

VIEWS AND ANALYSES FROM THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

ISSUE 13 • 2011

# the african.org

www.the-african.org • THE ALTERNATE-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES



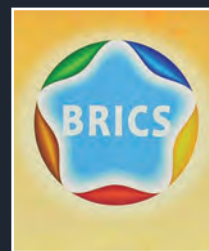
## The price of protest



**THE  
MYTH OF  
BIN LADEN**



**NO ARAB  
SPRING  
FOR  
ALGERIA**



**THE  
CHALLENGE  
OF BUILDING  
BRICS**



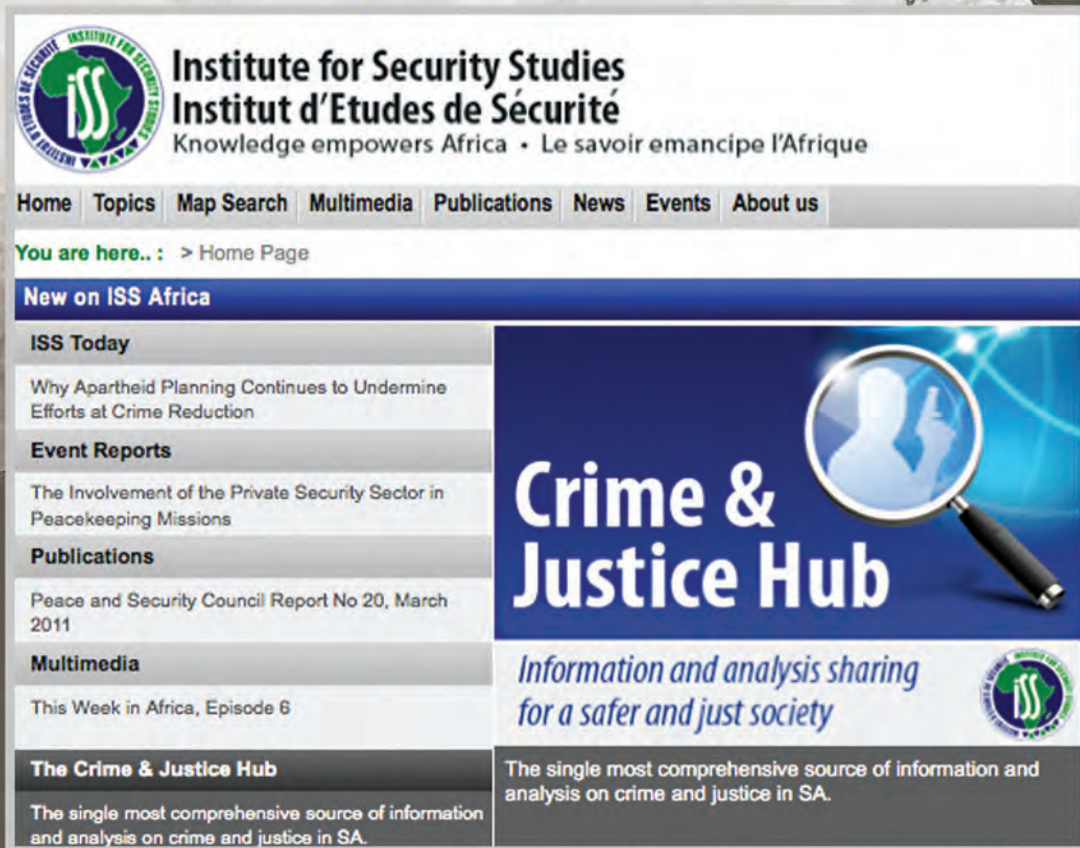
9 772073 495007

Angola K500 • Botswana P20.00 • Côte D'Ivoire Cfa3 000 • Democratic Republic of the Congo Cfa3 000 • Ethiopia B20.00  
Gambia D50.00 • Ghana C4.00 • Kenya Sh300.00 • Malawi K5 000 • Mozambique R29.00  
Namibia \$29.00 • Nigeria N500.00 • Tanzania Sh7 000 • Uganda Sh7 000 • Zambia K15 000 • Zimbabwe R29.00  
South Africa R29.00 (incl VAT) • UK £4.00 • US \$6.00 • Europe €6.95





# Institute for Security Studies



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). At the top left is the ISS logo, which features a green and blue circular emblem with the letters 'ISS' and the text 'INSTITUT D'ETUDES DE SECURITE' and 'INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES' around it. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Institute for Security Studies' and 'Institut d'Etudes de Sécurité', followed by the tagline 'Knowledge empowers Africa • Le savoir emancipe l'Afrique'. Below this is a navigation bar with links: Home, Topics, Map Search, Multimedia, Publications, News, Events, and About us. A breadcrumb trail indicates 'You are here.. : > Home Page'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a blue header 'New on ISS Africa' and lists several items: 'ISS Today' with the article 'Why Apartheid Planning Continues to Undermine Efforts at Crime Reduction', 'Event Reports' with 'The Involvement of the Private Security Sector in Peacekeeping Missions', 'Publications' with 'Peace and Security Council Report No 20, March 2011', 'Multimedia' with 'This Week in Africa, Episode 6', and 'The Crime & Justice Hub' with the description 'The single most comprehensive source of information and analysis on crime and justice in SA.'. The right column features a large blue banner for the 'Crime & Justice Hub' with a magnifying glass icon over a person's silhouette. Below the banner, it says 'Information and analysis sharing for a safer and just society' and includes the ISS logo. At the bottom of this column, it states 'The single most comprehensive source of information and analysis on crime and justice in SA.'

**Institute for Security Studies**  
**Institut d'Etudes de Sécurité**  
Knowledge empowers Africa • Le savoir emancipe l'Afrique

Home Topics Map Search Multimedia Publications News Events About us

You are here.. : > Home Page

**New on ISS Africa**

**ISS Today**  
Why Apartheid Planning Continues to Undermine Efforts at Crime Reduction

**Event Reports**  
The Involvement of the Private Security Sector in Peacekeeping Missions

**Publications**  
Peace and Security Council Report No 20, March 2011

**Multimedia**  
This Week in Africa, Episode 6

**The Crime & Justice Hub**  
The single most comprehensive source of information and analysis on crime and justice in SA.

**Crime & Justice Hub**  
Information and analysis sharing for a safer and just society

The single most comprehensive source of information and analysis on crime and justice in SA.

**For everything on African human security  
by Africans, visit [www.issafrica.org](http://www.issafrica.org)**

**The ISS, Knowledge Empowers Africa**

# Dear Reader...

**F**ormer Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and his supporters probably never in their wildest dreams thought it would happen: French military helicopters bombing his residence in Abidjan until he finally relented, emerging humiliated, hands in the air, from his cellar hide-out.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said this 'sent a strong signal' to other dictators who want to cling to power.

Gbagbo stubbornly refused to accept the results of the November 2010 presidential elections and was warned many times by his peers and the UN that he risked being removed by force.

Finally on 11 April, French forces with a UN mandate did just that.

A few weeks on, Libya's Col. Muammar Gaddafi, branded as the villain in Libya's civil war, is being bombed daily and hunted down at his probable hide-out in an underground bunker in Tripoli.

Africans have since the beginning of the year witnessed astonishing force being meted out against the pariahs of the international community.

Where talks and legal mechanisms like the International Criminal Tribunals used to be the order of the day, these scenes of violent intervention are today a sad indictment on the mediators of this world.

In his article in this issue on the future scenarios for Libya, Issaka Souaré writes that the African Union roadmap for Libya is the only solution to the Libyan crisis. The stalemate in the fighting between Libyan forces and anti-Gaddafi rebels is evident.

However, many would argue that Col. Gaddafi is not someone to be negotiated with, given his slaughter of his own people and the havoc he has wreaked across the continent as he supported rebel groups and insurgents.

Just before going to print, news came of the death of South African photo-journalist Anton Hammerl – a shock to all of those who believed the assurances of the Libyan regime that Hammerl was being held in Libya but was alive and well.

During a press conference the South African minister of foreign affairs Maite Nkoana-Mashabane unashamedly accused Gaddafi, his son and advisors of lying to the South African government about Hammerl's whereabouts.

In both Côte d'Ivoire and Libya, the use of force could probably be justified.

After all, as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, military intervention brought an end to the suffering of the people of Abidjan and has permitted the legitimate leader, Allasane Ouattara to finally run the country.

Is it naïve to wonder if there was another way out?

Where mediation – however slow and difficult, sometimes succeeding only after many lives are lost – managed to dislodge dictators like Mobutu SeseSeko and Charles Taylor, it is now up to the stealth bombers.

Painful and difficult negotiations managed to convince North and South Sudan to agree to a truce in 2005 and to finally split – the divorce, incidentally, to be officialised on 9 July.

Today, these diplomats and former

heads of state who managed to convince the belligerents to make peace elsewhere are standing on the sidelines watching the bombs rain down, shattering infrastructure, destroying homes and offices, causing civilians to flee from the 'collateral damage'.

Diplomacy has failed.

In both Cote d'Ivoire and Libya the AU counted on heads of state believed to have sufficient clout to convince their peers to step down for the mediation efforts.

It has not proved to be successful.

Paul-Simon Handy writes that Africans are searching for new ways to show their dissatisfaction with unpopular regimes. For now, protesters have been met with a show of force from leaders in countries like Uganda, Botswana, Swaziland and Burkina Faso.

The search for peaceful transitions and skillful mediators is still on.

**Liesl Louw-Vaudran**  
[llouw@issafrica.org](mailto:llouw@issafrica.org)



# In this issue



8



14

## 5 Newswatch

Senegal, Ethiopia, nuclear threat

## 6 Newswatch

Zimbabwe

## 7 Upcoming events

## 8 Cover Feature: Popular protest

Analysis

## 11 Swaziland

Mass marches fail

## 14 Uganda

Guns and bullets



29



32



**17 South Africa**  
Service delivery protests

**20 South Africa**  
Police brutality

**23 North Africa**  
Talk to Gaddafi

**26 North Africa**  
Waiting for Algeria

**29 Bin Laden**  
Africa's Al Qaeda continues

**32 Nigeria**  
Goodluck wins



**35 Nigeria**  
Foreign policy challenges

**38 Business**  
Understanding Brics

**40 Business**  
Gateways to Africa

**43 Books**  
Interview

**46 Books**  
Review

**48 Obituary**  
Henri Boshoff



**Publishers:** Mail & Guardian Media, Grosvenor  
Corner, 195 Jan Smuts Ave, Rosebank,  
Johannesburg, 2193, South Africa  
**Tel:** +27 11 250 7300 **Fax:** +27 11 250 7502

#### Editor

Liesl Louw-Vaudran

#### Editorial Board

Paul-Simon Handy  
Hennie van Vuuren  
Issaka Souare  
Cheryl Hendriks  
Andrews Atta-Assamoah  
David Zounmenou  
Sandra Adong Oder  
Lansana Gberie

#### Copy Editor

Sasha Evans

#### Proofreader

Mandi Smallhorne

#### Production Manager

Trudy-Lee Rutkowski

#### Design

Colleen Mulrooney

#### Head of Sales

Adriana Botha

#### Publisher for M&G Media

Anastacia Martin

#### Cover image

Morne Schaap



Institute for Security Studies:  
Block C, Brooklyn Court,  
Veale Street,  
New Muckleneuk,  
Pretoria/Tshwane 0181  
Tel: +27-12-346-9500/2

Copyright: M&G Media Ltd and **the-african.org**. No part of this magazine may be reproduced in any form without written consent of the publishers.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed are the responsibility of the authors and not those of The Institute for Security Studies, its Council, Trustees, any funder or sponsor of the ISS or M&G Media Ltd.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DISTRIBUTION

Helen Chanda

Tel: +27 12 346 9500

email: hchanda@issafrica.org



## Contributors



**Petrus de Kock** is a senior researcher at the South African Institute for International Affairs. His work focuses on the social impact and conflict dynamics related to such operations. Dr. de Kock comments widely in the media on African and Middle Eastern political and economic dynamics as well.



**Anneli Botha** is a senior researcher in the ISS International Crime in Africa Programme and a specialist on terrorism and religious extremist movements. Anneli is currently registered for a PhD titled: 'Radicalisation and suicide terrorism in North Africa: From a political socialisation perspective'.



**Issaka K. Souaré** is a senior researcher in the African Conflict Prevention Programme (ACPP) of the ISS. Dr Souaré has worked extensively on issues of governance and political instability, particularly Africa's international relations and unconstitutional changes of government, with special focus on West and North Africa



**Lansana Gberie** is a senior researcher in the Addis Abeba office of the ISS. Dr. Gberie has written extensively on conflict, conflict management, human rights and peacebuilding in Africa, including, most recently (as editor) *Rescuing a Fragile State: Sierra Leone 2002-2008* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2009).



**Paul-Simon Handy** is Research Director of the ISS. Paul-Simon studied Political Science and International Relations at the universities of Yaounde, Berlin and Leipzig where he did his PhD in 2005. He has published on issues related to governance, state fragility as well as the Africa policy of the EU, France and Germany.



**Dianna Games**, a regular columnist on African business issues, is vice president of The Africa Advisors, Global Pacific & Partners. She is also honorary CEO of the Nigeria-South Africa business chamber.

## The General Delegation of Alliance Française in Southern Africa



French is already spoken by half the population of Africa

Trade with francophone African countries is fast developing, thereby increasing the need to speak French in commercial, medical, engineering, educational, tourist and other sectors....

>>> We are the largest and oldest French language learning centre in South Africa  
**Teaching French is our main business.**

>>> Our teachers are trained and experienced, most of them are native-French speakers, we have the widest variety of courses at all levels at highly-competitive prices for adults and children.  
Our classes, scheduled at various times during the day, never more than 15 students to ensure a **personalised**, student-centered experience that gets you **communicating** in no time.

>>> As a cultural centre, we are truly a **gateway** to the French language and culture.

[www.alliance.org.za](http://www.alliance.org.za) | [info@alliance.org.za](mailto:info@alliance.org.za) | 011 646 11 69 | 17 Lower Park Drive - Crn Kerry Road- Parkview 2122

Cape town - Durban - Johannesburg - Port Elizabeth - Pretoria - Soweto - Stellenbosch - Gaborone - Maseru - Mbabane  
Lusaka - Bosmont - Bulawayo - Harare - Potchefstroom - Vaal Triangle - Pietermaritzburg - Mitchell's Plain- Bloemfontein

# Zuma determined to solve Zim crisis

Zimbabwe's future hangs on a credible next election. It is important, therefore, that all parties agree on the rules they are to be bound by.

Zanu-PF, concerned about an ailing leader, would have preferred elections to be held this year under the current constitution, but it seems clear that this will not happen in 2011.

The MDC and other opposition groups do not believe the environment is conducive to free and fair elections and want the provisions of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), the political compromise negotiated after the violence and contested elections of March-June 2008, to be implemented before any new elections.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ's increasingly assertive behaviour in relation to Zimbabwe's political crisis is commendable.

At the SADC Troika Summit, held in Livingstone, Zambia, on 3 April 2011, SADC's growing impatience with Zimbabwe's political parties' inability to resolve their disputes was evident.

The Summit issued a statement noting "with grave concern the polarisation of the political environment" and the "resurgence of violence, arrests and intimidation", and resolved: that there must be an end to the violence and harassment; that stakeholders should implement the provisions of the GPA and complete the necessary steps for holding an election, including the finalisation of the constitutional amendment and the referendum; a roadmap for elections must be developed; and, last but not least, that a three-member panel should be appointed to join the facilitation team and work with the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee to ensure the implementation of the GPA.

President Mugabe remained defiant, stating that "Any organisation, body or group of persons that is established by the

Troika or SADC should not prescribe to us what to do", and "we are a sovereign state and as a sovereign state we don't accept any interference; even our neighbours should not tell us what to do" (cited in *The Zimbabwean*). Nevertheless, negotiators from all three parties met soon thereafter to finally carve out that elusive roadmap.

The draft roadmap calls for, among other things, the lifting of sanctions; a new constitution; and media and electoral reforms (new media boards and new ZEC representatives). It also calls for respect for the rule of law: an end to violence; public statements by the service chiefs that they will accept election results; redeployment of the military to the barracks and an Act governing Intelligence operations. Finally, it also calls for a Human Rights Commission Bill and the appointment of a Anti-Corruption Commission.

Not unsurprisingly, there was little agreement on the roadmap between the political parties. The major areas of contention are:

- The new recruitment of Election Commission staff and the duration of observation by external election observers;
- Whether service chiefs should make a public statement that they will uphold the constitution (Zanu-PF asserts that this is not an election matter);
- The role of the military in politics;
- Whether there is violence, and who is the major perpetrator.

But these disputes seem rather trivial (although the security sector has always been a sticking point) and not sufficient reason not to come to an agreement on the roadmap.

South African president Jacob Zuma appears determined to ensure the resolution of this conflict. This is all the more important given the violence that engulfed Côte d'Ivoire after that country's election results were disputed earlier this year.

Zimbabwe shows signs of the same inclination if Zanu-PF were to lose. This is why the roadmap is important. It is also important that some exit clauses be included in this roadmap, which at present does not seem to be the case.

What will SADC do if Zanu-PF continues to stall on ensuring the implementation of the GPA and the creation of a more peaceful, free and fair electoral environment?

SADC has very few enforcement mechanisms, and even fewer that it is willing to use.

SADC is not in favour of sanctions against Zimbabwe and has been lobbying for the international community to lift the sanctions. Instead, SADC utilises the power of persuasion, but this has proved insufficient in the past. Will Zuma, as lead mediator this time, be able to yield better results?

What might assist Zuma is that the space for Zanu-PF's manoeuvring seems to be closing. The political party relied on its liberation credentials to sway opinion in a SADC Organ that seemed split between the new and the old guard.

If one looks carefully at the make-up of SADC's Troika Summit then President Mugabe's former allies are in short supply, while those who are currently present are tired of the shenanigans.

The Organ needs to ensure that all its members reach agreement on a way forward for Zimbabwe and that they do not renege mid-stream on its implementation. If there is no adequate compliance by Zimbabwe's parties, any elections held must be considered invalid and not be legitimised by SADC's presence as observers. Non-acceptance of election results appears to be SADC's only leverage.

SADC, an organisation tasked with creating a more secure and enabling environment for the region's people, must now be firm and lead the way.

*Cheryl Hendricks*

## The beginning of the end for Wade?

On Friday 18 March, Senegalese justice minister Sheikh Tidiane Sy announced that a coup against the government of President Abdoulaye Wade had been thwarted.

A few days after Sy's message, communications minister Moustapha Guirassy denied the coup allegations, stating that there was not enough evidence to support the government's concerns.

The alleged plotters were not members of the army, as one might expect, but members of the public – civil society figures and political activists who oppose the regime. They were released after at least 4 000 people assembled to march on Wade's palace in protest.

Wade's reaction could at best be seen as a manifestation of his fear of being toppled. It is clear that the regime in Dakar is growing very anxious about the ongoing revolutions across North Africa, given the country's precarious political and socioeconomic context.

Wade has been in power since 2000 and has had the constitution amended to allow him to run again for the presidency.

He recently declared this intention publicly, and he has also positioned his son favourably to take over the mantle of leadership in the event of his death.

If Wade insists on standing for re-election or attempts to push through his son, he might be faced with popular upheaval. The electoral process is likely to be flawed, and the ingredients for a protest movement to take root in Senegal are very much in place.

## Addressing nuclear security

On 12 April 2010, US President Barack Obama hosted the first Nuclear Security Summit to address an unprecedented threat – that of terrorists or criminals gaining access to nuclear material.

In an expert report released exactly one year later, the Arms Control Association and the Partnership for Global Security have found that a number of nations have made significant progress, but it warns that nuclear material security is a long-term challenge that requires sustained funding and an ongoing global commitment.

On 1-2 February 2011, the ISS hosted an experts' workshop on 'Securing Africa's Nuclear Resources'. Participants agreed that, given the developmental benefits of nuclear and other radioactive materials for Africa, there

is a need to commit to the safety and security of such materials and sources.

They also agreed that this should be done while ensuring the continued delivery of the benefits that nuclear materials and related applications provide, for example, radionuclides intended for use in life-saving medical applications.

Importantly, South Africa, the only non-nuclear weapon state to have produced its own stockpile of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU), is leading the transition to produce radioisotope with Lightly Enriched Uranium (LEU) – which poses less of a security threat – rather than HEU.

In 2012, leaders will gather again – this time in the Republic of Korea – to take stock of the post-Washington work and set new goals for nuclear security.

## Ethiopia defends dam in the Nile

Recently Ethiopia announced its plans to build its controversial 'Great Millennium Dam'.

The dam will be built along the River Nile, about 40km from the Sudanese border. It is set to be one of the biggest dams in Africa, with a capacity to produce 5 250 megawatts of electricity.

Following Ethiopia's announcement, Egyptian irrigation minister Hussein Al Atfy requested the Ethiopian government to provide technical and environmental studies for the project.

Al Atfy said that Egypt would examine the studies to determine any adverse effects of the dam on Egypt's Nile-water quota. He warned that his country would seek support from the international community or even consider military action if Ethiopia failed to reply.

However, the Ethiopian minister of water resources refused permission for Egyptian officials to visit the proposed site of the dam.

During a presentation at the ISS in Pretoria, Ethiopian minister for

government communications Dr Bereket Simon said that Ethiopia's neighbours would benefit from the dam. South Sudan, for example, will be able to use it for irrigation.

The dam is being built against the background of continuous dispute over the use of the Nile river.

On 14 May 2010, after eleven years of negotiations between the Nile Basin riparian states, four of the upper Nile Basin riparian countries (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania) signed the new Nile water-sharing agreement known as the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) in Entebbe, Uganda.

On 28 February 2011, Burundi became the sixth signatory. Upon its ratification by the respective legislatures of the signatory countries, the CFA will be binding to all members of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI).

The Nile Basin Commission will be established upon ratification of CFA instrument by a majority of six member states. Egypt, however, has rejected the CFA.



## news round-up

Upcoming events

**23-30 June**

### 17th Ordinary Summit of the African Union, Malabo

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea is currently chair of the AU, whose upcoming Summit of Heads of State will be held in Malabo, the country's capital.

Obiang Nguema is a controversial figure who has been in power for 31 years and is widely criticised for the lack of democratisation in his country.

During a visit to Zimbabwe earlier this year, Equatorial Guinea's state secretary in charge of national security, Mr Juan Antonio Bibang Nchuchuma, said preparations for the Summit were on course.

"We are very busy and, as you know, this is the first time we have hosted the AU Summit in 42 years of independence. The government and people of Equatorial Guinea are very excited. We have prepared a new city for the Summit," he said to local journalists.

**9 July**

### Independence Day, South Sudan

Following the successful referendum for independence on 9 January this year, South Sudan will officially become an independent state on 9 July.

Lavish celebrations are planned for this day, with around 30 heads of state invited to the event, reports the *Sudan Tribune* news website.

Preparations are being made to receive more than 1,500 foreign dignitaries in Juba, Africa's newest national capital.

South Sudan's independence is the final step in a peace process between North and South Sudan following the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

While many observers are optimistic about the future of South Sudan as an independent state, many issues are still outstanding, including the sharing of oil resources and a final decision on Abeyi, the contested region on the border between North and South Sudan.

**24 July**

### Elections, Tunisia

Tunisia's interim president Fouad Mebazaa announced that new elections would take place in July for the first time since the overthrowing of President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January.

Mr Mebazaa said in a televised address that voting for a council of representatives to rewrite the constitution would be held by 24 July, according to BBC radio.

Analysts are concerned about the power vacuum in Tunis following Ben Ali's departure.

The interim prime minister, Mohammed Ghannouchi, resigned from his position in mid-May, intensifying the political confusion in the country.

#### Other important dates:

12 June: World Day Against Child Labour

16 June: Day of the African Child

20 June: World Refugee Day ☐



## The-african.org is distributed in:

South Africa  
Kenya  
Zimbabwe  
Botswana  
Zambia  
Ghana  
Ethiopia

## To advertise contact

Racquel Oliphant  
M&G Media

Grosvenor Corner • 195 Jan Smuts Ave  
Rosebank • Johannesburg • 2193

Tel +27 11 250 7564

Fax +27 11 250 7502

Email: racquelo@mg.co.za

*Bruised but not beaten. Ugandan opposition party members are sprayed with coloured water during demonstrations in Kampala this year.*

# Protests in Africa: a short sociology of anger

Looking at the various recent manifestations of ‘people power’ in Africa, **Paul-Simon Handy** believes it might indicate an altogether new political landscape.

**T**here is a slow but fundamental change taking place in the mechanics of power alternation in Africa. It is visible in an increasing number of countries and at all levels – though not necessarily always at the same pace.

Before, *coups d'état* and autocratic rule were the most common ways to access and hold on to power in the continent. Today, even if *coups d'état* have not completely disappeared from the political grammar of African politics, they are certainly on the decline.

Where democracy is denied, disenchanted populations are no longer passively standing by. New actors are

emerging to facilitate the transition of power, including the youthful ‘dotcom’ generation.

Meanwhile, both the AU and the Regional Economic Communities are trying to position themselves as supra-national entrepreneurs of democracy and good governance.

### People's revolution a ‘disguised coup’?

The popular protests that have captured the most interest recently were those that unfolded in Tunisia and later in Egypt. Widely unpredicted by analysts and security agencies, the magnitude and outcomes of these revolutions came as a surprise even for

their own main actors.

In the past few decades, the relative success of North Africa in terms of human development has made those countries into African success stories.

However, their autocracies’ modernisation policies in the areas of education and infrastructure development have proved no match for high unemployment, rising food prices and the ostentation of an increasingly corrupt elite.

The surprising concomitant factors that make revolution possible – irremediably corrupt government, alienated elites and middle classes, a broad-based popular mobilisation spanning ethnic, religious and social



The reasons the Libyan protests took a violent turn are to be found in the nature of the Libyan regime and the perceived difficulty of reforming it from within

divides, and international abstention from intervention – unfurled a dynamic that led to the forced departure of presidents Zine Al Abedine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak.

Although the military played an important role in toppling the Tunisian and Egyptian governments, they appear to have captured the revolutions to the degree that some observers speak of a ‘disguised coup’.

In any case, one thing is clear – revolution does not necessarily lead to democratisation.

Although for now essentially comprising the Libyan case, a second category of protests is that of armed struggles.

## Regime change Libya-style

In Libya, the population’s attempts to contest the regime’s undemocratic practices led to fierce repression and a formal armed rebellion. Unlike in Tunisia and Egypt, the uprisings in Libya immediately displayed the artificial character of a state that is a recent creation imposed upon a substantially clan-based society.

If the Libyan situation appears unique in Africa today, it is more a reflection of the means used by the insurgents than of any supposed peculiarity of Libyan society. But the reasons the Libyan protests took a violent turn are to be found in the nature of the Libyan regime and the perceived difficulty of reforming it from within. Also, unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, the Libyan army is not strong enough to force the leader to leave.

## Reform without toppling the king

In some countries, population calls for reforms are centred less around the institutional form of the state than around the widening of civil liberties and the deepening of systems of accountability. This is mostly the case in monarchies, and in particular the Moroccan monarchy, which displays substantial differences to that of the monarchy in, for example, Swaziland.

In Morocco, the king and his government have understood that they need to accelerate reforms if they want to stay in power. The capacity of the Moroccan elite to reinvent a social contract that maintains the monarchy but provides the parliament and the government with stronger powers will decide the success of the Moroccan transition. Failure to do so, and lack of courage in proactive reforms, may well erode the people’s trust in the monarchic institution and generate an unpredictable dynamic like that in Tunisia or Egypt.

So far, the biggest difference between

# North Africa missed the boat

In the early 1990s, Africa’s autocratic regimes went into a transition process that became known as ‘democratisation’. Facilitated by the end of the Cold War and pushed by Western countries that had no more interest in supporting increasingly illegitimate governments, the democratisation process induced institutional reforms that were requested by Africa’s citizens.

Elections became an important feature in the political landscape, the space for political freedoms widened and the market economy made great strides into centrally controlled economies.

While sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world (central and eastern Europe, for example) were going through this people-driven transition, the northern part of the continent remained widely immune to what had been termed the ‘third wave’ of democratisation.

Because of the strategic importance of the region – substantial oil and gas reserves, closeness to Europe and the threat of migration, as well as the real or perceived threat of political Islam – Western countries provided massive support to autocratic and personalised regimes that not only seemed stable but

also appeared to give credence to basic assumptions of modernisation theory.

Recent events in North Africa in a sense indicate that the region is catching up with the rest of the continent and the world. Interestingly, these events come at a time when sub-Saharan democratisation processes are being taken hostage by largely undemocratic hybrid regimes that have managed to manipulate the reforms to their advantage.

These and other developments are bringing the continent into a new phase of transition, carried out by disenfranchised populations.

the revolutionary form of protests and the Moroccan style remains that Moroccan protesters do not seem to be driven by any ambition to topple the king.

### In need of better services

In a growing number of countries, the incapacity of long-ruling governments to deliver basic public services has sparked widespread protest from increasingly informed and more demanding populations. This form of protest takes place in both democratic and hybrid systems and is generally directed at the perceived corruption of the ruling elites.

### Recent history teaches us that repressing such movements hardly ever solves the root causes of the problem

However, the long-term aim of the protests varies according to the context. In the democratic setting of South Africa, for example, such protests are made alongside institutional mechanisms embedded in the country's legal framework and are not aimed at toppling the government. They are generally spontaneous and based on promises of the liberation ideology. In non-democratic countries like Uganda, Burkina Faso and Swaziland, protests tend to have taken a less spontaneous and more organised form.

Generally, however, the protests are staged by corporatist groups (security agencies, civil society organisations, youth groups) or political parties that challenge the authority and the legitimacy of the government. Protests for service delivery can also be generated by the rising cost of living in countries with high unemployment, as was the case for the so-called food riots in several African countries in 2008 and, more recently, in Mozambique.

Governments generally react with

repressive force to such protests, which they see as intending to erode their legitimacy. But recent history teaches us that repressing such movements hardly ever solves the root causes of the problem, which then generally re-emerge in an even more forceful manner later on.

With the high number of elections planned, 2011 was dubbed 'super-election year' and most analysts expected substantial disruption across the continent. With the exceptions of the Ivorian crisis and the violent protests around the Nigerian re-election of Goodluck Jonathan, the other elections have so far been less disruptive than anticipated.

Even in cases like Benin, where the re-election of the incumbent is seriously suspicious, political actors have used legitimate means to contest the election outcome.

### Believing in elections

However, as the Ivorian crisis demonstrated, elections carry a huge spoiling potential in reforming countries. Citizens are increasingly aware of their governments' attempts to manipulate electoral processes to stay in power.

They generally form broad-based coalitions including civil society organisations and political parties to oppose constitutional changes aimed at removing the term limits or manipulating ballot counts or voter registrations.

### New actors

All these new forms of protests display some common elements, despite their obvious differences in magnitude and in the way governments approach them. While in some areas we see new actors emerging, in others there seems little appreciation of the importance of popular uprisings. In every uprising, of course, the role played by the population is vital – especially the youth, which appears to be the main driver of protest.

A lot has been written about Africa's

'youth bulge', but less is known about how the 'dotcom generation' invents new ways to express its desire for what it considers to be basic rights. Cellphones and the internet are playing an increasing social mobilisation role as Facebook and Twitter make strides into the continent.


Another important driver of the uprisings are the countries' armies. Whether it decides to 'let the prince fall', as in Tunisia and Egypt, or maintain their allegiance for an ailing regime, as in Libya, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, the army almost never stays neutral, primarily because it is concerned about its role in a new dispensation.

Also looking for a role in these protests are regional organisations like ECOWAS and the AU. In North Africa, the absence of a sub-regional organisation to monitor and respond to events has hampered the AU's ability to position itself.

In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the interplay between ECOWAS and the AU proved critical in building international consensus against former president Laurent Gbagbo's electoral hold-up.

However, when popular uprisings lead to a revolution, which is an unconstitutional but legitimate change of government, African regional organisations don't seem to have the right mechanisms to address the situation. But this is admittedly no African peculiarity, as this phenomenon has surprised many actors.

Last but not least, religion seems to have been largely absent as a mobilising tool in all these uprisings, even in North Africa, where the role of political Islam has often been overestimated.

Mass protests and popular uprisings are the indicators of a transformation that is deeply affecting the African continent. It is clear that the governments' response to their people's demands will be key in framing the negotiation of Africa's new social contracts. 



# The kingdom underground

**E**very revolution is different, and only time will tell what will happen in Swaziland.

Shortly after recent pro-democracy demonstrations in the two main cities of Mbabane and Manzini, resignation settled over the landlocked kingdom – particularly in the economic hub of Manzini, the epicentre of the 12 April uprising against King Mswati III, the last absolute monarch in sub-Saharan Africa.

After that day's protests and subsequent crackdown and curfew, there

Efforts to force  
Swaziland's King  
Mswati III to allow  
political opposition  
have so far failed.

**Scott Maxwell** went  
to find out why.

was barely a hint of revolution in the air, much less any sign of one on the streets. But the streets don't tell the whole story of Swaziland's pro-democracy movement.

In Swaziland, there is an underground chain of disparate political action groups linked by a vision of reforming the political system. They seek a negotiated settlement whereby the institutional functions of government – executive, legislative and judicial – are fully and permanently separated.

The cities of Mbabane and Manzini, home to these democracy activists, are situated to the west and east of the Ezulwini Valley, Swaziland's royal heartland, as if flanking the King's grip on power. The tale of these two cities will dictate the direction and eventual outcome of Swaziland's democracy movement, if it should choose to reawaken.



Attempts at organising strikes and protest marches against the Swazi regime have been met with harsh reaction by the police

# Protests

Swaziland

On 18 March 2011, an estimated 7 000 students, teachers, and civil servants took part in protests in the capital of Mbabane, calling on prime minister Sibusiso Dlamini and his cabinet to resign.

## Pay freeze

The demonstrators opposed a series of economic reforms being enacted by the government, most of which are geared towards meeting the conditions for a loan from the International Monetary Fund. The reforms include a pay freeze and retrenchments of civil servants, as well as cuts to public funding for tertiary education.

The March protest provided a launching pad for the 12 April uprising, which purposefully took place on the 38th anniversary of the day when the current King's father, King Sobhuza II, banned political parties and centralised power within the monarchy.

Although the protests were galvanised by financial issues, particularly the King's lavish spending habits, the activists' core demands have always been political.

The present Tinkhundla system of government allows for local representatives working at the behest of the King to take part in the national parliament, but it does not permit the formation of new political parties.

It is this system, along with 2008's Suppression of Terrorism Act No 3 (which gives the government significant leeway in defining opposition groups as terrorist

**The present Tinkhundla system of government allows for local representatives working at the behest of the King to take part in the national parliament, but it does not permit the formation of new political parties**

organisations) that democracy activists seek to overturn.

The democracy movement's headquarters are currently located in a three-story office complex just off the main streets of Manzini. It is in a few hollowed-out offices, containing just a handful of computers and supplies, that leaders from the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL), the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and various student organisations are planning their next move.

## A pro-democracy alliance

This loose affiliation of unionists, pro-democracy activists and church organisations, collaborating under the banner of the Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF), is at first glance an incongruent alliance, but they are diligently working out the mechanics of their revolutionary operation.

As SUDF members explain it, PUDEMO drives the political agenda, while trade

## Silence from the neighbours

As the only country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region that has abolished multiparty democracy, Swaziland's labour unrests, social strife and discontent with the consolidated power of the traditional aristocracy are well known to its regional neighbours.

But South Africa and multilateral institutions like SADC have either ignored Swaziland because of its relative geopolitical insignificance, or they have bought into the Swazi government's line that any change must come slowly from within the system.

The exception was in 1996 when South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe held an emergency meeting to press the King to institute a constitutional review process. Thus a stalemate of sorts persists: while South Africa and regional institutions insist on democratic governance as one of the overarching regional values, there is a remarkable silence on confronting the Swazi government on this issue.

The perceived lack of urgency can be widely interpreted. But the South African government certainly has strategic

leverage in Swaziland because of its dominant position in the SACU; Swaziland's dependence on South Africa for trade; and the pegging of the lilangeni to the rand, which effectively puts South Africa in control of key economic decisions in Swaziland. This situation affords South Africa wide latitude in determining the fate of the Swazi political economy.

Therefore, there exists a window of opportunity for early intervention and preventative diplomacy. This should go beyond the conventional expressions of concern and calls for restraint to robust action. There is no such thing as a sudden crisis, and the SA government needs to develop an effective early-warning mechanism that would provide a basis for policymaking and also allow an early counteracting of negative developments.

A conflict on South Africa's doorstep would certainly pose a risk of spilling over into the country and may be an embarrassment for the current administration, which is clearly finding itself under pressure to focus more on conflict mediation in the SADC region.

*Dimpho Motsamai*





*King Mswati III of Swaziland is widely criticised for his lavish lifestyle while his country is one of the poorest in the world and opposition parties are outlawed.*

unions and student organisations spearhead efforts to strengthen civil society. Each faction is drawn together by the goal of attaining a “multiparty democracy, a transparent and accountable government [...] based on [...] the respect of the will of the people,” as stated in the PUDEMO constitution.

## Still a peaceful movement

The democracy movement in Swaziland has always tried to model its tactics on those of the South African resistance struggle against apartheid. In fact, all the hallmarks of South Africa’s struggle campaigns are evident in Swaziland, including protests, strikes and even its own form of a consciousness movement.

On 6 September 2011, Swaziland’s Independence Day, there are plans for a ‘stay-away’ from work to display solidarity to the cause. At this point the movement has not turned violent, although many activists claim it is getting dangerously close.

One man who flirts with the idea of a violent struggle is Mphandlana Shongwe, the deputy chairperson of the SUDF and self-styled radical, adding a harder edge to the democracy movement in Swaziland. With a scar above his left eye and a number of arrests under his belt, earned from 26 years of vociferously challenging the King’s absolute power, he has become the unofficial underboss of the liberation struggle.

Charged with organising a mass-mobilisation campaign, Mphandlana is uncompromising in his work. He recognises that his aggressive approach toward reform may have alienated some people, but maintains that Swaziland has reached a period when Swazis “recognise that nobody is going to liberate them except themselves”.

Additionally, the Facebook Revolution is alive and well in Swaziland, although this brand of politics may best be described as ‘revolution lite’. The participants who spurred the events on 12 April through their Facebook group, ‘The April 12 Swazi Uprising’, are a collection of urban, middle-class professionals, interested in change but wary of becoming too closely associated with certain elements of the struggle.

One such online revolutionary, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, is an insurance salesperson from Manzini whose frustrations with the King have boiled to the point where she is now “willing to get involved” in the campaign to change Swaziland’s

**The Facebook revolution is alive and well in Swaziland, although this brand of politics may best be described as ‘revolution lite’**


political structure. She says that although the revolution may be in its infancy, the movement will continue to gather momentum. Asked whether the crackdown on the 12 April protests will end the online efforts, she artfully remarked, “The King put a Band-Aid on a sore, but the sore will keep festering.”

## The King can stay

Her assessment may prove true, but the pro-democracy movement still needs to confront its greatest hurdle, specifically the question of how activists can gain wider public support without turning their struggle into a pitched battle against the King.

The underground democracy movement is underfunded, slightly disorganised and without a leader, yet its biggest challenge may be in garnering support from the rural poor. Many Swazis, particularly those living in rural areas, prize the peace and stability their country has enjoyed and are deeply loyal to the King.

As the struggle for democratic reform spreads from urban centres to the countryside, success will be predicated upon how well leaders manage the sensitive issues around the monarchy. Mr Shongwe is acutely aware of the significance: “We seek to expose the short-sightedness of the system, but we are not fighting the King – never have we asked for the King to step down.”

However, it still remains unclear whether the ‘revolution’ in Swaziland will continue to fester and eventually force the King to establish the conditions for free and fair elections, or whether it will simply crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet. Only time will answer these questions, but activists certainly have the drive and determination to effect change within Swaziland’s political system – as well as the powerful momentum of republican ideals on their side. 

# Buckshot and police batons in Kampala

Scenes of brutal repression by the Ugandan police against the opposition have not deterred angry protesters from taking to the streets of Kampala. Together with mounting fears about how oil revenue will be distributed, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni is feeling pressure from the poor and frustrated in the cities, writes **Petrus de Kock** following a visit to Kampala

**P**rotests against the high cost of living unfolding on the streets of Kampala have now resulted in an outright battle between the police and those opposed to Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni.

The protests, still largely confined to the pot-holed streets of the capital city, are the result of deep-rooted frustrations with Uganda's reigning order.

Another important issue relates to the emerging politics of fear and hope that pervade villages along the shores of Lake Albert, where the UK-registered Tullow oil has been successfully drilling for commercially viable sources of oil.

These matters will have to be dealt with by Museveni, who was sworn in on 12 May for another term in office. Museveni, who has been at the helm since 1986 when the National Resistance Army (NRA) rolled into Kampala to relieve the country of years of post-Idi Amin chaos, was re-elected to the post in February 2011 with a comfortable majority of 68%. His closest rival, Col Kizza Besigye, managed to squeeze just 26% of the Ugandan vote.

## Brutal police crackdown

However, soon after his significant electoral victory, the Ugandan president is being put to the test on several fronts.

The most challenging of the multiple political battlefronts he faces is the controversial 'walk to work' campaign that was called in protest against high food and fuel prices. Besigye, one of the oppositional heavyweights behind the campaign, suffered several injuries during brutal police crackdowns on the protests. In a recent incident, police stopped his vehicle, smashed the windows and sprayed the occupants with pepper spray.

President Museveni's response to popular economic frustrations has been to roll out the state security apparatus while continually saying that he will not allow further protests. His main counterargument to the protests has been that the government cannot control or curtail rising prices in a free-market economy.

**President Museveni's response to popular economic frustrations has been to roll out the state security apparatus, while continually saying that he will not allow further protests**

Yet there may be more to the 'walk to work' protests than meets the eye.

During December 2010, in the run-up to the February elections, the government asked parliament to approve a supplementary budget totalling 605 billion Ugandan shillings (US\$254 million). According to sources in Kampala, little if any of this money has actually found its way to government departments.

Accusations and evidence abound of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party agents roaming electoral districts and distributing gifts of soap, sugar and food to the party faithful.

In several other cases, the NRM is said to have bought votes by dispersing brown envelopes stuffed with cash. This has led some Ugandans to argue that the country's post-election economic woes are to be blamed on a reckless government spending public money on the NRM's re-election campaign.

In this regard, tensions have emerged between Uganda and its international donors, several of whom are threatening to cut back budgetary aid.

## A battered opposition

It may very well be that the protests against the rising cost of living stem from underlying political frustrations. The NRM has been swamped by





*Ugandan rioters are made to lie down on the road after their arrest by Ugandan police in the capital city Kampala, 29 April after riots broke out. Army troops and police faced off against rioting demonstrators in downtown Kampala, the first time the Uganda's growing protest movement had reached the country's capital, and Red Cross officials said at least one person was killed and 64 wounded.*

controversial corruption cases that can be traced to some of the highest officials and offices in the land.

Claims of irregularities during the election are not helping to ease tensions between a battered opposition and a government that is perceived to be self-serving and securocratic.

However, it has also been argued that Besigye's prominent role in the 'walk to work' campaign is part of an attempt to resuscitate his political career after being defeated at the ballot box by Museveni, his arch-rival.

In any case, the fact remains that

It has also been argued that Col Besigye's prominent role in the 'walk to work' campaign is part of an attempt to resuscitate his political career after being defeated at the ballot box by Museveni, his arch-rival

Kampala's streets are becoming the battleground where a economically marginalised and politically frustrated opposition flexes its muscles against a government keen on deploying instruments of state violence to quell popular protests.

Images of Zimbabwe's political trials and tribulations spring to mind when looking at footage of police flushing protestors out of their ramshackle homes by lobbing teargas canisters through windows while subjecting passersby to the law of buckshot and police batons.

While the events in Kampala are disconcerting, with Ugandans openly speculating about their people's willingness to engage in North-Africa style popular protests, another set of challenges awaits President Museveni in the villages around Lake Albert.

### Oil creates fear and hope

Far away from the teargas-lined streets of the Ugandan capital, I discovered that the shores of Lake Albert are fast being transformed by oil exploration activities.

During visits to lakeside villages such as Tonya, Ssebagoro, Kaiso and Buliisa, which all depend on fishing for subsistence, an interesting set of issues emerged.

Fears of oil spills and the fact that the government has allowed Tullow Oil to drill for oil in the Murchison's Falls National Park figure prominently in local conversations.

The international excitement that started a few years ago regarding transparency in the extractive industries has taken root in Uganda's western extremities.

Local chapters and advocacy committees of Publish What You Pay (PWYP) are keeping a beady eye on the social and environmental impact of the oil developments. Common complaints in this region include the fact that the government and Tullow Oil have only in very few cases consulted or properly informed communities about plans for oil exploration.

The odd mixture of hope and fear lining the shores of Lake Albert is another tricky political trench that the NRM and President Museveni will have to negotiate

Tullow Oil recently inked a deal with Total and China's National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) to pave the way for the next phase of development that will lead Uganda to join the ranks of African oil-producing states.

This has created an atmosphere of hope and expectation, with villagers dreaming about jobs, schools, better roads, and new economic prospects.

### Calls for transparency

Along with these hopes and expectations come fears about land ownership in villages where land is owned communally. In some cases, land speculators have been trying to acquire pieces of communally-owned land, while communities such as Kabaale on the escarpment above the lake have been paralysed by rumours about their imminent displacement to make way for a refinery to be built over 25 sq km.

Interestingly, President Museveni is not seen as a total monster by villagers living alongside the lake. Memories of Ugandans suffering under Milton Obote and Idi Amin have people in rural areas appreciating the fact that Museveni has brought the armed forces under control.

However, at some PWYP meetings, members of the NRM shared the floor to echo their fellow villagers' concerns about the lack of consultation on oil developments.

What emerged from PWYP discussions were not simplistic pot-shots at the president or the government, but rather a sense of frustration and an honest call for the government and the oil companies to cooperate with communities in planning for the future impact of oil production.

A call for cooperative governance and for local communities to be informed about plans for the construction of oil pipelines thus dominated a lot of the discussions. More than merely criticising the government, the people seem eager to contribute to policy and

planning for the future of their villages.

This dynamic also underscores another challenge that resource-rich African states have to confront: the need to include communities affected by large-scale resource extraction projects in cooperative governance systems.


### The spectre of the Niger Delta

Fears of Niger Delta-style pollution, social dislocation and conflict have been raised often, with villagers making heartfelt pleas for their voices to be heard.

This means that Uganda faces a crucial test in coming years. Will it engage with its people and allow forms of cooperation between the government and the communities to emerge in an industry that is all too often plagued by conflict, due to powers ignoring the voices of discontent?

In cases like Uganda's western districts, it would be possible for such voices to become proactive forces for change if anyone was prepared to listen and respond positively to their reasonable requests.

Communities are asking for better roads, support to schools, and more job opportunities. The odd mixture of hope and fear that lines the shores of Lake Albert is therefore another tricky political trench that the NRM and President Museveni have to negotiate.

Calls abound for the Petroleum (Exploration, Development, Production and Value Addition) Bill of 2010 to be adopted by parliament. Pressure is mounting for the government to act responsibly and put the necessary legal instruments in place to safeguard the environment, people, and interests of Uganda as the country races towards oil production. 

Dr Petrus de Kock is senior researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Cape Town





According to surveys ahead of South Africa's May 18 local elections, there is growing frustration about lack of basic services.

## How they voted:

According to South Africa's Independent Election Commission, the ANC maintained its overwhelming majority of local municipalities. However, the Democratic Alliance, the official opposition, secured a major improvement from its 14.8% in the previous local elections in 2006. The smaller parties saw their share of the votes diminish, with the Congress of the People (COPE), which broke away from the ANC in 2009, getting 2.1%, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) receiving 3.6% and its breakaway party, the National Freedom Party (NFP), secured 2.4% of the votes.

The turnout was an unprecedented 57% – the highest ever for local elections in South Africa.

ANC: 62%  
DA: 23%  
IFP: 3.6%  
Cope: 2.1%  
NFP: 2.4%

Source: Mail&Guardian online

# Protests expected to grow

Frustration at the lack of service delivery has led to numerous protest actions in South Africa. **Hoplang Selebalo, Shireen Mukadam and Collette Schulz-Herzenberg** explain how this affected campaigning in the run-up to local elections.

**A**s South Africans went to the polls on 18 May to elect local representatives in their fourth municipal vote, the elections promised to be the most important expression of citizen satisfaction with local government thus far. Local government, which is responsible for providing basic services such as water, sanitation and

electricity, is criticised for service delivery failures and is rife with accusations of corruption, maladministration and lack of accountability to communities.

Pre-election citizen surveys captured the mood prevailing across many local communities in South Africa – one of dissatisfaction and frustration at service delivery failures. A survey conducted by

# Protests

South Africa

Citizens have responded by voicing growing frustration with a wave of protest action that has affected local communities across the country

TNS Research Surveys indicated public discontent over the lack of achievement in the provision of basic services. The survey, which focused on South Africa's metropolitan areas, stated: "Over a half of residents – 51% – are still not happy with the service delivery they receive from their local authority or municipality. This is effectively no change compared with the figure of 52% recorded in February 2010 and means that local government effectively achieved nothing during 2009 in terms of improving people's perceptions of its service delivery." The survey also highlighted a sharp increase compared to a similar study conducted in 2007, which showed the level of dissatisfaction at 27%.

Citizens have expressed their growing frustration with a wave of protest action that has affected local communities across the country. The killing of Andries Tatane of the Free State town of Ficksburg is one indicator of the increasing violence associated with these protests. (See article on page 20.)

The same TNS survey warned that the 51% of respondents who indicated dissatisfaction with service delivery provided an indicator that further violent protests over service delivery can be expected in the future.

## Discontent drives protest

Frustration with the lack of service delivery is further compounded by the perception that corruption is rife among local councillors, many of whom use public office to enrich themselves and those closest to them. The recent spike in allegations of corruption, fraud, tender irregularities and mismanagement of funds at local government level undermines this critical delivery arm of the state, thwarting the implementation of important policies and diverting much-needed resources away from developmental objectives with which

the local sphere is tasked.

Reports such as the R3.5 billion worth of tender irregularities and financial mismanagement at eThekweni Metro in February 2011, as well as an apparently "explosive forensic report" dealing with allegations of corruption in the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality between 2003-2009, also serve to undermine public trust in the integrity of their elected officials and democratic institutions. As the first point of contact citizens have with their government, the effects of mismanagement and corruption in municipalities are felt deeply. And once the ethical conduct of public officials – whose primary responsibility is to serve the public interest – is under question, the legitimacy of the government itself is also jeopardised.

Another critical factor, which not only contributes to voter turnout but also influences how the public cast their

*The growth of support for South Africa's official opposition, the DA, is seen as a response to the ANC's lack of service delivery.*





vote, is the protests that have taken place in the past few months over the African National Congress candidate lists. Community members in certain provinces have voiced discontent about some of the nominated ward councillors. Residents accuse those candidates of corruption and inability to cater to the needs of their communities. In response, President Jacob Zuma stated that the problems around the candidate lists would be solved by “an investigative team” set up by the ANC after the elections – he then encouraged voters to vote for the ANC and to allow the ruling party to resolve these issues only after 18 May.

## Questions about candidates

The issue of preferred candidates running as independents is also a feature of the forthcoming election. In De Aar in the Northern Cape, residents attending an ANC Workers’ Day rally voiced dissatisfaction that their preferred candidate had not been placed on the ANC list and had to run independently. There are 748 independents candidates contesting the 2011 election, 81 more than in 2006.

In the run-up to the elections, analysts speculated that social protestation would, in all likelihood, negatively affect political participation, culminating in the lowest turnout yet as many refused to go to the polls. With voter turnout averaging 48 percent in the two previous local elections some predicted that it may drop further as voters withdrew their support for the incumbent ANC, a party that retains majority support in many of South Africa’s municipalities.

## Opposition chances for more votes

Meanwhile, expectations were raised among opposition party leaders and independent candidates, who regarded the election as an opportunity to benefit

from increased voter dissatisfaction with the ANC. Opposition parties have failed to make serious inroads into traditional ANC constituencies in previous national and regional elections, leaving the ANC largely unthreatened at elections.

The 2006 local government elections saw the ANC consolidate its position, with increases in the overall majority it holds in councils. It also saw the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (now merged with the Independent Democrats), strengthen its position as the strongest opposition party.

It was predicted that the 2011 local government elections would see a shift in the voting trends of South Africans across the country. Despite clear victories at the polls for the incumbent ANC since the first democratic elections in 1994, Afrobarometer survey data before the polls indicated that voters were willing to withdraw their support from the incumbent party if they perceived that it had not performed well. But disillusioned ANC supporters were also unwilling to move their support to other parties. This resulted in a partial withdrawal from active electoral politics for many potential voters who did not cast their ballots in support of any political party. This development is evident if one considers the turnout figures as a percentage of the entire voting age population (VAP) in South Africa. In the 2009 national election, it was estimated that approximately


**Frustration over the lack of service delivery is further compounded by the perception that corruption is rife among local councilors, with many using public office to enrich themselves and those closest to them**

60% of the VAP had participated (despite a relatively high turnout with 77% of registered voters). Voter turnout at local elections is usually lower than that of national and provincial elections. The turnout of registered voters in the local elections in 2006 and 2000 stood at 48%.

Turnout determines the vote share obtained by the governing party vis-à-vis the opposition bloc. When governing party supporters fail to turn out to vote, it effectively increases the percentage of the vote share that the collective opposition bloc obtains, regardless of increases in the number of actual votes for the ANC.

## Growing pool of ‘floating’ votes

Afrobarometer data also shows a clear rise in independents, or ‘floating voters’, in South Africa. It is always difficult to predict whether these people do vote at elections, and for which party, since they don’t hold a compelling party loyalty. Yet this largely unpredictable block of eligible voters could transform the political scene if they chose to turn out at the polls. Data suggests that floating voters disproportionately come from opposition parties, which have experienced a much higher rate of partisan decline than the ANC over the years. However, given the demographic composition of South Africa, the significant increases in the numbers of floating voters seen among the African electorate could become the key to future electoral realignments. Huge potential exists for parties to tap into this group of potential voters who are yet to be persuaded.

Opposition parties were quick to harness the frustration with service delivery failures felt by many voters and may very well have gained ground due to the perceived failings of the ruling party. With service delivery at the centre of electioneering and campaigning there was more suspense in the run-up to this year’s election – making it in many ways one of the most interesting yet. 

**T**he brutal death of unarmed protestor and father of two Andries Tatane, at the hands of the South African police in the town of Ficksburg on 13 April, would have gone largely unnoticed, except that it was captured on film and shown as headline news on national television. South Africans were rightly outraged at the senseless and disproportionate violence directed at Mr Tatane by a mob of policemen.

The harsh reality is that many police officials watching the same news item would not have been shocked at seeing him being beaten with batons and shot at from close range with rubber bullets.

Because Tatane was fighting back at the policemen attacking him, they could very well think that he deserved the beating.

The use of excessive violence as part of everyday policing has long been the norm in South Africa. What was different this time was not only that the victim died shortly thereafter, but that it was also captured on film and broadcast on public television.

The warning signs that the police are becoming increasingly violent have been around for some time.

Unfortunately, however, this has not triggered any recognition that there may be a fundamental problem with policing, and no steps have been taken by the police leadership to obtain a better understanding as to why this is happening.

## A quick reaction

Following the broadcasts, the minister of police, Nathi Mthethwa, immediately released a media statement in which he expressed his "...full confidence that the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) will, without fear or favour, investigate an alleged killing of



*The video that shocked the nation. Police allegedly fired rubber bullets into the chest of Andries Tatane and beat him up during a demonstration in the South African town of Ficksburg. Tatane died of his injuries.*

# Police can't handle protests

South Africa has been confronted with increasing service delivery protests, which intensified in the run-up to local elections in mid-May. **Gareth Newham** believes that the harsh treatment of protesters by police reflects a fundamental problem in the SAPS.

a striking resident by police during a march in Ficksburg"

A few days later he released another statement welcoming the arrest of six policemen implicated in the killing and highlighting that he has been consistent in his stance that "those who break the law must be punished"

It is unusual for the ICD to act so quickly in response to complaints

of police brutality, but given the widespread national and international condemnation of this incident and the directive from the minister, it is understandable.

Unfortunately, however, the usual approach when such incidents are referred to the ICD for investigation will do nothing to solve the ongoing and far deeper problem.



The investigations may or may not reveal whether the police officials involved acted within the scope of the law and police regulations.

If it is found that they did break the law, the ICD will pass the docket to the National Prosecuting Authorities, who may decide to criminally prosecute the policemen.

If SAPS regulations were broken then the ICD will make recommendations to the SAPS that disciplinary action is taken against the offending officers.

The SAPS generally ignores these recommendations from the ICD, but even when it does act on them, the outcome is usually that only a few officers are held accountable. This will not address the underlying management and structural problems that contribute to this growing problem.

## Proper inquiry needed

The ANC was correct to call for a commission of inquiry into Tatane's death, as that is exactly what is needed at this time. Rather than only focusing

## The use of excessive violence as part of everyday policing has long been the norm in South Africa

on the individual officers, as the ICD investigation will do, such an inquiry should look at the organisational context within which the police officials were operating.

If it does so, it is likely to find that inadequate command and control were generally exercised over the officers, and that the SAPS' standard operating procedures and code of conduct are largely ignored.

It is also likely to find that the training these officials received was sub-standard and that they were not properly tested on the extent to which they understood their role and responsibilities in handling public protests. Such an inquiry could further note that poor strategic decisions taken

by the SAPS leadership over the past decade have resulted in the closure of specialised units including the Public Order units.

Consequently, the SAPS does not possess the skills or the capacity to consistently respond in a professional manner to a number of the challenges it faces, including maintaining public order.

If such an inquiry correctly includes a focus on those who have the authority and responsibility to ensure that the police uphold the law, then the political context of this killing cannot be ignored.

## 'Shoot to kill' policy to blame

Since 2008, when the deputy minister of police, Susan Shabangu, called for police to "shoot to kill", the SAPS has been led down a dangerous path where political rhetoric urging the police to "show no mercy" to whomever they label as "criminals" has replaced any firm commitment to ensuring that the SAPS adheres to acceptable standards of police professionalism and the rule



*Little consolation. South Africa's national commissioner of police General Bheki Cele (far left) and deputy minister of police Ms Makhotso Sotyu visit the family of Andries Tatane in Ficksburg*

# Protests

South Africa

The SAPS does not possess the skills or the capacity to consistently respond in a professional manner to a number of the challenges it faces, including maintaining public order


of law. While the minister of police has implored the SAPS to "...respect the principles of human dignity and rights", he also appears to justify police violence by warning civilians "not to provoke or insult the police". This suggests that at the most senior levels of government, police violence is not seen as something that the police leadership has a duty to contain as much as something that civilians should avoid by paying attention to the way that they act towards police officials. Moreover, General Cele has refused to recognise that there might be a structural problem relating to police violence, calling recent deaths as a result of police action "isolated incidents."

David Bruce from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, who has been studying violence and policing in South Africa, presented a paper at an Institute for Security Studies conference on crime and crime prevention in December 2010 in which he highlights the urgent need "for policing which is carried out fairly and respectfully". He goes on to argue that "There is some evidence 'that the manner in which people are treated by agents of the criminal justice system contributes not only to respect for [the criminal] justice [system] but to respect for the law itself. Essentially this means that people are more likely to voluntarily obey the law if they believe that agents of the criminal justice system will act towards them in a fair way.'" This is an insight that the current leadership would do well to heed.

The *Mail & Guardian* recently quoted a government insider as stating that President Jacob Zuma had appointed General Cele to show South Africans that the "police must be feared and respected".

However, fear does not necessarily produce respect. Listening to the public outrage about this killing, it is hard to find many expressing respect for the

The Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) reports annually to parliament on police-related deaths, assaults and other forms of serious misconduct. These annual reports reveal that the number of people killed by the police more than doubled (increasing by 102%) between 2005/06 and 2008/09, when a record 568 people were killed. Moreover, the ICD statistics reveal that complaints of police assault with intention to commit grievous bodily harm increased from 825 incidents in 2008/9 to 920 in 2009/2010.

police. The police are more likely to be respected if the government changes its approach to policing and recognises it for the professional craft that it should be. Given that many of the problems facing the SAPS stem from decades of poor leadership, effective change must be guided by an independent commission of inquiry that focuses specifically on the managerial and structural challenges that need to be addressed. Until this happens, the tragic killing of Andries Tatane will not be the last such incident to shock South Africa. 

## Militias, Rebels and Islamist Militants

Human Insecurity and State Crises in Africa

Edited by Wafuda Okumu and Augustine Ikelegbe



For all those who wish to understand the contribution these groups make to continuing insecurity in African states, this collection of well-researched case studies is essential reading.

David M Anderson, Professor of African Politics at the University of Oxford, and Fellow at St Cross College, Oxford

It is highly recommended reading for scholars, researchers, policy makers and anyone seeking a deeper understanding of militia, rebel and Islamist militant groups and the impact their actions have on human insecurity and the state crisis in Africa.

Major General Henry K Anyidoho, Deputy Joint Special Representative for the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID) and former Deputy Force Commander and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)



# Negotiations the only way out

With the stalemate between rebels and pro-Gaddafi forces in Libya continuing, many are questioning the Nato intervention. **Issaka K Souaré** believes that AU mediation should be given a chance

**F**or nearly 42 years now, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has single-handedly ruled Libya with an iron fist. It is therefore understandable that the Libyan people would aspire to a better system of governance.

Yet after weeks of Nato airstrikes on Libya and endless human suffering, it seems less and less likely that a military operation in Libya is a solution to the imbroglio.

Could a negotiated settlement – as advocated by the AU and called for by UN Resolution 1973 – be the answer?

A number of misconceptions should first be cleared up.

First, since the start of the military intervention, it has become clear that even though some Arab countries are part of the coalition in Libya, it is mainly a 'western' operation, the Arab League having been used merely to give a cover of legitimacy.

Second, there is hypocrisy in the operation in Libya in view of the benevolent approach to the repressive actions of the regimes in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, which have mercilessly killed 'peaceful' protesters, while those of Libya are armed.

Third, forceful regime change, which is now very clearly part of the agenda of the Nato forces, would constitute a violation of Resolution 1973.

*Lost without Nato's help. A rebel soldier at a check point on the outskirts of Benghazi on 11 May.*

Those advocating the military approach wish to believe that getting rid of Gaddafi and those around him will pave the way to a democratic system – something the Libyan people rightly deserve.

But there is no guarantee that a forced victory for the rebels in Libya will bring about a better political system that responds to the aspirations of the majority of Libyans, particularly given that most of the top brass of the rebellion were dignitaries of the Gaddafi regime until recently.

### Removing Gaddafi may not bring democracy

There is also no guarantee that there will be peace in Libya when and if Gaddafi is deposed, as he has scores of supporters, not least from his Gaddafah tribe and allies.

Given the nature of the conflict, a sort of guerrilla warfare and years of instability are more likely to ensue, particularly as Gaddafi's forceful overthrowing or assassination is likely to lead to a 'protection force' being stationed in Libya by the western coalition at the request of the 'former rebels'. This will cause instability, not only for Libya but also for some of its neighbours.

### Libyan rebels are not 'peaceful protesters'

Tunisia and Egypt are two North African countries that were in a similar situation where, despite the presence of 'décor' political parties, desperate and frustrated populations have risen up against autocratic leaders and eventually overthrown them in largely 'peaceful' revolutions.

However, in Libya the protests turned out to be an armed rebellion, which the Gaddafi regime has resolved to crush. Some argue that the regime attacked them with merciless force, but Mubarak's forces in Egypt killed more than 800 'peaceful' protesters; Ben Ali's

**Air strikes cannot continue endlessly. Unless they can kill, dislodge or arrest Gaddafi and eliminate or pacify his supporters, the coalition forces must at some point stop the air strikes**

in Tunisia killed more than 200, and hundreds of protesters have been killed in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. None of those have taken up arms against their governments, even though they do not lack military elements that defected from the regimes.

This sets Libya apart from other cases and detaches it from the 'noble' revolutionary wind that is sweeping other countries.

In addition, the human rights violations committed so far in Libya have not been the work of Gaddafi's forces alone. Based on unsubstantiated claims of 'African mercenaries' fighting for Gaddafi, the rebels have at times indiscriminately attacked and killed black people in Libya, including black Libyans, on the pretext of their being mercenaries.

### Testing the waters of mediation

Air strikes cannot continue endlessly. Unless they can kill, dislodge or arrest Gaddafi and eliminate or pacify his supporters, the coalition forces must at some point stop the air strikes and consider a political solution.

There should also be a point at which the coalition has to stop and admit that civilians are now protected as per the UN resolution.

Meanwhile, the AU has consistently

called for dialogue as the only way to end the crisis in Libya.

Nato and the rebels have been reluctant to consider a negotiated option, asserting that Gaddafi is 'irrational' and will never keep his word, so it will therefore be impossible to negotiate with him.

But let it be said that Gaddafi, a man who has remained in power for so long, playing various segments of his people off against one another and taking difficult decisions, is anything but irrational.

And although he played a destructive role in the 1970s and 1980s, he did keep to negotiated agreements. For example, he withdrew his troops from Chad in the late 1980s and even became a friend of subsequent Chadian regimes. He also handed over two Libyan nationals after the Lockerbie bombing, and gave up the chemical weapons programmes – which is why the West restored diplomatic relations with him and lifted economic sanctions.

### The AU: an honest broker

Parties only negotiate when they realise they cannot win but do not want to lose. Gaddafi has been pushed to the wall by the rebellion and the military strikes. He would not want to be utterly humiliated – but he can make significant concessions.

Some, meanwhile, believe that the AU is not a neutral mediator because it is indebted to Gaddafi and will therefore be biased in his favour. This is misleading. While some African leaders might be sympathetic to him, others have challenged his views, and not all African countries receive or need his assistance.

The communiqué of the 23 February 2011 meeting of the AU's Peace and Security Council (even before the UN Security Council seized the matter for the first time on 26 February) and the strong language it used to condemn the violence in Libya and acknowledge the legitimacy



of the Libyan people in their calls for political reforms clearly proves that the AU has been quite impartial in this case.

Indeed, the proposal for a political solution before military options is a consistent approach of the AU in all conflict situations (even in Côte d'Ivoire, where there was a legitimate camp and an illegitimate one) and is the tradition in diplomacy, including in the UN Charter.

It is evident that the military option alone does not offer a solution to the Libyan crisis and that a political settlement, reached through open negotiation, with no preconditions, may be the only viable solution.

### What kind of acceptable settlement?

The point of departure is that all stakeholders, including the AU, Nato and the rebels, agree that there must be profound political changes in Libya in response to the legitimate aspirations of the majority of Libyan people for good governance. A rebel victory or the forceful departure of Gaddafi will not necessarily lead to this end – which is another reason for mediation in which the outcome can be foreseen, planned and largely controlled.

The only entity that has so far called for and proposed a road map for dialogue and political settlement is the AU, through its ad hoc High-Level Committee.

In addition to a ceasefire, which would allow for the protection of civilians on both sides, the road map calls for an 'inclusive transitional period that would lead to political reforms that meet the aspirations of the Libyan people'. It neither excludes Gaddafi's immediate departure from power, nor makes it a prerequisite for dialogue to begin.

Gaddafi unconditionally accepted the road map while the rebels and Nato rejected it.

The AU also proposes the establishment of a government of



*Will they talk to Gaddafi? Libyan rebel fighters defiant during a funeral on 10 May*

**Gaddafi or someone from his camp could retain the presidency of this government but with reduced powers, while the rebels appoint a prime minister with broader powers**

national unity (GNU) – a concept that has been widely criticised, particularly in Kenya and Zimbabwe. But while the situation in these two countries was that of a post-election conflict, Libya is effectively at war with itself.


In a country that has no experience in democratic governance and is deeply divided along tribal lines, there is a lot of wisdom in a GNU and a transitional period during which structures of a democratic government can be put in place.

A solution that all the parties are likely to gain from – but not win everything – could be an immediate ceasefire, supervised by impartial forces, followed immediately by the establishment of a transitional GNU for

about a year, formed out of elements of both Gaddafi's regime and the rebels. Gaddafi or someone from his camp (but preferably a 'neutral' person) could retain the presidency of this government (with reduced powers if it is Gaddafi), while the rebels appoint a Prime Minister with large powers (or normal ones if the transitional president is a neutral person). The transitional period should culminate in multiparty elections in which neither the president nor the Prime Minister may be a candidate.

There may be a specific clause stipulating that neither Gaddafi nor his sons, regardless of the role they play in the transitional government, may be candidates, but their physical safety should be guaranteed.

The elections would then be run by an impartial Commission appointed by an international contact group, in which the AU, the UN, the Arab League and the EU collectively play a leading role. The commission may include foreign members to ensure impartiality and the poll should be internationally supervised.

Thus, the election winner, whoever he may be, must be accepted by all, as he will be the choice of the majority of Libyan people. 



*The pomp and ceremony of traditional robes and Algerian and Palestinian flags, seen here during an official visit by Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to Setif, east of Algiers, hide the realities of a country that can't discuss its past.*

# Algeria's mothers don't want war

Many eyes are focused on Algeria, waiting for it to continue the Arab spring.

**Ghania Mouffok** explores the possible reasons why the masses of dissatisfied youth in Algeria have not yet imitated those of Tunisia or Egypt.

**I**t has become something of a tradition for the working women of Algeria to enjoy a day off on 8 March. Our austere streets transform for this 'Women's Day' celebration, with men, some polite, some mocking, offering plastic roses to the women they see.

These few stolen hours of rest are a result of the modest but symbolic achievements of the women's movement in the 1980s.

REUTERS/Zohra Bensemra



The struggle for our rights, though, faded into the background during the 1992-2002 civil war; a war we are now forbidden to talk about thanks to the 2006 Law on National Reconciliation.

The Law states that anyone who, by their statements, writings or any other act, seeks to instrumentalise the injuries of the 'national tragedy' risks three to five years' imprisonment or a heavy fine.

And yet, on 8 March 2011, the tragedy invited itself to the party.

In the heart of Algiers, on the Place de la Grande Poste, there was a meeting held by an association for the families of the victims of terrorism. Only about 20 women turned up, carrying small bouquets of flowers and pictures of victims, their names, and the dates and places of their murder or disappearance.

Not far from there, on the Place des Martyrs, there was another meeting, this time of the 'patriots' – representatives of around 100 000 civilians who were recruited and armed *en masse* to defend the country against 'Islamic terrorists'. Today they too have been abandoned by the state, and we're not allowed to talk about them either.

In Algeria, it is forbidden to remember the past, and the security forces came out in large numbers to stop the gatherings.

This 8 March it was as if Algiers was surrounded by a band of memory: the families of the victims of terrorism, the families of the disappeared, and the patriots – all of them shooed away by the police.

## Fear of war

Algeria, somewhere between war and peace, is still inhabited by memories of the civil war, even if you want to step over it, like a parenthesis, like an empty black hole.

The truth is, we savagely killed one another. Algerians against Algerians, massacres, beheadings, torture, disappearances, rapes, looting,

destruction, bomb attacks, Kamikazes – in a nightmare that lasted for more than ten years.

Since then, Algerians have learnt the price of peace and live daily with the fear that the violence could return.

Our biggest fear is the fear of civil war. Nothing scares us more than ourselves.

## A demonstration gone wrong

This is in part what explains the failure of the National Coordination for Change and Democracy (CNCD), a grouping of human rights organisations, opposition parties and trade unions.

Enthused by the Tunisian and the Egyptian 'revolutions', the organisers hoped that their rallies would in turn topple the regime, even if their demands, asking for the lifting of the state of emergency, were not as radical. The state of emergency was implemented in 1991, after the first pluralist legislative elections in Algeria were won by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The party was toppled by a military coup and has been banned ever since.

## A divided nation

A march organised by the CNCD on 1 May beginning at the Place des Martyrs sparked a huge security presence – a veritable armada of repression surrounding the square, living proof of the fear that now inhabits all the oppressive regimes on the southern banks of the Mediterranean.

But this massive security presence shouldn't hide the lack of popular support for the demonstration and for the demonstrations that followed.

## Our biggest fear is the fear of civil war. Nothing scares us more than ourselves

The local residents of the area gathered as onlookers. Their children – aged perhaps between 10 and 20 years old – attacked the demonstrators, as unexpected allies of the security forces.

One mother in *haik* asks the crowd: "But what do you want? That the war starts again? Have you forgotten the days when we were too terrified to leave the house? When blood flowed? What has Bouteflika done to you? He brought peace, didn't he?"

## Bouteflika fronting for the army

Since coming to power in 1999, after dubious elections held on the request of the army that really holds the power, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and his Law on National Reconciliation have been credited with bringing peace to Algeria. Even if this was only an arrangement between the rebels and the army, it is true that the violence has decreased.

Other factors have been in Bouteflika's favour. During his tenure the price of oil has skyrocketed, allowing the oil-producing country to pay off its debts and plough several hundred billion dinars into development projects.

Then there were the spectacular events of 11 September 2001. Until that point, the Algerian regime was a pariah in the concert of nations, with security services that could have been tried before international tribunals for committing massacres and crimes against humanity.

But since then, the regime has been able to position itself right behind the Americans, as a leader in the fight against 'Islamic terrorism'.

Since its sudden rise to international acceptability, a complex and secret network of companies and organisations has kept the Algerian regime in power.

Meanwhile, Algerian society's capacity to resist is quite remarkable:

every ten years a new generation refuses to relinquish its demands.

While Egypt, Tunisia and the entire Arab world wait for the 'Algerian street' to reinforce the extraordinary spring of people's anger, the simple truth is that Algerians – male and female – are engaged in a different battle.

## Communities getting together

Scalded by the constant changes of government – so many presidents have fallen, from the ousting of President Chadli Benjedid in 1992 to the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf some five months later, followed by the

**While Egypt, Tunisia and the entire Arab world wait for the 'Algerian street' to reinforce the extraordinary spring of people's anger, the simple truth is that Algerians – male and female – are engaged in a different battle**



*Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika here seen shaking hands with students in Setif, east of Algiers, offers traumatised Algerians a kind of stability*

ousting of Ali Kafi in 1994 and Zérroual in 1999 – they are today trying to build an alternative from below.

Entire sections of society are learning how to organise themselves, reconstructing community networks through protests.

They are again learning how to talk to one another, count on one another and fight in a different way together. Street committees and organisations are being formed to discuss housing, water and access to schools and other services.

Through these daily demonstrations, they are putting pressure on the local

administrators and mayors – the dubiously elected 'walis' who represent the central government – and questioning their opaque management of the urban spaces.

Trade unions and student organisations are active across the country with astounding and contagious dynamism. Even the unemployed now have a national association, which is something we've never seen before.

Of the many problems in Algeria, unemployment and housing are the two major social issues that the regime is incapable of solving.

Faced with civil mobilisation, the non-party-political elites are trying, for their part, to create a political alternative to activism, from which they can reflect on the urgent social issues and learn to think afresh about the country that has become Algeria. In other words, to think about transformation.


## Rethinking transformation

In a letter addressed to the president, former leader of the FLN Abdelhamid Mehri, who fought against the French colonialists and became an opponent of the regime after the annulment of the elections in 1991, reflects this new way of thinking by asking for a stocktake of the 50 years since independence by groups constituted for this purpose across the country.

"The issue is not to change one man, not to overthrow the regime, but to change the way the country is governed," he said. This is a desire shared by the overwhelming majority of the population.

Following protest after protest, strike after strike, peaceful demonstration after peaceful demonstration, the Algerian government has for now lifted the state of emergency. It has installed populist measures, such as distributing the oil money, and it has also sent thousands of new recruits to the riot police to help control the demonstrations.

This is an untenable situation, while all around us, the suburbs of the excluded form a dangerous, explosive belt that is tightening around the cities of this country.

The explosion will happen if the Algerian regime remains intransigent, with the help of the western powers, and does not listen to this immense uprising of souls desiring a future far removed from the still-recent past, so full of sound and fury. 

Ghania Mouffok is a freelance journalist based in Algiers.



Osama Bin Laden was neither financing nor controlling the terrorist groups in Africa who claim affiliation to Al Qaeda.



**T**errorist cells and groups in Africa do not depend on the existence of Ossama bin Laden, neither for financing nor for any coherent demand structure.

They have, in fact, long adopted an independent, decentralised structure.

The majority of these groups, such as Al Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (ALQIM) in Algeria, were formed and driven by domestic realities and dynamics.

They aligned themselves to Al Qaeda largely because they lacked momentum in a greater global picture.

Indirect linkages have been created through the Internet and other media, perpetuated by the notion of them sharing a common inspiration.

But many groups are increasingly involved in criminal activity rather than outright terrorism.

## Not a massive organisation

The death of Bin Laden has dispelled a number of myths, not least the belief that Al Qaeda is a massive, albeit covert, organisation. It is obvious that only a handful of people are necessary in order to create havoc.

Secondly, Bin Laden was not as wealthy a figure or sponsor as often is believed.

Attacks since 2001 on major cities such as London and Madrid were domestically funded. Bin Laden may have been responsible for financing operations in the past, but after the 11 September 2001 attacks, any such sponsorship disappeared. His main worth to those who embraced

# The myth of Osama Bin Laden

Some think the death of Osama Bin Laden on 2 May this year will lead to the disintegration of Al Qaeda and the disappearance of affiliated organisations in Africa. **Anneli Botha** believes this is unlikely to happen.

# Analysis

Al Qaeda in Africa



*Residents gather to witness the meeting between Somalia's Islamist al Shabaab and rebel group Hizbul Islam, in southern Mogadishu, 1 January, where the two groups officially merged. Al Shabaab, which means 'the youth' in Arabic, controls most of the south of Somalia and much of Mogadishu, from where they launch attacks on the United Nations-backed government.*

his ideology and example was the symbolism he engendered and the terror with which he was associated.

Finally, the high-profile political protests and revolutions occurring throughout Northern Africa and the Middle East also point to the fact that Al Qaeda and similar organisations are

**A realistic present threat is that terrorist groups could link up across the Sahel to create an 'international African connection'**

clearly out of touch with the majority and their grievances, as they are completely absent from revolutions and protests.

African leaders have long used the threat of Al Qaeda as a means to crush or repress resistance to their rule, with concepts like democratisation being rhetorically linked to terrorism in countries such as Egypt before former President Hosni Mubarak was toppled.

Clearly the Maghreb/Arab/Islamic world does not identify Al Qaeda as the right instrument to realise its ambitions or see it as possessing an attractive ideology.

Bin Laden may well have had no idea what was going on in North Africa and

the rest of the continent, but he allowed his name to be used and his reputation to be harnessed in order to create a climate of fear.

## An international African connection

A realistic present threat is that terrorist groups could link up across the Sahel to create an 'international African connection'.

This scenario posits that groups such as Boko Haram, AQLIM and Al Shabaab would cooperate to achieve common goals.

Although the extent to which money, if any, is transferred between the organisations is unclear, there is



## Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb

Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) was officially formed in 2007 through the renaming of the Algerian Salafist Group of Combat and Preaching (GSPC).

Some saw this move as evidence of the 'latest spread of Al Qaeda's influence to Africa'.

But despite the apparent threat to the people living throughout the Sahel, as well as to foreigners – who are often the target of kidnappings for ransom – the danger presented by AQLIM is in fact much less acute than it was in the 'dark period' (1991-2003), during which an estimated 150 000 people were killed by the GSPC in Algeria alone.

Indeed, all indications are that AQLIM is fast losing members through arrests and low morale.

However, suicide attacks and the kidnapping of Westerners remain a major concern for countries in the Sahel. In 2010, a total of 16 French, Italian, Swiss and Spanish nationals were kidnapped.

In a dramatic incident on 7 January that year, two French nationals were kidnapped in a restaurant in Niamey, Niger, and subsequently killed after an attempt to free them was unsuccessful. Four more French nationals are currently being held hostage in the Sahel.

The increasing decentralisation of the organisation, with a greater role for its southern command and the formation of cell structures (consisting of individuals beyond its immediate control) is another cause for concern.

### Al Qaeda's influence

The links to Al Qaeda stretch back to the earlier influence of the Afghan Mujahideen on insurgent or terrorist movements in Algeria in the 1980s and 1990s.

From 2004, the GSPC openly

warmed towards Al Qaeda, perhaps due to the growing realisation that the former's survival was hanging by a thread.

The broader public in Algeria and even hardened Islamist extremists were becoming increasingly tired of the constant bloodshed, and it was hoped that the GSPC's rebranding and incorporation of Al Qaeda's ideology in the region would garner it more support. Adopting Al Qaeda's name also implied that the GSPC would change its *modus operandi* – specifically with reference to the use of suicide attacks – and target selection in fighting Al Qaeda's enemies.

Using the vast uncontrolled territories of southern Algeria, northern Mali and Niger, as well as north and west Mauritania, AQLIM in fact started training jihadists from Europe and other countries in 2003, following the US invasion of Iraq.

More recently, while gradually losing Iraq as a rallying point, there have been demonstrable attempts to stir emotions against France. For example, AQLIM claimed responsibility for the 2009 suicide attack against the French embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, blaming France for its hostility against Islam and Muslims, apparently exemplified by that country's recent decision to ban the burqa.

### Financing

It is estimated that kidnappings for ransom and the organisation's association with smuggling networks in the Sahel have brought in an estimated 150 million euros for AQLIM over the past five years.

Concerns grew during 2010 that drug-producing South American networks were paying AQLIM vast amounts of money to safeguard their smuggling operations via North Africa to Europe.

sufficient proof of a link with Boko Haram and AQLIM in terms of training. For example, in October 2007 in Kano, Nigerian security officers arrested Abubakar Haruna and Isah A, who allegedly attended a training camp in Algeria.

This was followed in November 2007 by the arrest of another nine suspects, also in Kano, including Kaduna and Yobe, who was charged with receiving training in Algeria from GSPC/AQLIM.


An important issue to consider now, in view of these strategic and ideological networks, concerns the possibility of revenge attacks for the killing of Bin Laden. There is also a danger of individual actions, where some people could use this opportunity to make a statement guaranteed to draw global media attention.

Plans for anniversary attacks are also a distinct possibility.

### How to react

The first question that must be answered when creating responses to terrorist attacks, either discursively or through policy, is what is it that radicalises people and drives them to extremism?

It is important to embrace a long-term strategic perspective rather than the short-term tactical approach that is too often applied, and any efforts at counter-terrorism must therefore address the underlying root causes and grievances that motivate the organisations and their supporters.

One major contextual factor is the growth of the middle class in Africa. There is a notable radicalisation of social anger and frustration on the part of those who have been 'left behind'. Meanwhile, religious affiliation is also growing – but religion should not in itself be seen to be the cause. Instead, it is a system that is manipulated and abused by individuals for their own benefit. 

## Nigeria

Presidential elections

Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan ran a successful election campaign ahead of the vote on 18 April



# Goodluck triumphs again

The election of President Goodluck Jonathan in April this year breaks with the elite consensus of 'zoning' the Nigerian presidency. But, asks **Lansana Gberie**, what will replace it?

**W**hen he emerged on the Nigerian national scene in 2007 as vice-presidential candidate for the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a bland zoologist in an ill-fitting fedora, was a kind of curiosity. From an impoverished fishing village in the oil-rich but badly neglected

Bayelsa State, Jonathan was dismissed by many in the country as a nonentity who would not, on his own, survive the rough and tumble of Nigeria's politics.

On April 18, he was declared elected president of Africa's largest democracy, by Attahiru Jega, Nigeria's unusually well-respected chair of the Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC).

But it hasn't been easy.

Lacking a political base and not belonging to any of the three major ethnic groups in the country – he is from the minority Ijaw – Jonathan was, of course, expected merely to serve out Umaru Yar'Adua's term, when his





CDC), was already crying foul as the returns came in, and riots had broken out in the northern half of the country. But Jega made it clear that Jonathan had fulfilled the requirements, not only winning the highest number of votes but also the more difficult requirement of winning 25% of the votes in two-thirds of the 36 states.

He failed, however, to carry a single one of the 16 main northern states, which Buhari comfortably carried. Buhari, for his part, failed to carry or even poll significantly in any of the southern states. Youths chanting 'Only Buhari!' rampaged through northern cities, killing supporters of Jonathan and burning down houses. In all, as many as 1 000 people may have been killed, a number far higher than during and after the elections of 2007. The army had to be deployed, and a 17 000-strong division had been set up for just that eventuality.

### Rigging claims

Buhari claimed that the returns in Jonathan's southern strongholds had been rigged, and he called for a forensic examination of the ballots. Though Jonathan commanded majority support in the country, there are certainly grounds for Buhari's objection. While overall voter turnout was low, hovering around 45-55%, voter turnout in the south was in some places way higher. That could perhaps be explained by the fact that enthusiasm for Jonathan in these areas was very high, though his People's Democratic Party (PDP) is far from popular there. The official results of the balloting are certainly somewhat suspect – they indicated perhaps some sophisticated tampering by the PDP, which is notorious for rigging elections. The results from Akwa Ibom State in the south of the country, for example, gave Jonathan 95%. The mainly Igbo Anambra state, not at all a major stronghold of either Jonathan or the PDP, gave the incumbent 99%. Jonathan modestly

accepted only 99.63% in his home state of Bayelsa.

The national chairman of Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) party delivered a formal petition to INEC rejection results from the 22 states, demanding that the "ballot papers and result sheets... from these zones and states" be subjected to further "scrutiny in the interest of peace, prosperity, free, fair and credible elections".

There could be a long legal tussle, though Buhari earlier rejected claims that and was seeking legal recourse. To his credit, although he initially dithered with respect to condemning the spreading violence, he finally disowned the perpetrators. Buhari has been defeated now three times by the PDP in his presidential bid.

The presidential results were very disappointing for the anti-corruption crusader Nuhu Ribadu. He got only 2 079 159 votes to Jonathan's 22 495 187 and Buhari's 12 214 853. Initial indications were that key governors and notables of his party had made deals with the PDP to support Jonathan in return for future favours. In any case, Ribadu, a newcomer to Nigeria's tough electoral field, never really had a chance even in areas where his party held governorships (mainly

predecessor died in early 2010 and then give way to a Northern candidate for presidency.

Instead, he repudiated the supposed elite consensus called 'zoning', and ran as his own man, as the flag-bearer of the PDP, after winning a hotly contested primary poll.

### Results marred by violence

There had initially been doubts about whether the result would be announced at all, since Jonathan's key opponent, former military leader General Muhammadu Buhari (of the Congress for Democratic Change,

Clearly, disgruntlement runs deep in the north as a result of Jonathan's repudiation of the 'zoning' agreement, which in effect has denied the north a chance to provide a two-term president for the country

the south-west), since as a northerner he was deemed far less palatable than Jonathan, from the minority Ijaw in the south. He also had little chance against the veteran campaigner Buhari.

### The 'National Question'

The post-election violence in northern Nigeria should not be viewed as merely a reaction to the suspicion that the votes had been rigged in favour of the incumbent, Jonathan, though it was clearly part of the reason for it. Northerners – civilian and military – have ruled Nigeria for 38 of its 51 years of existence as an independent state. This putative dominance is the cause of the great anxiety which Nigerians cryptically call the 'National Question', or, using another formulation, the 'Federal Character' of the nation: the idea that no region or cluster of states or related ethnic groups would dominate national politics in the country.

It is the reason why Nigeria has tended to be progressively fissiparous, breaking up old political units or states into smaller new ones that, because they are non-viable in themselves, are wholly dependent on the largesse of the federal government, making secession all but impossible. At independence, Nigeria had three regions and 301 local governments; since 1996, the last time new states were created, Nigeria has had 36 states and 774 local governments. The conspiracy theory emanating from Jonathan and his supporters around the violence – that it was orchestrated by disgruntled political figures and not at all spontaneous – should be understood partly in this context.

### Zoning did bring stability

This brings in the issue of 'zoning' – the elite consensus forged by the PDP to make sure that no part of the Nigerian Federation would be politically dominant. This is highly significant

politically. 'Zoning' is far from perfect, but the fact that it may be principally responsible for the political stability Nigeria has enjoyed since 1999 – the longest period of civil rule since the country's independence in 1960 – should be a cause of deep reflection.

Clearly, disgruntlement runs deep in the north as a result of Jonathan's repudiation of the 'zoning' agreement, which in effect has denied the north a chance to provide a two-term president for the country. The fact that Jonathan is Christian, and from an impoverished backwater – albeit oil-rich – state, makes matters worse in the eyes of many northern Nigerians. The violence was perpetrated by young, impoverished people, many of whom probably did not vote. Nigeria is a country where politicians hire assassins to kill their opponents, such are the stakes. Inspiring mobs to create mayhem to make a political point or gain political mileage is not at all inconceivable in Nigeria.

Nigeria surely needs consensus if it is to remain together, or is to have a stable democratic future. An important step forward would be for Jonathan to organise something like a national conference to debate the issue and forge an elite consensus to replace 'zoning'.

### Niger-Delta rebels support Jonathan


An important development during and after the elections was the support thrown behind Jonathan by the violent militants of the Niger Delta state. Yar'Adua had negotiated a peace agreement with the militants in which they were offered amnesty in exchange for laying down their arms. Violence, however, continued in the region, some of it no doubt perpetrated by the militants, but some perhaps by extraneous political elements wishing to undermine Jonathan, who hails from the region. The Amnesty Office set up by Yar'Adua in Abuja, the federal capital,

went up in flames on 3 March 2011. No one claimed responsibility for this. After Jonathan's win precipitated violence in the north, the Niger Delta militants vowed to fight to the death to protect Jonathan's tenure.

If the militants' support for Jonathan holds, and they finally accept the jurisdiction of the federal government over that key oil-producing state, then his presidency could have made a highly positive contribution to keeping Nigeria together and stabilising its oil production.

That, however, is only the very beginning of the effort to establish good governance, peace and stability in Nigeria.

Nigeria is Africa's largest democracy, its most populated country, and the most strategic in West Africa. It is the continent's largest oil producer and its most enthusiastic peace-enforcer. Nigerians have high hopes that their country, disfigured by decades of corruption and mismanagement, will finally turn the corner by entrenching practices of good governance. This will demand major reforms in all public sectors in the country, which can only be guaranteed by strong and visionary leadership. Entrenched corruption around the oil industry should be a key focus. Hailing from the oil-rich Bayelsa State himself, Jonathan must be keenly aware of the ravages caused by rapacious elite exploitation of this key industry, including distorting the country's development, creating an exploitative and unproductive ruling class and causing massive environmental degradation, as well as the impoverishment and oppression of citizens of the oil producing regions.

With an apparently strong mandate of his own, and with his promise to serve out only one term, Jonathan ought surely to immediately start working on these issues, even if that means, once again, going to battle with his PDP. 





*Africa's most populous nation has in the past played a significant role in the ECOWAS region, but the writer believes this is not enough.*

# Big Brother punching below its weight

Nigeria should lead by example and not by exception, writes **Francis Ikome**

Since gaining independence, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has tended to play the role of Big Brother in its immediate neighbourhood.

Some of its peers perceive this posturing as a form of regional and continental hegemony, displaying unacceptable paternalism and arrogance. However, there has also been a tacit

recognition that the country remains the unquestionable leader in efforts to pursue any successful regional or continental agenda, including efforts to resolve the region's numerous conflicts.

Looking back at the recent Ivorian post-election crisis, there were clear expectations that Nigeria should play a leading role in efforts to resolve

it. Helped by its current position as chair of ECOWAS, Nigeria's president Goodluck Jonathan sought to meet those expectations by facilitating the crafting of a common position for ECOWAS and a roadmap to resolve the crisis.

ECOWAS' position, shared by many other international actors, was that there was a clear winner of the elections in

Côte d'Ivoire, and therefore only one legitimate president, who must be assisted in every way possible by the international community to take up his position as head of state.

Nigeria facilitated ECOWAS' diplomacy, which focused largely on convincing the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo to cede power to President Alassane Ouattara. It also engaged the AU and the United Nations towards the same ends and was the leading voice in the threat to use legitimate force to uproot Laurent Gbagbo in the advent of the failure of diplomacy. However, despite Nigeria's commendable resolve, a number of factors (domestic and external) constrained its freedom of action in Côte d'Ivoire.

## Self-imposed problems

Notwithstanding its admittedly impressive record in regional and continental affairs, in the past few years, and particularly during the rule of the late President Musa Yar'Adua, Nigeria has punched far below its weight in domestic terms.

This has been partly because of an avalanche of self-imposed political, economic and social problems. In particular, poor governance, endemic corruption and the excessive politicisation of its diversity – religious, ethnic and otherwise – are seen to have robbed it of any credentials it may have had as a hegemonic entity in the region,

## The crisis in Côte d'Ivoire was a double-edged sword for Nigeria's foreign policy

let alone the continent.

This is in spite of the country's remarkable prominence in continental and global politics during the eight years (1999-2007) of Obasanjo's administration, partly facilitated by the good working relationship he had with former South African president Thabo Mbeki.

Following the April presidential elections, President Goodluck Jonathan continues to face a great many challenges, in spite of having been propelled first to the position of transitional president and then to that of presidential candidate for the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Although Jonathan's candidacy was won through the support of many influential powerbrokers from the Muslim-dominated north, the fact remains that many still resent him (a southerner) for robbing the north of the opportunity to retain power for another four-year term within the framework of the PDP's infamous 'gentleman's agreement' on the rotation of power between north and south.

Following the election and the violence that ensued (see article on

page 32) there is now a wide range of national issues awaiting the President-elect's attention, which all need to be prioritised over the ambition of wanting to play 'Big Brother' in the region.

This includes, among other things, the need to devise strategies to resolve the protracted insurgency in the oil-producing Niger Delta and sectarian violence in the northern parts of the country; to resolve the energy crisis that has been a major obstacle to Nigeria's economic take-off; to focus on rebuilding its infrastructure; to fight corruption and to institutionalise good governance generally.

The Babangida and Abacha governments had the luxury of limited legislative oversight, which enabled them to move with the kind of speed that was seen in the Nigerian-led ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

## No moral high ground

Even then, and despite the celebration of these interventions as success cases, they did not escape criticism with regard to their questionable legitimacy and the deficit in the clarity of their mandates.

Moreover, the country's firm stance on Côte d'Ivoire, particularly its insistence on respecting the voice of the people in line with democratic values enunciated by both ECOWAS and the AU, might be questioned, partly because Nigeria itself is perceived as lacking the necessary democratic credentials.

## Nigeria is one of Africa's most tried and tested regional actors

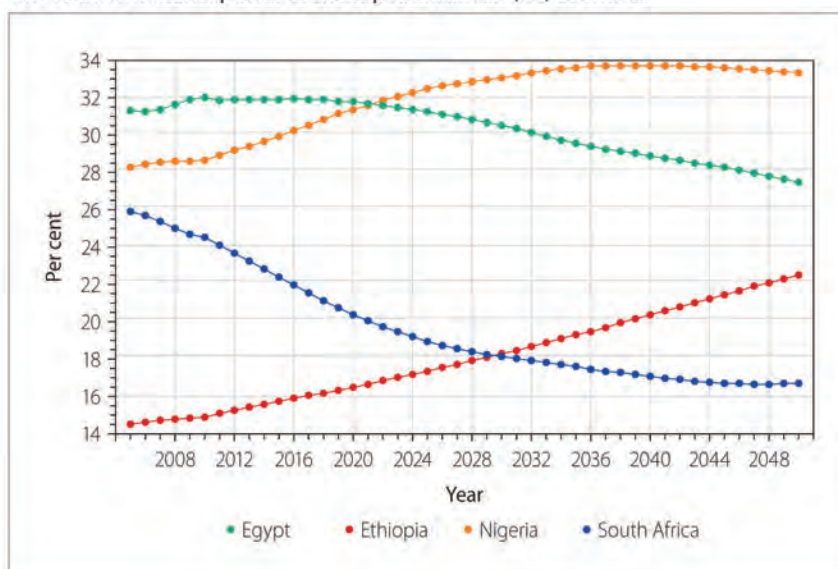
Despite the early fracturing of its polity shortly after independence, which culminated in the 1967-1970 civil war, the country must be credited for its pivotal role in the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, including the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

It must also be recognised for championing the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and the subsequent interjection of an ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) into Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early 1990s.

The country has been instrumental in shaping continental institutions and processes, beginning with the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, through the crafting of the 1993 Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Abuja Treaty for the establishment of an African Common Market, to the establishment of the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It also has an enviable record in contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations over the years.



The relative material power of the top four African (A4) countries



Studies done by the ISS and the Pardee Institute for Futures Studies in the US indicate Nigeria will increase in power and in influence in the next 40 years.

Source: ISS African Futures Monograph [www.issafrica.org](http://www.issafrica.org)

The country's appalling record in the management of its own elections is well documented. In particular, the controversies that surrounded the country's first attempt at the peaceful transfer of power from one civilian leader to the other in 2007 and the ensuing post-election conflict in the country were still fresh in the memories of many observers of the Ivorian scene.

Therefore, although Nigeria is seen to have redeemed itself through the manner in which it managed the transition from the late Yar'Adua to Jonathan, many still believe that it cannot hold the moral high ground on democratic questions in West Africa and the broader continent.

## Standing up to South Africa and Angola

Despite its success in facilitating the emergence of an ECOWAS common position on the crisis, Nigeria was less successful in building consensus among member states over the imperative of employing legitimate military force to uproot the Ivorian incumbent, Laurent Gbagbo.

Some ECOWAS states, including Ghana, Benin, Guinea, Gambia and Liberia, expressed reservations about the

use of military force, partly because of its potential to destabilise the entire region and also out of fear that their nationals in Côte d'Ivoire could face retaliation from President Gbagbo's supporters.

It is worth noting that Côte d'Ivoire's realities are fundamentally different from those of Liberia and Sierra Leone, which are usually pointed to as examples of successful Nigerian-led ECOWAS interventions in West Africa.

Côte d'Ivoire, by virtue of its historical status as West Africa's second largest economy after Nigeria, is of greater geostrategic importance than Liberia and Sierra Leone. In particular, the Francophone factor, which has always been one of the major obstacles to the attainment of Nigeria's foreign policy goals in West Africa, would most likely become a very critical issue if the threat to use military force were acted upon.

In this regard, although the positions of Nigeria and France seemed to converge over the crisis, it is clear that France did not allow Nigeria a free hand to lead a military intervention in Côte d'Ivoire.

On the continental level, although the AU initially aligned itself to the position of ECOWAS, deep divisions subsequently emerged among AU member states, not only over the use of military force but also

over substantive issues relating to the electoral process in Côte d'Ivoire.

In particular, Angola and South Africa were seen to be sympathetic to the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo, and their apparent persuasion by Gbagbo's claims of electoral fraud led to sympathy with his call for a recount of votes as part of the AU/ECOWAS mediation. These two Southern African states were also the leading proponents for the establishment of a government of national unity in Côte d'Ivoire, which they contended was a better option than military intervention. This position was perceived by Abuja as unacceptable meddling in its back yard, and a threat to Nigeria's hegemonic status in the West Africa, as well as undermining the position of ECOWAS.

The Ivorian crisis was a double-edged sword for Nigeria's foreign policy. On the one hand it provided the country the opportunity to re-assert its regional leadership status, including sending out a clear message against the apparent meddling by South Africa and Angola. On the other hand, the crisis exposed Nigeria's internal weaknesses and seriously eroded capabilities, as well as underscoring the fact that the greatness that enabled Nigeria to lead ECOMOG interventions in both Liberia and Sierra Leone was a thing of the past.

When all is said and done, Nigeria needs to put its house in order for its regional leadership role to acquire legitimacy, particularly on issues related to democracy and good governance. Similarly, it can only afford to promote peace and stability in the region and across the continent after it has been able to do so at home, particularly with regard to addressing the protracted insurgency in the Niger Delta and the sectarian violence in the northern part of the country. In the final analysis, Nigeria's and Jonathan's apparent steadfastness over regional crises will remain hollow until Nigeria shows that it can lead by example and not by exception. □

# The challenges of building BRICS

South Africa recently joined the BRICS grouping alongside Brazil, Russia, India and China.

**Marie-Lise du Preez** attended a think-tank symposium ahead of the Heads of State Summit in Hainan, China, in mid-April.

**T**he new kid on the block, South Africa, was welcomed to its first BRICS summit in April this year with much fanfare.

Still, some people are asking “so what is this BRICS?” Many seem to be stuck at the origin of the acronym ‘BRIC’, which comes from a phrase

initially coined by Goldman Sachs.

It would appear that not much has changed since *The Economist's* comments after the first BRIC summit in 2009 that it provided “more rhetoric than substance”.

This is perhaps not surprising when one considers the disparities that exist

within the group.

At best, the group's driving force seems to be the fact that the balance of economic power in the world is shifting, while institutionalised political power – as reflected in the global multilateral institutions – has not kept pace.

All agree that the financial system needs to be reformed, but the only agreement on what form it should take seems to be on ‘lowest common denominator’ issues like support for a rules-based trading system, combined with domestic policy space.

## A political role for the BRICS?

There is clearly still disagreement on whether BRICS should move beyond being a purely economic grouping to become a more geopolitical one.

That the individual BRICS countries are increasingly making their weight

South Africa's president Jacob Zuma (far right) was the new kid on the block at this year's BRICS summit in China



## 金砖国家领导人第三次会晤 BRICS Leaders Meeting





**At best, the group's driving force seems to be the fact that the balance of economic power in the world is shifting, while institutionalised political power (as reflected in the global multilateral institutions) has not held pace**

felt on the international stage is not to be disputed. The question that remains, however, is whether they should form a 'consolidated' group, as Russia suggested at the think-tank event preceding the Heads of State Summit on 13 April 2011.

Russia pushed the hardest for a bureaucratisation of BRICS. It suggested such things as a coordination bureau or council and thematic task forces.

The Russians' discourse seemed to come straight from the Cold War. Their talk of BRICS as an anti-Western pole in the world would suggest that they see BRICS as their second chance for world domination.

Although there seemed to be some natural affinity between Russia and China, the latter trod much more carefully, suggesting – as diplomatically as only the Chinese can – a move away from the 'us vs them' language of the Cold War. The reality is that, unhappy as China is with the still-hegemonic role of the West, its economy is highly interdependent with that of countries like the USA.

Indeed, it was one of the Chinese

delegates who gave the most coherent and simple explanation of what the BRICS member states have in common: they are all emerging powerhouses that simultaneously face very real challenges of large poor populations and rising inequality.

China argues that the BRICS countries will have to focus on what they have in common, while respecting each other's differences. One of the only positions championed by China at the symposium was the well-known one of 'non-interference'.

## **Resistance against expanding BRICS**

The membership issue is always lurking behind the scenes: what was the motivation for selecting these specific countries, except for the Goldman Sachs study, which has since been revised and did not include South Africa anyway? What about expanding membership even further? There seems to be a consensus that BRICS should 'deepen rather than broaden' its engagement at this stage, although what exactly this means was not agreed.

It appears that the question of whether South Africa should join was debated rather fiercely on the sidelines of a previous meeting, with not all of the original BRIC countries being in

favour of expanding the grouping. This should not come as a surprise. In economic terms, South Africa is definitely the BRIC's small brother. However, if the symposium is anything to go by, the country can hold its own diplomatically.

Considering South Africa's relative 'size' on the international stage, it will require considerable diplomatic finesse.

Russia, meanwhile, produced a thinly-veiled criticism of South Africa's position on the no-fly zone over Libya at the UN Security Council, where the rest of the BRICS abstained and only South Africa voted in favour.

The lengthy negotiation about the final draft of the concluding text of the symposium illustrated the catch-22 of BRICS: it might not be possible for the forum to 'stay away from politics', but the stark differences between the BRICS member states would make it near impossible for the grouping to form 'consolidated positions.'

South Africa seems to follow a normative foreign policy, which, due to difference in values among the BRICS, could lead to many disagreements.

South Africa was also the only BRICS member that pushed a regional (African) position on Libya. This is interesting, considering that the continent is perhaps the place where South Africa's position and role as mediator is challenged the most.

If I could have given South African president Jacob Zuma one piece of advice, it would have been to sort out South Africa's position on Libya, as this seems to be an issue that the BRICS will not let rest. □

**If I could have given South African president Jacob Zuma one piece of advice, it would have been to sort out South Africa's position on Libya, as this seems to be an issue that the BRICS will not let rest**

Marie-Lize du Preez is a senior researcher at the South African Institute for International Affairs.

# Looking for a new gateway to Africa?

While basking in the attention of being a new member of the BRICS, **Dianna Games** warns that South Africa shouldn't take for granted its status as the so-called 'Gateway to Africa'.

**A**t an African investment conference held in Dubai recently, the tiny emirate claimed to be an attractive gateway for companies looking at investing in African markets.

The conference in question was the annual business event for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa), which has 19 member states under its umbrella stretching all the way down Africa's east coast from Egypt to Swaziland.

The event was hosted by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, which put forward a strong case for multinationals to use the city state as a conduit for business into the continent given its proximity to Africa, excellent logistics, strong multinational presence, and its ability to leverage funding from the wealthy Middle Eastern states.

This seemed to be a direct challenge to South Africa, which has long believed itself to be the favoured gateway into Africa – or 'springboard into the continent', as many South Africans prefer to call it – for foreign multinationals.

South Africa also has a compelling case. It is the most diversified and sophisticated economy on the continent, it boxes above its weight in the world, and it is a major power in its own backyard. It also has a solid infrastructure and relatively sound telecommunications networks, and it offers a good lifestyle to foreigners, making it easier for

multinationals to hire top staff for their African operations. It also has world-class legal and commercial systems, good air links to African countries, and political stability.

Its long tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC and its occupation of the exclusive African seat at the G20 table has given rise to the country's view of itself as Africa's representative in the global community.

The invitation earlier this year to South Africa to join the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) alliance, an arrangement of commercial powerhouses from the global south, gave further impetus to the country's sense of 'exceptionalism' on the continent, notwithstanding questions about its qualification to join a group with much higher population numbers, greater global clout and more impressive growth figures.

In courting South Africa, the other BRIC states have frequently referred to the country as the gateway to the continent.

**The key element of the Emirate's approach, which differs from that of South Africa, is that it is hungry for new challenges, highly competitive, nimble and visionary**

This may be true for western companies. But the new investors in Africa, the BRIC states among them, are not relying on a soft landing in South Africa to realise their continental ambitions.

The advantages South Africa has offered in the past as a gateway are now being outweighed by considerations of geography, language, culture – and the location of sought-after resources that are leading the new multinationals in Africa directly to the heart of the matter.

China has direct links to resource-rich countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and Nigeria. While China-South Africa trade is significant, the latter is but one African country on the economic giant's investment radar.

Angola is the springboard of choice for the Brazilian multinationals, with some trickle-down to Mozambique. These countries are also the key point of contact for Africa-hungry Portugal, still a major player in Lusophone economies.

A rapidly reforming Nigeria with growth rates more than double those of South Africa is becoming a gateway to the West African region, while many Asian companies are going directly to East Africa to invest in emerging opportunities there.

With oil and gas opportunities now strung out across the continent, international players in that game are going directly to the markets, mostly





*The writer believes South Africa, unlike its BRICS partners, has not sufficiently capitalised on its proximity to the countries in its region.*

bypassing South Africa and other potential gateways.

The changing nature of entry to the continent reflects bigger changes in the way the world works.

These changes do not preclude South Africa. But the South African government, while basking in the diplomatic prestige of becoming a BRICS member, seems to be losing traction in key areas of its economy that may weaken its case in time as the destination of choice in Africa.

Critics maintain that South Africa is starting to backslide, pointing to its diminishing global competitiveness resulting from rising costs, slowing export performance, lack of trade liberalisation, low education levels, growing corruption and rampant trade unionism. Key sectors, such as agriculture and mining, are in decline.

Recent reports show that mining's share of the GDP has gone down because of empowerment obligations, power shortages, delays in issuing licences, talk of nationalisation in political circles, labour costs, and related problems. The country has benefited little from the commodities boom of the past decade.

Farmers are leaving South Africa in droves, looking for opportunities in other

African countries. According to research, there were 120 000 commercial farmers in South Africa in 1994; today only 37 000 remain and the country is importing food it used to produce.

Given the size of its stock exchange relative to other African exchanges, its profusion of private equity funds and its well-funded banks, South Africa is still the financial centre of Africa, but it has exchange controls in place that undermine its gateway role. In the meantime, liberalised countries such as Mauritius and Botswana have built attractive financial centres.

Even in its hinterland, South Africa has not realised its potential as a regional player. It has not capitalised sufficiently on its proximity to the rest of Africa, and nor has it used its political ties to build strong economic interests on the continent – unlike its BRICS partners.

All of these factors are quickly eroding the country's 'exceptionalism' that had positioned it as a gateway to the African continent, leaving Dubai, a city with a shifting population of less than two million people, with a good chance of becoming a significant gateway to Africa in time.

The key element of the Emirate's approach, which differs from that of

South Africa, is that it is hungry for new challenges, highly competitive, nimble and visionary. Its airline is quickly taking on the African carriers in their own back yard. South Africa, on the other hand, appears to be resting on its laurels.

Its focus on politics, rather than on economy, both at home and in the region, has not positioned it well for future growth. In time, when the BRICS bring on board other growing emerging market economies such as Indonesia, Vietnam and Turkey, South Africa's relevance in the global arena may diminish.

Even in Africa, Nigeria remains a challenger to South Africa's economic status as the continent's superpower, and there are other reformers with high growth rates and big plans.

South Africa's key structural challenges and nationalisation threats will not be resolved by aligning itself with emerging global powers. It needs to keep itself relevant in the rapidly changing international order and not get distracted by all the attention currently being bestowed upon it. □

Dianna Games is vice president of The Africa Advisors, Global Pacific & Partners; [dianna@glopac.com](mailto:dianna@glopac.com)





**Global Pacific & Partners**  
London • The Hague • Johannesburg • Nicosia • Rio de Janeiro

**Africa's Premier International Oil & Gas Event**  
**Sub-Saharan & Maghreb-North Africa**

**Advance Notice Pre-Registration 10% Discount Prior 31 July 2011**

# 18<sup>th</sup> Africa Oil Week

31 October - 4 November 2011, BMW Pavilion Theatre  
Cape Town, South Africa

[www.petro21.com](http://www.petro21.com)

## Confirmed Speakers Include

HE Gabriel Nguema Lima, Minister, Ministry Mines, Industry & Energy, Equatorial Guinea  
Jacques Marraud des Grottes, President Africa, Total  
Michael Blaha, Executive Chairman, Cove Energy  
Pedro Augusto Cortes Xavier Bastos, E&P Int'l Business Development Manager, Petrobras  
Babafemi Oyewole, Executive Director, APPA Fund For Technical Cooperation  
Ahmed Salem Ould Tekrou, Director General Petroleum, Ministère de l'Energie et du Pétrole, Mauritania  
Tim O'Hanlon, Vice President, Africa Business, Tullow Oil  
Hassan Hassan, Chairman & Founder, Simba Energy  
Paul Welch, Chief Executive Officer, Chariot Oil & Gas  
BN Ghosh, Chief Operating Officer, OMEL Nigeria  
HE Celestin Mbuyi Kabango, Minister of Hydrocarbons, Ministère des Hydrocarbures, Kinshasa, DRC  
Joseph Pili Mawenzi, Secretary General of Hydrocarbons, Ministère des Hydrocarbures, Kinshasa, DRC  
Dr Alan Stein, Managing Director, Ophir Energy  
Ian Craig, Regional Executive Vice President, Africa, Shell  
Ebbie Haan, Chief Executive, Sasol Petroleum International  
Galib Virani, Associate Director, Afren, London, UK  
Yi Zhang, Chief Executive Officer, Addax Petroleum Corporation  
Francisco Pulit, Vice President, Corporate Development, Pluspetrol  
Eddy Belle, Deputy Chief Executive, Seychelles Petroleum Company  
Robert Pascoe, Vice President, New Ventures, BHP Billiton  
Alexander Leslie, Director, Business Intelligence, Risk Advisory  
David Pickard, Head Of Maritime Services, Drum Cussac  
Kjetil Solbraekke, Chief Executive Officer, Panoro Energy  
Martin Trachsel, Chief Executive Officer, South Atlantic Petroleum Ltd  
Dr Sam Algar, Vice President, Worldwide Exploration, Murphy Oil  
Ousseini Assane Boureima, Director of Exploration, Ministère des Mines de l'Energie, Niger  
Teklehaimanot Debrezion, Director, Hydrocarbon Division, Ministry of Energy & Mines, Eritrea  
Dr Duncan Clarke, Chairman & CEO, Global Pacific & Partners  
Mthozami Xiphu, CEO, Petroleum Agency South Africa  
Brian O' Cathain, Executive Chairman, Petroceltic  
Ketsela Tadesse, Head, Promotion Operations Dept, Ministry of Mines & Energy, Ethiopia  
Scott Aitken, Chief Executive Officer, Seven Energy Ltd  
Keith Hill, President & CEO, Africa Oil Corp  
Marcio Rocha Mello, Chief Executive Officer, HRT Oil & Gas Ltd  
Robin Vela, Chief Executive Officer, SacOil Holdings  
Mwendia Nyaga, Petroleum Consultant, Ministry of Energy, Kenya  
Tewodros Ashenafi, Chairman & CEO, Southwest Energy  
HE Hussein Abdi Dualah, Minister of Mining, Energy, & Water Resources, Republic of Somaliland  
Kennedy Liyungu, Director, Geological Survey Department, Zambia  
Mamadou Faye, Technical Advisor, Petrosen  
Thore Kristiansen, Sr VP, Development & Production, South America & Sub-Saharan Africa, Statoil  
Andrew Cochran, Chief Executive Officer, Dominion Petroleum  
Rob Tims, Managing Director, Corporate Advisory, Oil & Gas, Standard Chartered Bank  
Phil Heilberg, President & CEO, Jarch Capital LLC  
Robert van der Poll, International Manager, Law of the Sea, Fugro Group  
Peter Ntephe, Chief Executive Officer, ERHC Energy Inc  
Russell Scheirman, President & COO, VAALCO Energy  
Senior Executive, Maersk Oil  
Adriano Paul Sebastiao, Chief Geophysicist, Sonangol, Angola  
Evertson September, Vice President, New Ventures Upstream, PetroSA  
Haddou Jabour, Promotion & Partnership Manager, ONHYM, Morocco  
Dave Fassom, Director, Stellar Energy  
Pierre Raillard, Vice President, Infrastructure, Tanzania, Orca Exploration  
Fredrik Ohn, Chief Executive Officer, Svenska Petroleum Exploration AS  
Immanuel Mulunga, Petroleum Commissioner, Ministry of Mines, Namibia  
Fafa Sanyang, Petroleum Commissioner, Ministry of Petroleum, Gambia  
Kevin Hart, Chief Executive, Bowleven  
Richard Bray, Chief Operating Officer, Afex Global  
Wale Tinubu, Chief Executive, Oando plc, Lagos  
Andrew Obaje, Director, Department of Petroleum Resources, Abuja, Nigeria  
Manfred Boeckmann, General Manager, New Ventures, Africa/Middle East, RWE Dea, Hamburg  
Ernest Rubondo, Assistant Commissioner Geology, Petroleum & Exploration Department, Kampala  
Daniel Gnangni, Managing Director, Petroci, Cote d'Ivoire  
Ian Gordon, Manager Global New Ventures, Noble Energy  
Christopher Naylor, President & Chief Executive Officer, National Oil Company of Liberia  
Mike Rego, Group Exploration Director, Aminex  
Ken Kuroda, Senior Vice President Energy Business, Europe, CIS, Middle Africa, Mitsubishi Corporation  
Halfani Halfani, Director, E&P Technical Services, Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation  
Peter Landau, Executive Director, Range Resources Ltd  
Michael Heslop, Director, Preng & Associates  
Neil Taylor, Director, SVL, Angola  
Sola Adepotun, Senior Partners, Adepotun, Caxton, Martins, Agbor & Segun, Nigeria  
Tim Zoba Jr, Managing Director, Global Business Development, IHS Cera, Houston  
Dr Mike Fischer, Chief Operating Officer, Ophir Energy, Perth

Plus Separately Bookable

**13<sup>th</sup> Scramble For Africa: Strategy Briefing - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011**

*Presentations By Dr Duncan Clarke, Chairman & CEO, Global Pacific & Partners*

**8<sup>th</sup> Africa Independents Forum - 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011**

**18<sup>th</sup> Africa Upstream Conference - 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**41<sup>st</sup> PetroAfricanus Dinner In Africa - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011**

*With Guest Speaker: Galib Virani, Associate Director, Afren*



**ENHANCE  
YOUR PROFILE  
AND  
BRANDING**

**World-Class Program: Africa's Crème de la Crème**

**With 75+ Presentations**

**Plus 55 Exhibitors**

## Join as a Sponsor & Exhibitor

Join us as a Sponsor to the 18th Africa Oil Week 2011, build new presence and/or further establish your position in the region. Forge new business deals, network with key industry players and increase your companies visibility.

Book Now - Exhibition limited and is always fully booked

## Sponsors

2011 Lead Sponsor



Platinum Sponsor



Gold Sponsor



Silver Sponsor



Bronze Sponsor



**ExxonMobil**



## CONTACT

The Hague  
Tel: +31 70 324 6154  
Fax: +31 70 324 1741

Johannesburg  
Tel: +27 11 880 7052  
Fax: +27 11 880 1798


Group Managing Director  
Babette van Gessel  
[babette@glopac-partners.com](mailto:babette@glopac-partners.com)

Sponsors  
Amanda Wellbeloved  
[amanda@glopac-partners.com](mailto:amanda@glopac-partners.com)

Exhibition  
Sonika Greyenstein  
[sonika@glopac-partners.com](mailto:sonika@glopac-partners.com)

Registration  
Tanya Beddall  
[tanya@glopac-partners.com](mailto:tanya@glopac-partners.com)





# Moral dilemmas of the black diamonds

**Percy Zvomuya** speaks to Cynthia Jele, winner of the Commonwealth Best First Book Prize for the Africa region for her novel, *Happiness is a Four-Letter Word*.

**W**hen I spoke with Cynthia Jele, she was about to go Australia for the Sydney Writers' Festival, where the champions from the 'Provinces' (Africa, the Caribbean and Canada, South Asia and Europe, South East Asia and the Pacific) were to engage in a battle royal on 16-22 May.

The provincial champions include *Bird Eat Bird* by Katrina Best (Canada); *Sabra Zoo* by Mischa Hiller (UK); and *A Man Melting* by Craig Cliff (New Zealand).

Jele's novel, set in Johannesburg, documents the lives of four women in their 30s: Zaza, Tumi, Princess and Nandi. The post-apartheid scenario the author paints, full of opportunities and in which

the black middle class is rapidly growing, is eerily reminiscent of the time when slavery had just been outlawed in the United States.

Eric Foner, in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, wrote of "how blacks relished opportunities to flaunt their liberation from the innumerable regulations, significant and trivial, associated with slavery." Blacks held "mass-meetings and religious services unrestrained by white surveillance, acquired dogs, guns and liquor (all barred to them under slavery) and refused to yield the sidewalks to whites."

In Jele's novel, the reign of the "middle-aged white males" in which "every

woman's name was Tjerrie" has come to an end; black-owned firms are on the increase, some are establishing their presence in the rest of Africa, and even white-owned firms have added a bit of melanin to their names.

Nandi, a chartered accountant by training, is about to become a partner at Le Roux, Mathaba and Associates (formerly known as Le Roux and Associates), an accounting firm. Boasting a Master's degree in education, Tumi is a teacher and married to the sales and marketing manager of a technology firm. Princess is a lawyer working for the Women's Rights Law Clinic, an NGO dealing with women's rights issues.

## Interview

### Books

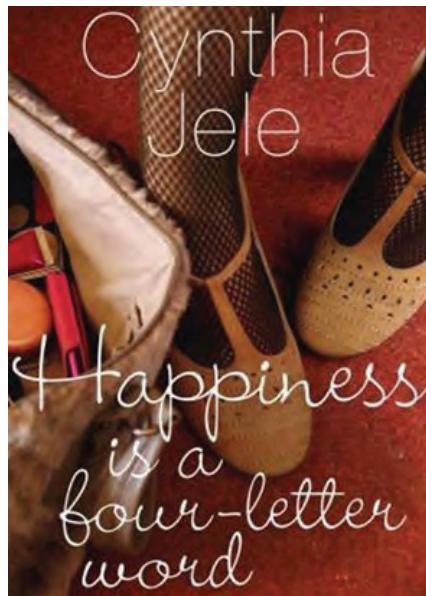
Completing the foursome is Zaza, an enchantress and celebrity philanthropist who has a millionaire husband she's cheating on.

These are women for whom using public transport, living in cramped, squalid conditions and apartheid's brutal footprint are a blurry memory. Their material needs catered for, their crises have more to do with a schizophrenia of late capitalism manifested in narcissism, consumerism and insatiable appetites. In his work *Valences of the Dialectic*, Marxist and philosopher Frederic Jameson argues that late capitalism is typified by consumption, the development of an "advertising and image society, or in other words an emergence of commodification as a fundamental social and political issue." Dolce & Gabbana sunglasses, multi-million rand houses, Carducci suits, Jenni Button and fast cars are the staples of the *nouveau riche* classes.

Thembi, Zaza's maid, tells her employer of the fate of a neighbour who was ejected from her family home by an enraged husband. She ends the morality tale with a question: "You modern women" who "have everything – rich husbands, big houses, fancy cars – and yet you're never satisfied. Tell me, why do you always want and want?"

It's a mind-boggling question for Zaza and, for a moment, she doesn't know how to reply. Eventually she confesses: "What I do know is the big house and the cars and money don't guarantee one's happiness. Sometimes you have everything and yet have nothing." Zaza is a symbol of this gnawing sense of emptiness and overwhelming lack of purpose that must be soothed by sexual distractions. She leaves her mansion in Bryanston to enjoy stolen moments with her lover in a ramshackle rat-hole in Pretoria.

*Happiness is a Four-Letter Word* is an accomplished work, powered by the drama and melodrama of the lives of its protagonists. Whenever the novel's narrative energies are petering out and



***Happiness is a Four-Letter Word* is an accomplished work, powered by the drama and melodrama in the lives of its protagonists**

the story's arc seems to be dipping, the author throws in some action to propel the narrative. The result is a rollicking tale, or tales, that are somewhat spoilt by borrowing heavily from the 'happily ever after' template of popular female literature. After conjuring existential conundrums, uneasy moral dilemmas, torrential scenarios, situations requiring the quick decision-making abilities of a pilot, the author chooses simpler – simplistic, even – ways to resolve the questions she has raised throughout the novel. Perhaps it's a requirement of the genre, or perhaps it's the belief carried by the downtrodden and optimistic that things – bad governments, dysfunctional marriages, cruel employers – must surely come right at some point.

Jele currently works as a management consultant in Johannesburg. She went to St Victor High School, a Catholic institution in KwaZulu-Natal, and then studied for a BTech in Public Health at the Technikon Natal (now the Durban University of Technology). After graduating she found that she wasn't really excited about the profession she

had studied for and instead went to the United States as part of an au pair programme in 1999. She then enrolled at the North Central College in Illinois, where she gained a BA in international business from North Central College. She moved on to the UK for a year until her return to South Africa in 2006.

Jele's fiction has been rewarded previously, first in 2008 when her two stories won the first and fourth prize in the BTA/Anglo-Platinum short story competition, a contest that was run by literacy activist Beulah Thumbadoo until it was discontinued when Anglo-Platinum withdrew its sponsorship. By a strange coincidence, Thumbadoo was one of this year's judges of the Commonwealth Writers Prize. This presented a dilemma for Thumbadoo. "It was a special moment," she said, just before the prizes were announced. "When I saw the book I recused myself." In the event, Thumbadoo's fellow judges also agreed that the book was exceptional, a worthy contestant for the prize.

For her part, Jele says that she was "completely surprised" by the gong. "When you have written a book that is classified as 'chick-lit' [a derogatory name for women's literature], you're made to believe that your book is not of literary importance, let alone worthy of a prize. The award is definitely something the genre needs; I'm very honoured."

And looking back at the last decade, she is enthused by the books that have come out. "I'm always amazed at the number of new titles that come up each year – the content, the depth, the variety, the relevance; I think it's all there. And I love the fact that we have the freedom to produce material that we want to write about."

By the time you read this, you'll probably know who has won the battle in Australia. Whatever happens, one thing is clear: Jele is an exciting new author, who melds aspects from literary fiction and the popular to come up with readable and fascinating stories. [a]





7% up

## Share our influence

The Mail & Guardian has powered up by 7% to cut through the 50 000\* circulation barrier. As one of South Africa's most influential newspapers, the strength and influence of this feisty weekly rests in its power to report fairly, analytically and truthfully week after week. If you are in the business of shaping and influencing others, we can help you. We sell 50 225 newspapers every Friday and reach more than one million readers both in print and online.

Just by advertising with us, you share our top position of influence

To advertise call:

Johannesburg: 011 250 7300

Cape Town: 021 425 9028

Durban: 031 266 7782

\*(Audit Bureau of Circulation, Q4, 2010)

Call 011 250 7300 or SMS "subs" to 34917 and we will deliver a copy to your door every Friday, or go to [www.mg.co.za/subscriptions](http://www.mg.co.za/subscriptions)

Mail & Guardian online  
www.mg.co.za  
**M&G**

# A tale of **two** Liberias

Jonny Steinberg, *Little Liberia: An African Odyssey in New York City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011)

Reviewed by Lansana Gberie

A few years ago I stayed for a couple of days at a friend's apartment in a Dickensian high-rise building on Bowen Street in Staten Island, New York. The building was full of Liberians, many very young. My friend took me to a restaurant and bar in one of the cramped apartments – the booze was much cheaper than elsewhere, and the talk was all Liberian. It was an illegal business outfit, of course, since it wasn't registered and was tax-free. I felt I was in a version of Liberia's capital city Monrovia, but with money...

Liberians have been living in the US for decades. Indeed, many of Liberia's ruling elite before the coup in 1980 had US citizenship: the father of President William R Tolbert, the last of the Americo-Liberian leaders, was actually born in the US, into an African-American family. What I did not notice during my stay there was an inchoate animosity in the Liberian community deriving from the country's recent past

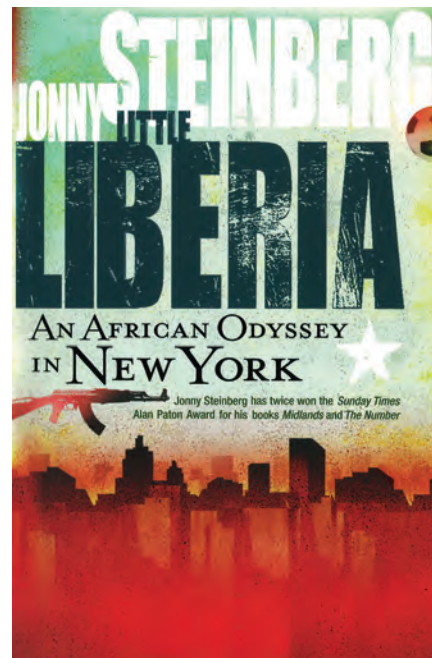
Jonny Steinberg's very interesting account of Liberia's New York community through the eyes of two of its protagonists lays bare the troubles of this immigrant community in a charming way

of bloody coup and horrific civil war, or reflecting the deep political, social and ethnic divisions in Liberia itself.

Jonny Steinberg's very interesting account of Liberia's New York community through the eyes of two of its protagonists lays bare the troubles of this immigrant community in a charming way. For two years, Steinberg, a South African writer and journalist, shadows the two men in the neighbourhoods of Clifton and Stapleton in the Parkview area of Staten Island, New York, which hosts some 4 000 Liberian refugees.

This methodology has its risk – prolonged intimacy of this sort can undermine objectivity and sound judgement – but Steinberg balances the picture by talking to countless other Liberians and consulting more conventional sources. More importantly, he visits Liberia for a month and travels around the country, including to the county from which one of the protagonists, Jacob Massaquoi, hailed. The result is a nuanced and sympathetic account. (Here is the place for me to state, by way of full disclosure, that I know Steinberg, and I met him during his Liberia visit. I was then head of the Liberia Office of the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice, ICTJ).

This book, in my view, is valuable for two reasons. Firstly, it serves as a trenchant, though understated, criticism of the rather faddish approach to transitional justice – the knee-jerk idea that after atrocious wars such as that experienced by Liberia, and without a careful consideration of the history and socio-political configuration of the country, there is need to set up a South African-style truth commission as a way of accounting for the conflict and of



fostering reconciliation.

Steinberg followed the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), especially the Commission's commendable – on the face of it – attempts to collect civil-war-related testimonies from diaspora Liberians in the US. In fact, discordant political and ethnic interests and the deep divisions in the Liberian community (epitomised by that between Massaquoi, who experienced the war and sustained a shrapnel wound to the leg, and the gregarious and charming Rufus Arkoi, who arrived from Liberia before the war and became a successful football coach training young Liberians in New York, among other valuable community work) seriously undermined this effort. Even within Liberia, as I saw for myself while working with the TRC, the process was wobbly and controversial from the start, and it was unable either to create “a clear picture of the past” or “facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation” (the TRC's core mandate).



Steinberg is a lot more critical of Arkoi than of Massaquoi, which I find unfair. Arkoi is described as having “sat out the [Liberian] war in the US” and accused of harbouring designs to be president of Liberia. But Arkoi went to the US long before the war (like many thousands of Liberians) and, being neither a soldier nor, in fact, a politician, should not reasonably be expected to have gone back to experience the brutal, nihilistic conflict. As it happens, I find the work that Arkoi has been doing in the US admirable and important enough to qualify him over and above the countless number of other portfolio politicians in Liberia wanting to be president. Massaquoi, for his part, was a young student who got caught in the thick of things. One admires his endurance, sympathises with his sufferings during the war, and wishes him well in his staunch ambition to be highly educated. One respects his community work, too. But this does not necessarily place him on a higher level than Arkoi.

Secondly, Steinberg’s exploration of diaspora politics and the travails of a transplanted community is both subtle and immensely timely. He makes some play of the slight revulsion of older Liberians who were well established in the US towards the newly arrived, war-displaced and somewhat febrile young immigrants. But this is as old as immigration itself, and the literature on the Irish Americans, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans shows the deep unease, bothering on neurosis, of settled ethnic communities to the influx of poorer, less educated members of their ethnicity in their neighbourhoods – the kind of pathology which indicates fear of one’s middle class pretensions being exposed.

There are a number of repetitions in this book, and they appear deliberate and stylistically laboured. One thinks as well that some of the minor characters



*Award-winning South African writer Jonny Steinberg*

that Steinberg invests some effort in sketching are extraneous. It certainly would have been helpful if he had reflected more systematically on the issue of memory, the underlying – though unstated – theme of this book. We get a tantalising glimpse of it in the final chapter. Steinberg gives both Arkoi and Massaquoi a copy of his manuscript to read before publication. As might be expected, the busy Arkoi is uninterested, or is interested only in the promise that he will get a portion of the royalties from it. The more sophisticated Massaquoi, however, is appalled at the portrayal of him; he doesn’t seem to recognise a lot of what he told Steinberg in the year

and half of their conversations. Or, rather, he doesn’t quite want to see it in print. The whole thing seems to him to have been a hoax, a set-up by the writer to get material out of him. He feels proprietorial – or at least this is Steinberg’s impression.

I suspect that there is something more than this at play in Massaquoi’s subtle mind. Memory gets affected by time and distance, and what people share with strangers or others of their experiences is often mediated and abbreviated by circumstance. This is why truth commissions are a very tricky thing. In their process, truth itself is on trial. This is the principal lesson I gleaned from Steinberg’s book. □

# Goodbye to a peacemaker

**H**enri Boshoff, head of the Peace Missions Programme at the Institute for Security Studies, died on 25 April in a fatal car accident. He was a dedicated family man, very active in his community and a renowned expert on security issues in Africa.

The following are extracts from the numerous messages received upon his death:

Henry has made a tremendous contribution to our common efforts for the promotion of peace and security on the continent. His death is a terrible loss.

*Mr El Ghassim Wane, Director, Peace and Security Department of the African Union, Addis Ababa*

Although it can be little consolation at this time, there must be some solace to be taken that Henri as Head of Programme was helping shape and mentor the next generation of analysts on critical security issues.

*Paul Engel, Director, European Centre for Development Policy Management, Brussels*

On behalf of Interpol, I would like to express our deepest regret and extend to you and to Mr Boshoff's family our sincerest condolences for this tragic loss.

*Ronald K Noble, Secretary General, Interpol, Lyons, France*

We all have a vibrant memory of him as a cheerful and passionate person, and a professional colleague with extensive knowledge of African security affairs.

*Luc van de Goor, Head of Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute, The Hague*

Let me extend our deepest sorrow at this tragic incident and the loss of a

dedicated and warm colleague.

*Kwesi Aning, Director, Research Department, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training centre (KAIPTC), Accra, Ghana.*

His death is certainly not only a loss to the ISS but to the entire African Continent.

*Ross Sanoto, Director, Defence, Justice and Security, Office of the President, Gaborone, Botswana*

He was a genuine activist for social justice and one of the most renowned military and security experts to have ever come out of our beautiful city.

*Mr Kgositso Ramakgopa, Executive Mayor, Pretoria.*

He was a great man.

*Col Thomas E Sheperd, USA Director of African Studies Department of National Security and Strategy*

This is a great loss not only to his dear family and to the ISS, but to us all who knew and interacted with him in the peacekeeping field.

*Brigadier Robert Kibochi, Director International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) Nairobi, Kenya*

He was a giant among men and I truly believe we have lost a great mind in SA, Africa and the world.

*Siki Mgabadeli, Presenter, SAFM radio.*


We have lost not only one of the best men ever – a gentleman, with great integrity and kindness, selfless and a protector of all, but also an irreplaceable wise man and peacemaker.

*Paula Cristina Roque, former colleague*



Henri Boshoff was born in Pretoria on 12 April 1957.

After doing his national military service, he taught in Pretoria until 1986 when he joined the South African Defence Force, eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He also obtained an honours degree in African Politics in 1995, and later while at the ISS, a masters' degree. He left the SANDF at the end of 2001 to join the Institute for Security Studies as military analyst for the Africa Security Analysis Programme, with a specific focus on the Great Lakes Region.

On 1 April 2009 he was appointed Head of the Peace Missions Programme with particular responsibility for the Norwegian funded Training for Peace project. He is survived by his wife Leonie and his son Jean. 



# ISS Publications

African counter-terrorism  
legal frameworks  
a decade after 2001



Jolyon Ford

African Futures 2050



Jakkie Cilliers, Barry Hughes and Jonathan Moyer

Merchants of  
African conflict

More than just a pound of flesh



Edited by Sabelo Gumedze

Contact [pubs@issafrica.org](mailto:pubs@issafrica.org) if you wish to  
order one of these monographs





INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES  
PO Box 1787  
Brooklyn Square  
Tshwane (Pretoria)  
0075, South Africa  
E-mail: [iss@issafrica.org](mailto:iss@issafrica.org)

# ISS Vision

As a leading African human security research institution, the ISS works towards a stable and peaceful Africa characterised by sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law, democracy, collaborative security and gender mainstreaming.

**Knowledge empowers Africa**  
*Le savoir émancipe l'Afrique*

The ISS has offices in  
Cape Town, Pretoria, Addis Ababa,  
Nairobi and Dakar