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Towards a new pan-Africanism

Julius Nyerere said that African unity need not be a dream – it could be a vision. It is up to today's African intellectuals to rekindle his ideas about pan-Africanism – avoiding the pitfalls of narrow state nationalism, writes **Issa G Shivji**

MWALIMU JULIUS Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah were towering figures of pan-Africanism. They arrived at Pan-Africanism through different intellectual and political routes. Nyerere found pan-Africanism through Tanganyikan nationalism; Nkrumah found Ghanaian nationalism through pan-Africanism.

Mwalimu's intellectual formation was steeped in missionary influence. When in England, he came into political contact with the Labour Party and the Fabian Colonial Bureau. His anti-colonialism was moderate, his approach to change gradualist. Nkrumah went to Lincoln University in the US, a black college. He had first-hand experience of racial discrimination, lived in Harlem during summer vacations and was mentored by great African-American pan-Africanists like W E B du Bois, George Padmore and C L R James. Nkrumah's anti-colonialism was grounded in his understanding of the political economy of imperialism; his approach to independence was radical. Nkrumah ended up writing a great treatise, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Mwalimu authored the *Arusha Declaration: Socialism and Self-Reliance*.

Nkrumah did not survive. Imperialism overthrew him in a CIA-engineered coup only a year after publication of *Neo-Colonialism*. Mwalimu survived, but the *Arusha Declaration* did not. Neo-liberalism discredited and buried 'socialism and self-reliance' in a Reaganite counter-revolution against development and national self-determination.

In spite of these differences in the intellectual and political formation of the two men, they were both unreservedly great pan-Africanists and fighters for African unity. They differed in their approach. Nkrumah wanted the United States of Africa 'now, now', whereas Nyerere counselled gradualism. Several decades later, Mwalimu paid wholesome tribute to Nkrumah for his single-minded crusade for African unity. In the process, he acknowledged their different intellectual backgrounds, and even admitted that Nkrumah had a point. Some 40 years of 'state nationalism' has made African unity even harder to achieve – just when Africa needs it most.

I propose to isolate two strands in Mwalimu's thought. One relates to the rationale or justification for the unity of Africa, the other to the agency that would bring it about. Mwalimu deployed three interrelated elements in his argument for unity. For a lack of better words, I sum them up as identity, non-viability and sovereignty.

Julius Nyerere, right, greets Cuban leader Fidel Castro … the Tanzanian leader saw 'socialism and self-reliance' as key weapons in the fight against imperialism. AP Photo/file

A singular African identity

There is constant assertion in Mwalimu's speeches and writings of the 'African-ness' of the African people. Unlike other people, Mwalimu said, our identity is African, not Tanzanian, Ghananian or Gabonese. Not only is our own perception of ourselves African, even outsiders recognise us as Africans.

Mwalimu's was a consistent anti-colonialism; Nkrumah's a militant anti-imperialism. Mwalimu sneered at imperialists; Nkrumah stung them. Mwalimu saw African unity as a goal, which could be achieved by small steps. Any number of African states uniting in any form – economically or politically, regionally or otherwise – was, for Mwalimu, a step forward. For Nkrumah, national liberation and African unity were two sides of the same coin, the coin being an anti-imperialist, pan-Africanist struggle.

Mwalimu conceptualised the task of the first generation of African nationalists as twofold: national liberation (meaning independence) and unity. By 1994, when South Africa formally ended apartheid, the first task was complete. In Mwalimu's assessment, the first-generation African nationalists succeeded in the task of national liberation but failed in the task of African unity. A 'stagest' approach is implied here – independence first, then unity. Within unity, too, there are stages – regional unity leading to continental unity.

To be fair, Mwalimu recognised the difficulty of his stages theory. He argued, for example, that the proposed East African Federation should precede the independence of individual countries, otherwise unity would become difficult. History has proved him right. But the basis and logic of his argument for regional unity first, before independence, was similar to Nkrumah's call for immediate continental federation. Nkrumah's position was that regional unities would make continental unity even more difficult. He viewed 'regionalisation' as being balkanisation on a larger scale.

Fifty years later, we are less regionalised and even more balkanised. In his *Reflections* on his 75th birthday, Mwalimu once again returned to the theme of the balkanisation of Africa. He said the Balkans themselves were being Africanised as they were absorbed into the larger European Union – while Africans were being tribalised.

Mwalimu said: '…these powerful European states are moving towards unity, and you people are talking about the atavism of the tribe, this is nonsense! I am telling you people. How can anybody think of the tribe as the unity of the future, hakuna!'

Another underlying difference between the gradualist and radical approaches of Nyerere and Nkrumah has not been sufficiently analysed.

For Nkrumah, unity itself, like liberation, was an anti-imperialist struggle, not a formal process of dissolving sovereignties. Amílcar Cabral captured the national liberation struggle as an anti-imperialist struggle well when he said, 'So long as imperialism is in existence, an independent African state must be a liberation movement in power, or it will not be independent.' The notion of an independent African state being a 'national liberation movement in power' gives us the core of the ideology and politics of pan-Africanism as a vision of not only unity but liberation.

African liberation is not complete with the independence of single entities called countries. 'Territorial nationalism' is not African nationalism. African nationalism can only be pan-Africanism or else, as Mwalimu characterised it, it is 'the equivalent of tribalism within the context of our separate nation states'. Pan-Africanism gave birth to nationalism, not the other way round. This is a powerful argument implied in Mwalimu's ideas on African unity.

Julius Nyerere with Nelson Mandela … for the former, the end of apartheid in SA and continent-wide liberation marked the end of the first great task of African nationalism – the next would be unity. AP Photo/Adil Bradlow

Non-viability of African states

Mwalimu spent a lot of time demonstrating the irrationality and non-viability of African states. He used the Kiswahili diminutive *vinchi* to describe them. I translate *vinchi* as 'statelets' (as in islets). These statelets had neither geographical nor ethnic rationality. There are 53 independent African states, all members of the UN. 'If numbers were horses,' Mwalimu quipped, 'Africa would be riding high!' Yet Africa is the weakest continent. World councils make decisions without regard to the interests of Africa.

Let us not glorify nation-states inherited from colonialism, Mwalimu used to tell his fellow state leaders. He admonished the new generation of African leaders to reject the 'return to tribe'. He characterised the current upsurge of ethnic, racial and other forms of narrow nationalisms as fossilising 'Africa into the wounds inflicted upon it by the vultures of imperialism'. Colonial boundaries were artificially carved by the colonialists, of the colonialists and for the colonialists. They have little to do with the history or cultures of Africa. The map of Africa is full of straight-line boundaries, unlike other continents. It is as if someone draw them with a geometry set – which is more or less what happened when colonial powers met at the Berlin Conference in 1885 to slice up their booty.

Mwalimu argued that the mini-states of Africa could not, on their own, exercise their sovereign right to make their own decisions in a global world dominated by the powerful. He emphasised, particularly in early writings, that erstwhile colonial masters would divide us, based on our sovereignties,

to continue ruling us. He placed a great premium on the right of the people to make their own decisions – which is the fundamental meaning of independence.

But Mwalimu was a head of state, a political leader. Underlying his position on the right of the people to make their own decisions was the unstated assumption of state sovereignty. People make their decisions through their states. In fact, the dichotomy and the contradiction between people's sovereignty and state sovereignty were fudged in Mwalimu's thought and much more so in his political practice.

A state of contradiction

I will not go into his political practice except to say that it is closely connected with the other strand in his thought, the question of agency.

Having argued for African unity, the question arises: Who will bring it about? Which social agency will be the carrier of this great historical task? Neither Nyerere nor Nkrumah raised these questions in this form, at least not while they were in power. But implied in their position was that it should be the state. Partly this was an acknowledgement of the historical formation of the state in colonial Africa; partly it was realpolitik.

The state in Africa was a colonial imposition. It did not develop organically through social struggles within the African formation. When we raised the flag of independence, sang our national anthem and proclaimed sovereignty, it was the sovereignty of the state inherited from colonialism. In that sense, it was not our state; we took over the colonial state. There was no internal social class to shoulder the task of nation-building and economic development. The only available organised force was the state. The colonial heritage thus left the first generation of African nationalists with no option. The task of transformation fell on the state, almost by default. This is where the real contradiction lay. For the state which was supposed to undertake the task of nation-building was itself a colonial state, the very antithesis of a national state.

When it came to building African unity, the contradiction was even more blatant. First, independence meant attaining state sovereignty. Independence before unity meant recognising and reinforcing colonial boundaries. Ironically, the man who condemned colonial boundaries most was the same man who moved the motion on the sanctity of colonial boundaries at the 1964 Organisation of African Unity summit in Cairo. To compound the irony, it was the same man who recognised secessionist Biafra and marched into Uganda without regard to borders. That man was Mwalimu Nyerere. As intellectuals and historians, we may say it was ironical. But Mwalimu was not simply an intellectual. He was a head of state. The king and the philosopher combined in him, and they could not always sit together comfortably. So, ironical or not, he could not escape making pragmatic political decisions.

Also in the way of unity were the vested interests of the political class. Unity meant dissolving, even if partially, the sovereignty of the newly independent states. This meant depriving the new political class of its power, privileges and potential of acquiring wealth. Africa's new rulers were nervous and resistant to Nkrumah's call for African unity.

Forty years later, the state has become more than

Tanzanians line up to see the body of Julius Nyerere lying in state before his funeral in 1999 … the founder of Tanzania believed the African state was irrational and non-viable. AP Photo/Jean-Marc Bouju simply a site of accumulating power and privilege. It has become the site of accumulating wealth and capital. The class that uses state positions to acquire wealth and accumulate property is not a productive class. It does not accumulate and invest in production. It is an underdeveloped 'middle-class', as Frantz Fanon described it on the eve of independence. Without understanding issues of state, class and accumulation, we cannot identify and assess the agency of the pan-Africanist struggle.

Pan-Africanism is making a comeback. African nationalism is at a crossroads; it can either degenerate into narrow chauvinistic nationalisms – ethnic, racial and cultural – or climb the continental heights of pan-Africanism. Do not glorify the nation-state, Mwalimu admonished. Rise to the challenge of being Africans first and Africans last.

We, as intellectuals, have to develop a new pan-Africanist discourse. It will be different to the pan-Africanist discourse of the first-generation nationalism. But it will be a discourse of national liberation and anti-imperialism – the 'nation' this time being the African nation. The new pan-Africanism will have to take account of the failure of the national project and its implication for African nationalism. It will have to question the first-generation nationalism, which was essentially 'state nationalism'. It will have to research and analyse the social character of the African state and it will have to interrogate its agency. It will have to examine and scrutinise the neo-liberal project and its various forms and manifestations, such as NEPAD. It will have to examine and expose new forms of imperialism and world hegemony. It will have to do many things, but with a single purpose – liberation of the African people. What is the role of an African intellectual in the development of a new pan-Africanism? I do not have a complete answer. Meanwhile, let me simply assert that we need a new nationalist insurrection – an insurrection of pan-Africanist ideas in the era of globalisation. In his speech at the inauguration of Kenneth Kaunda as the Chancellor of the University of Zambia in 1966, Mwalimu agonised over 'the dilemma of a pan-Africanist'. The dilemma he was talking of was that of a pan-Africanist state leader. On the one hand, his conviction and philosophy pulls him to pan-Africanism; on the other, as a head of state, he presides over building and nurturing 'territorial nationalism'. Mwalimu could not resolve the dilemma, nor did he pretend to do so. Whatever the case, he said, 'African unity does not have to be a dream; it can be a vision which inspires us.' I agree. If pan-Africanism is only a dream, it is in the sub-conscious; beyond our control. If it is a vision, it is in the realm of the possible. We have to consciously nurture and struggle for it.

> African nationalism can either degenerate into narrow chauvinistic nationalisms or climb the continental heights of pan-Africanism

African intellectuals have to make pan-Africanism part of our peoples' collective consciousness. Converting a pan-Africanist vision into a category of intellectual thought squarely falls on the shoulders of African intellectuals. We do it by engaging critically with pan-Africanist ideas; many ideas, varied ideas. Let us form pan-African organisations and pan-African movements – the pan-African youth movement, the pan-African student movement, the pan-African women's movement, pan-African trade unions, and so on.

This time around, we have to invert the relationship. Let us work from the civil society to the state. We have to work towards building an African civil society. From the vantage point of the African civil society, we have to cajole, persuade, pressurise, criticise, even satirise the African state. Do not demonise the state; de-legitimise it by engaging with it, not in it. That would be the beginning of building the hegemony of pan-Africanism within African civil society. In short, let a hundred flowers of pan-Africanist thought blossom. New pan-Africanism must be anchored in democracy, said Thandika Mkandawire. Africa needs some kind of social democracy, argued Archie Mafeje, whom we lost recently. On Mwalimu's 75th birthday, I argued that Africa needs a new democracy built around popular livelihoods, popular participation and popular power. But in this day and age of militarised hegemonies and despotic democracies, from Iraq to Somalia, we need to question the very concept of democracy. Where ideas are commodities, manufactured on order by ideas-traders, we need to return to the ideas of commitment and the commitment to the ideas of human emancipation. We need committed pan-Africanist intellectuals. The question before us is: Who are we: pan-Africanist intellectuals committed to African liberation and human emancipation, or neo-liberal impostors serving 'imperialist vultures'? ■

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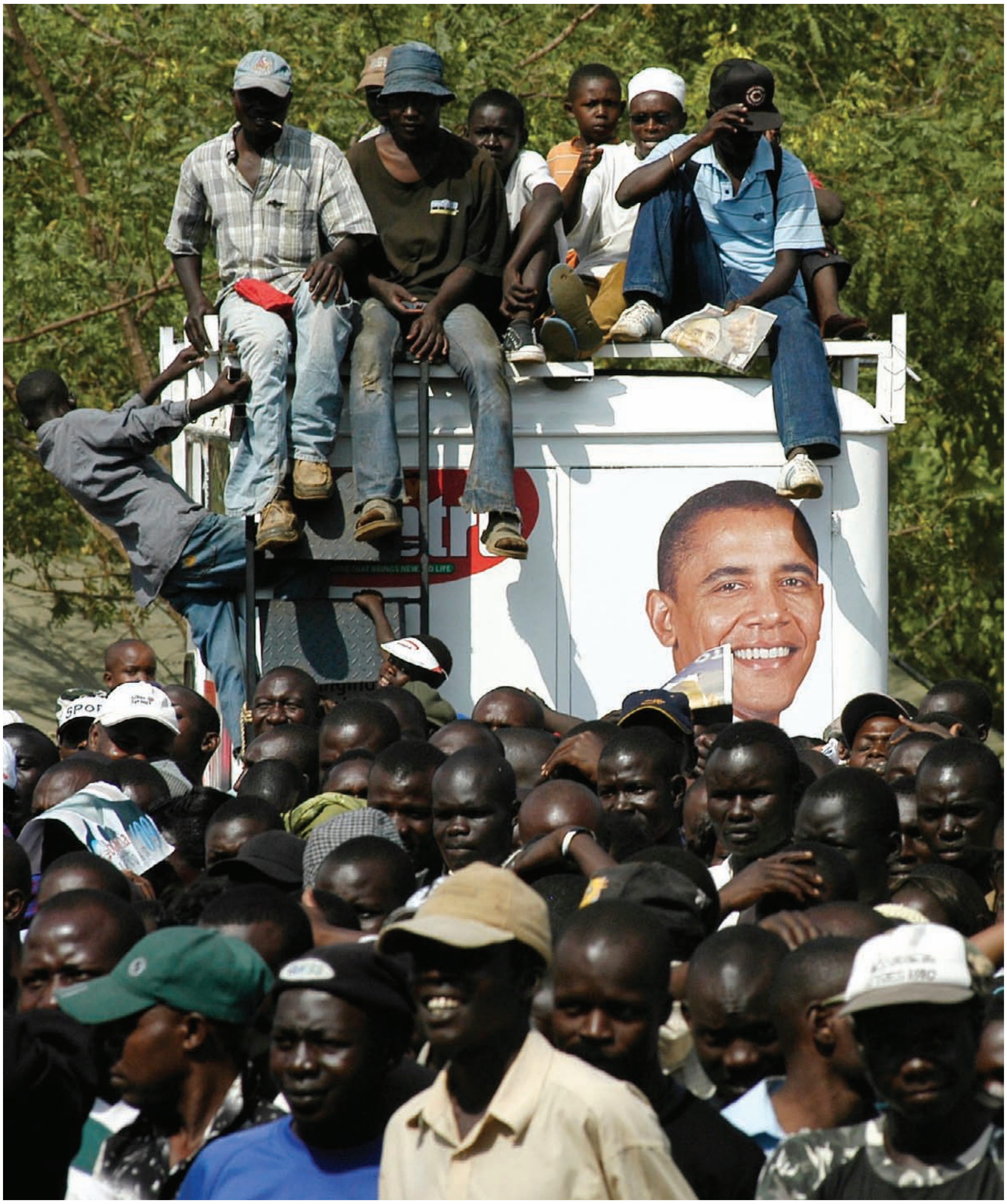

Kenyans celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama … pride in their country being the birthplace of the father of the 44th president of the US brought Kenyans together just a year after violence had ravaged the land. AP Photo/ Riccardo Gangale

Obama and Africa

After Barack Obama's first 100 days in office, **Peter J Schraeder** searches for indications of how the new US administration might shape foreign policy on Africa. The president's background suggests a generous approach to the continent, but he faces a number of constraints – not least the economic crisis at home and abroad

It is commonplace in the US to provide assessment of a new administration's policies after the first 100 days in office. A common refrain associated with Barack Obama's presidency is that his background and personal connection to the African continent ensure a more proactive and enlightened US foreign policy toward Africa. If history is our guide, however, Africa will remain the region of least concern within the hierarchy of US foreign policy, as the Obama administration by necessity focuses on domestic issues and other regions of perceived greater importance.

Five sets of constraints may limit the manoeuvrability of the Obama administration.

The first is the crisis in the US economy. Obama's number one priority if he wants to be re-elected is responding to this crisis. Not since Franklin D Roosevelt took office in 1933 has a new president inherited an economy in such disastrous shape. One statistic in particular stands out: the Congressional Budget Office projected in March 2009 that the US would experience a record $1.8 trillion budget deficit in 2009. This domestic crisis will consume a significant portion of the Obama administration's first two years in office, leaving relatively little time for foreign initiatives, and especially the African continent. Requirements of responding to the crisis also mean a lack of financial resources to fund new initiatives in Africa and other regions.

A second potential constraint is Obama's inheritance of a residual fear of another 9/11-type attack. Although subsiding after eight years, especially in the face of the economic crisis, this fear remains within the fabric of US society. The Africa dimension of it is that the new administration has inherited a series of national security initiatives, often critiqued as the 'militarisation of US foreign policy toward Africa'. An example of this inherited security structure is a set of three regionally based counter-terrorism programmes in the 'Islamic littoral' or coastal regions of the African continent, including the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) that includes North Africa, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) that is responsible for the 'Greater Horn of Africa', and the East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI). These are not initiatives that a president seeking to avoid missteps on the path to re-election in 2012 will dismantle.

> Throughout the cold war and its aftermath, presidents traditionally devoted less attention to Africa than other regions

A third potential constraint involves historic White House neglect of the African continent. Throughout the Cold War and its aftermath, presidents traditionally devoted less attention to Africa than other regions of perceived greater concern – notably Europe, the Middle East, and south Asia. Even if we recognise that Obama is different to previous presidents, an Obama White House will still be consumed by foreign policy issues in regions of perceived greatest importance, leaving little time for high-level attention to Africa.

Neglect in a Democratic congress

After prioritising US relations with Europe and other northern industrialised democracies, the Obama administration has demonstrated that the Middle East is second in the foreign policy hierarchy, as witnessed by the focus on the war in Iraq, the decision to make the pursuit of Middle East peace an administration priority, and an unprecedented diplomatic overture to Iran. The third region of foreign policy concern is south Asia, as witnessed by the increase in US troops to Afghanistan and focus on Pakistan. Other key regions are Asia and Latin America. Where is Africa in all this? Presumably still last.

A fourth potential constraint is that members of the US Congress also neglect Africa. Since the primary objective of most members is to be re-elected, and since most US citizens know or care little about the African continent, it is politically unwise to spend much time on Africa. An important effect of congressional neglect of Africa is that even highly motivated chairpersons of the Africa sub-committees face an uphill task in pushing African issues to the forefront of congressional debate. In the absence of crisis, partisan and ideological differences within Congress prevent activist groups from achieving congressionally mandated changes in US foreign policy toward Africa.

Equally importantly, both Senate and House of Representatives being dominated by the Democratic Party is a double-edged sword for the White House. On average, the Congress is more liberal than Obama, and there is a great deal of pent-up demand stemming from the Bush years for a host of domestic programmes. So, there is a good chance Obama's priorities will be stymied by a Congress pushing its own priorities and initiatives, which are unlikely to include Africa.

The net result of White House and congressional neglect of Africa is that US foreign policy, perhaps more so than that toward any other region of the world, is largely delegated to high-level bureaucrats and political appointees within the bureaucracies of the executive branch.

In order to understand US foreign policy toward

A child at a mock US presidential inauguration party in Kisumu, Kenya … Barack Obama's election is seen as a symbol of unity on the continent of his forebears. AP Photo/Riccardo Gangale

Africa, one must focus on the policies and interactions of the African affairs bureaus of the national security bureaucracies, such as the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as their counterparts within the increasingly important economic realm, most notably the Department of Commerce. To be sure, the White House sets the overall parameters of US foreign policy on Africa, as was the case with its predecessors during the cold war. But the unique nature of the US policy-making system ensures that specific policy initiatives often emerge from and are co-ordinated by national security bureaucracies with little White House input. An important aspect of bureaucratic influence in the policy-making process on Africa is that it fosters the continuation of established policies, even when an administration with seemingly different beliefs than its predecessor takes office, such as in the shift from the Bush to the Obama administration.

One indicator of potential change is the leadership of the State Department's bureau of African affairs, which traditionally has taken the lead on US Africa policies. So, the nomination of Johnnie Carson as assistant secretary of state for African affairs offers important insights. He most recently served as national intelligence officer for Africa for the National Intelligence Council and senior vice president for the National Defense University. In the State Department, he served as deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, ambassador to Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Kenya, and as a foreign service officer (FSO) in Portugal, Botswana, Mozambique, and Nigeria. He began his service in Africa as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania.

It is unclear how much a career FSO will push for significant change in the substance and the priorities of the Africa policy. Moreover, the recent and significant nature of Carson's involvement in the intelligence arena makes it unlikely that he will be a strong proponent of significantly changing the recent heavy emphasis on US military/security policy in Africa. His extended experience in east Africa and southern Africa nonetheless bodes well for enhanced US foreign policy attention to these two regions.

Seven trends in the first 100 days

At least seven trends have become evident during the first 100 days of the Obama administration.

First, there is no question that Obama's appointments demonstrate a heightened interest in Africa. One appointee is Jonathan Scott Gration, a retired air force major general who was raised as the son of missionary parents in the Democratic Republic of Congo and who speaks fluent Swahili. He refers to Obama as 'America's Mandela' and serves as the White House special envoy to Sudan. Another fascinating White House choice is Samantha Power, a Harvard human rights expert and Pulitzer Prize winning author (*A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*), who serves as senior director for multilateral affairs at the National Security Council.

Characteristics common to these and other core members of Obama's Africa foreign policy team include early opposition to the war in Iraq, a tendency toward liberal internationalism, and an emphasis on the use of 'soft power' (diplomacy and economic aid) to advance US interests abroad. Interestingly, this foreign policy team also demonstrates Obama's reliance on those with military experience (such as Gration), with important implications for how an Obama administration will deal with the current overwhelming influence of strategic and military initiatives in Africa.

A second trend involves Obama's governing ideology. He is not a typical liberal, but rather a pragmatic traditional realist with strong tendencies toward liberal internationalism, sometimes referred to by critics and admirers as an 'optimistic realist' or a 'realistic optimist'. As succinctly summarised by one observer during the presidential campaign, Obama does not speak in the moralistic tones of the most recent Bush administration, does not use the soaring rhetoric of Bush's freedom agenda, rejects the Bush administration's obsession with elections and political rights, and argues that people's aspirations are broader and more basic – involving issues such as food, shelter, and jobs.

A sober reckoning of resources

One implication of this world view, according to those in favour of a foreign policy more firmly based on democracy and human rights, is potentially little change toward authoritarian regimes in Africa, especially those known for advancing liberalisation within the non-political sectors of their societies – such as Tunisia and its progressive approach to women's rights. Indeed, the outlines of Obama's foreign policy toward authoritarian regimes will in many respects be demonstrated when he makes his much-awaited speech on Islam during June 2009 in Egypt – an authoritarian US ally at the intersection of the Middle East and Africa that is considered key to advancing Obama's Middle East peace process.

A third trend is a sober reckoning of Africa programmes that require additional financial resources. During his election campaign, Obama said he aimed to double US foreign assistance to Africa as part of a promise to double the annual foreign aid budget from $25 billion to $50 billion by 2012. He underscored a desire to showcase the Bush administration's President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which he also pledged to increase from $15 billion in total funding during the Bush years to approximately $50 billion by 2012. Clearly there has been a reassessment of all this in light of the economic meltdown in the US. It is difficult to imagine the Obama administration being able to 'sell' massive foreign aid increases to the American public and the US Congress when so many Americans are jobless, losing their homes, and confronting sizable health care costs.

Sarah Hussein Obama holds a photograph of her and her grandson Barack in a village on the shores of Lake Victoria … hope that the US president's ties to Kenya and Africa will influence his approach to Africa might be unrealistically inflated. AP Photo/Ben Curtis

The Obama administration will nonetheless pursue liberal initiatives that are not dependent on additional financial resources. One example of this trend occurred in January 2009, when Obama rescinded US restrictions on international family planning measures, officially known as the Mexico City Policy but typically referred to as the 'global gag rule'. Originally put in place under Ronald Reagan, maintained by George HW Bush, lifted by Bill Clinton, and subsequently re-imposed by George W Bush, the gag rule remains a highly charged ideological policy that serves as a litmus test on both sides of the abortion debate.

Specifically, this policy ensured that no US family planning assistance could be given to foreign non-governmental organisations that performed abortions, provided counselling and referral for abortion, or lobbied to make abortion legal or more available in their country. This policy, which had a highly negative effect on the provision of health care in numerous African countries, was reversed by an Obama administration intent on demonstrating the fruits of electoral victory to its supporters.

Will he have the time?

A fifth trend is Obama's cautious approach to conflict resolution – that is nonetheless willing to use the White House as a 'bully pulpit'. Obama entered office mindful of the fact that the US has not played enough of a role in recent years to resolve conflict in Africa. He has underscored his administration's intent to adopt a more proactive approach in this area, and has cited ongoing conflicts in Darfur, Zimbabwe, eastern Congo, the Niger Delta, and Somalia. Although Obama's knowledge of and reference to these conflicts is laudable, the reality is that effectively resolving any *one* of them would require the sustained attention of the White House – and most importantly Obama himself. But it is unclear if foreign policy challenges and priorities elsewhere, including the pledge to make the Arab-Israeli peace process a priority, will permit the degree of high-level White House attention necessary for effective conflict resolution in Africa.

The Obama administration has demonstrated a heightened focus on socio-economic and development issues. The most noteworthy proposal is a pledge to remake and restore the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to a position of pre-eminence in the foreign aid hierarchy. USAID funding was severely curtailed during the Bush administration, as increasing amounts of aid were channeled through the US military establishment and newly created quasi-independent foreign aid programmes, such as PEPFAR. As envisioned by its proponents within the Obama administration, this restructuring would entail the moving to USAID of foreign aid programmes currently under at least 21 different executive branch agencies. The key to this process is the belief that USAID, and not the Pentagon, should play the central role in formulation and implementation of development and other related foreign policy strategies, not only in Africa, but in all regions of the developing world.

A final trend is a lack of clarity over any change in the 'democratic deficit' in US foreign policy toward Africa. The Bush administration talked about the normative good of democracy promotion. But when the normative goal of promoting democracy clashed with the strategic goal of containing terrorist threats, the strategic goal almost certainly won, thereby more closely associating the US with some of the worst abusers of human rights.

The case of Tunisia is enlightening. Boasting a dictatorship that is perceived in Washington as a 'strong US ally in the Arab world' and a 'valuable partner in the war on terrorism', Tunisia was actively courted by the Bush administration. In February 2004, Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's support for US counter-terrorism initiatives was rewarded with a highly coveted head-of-state visit to Washington, amid a chorus of criticism from human rights activists.

Preoccupied by terrorism threats

This visit was significant, in that it was the first such visit granted to Ben Ali since he took power in 1987. Bush's predecessors, Reagan, Bush senior, and Clinton, all denied Ben Ali's request for a visit. In short, an overriding preoccupation with terrorist threats led the Bush administration to overlook the authoritarian excesses of African regimes in favour of their willingness to support US war on terror, just as the US did during the cold war.

A key dilemma for pro-democracy activists is that it is unclear if Obama's governing ideology – pragmatic traditional realism with strong tendencies toward liberal internationalism – will lead to significant change in the democratic deficit in US foreign policy toward Africa. ■

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The victory of Barack Obama was celebrated throughout Africa … and the US flag became a symbol of hope overnight. AP Photo/Khalil Senosi

Iraj Abedian

The global economic crisis is showing few signs of dissipating soon. IGD's Brendan Vickers interviewed **Iraj Abedian**, chief executive of Pan-African Capital, for insight into the roots of the problem and how it might be tackled

Iraj Abedian is co-founder and chief executive of Pan-African Capital Holdings (Pty) Ltd. He was professor of economics at the University of Cape Town, before joining Standard Bank Group in 2000 as group chief economist. He obtained his BA (Honours) and MA in economics from UCT and PhD in economics from Simon Fraser University in Canada. He was founder and director of the Applied Fiscal Research Centre (AFReC) at UCT and has been a consultant on economic policy issues to public and private sector organisations in SA and elsewhere.

Recent involvement in policy development in South Africa includes work on transformation of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (1995), the RDP White Paper (1995), Growth, Employment and Redistribution (1996), the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, and the Presidential Review Commission (1997). He has written numerous articles and co-authored books such as *Economic Growth in South Africa* and *Economic Globalisation and Fiscal Policy*.

Could you briefly explain the origins of the current financial crisis?

The first contributing cause of the crisis is the erosion of ethical underpinnings of the market economy and the moral failure of the Anglo-Saxon governance value system. This manifests itself in the simultaneous failure of the state and the market. There are many examples of market failure. We see what is happening in the financial sector. In SA there is collusion among listed companies and unlisted companies. On state failure, we see the collapse of regulatory bodies – whether in the US, Britain, France, or even Switzerland, which prides itself on financial sector management.

As far back as the 18th century, market philosophers like Adam Smith and David Hume wrote that a market economy requires a moral underpinning. However, over the past 10 years there has been open and growing disregard for these ethical-moral values. In business, chief executives bankrupt their companies and then still demand bonuses, as at AIG or SAA. You see governments doing the same thing, and this is not unique to either developed or underdeveloped countries.

The next contributing factor is that we as a human society have over the past decade – and certainly since 2001 – been engaged in four very expensive wars that have led to value attrition. The first of these is a trade war. In 2008, this war cost the world more than US$900 billion, of which the OECD countries spent more than $750 billion in agricultural subsidies alone. From an economic perspective, this is erosion of value. This is about using limited resources to ensure that optimal resource allocation will not happen. In other words, it is about subsidising South Korean farmers to make sure Argentinean farmers will not become competitive, or subsidising Swiss farmers to make sure Ugandan or Indian farmers will not.

Then you have the war on terrorism, where some people fund terrorist cells while others spend enormous amounts to detect, interrupt, intercept, destroy, and counter them. From a resource allocation point of view, you are using scarce resources to slow things down and create layers of inefficiencies through checks, controls, surveillance and so forth. Intuitively and from a security point of view, this all makes sense. But from an economic point of view, it is a waste of value.

The third war is in Iraq and the fourth in Afghanistan.

In terms of the resources that these four wars use, I estimate it at between 3% and 3.8% of global GDP. In other words, what we have been doing each year over the past decade is use between 3% and 3.8% of global GDP to ensure optimal allocation does not happen.

As a result of this, social trust has been eroded, political cohesion has been undermined and tension has increased. Another contributing factor, as a result of the super-cycle of growth, has been a widening of the gap between haves and have-nots in the world. The rich were never so rich and the poor were never so poor, and the gap between the two was, broadly speaking, never so wide. This complicates an already tense social situation caused by the security wars.

These factors bring us to the fourth and final contributing factor – the concurrence of two basic economic idioms or principles.

One is called the 'paradox of thrift': society finds itself in a situation where everybody, for very good reason, has to be thrifty; but if everybody is thrifty, the society loses.

The second important element is the 'liquidity trap'. Interest rates have never been so low in England and at the same time investment has never been so low. This is counter-intuitive: usually when interest rates go down, people borrow and invest more. Similarly, the US cut its rates and instead of investment picking up it collapsed. Japan has had 20 years of negative interest rates, but investment does not increase. Over the past three or four months central bankers have been vying with each other to lower rates. With so much liquidity, you would have thought investment would pick up – but it has not.

Lack of confidence has brought about a concurrence of the thrift and liquidity traps, further undermining growth. That means we all have to go back to square one with respect to valuation. If valuations are lowered, debt-to-value ratios go up and the financial system blows up.

People are quick to look at the mortgage and subprime crisis, and so forth. That was just an element. It is this bigger picture that created the global crisis.

The developed world's crisis has now spread to the developing world – and a 'third wave' to Africa. What impact has the crisis had on Africa, and how do you think African countries should respond, singly and collectively?

Africa had a crisis before the global crisis hit, so it is the least capable of coping with the current situation. Having said that, different parts of Africa are affected differently and the responses required vary accordingly.

For example, a country like Nigeria is affected by a sudden collapse of its fiscal revenues and its foreign exchange earnings. Francophone Africa is facing a collapse of its commodity exports and commodity prices, which is a lot more broad-based than a narrow sector like oil in Angola or Nigeria. A country like Botswana has been hit hard in the short term by way of its ability to earn revenue from diamond mining. But Botswana has sufficient foreign reserves to cope for at least four years or so. Therefore, the probability of social suffering is a lot lower there than in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and the like. So, African countries may very broadly be placed into three categories: highly indebted poor countries (HIPCs), middle-of-the-road countries, and more developed countries such as SA, Egypt and Morocco.

What should they do?

My view is that Africa should coordinate at one level. At that level, tough times require tough and hard leadership to ensure that limited resources are not spent on social destruction. As such, wars in the DRC and the Great Lakes, social strife in Zimbabwe, and other types of regional instability, as in Madagascar, demonstrate exactly what not to do.

At another level it is an opportunity to strengthen the productive side of the economy, particularly in agriculture. This is where an immediate, one-season impact can become tangible. When resources become more limited, you have to use them more optimally. You do not have the luxury of experimentation and squandering.

Africa's comparative advantage remains in agriculture. However, its bottleneck is basic infrastructure. Any form of stimulus, bolstering or cushioning of the economy should come from expenditure on basic infrastructure that delivers very short term, productive results. This could be as simple as access roads for productive farms; a dam for provision of water for production or human consumption; or investment in basic power generation, telecommunications, and so forth.

There is some debate about whether SA has entered a recession. What is your view on this and what are the economic prospects for 2009?

There is no question that SA's key sectors – manufacturing, mining, and trade – are in recession, technically, politically, and from observation. Whatever measure you use, there is no doubt those sectors are in recession. For the rest of the economy and the aggregate economy, you can either believe they are in recession or wait for the official results to see that there is a recession.

> 'Wars in the DRC and the Great Lakes, social strife in Zimbabwe, and other types of regional instability, as in Madagascar, demonstrate exactly what not to do'

There is no question that the aggregate economy is in recession. The best indicator of this is tax revenue falling for the first time in

10 years. Even VAT, which is the expenditure side, has fallen in real terms. That is the top-line indicator of an economy in recession.

What reforms are needed to strengthen transparency in global financial markets to avert future crises? How do you see the role and contribution of the G20?

The G20 has a critical role to play. It represents well over 80% of global GDP. This is a wide enough base to give it political legitimacy. It *could* play the necessary role to prevent further potential crisis.

What needs to be done is not just with regard to the financial sector. For as long as the focus is on the financial sector, narrowly defined, problems are going to be exacerbated.

Extreme care must be taken not to fall into the trap of confusing symptoms with causes. That is why I want to look at it back-to-front. If you start from the financial sector, you pretend that the causal factor is the financial sector. For example, if the G20 does not put trade and trade facilitation at the top of the agenda, it has not really started to deal with underlying issues.

> 'Governments and leaders cannot mortgage future revenues'

The second priority issue should be measures to eliminate the gap between the haves and the have-nots. This is the real driver of social instability, political ideological debate and interpretation of developments. That means putting in place mechanisms to deal with these issues in five or six years, because those structural problems cannot be solved overnight.

The third issue is what I call the 'unity of humankind'. What I mean by this is tackling the historic superiority that rich countries believe they have over the rest of the globe, which manifests itself in organs of the UN and other bodies.

The G20 *could* play a potential transformative role in: a) giving priority to the key issues; b) dealing with them openly, frankly, and painfully; and c) putting the global system on a path that is sustainable, as opposed to seeking a palliative solution that is not sustainable. What the US, Britain, Germany, the EU, Japan, and China have been doing is not sustainable.

Governments and leaders cannot mortgage future revenues and squander on agricultural subsidies and other kinds of short-term, welfare-oriented approaches without offering long-term sustainable remedies. Imagine if we do this for 20 years. The problem is that a lot of short-term palliatives are being introduced at the expense of the tough decisions that have to be made for the long term. So the G20 is at a junction. Future historians will judge it for having shown real leadership or having failed miserably.

The Economist *recently gave SA the highest overall risk rating of 17 large emerging markets – ahead of Pakistan and Venezuela. What are some of the key risk factors facing the country? For example, how sustainable is SA's current account deficit, now twinned with a budget deficit?*

Risks of the twinned deficit have re-emerged. If twinned deficits are not managed well politically they tend to lead to financial instability, in the form of currency and macroeconomic instability. It is a very thin line between twinned deficits and macroeconomic instability. The buffer between financial instability and currency instability is even thinner.

The country has taken a hit on its export earnings. At the same time, it is a country that has to import in order to build its productive capacity. There is no choice on this. We must increase electricity generation capacity, water supply capacity, and invest in roads and urban infrastructure. We have to continue with the capital expenditure programme – which is import-intensive – for two reasons: one is from a simple growth point of view and the other from a phase of the economic cycle point of view (or the fiscal stimulus that is needed).

By and large, SA is not very elastic in terms of import demand, but highly elastic with respect to the ability to earn from exports – as shown by the commodities sector and motor vehicle and related industries being hit hard. Tourism, which was gaining fantastic momentum, is also income dependent. If people's incomes collapse they are unlikely to travel globally. Those are sources of foreign exchange, so we do have a balance of payments problem.

The other risk is fiscal imprudence, which the new government might be tempted to engage in. That would contribute to budget deficit. We have a deficit as is, but welfare spending – which admittedly has strong political and social appeal – could exacerbate it.

There is speculation about a leftward shift in policymaking following the April 2009 elections. How do you see the evolution of macroeconomic policy in SA?

I do not see a leftward shift in the conventional policy sense of nationalisation, control, and so forth. I do see a welfarist tendency, which has potential fiscal implications. The ANC's manifesto is certainly a lot more populist, welfarist, and short-term than it has been in the past.

What is your assessment of the South African government's *response to the global crisis – the package of measures adopted by the NEDLAC social partners?*

I thought SA did relatively better than the so-called developed countries. It did not mortgage future generations' income, but managed the multi-stakeholder expectations well enough for everybody to offload and think that they had done something. We have tried to ensure continued production at the factory level, without creating debt for the country. The NEDLAC resolutions identified something that all stakeholders – government, companies, labour, and so forth – must do, which is absolutely right in times of crisis. To pretend that this is a government problem misses the point that it is a socio-economic problem. It takes more than government to find solutions and definitely more than government to implement a solution.

I would have liked NEDLAC to go a step further and identify productive areas and immediately target them for injections of resources and investment. A neglected area in SA is land and agriculture. NEDLAC could have agreed that within two or three months it would remove all historic bottlenecks to land redistribution and support for farmers. Removing this cloud of uncertainty over agriculture would have unleashed much productive activity, job creation, and value creation in the economy. Likewise, there are regulatory system areas that are bogged down. A crisis is a good time to solve problems.

Various proposals have been floated to stabilise the Zimbabwean economy, including adoption of the South African rand. What is the best approach?

The technology for dealing with hyper-inflation is well tried and tested. You do not have to re-invent the wheel. There are broadly four elements to fighting hyper-inflation.

First, you must have a political regime change that is credible, sustainable, and of unquestioned legitimacy. Second, you have to introduce a new currency that has a credible new basis and appropriate backing. Credibility requires seven to 10 years of adequate backing so that people can believe in the new currency, trade with it, and see that it will not lose its value. This new currency must be a credible store of value as well as a medium of exchange. Third, you must have sufficient lines of credit for production expansion, rejuvenation or start-ups. That means anything from three to five years, depending on the underlying structure of the economy. If the economy is industrial, you need longer-term lines of credit. If the economy is primary, you need shorter-term lines of credit to prepare lands, buy seeds, plant and cultivate, and finally sell the produce to make a profit and repay the loan. In the manufacturing sector it might be much longer, and in the services sector even longer. In the end it all depends on the structure of the economy. The fourth element is a competent project management or fund allocation mechanism to ensure that resources are used optimally. It is a euphemism to say that you need to have an effective state. If a state has collapsed or has lost its legitimacy, you have to put in place a 'pseudo' state while you are reconstructing the organs and structures of the state.

In this matrix, which elements does Zimbabwe have and which ones have they not even started talking about?

The legitimacy and credibility of Zimbabwe's government is at best half-hearted. As long as that is the case, a start on fighting hyper-inflation will be delayed. Regarding the new currency, there is a need for long-term commitment to back it. In terms of the rand, or any other regional currency, we lack an adequate commitment or backing for the currency by somebody rich and credible enough to stick it out for the long term – even over 10 years. So, the approach in Zimbabwe has been more akin to plastering a massive wound. Good luck if you think that is going to cure it.

Given Zimbabwe's primary and secondary economy, we need lines of credit of at least three years (and ideally five years) in order to reactivate the production, trade, distribution, accumulation, and payback cycle. But that is not going to happen until the first and second conditions are met.

> 'A neglected area in South Africa is land and agriculture'

Finally, it is folly to think that the state in Zimbabwe has not collapsed. Corruption and abuse of resources and society have become the culture. A state at that level of operation, efficiency and cultural management is not fit for fighting hyper-inflation, engendering confidence, and reacting to resource allocation challenges. I am more concerned about this fourth element than number one.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, these four conditions have to happen concurrently. You cannot sequence them. Hyper-inflation therefore remains the biggest disease, until and unless true leadership arises and acknowledges this problem. ■

The global financial architecture: is change coming?

The economic crisis has focused minds afresh on the need to reform international financial institutions and governance. **Daniel Bradlow** looks at what is being done and the prospects for real change

THE PHRASE 'global financial architecture' is shorthand for the institutional arrangements for governance of the international financial system. These arrangements include organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as well as more technical entities such as the Financial Stability Board and the Basel Committee of Banking Supervisors (Basel Committee). They also include a range of state groupings, of varying degrees of influence and cohesion, like the G7, G10, G20 and G24.

At least since the Asian financial crises there has been general agreement that the global financial architecture needs reforming. However, attention paid to this topic has been inversely proportional to the well being of the global financial system. Consequently, the issue has recently received considerable attention and the first sign of this was an agreement to reform IMF governance taken at the 2006 IMF annual meeting. Agreed measures included small increases in the quotas (and therefore votes) of China, Mexico, Turkey and South Korea, and additional support for the African executive directors. Some of these reforms took effect in 2008, and the World Bank also agreed to create an additional African director, although this has not yet been implemented.

Not surprisingly, the issue was on the agenda of the G20 summits in Washington and London. In fact, most commitments at the London summit related to it. It is also the focus of two high-level commissions: the Manuel commission studied IMF governance, and the Zedillo commission is reviewing governance of the World Bank.

This is an opportune time to take stock of what has been achieved and the potential for further reform. To do so we need to answer four questions: What are the problems with international financial governance? What has been achieved? Are these reforms sufficient? What more can be achieved?

There are three sets of problems relating to the existing international financial architecture.

The first is the failure of existing global regulatory bodies. For example, the Basel Committee spent years developing new capital requirements for banks ('Basel II'), but the crisis demonstrated that these rules placed undue confidence in the capacity of banks to self-regulate and did not fully account for banks' risk exposure.

Second, the legitimacy of the institutions themselves is impaired. Most significantly, the distribution of votes and voice in the IMF and World Bank has not kept up with changes in the global political economy. For example, Belgium has more votes in the IMF than Brazil; and sub-Saharan Africa, which actually uses World Bank services, has two representatives on its board, while Western Europe has eight.

Third, conditions attached to IMF and World Bank funding are too onerous. For example, the IMF has historically required member states facing a financial crisis to cut public expenditure – which is not the strategy currently being adopted by the US and Europe. In addition, some of the conditions, such as those relating to public sector management reform, seem to be outside the IMF's macro-economic mandate or to violate the prohibition against the World Bank taking political considerations into account in its operations. One result is that many member states built up large reserves in part to ensure that they would never need IMF financing. This approach in turn helped create the global imbalances that contributed to the financial crisis.

Creation of a useful forum

The reforms can be divided into three areas.

First, there are reforms that have been or are being implemented – three of which are of particular interest to Africa.

The first of these is conversion of the Financial Stability Forum into the Financial Stability Board. In the FSF, banking, finance and insurance regulators from G7 countries and representatives from international financial institutions like the IMF met to discuss financial regulatory matters. The FSB adds financial regulators from the other G20 countries to this grouping. This should result in broader participation in deliberations about financial regulation. However, it is not clear that the FSB will be more responsive than the FSF to the concerns of low-income countries.

The second reform is the creation of the Committee of Ten African Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. The committee includes finance ministers from SA, Nigeria, Egypt, Cameroon, and Tanzania; and central bank governors from Botswana, Kenya, Algeria, West African states, and Central African states, as well as representatives from the African Development Bank, the AU Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa. It was created to help SA, the sole African representative on the G20, prepare for the G20 meeting. While this grouping is informal and ad hoc, it is a useful forum for co-ordinating African positions for other international financial meetings, sharing information, and for developing protocols to guide African states in enhancing national financial governance.

The third relevant reform relates to proposals on IMF's finances which have three components. The first is increasing resources of the IMF by $500 billion. By mid-April, the IMF had already secured about $250 billion from Japan, the EU, China, Canada, Switzerland, Brazil, and Norway and was expecting to receive additional support from the US and other G20 member states. These contributions are in the form of loans and are not permanent increases in the resources of the IMF. The terms have not yet been disclosed.

> Rising powers have succeeded in obtaining only marginal changes

The second component of the IMF reform is G20 support for a new $250 billion 'special drawing right' allocation. SDRs are created by the IMF to provide member states with additional liquidity and the fund's rules state that it must allocate them among all its members on a pro rata basis. Developing countries will get about $100 billion, with $19 billion for low-income countries. It is possible that rich countries will decide to redirect their SDR share to developing countries. In many countries, such a decision, because it involves a commitment of state resources, will require legislative authorisation, which is inherently uncertain.

The third reform component involves the G20 agreeing that the IMF should sell some of its gold reserves to raise funds (about $6 billion) for the poorest developing countries. These gold sales have been authorised by the IMF membership, so implementation should be easy.

The IMF has also taken a number of actions designed to enhance access to its financing. These include making its conditionality requirements more targeted and streamlined, eliminating underutilised facilities, creating an unconditional flexible credit facility that is only available to certain member states, and raising the limits on member states' access to IMF financing. The World Bank has also agreed to increase its lending over the next three years.

The second area of overall reform concerns proposals not yet implemented.

These include an agreement that future heads of the IMF and World Bank will be selected on the basis

Opposite: Anti-globalisation protests have targeted the World Bank and the IMF as symbols of international finance … and after the economic crisis there is a more widespread agreement that such organisations are in need of radical change. AP Photo/ Jerome Delay of merit and not nationality. The G20 also agreed to implement all voice and vote reforms agreed on in 2008 and to advance the quota review. It is unclear when and if all this will be implemented. The key problem is that European states, 'over-represented' in the organisations, are unlikely to surrender their votes (and therefore agree to quota reforms) without compensation and it is unclear how they can be adequately compensated.

The third area of reform consists of issues still under discussion. The most significant of these are the recommendations of the Manuel report and the forthcoming recommendations of the Zedillo report. In the case of the Manuel commission, recommendations include changing the requirement that the five largest member states have their own IMF executive director, changing the scope of IMF surveillance to make it more comprehensive, and changing majority voting rules to eliminate the US veto.

These proposals require amendments to the IMF articles, which will in turn need parliamentary approval in many member states. So it is difficult to predict if and when they will happen. One indicator: after 12 years, the fourth amendment to the IMF articles has not entered into force because, despite the support of more than 100 member states holding more than 70% of the total IMF vote, it has not yet received the 85% majority needed for adoption.

The goal of reforms should be to improve institutional arrangements so that they are both responsive to the changing needs of the international community and are sustainable. Unfortunately, when measured against this standard, current reform efforts are inadequate for three reasons.

A shift in economic power

First, we are undergoing a shift in power in the global political economy. Currently, the rising powers are not powerful enough to successfully demand substantial changes to global financial governance arrangements, and the declining powers can still block changes not to their liking. Rising powers have succeeded in obtaining only marginal changes in IMF quotas, and the rise of the G20 has not yet led to the demise or even reform of the G7. The governance reform process is unlikely to be sustainable until this shift is more complete.

Second, key challenges for global financial governance include, in addition to traditional financial issues, the environmental crisis and the growing problems of poverty and inequality – both of which have an impact on global financial flows and financial regulation. Their exclusion from discussions on international financial governance undermines the efforts to reform the financial architecture. One indication: some developing countries refuse to make commitments on curbing carbon emissions until rich countries clarify how much funding they are willing to contribute towards helping them deal with climate change.

Third, current reform efforts have not addressed all legitimacy problems in the institutions. For example, there has been no agreement on increasing the accountability of the IMF management and staff, or on enhancing the ability of all stakeholders to participate in its operations.

More effective African participation

It is clear that civil society will continue to advocate and work for further reform of the global financial architecture. These efforts should be supported by African countries. If they succeed, they will facilitate more effective African participation in the decision-making processes of institutions, making them more responsive to African interests. However, African states and civil society need to become effective participants in them. This requires key African actors to both develop a realistic reform strategy and energetically advocate for it.

Such a strategy should include both short- and medium-term aspects. The short-term aspects must acknowledge that the current institutions will continue to exist for some time, and be governed by their existing articles. Within these constraints, the strategy should focus on getting more effective African representation within the organisations and on improving channels of communications between these representatives and all African stakeholders in the organisations. It should also promote stronger mechanisms of accountability for the organisations. The history of the inspection mechanisms in the multilateral development banks demonstrates the importance of effective accountability mechanisms.

The medium-term strategy should be more ambitious and not accept as given that the current institutions must continue to exist. Consequently, it should include a blueprint for the kinds of institutions Africa needs at a global level and a strategy for achieving this objective.

Full elaboration of this blueprint is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is clear that the organisations that Africa needs must have clear mandates to comprehensively address all aspects of international financial governance, transparent operational policies and procedures, effective accountability mechanisms, and must provide for meaningful participation by all stakeholders. ■

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Understanding the war on Gaza

The invasion and devastation of Gaza by the Israeli military needs to be understood in terms of the history of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, writes **Aslam Farouk-Alli**

ISRAEL FRAMED its recent war on Gaza as a legitimate act of defence and an overdue response to the terror campaign launched by Hamas since it took control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. The Zionist state portrayed itself as a bastion of democracy fighting for survival in an autocratic and fundamentalist wilderness. In the process, the plight of the 1.5 million Gazans trapped in a 400 square kilometre open-air prison was ignored. As Israeli rhetoric sought to legitimise the indiscriminate slaughter of Palestinians the fact of occupation was easily forgotten. So too was the plight of the Palestinian people, who have lost land and faced oppression and suffering since the signing of the 'historic' Oslo Accords that promised to deliver an independent, sovereign Palestinian state.

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was a catastrophe for the Palestinian people, who were in the process dispossessed, massacred, driven into exile, and finally subjected to military occupation. The settler-colonial foundations of the state of Israel are indisputable fact; the Zionist enterprise in British-mandate Palestine, of predominantly East European Jewry, was carried out at the expense of an indigenous Palestinian population that had continuously inhabited the land for 1 200 years.

The Israelis attacked Gaza in December 2008 for two reasons. First, the US Republican administration of George W Bush was coming to an end, about to be replaced by Barack Obama's Democratic government, and Israel would potentially lose its greatest ally. Second, the Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, and his Fatah party was growing increasingly weaker as rival party Hamas grew stronger, despite efforts to thwart it.

The burden of history

The war was therefore an attempt by Israel to move into the new era with Hamas eliminated. The attempt was a failure – Israel lost the war simply because it did not win it. Hamas is as strong and as popular as ever, while Israel's international image has been tarnished due to its military brutality.

An immediate consequence of the war has been the strengthening of the 'resistance trend' in Palestinian politics, adopted by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the other factions that are mostly based in the Syrian capital of Damascus. In contrast, the 'negotiation trend', pursued by President Abbas and Fatah since 1993, has not delivered any results. More importantly, the war also uncovered the complicity between Abbas and Israel in trying to bring down Hamas. As such, the negotiation trend has been discredited, not only for failing to produce results but also for collaborating with the enemy.

The burden of history weighs heavily on the Palestinian problem. To properly analyse the current situation, the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords is the best point of departure – and not the so-called Hamas takeover of Gaza in June 2007.

For the earlier Palestinian leadership under Yasser Arafat, Oslo held the promise of finally achieving international legitimacy and statehood. For the Israeli administration, Oslo sounded the death knell of the Zionist dream of a greater Israel that includes the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria – in other words the Palestinian territories of the West Bank.

An immediate consequence of the war has been the strengthening of the 'resistance trend' in Palestinian politics

Factions like Hamas had grown in stature and influence within the occupied territories since the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) in 1987 and voiced their opposition to the Oslo Accords, choosing to stay outside the process. So, Arafat's exiled leadership returned to the occupied Palestinian territories to take centre stage as the process unfolded.

The Oslo Accords envisioned the formation of a Palestinian state through a phased process consisting of three steps. First, Israeli troops would withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza; second, an interim Palestinian self-governing authority (PA) would be established; and, third, negotiations to resolve final status issues would be initiated, including the question of borders, the status of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the rights of Palestinian refugees. During the early years of the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), the first two phases were implemented with relative success.

However, it soon became apparent that the Palestinians and Israelis had very different understandings of the peace process. For the Palestinians, it was a mechanism to achieve statehood; for the Israelis, it was a mechanism for getting the nascent PA to manage the oppression of its own people. While the negotiations proceeded, Israeli settlement activity continued apace, illegally appropriating Palestinian land at a rate far higher than before Oslo. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by an Israeli settler opposed to withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza only served to bring into power a right-wing government that shared similar views to the assassin.

Bantustan-like political structure

Tension between Israelis and Palestinians quickly escalated as the new Israeli government dropped the façade of the peace process as a mechanism for Palestinian statehood and instead promoted a form of Palestinian autonomy in a bantustan-like political structure. Further negotiations at Camp David and Taba did not offer the Palestinians any real autonomy. Arafat justifiably refused to budge on the consensus position of the Palestinian National Movement, which would not settle for anything less than a Palestinian state on the armistice borders of 4 June 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return for all Palestinian refugees to their homes.

> Twelve years had passed since the Oslo Accords and the plight of Palestinians had only worsened

The second Palestinian intifada – the Al-Aqsa Intifada – was triggered in September 2000 by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound that has long been under threat of destruction by fundamentalist Zionists who claim that it is the site of the ruined Temple of Solomon. Sharon's visit was thus a premeditated act of provocation, a pretext for launching Operation Defensive Shield by the Israeli military, the purpose of which was to undo Palestinian gains made in the negotiation process during the previous years and re-assert Israeli hegemony over both the peace process and the land.

This second intifada brought the negotiation process to a standstill and Arafat faced increasing pressure to make concessions, from both within his negotiation team and from the Israelis and the Americans. One of his advisors, Yasser Abed-Rabbo, launched a new initiative co-authored with an Israeli, Yossi Belin. The so-called Geneva Accord drew severe criticism from Palestinians as it was willing to make concessions on the Palestinian consensus position. It was never seriously considered as a workable plan.

Arafat, under increasing pressure from all sides, was placed under siege in his Ramallah compound, abandoned by his closest advisors and by leaders of the Arab world. During the final moments of his life, it was Palestinian factions opposed to the Oslo Accords that showed him most sympathy, not the leadership of his own Fatah movement. Arafat died under mysterious circumstances in November 2004 and is widely believed to have been poisoned. He was replaced by Mahmoud Abbas, who was elected president of the PA in January 2005 and was regarded by the Israelis and the Americans as a Palestinian leader with the potential to make the 'brave' concessions that Arafat was unable to.

By this time, 12 years had passed since the signing of the Oslo Accords and the plight of the Palestinian people had only worsened. Of all the Palestinian factions opposed to Oslo, the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, had the largest following in Palestinian civil society and was by far the best organised. In March 2005 Hamas decided to enter the political process and announced it would contest the forthcoming Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections. Even though the PA was a creation of Oslo, Hamas held that it was entering the political process because Oslo had failed.

Hamas argued that the Abbas-led authority had lost the consensus of the Palestinian National Movement and could therefore not be trusted to negotiate a just settlement for the Palestinian people. The political strategy of Hamas was therefore based on continuing resistance to Israeli occupation while simultaneously wresting control of the political process from president Abbas at the ballot box.

Stunning election victory

The Israeli administration viewed Hamas with extreme circumspection due to its armed resistance to the occupation and was initially opposed to allowing it to participate in the elections. However, the Americans were convinced that Abbas's Fatah party would easily win the poll and thereby dismiss the Hamas challenge legitimately. This proved a costly mistake, with Hamas achieving a stunning victory in the January 2006 PLC elections, running a campaign calling for change and reform.

Hamas promised to try to build an advanced Palestinian society based on political pluralism and the rotation of power through democratic processes, with the ultimate goal of achieving

Women from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine during a protest against Israel … the military invasion of Gaza has intensified the anger of many displaced Palestinians. AP Photo/Lutfallah Daher

Palestinian national rights. This objective was in itself a response to the stagnating structures of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), which had been reduced to a shell organisation controlled by a handful of individuals that had held onto power since the 1980s.

Hamas tried to form a coalition cabinet of all the Palestinian factions. However, Fatah refused to be part of a government of national unity and chose to remain outside the cabinet as the official opposition. The Israelis and the Americans understood very well that if Hamas were to be allowed to govern, it would be as firm as Arafat in defending the Palestinian national consensus position. Also, Hamas seemed capable of delivering on its promise of clean governance, with the Islamist movement not tainted by the corruption prevalent in Fatah ranks. This would naturally entrench the popularity of Hamas and marginalise Fatah.

Forced to govern on its own, the Hamas government set itself seven challenges: resisting the occupation; ending the security chaos in Palestine; relieving the economic hardships of Palestinians; undertaking administrative and financial reforms; reorganising Palestinian affairs on a democratic basis; promoting awareness of the Palestinian question in Arab and Muslim circles; and developing regional and international relations to serve the interests of the Palestinians.

The two-state solution

However, the Hamas government was hamstrung from the outset by the Israeli and US administrations, who used their leverage with Abbas as the primary means of obstruction. The Israelis and Americans were simply unwilling to acknowledge the shift within Hamas from a position that sought to liberate all of Palestine to one that accepted a Palestinian state on 1967 borders, i.e. a two-state solution that provided *de facto* recognition of Israel.

The Israeli government quickly realised that the Palestinian people had snatched leadership of the Palestinian National Movement from Abbas and his Fatah party and entrusted it to Hamas. Together with the Americans, the Israelis devised plans to depose Hamas and reinstate Abbas and Fatah. The Americans had appointed General Keith Dayton as a security co-ordinator between Israeli and Palestinian Authority security agencies in November 2005, but he also had another role – to bring down Hamas. 'Regime change' was already a well-established characteristic of the Bush administration, part of a broader attempt by the US to transform the Middle East to suit its national interests. As is apparent from the Iraqi and Afghani experiences, this policy has been a failure.

The Israelis and Americans adopted a multi-faceted approach in trying to depose Hamas that not only relied on the PA but also upon the so-called moderate Arab alliance – especially Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

President Abbas made it impossible for Hamas to pass legislation – overriding its authority by invoking the authority of the PLO, of which he was also president. The Israelis contributed by arresting 60 Hamas government ministers on 29 June 2006, including high-profile members of parliament like the speaker, Abdul Aziz Duwaik, and deputy prime minister, Nasser al-Sha'er. Countries of the moderate Arab alliance withheld monetary contributions promised to the PA after Hamas took over, hampering its functioning. Also, Jordan undertook to train Palestinian security forces loyal to President Abbas (the Badr brigades), and the UAE provided them with small arms and equipment. The US intelligence services devised a 16-page secret plan entitled *Action Plan for the Palestinian Presidency* that outlined how to topple Hamas.

In the course of 2006, internecine fighting between Fatah and Hamas gradually increased and was especially violent in Gaza. This came as a shock to some Arab countries in the moderate alliance and in February 2007 the Saudis brokered a peace treaty between the fighting factions, referred to as the Mecca Accords. The Mecca Accords gave Hamas the upper hand once again by reasserting its legitimacy, gained in the January 2006 elections, even though it called for a government of national unity and reasserted the agreement reached in Cairo 2005, which called for reformation of the PLO to include Hamas and Islamic Jihad and in accordance with democratic principles.

The Mecca Accords gave Hamas a new lease on life; so the Americans prompted Abbas's security advisor, Muhammad Dahlan, to mobilise his security forces in Gaza in an attempt to violently overthrow Hamas. The plan failed and Hamas was able to defeat Dahlan's forces, taking full control of Gaza in June 2007. As a result, two centres of power emerged for the first time in Palestinian politics, with Gaza separated from the West Bank.

Egyptian mediation failed

The moderate Arab alliance, especially Egypt, continued to collaborate with President Abbas to bring Hamas down and Egyptian mediation efforts to bring about Palestinian national unity were clearly biased in favour of Abbas and Fatah. The Egyptian mediation process of November 2008 failed after it refused to consider any amendments to a framework agreement document and demanded that it be endorsed as it stood. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP-GC, and other factions based in Damascus refused to sign.

> Israel decided to bring down Hamas – in collaboration with Abbas, the Egyptians, and the Americans

Egypt was able to negotiate a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in July 2008, valid for six months. Under conditions of the ceasefire, Hamas would suspend rocket fire into Israel and Israel undertook to open border crossings. Egypt promised to open the Rafah border crossing should Israel fail to comply.

The Israelis did not stick to the ceasefire and provoked Hamas and other factions by stepping up attacks on their interests in the West Bank. Hamas had wanted the ceasefire to apply to the West Bank as well, but the Israelis refused. During the six months of the ceasefire, Israel continued to close border crossings indiscriminately, starving people and denying them medicines, clean water, and electricity for prolonged periods. Israeli army attacks on Hamas in Gaza killed 25 people. Hamas and other factions in Gaza, including the armed wing of Abbas's Fatah, responded with rocket fire. Egypt did not keep its promise to open the Rafah border crossing, in spite of the Israeli transgression. During the ceasefire, 173 Israeli transgressions were counted.

The 'apartheid' wall

In spite of the impasse between Fatah and Hamas, Khaled Mishaal, head of the Hamas political bureau, convened a press conference in Damascus on 24 November 2008 calling for Palestinian unity and the launching of a national political programme, invoking the Palestinian consensus position. Mishaal called for the creation of a Palestinian state on the armistice borders of 4 June 1967 and rejected the option of territorial exchange being explored by Abbas with the Israelis. Mishaal also called for the dismantling of all Israeli settlements, the dismantling of the 'apartheid' wall, and affirmed Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian state. He also affirmed that the right of return was not negotiable and rejected the options of compensation and return to the occupied Palestinian territories instead of to the lands from which the refugees originally had been displaced. In addition, Mishaal called for Palestinian sovereignty over all its borders and border crossings, and for the release of the 12 000 or so Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

With Hamas working on fulfilling these political objectives, the Israelis and the PA were running out of time. Abbas's term as head of the PA was due to expire on 9 January 2009 and Hamas had stated that it would not recognise him as president thereafter. President Bush was due to leave office on 22 January 2009. So Israel decided to bring down Hamas – in collaboration with Abbas, the Egyptians, and the Americans.

The Israeli attack on Gaza on Saturday 27 December 2008 came as a surprise to Hamas, even though Israel's foreign minister, Tsipi Livni, had voiced threats at a press conference in Egypt a few days before. The Arab media exposed how the Hamas leadership was deliberately misled, having been informed by the Egyptians that the Israelis were keen to discuss a ceasefire and would not attack Gaza in the 48 hours from 26 January. The Hamas government in Gaza did not evacuate its security premises as it usually did when threatened, and a graduation ceremony of police cadets went ahead as planned on the Saturday. Consequently, more than 100 cadets were killed in the initial air strikes, which dropped 100 tons of explosives on Gaza.

Fatah members leaked information to the Arab press on President Abbas's meetings with his security advisors from Gaza – stationed in Egypt following the Hamas takeover – just after the air strikes had begun, telling them to start preparing to take control of Gaza after Hamas was removed. As one commentator put it, Abbas was planning on returning victoriously to Gaza on the back of Israeli tanks.

Sources in Gaza also informed the press that Abbas's office was gathering intelligence from Fatah members in Gaza on the secret locations of Hamas members and passing this information on to the Israelis. Members of the moderate Arab alliance delayed convening of an emergency Arab summit and the Saudi foreign minister held the Palestinians responsible for the Israeli attack, arguing that it was as a result of their division.

As Gaza burnt and its people were killed, the only serious diplomatic intervention came from Turkey, with support from Qatar. The Turkish prime minister, Rajib Tayyeb Erdogan, made emergency visits to Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia to try to arrange a ceasefire. He called for an immediate suspension of all hostilities and the immediate lifting of the siege on Gaza. At the time, only Qatar and Syria echoed his sentiment. The unilateral ceasefire announced by Israel on 18 January 2009 was followed by a similar announcement by Hamas.

As the dust settled, the international community began taking stock of the damage and Arab regimes began repositioning themselves in light of the outcome of the war.

A proxy for American interests

The war was costly for the Palestinian people, but did not break their spirit. In terms of the international community, a very slight shift in position can be discerned. But not much can be immediately expected from the new American administration in bringing an end to the conflict. The US still treats Israel as a proxy for American interests in the region and will continue its support. However, it remains to be seen whether Obama's support will be as uncritical as that of Bush.

The EU maintains its subservient role to the US, bankrolling the Israeli occupation by continuing to provide financial aid to the PA and turning a blind eye to Israeli atrocities. Significantly though, more and more EU member states have begun asserting a more independent stance with regard to the necessity to engage Hamas. Since the end of the war, several European countries have sent delegations to Damascus to hold talks with Hamas leader Khalid Mishaal, including the UK, France, Italy, and Greece.

World leaders gathered at Sharm al-Sheikh at the invitation of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak on 18 January 2009 pledged full support to finance the rebuilding of Gaza, but also emphasised Israel's security concerns. Not one leader, including the PA's President Abbas, made mention of the Israeli occupation that remains the root cause of the conflict in the region.

New peace initiatives will inevitably be suggested by the international community, but all indications are that Israeli leaders will pursue the Zionist dream of an ethnically pure Jewish state, where there are no Arabs or where Arabs live as landless serfs.

The Gaza war was waged by an Israeli Kadima-Labour coalition government regarded as centrist. So, with the February 2009 Israeli elections ushering in a right-wing government, led by the Likud Party's Binyamin Netanyahu, propects for peace look bleaker than ever.

Realities on the ground leave Palestinians with only one choice: continuing the resistance

While Western policy makers and analysts speculate over the effect of a right-wing Israeli government on the peace process, Arab sentiment is well captured by the Syrian foreign minister, Walid Muallim. When asked what he thought about the new Israeli administration, Muallim responded that it was better to deal with a regime that does not hide behind the mask of peace. Most Palestinian and Arab leaders realise that there is little that separates the various political parties in Israel in terms of policy.

Livni, head of the Kadima Party, announced immediately before the Gaza conflict that Israeli Arabs should leave Israel once a Palestinian state is established. Netanyahu holds views that are no less enlightened. His Likud Party calls for the annexation and settlement of the entire 'Land of Israel', comprising the current territory of the state of Israel, as well as the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the whole of Jerusalem. Netanyahu's model for peace emphasises 'economic' and 'security' democracy for the Palestinians – a thinly veiled denial of sovereignty and autonomy. Avigdor Lieberman, Netanyahu's foreign minister and leader of the Yisrael Beitenu Party, advocates a two-state solution based on the Cyprus model and calls for the transfer of all Arabs to the other side of the wall.

Currently, realities on the ground leave the Palestinian people with only one choice: continuing the resistance. As such, the Gaza war has only served to strengthen the support base of Hamas.

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Africa's hands-off approach to 'non-indifference'

The AU is solidly behind principles of the UN's 'responsibility to protect'. But it fails to rise to the challenges on the ground, writes **Francis Ikome**

A DEFINING FEATURE of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was the pride of place it accorded sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. The OAU's founders believed leaders of newly independent African states required unencumbered sovereign authority to help them overcome challenges of national economic, political, and social consolidation and development.

However, this rigid definition of sovereignty, together with the polarising effects of the Cold War, bred what could be described as a culture of indifference towards misrule and its negative impact on ordinary people. It also suggested that sovereignty was an unconditional right of the wielders of political power, devoid of responsibility.

It was a recipe for recklessness and impunity on the continent.

Yet the dangers of unbridled and irresponsible sovereignty have always been acknowledged, both by Africans and the broader international community. Against this background and helped by a more collaborative environment heralded by the end of the Cold War, regional and global leaders undertook various initiatives to circumscribe sovereignty and mitigate its disruptive effects.

> Origins of responsibility to protect can be traced to the two African secretaries-general of the UN

On a global level, one of the most powerful, if least understood, ideas to emerge was the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P). This is often mistaken as coded language for the none-too-popular related notion of humanitarian intervention, but it is actually anchored in a more positive and affirmative concept of sovereignty as responsibility.

At the continental level, in 2000 – five years before the UN declaration on R2P – the new pan-African organisation, the AU, watered down the concept of sovereignty. It opted to move from the 'culture of indifference' (non-interference) of its predecessor, the OAU, to one of 'non-indifference' – with clear provisions in both its constitution and its Peace and Security Council for intervention under certain circumstances.

How aligned is the AU's principle of non-indifference with the international responsibility to protect? Also, what are the AU's capabilities to effectively intervene and protect vulnerable African populations?

The origins of responsibility to protect can be traced to the two African secretaries-general of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan, the first world leaders to explore changing notions of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention.

New, more complex conflicts

In his 1992 *An Agenda for Peace*, Boutros-Ghali made a case for proactive peace making and humanitarian intervention, with proposals on how to respond effectively to post-Cold War threats to international peace and security. At the turn of the century, faced with new and more complex intra-state conflicts and their resultant tragedies, Boutros-Ghali's successor Annan challenged the international community to find a new consensus on a more effective approach to humanitarian intervention.

This challenge was taken up by the Canadian government, which helped establish the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to assess appropriate circumstances for humanitarian intervention. The ICISS produced the famous report on R2P that was adopted by the 2005 World Summit. It was subsequently endorsed by both the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

Responsibility to protect implies recasting state sovereignty and the role of the international community where a state fails to protect its population in cases of war, insurgency, or repression. More significantly, R2P is based on three levels or types of responsibilities:

- responsibility to prevent, which embraces the need to address the root and direct causes of internal conflict;
- responsibility to react, consisting of the need to respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, which may include

coercion in the form of sanctions, international prosecution, and, as a last resort, military action; and

- responsibility to rebuild, which is the need to provide full assistance to facilitate recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation – particularly after military intervention.

Of these, prevention is recognised as the most important, and all preventative options must be exhausted before other intervention is contemplated. The responsibility to both prevent and react should be incremental, moving from less intrusive and coercive measures to more coercive and intrusive ones.

Intervention is a dilemma for policy makers and executives – controversial both when it does and does not occur. There will be perceptions that the international community has let down humanity by not intervening judiciously, and in a timely and effective way. Conversely, there will be accusations that it has intervened too intrusively, at times pushing agendas detached from the needs and aspirations of the population in whose name it has acted. Intervention can quickly be labeled illegitimate; hence it is generally very unpopular.

To make intervention more palatable, the R2P seeks to ensure that it occurs only for just causes and with the right intentions. There are safeguards against the disproportionate use of force and for ascertaining that intervention will be brief and successful. More significantly, the R2P framework identifies the UN Security Council as the most appropriate body to authorise intervention – under chapter VII of the UN charter.

Should the Security Council fail to act within a reasonable time, alternative options include consideration of the matter by the General aAsembly in an emergency special session. Action could also be undertaken by a regional or sub-regional organisation under chapter VIII, subject to later authorisation of the Security Council.

New security culture

Overall, Africa's new security culture converges with and allows for application of the principal tenets of the international R2P. The AU's legal instruments recognise the linkages between poor governance and conflict and therefore emphasise democracy, liberty, human freedom, good governance, and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the AU peace and security architecture makes provision for the establishment of institutions and processes that address the challenges in the three pillars of R2P – prevention, reaction and rebuilding. The three main components of the AU's peace and security architecture – namely conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction – are seamlessly aligned to the three pillars of R2P.

The Continental Early Warning System and its associated regional early warning mechanisms, including the Panel of the Wise and the deployment of fact-finding missions and envoys, fits well the preventive dimensions of the R2P. The African Standby Force and various regional brigades are designed to respond to conflict situations, particularly those posing a threat to human lives, and so are in line with the R2P's second pillar – timely and effective reaction. Finally, the Peace and Security Protocol provides for the establishment of a post-conflict reconstruction and development mechanism that will serve the needs of the third pillar of the R2P, the responsibility to rebuild.

A displaced Sudanese youth watches UN peacekeepers from the window of a mud hut at Abu Shouk refugee camp in Darfur … outside interventions in the region have failed to shield people from the repression of their own government. AP Photo/Nasser Nasser

However, despite the progressive character of Africa's new security culture, and its convergence with core elements of R2P, the challenges of implementation have remained daunting.

This is due to political sensitivities over intervention generally, and the kinds of intervention required under the R2P in particular. The AU has retained a number of the OAU's core sovereignty-enhancing principles, which seem to contradict its otherwise progressive interventionist inclinations. Although African leaders profess a willingness to cede some portions of sovereignty to the continental body, they continue to see sovereign independence as the essence and defining element of statehood.

Intervention as provided for in the R2P occurs under two conditions: when a state has collapsed and the livelihood of citizens is seriously threatened, or when an invitation is extended by a state that is unable to protect its people.

But the AU does not subscribe to the notion of failed or collapsed statehood as this is perceived to be a derogatory Western concept aimed at justifying meddling in the internal affairs of African states. Also, requiring governments with suffering populations to invite the AU to intervene means invitations might never be issued; or, if they are issued, they would be on terms set by the very perpetrators of the prevailing atrocities or deprivations.

> Darfur presented the international community with a classic case for implementation of the R2P

The AU does face serious human and material resource constraints that make intervention in member states prohibitive. But, more importantly, the body has not been able summon the kind of political will required to realise the ambitious interventionist policies prescribed in its Constitutive Act and its Peace and Security Protocol. AU responses to the conflicts in Darfur, Somalia, Zimbabwe, and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have exposed the limits of its non-indifference and interventionist rhetoric.

The Darfur conflict presented the international community with a classic case for application of the R2P. The failure to shield people of Darfur from repression by their own government has been rightly described as an indictment of the international community generally, and of the AU in particular.

While the intervention delay in Darfur was seen as the international community pandering to the dictates of the Khartoum regime, the inadequacies of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) – when eventually constituted – confirmed perceptions about the organisation's unpreparedness for such action. Moreover, the restrictive mandate assigned to AMIS created the impression that intervention was intended more to serve the sovereign interests of the Khartoum government than to address the plight of the population of Darfur.

The AU mission had no mandate to protect the civilian population, a core requirement of the R2P. In fact, AMIS could only 'protect civilians whom it encounters under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity, within resources and capacity, it being understood that the protection of the civilian population is the responsibility of the government of Sudan'. This was in spite of clear evidence that the Sudanese government had failed in its responsibility and was indeed an accomplice in the human rights violations being perpetrated against Darfur's people by the Janjaweed militia.

Despite the reluctance of the AU to accept the notion of failed statehood, Somalia perfectly fits into this category. The absence of a central government authority and running battles among various warlords and militia factions have transformed Somalia into one of the world's most unsafe territories, where the civilian population is subjected to the worst forms of human rights violations and insecurity.

After several months of hesitation, the AU reluctantly launched a 'peace operation' in Somalia in March 2007, aimed at stabilising the situation. However, because the AU intervened to keep peace in a country that had virtually collapsed, and where there was actually no peace to keep, it became entangled in the conflict and created perceptions that it was more part of the problem than the solution.

So, the AU is seen to have failed to uphold the first two critical principles of the R2P, namely, prevention and appropriate reaction. It is also unlikely to have the resources to meet any responsibility to rebuild a war-ravaged Somalia.

Too little too late

Zimbabwe presented the AU with another test case.

There was abundant evidence of human rights violations, torture, and murder by state agents, reflecting the failure of the Zimbabwean state to protect significant portions of its population. Despite much diplomatic engagement with various political actors in Zimbabwe, and the appointment of a number of high profile mediators, relief to millions of Zimbabweans was slow in coming. The situation deteriorated to a point where intervention was justified in terms of the AU's Constitutive Act and the requirements of the R2P, but African leaders continued to emphasise negotiation, even excluding sanctions.

Although mediation finally yielded some dividends with the swearing in of a government of national unity in March 2009, it was perceived as too little too late.

The eastern province of Ituri in the DRC has remained in conflict despite stabilisation in the rest of the country, and despite the presence of one of the UN's largest peace-keeping missions. For almost a decade, the Tutsi general, Laurent Nkunda, and his National Congress for the Defense of People held Ituri hostage, displacing thousands and depriving thousands more of humanitarian assistance.

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Guinea Conakry: more of the same, or opportunity for change?

The recent coup in Guinea Conakry was widely condemned as a step backwards for governance in Africa. But many within the country hailed the power grab as a 'patriotic' act. **Dimpho Motsamai** looks at the revival of an old debate about 'good coups' and 'bad coups'

ON 22 December 2008 the long-standing ruler of Guinea Conakry, General Lansana Conté, died after a lengthy illness. A few hours after his death was announced in the media, army officers led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara staged a swift and bloodless coup d'état. This was done before discussions on the constitutional appointment of a new leader were concluded.

According to media reports, the coup was greeted with calm by most Guineans, with some describing it as a 'necessary course of action'. By contrast, it was condemned by the international community as well as continental and regional institutions, including the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). ECOWAS also sharply criticised the views of Guineans who described the coup as 'patriotic', asserting that the era of distinguishing between 'good coups' and 'bad coups' in Africa was over, and that promoting a 'patriotic coup' was a step backwards for democracy in Africa. The AU slated the coup as a serious setback in the ongoing democratisation of Africa, and highlighted the negative effects of political instability, conflicts, and coups in West Africa.

The coup in Guinea came shortly after those in Mauritania and neighbouring Guinea Bissau, and therefore in the midst of debates about acceptable or 'good coups' and unacceptable or 'bad coups'. Generally, coups are perceived as negative and unacceptable because they constitute an illegal appropriation of power. However, a view has developed that some coups are acceptable and therefore 'good' because they meet the following three conditions: a) when those who stage the coup are overthrowing a repressive government; b) most or all of the citizens in the country concerned accept the coup as positive; and c) the coup leads to pledges of reforms to citizens and the international community, including a transition to democracy through open elections. Against this background, questions have been raised about the nature of the Guinean coup, particularly its legitimacy, and whether or not the military rulers will eventually relinquish power and lead the country into a stable democratic era.

This article examines the dynamics of the Guinea coup. Firstly, it reviews Guinea's political history, including Conté's rule, and identifies the characteristics of Conté's administration that led to the coup. Secondly, it analyses the coup itself, internal and external responses to it, and developments since then. Lastly, it suggests how Guinea could return to constitutionalism and democracy.

Only two presidents

In order to understand the recent developments in Guinea, it is important to review the role of coups in its political history, as well as its pattern of political succession. Since gaining its independence in 1958, Guinea has only had two presidents. The first was Ahmed Sekou Touré, leader of the socialist Parti de Démocratique de Guinée (PDG), who ruled until his death in 1984, and the second was Lansana Conté. Under Touré, Guinea was scarred by political instability and economic disasters induced particularly by his socialist policies and the introduction of a single-party system, which effectively turned Guinea into a dictatorship. Furthermore, Touré was a suspicious ruler who responded harshly to threats or perceived threats to overthrow his government, whether internal or external. Hence, the 1970s and early 1980s were marked by repeated allegations of 'antirevolutionary conspiracies' by members of the French and Côte d'Ivoire governments as well as internal opponents. Waves of arrests and executions followed. Documented incidents include the arrest and murder of the minister of justice and former

> The new regime embarked on economic and political reforms, restoring free enterprise and allowing a more open and free society

secretary general of the OAU, Diallo Telli, in 1976.

When Touré died in 1984, a political vacuum developed. Days after his burial, a group of military officers called the Military Committee of National Recovery (CMRN) – headed by Colonel (later General) Lansana Conté – staged a bloodless coup d'état and announced the appointment of Conté as head of state and Colonel Diarra Traoré as prime minister.

The early stages of Conté's administration contrasted sharply with Touré's rule. The new regime immediately embarked on economic and political reforms, restoring free enterprise and allowing a more open and free society. Most political detainees were released, press censorship was lifted, the PDG party apparatus was dismantled, and discussions began on moving towards a multiparty system. The CMRN declared the protection of human rights to be one of its primary objectives, reorganised the judicial system, and decentralised the administration. However, these seemingly positive trends were reversed by a power struggle between the head of state and prime minister. In 1985 Traoré attempted to seize state control while Conté was in Togo. Conté's troops squashed the rebellion, and Traoré and some of his supporters were executed.

A referendum to approve changes to the constitution was only held in December 1990. Emanating from this, a multiparty electoral system was introduced in Guinea in 1992, leading eventually to the formation of about four dozen political parties. Many Guineans believed the transition to democracy would mark the end of political turmoil and repression. However, in reality the new constitution paved the way for two decades of dictatorial and military rule behind a façade of democracy. Conté formed his own political party, the Parti de l'unité et du progress (PUP), and stood as its presidential candidate in the 1993 elections. Political parties were proscribed, and allegations of vote-rigging and repression of the opposition were rife. Nonetheless, Conté retained the presidency. Expectations that the introduction of the multiparty system would result in a constitutional democracy began to wane. This trend continued as Conté won presidential elections in 1998 and 2003, amid allegations of fraud.

> The Conté regime ran Guinea like a military state, and used the state security apparatus to eliminate its rivals

By 1998 Conté had become very unpopular due to his dictatorial leadership style, poor governance, and corruption, and labour unions and civilians began to demonstrate against his rule. In 1999 troops mutinied in the capital of Conakry, during which civilians took to the streets and destroyed presidential offices. The mutineers tried to turn the rebellion into a coup d'état, but did not succeed; military forces loyal to the Conté regime made hundreds of arrests, and put many on trial. From then on Conté tightened his grip on Guinea, and appointed a new government as part of a set of political and economic reforms. Among other things, he appointed more 'technically minded ministers', and appointed Sidya Touré, a former chief of staff of the prime minister of Cote d'Ivoire, as prime minister. Touré was charged with co-ordinating all government activities, including management, economic planning, and financial functions. But Conté also replaced many technocrats and members of the Guinean diaspora that had previously held important positions in government with 'home-grown' ministers, particularly from his own Soussou ethnic group. These changes led to increased cronyism, corruption, and a greatly reduced focus on economic, social, and political reforms.

En route to the coup

Conté's regime had become notorious for endemic corruption, nepotism, dysfunctional state institutions, and collapsed economic infrastructure. Among other things, it grossly mismanaged the country's abundant mineral resources. Guinea has more than a third of the world's bauxite deposits, abundant oil reserves, and large deposits of gold, diamonds, and iron ore, yet is ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. Like that of his predecessor, Conté's rule was marked by fear of conspiracies, state-sponsored violence, repression, and national isolation. These actions were justified in the name of nationalism and anti-imperialism. The Conté regime ran Guinea like a military state, and used the state security apparatus to eliminate its rivals within the army as well as opponents linked to the previous regime. This turned the military into a potential threat. In response, Conte's strategy for assuring the loyalty of at least part of the army was to give preferential treatment to army special forces, thus effectively creating an 'army within the army'. Preferential treatment was given to the presidential guards (the *Bataillon Autonome de Sécurité Présidentielle*, or BASP) and the so-called airport battalion (bataillon autonome des troupes aéroportées, or BATA). This is significant as Moussa Dadis Camara, the leader of the military group which currently holds power, is not a member of either of these military formations, but a lower-ranking military officer.

Reports that the president's health was deteriorating began to surface in 2003. He frequently travelled to Geneva for medical treatment, and increasingly withdrew from active political life. In his absence, national affairs were left to factions concerned with safeguarding their own interests and securing their eventual succession to power. These internal power struggles took place against a backdrop of worsening poverty and deteriorating economic conditions. In 2006 inflation soared to about 30%, and continued to climb rapidly. Millions of Guineans were living in abject poverty and could not afford basic commodities such as rice and fuel, as prices had skyrocketed. Furthermore, the government had failed to address issues such as deteriorating social services, decaying infrastructure, and daily water and power shortages. Popular discontent grew. In February and June 2006 trade unions called two strikes in protest against the poor governance, corruption, and incompetence of Conté's administration, which brought the country to a standstill.

When the government failed to respond to the issues raised in 2006, Guinea's main labour unions, the Guinean Workers Union (USTG) and the National Confederation of Guinean Workers (CNTG), launched another wave of demonstrations in January 2007. This time, the unions were joined by the country's 14 opposition parties and civil society leaders, resulting in the largest strike action Guinea had witnessed in more than 40 years. The protesters now called for sweeping political change, and demanded that Conté appoint a prime minister to take over all executive powers.

The ailing president conceded to this demand. But instead of appointing a person 'uncompromised by association with his regime', as the unions had demanded, he appointed Camara, then minister of state for presidential affairs. The reaction was immediate, and the strikes developed into an unprecedented popular revolt. Demonstrators vandalised state property as well as property owned by members of government and the presidential entourage. The government ordered security forces to shoot at demonstrators, and in just three days more than 150 civilians were killed. Conté declared a state of emergency, including a strict curfew and martial law. Although order was restored, this was accompanied by grave abuses against civilians, including unlawful arrests, torture, and rape.

On 25 February 2007 Conté agreed to a deal to end the strike. This involved appointing a new prime minister in place of Camara from a list of people drawn up by the trade unions and representatives of civil society. This resulted in the appointment of Lansana Kouyaté, a former Guinean ambassador to the UN, as prime minister. Unlike Camara, Kouyaté was not a Conté loyalist, and he soon chose a cabinet that excluded members of the previous government. Conté dismissed him in May 2008 and replaced him with a long-standing ally, Ahmed Tidiane Souaré.

Guinea's military leader Moussa Dadis Camara smokes during a media interview at a military camp in Conakry in March … despite condemnation of his coup, international and African organisations are engaging Camara in planning new elections. AP Photo/Jerome Delay

While the labour unions had become central to increased pressure on the Conté regime, the military remained Guinea's most organised institution, helping Conté to maintain his grip on the country. Significantly, the military's central role in Guinea's politics also meant that it was well-positioned to seize power if and when Conté lost his control.

Conté's death, the coup, and the coupists

After much speculation and many denials from the authorities about Conté's state of health, his death was reported on 23 December 2008. This event invoked article 34 of the Guinean constitution, which states that the president of the National Assembly will assume the presidency of the republic in the event of a vacancy, and that a new presidential election should be held within 60 days. In the course of discussions between the head of the supreme court, Lamine Sidimé, and a group of politicians, including prime minister Souaré, on the appointment of an interim president, there were announcements in the media that a group of army officers led by Camara had taken over the government on behalf of a group called the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD). Camara announced that the existing government had been dissolved and that the constitution as well as political and union activities had been suspended. Most of the top members of Conté's administration, including Souaré, surrendered, and the coup leaders replaced them with military commanders. The CNDD established a new government, the National Transitional Council (NTC), comprising civilians and the military, with a view to achieving a transition to democracy. The military leaders also established a consultative forum comprising representatives of all Guinean stakeholders, with the aim of promoting dialogue and enhancing national cohesion. Moreover, the CNDD committed itself to respecting the rule of law, and fighting drug trafficking.

Since assuming power, the CNDD has embarked on a public relations campaign, pledging to organise credible and transparent presidential elections and return the country to civil rule. In the interim, Camara has assumed the presidency, and, in consultation with the labour unions, Kabinet Komara has been appointed transitional prime minister.

> Leaders of the main opposition parties cautiously welcomed the coup, but called for elections to be held no later than 2009

Responses to the coup: Internal

The general population, opposition parties, and trade unions have broadly supported the CNDD. Many Guineans seemed to welcome the coup, or at least did not speak out against it. Some Conakry residents celebrated, declaring that the coup was necessary and marked an important moment of change. These sentiments were echoed by the National Council of Civil Society Organisations (CNOSSG), which asserted that the CNDD presented a real opportunity for genuine national dialogue and reconstruction. The unions vowed to work with the CNDD during the political transition. Leaders of the main opposition parties cautiously welcomed the coup, but called for elections to be held no later than 2009.

Some of the reasons for these immediate reactions include: i) the bloodless nature of the coup; ii) a general lack of confidence in the old regime; iii) the desire for change, as the coup represents a reprieve from Conté's regime; and iv) the CNDD's appealing message of change. A few days after the coup the CNDD invited representatives of civil society, political parties, labour unions, and the private sector to present proposals on how to move Guinean society forward. This move garnered more support for the CNDD government, and presented civil society with a window of opportunity to influence political leadership.

External

External responses to the coup differed widely; some role players were cautious, while others expressed unambiguous support for the new regime. This was partly because the coup was so widely accepted in Guinea. Some regional leaders welcomed the political change, pledged support for the new rulers, and called for their recognition. The president of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, asserted that the military officers had not really staged a coup as Conté had passed on, and the CNDD had merely moved to fill a power vacuum. According to Wade, the CNDD deserved international support as it presented a viable route to consolidating democracy in Guinea. Similar views were expressed by the former Nigerian president, Ibrahim Babangida; and the president of Libya, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who paid a solidarity visit to Guinea after the coup.

However, the coup was condemned by ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, the US, and France, especially since it had closely followed similar events in Mauritania and Guinea Bissau. ECOWAS suspended Guinea from all its meetings until the restoration of 'constitutional order'. It also declared that despite domestic sentiments about the coup, it was unconstitutional and violated the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance. ECOWAS has since resolved to push for Guinea to be placed on the agenda of the UN Peace Building Commission as a fragile and post-conflict country. This will enable it to access the UN peace building fund in order to develop its infrastructure and return to sustainable development.

The AU suspended Guinea's membership pending a 'return to constitutional order'. In its communiqué, the AU criticised the recurrence of coups d'état in West Africa, and asserted that the Guinea coup was a 'flagrant violation' of the Guinean constitution, the Algiers Decision of July 1999, the Lomé Declaration of July 2000, and the Constitutive Act of the AU. The UN Security Council also rejected the coup, and mandated the UN office for West Africa (UNOWA) to support efforts to create conditions for holding elections in Guinea. The US said it would support efforts by the AU and ECOWAS to facilitate the transition. In

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Madagascar: the more things change, the more they stay the same

The latest leadership change in the Indian Ocean island nation mirrors a history of chronic political instability. **Emmanuel Kisiangani** examines the roots of the current turmoil and international responses to it

ON 21 March 2009, Andry Rajoelina, popularly known as 'TGV' (*train à grande vitesse*, French for high-speed train) for his energetic personality, was installed as head of the High Transitional Authority of Madagascar. It marked a dramatic comeback for the 34-year-old former disc jockey who had been sacked as mayor of the capital Antananarivo in February 2009. The change of government was endorsed by the constitutional court of Madagascar, despite Rajoelina being 'under-age' and having assumed his new position with the tacit support of a section of the military.

All this followed the resignation of the president, Marc Ravalomanana, 59, who handed over power to the military a day after disgruntled soldiers stormed his office and the army chief publicly backed a Rajoelina takeover.

The developments drew intense international disapproval, with various countries and regional organisations calling for a return to constitutional order. Madagascar's constitution provides that in the event of a presidential resignation the head of parliament's upper house should assume office for two months, within which period new elections have to be organised.

The Indian Ocean island nation's problems seem far from over, with Ravalomanana's supporters starting up 'anti government' protests.

While relations between Ravalomanana and Rajoelina have been strained for some time, the recent political upheaval was sparked by the closure in December of Viva television station, owned by Rajoelina, for broadcasting an interview with the former president, Didier Ratsiraka. The same interview was seen on most other television channels on the same day, but the government said the Viva broadcast undermined national security and peace, and pointed out that Rajoelina was supported by Ratsiraka's family. Ratsiraka's reluctance to leave office in 2002 after electoral defeat by Ravalomanana

Andry Rajoelina, 34, paraded victoriously through Antananarivo in March after being installed as Madagascar's head of state by the military … some observers accuse a former ousted president, Didier Ratsiraka, of instigating the political upheaval set off massive demonstrations and violence that rendered the country ungovernable and forced Ratsiraka to flee to France.

Rajoelina responded by accusing Ravalomana of abusing state power, threatening democracy, and abandoning the people. A successful young business entrepreneur with public appeal, Rajoelina capitalised on public frustration with the central government to mount a series of high profile anti-government demonstrations. Suppression of these protests left 135 people dead.

A form of neocolonialism

A groundswell of resentment against Ravalomanana had been building since he bought a presidential jet for US$60 million in 2008, an extravagance in a country where nearly 70% of the 20 m population lives on less than $2 a day. Matters were compounded by a government decision to allow South Korean industrial giant, Daewoo, to lease 1.3 million hectares of prime land, about half the island's arable land, to cultivate crops for the South Korean market. This move was seen by some locals as an economic takeover, or a form of neocolonialism.

Rajoelina tapped into the growing resentment with three months of protests, mostly staged at May 13 Plaza, epicentre of the country's popular revolt since independence in 1960. The emergence of politicians of the Ratsiraka era in protests in provincial cities suggested that the former president was an indirect factor in the conflict. A nephew, Roland Ratsiraka, was among those allied to Rajoelina.

The anti-government protest escalated dramatically in early March when a section of the military staged a mutiny and sided with Rajoelina. After losing control of the government and the army, Ravalomanana conceded power to a military directorate, which in turn passed it to Rajoelina. Ravalomanana 'relocated' to Swaziland as a guest of King Mswati.

Madagascar's constitutional court ruled that the double transfer of power was legal and that Rajoelina was the country's rightful interim leader. At 34, Rajoelina was six years short of the minimum 40 years old requirement for a president.

The new leader suspended parliament and set up two transitional bodies to run the country. He stopped the controversial land deal with Daewoo and promised to change the constitution and hold elections in 18 to 24 months. The poll has since been scheduled for October 2010, on the recommendation of a reconciliation conference organised by the new regime but boycotted by Ravalomanana supporters.

Questions remain about whether Rajoelina offers Madacascar anything different from his predecessor. With suggestions of divisions within the military and perceptions that the differences between the two leaders were more about personality and business interests than policy, Rajoelina's long-term political security remains uncertain.

The AU suspended Madagascar, which had been due to hold the next AU summit meeting in July 2009, and gave the new administration six months to call an election. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) also suspended the country and called on its new leader to step down. Norway imposed an aid freeze, while the US and the EU described Rajoelina's accession to power as a coup.

Former colonial power France, accused by some of tacitly supporting Rajoelina in the power struggle, initially complained that the timeframe for new elections was too long, but later asserted that it still considered Ravalomanana to be president. Early in January, as Ravalomanana faced increasing public demonstrations, the French charge d'affaires, Marie-Claire Giraudin, announced the end of the status quo as discontent on the streets 'showed that something was profoundly wrong' with Madagascan society. Later, the French embassy reportedly offered Rajoelina refuge and, despite conceding that the takeover was a coup, France has kept the aid flowing.

The latest power struggle mirrored that of 2001, when Ravalomanana used the Antananarivo mayoral seat as a launching pad for his opposition political movement. Then Ravalomanana galvanised massive demonstrations while accusing Ratsiraka of being 'an anti-democrat and an oppressor of the populace'. The script was much the same in 2009 – but, unlike 2001, there was no election to legitimise Rajoelina's cause.

Preferential treatment of elites

As president, Ravalomanana was credited with improving the country's infrastructure, especially roads, and for improvements in education and health. But he faced criticism on lack of progress in fighting poverty and for perceived preferential treatment of political and commercial elites and some army cadres.

In the past, politicians in Madagascar have exploited ethnicity, pitting the Merina group, making up 26% of the population, against the Côtiers, who constitute about 33%. The fact that both Ravalomanana and Rajoelina are Merina suggests that ethnicity was not a factor this time. Ravalomanana, the first Malagasy politician to transcend the Merina-Cotier political divide, used his personal financial resources to turn his national business network into a political one. Critics of Rajoelina point out that,

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Russia and the international politics of energy security

Disquiet over Europe's reliance on energy from Russia has intensified efforts to find new suppliers. **Lesley Masters** argues that the politicisation of energy security in the region diverts all parties from the threat posed by a continued reliance on hydrocarbons

JANUARY 2009 saw the supply of energy to a number of European states disrupted following a price dispute between Ukraine and Russia. Although the former Russian president, Vladimir Putin, had claimed that Russia would not behave as an energy superpower, the Kremlin's decision to suspend gas supplies to the Ukraine increased European anxiety that Moscow was willing to use energy as a tool in foreign policy.

As the world's leading supplier of natural gas, and the seventh largest supplier of oil, Russia occupies a formidable position as an energy exporter. In contrast, many of the surrounding states of the former Soviet Union and the EU are major importers of Russian energy. The media coverage of this 'gas crisis' highlights the growing politicisation of energy security within the region. However, the focus on Europe's access to a reliable (and relatively cheap) supply of energy, coupled with growing Russian adventurism, obscures the threat that a continued reliance on hydrocarbons has on the future of international energy security.

Russia's growing international prominence is inextricably linked to its endowment of energy resources. Rapid increases in the prices of oil and gas enabled Russia to progress from a position of near financial collapse in 1998 to successive years of economic growth. The growing demand for Russian energy has been helped by the country's position outside the Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Middle East, where ongoing conflict undermines the reliability of supply. Europe currently relies on Russia for more than 40% of its gas and a third of its oil supplies, figures that are expected to increase.

Yet, as Pierre Noël lucidly argues in a *Policy Brief* for the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), there are key differences between east and west Europe in their dependency on Russia energy. Although the total amount of gas consumed by the eastern European states is relatively small in comparison to that of Germany or Italy, they are much more dependent on Russia for their supply.

Ukraine is particularly vulnerable to disruptions from Russia. Not only is it a pivotal state in the transit of gas towards Europe (accounting for approximately 80%), it is also dependent on Russian gas for its own energy needs and the revenue generated from transit fees. Although the Kremlin cited commercial reasons for the suspension of gas, there is growing concern in the West that Ukraine's energy dependency is increasingly being used by Moscow as a tool to exert political pressure to bring a pro-West Kiev 'to heel'.

A pipeline carrying liquid natural gas across Europe … Russia's enormous wealth in energy resources has placed it in a formidable bargaining position. Peter Blakely/Redux

Case for diversification

The prospect of a Russian stranglehold on Europe's energy supply has strengthened the case for diversification of Europe's energy supply. But while there are efforts to circumvent Russia, the long lead-in time to access alternative energy sources and construct supporting infrastructure will see continued reliance on Russia for the immediate future.

Securing the future of Europe's energy supply is complicated by the tenuous nature of Moscow's relations with transit countries. This was highlighted by the Georgia-Russia conflict of 2008, where security of oil and gas transit pipes came under the spotlight.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, back right, and his Ukrainian counterpart Yulia Tymoshenko, back centre, watch as Russia's state-run gas monopoly Gazprom chief Alexei Miller, foreground right, and Oleh Dubina, the head of Ukrainian state energy firm Naftogaz, foreground left, exchange documents at crisis talks in January 2009. AP Photo/ Alexander Zemlianichenko

Georgia's transit pipelines are of particular importance to Europe as they represent the only route that does not cross Russia or Iran. The transit states, as well as the oil-rich central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, fall within what Russian foreign policy has identified as a sphere of influence. Former US vice-president Dick Cheney's use of a visit to signal America's 'deep interest' in the energy security of the region, following the Georgia-Russia conflict, reinforced the perception later expressed by Russia's minister of defence, Anatoly Serdyukov, that the US is looking to 'muscle in' on energy and mineral resources in the former Soviet countries of central Asia.

New energy charter for Europe

In addressing Europe's energy needs, the EU has continued to push for the liberalisation of energy markets and Russia's ratification of the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) and the Transit Protocol. While Russia signed the treaty in 1994, it argues that ratifying it would undermine the country's national interest. And acceding to the Transit Protocol would allow the central Asian states access to Russia's gas and oil transit pipe network without any agreement with Moscow. The Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, has called for the negotiation of a new energy charter for Europe, one that focuses not only on consumers of energy, but also on producers and transit countries.

While Europe is dependent on Russian energy exports, Moscow is reliant on the revenue raised from the sale of its oil and gas to Europe. With evidence suggesting that Russia's resources are reaching their peak, the bilateral agreement reached between Moscow and China in February 2009, securing a significant increase in oil trading volumes, has underscored growing concern regarding Russia's over-extension and future capacity to supply energy. The country also faces growing domestic demand for energy, while the doubling of the gas price over the last 10 years has placed an additional burden on lower-income families.

Internationally, the soaring cost of energy and the move towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions has resulted in increased finance for the research and development of alternative energy sources, including renewables like solar, wind, and hydropower. With significant fossil fuel reserves, there has been little investor incentive to finance studies to develop technology and diversify energy sources within the Russian federation, leaving the economy dangerously dependent on hydrocarbons.

The global financial crisis has taken a toll on revenue from energy exports. In a presentation to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Ivan Korolev indicated that Russia's expected growth rate for 2009 is zero. This is linked to a dependence on the export price of hydrocarbons, which account for 70-80% of all export earnings. In addition to its impact on the 2009 budget, Tatiana Mitrova, head of the Centre for International Energy Market Studies at the Energy Research Institute (Moscow),

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A new Kyoto beckons

There is a pressing need to find a new, post-Kyoto agreement on climate change. **Saliem Fakir** and **Juanique Pretorius** set the scene for a crucial debate in Copenhagen later this year

'All countries will be affected. The most vulnerable – the poorest countries and populations – will suffer earliest and most, even though they have contributed least to the causes of climate change.'

– The Stern Review

WE ARE on the cusp of a make-or-break international pact – the post-Kyoto 2012 climate change agreement. A lot of what has been built in the climate change arena in the last decade rests on what can be achieved in Denmark in December 2009 when Copenhagen hosts the UN Climate Change Conference. This gathering will tackle what has been described as 'one of the most complicated international negotiating processes in the world today'.

One thing is certain: none of the world's rival powers will want to take on burdens that reduce their global competitiveness and economic power. And the negotiations must also been seen in the context of the global financial crisis and rivalry for the world's last remaining fossil fuels.

Copenhagen is the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15), the first having been in Berlin in 1995 (COP1) when there was still much uncertainty as to how individual countries could go about combating greenhouse gas emissions. At the time, a two-year evaluation phase was set up – just to generate a suitable set of instruments for participating countries to choose from in order to match their needs.

The game will be different

The 1992 Rio Earth Summit gave birth to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) treaty, which in turn gave rise to the famous Kyoto Protocol at COP3, five years later. In essence, Copenhagen is tasked with picking up from where the Kyoto Protocol will leave off when it expires in 2012.

A new agreement for global emissions reduction policies will have to be hashed out. However, this time the game will be different. Developed economies will want to offload some of the burden of carbon reduction on to emerging economies such as SA, India and China, whose fossil fuel emissions are growing fast as their economies demand more and more energy.

According to Jeremy Wakeford, research director for the South African New Economics Network, 'Because of its heavy reliance on coal, SA is one of the world's top emitters of CO^2, from energy consumption on a per capita basis. In 2005, its per capita CO^2 emissions of 9.56 tons per capita were more than twice the global average of 4.37; in fact higher than those of the EU, China, India, and Brazil.'

The first challenge is to get countries to agree to acceptable reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions. Here there may be some wrangling about the numbers. The aim is to cut emission reductions to between 400 and 450 parts per million, or at levels that keep global temperatures at 20°C or below.

A tall order

This is a tall order if one considers that China and India will be building hundreds of new coal-fired power stations, and SA itself will have to double its current power generation capacity – about 60% of which will be via coal-fired stations. China has been making the right noises; India seems a lot more cautious about how far it is willing to go. Brazil does not want the world to tell it that it cannot cut down the Amazon rainforest – unless somebody pays for it to desist.

The second challenge then is how to assist developing nations to take urgent steps to reduce their emissions. Agreement on the financial architecture and levels of support from developed economies for developing countries will also influence the degree to which the targets can be met.

The urgency of dealing with climate change was underscored by the Stern Review process two years ago. Stern said that about 1% of global gross domestic product spending will be required for the next 20 years in order to stave off the effects of global warming. Where all this money will come from is still an open question.

The other two core issues facing the delegates in Copenhagen are inextricably linked, in that they both aim to assist vulnerable inhabitants in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

An iron and steel mill in Lorraine, France … but SA's greenhouse emissions are higher, per capita, than those in Europe. Reuters

One is an agreement on an 'adaptation fund' to support vulnerable countries. Many developing countries see this as 'their fund' and there is already some wrangling about how money will be allocated and which types of initiatives and countries will qualify. For Africa, getting a reasonable share and access to the funds will be an important outcome to the negotiations, as the continent's challenge is not mitigation but adaptation to climate change.

The final area up for discussion is clean technology deployment and low carbon economy financing schemes. Technology is rapidly moving from a 'nice-to-have' to a 'must-have' as rival powers begin to position themselves as players within the fast emerging multi-polar geopolitical shift.

In the wake of the US's reluctance to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, its stance in relation to these core issues will be pivotal to success in Copenhagen. The US Congress is considering a draft bill on climate change that proposes a suite of options more or less aligned to the four areas identified as critical to the success of the Copenhagen climate change negotiations. The US bill seems to support the contention that the Obama administration is taking a different tack on climate change. Rather than resisting, it wants to be seen to be co-operative.

A shift toward offsetting

President Barack Obama's recent commitment to reducing emissions by a generous 80% by 2050 means a great deal of focus will need to be shifted toward offsetting. Obama has already turned green issues from being a cost into an economic opportunity.

The US and China are already leading investors, as part of their recent green fiscal stimulus, in low carbon economy transitions. Reaching a global climate change agreement can well help support the next wave of technology development – which many specialists have come to recognise will be in the 'clean-tech' sector.

These transitions include the promoting of renewable technologies to help communities adapt, and increasing resilience to climate change via national or regional adaptation programmes of action that focus on natural resource protection and rehabilitation.

Jeffrey Sachs is the director of the UN Millennium Project, Earth Institute at Columbia University and special adviser to Kofi Annan. In his recent book *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*, Sachs highlights that global challenges can easily be resolved if they are approached in the correct manner. 'The defining challenge of the 21st century will be to face the reality that humanity shares a common fate on a crowded planet,' he says. 'That common fate will require new forms of global co-operation, a fundamental point of blinding simplicity that many world leaders have yet to understand.'

Sachs admits that attaining goals on a global scale may seem impossible at the outset; however, using the expertise of colleagues from a multitude of academic backgrounds and disciplines, he shows that there is nothing in global politics, technology, or the availability of resources on the planet to prevent success. He adds: 'The barriers are in our limited capacity to co-operate. We need agreements at the global level and attitudes throughout the world that are compatible with meeting our global challenges.'

Both Sachs and the Stern Review believe climate change problems can be solved. But they do emphasize that urgency is required.

Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UNFCCC, reports that COP13 in Bali showed how global political processes have in fact reached a phase where ideas are converging. These findings will form the basis of a draft agreement for Copenhagen.

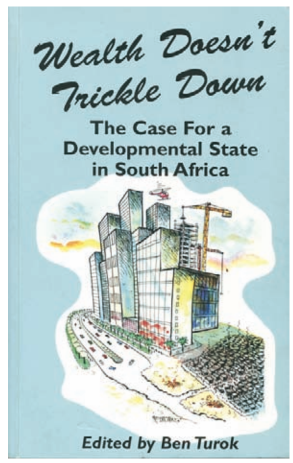
Saliem Fakir is head of the living planet unit, WWF-SA and Juanique Pretorius is an independent freelance journalist based in Cape Town

The people vote, but does the market rule?

Setting up a developmental state is at the forefront of the new South African government's deliberations as it faces its many challenges. **Adekunle Amuwo** discusses the insights provided by a new book on the subject

PAPERS PRESENTED at a seminar on the developmental state have been collected together in a book called *Wealth Doesn't Trickle Down, the Case for a Developmental State in South Africa*, ably edited by Professor Ben Turok. The seminar was hosted in 2007 by the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Human Sciences Research Council, and the UN Development Programme, with assistance from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The book is made up of 18 chapters (some of which appear to have been commissioned after the seminar) and the following documents: 'The ANC View' on, among other subjects, 'Building a developmental state', 'Monopoly capital and the National Democratic Revolution', and 'Rural development, land reform and agrarian change'; an introduction by Sydney Mufamadi, former minister of provincial and local government, and a report on the seminar by the editor.

At a time when the US, major EU countries, and Japan are using the agency of the much-maligned state to clean up the failures of the market and attenuate the market's hegemonic 'credit contract' over the state's 'social contract', the newly inaugurated South African government of President Jacob Zuma, constrained by global *force majeure*, has had to make repeated affirmations of its commitment to SA post-apartheid adulation of market fundamentalism. While there is an ever-present dilemma that 'neither a liberal nor an overtly interventionist state will manage to achieve sustainable development' (as Mohammed & Roberts remind us in the Turok volume, p. 119), there is also the danger that Pretoria may become more entrapped in the quagmire of economic neo-liberalism.



Wealth Doesn't Trickle Down, The Case for a Developmental State in South Africa
Ben Turok (ed)
Cape Town: New Agenda, South African Journal of Social & Economic Policy (2008)

Financial meltdown

Against the backdrop of the current international financial meltdown, we should heed the warning of economics Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz about winners and losers in the less turbulent 1990s. In his book *The Roaring 90s*, Stiglitz says: 'America's financial firms made money as the capital flowed in, and then made more money advising governments on how to manage the capital inflows; when countries went into crises, as they so often did, whether they followed the advice or not, the financial firms then made still more money advising on restructuring.' (p. 222) He adds: '…no matter which way things went, the investment banks made money.' (p. 223)

The new editor of the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper, Nic Dawes, writes that the Zuma government could not have been inaugurated at a more auspicious time. The current global recession provides a unique opportunity to interrogate the nature and character of globalised capitalism, as well as the need not only to redress global imbalances but to tinker with the contemporary architecture of capitalism. Undoubtedly, capitalism in its different guises and disguises across cultures and civilisations is on trial. In consequence, key players, emergent markets, and medium powers should join the intellectual, political, and policy fray with a view to deepening the debate and articulating praxis on the market-state matrix.

SA is arguably one of the most eminently qualified countries to do this, given its extremely rich, if fractured history of two unequal parts (first and third worlds) jostling for pattern maintenance and transformation. It would appear that the Zuma government has fired the first long-awaited salvo in support of the latter as the dominant development strategy. I refer not only to the government's new economic team (which is a deft balance between advocates of pro-business policies and protagonists of pro-people policies), but more importantly to the establishment of a national planning commission (NPC) and the performance monitoring and evaluation unit (PMEU) located in the presidency. This has been done in a very quiet and subtle, but dignified, way even as the government continues to play the pragmatic politics of assuring big business that it will be business as usual.

Post-apartheid SA arrived on the international scene in the early 1990s, at a time when the deregulation mantra was being sold – according to Stiglitz – as the 'the end of politics'. This was a sub-set and sub-text of the larger political thesis of 'the end of history'. Developed by Francis Fukuyama in 1992, this held that at the formal end of the Cold War western liberal democracy and its economic correlate capitalism had triumphed over all other forms of human governance. Whilst the deregulation mantra was a myth, it was nonetheless deep-seated. For reasons of enlightened self-interest, its proponents conveniently overlooked the numerous examples in the world's most developed capitalist economies and societies 'in which the fruitful operation of the market depended on a degree of regulation' as Stiglitz writes in *The Roaring 90s* (p. 102).

> The former liberation movement gave its heart to economic neo-liberalism after it had been pilloried and harangued by high priests of market orthodoxy

The mantra was also valorised through the demonisation of the state and government. Its advocates claim that an expanded role for the latter means, *ipso facto*, politicisation of the market. As Glen Thomas argues in the Turok volume, an over-regulated economy is capable of stifling the market and the private sector. A near theological devotion to the virtues of the market (whilst papering over its many vices, in particular its historic inability to supply basic political/public goods in a sustained manner, drive distributive politics and social justice, and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor) transformed the deregulation mantra into an article of faith. To quote Stiglitz again: '…the market, by itself, could handle almost any problem – that government, by definition, made things worse.' (p. 102)

Two unequal parts

The major question that confronted the government of Nelson Mandela (1994-1999) was how to harmonise the two unequal parts of SA: the first world coexisting in an almost unstable juxtaposition with the third world. According to Shisana, there were only two options: '…either 'redistribute the resources to achieve equity' or 'grow the pie first, before redistribution'.' What kind of modalities and instrumentalities would be deployed to frontally and brutally confront the profound inequities bequeathed by apartheid (with its legacy of an oasis of unprecedented economic prosperity in the midst of a large desert of joblessness, poverty, and inequality) without 'hurting' domestic (white) capital and 'frightening' foreign investors? This was an extremely hard act.

The governing ANC and Mandela, the iconic party and state president, were called upon early in the day to decide on which side of the mixed economy the country was going to stand. A decision in favour of the left of the mixed economy would have gone against the grain of the dominant economic orthodoxy, while a vote in favour of the right of the mixed economy would have meant repudiation of all that the Freedom Charter stood for. The former would have annoyed trans-national capital and the latter ignored the existential reality of the black majority blighted by apartheid's political economy. In the ensuing debate, the labour federation and ruling party alliance partner COSATU repeatedly called for 'an active interventionist state' capable of achieving the goals of economic development. It seemed to have subscribed to the argument of Peter Evans that state involvement in the economy is a given: the appropriate question is not how much, but what kind. Strategic state intervention was required to do what the market would not do: drive development, industrialisation, employment creation, and state transformation

It appears that the former liberation movement gave its heart to economic neo-liberalism after it had been pilloried and harangued by western high priests of market orthodoxy. It mattered little that the latter often honour the orthodoxy more in its breach than in its observance. Yet for the ANC government this was not a straightforward decision; the choice between the market and the state (or, perhaps more correctly, a judicious and socially relevant balance between them) was a hard one. As Turok argues, the governing elite woven around President Thabo Mbeki – renowned for largely pro-business policies – recognised the need for both entitlements and capabilities. Thomas (p. 178) goes so far as to say that Mbeki dismissed, however indirectly, the notion of a minimalist state in view of its suspected inability to deal with the backlog of poverty. This was an attempt to valorise social citizenship and politicise the development process for public-regarding purposes (Habib, p. 175), while still showing undue reverence to the god of the market. There was, therefore, a veritable tug of war between 'market yes' and 'state no', which culminated in what Bodibe (p. 222) refers to as an apparent 'indecisiveness on the part of the state in terms of where it wants to go and how to draw society behind its vision'.

Yet, by choosing the growth, employment, and redistribution (GEAR) programme, a more market-friendly development framework vis-à-vis the reconstruction and development programme (RDP), as the country's 'capitalist integration, stabilisation and growth agenda' (to paraphrase Jeremy Cronin, p. 234, who, at the time of writing was a MP, deputy secretary-general of the SACP and a member of the ANC, but is today the deputy minister of public works), the ANC appeared, however willy-nilly, to have handed over the economy to globalised capital and made the country safe for capitalist and primitive accumulation. Capital would henceforth closely tackle and watch over the state to prevent it from discriminating against foreign capital (Habib, p. 170).

The treasury's narrow focus

This explains Makgetla's lamentation that the GEAR strategy 'reflected the treasury's narrow focus on ensuring fiscal stability at the cost of broader development initiatives' (p. 153). Cronin argues that the aggregate of treasury's fastidious concern with macroeconomics (at the expense of 'national democratic developmental objectives') and the Mbeki government's 'relatively coherent' but 'deeply flawed' strategic vision is narrow macroeconomic coherence that fell flat at the level of strategic priorities such as job creation. For him, this explains why on its two main promises – generation of a million formal sector jobs in five years and effective cum people-friendly social service delivery – the strategic vision failed (p. 233, 234). But it certainly is far-fetched to suggest, as Cronin does (p. 234), that having ceded its sovereign economic-decision power to western imperialism, all that the ANC did was little more than 'the electoral reproduction of the new elite'.

From the point of view of market efficiency, the balance sheet of economic neo-liberalism in the past 15 years in SA is largely positive. Growth averaged at about 5% between 2004 and 2007, although estimates show it may contract by nearly 1% in 2009. A surplus budget gave government the elbow room to roll out a stimulus package of R690 billion over the next three years. There is perhaps no better proof of the country's macroeconomic good health than how SA has fared under the current recession. As with its fellow notable emergent markets, like China, India and Brazil, it would appear that SA has not been too harshly hit – thanks also to its superb financial management, tight banking regulation, and scrupulous fiscal balance. Emblematic of this impressive macroeconomic orientation has been the top-class performance achieved by the South African Revenue Service (SARS). In a decade – between 1999 and 2009 – tax collection grew from 16% to 28% of the GDP. High growth rates have, however, been blighted by what Bhorat (p. 192) calls a 'skills mismatch crisis', by which he means that 'individuals with higher levels of human capital do not appear to be guaranteed employment in the domestic economy' (p. 193).

As the existential reality of millions of, largely black, South Africans has copiously shown, economic growth is one thing, but economic development and material prosperity of the people is another. And there can be no meaningful development without the people or behind them. Similarly, because people are unemployed, underemployed, or poorly paid, they cannot save and accumulate capital. The *2008 South African Government Report* shows that, between 1994 and 2008, the number of the unemployed people doubled to 23%; people receiving social welfare support increased from 2.5m (1995) to 12m (2007), and counting.

A major explanation for this trend is the linkage between domestic and external capital, in which the latter has an upper hand, often to the detriment of the public good. Turok laments 'the continuing influence of the business sector, which raises concerns about any new emphasis on state intervention and uses its media channels to whip up public sentiment against this'. He reasons that this situation has had a contagious effect on senior public servants, such that some of them have internalised 'conservative values with respect to legislation and allocation of resources' (p. 166).

More worrying perhaps is that an economic system that has victimised millions of bona fide citizens (such as shack dwellers, farm workers, landless people, job seekers, and domestic servants) has retained its legitimacy for too long in the eyes of the people (minus, of course, the left of the ruling tripartite alliance). This is not a new thing, however. In his book *Beyond US Hegemony?*, economist Samir Amin writes that in China 'the capitalist road derives its strength – as well as much of its legitimacy and stable foundations – from its capacity to achieve economic growth where material benefits are widely (if unevenly) distributed' (p. 31). But he is quick to add that the exclusion of the majority of workers and peasants from the formal, mainstream economy and its benefits not only betrays the weakness of the 'pro-capitalist hegemonic bloc' but also constitutes the source of its political management problems (p. 32).

> Economic growth is one thing, but economic development and material prosperity of the people is another

The new minister of finance, Pravin Gordhan – the man under whose watch the SARS purse was fattened – has reportedly been quick to acknowledge

SA's former president, Thabo Mbeki, left, and his successor Jacob Zuma at the ANC's fateful Polokwane conference … the party's 'broad church' encompasses shades of economic thought, but might lean leftwards in its pursuit of a developmental state. AP Photo/ Denis Farrell

the unsatisfactory record of the government in the critical area of service delivery. What should worry the public and private sectors (as well as capital and labour) is that the poverty of service delivery is to a large extent not in spite of the country's sound macroeconomic policy, but because of it.

Important policy gap

But market fundamentalism does not explain everything. An important policy gap is that a professional, meritocratic public bureaucracy 'responsible for economic goal-setting to guide the market' in close co-operation with the private sector' and enjoying a high degree of autonomy has hardly been constituted in the 'modern' urban economy, let alone in the 'traditional' rural economy (Jahed & Kimathi, p. 103). Related to this is the fact that despite the huge salaries of directors general and other senior bureaucrats, SA's public service appears permeated by 'chronic inefficiency'. It is very doubtful, however, if the most appropriate solution is 'a customer-driven business culture in the service', *à la* the private sector.

To be sure, successive ANC-led governments have provided millions of South Africans with basic social services, as well as access to health, education, housing, and electricity (Shisana, p. 186-187). But a combination of the near deification of the market and foreign investment and the virtual zero level of basic services to the black community in the apartheid years has conspired to make the huge amount of work done thus far akin to scratching the surface. Simply put, not enough has been done (Levin, p. 64; Mondi, p. 72-73; Mohammed & Roberts, p. 79). Existing economic policies have not met the goal of improved service delivery. Herein lies the case for a developmental state in SA – and the importance of this volume by Turok and his collaborators.

While the ANC favours the state, capital, and labour working together to build a developmental state, the Mandela and Mbeki governments opted for trade liberalisation – a stance trenchantly critiqued by some of the contributors to the book. For example, to the extent that virtually all the so-called Asian Tigers and their ilk elsewhere used the state to socially discipline the market (that is to say, they thought outside the IMF cum World Bank development box), Mohammed & Roberts (p. 85) argue that: '…the case for trade liberalisation is theoretically and empirically weak'. Turok contends that the much-applauded market efficiency not only benefits an insignificant minority, it also does not work to its full capacity (p. 160). Similarly, the broad-based economic development that a developmental state is called upon to drive and achieve is presented by him as most susceptible to tilting state spending away from social grants to development needs (p. 160).

A more nuanced approach is proffered by W Thomas in what he calls 'comprehensive multi-dimensional public-private partnership' (p. 230), a suggestion that echoes Makgetla's plea for close 'private sector-business-government links' (p. 141-142). But are we not here dealing with the difference between six and half-a-dozen if Thomas's suggestion is followed to give 'far greater attention to the private sector (business-driven dimension) of development efforts'? In its diluted form, Thomas's further prescription that 'a complex mix of a developmental state and a developmental private sector' should be the base for all policy debate and action plans (p. 227) looks more attractive. Yet, the private sector is too hooked on to its profit motif and credit contract and too undemocratic to be left largely unregulated if it is to serve as a credible and strategic partner in the development matrix. More relevant perhaps is Makgetla's conceptualisation of a successful development state as one that elicits the support of development by capital 'as a class' and 'is willing to sacrifice some fractions of capital in order to achieve it' (p. 143).

A major statement

Did the minister in the presidency, Trevor Manuel, a globally rated star pupil of market fundamentalism, not say as recently as May 2009 (shortly after the inauguration of Zuma's first cabinet, which is perhaps instructive for future macro-economic policy direction) that the world may had been 'naïve to think that bankers were only interested in the common good'? Did he not add, rather memorably, that 'the period of deregulation has come to an end' and, echoing US President Barack Obama, that 'the lesson we have learned is that the world needs good regulation and good regulators'. While the statement might have been prompted by the recession and is, to that extent, circumstantial, it is nonetheless a major statement.

Time for decisive action

While Thomas may be right in his call for more debate 'on the substance of the South African developmental state, the role of the private sector in the economy, and how the developmental state aims to interact with different class forces and to mediate the inherent contradictions between the private sector and civil society' (p. 179), it is also time for decisive action by all stakeholders and role players in favour of a state that is simultaneously developmental and democratic. The government and the public sector cannot but drive this process, not least because, unlike the market and the private sector, there is a social contract between the people-as-citizens and the state or government. What comes into sharp focus from this volume, moreover, is a plethora of political economy analyses, understandably of varying levels of excellence and differing ideological hue, about what needs to be done.

Three comments are apposite here.

First, while several contributors give expression to a developmental state as no more than a prescriptive and aspirational category (see, for instance, 'The ANC View', p. 19; Levin, p. 50, 64; Mohammed & Roberts, p. 94; Jahed & Kimathi, p. 97; Machete, p. 113; Erwin, p. 135), three insights appear helpful moving forward. The first, arguably a more sanguine and more contextual South African conception in terms of its logic of economic growth first and the *less important goals of welfare and equality* (my emphasis) later, is evinced by Jahed & Kimathi (p. 102) as follows: 'A developmental state must give first precedence to policies that create wealth rather than to those concerned with social distribution.' The second, its corollary, from Laubscher (in Machete, p. 117), sees SA as akin more to a 'distributive state' than to an emerging developmental state (even though it is equally 'focused on the transformation of the economy and society'). The third is the rural component of the developmental state. Insofar as the majority of the people come from the rural political economy, Machete (p. 120) makes the important point that 'a state without the capacity to implement rural development programmes effectively is not a developmental state'.

The second comment is on the economics of the developmental state. The cocktail menu here is straightforward. The 'strategic parameters for the accumulation process within the national economy' include (but are not limited to): a 'strong public sector (including an interventionist state in the investment process, the 'strategic economic resources' and in the operation of labour markets, effective state-owned enterprises, strategic investment initiatives, support for small, medium and micro-enterprises and an investor-friendly regulatory environment' (Erwin, p. 132, 136, 138).

Development finance for industry, industrialisation and industrial development is also necessary. Given the historical centrality of the 'minerals-energy complex' to the South African economy, Makgetla calls for 'a new growth path based in other industries'. The strategic use of foreign direct investment and the protection of infant and emerging industries from undue global competition are also important (Mondi, p. 68; Mohammed & Roberts, p. 91; Thomas, p. 177). Huge infrastructure investments by both public and private sectors with a view to increasing both the quantity and quality of productive work shore up the intensity and extensity of the domestic market, upgrade the technological and knowledge capacity of the economy, etc (Erwin, p. 179; Turok, p. 159). Once the state gets its 'economics' (and perhaps also 'prices') right – to recall an old World Bank cliché – a developmental state begins to emerge. Hear Erwin (p. 138): 'Faced by the external power of global economic forces, a developmental state is one that can effectively counter the forces leading to economic isolation, uneven development and underdevelopment'.

A developmental state is one that can effectively counter the forces leading to economic isolation, uneven development, and underdevelopment

The battle royal

The third and final comment relates to the politics of the developmental state – and this is where things begin really heat up in the book. The battle royal is, not unexpectedly, between Alec Erwin, then minister of public enterprises, and Cronin, with Turok as the sage, if inadvertent, referee. The latter is of the considered opinion that the political hegemony of the ANC in the country's political system places it in a pole position to forge a developmental state. The *leitmotif* is simple, but profound: '…the inherited poverty, unemployment and inequality will not be overcome without a major intervention by the state.' The goal is a strategic use of political power, 'through the creation of a developmental state' to create 'a platform for the ultimate transformation of the political economy of society' (Turok, p. 166, 168).

Where Erwin sought to play the politics of the politician, Cronin's *demarche* resembles the politics of the communitarian, populist, and revolutionary, all rolled into one. There are two sides to this useful, if subtle, exchange – useful to the extent that it gives us an insight into the contradictions and struggles for hegemony amongst the different politico-ideological factions (and fractions) within the ANC's 'broad church'. While the Zuma ideological faction defeated its Mbeki counterpart at the ANC's 52nd national conference at Polokwane in December 2007 and gave birth to the Congress of the People (COPE) – the Mbeki faction's political and spiritual emanation in the presidential and provincial elections in April 2009 – there is nothing to suggest that it will be hegemonic forever.

Noting that 'the ANC's fundamental power' is 'its ability to lead a multi-class movement', and that that power would be weakened 'when groups talk of capturing the leadership of the ANC to ensure it is dominated by unionists, socialists or capitalists' (the latter added perhaps as a subterfuge!), Erwin argues that 'if the ANC is weakened in such a way, the prospects of a developmental state are exceedingly low' (p. 138). Erwin is saying that only the ANC – meaning the ideologically 'pragmatic' Mbeki faction in the pre-Polokwane era – could be relied upon to craft a 'market-friendly' and 'investor-attracting' developmental state. Cronin's response is that the ANC (in the hands of the Mbeki faction, without the 'unionists, socialists and communists') has often been described by its own senior officials as a 'dysfunctional formation confronting grave challenges – including sectarianism, corruption, careerism, and organisational malaise' (p. 231). Precisely because of this characterisation – and this is the second point – the ruling alliance partners, *not* the ANC, can claim the moral high ground to play the role of 'a strategic political centre' (Cronin, p. 232). According to Cronin (p. 239), the latter is called upon to 'ensure that there is a progressive, transformational politics that suffuses the state apparatus with its values, ethos and broad priorities'. Clearly, this progressive strand is challenged to prove its worth and show its character as a credible and strategic defender of the mass majority vis-à-vis globalised capital's expectation that the South African state would be its handmaiden and facilitator.

> Will the Zuma government fit the bill? It will if it plays correctly and adequately the historic role demanded of it

Will the Zuma government fit the bill? It will if it plays correctly and adequately the historic role demanded of it at this critical juncture in SA's political economy. The government is faced with several challenges, including an inadequate industrial policy framework; the structural divide between the first and second economies; and the extremely slow pace of land redistribution, land reform, and agrarian change. Others are the state's seeming unpreparedness to influence the allocation of capital in the economy, local government as a missing link in the social delivery chain, and the frequent lack of synergy between economic and social service departments (Levin, p. 64; Mondi, p. 72; Mohammed & Roberts, p. 79; Makgetla, p. 147-148). And what is the developmental import of the ANC, a sometime revolutionary movement out of power that has been transformed into a reformist movement in power?

The Zuma government has responded to Bodibe's (p. 221) unequivocal call that 'at the minimum, there is a clear demand for an economic planning system within the state' with the establishment of the NPC and the PMEU (as noted above) as if the call was made directly to it. On face value, the new government has been putting in place the right structures – and has also been making the right noises about political inclusiveness and about its resolve to be hands-on. Calland says that the Zuma government is tantamount to 'an alliance government in power', and that 'in terms of the broad church of the ANC's contemporary ideological span', the cabinet is 'the epitome of political heterogeneity'.

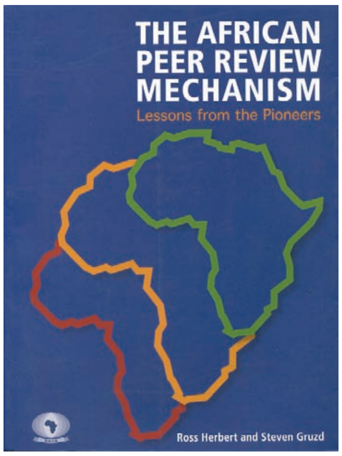
Macroeconomic tinkering

Further, the Zuma ideological faction's reported opposition to the R22.5 billion Telkom sale of 15% of Vodacom to Vodafone, the British telecommunications giant (making the latter the lion shareholder with 65%), preferring to retain Telkom as 'a strategic government asset', may signal the possibility of macroeconomic tinkering in the near future. Perhaps the message being sent out – even though it is still early days – is that while the role of the post-apartheid state has generally been limited by the market, the Zuma faction of the ANC does not intend to be limited by, and to, that role. Moreover, the government's decision shortly after its inauguration to borrow some US$1.5 billion (R12.7 billion) on the international capital market to fund the budget deficit might be evidence that it is gearing up to rising demand for social spending.

Continued on page 45

Learning from APRM pioneers

A timely new study examines the strengths and weaknesses of a key tool for Africa's renewal, writes **Ozias Tungwarara**



The African Peer Review Mechanism: Lessons from the Pioneers
Ross Herbert and Steve Gruzd
Johannesburg: The South Africa Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) (2008)

THIS BOOK is a remarkable resource for those serious about making the African Peer Review Mechanism work. The 406-page publication is divided into five parts, comprising 14 chapters covering a diverse range of issues. The appendices contain vital information on official guidance documents, APRM standards by thematic area, sources for desk research, a civil society checklist, and lessons for success. It comes with a CD-ROM that includes APRM guidelines, country reports, survey instruments, video testimonials, and standards embraced by the APRM.

The publication is timely, coming at a time of growing scepticism about the utility of the APRM. At its launch, the APRM was applauded as an organically evolved African response to the continent's deep-seated challenges of governance. Since its launch, 29 countries have signed up to the APRM, and nine have completed the review process so far.

While the continent has continued to consolidate democratic governance, political and economic systems remain fragile. In some countries we have seen reversals to earlier progress. The study is candid about the shortcomings of the APRM, while offering practical suggestions to make the process efficient and effective. It would have been useful to have had some assessment about whether the critical assumptions on which the APRM was based still hold. For instance, enthusiasm associated with Africa's renewal, characteristic of the late 1990s and early 2000s, seems to have waned. Have the initial incentives for signing up to the APRM, including increased foreign direct investment, changed?

Highly political

Experiences of the pioneer countries amply demonstrate the unprecedented level of ambition of the APRM, the complexity of which was compounded by methodology, process, and political challenges encountered. It was estimated that the APRM process would take six to nine months to complete, but it has taken between 33 and 39 months. Also, what might have been conceived as a technical exercise is proving highly political. While acknowledging the daunting challenges that the APRM faces, the study is positive in its view of the process as an opportunity to improve governance in Africa.

The study highlights challenges regarding APRM rules, processes, and institutions in a detailed and substantive manner. Guidance provided by a variety of documents, and orally by the ARPM secretariat, is still evolving. While the documents are becoming more specific with experience, the study notes that later documents contradict earlier ones and it is not clear what takes precedence. Some documents are not available on the website to allow easy access to information and guidance to the wide range of stakeholders engaging with the APRM.

Establishing national APRM institutions, key to the credibility of the process, has not been without controversy in pioneer countries. The book highlights the independence of the national governing council (NGC) as a contentious issue. There is division between those that advocate autonomy from government and those that suggest there should be an even split between government, civil society, and the corporate sector. Different configurations of NGCs have emerged in pioneer countries and there is urgent need to consolidate the rules into one set of authoritative guidance to give clarity and consistency to the process.

Use of technical research institutions (TRIs) is emerging as a standard feature of the APRM. It is important that processes to establish national APRM institutions should be transparent – to create trust and avoid conflict that can undermine the project.

The study recommends that particular attention be paid to the capacities and independence of the TRIs in order to maintain consistency in the self-assessment report and the programme of action (POA).

The greatest challenge of the APRM is the questionnaire, which aims to ensure that reviews are done in a consistent manner across countries. The questionnaire is too long, containing 25 objectives, 58 questions and 183 indicators. APRM rules promote broad public participation, but responding to the majority of questions and indicators requires technical knowledge. There is need to simplify the language of the questionnaire to make it more accessible. The principle of broad-based public participation underpinning the APRM provides an excellent opportunity for a national dialogue critical to a country's development, yet it could be undermined by such technical demands.

> The questionnaire marginalises important subjects such as freedom of information laws

A far-reaching criticism of the questionnaire is its division into four discrete thematic areas. This, the study argues, imposes artificial barriers to the economic, social, political, and corporate spheres – resulting in the reports being very repetitive. The study suggests clustering related issues together – such as gender, human rights, and vulnerable groups. It further suggests focusing on institutions not thematic areas, as the current format invites superficial generalisations. The questionnaire is extremely diverse in the information and expertise it requires, making it difficult to manage information and find expertise from a research perspective. It is estimated that the questionnaire in its current form requires between 27 and 35 forms of specialised expertise.

Another criticism is that the questionnaire marginalises important subjects such as freedom of information laws, restrictions on media freedoms, criminal libel laws, journalist licensing systems and criminal justice. Questions relating to political and democratic systems are not well structured to diagnose sources of poor political governance.

A key output of the APRM is the POA, which is supposed to address democratic deficits identified by the country self assessment and country review. Reports of the pioneer countries reveal gaps between analysis and recommendations in the POA. There are many instances where the analytical part of the report identifies problems and urges action but recommendations in the POA ignore this. This might imply a lack of political will to act on problems considered too difficult, and perhaps not enough time is allocated to development of the POA compared to other phases of the process.

Unrealistic

This publication rightly observes that POAs should seek to offer better quality solutions, more useful prioritisation, stronger political consensus, and improved integration with existing systems. The guidelines should be clearer on how to write a POA and how to monitor and evaluate progress. Pioneer countries have struggled with the requirement to report progress to the heads of states forum every six months. All that they have been able to report are intentions, confirming that the reporting period is unrealistic.

The APRM's many political aspects include: the potential to embarrass politicians, discussion of corruption, examination of national political power dynamics through the necessary discussion of political systems, and the allocation of political goods. These political aspects have implications, such as the choice of who gets consulted, invited to meetings, appointed to governing structures, or chosen to write and edit reports. It is important that political tensions inevitably arising from the APRM be mediated through democratic processes. There needs to be a healthy tension between government and civil society, with each party acknowledging that they play different roles and have different responsibilities. In most countries that have undertaken the APRM, the government appears to have controlled the process.

It is critical that clear guidelines on the size and rules of procedure for governing councils be provided. The study makes very useful suggestions about how civil society can effectively influence the process. In most cases, civil society organisations (CSOs) are reactive to government's exercise of power in setting the rules and shaping the process. CSOs need a balance between applying pressure and persuasion – knowing when to protest and when to persuade. The APRM should not be seen as an exercise in scoring political points but rather as an opportunity to reform systems of governance, and this requires CSOs getting priorities right and building strategic alliances. An important role for CSOs is establishing monitoring and tracking systems for the APRM, as well as seeking to influence the panel of eminent persons and the secretariat through well-researched submissions.

Part IV of the book comprises five case studies (Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Mauritius, and SA), which provide extremely useful information on how the process was conducted and the challenges faced. By drawing out the lessons learnt in the pioneer countries, best practice can be developed. This is vital for countries beginning the process and for second-generation APRM assessments.

This publication makes it clear that the APRM needs revision, in both process and substance. Given the magnitude of suggested changes, it is important to ensure that the APRM secretariat has the capacity to make them. It will be a real pity if this becomes another APRM study with recommendations that are not translated into concrete reforms. ■

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Understanding the war on Gaza – *continued from page 23*

Developments in the Middle East have reached an important crossroads. While the situation still remains in relative flux in the short term, there are strong indications that a fundamental paradigm shift can be expected in the medium to long term in favour of the resistance trend.

Ironically, it is Israel that bears major responsibility for rising militancy in Palestinian politics. Reflecting on SA's struggle and the demands made on the ANC by the apartheid regime to abandon violence, Nelson Mandela responded, '…the state was responsible for the violence and it is always the oppressor, not the oppressed, who dictates the form of the struggle. If the oppressor uses violence, the oppressed have no alternative but to respond violently.'

This is, however, not the most profound lesson SA has to offer, for it also teaches us that ultimately, reconciliation is only possible amongst equals. This universal truth was poignantly captured by French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, who said: 'The cry of the Zionists to justify their racist violence has always been "We are not a people like any other" while the Palestinian cry of resistance has always been "We are a people like all others".' ■

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The people vote, but does the market rule? – *continued from page 42*

The flip side is the negative effect of the recession on global trade, GDP and commodity sales – especially gold – and its implication for the government's external earnings. In any event, the sluggish emergence of the EU from recession (slower than in the US, even though the projected growth of Europe for 2009 is 0.2% compared to 0.1% for the US) and its repercussion for, among other things, foreign direct investment, provides ample opportunity for SA to rethink the decidedly right-wing leaning of its mixed economy. Analysts and activists who have waited to see SA move a little to the left of the mixed economy may be delighted by the fact that, unlike the Mbeki government that talked left but walked right, the Zuma government seems set to talk right and walk left. But will it? Can it?

Except for very isolated pockets (e.g. Cronin, p. 241-242; Turok, p. 166-168), the book sets little store by either the democratic component of developmental states or the critical role of women in development. If we take both together, it can be argued that, unlike in East Asian countries, SA cannot dispense with democracy and concentrate only on capitalist development. Cronin rightly conceptualises the democratic developmental state as one that, in the exceptional context of SA, is anchored on 'popular participatory mobilisation and struggle' (p. 240) and on working class politics 'that seeks to roll back capital's managerial prerogatives, in which the working class plays an active role … in developing industrial policy or investment decisions, both on the shop floor and in national bargaining for a' (p. 242). Cronin's 'revolutionary politics' that 'seeks to defend, strengthen and transform (the) democratic state' finds resonance in Jara's call for 'sustained mass conscientisation'. The latter would involve 'the patient work of building ordinary people as critical, conscious, self-organised and engaged social agents with social power, voice, and capacity'.

The flurry of strikes by an array of public sector workers in May 2009 and the threat by COSATU to call a nationwide strike over wage increases and better conditions of service for public servants are eloquent testimony to a vibrant and politically engaged working class. The agreement on salary increases reached between government and labour in 2007 has yet to be honoured. The ball is in the court of the governing elite to no longer see workers as electoral canon fodder, but as strategic partners in the development process and in the construction of a strong, democratic, developmental state. 'In a fractured and divided country such as (SA's)', writes ANC veteran Mac Maharaj, 'there is need for a strong government. We need this to build the unity of our emerging nation, to get on top of poverty in all its manifestations, to create a society based on equality, non-racism and non-sexism.'

Wealth Doesn't Trickle Down is a welcome addition to the growing literature and debate on the developmental state in SA. It should be read by South African politicians and policy makers, as well as by their counterparts in other climes where the political and policy elite want to exit the fundamentalism of top-down and bottom-up (or what editor Turok refers to as 'trickle-down' and 'ladders-up') approaches to development. ■

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Africa's hands-off approach to 'non-indifference' – *continued from page 26*

Although Nkunda's savage disregard for civilians received much diplomatic and media publicity, he was allowed to continue operating through international indifference, the perverse motivations of regional leaders, and a poorly defined UN mission. Eventually a dubious joint military operation by the DRC and Rwanda brought an end to his activities.

The AU could not muster the material and moral authority to deal with this outrage in its backyard, and relied on extra-regional actors. In eastern Congo, the AU seems to have failed both in its responsibility to prevent conflict and to react appropriately when conflict broke out.

Africa's shift from a culture of indifference to the plight of fellow nations to one of non-indifference is praiseworthy, but the gap between principle and implementation makes the exercise seem merely rhetorical and devoid of moral, political or military authority. ■

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Madagascar: the more things change, the more they stay the same – *continued from page 32*

despite his business acumen, he did not consolidate support outside the capital during the three-month standoff.

Madagascar's political unrest has left the once-booming tourist industry – once worth $390 million a year – facing ruin. Classified by the 2007/2008 *Human Development Report* as a low-income food-deficit nation, Madagascar remains heavily dependent on donor funding.

Ravalomanana's economic reforms attracted foreign investors such as mining giants Rio Tinto of the UK and Sherritt International of Canada, which invested heavily in the country's oil and mineral sectors. The mining industry has, however, faced problems of poor governance and corruption, with *The Economist* estimating that, in 2005, 50 kilograms of gems were being smuggled from Madagascar to Thailand every week.

Notably, while the latest conflict was driven largely by economic grievances, the country's economy was doing relatively well. Aggregate economic indicators had improved dramatically, with government projecting economic growth of 7.1% in 2008 and 7.5% in 2009. Ravalomanana's Madagascar Action Plan sought to increase efficiency in the public sector and increase private sector growth. The problem, however, was that results were seen to be slow in coming to ordinary people while key individuals in the public and private sectors were getting rich. Free market policies led to the privatisation of basic social services, putting them out of the reach of many. Rapid population growth of about 3% increased pressure on resources and Rajoelina easily exploited the frustrations being felt.

Madagascar's current politics are bred of the country's tumultuous history. Beginning with the 1947 anti-colonial uprising, the bloody suppression of which resulted in over 80 000 deaths, political unrest and power struggles have been the order of the day. There was a failed military insurrection in 1971; street protests that toppled the first president in 1972; a failed coup in 1974; military assassination of the president in 1975; strikes and violence in the 1980s; failed coups in 1989, 1990, and 1992; and chaotic populist support for 'democracy' in 2002 and 2009.

Roots of the current turmoil lie in the country's constitution and institutional structures that have given rise to regimes marked by centralised power and neo-patrimonial rule. The restiveness of opposition elements, coupled with popular frustration with government inability to resolve socio-economic and political problems, and the continued role of an oligarchic military directorate, contribute to an environment where anyone leading a street protest in Antananarivo is likely to get support. The 2009 events were more or less predictable.

The central question for Rajoelina is whether he can reverse poverty on the island in an international environment that is hostile to him. In a country reeling from the effects of the global economic crisis and with questions about his national political base, Rajoelina's government is vulnerable.

The Ravalomanana-Rajoelina conflict is a reflection of Madagascar's chronic political instability and a solution to the perennial problems will need to go beyond Ravalomanana and Rajoelina. To break the cycle of instability calls for systematic efforts to promote institutions and constitutional reforms and the formulation of socio-economic policies that address the structural sources of the recent conflict and promote popular participation in the running of national affairs. ■

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Russia and the international politics of energy security – *continued from page 34*

has indicated that the financial crisis, and the rapid depreciation in oil prices, has reduced the resources available for investment in energy infrastructure modernisation projects and the development of new oil and gas fields.

In response to the oil price falling from a high above $140 a barrel in July 2008, and in an effort to ensure its own energy security, Moscow has indicated a willingness to work closely with OPEC in an effort to stabilise the market. The Kremlin has also been at the forefront of plans to form a gas cartel along OPEC lines. To this end, Moscow has been in talks with Iran and Qatar – and if the three joined forces they would control more than half of the world's natural gas resources.

Through Gazprom, Russia is expanding its energy network internationally. Indeed, there are indications that the state-run monopoly has set out to acquire a share of Africa's energy assets, with the opening of its first African office in Algeria in June 2008. It has also offered to buy all Libya's spare oil and gas exports. The company has equally expressed an interest in buying exploration licences in Nigeria as well as the building of gas pipelines between Nigeria and Algeria and Europe and Libya.

While this aggressive pursuit of energy resources internationally plays a part in securing Moscow's future energy security, it has also seen the growing politicisation of energy security in the West and rising trepidation of a future energy empire.

Internationally, oil and gas have been the fundamental drivers of economic growth and development. As these hydrocarbons become increasingly scarce, competition for energy resources in Russia and the central Asian region will result in rising tension between both the energy exporting and energy importing states. This is reflected in the controversial *Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation until the Year 2020*, which focuses on the importance of access to energy resources globally and the potential for military conflict.

Nevertheless, by placing access to hydrocarbons at the centre of the federation's energy security, Russia will continue to remain dependent on fossil fuel, not only for its energy but as a source of revenue. The sustainability of this approach needs further consideration; especially in light of the decreasing price of energy resources and its subsequent impact on the national budget, modernisation projects, and the exploration and development of future gas and oil fields.

Although diplomatic efforts saw the supply of gas restored to Ukraine, the European Commission has prioritised the connection of the vulnerable Eastern European states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to European power grids, as well as the development of the Southern Gas Corridor.

Turning to alternative oil and gas exporting countries may provide a short to medium-term solution; however, Europe's focus on reducing its dependence on Russia diverts attention from the region's continued reliance on hydrocarbons. The Southern Gas Corridor may bypass Russia and Iran, but Europe would remain dependent on hydrocarbon energy exports from a region that remains firmly within Russia's sphere of influence. Rather than the continuing prioritisation of energy security linked to the export and import of oil and gas, the future of energy security for both Europe and Russia lies in the diversification of energy resources and the move away from a dependence on fossil fuels. ■

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Guinea Conakry: more of the same, or opportunity for change? – *continued from page 30*

the interim, the US has suspended financial assistance to Guinea, except for humanitarian aid and programmes supporting the transition. The French government, which holds the rotating chair of the EU, called on Guinea's new military leaders to hold elections in 2009. The EU has withheld all aid except for emergency aid, but has vowed to support processes towards a democratic transition.

These responses led to the establishment of the International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G), tasked with monitoring the transition process and co-ordinating efforts to restore constitutional order. It comprises representatives of the AU, the chair of the AU Peace and Security Council (Angola), the chair of ECOWAS (Nigeria), the UN and permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Mano River Union (MRU), the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the International Organisation of Francophone (OIF), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), and the World Bank.

> The key remaining question is whether the CNDD will indeed remain committed to the transition process, and restore democracy in Guinea

On 16 February 2009 the ICG-G held its first meeting with CNDD leaders. Following the meeting, it said it was satisfied with the CNDD's efforts thus far, notably its attempts to start a comprehensive political dialogue with all stakeholders, exercise its authority within the bounds of the rule of law, show respect for human rights, and show a spirit of neutrality.

The ICG-G resolved that the transition to democracy should be organised in four phases: the establishment of a framework and organs for transition; the establishment of a truth, justice, and reconciliation commission; the introduction of constitutional reforms; and the publication of electoral laws. CNDD leaders have welcomed these proposals. As a result, the main parties have signed a transitional timetable and adopted a common position on the steps to be taken towards staging general and presidential elections later this year. The ICG-G intends to establish a local contact group in Guinea to closely monitor and assess the situation in the country.

The Guinea coup has not only revived the question of how to judge the legitimacy or otherwise of coups d'état in Africa, but has also rekindled an awareness of coups as a way of changing political regimes. This highlights the strategies previously employed by other military groups in Guinea and the sub-region; therefore, many contend that the CNDD is using the same rhetoric as other ruling groups that have seized power by military means. However, taking into consideration the timing of the coup, the end of Conté's 23 years of misrule, the level of endorsement by Guinean as well as some prominent regional role players, it can be argued that the coup deserves the benefit of the doubt.

The situation remains precarious, and the CNDD government faces a major challenge in securing its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. Given this, the key remaining question is whether the CNDD will indeed remain committed to the transition process, and restore democracy in Guinea. The interim period will be critical, as Guineans and the international community assess whether the CNDD is simply buying time in order to strengthen its grip on power, and then eventually retract its commitments to the Guinean population.

All role players seeking to resolve the situation should place the interests of Guineans high on their agendas. ECOWAS and the AU should remain engaged with Guinea, particularly since the coup had been looming for some time yet they failed to intervene. All the symptoms of a political crisis were visible for some time, and the lack of intervention has now made it more difficult to deal with Guinea's political predicament in a proactive way. The moral of the story is that ECOWAS and the AU should improve their early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms in West Africa and the rest of the continent. ■

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