

We are the continent most affected by global warming. What I find regrettable is that much attention and resources has gone to financing mitigation – reducing emissions or their rate of increase – and not enough to adaptation. What we need in Africa is adaptation.

For example, in Bangladesh the sea levels are rising and the paddy farms are being flooded. They're now being adapted to become prawn farms. In Africa the challenges are huge, but we don't have the same resources.

The second issue to be addressed in Copenhagen (the United Nations Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change in December 2009) is the ability to develop hydropower – whether it is the Nile or the Zambezi or the Congo River. We have enormous difficulty raising money for these big projects.

The third issue is Africa's forests. We have a programme here at the bank on the Congo Basin to fund agriculture so that the Congolese and others don't cut down

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“For years people have been saying Africa is high risk, but more money was lost on Wall Street than in Africa in the last two or three decades. It is clear there has been a systematic undervaluation of Africa's assets”


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their forests. There is nothing in the Kyoto protocol that makes provision for that.

**Looking at Zimbabwe: you said that unless there's a proper government you're not going to give a dime to Zimbabwe?**

I've said just the opposite. I've said that the agreement in Zimbabwe between the parties is the best we can get under the circumstances. It's a compromise accepted by the international community. It is showing signs of beginning to work. My judgement is that the international community should stop sitting on the

fence. We are part of that community.

However, we do have to figure out a way out of Zimbabwe's debt problem. It is around \$400 million. And we are working at it. Zimbabwe's debt is not the biggest debt settlement we've had to deal with: we've done the Democratic Republic of the Congo and we did the Ivory Coast, which was concluded only last month. Now that economic laws are coming back to Zimbabwe, there is multi-currency income coming into Zimbabwe. I hope it doesn't take too long. It took us two years to settle Liberia's debt and it took us a few months to sort out the Ivory Coast's debt, which was bigger than that of Zimbabwe. 

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"We shouldn't draw the wrong conclusions from the crisis. We shouldn't now abandon market reforms, abandon integration, abandon globalisation ... these things have made the continent much stronger in the face of external shocks"

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**Selling sex in Cape Town** is the result of a two-year study by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) to gather data about the sex work industry in Cape Town and evidence of human trafficking into the industry.




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[info@sweat.org.za](mailto:info@sweat.org.za)  
[pubs@issafrica.org](mailto:pubs@issafrica.org)



# Sending money home

Remittances from family members abroad have helped many in Africa to survive. However, the global economic crisis is sure to effect this valuable source of income for many Africans, writes **Dianna Games**



How did the Zimbabwean economy survive a decade of mismanagement and mind-boggling decline, observers of that battered country often ask.

A large part of the answer may be found in cities across the world where an estimated three to four million Zimbabweans found new homes and jobs, often against great odds, that allowed them to support family and friends back home.

Foreign remittances was a lifeline for yet more millions of Zimbabweans back home who were not just neglected by the state but often almost destroyed by it.

It has been estimated recently that more than US\$1 million a day was pouring over the border in remittances into this economically stricken country by 2008, keeping the economy, such as it was, afloat.

The government, eager to get its hands on this valuable foreign exchange, was spurned by expatriates who preferred to find their own informal channels to support their networks at home.

But, ironically, the state did benefit: it

had unfettered access to the black market for foreign exchange fed largely by remittance money. The funds also provided a financial cushion for ordinary people, reducing the pressure for political change and preventing total economic collapse.

Remittance inflows into Africa, conservatively estimated at about \$20 billion annually, have buoyed other dysfunctional states where poor governance and underdevelopment have driven able and skilled workers into the international economy in pursuit of better lives. The money creates the impression, in some cases, that governments are doing a better job than they actually are, by plugging holes opened up by state inefficiency and lack of delivery.

It is only within the past decade that there has been proper acknowledgement globally of the value of remittance money to developing regions, but still, many governments fail to properly monitor these inflows, let alone capture them.

In Africa, larger economies such as Kenya and Senegal are key recipients of

remittance money and even oil producing states such as Angola and Nigeria, which have largely squandered resource windfalls, receive millions of dollars annually from outside the continent.

Failed states such as Somalia are more dependent than most on this funding lifeline and have effective funding links to Somalis abroad that have not only kept families alive but have also allowed the development of successful business empires in related services such as mobile phones.

The overall flows involved are staggering. According to the World Bank, in 2005 remittances to developing countries, dominated by flows to China, India and Mexico, totalled \$188bn – twice the amount of aid to these countries.

The figures for Africa are relatively small but rising rapidly, reaching anything from \$20bn to \$40bn in 2007.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria has traditionally been the biggest recipient (officially \$3.3bn in 2007), followed by Kenya (\$1.3bn) and Senegal (\$900m). South Africa



Photo Media24

*Is the money sent by Africans abroad to their families back home now drying up?*

has experienced the situation differently, being more of a source of outward remittances than a recipient country.

Experts say official remittance figures are probably less than half of total inflows, given that informal channels are often used to move money to avoid high transfer costs charged by agencies and banks and to counter the low banking penetration in Africa. Although most money goes to families, a new trend of funding business interests has begun with expatriates investing in companies back home through local stock exchanges and buying into property developments. In Senegal, the government reckons that about 30% of the money fuelling a housing boom in 2008 came from the Senegalese diaspora.

But the heady remittance flows of the past few years look set to be dented by the global financial crisis, which has affected the amount of money international migrants are able to send home.

A recent World Bank report said remittance inflows to developing countries

could fall by anything between 1% and 6% this year from 2008. Foreigners have been in the forefront of retrenchments in first world countries, overtime has become harder to get and even those who have kept their jobs have had to take pay cuts.

The report suggests that shrinking economies will lead to anti-immigrant hostility, further affecting the employment of foreigners in western countries. The declining income will hit hard many families at the poorest end of the spectrum.

But it may also force governments and communities to look for new solutions to their predicaments as remittance money is not a long-term solution, in the same way that international aid has not helped Africa solve long-term problems.

Many countries high on Africa's remittances recipient list remain at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index, suggesting that these massive inflows have failed to create sustainable economic growth.

Most remittance money is used for consumption spending and has, in some

instances, discouraged recipients from getting jobs or creating businesses.

For every success story, there are other stories of families exploiting their remittances to live a lifestyle they could not otherwise afford. The money tends to be widely dispersed over large numbers of people and is not stored as savings.

As a result, remittance money has tended to keep economies ticking over rather than helping them to move to the next level. A crisis may precipitate creative solutions and more focused political will for problem solving. Another development flowing from the financial crisis is the fact that many skilled migrants are opting to return home, bringing their badly needed skills and more efficient work methods with them.

The global crisis will not last forever and the migrant professionals will not stay home just to find it is business as usual. A window of opportunity exists for governments and business to work together quickly and creatively to find a way to keep these skills in Africa indefinitely. ■

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Though Africa does not have to reinvent the wheel on good governance, the continent does seem to fail in that it simply lifts practices from elsewhere and transplants them without cognisance of the particular circumstances

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# Not on our

**Annie Barbara Chikwanha**

KENYA'S government has been at loggerheads with the media and the public since the beginning of this year over the new Communications Amendment Act (2008). The government argues that there is a Media Act that protects press freedom, however, the new amendment effectively introduces claw back clauses that would inhibit media freedom. The Act provides, among other things, for the appointment of commissioners whose role is to set 'communication'/broadcasting standards. As expected, Kenyans rose en masse in defence of their democracy and made loud noises to anyone who would listen. Being cowed into silence is definitely not an option for Kenyan citizens who have experienced varying brutal regimes that did not respect freedom of expression.

Just like Kenya, Botswana too has rushed to gazette a new media law, The Media Practitioners Act that was passed last year. Lawmakers and civic groups had asked for amendments in response to the public outcry by journalists. Parliamentary committees were denied the chance to fine-tune the bill and the main outrage is over the requirement for journalists to register with Botswana's Media Council before

practicing. The Media Council's decision-making structure has got appointees who apparently are not in any way involved in or knowledgeable about the media industry.

Press freedom has been under threat elsewhere on the continent for some time with Zimbabwe clearly setting the trend. The former Zimbabwean Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo, spelled out what was to be aired in the local broadcast arena as 'local content'. The only problem is that in this era, everything local is also global and vice versa.

Unfortunately for Kenya, the rather fragile coalition government faced yet another acid test as the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Prime Minister Raila Odinga denounced the passing of the law as an 'act of violence on common sense and harming a free media'. This of course endeared the ODM to the Media Owners Association. The ODM has taken every opportunity it can to enforce its authority within the coalition and this seems to be paying off. By distancing itself from the new law, the legitimacy of the new Communications Amendment Act (2008) was undermined. In defence of

its actions in regulating the media or communication, the government stated in a costly newspaper advert:

"The reality is that the new Act is in keeping with similar provisions in developed democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and others." The government claims in the advert that the Act does not impede journalists from doing their work but actually supports the growth of the ICT sector and press freedom, and stops the spread of "pornography, hate and violence". It further states that the new Act is only targeting broadcasting and not journalists. The question here is: is someone somewhere honestly failing to see the connection between reporters, journalists and radio and television stations? Or perhaps we need to engage in a semantic debate on the differences between 'broadcasting' and the 'media'?

The government's defence statement concludes with the words: "In a democracy, it is vital for there to be checks and balances to protect society from a Rogue Government, a Rogue Parliament, a Rogue Judiciary and a Rogue Media." There is no other statement that sums up governance





# watch

in Kenya as well as this one. The corruption scandals by politicians depict the all round rogue nature of the regime; the roguish tendencies of a parliament that does not believe it should pay tax, a judiciary that is riddled with favouritism and corruption that destroy the pivotal point of the criminal justice system and a media that has at times faced allegations of blackmailing corrupt politicians and officials into paying them so that their shenanigans are kept out of the news.

Though Africa does not have to reinvent the wheel on good governance, the continent does seem to fail in that it simply lifts practices from elsewhere and transplants them without cognisance of the particular circumstances. That provisions are effective in the developed world does not always make them relevant and applicable to the developing countries' contexts. In any case, it is the failure to fashion our own blueprints relevant for our contexts, history and diversity that

has caused Africa to lag behind the other continents. The leadership has also largely designated itself as 'the guardians of public opinion'. African presidents so often refer to 'my people', when speaking about citizens – demonstrating that only they know what is good for their people.

Unfortunately for President Mwai Kibaki, the ripples caused by his signing of this bill into law caused him some embarrassment as he was forced to refer it back to the lawmakers for further scrutiny. The point is: he had assumed wrongly what was good for his people. Perhaps it is time for all to reread *Why Men Rebel* by Ted Robert Gurr.

In this case, the legislature must also take the blame for the very few MPs who turned up in Parliament on the day the bill was passed. At most a third of the well over 200 MPs turned up.

That said, the media fraternity, journalists in particular, also need to be conscientious in their operations. Presidents know that only they are the news in many

countries and the norm is that their activities or luxurious lifestyles provide the news. In many countries, journalists demand to be paid and to be provided with transport to cover civil society events. Furthermore, at these events the media then only arrives to cover the minister's speech and they immediately dash off to follow another minister – as if they are the only high important people when it comes to democratisation or developmental issues.

Whatever the excuse for such behaviour, their failure to recognise the importance and contributions of other actors on the governance landscape on the continent has largely contributed to the mischief by the leadership. In brief, the media fails the public when it only focuses on catastrophes and politicians and excludes all other actors. It needs to do a careful balancing act in terms of covering all angles of a story. And in the absence of community newspapers and radio stations in most of Africa, only the big media houses located in the city are available to fill this space. □

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## Rewriting the possibilities of new meanings in the study and teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences at UNISA.

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Our goal as the College of Human Sciences (CHS) at Unisa is to provide quality and relevant general academic and career focused learning opportunities underpinned by principles of lifelong learning, flexibility and student-centeredness. As we foster change and transformation in line with our institutional identity at UNISA, the CHS aims to address the needs of a very diverse student population by offering targeted student support which is facilitated by user friendly information and communication technologies (ICTs). Our courses in the humanities and social sciences graduate students who are versatile so that they can become critical and reflective thinkers and practitioners who are able to produce knowledge that is relevant and essential for the development of South Africa and the African continent. We also push our students to contribute to universal knowledge that addresses immediate and long-term issues in our societies. The focus is on developing graduates with attributes that include "critical/democratic citizenship, social, cultural, and environmental awareness, tolerance and responsibility in the African context, self management, and lifelong learning."

Our Open Distance Learning mode of delivery which is synchronous and asynchronous, print and electronic makes use of a pedagogy which critically engages learners of all ages so that they are able to interrogate content and in the process they construct their own authentic meanings and identities as future academics and constructive members in commerce and industry. It is a learning and teaching model that is flexible, cost-effective, integrated and blended. Furthermore, as we strive to achieve our vision, mission and identity of being the African university in the service of humanity, our teaching and research focuses on developing learning architectures that push students and academics to explore new vistas of knowledge and to expand the intellectual growth envelope of students and academics so as to generate new basic and applied knowledge reflexively.

Over the years, our quest for excellence and service to South Africa and the continent has enabled us to develop a genetic code and a corporate strategy that has resulted in a matrix structure at the College level with 26 departments, several centers and two research institutes; 580 academic staff members of whom 35 are rated; over 95 000 students of whom 1 300 doctoral students and 3 000 masters students were registered in 2008 and 2009. In establishing a culture of scholarship and rigour in our programmes, undergraduate and postgraduate students are exposed to disciplines in which they explore the relationships between theory and practice and weaving multi, inter and cross disciplinary synergies that are essential in the study of social phenomena in our complex and networked societies. The goal is to cultivate and promote an institutional ethos, intellectual culture and educational experiences that are conducive to critical discourses, intellectual curiosity, tolerance and a diversity of views essential for building democratic and modern knowledge societies in South Africa and the continent. This is achieved through: the use small group discussion classes that are virtual and physical; an improved research culture among academics; role modeling by academics; self-directed and user friendly study materials that are now used by students and staff in conventional universities; and well trained and motivated tutors across the country and the continent.

Teaching staff, who are organic and transformative intellectuals, help students to relate their studies to social, economic, technological and political issues that affect our society and the African continent in particular as they focus on the nexus of teaching

and learning strategies on the one hand, and curriculum and pedagogical transformation on the other. As we attempt to see what the future holds for our country and Africa, we offer formal and non formal product range and sustained learner support in disciplines which include Anthropology, and Archeology, Art, African and World Languages, Communication Sciences, Development Studies, Education, History, Health Studies, Musicology, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Theology. At a national level, we take the lead in educating students through open distance and electronic learning by taking the human sciences and the university to the "people" with the use of modern ICTs. In the process, we have made the notion of massifying higher education a reality by enrolling more than one third of students in publicly funded universities in the country. In the process, we are redefining higher education provision and evolving tomorrow's concept of accessibility of quality higher education and training to the entire populace and beyond our country's borders. Our focus is also on accessibility of higher education to poor and marginalized communities by offering a barrier-free environment while responding to the needs of a competitive national, regional and global market.

Therefore, in terms of our strategy maps in all departments, we are always striving to make our courses and programmes innovative and in-tune with current disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary developments in our niche areas so that our graduates are able to be pace setters at present and in their future careers. Our aim is to produce a graduate who will eventually be able to create employment for himself or herself and others so that they can play a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political development of SA and the African continent. Strategically, our immediate and long-term goal is to expose students to knowledge, philosophies and values that will enable them to be visionary leaders located in South Africa and on the African continent and to help achieve Africa's ideals. In our teaching, research and community engagement, our academics and students focus on riding "the wave of creativity" so that "we make the future happen" in higher education and training. In that regard, we are committed to being a bench mark for our peers in many disciplines so that we can change our world before our competitors. We aim at producing a well grounded corps of academics and thereby sustain the university.

In linking up with the rest of the continent the College has initiated projects such as the African Visiting Scholar of the Month Lecture Series. Through various initiatives intended to increase our research output and the role of young black and women academics, the CHS is in the process able to expose our students and academics to various ways of challenging dominant modes of knowledge production in our global world so that our intellectuals and burgeoning scholars can rewrite the possibilities of new meanings, and African intellectual identities whose locus and point of reference is South Africa and the African continent. In that way, we shift the aim of academia from a blind and ahistorical quest for universal truths to the notion of organic intellectuals and researchers who are committed to a self-reflective teaching and research project and are aware of the "baggage" they bring to the intellectual enterprise. Therefore, we invite you to experience the CHS at UNISA because we are committed first to you the prospective student, South Africa and the African continent in terms of knowledge production, dissemination and utilization.





## Rich analysis of Kenyan politics

It's our Turn to Eat: **The Story of a Kenyan Whistleblower**

Author Michela Wrong

Reviewed by Richard Cornwell

"Michela Wrong also provides a richly textured analysis of the fabric of Kenya's troubled polity, showing how the corrupted heart of government and the cynical games of the political elite led inexorably to the violence after Kibaki's disputed re-election in 2007"

### Book Details

**Michela Wrong**

*It's our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistleblower.*

London: Fourth Estate, 2009.

ISBN 978-0-00-724196-5

A NUMBER OF very good books have been published about contemporary Africa already this year, and Michela Wrong's new volume will stand among the first rank. The title is a little misleading and disguises the massive scope of the work. At one level she tells the story of John Githongo, who was appointed by Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki as permanent secretary for governance and ethics in January 2003. Githongo was a journalist and anti-corruption activist whose new post was supposed to signal Kenya's new government's determination to tackle the pervasive corruption that had marked the long rule of President Daniel arap Moi.


Matters did not develop as Kibaki and his senior ministers had hoped, for it gradually dawned upon Githongo that corruption had continued unabated and that the Kikuyu political and business elite, nicknamed the Mount Kenya Mafia, now regarded the spoils of office as their rightful inheritance: it was, indeed, their turn to eat. Central to Githongo's investigations was a network of scams centering upon a fictitious entity, Anglo-Leasing Finance. This, and a number of other phantom companies, were being paid millions of dollars by the Kenyan government for either work that was not done, or goods not delivered. Many of these goods and services were related

to security matters and were therefore afforded a cloak of secrecy.

Initially Githongo reported dutifully to the President, convinced that he was being duped by his closest associates, only to realise that Kibaki was fully aware of what was happening, and that much of the money was to be used to fund his party's election campaign in 2007, though personal enrichment also featured in the motives of the perpetrators.

In 2005, fearing for his life, John Githongo left for England, whence he submitted his resignation. His subsequent detailed revelations about the Anglo-Leasing scandal caused much discomfort, though few prosecutions, and Githongo was reviled by some as a traitor to his country and his people.

But this story, and how John Githongo managed to transcend the ethnic loyalties his political masters had assumed would override his moral compass, are only a part of the book. Michela Wrong also provides a richly textured analysis of the fabric of Kenya's troubled polity, showing how the corrupted heart of government and the cynical games of the political elite led inexorably to the violence after Kibaki's disputed re-election in 2007.

This is a book for all those interested in Africa in general and Kenya in particular, though I understand it is difficult to buy in Nairobi. 

# CREATING NIGERIAN HEROES

Will there ever be a Nigerian Incredible Hulk, a Batman from Abuja or Judge Dredd on the streets of Lagos? A new generation of Nigerian graphic artists says no: their comic heroes will be homegrown, writes **Waldimar Pelsner** from Lagos



Photo Courtesy City Press

The reincarnation of Nigerian dictators and democratic activists, Lara Croft-like super-heroes, and the kings and warriors of Nigerian legends has begun – between the covers of comic books.

From **Secrets of Allen Avenue**, where male prostitutes lurk near the shadowy Orchid of Sin, to **June 12**, a graphic novel about the annulment of Moshood Abiola's election victory in 1993, a new breed of comics is giving young Nigerian readers a fresh take on what their country is about and what it could become.

Their creators, driven partly by the success of Hollywood blockbusters with roots in the comics world (*Batman*, *Superman*, *Sin City*, *Stardust*), want to immortalise Nigeria's own heroes in graphic novels that may one day hit the silver screen too. A dearth of funding is hampering the realisation of this dream.

"We want to start something here," says Sewedo Nupowaku (31), a six foot plus Lagosian who studied law until creative urges drove him into the arms of animation art and comic strips.

"Lots of kids are hooked on MTV and don't know anything about their culture. We as Nigerians, our fathers were kings, our mothers warriors. Everybody talks about Churchill and (Napoleon) Bonaparte. Where are our own heroes?"

Hoping to inject TV-watching youth with a sense of history, Nupowako conceived a comics series which includes The

Legend of Moremi, the tale of early settlers from Saudi Arabia in the Nigerian town of Ile Ife, the oldest Yoruba town.

This is a fabled world where forest demons live and boys listen as their mothers recount stories of bravery and conquest. In the same volume Nupowaku tackles contemporary Lagos in *Secrets of Allen Avenue*.

Based on an actual street in Ikeja, the Lagos state capital and part of today's

metropolis, Allen Avenue is home to Linus the gun runner, The Orchid of Sin (where bar girls leave customers "fully satisfied"), and other sleazy characters besides.

"It used to be called 'cocaine avenue'," Nupowaku says, referring to the Ikeja street, and his fictional version. "The good, the bad, the ugly, people with financial clout, banks; we want to chronicle how different facets of Nigerian life interweave."

What emerged is a world he calls "Tarantinoesque", after Quentin Tarantino, director of *Pulp Fiction* (1994).

The comics at the Lagos carnival tackle anything from futuristic fantasy to questions of ethnicity and identity. Most sport a racy style pitched at young readers of between 10 and 25 years old.

What would Nigeria look like in 2145 AD? Nupowaku's ACE Comics risks a guess in *Naija Hardcore*, with its totalitar-

ian but orderly world where Lagos's yellow Molue taxi buses are jet-powered and fly, but policemen still take bribes.

In other series, characters are rescued from desperate and often typically Nigerian crises by the intervention of super humans, as if nothing else could save the day. Pandora includes two such stories.

Aisha, an orphan, is a computer sales lady to her friends but morphs after hours into a Nigerian Lara Croft – a fearless street-fighter with exposed abdomen, a spandex suit, mask and gun. In *S.I.E.G.E.*, also in Pandora's story box, police commissioner Chiduem Okoro's daughter is kidnapped in Nigeria's oil rich Port Harcourt, until a flying

hero snatches her from the armed gang.

They may resemble the Ninja Turtles, but are far from mere fiction: kidnappings in the Niger Delta around Port Harcourt grab headlines here every other day. Nigeria's brutal civil war also gets a mention in Kenway Oforeh's *Kinetic*.

It is the story of a troubled young man whose father had been a soldier in a "civil strife" in 1967 (the secessionist war in Biafra that claimed a million lives). He saves passengers in a hijacked Lagos public bus from murderous robbers by invoking supernatural powers inherited from his father, the retired major.

Ofore (30) never mentions Biafra, the name given to the eastern part of Nigeria by Igbo secessionists, some of whom still campaign for independence today. Also, he calls Nigeria a "marriage of convenience" because he believes the country actually contains numerous distinct nations, united merely for the sake of convenience by British colonial rulers.

But by building into his narrative a character with roots in the Igbo east, Ofore feels he is doing his bit for integration and tolerance.

"The trouble with this country is that most people don't know much about each other. If I tell people my middle name is Afam, short for Afamefuna, most of them will not know it is Igbo. The best way to educate people is to excite them; once I can excite them, I can educate them," Ofore says.

"We have too many Yorubas in this country. Too many Igbos and Hausas. We don't have enough Nigerians." Sales of *Kinetic* are still modest, and like Nupowaku, Ofore craves proper funding to increase his printing run and quality.

In this vast market where distribution channels are largely informal and artists rely on street vendors and a

From **Secrets of Allen Avenue** to **June 12**, a new breed of comics is giving young Nigerian readers a fresh take on what their country is about and what it could become





handful of bookshops to sell their work, few comics sell more than 2 000 at a time. But if a story is strong enough, it will find a way of being told, even at huge cost. Arguably the most ambitious project in recent years has been a graphic novel by Abraham Oshoko (28) which documents events around the 1993 presidential election in Nigeria.

*June 12, The Struggle for Power in Nigeria* shows how a northern political élite, led by the former Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, pressurised the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida ("IBB" as he is known) into annulling the results.

Despite promises he would hand over to civilian rule in August that year, IBB allowed the election results to be annulled after it

became clear a Yoruba, the business magnate Moshood Abiola, had won. Five more years of military dictatorship followed.

The story has been told, but never in graphic form. Oshoko, who did the research, story and drawing, calls it a "non-fiction work of art".

"People, even elderly people, read it now and can't believe that all this happened. It is a warning to African leaders: whatever you do will be recorded."

Will audiences in Johannesburg or New York one day watch full-length animated movies produced by the likes of Oshoko, Nupowako and Ofore? Or will the soap opera-style video movies produced in their thousands in Nollywood, the vast local film industry, continue to dominate?

"Abroad, comics and animation is a legitimate medium of expression," says Nupowako. "Japanese and Europeans are very serious about their comics. In the third world people still sometimes see comics as a kiddy medium." Institutional support is also sometimes lacking.

Ofore, a former psychology student, had "never seen an invoice before" when he started his comics business, and had to teach himself business skills.

And then there's the funding hurdle, which often means comics like *Naija Hardcore*, *Pandora* and *Kinetic* remain paper-bound. The medium has its advantages, Nupowako believes. "It makes for muscular mental athletics. Comics have a way of igniting the mind." 📖

# Daniel Makokera

## Keeping his "Eye on Africa"





Issaka K Souaré

# Journey to Eldorado

Leaving their home countries behind, two young men follow in the footsteps of fellow Africans who have gone in search of a better life in Europe. **Issaka K Souaré** joins their journey as he highlights the business of migration

I am writing these words from Gao, in the northeast of Mali, where I went for field research. Gao is closer to Algeria than to Bamako, which is 1 250km further south. Our bus departed from Bamako, from where we travelled 22 hours uninterrupted to reach our destination.

Mohamed caught my attention when he asked if I was “also” going to Algeria. I became interested in this 21-year-old young man as we spoke the same language and he revealed to me that he came from N’Zérékoré, the capital of the southern region of Guinea, where I was born and grew up. His parents still live there. He was going to take another bus in Gao that would take him to the Algerian border and then another one to the capital of Algeria – he didn’t know the city’s name.

My “young brother” hoped to work in Algeria for some time and continue his journey to Europe. He did not know how long it would take him to get to his final destination, nor did he know what conditions awaited him in Algeria. With just seven years of formal education, Mohamed didn’t even know anyone in

Algeria. He only had the telephone number of the brother of a friend, who assured him in Bamako that everything had been arranged for him in Algiers. He never spoke to the friend’s brother himself, but he was determined and had some money he had saved from working in his father’s shop. His mother had also given him something for the trip.

I call my other friend Camara. He is a 26-year-old Malian national from the south-eastern region of Sikasso. He didn’t tell me how much money he had, but he shares that he was a farmer and never had any formal education. He claimed he spoke a little French, acquired during a two-year stay in neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire, but I could not verify this as we only spoke in Bambara. Like Mohamed, Camara did not know anyone in Algeria but they both had the same ambition of finding themselves in Europe one day.

Listening to their stories, I realised they were very naive in their belief that they’ll both easily find jobs in Algeria and then from there travel to Europe. I told them that many Algerians themselves struggle to go abroad in search of employment. I warned

them against the dangers of this adventure and that they may even die en route to their destination, but they had an unshakable belief in Allah – even though the Almighty seems to have failed to save many others like them in the past.

Returning home, should their plans fail, was not an option, they explained.

It became clear that Camara was mainly motivated by the prospect of making money in the European “eldorado” (a place of great abundance), while Mohamed was under some sort of self-imposed family pressure. His elder and younger brothers had both gone abroad too, even though the latter was still somewhere in Mauritania en route to Europe. He said he couldn’t bear the prospect of his brothers returning home in a few years’ time with lots of money and everyone respecting them while he is considered an outcast and an embarrassment to the family.

## The business of migration

Even though the stories of these two young men may not be the same as those of all other would-be immigrants, they are



*Many young people in Africa's big cities dream of leaving the daily struggle for survival.*

largely representative of the motives and conditions of many young Africans who embark on such perilous journeys.

In September 2005, the Spanish border police, armed with riot gear and rubber bullets, faced hundreds of sub-Saharan African emigrants who were prepared to risk their lives to get across the razor wire-topped perimeter fence around Ceuta and Mellila, off the Moroccan coast. More than 500 of them, including pregnant women

and children, were later found abandoned in the Moroccan desert after being expelled from the two enclaves.

A number of theories explain why some of these migrants embark on such risky journeys. The most popular explanations include abject poverty, civil wars, unemployment and lack of opportunity in their countries of origin.

Migration theorists have found a correlation between the level of economic

development and patterns of population mobility in a country. They argue that since a certain threshold of wealth is necessary to enable people to assume the costs and risks of migrating, very poor people generally do not migrate far from their homes.

However, there are social factors that allow even the poor to meet these costs, including taking loans. This is clear in the case of Mohamed.



At times, to quote researchers Giles Mohan and Alfred Zack-Williams, “the decision to migrate is located at the household level where family members see migration as a form of portfolio diversification, which [in their view] spreads risks between various income-generating activities”. It is partly because of this that most of these migrants, or their families, do not appreciate the idea of investing locally, and prefer “investing in migration” which has arguably become an industry in its own right.


In regard to armed conflicts, the fact that most African refugees flee to neighbouring African states and not beyond doesn't give a lot of credence to this assumption. Indeed,

the stories of Mohamed and Camara, coming from two relatively stable countries, support this assertion.

But looking at their stories closely, one could try to explain the phenomenon by looking at two interlinked factors, namely the real or perceived lack of economic opportunities in the country of origin and, most importantly, the idealised image that many migrants have of their would-be destinations as unconditional eldorados. This is not to deny the fact that the gap is in many instances huge between the economic opportunities at home and in their would-be destinations.

In the final analysis, it must be noted that the potential migrants ought to try

to think rationally before embarking on uncertain adventures. Many are seduced by the remittances of their friends or relatives who live abroad, but what is unbeknown to them is that in order for those to do so, they often deprive themselves of any comforts of life, abandon all social activities, live in crowded rooms and reduce their life to a cycle of work and sleep, or what the French popularly call *métro-boulot-dodo* (a life of train-work-sleep).

The onus lies with African governments to do more to avoid losing the future generations of their countries. Who knows, many of those living abroad in precarious situations might be encouraged to return home. 

*A migrant after arriving at Las Vistas Beach in the town of Los Cristianos in the Canary Island of Tenerife, Spain, early on Sunday, February 15, 2009. About 78 African migrants made it to the Spanish shores in a small wooden boat.*

Photo Picturenet



# Africa pursuit: test your **knowledge**

- Q1:** What is the name of the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court?
- Q2:** Who is the presidential candidate of the new South African political party Cope?
- Q3:** In which country is the former Chadian president Hissein Habre living in exile?
- Q4:** Who is the interim prime minister of Guinea Bissau?
- Q5:** Where is Mingingo island?
- Q6:** Who is Vital Kamerhe?
- Q7:** Who is the current chair of the African Union?
- Q8:** Who is the minister of finance of Zimbabwe?
- Q9:** Where is the Copperbelt?
- Q10:** Who has the nickname "TGV"?



**Clue (Q3)** Saly beach is in the same country.



**Clue (Q9)** The Copperbelt is in the same country as this popular destination.

**Answers:** A1: Luis Moreno-Ocampo A2: Mvume Dandala A3: Senegal A4: Carlos Gomes Júnior A5: In Lake Victoria A6: Former speaker of parliament of the DRC A7: Muammar Ghaddafi A8: Tendai Biti A9: In Zambia A10: Andry Rajoelina, in reference to the French high-speed train the TGV

# african images

Pictures from our readers





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2. Women in Zinder, Niger
3. Coffee ceremony, Addis Ababa
4. Bandiagara, Mali
5. Fishing in Mozambique



Nadia Ahmadou

# Spare those dollars

The so-called *per-diem* syndrome has come to plague the way conferences and seminars are run in Africa, writes **Nadia Ahmadou**



2006 Summit in Banjul.

A **PER DIEM** can be defined as payment made to individuals to cover costs incurred in attending a conference, meeting or workshop away from their country of residence. The payment of per diems has become habitual for attendees of conferences and workshops continent-wide and amount to hundreds of dollars made available daily to participants. This practice, initially adopted as a courtesy to participants coming from a distance, has developed into what can only be termed 'the Per Diem Syndrome' on the continent today.

The terminology serves to illustrate the fact that per diems have, for some, been turned into salary augmenting ventures. Some would indeed argue that Africans in leadership positions who attend these conferences really have no need for this top-up in salary, and that the money could be better put to use in our

poor countries. These hundreds of dollars could for example be used to pay school fees and/or medical costs for a good percentage of poor people. However, politicians and government officials aren't the only guilty parties in this money making venture.

Both local and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) further this practice by using per diems as an incentive to secure the participation of our dignified leaders in their various activities. Shameful as it is, many delegates will not attend an event to share their knowledge on a subject matter unless assured that they would receive per diem as compensation. CSOs, which mostly operate towards furthering noble causes such as adequate healthcare and education for all, waste tremendous amounts of money towards entertaining the per diem syndrome. Amounts that, yet again, could contribute towards feeding

a number of starving children, clothing others, and buying school material for dozens more. Rather, this money is invested into inviting a dignified person to come and speak at a conference – sometimes to discuss the cause of poor, needy and suffering Africans. Sadly, CSO donor parties exacerbate this distasteful practice; as they encourage spending the large amounts of money donated to provide a better livelihood to the poor people of our continent. This pressure under which CSOs are put to spend the donated money allows for excesses like providing excessive per diems for conference participants. Nowhere is it stated that the money be spent towards the cause the donor represents – as long as it can be accounted for as being part of a conference or other workshop themed, of course, at ending the plight of the suffering African.

This syndrome, it can be argued, is destructive to the qualitative agenda and institutional framework that is being put in place to ensure good governance and the respect for democratic principles. As members of civil society, as consultants, as administrative staff, as political leadership and as the donor community, we need to address this troubling issue. If people are committed to ending famine, poverty, illiteracy and all the numerous afflictions from which the continent suffer, then they must begin to represent this commitment beyond statements and speeches at workshops and conferences. It is their responsibility, before accepting bonuses for attendance at far away events, to re-think the use of these funds and come up with different ways in which they may be spent towards reaching the goals they believe in and have set for themselves. 