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EDITORIAL

The Pied Piper of Pretoria

After the bitter foreign policy lessons of the Mandela era, Thabo Mbeki has adopted a circumspect approach which has not made South Africa the African messiah some have hoped for, but also not the mercantilist others have dreaded. By **Adekeye Adebajo**

In one of the greatest ironies of the post-apartheid decade, South Africa has transformed itself from Africa's most destabilising and destructive power into its most active peacemaker. After the cautious and tentative Africa policy under Nelson Mandela's presidency between 1994 and 1999, Thabo Mbeki has acted as the 'Pied Piper of Pretoria', playing the diplomatic tunes to which politicians, warlords, and rebels have danced in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Côte d'Ivoire. All diplomatic roads in Africa are currently leading to Pretoria. But Africa is still haunted by Pretoria's past, and analysts continue to wonder whether South Africa's ultimate role in post-apartheid Africa will be that of messiah or mercantilist.

Collective memory

One cannot properly understand the significance of Pretoria's current Africa policy without examining its previously destructive military and economic role. Under apartheid, South African governments tried to reduce southern Africa to a region of 'broken-backed' states. More than 500 000 people died as a result of Pretoria's destabilisation policies, and its economic sabotage cost the region an estimated \$60 billion between 1980 and 1988 alone. The collective memory of these actions is still alive in the subregion. Despite the emergence of a black-led government, the fact that South Africa's economic, military, academic, and policy institutions for the most part remain stubbornly untransformed a decade after the end of apartheid further weakens its credibility in Africa.

The Customs Union, established in 1889 and transformed into the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in 1969, binds South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland to the promotion of free trade, thereby perfectly symbolising the mercantilist approach that Pretoria adopted towards its neighbours. Through SACU, Pretoria pursued one-sided trade deals while restricting access to its own markets. South Africa unilaterally determined SACU's tariffs, and was responsible for administering all customs, excise, and other duties. Far from promoting industrial development within SACU, South Africa often blocked its neighbours' industrialisation efforts.

In the post-Cold War era, the reluctance of western countries to intervene militarily in African countries after the UN debacles in Somalia (1993) and Rwanda (1994) led many observers to question whether potential African hegemons such as South Africa could fill the security vacuum. During Mandela's inauguration in May 1994, the then US vice-president, Al Gore, urged Pretoria to send peacekeepers to Rwanda. Given a history in which

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apartheid's leaders defined the country as a European outpost, South Africa is still struggling to shake off its image of a western Trojan horse in Africa. However, in the Mandela era South Africa had a globally revered statesman, one of the most representative political systems on the continent, arguably its strongest army, and Africa's largest economy.

Controversial intervention

A democratic South Africa joined a reformed Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1994. During Mandela's presidency, Pretoria largely shunned a military role in its subregion, out of fear of provoking allegations of hegemonic domination. However, while serving as the SADC chair, Mandela became embroiled in a spat with Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe over the structure of SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security, which Mugabe chaired. Furthermore, South Africa's first major peacekeeping mission was marred by controversy. When, in 1998, Pretoria intervened militarily in Lesotho, together with Botswana, it encountered stiff opposition from sections of Lesotho's army and parts of the population. The legitimacy of the intervention as a SADC-sanctioned action was widely questioned. The fact that the peacekeeping force was led by white South African officers who had served in the apartheid army (the force commander had been part of South Africa's destructive forces in Angola) further fuelled passions.

Perhaps the most significant event under Mandela's post-apartheid Africa policy was Pretoria's bruising battle with Nigeria. In retelling this tale, it is important to contrast the two main protagonists. In a recent play, *King Baabu*, Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka created a bumbling, brainless, brutish, and greedily corrupt military general who exchanges his military attire for a monarchic robe and crown. The play is a thinly disguised satire of General Sani Abacha's debauched rule between 1993 and 1998. In power, Abacha was ruthless and reclusive, but not nearly as inept as the caricature created by Nigeria's political opposition; they greatly underestimated him. Nelson Mandela is

perhaps the starkest contrast to Abacha that one can imagine: an educated lawyer from a royal family, an iconic figure, and winner of the Nobel peace prize, he has been celebrated as a 'saint' and one of the greatest moral figures of the 20th century.

When, during the Commonwealth summit in Auckland in November 1995, the Abacha regime hanged the Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni campaigners, a deeply betrayed Mandela, egged on by several western governments, called for the imposition of oil sanctions on Abacha, and advocated Nigeria's expulsion from the Commonwealth. He also called a SADC summit in order to plan collective action against Nigeria. Much to his horror, Mandela soon learnt that African diplomacy was more intricate than he had imagined; even his iconic status failed to persuade a single southern African state to take action against Nigeria. Instead, many African leaders accused Pretoria of becoming a western Trojan horse, sowing seeds of division in Africa and undermining African solidarity.

As deputy president, Thabo Mbeki engineered a change in South Africa's Nigeria policy. In an address to South Africa's parliament in May 1996, he argued that Pretoria did not have the leverage to dictate to Nigeria, and noted that Mandela had been set up for failure and ridicule by western leaders, some of whom were protecting oil profits and Nigerian assets in their countries. This incident greatly influenced Mbeki's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe; African efforts to depict Pretoria as a western stooge over Nigeria was a painful experience that Pretoria was determined never to repeat. Mbeki did not want to suffer the same fate over Zimbabwe.

Strategic partnerships

Under Mbeki's presidency since 1999, South Africa has established solid credentials for the position of Africa's leading power. Chastened by Mandela's bitter foreign policy experiences, Mbeki has consistently sought multilateral solutions to regional conflicts, and skilfully used a strategic partnership with Nigeria and his chairpersonship of the African Union (AU) between 2002 and 2003 to pursue his goals. Mbeki has also been more prepared than Mandela to send peacekeepers into Africa. He was the first chairperson of the AU and chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the intellectual architect of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Under his leadership, South Africa has hosted two high-profile UN conferences on racism and sustainable development.

South Africa's diplomacy was, however, openly defied by Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola, which sent troops to the DRC in 1998. Pretoria's alliance with Abuja is therefore a marriage of necessity for Mbeki. Unable to assert his leadership in southern Africa, due to residual historical baggage and states such as Angola and Zimbabwe seeing themselves as regional leaders, Mbeki seems to be venturing outside his own subregion in search of viable allies and additional legitimacy to bolster his continental leadership ambitions. South Africa has reached out to Nigeria, Africa's most populous state, and co-ordinated efforts in diplomatic fora.

But despite Mbeki's efforts to integrate South Africa with the rest of Africa, it is unclear how strongly these



Thabo Mbeki with Nelson Mandela. The former president's bitter foreign policy experiences have greatly influenced Mbeki's African strategies.

PictureNET Africa/Paul Velasco



President Thabo Mbeki arrives on an AU peace mission in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Pretoria can only promote its interests in Africa by working through regional bodies. *PictureNET Africa/AP Photo/Str*

efforts are supported by South Africa's political and business elite, and whether Mbeki's heirs will maintain his commitment to Africa. Many African governments and people have expressed unease about what they perceive to be Pretoria's protectionist trade and xenophobic immigration policies, and accuse its leaders of ingratitude after three decades of support for the ANC at enormous cost to their own countries. Africans also complain about the aggressive drive by South Africa's mostly white-dominated corporations to capture new markets north of the Limpopo. The fact that South Africa accounts for 80 per cent of SADC's economy and has a 9-1 favourable trade balance with its smaller neighbours continues to breed envy and resentment. The end of the Cold War diverted western investment to eastern Europe and Asia, leaving South Africa with surplus capital that has made it Africa's largest investor.

South Africa is becoming an African power, and is aspiring to global middle power status through its current policy of working with key African allies, as well as Brazil and India, in international fora, in which its voice is widely respected. But its future lies in Africa, and it can only achieve global status if it is accepted as a leader on its own continent. South Africa also wields many elements of 'soft power' that it can use more effectively to promote its interests and win friends in Africa. The supreme irony is that while many South Africans are highly ignorant about the rest of Africa, segments of Africa's elite know more about South Africa than any other country in Africa. Pretoria can use *Channel Africa*, which transmits to 33 African countries, to further expose Africans to South Africa, and improve South Africans' knowledge of the rest of the continent. South Africa's mobile phone giants, MTN and Vodacom, could interconnect the entire continent, and South African technology and capital could help build the roads, railways, and ports Africa needs for an industrial take-off. South

Africa already generates about half of sub-Saharan Africa's electricity needs, and is investing in a trans-African electricity grid. South African Airways (SAA) is by far the most reliable aircraft carrier on the continent.

Aspiring middle power

Post-apartheid South Africa is, however, neither a messiah nor a mercantilist power. It is simply an aspiring middle power seeking to punch above its weight in global politics. Pretoria still has massive domestic problems inherited from apartheid, and is seeking to reverse these through an effective foreign policy. South Africa can also not be a messiah for Africa because it lacks the economic and military muscle and political legitimacy to impose its preferences on its own subregion, let alone on the continent. Mbeki has grasped one basic reality: Pretoria can only promote its diplomatic interests within Africa by working through other regional states.

South Africa is also no longer the mercantilist power it once was under apartheid. The country is gradually loosening its protectionist policies in southern Africa, has restructured SACU and SADC to render greater benefits to its other members, and is at last conscious of the need to promote investment and industrialisation policies that will benefit its neighbours. The 'Pied Piper of Pretoria' has won widespread applause for his impressive peacemaking efforts. He should continue to play this diplomatic tune, because at this stage it is the only way in which a South African leader could help to calm a volatile continent. ■

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Red no more: Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet era

While Vladimir Putin has done much to stabilise post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, he needs to make a final choice between democracy, respect for human rights and a continued partnership with the West – and a concentration of power, alienation from the West, and economic decline, writes **Gerrit Olivier**

Russia's modern history can be divided into three epochs: Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet. While each of these had its own distinctive character, the Russian national ethos, political culture, identity, and aspirations generally represent a historical continuum. During each epoch these attributes of Russia's national character have underpinned, directed, and rationalised its political decision-making and foreign and domestic policy. Soviet leaders ruled like Tsars, and political authoritarianism and intolerance run threateningly through Russian history. Thus Ivan the Terrible and Stalin had much in common, and the tendency of the current president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, towards a concentration of power and Kremlin-style hegemony is a deeply embedded Russian leadership trait.

Crises of identity

By the same token, Putin's regime is still faced by uncertainties and crises of identity that have plagued and divided the Russian ruling class for centuries. For instance, what are Russia's location, identity, and mission in the world? Does it belong to the East, the West, or both? Is it part of Europe, or should it project a Eurasian identity and mission? Is it more empire than nation, transcending continental boundaries? Or is it at once Slavic, Asian, European, global, and imperial? Since the Tsarist period, these uncertainties have fed a never-ending debate about Russia's foreign policy. Should it play a global role, or limit its sphere of influence to the 'near abroad' (roughly the space of the old Soviet Union)? Should it be pro-Western and pro-American? Should it be friendly and accommodating towards NATO and the EU? Or should it align itself with Eastern nations such as China and India in an attempt to counter to the present unipolar world system?

The Marxist-Leninist notion of a world revolution and the subsequent Soviet foreign policy approach was not alien to Russia's traditional imperialist outlook, although it went much further to become universalist in scope. While this policy was ideologically inspired in the early phases of the Soviet Union, it eventually became increasingly nationalist, and developed into a touchstone of Russian national interest. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it was traumatic and humiliating for Russians, whether members of the elite or the rank and file, to face the reality that the global role of the once mighty Soviet Union was a thing of the past. Difficult adjustments had to be made after the implosion of the regime, although the new Kremlin regime was extremely reluctant to accept the reality of a reduced Russian status in the world political hierarchy. Even if most Russians

realised that Russia could not sustain the Soviet Union's global role, they were unwilling to accept that it was no longer a 'great power' (*velikaya derzhava*), a concept embedded in the Russian ethos. Thus after 1991 the new Russian foreign policy elite became preoccupied with the question of how to preserve or reinstate the glory of the past, and foreign policy was dictated by a fervour to resurrect the notion of great powerness (*derzhavnost*).

After the sudden and ignominious implosion of the Soviet Union, most Russians realised that the Marxist-Leninist paradigm, particularly its notion of a global proletarian revolution, had failed, and that a new approach was called for. However, this did not mean that Russia's traditional perception of its international role would change, or that it would relinquish its quest for *derzhavnost*. The new approach simply meant that the revolutionary ideology of the Soviet Union would be consigned to the dustbin and replaced with a policy driven by pragmatic considerations, with practical Russian national interests as the lodestar. How to translate this paradigm shift into workable foreign policy was another matter. On the one hand, the new Russian government had to preside, albeit reluctantly, over the liquidation of the Soviet Union's role as superpower; on the other, it had to find a new role in world affairs commensurate with Russia's new non-ideological approach, its newly defined national interests, and its reduced national capabilities. This process was largely haphazard, reactive, and badly conceived.

Yeltsin's first steps

The first major step taken by the Kremlin's new leaders in 1991 was to bury the hatchet with the West, the Soviet Union's long-standing enemy and Cold War competitor. Rather naively, Yeltsin and his minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, believed that Russia would find its way back to greatness by aligning with the 'capitalist' West, particularly the US. Inheriting the international rights, obligations, and legal personality of the defunct Soviet Union, its nuclear arsenal, and permanent membership of the UN Security Council, the new Kremlin administration expected Russia to carry on much like before, albeit without the tag as the ideological enemy of the West. It expected to be treated as equal of the US in world affairs; that its leading role in global affairs, particularly in regional conflict situations such as Angola, the Middle East and the Balkans, would continue; and that it would continue to play a superpower role in the UN and its specialised agencies.

Of course, the fall of the Soviet Union was precipitated by



The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, second from right, lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow to mark Defender of the Fatherland Day. His increasing tendency towards Soviet-style rule has resonated with ordinary Russians. *PictureNET Africa/AP Photo/Alexander Natruskin*

its growing economic and technological inferiority to the West, and when the Yeltsin administration took over the decline of Russia's global power and status was already indisputable. In fact, after 1991 the situation got progressively worse due to the political and economic failures and decay on the domestic front. When Kozыrev proclaimed in 1995 that 'Russia remains a great power, and cannot be a junior partner [to the West], only an equal partner', he was indulging in wishful thinking, or dodging the truth. The only remaining elements of great power status were Russia's nuclear power status and permanent membership of the UN Security Council, but that was obviously not enough to place it in the same league as the US.

Minimalist response

Indeed, Russia had little to offer to justify an equal partnership. The Yeltsin administration expected to be rewarded for ending the decades-long East/West Cold War, offering to act as a vital strategic partner to the West, and relinquishing the old Soviet policy of enmity and confrontation towards the West in favour of a policy of constructive co-operation. Of course, this is not how international politics works: altruism falls outside the equation when it is not in the 'national interest'; even friendly nations compete with one another; and the quest for a monopoly of power and influence is a perennial one. Not willing to face a renewed challenge from a resurgent and dominant Russia, the West showed no desire to help it to become a world force once

again. What it wanted to see was a new, predictable, and democratic Russia that posed no threat to its interests. Therefore, while the hand of friendship extended by Boris Yeltsin was welcomed, the West never intended to produce the matching performance the Russians wanted or expected. While Western leaders were careful not to 'lose' or alienate Russia, they also knew that, because of its dependence and vulnerability, Russia had little choice but to co-operate with them. Therefore, while they acknowledged Russia's intrinsic power and pivotal political and strategic importance, their diplomatic response remained minimalist. Moreover, the Yeltsin administration's weak, unimaginative, and sometimes chaotic diplomacy never forced them to change their position to protect their interests.

Russia's post-Soviet weakness was particularly epitomised by its inability to influence the all-important reconstruction of Europe's security and foreign policy architecture. Besides a loss of power, the Yeltsin administration also lacked direction, diplomatic and strategic finesse, and consistency. Its approach towards the West was a random mixture of co-operation and confrontation. This became very clear from its reduced role in regional conflicts such as the Middle East, the Balkans and Angola. Legitimate Kremlin protestations about the expansion of NATO to include former Warsaw Pact satellite states were politely pushed aside. In the end, it had to be satisfied with palliatives such as a consultative role in NATO structures, and promises of a good neighbourly policy on the part of the enlarged EU.

Nothing came of Yeltsin's threats to form a strategic partnership with China, India, and Iran in order to counterbalance US hegemony, forge a 'cold peace' with the West, or reintroduce Russia's nuclear capability in the East/West equation. His flip-flop foreign policy was obviously a failure. Divisions among politicians, strategists, and the attentive public also sharpened around the issue of a pro-Western or anti-Western foreign policy posture.

Everything considered, the Yeltsin administration put Russia's new foreign policy on a no-win course. As the gap between expectations and reality widened, foreign policy inevitably became highly politicised, and was rejected by liberals and conservatives alike on the home front. Fearing a conservative (by communist and nationalist factions) backlash ahead of the 1996 presidential elections, Yeltsin tried to assuage public opinion by replacing the free-wheeling, pro-Western Kozyrev with the more conservative former KGB chief Yevgenii Primakov. When Primakov came on to the scene, Russia had already metamorphosed into a nation of no clear identity, uncertain whether it was European, Asian, or Eurasian. It had also shrunk from global force to regional power, and teetered on the brink of internal anarchy.

Following a neutral approach to the West, while stressing the importance of a multipolar world system as against a unipolar one, Primakov succeeded in restoring some credibility at home, and greater respect for Russian diplomacy abroad. However, while the new foreign policy line was an improvement, it remained hamstrung by Yeltsin's unpredictable style, erratic leadership, and personalisation of Russian foreign policy. Russian foreign policy only really changed when Vladimir Putin became president in 2000.

Putin's foreign policy

The fact that Yeltsin was old, ailing, and incompetent during his last years in the Kremlin meant that Putin did not have a hard act to follow. The young and energetic Putin took over at a time when Russia was rudderless, on the verge of anarchy, and deeply humiliated by the successful resistance of separatist forces in the small, semi-autonomous Chechnya against the once mighty Red Army. Fortunately, Putin was at the right place at the right time, because the erratic Yeltsin could easily have chosen another successor. Between March 1998 and September 1999, Yeltsin had run through five different prime ministers. At the time, Putin – the last of these appointments, which occurred at ever diminishing intervals – was portrayed as nondescript. He had no political experience barring a long KGB career and a short stint as deputy to St Petersburg's mayor, and no power base to speak of; luck and circumstance played a major role in his rapid elevation to power. In the end, however, he became a very popular leader, surprising and impressing everyone with his political astuteness, strategic acumen, administrative efficiency, and energy.

Skilfully exploiting the Chechen war, the brutal terrorist attacks in Russia, and the anger, indignation, and disillusionment of the Russian people at Yeltsin's failed reforms and 'shock ther-

apy', he quickly developed an image as the new saviour of the Rodina (motherland). Pandering to patriotic sentiment, and exploiting the wounded pride of the Russian people over the loss of the Soviet Empire, his public approval ratings have remained consistently above 60 per cent, shooting up to 83 per cent at times.

Official corruption

From a Western political science perspective, Putin's popularity is hard to explain. When his track record is examined more closely, his success has been more apparent than real. Under his watch Russia has become less democratic, drifting towards benevolent authoritarianism. He has been unable to keep his promise of 2000 to end the brutal war against the Chechen separatists; he has failed to stop the bloody wave of terrorist attacks on Russian civilians waged since 1999; he has failed to stem massive official corruption; and he still has to deliver on his promise to improve the lives of ordinary Russians. To strengthen his grip on power, draconian restrictions have been placed on the emergence of an opposition, and press freedom has been severely curtailed.

Part of the reason for his popularity with the Russian masses seems to lie in the Russian psyche and political culture. Centuries of autocratic rule have conditioned Russians to respect the power of leaders rather than institutional authority, or the moral correctness of democracy. Moreover, under communism there was a predictability and continuity to life that appealed to ordinary Russians. This certainty was annihilated by the Yeltsin regime.

Putin understands these sentiments and predilections, and knows how to react to it. His increasingly authoritarian, almost Soviet-style rule is perceived and experienced differently by ordinary Russians than by democratic purists in the West. He can therefore rule like a modern Tsar or communist boss and get away with it. He controls the media with an iron fist, does not tolerate opposition, has no scruples about eliminating opponents, and increasingly concentrates power in the Kremlin to suit his political ends. The fact that he does most of these things to protect and promote his leadership does not seem to count

against him; many Russians believe they are essential to protect and advance the Russian people and the Russian state.

Putin's foreign policy differs substantially from Yeltsin's, particularly in respect of style, strategies, tactics,

and emphasis. It is also decidedly pro-Western, but more Eurocentric than pro-American, as was the case under Yeltsin and Kozyrev. Although he actively cultivates relations with the East, his explicit motive is not to promote multipolarity or counter US 'hegemonism', as Yeltsin and Primakov tried to do. His foreign policy is multifaceted and ideologically neutral, driven by economic, security, and strategic motives rather than by a penchant for grandeur and deference or a quest for great power status. For him, these elements will come when the more mundane 'bread and butter' elements of his policy have fallen into place.

While Yeltsin's foreign policy on key issues such as strategic disarmament, the expansion of NATO, the virtual shunning of

Putin controls the media with an iron fist, does not tolerate opposition, and increasingly concentrates power in the Kremlin to suit his political ends

Russia during the Balkan crisis, and America's refusal to deal with Russia as a co-equal swung almost randomly from confrontation to accommodation, Putin's approach is consistent, non-confrontational, prudent, patient, and calculated. While Yeltsin ranted *ad nauseam* about Russia's rights as a 'great power', Putin is more inclined to leave that judgement to others. In doing so he does not create unreasonable expectations, and leaves room for himself to achieve goals that are more commensurate with Russia's new reduced status and capabilities, and getting things done and off the agenda.

Because of a lack of internal economic resources, and reduced military and technological capabilities, post-Soviet Russian foreign policy no longer has a global reach, but is limited to specific areas demarcated by core national interests. These interests are defined by geographic proximity and by imperatives of security, economic necessity, and cultural affinity (particularly in the case of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet republics, and fellow Slavs in the former Yugoslavia). From this perspective, the 'near abroad', Europe (specifically the EU), the US, and Asia are the focal areas of Russian foreign policy. The southern hemisphere – Africa, South America, and Australasia – fall outside this primary focus. Good relations are being maintained with major southern countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Australia, but they are not regarded as central to Russian national interests.

Security interests

Russian foreign policy is multifaceted, with overlapping characteristics and nuances. Although the demarcation of this policy in spatial terms, denoting levels of priority or spheres of interest, may oversimplify and generalise these complexities, this mode of analysis is nevertheless instructive. Security interests in the physical and military sense unquestionably demand first priority. For Russian policy-makers, national security is an absolute, and any compromise or minimalist approach in this respect is out of the question. For this reason, Moscow refuses to make even the smallest of territorial concessions, such as giving autonomy to Chechnya or handing back the Northern Territories/South Kurile islands to Japan. Russia is huge (comprising one seventh of the earth's surface), and the Russian Federation consists of 89 regions. The threat of a break-up is ever present, and the Kremlin knows that the domino effect of one breakaway could have disastrous consequences for the Russian state.

Culture and religion also form part of the Russian security equation, but are less dominant. Security interests are closely followed by economic interests, particularly in view of the gigantic challenges of transformation facing Russia in the wake of 70 years of Communist totalitarianism and economic mismanagement. Prestige and recognition as an international role player also feature prominently in Russian foreign policy; particularly important in this respect is its role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and its specialised agencies.

Therefore, in terms of foreign policy priorities, the 'near abroad' ranks at the top. What it boils down to is that Russia needs a secure and stable neighbourhood. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), founded in 1991, is the institutionalised structure for securing Russian security, if not hegemony, in the 'near abroad'. While no longer a world power, Russia's status



The president of the EU Commission, Romano Prodi, welcomes Putin at an EU-Russia summit in Rome. Unlike Yeltsin, Putin's foreign policy is more Eurocentric than pro-American. *Picturenet Africa/AP Photo/Massimo Sambucetti*

is unquestionably that of a Eurasian regional power. Thus the 'near abroad' is a region where Russian interests come first, the first circle of Russian foreign policy. The right to defend its interests in this region is a non-negotiable element of Russian foreign policy, and recognised as such by other international actors. These interests are driven by security imperatives, strategic-military priorities, economic considerations, demographic factors, and cultural affinities.

While the West spurns Russia's global aspirations, it tolerates the latter's virtual hegemony over its 'near abroad', and recognises this as a legitimate Russian sphere of influence where outside interference would be provocative and even dangerous. The Soviet Union consolidated this vast and diverse region into one economic space; today, the dependence on Russia of the newly independent former Soviet republics may be declining, but is still substantial. Only Belarus, Ukraine, and Armenia gravitate spontaneously towards Moscow, while the rest do so because they have no other choice.

Nuclear warheads

Their relations with Moscow are marked by the vulnerability conferred by interdependence. Although Moscow's relations with the former Soviet republics are less imperialist and dogmatic than under communist rule, geopolitical security considerations still play an important role. Since 1991 Russian troops have been involved in Tajikistan, Nagorno Karabach, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. However, these security considerations are no longer of a zero-sum nature, as the Russian government is also taking into account the wider implications of developments in the CIS, particularly how these relations would impact on its relations with the West. For instance, Yeltsin played a key role in the deactivation of almost 5 000 nuclear warheads in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, while Putin did not object to US military deployment in the Central Asian states in the aftermath of 11 September 2001.

The second circle of Russian foreign policy is Europe and the US. Yeltsin favoured the US above Europe. He regarded the US as Russia's natural partner in world politics; an essential role player in its economic and social transformation; a gateway towards a renewed respectability in world affairs; and a guarantor of his personal hold on power. Kozyrev called for a 'constructive partnership' between the US and Russia that would 'influence positively the course of world affairs'.

Failed relationship

Although the US response to these aspirations was not altogether negative, it fell far short of Moscow's expectations. Predictably, towards the end of the Yeltsin regime, the relationship deteriorated. Positive developments in the nuclear field, such as the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programme for the safe dismantling and disposal of obsolete Russian nuclear missiles and nuclear materials, the denuclearisation of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and the signing in 1992 of START-2 did give the relationship a positive shine. However, these events were overshadowed by the Russian Duma's refusal to ratify START-2, Russian aggravation over the US-dominated Kosovo operation, the 'isolation' of Russia by the expansion of NATO, and America's strategic defence plans. In the end, Yeltsin had almost nothing concrete to show for the 'constructive partnership' with the US. In many ways, this was a failed relationship.

When Putin took over the presidency, Russian relations with the West were in an awkward state. From the outset, however,

Putin followed a more prudent, predictable, and co-operative line of diplomacy than his erratic predecessor. His strategy was to 'join the concert of developed, democratic countries alongside America and Europe'. Unlike Yeltsin, he sees little point in picking fights he cannot win. When he took over, the Kremlin cooled down over NATO enlargement, while America's unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM) was merely depicted as a 'mistake', and no confrontation or diplomatic fuss was made about its intention to build missile defences.

In contrast to Yeltsin, Putin puts a greater premium on Europe than the US. Opening the first summit of the EU held in Moscow in May 2000, he declared: 'Russia has been, and is, a European country, through its geography, culture, and desire for economic integration.' At the beginning of his presidency Russo-European relations were at a low point, mainly because of the Kosovo experience, the expansion of NATO, and Europe's critical stance on the brutal war in Chechnya. Putin immediately realised that a weak Russia could do nothing to oppose the expansion of NATO, and adopted a more constructive approach. At a meeting with the secretary-general of NATO in November 2001, he stated: 'Russia is not standing in line to join NATO ... but it is ready to develop relations as far as the alliance is prepared.' While the Kremlin still regards the organisation's eastwards expansion as an unfriendly act, its opposition has moderated, and the issue is being used as a bargaining chip to get more concessions from the West. Putin no longer regards NATO as an enemy, and is committed to co-operating with it via the newly formed Russia-NATO Council for the sake of wider European

security, mainly in the fields of international terrorism, crisis management, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and arms control.

Two overarching factors dominate Putin's relations with the West: international terrorism, and the state of Russia's economy. The terrorist assault on the US on 11 September 2001 was not only a watershed event in the rapprochement between Russia and the West, but also gave Putin the opportunity to redesign Russian foreign policy. It helped him to change Russia's identity and image from a tolerated outsider to a normal, constructive international partner; restore a good working relationship with Washington; prioritise international security, trade and economic co-operation; and justify his pro-Western stance to his domestic critics. In an important way, 9/11 was also a godsend for Putin in his struggle against Chechen separatists, which he has consistently justified as a battle against 'terrorists'. Europe in particular was sceptical of this characterisation, because in its view Moscow was ignoring the legitimate aspirations of the Chechen people, and because the worst violations of human rights took place in Chechnya in the name of Moscow's right



The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, accompanied by the Chinese president, Hu Jintao, reviews a guard of honour on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Putin is using every opportunity to expand economic relations with China and other eastern countries. *PictureNET Africa/AP Photo/Greg Baker*

to secure its territorial integrity. After 9/11, America's battle against international terrorism also became Putin's battle, and Chechen rebels became part of George W Bush's 'axis of evil'. Using this premise, Putin was at pains to convince the world that the horrible September 2004 attack on a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, was indeed part of an international campaign to destabilise Russia, and that negotiation with the Chechen rebels to find a peaceful settlement was out of the question. He also promptly used this incident to concentrate more power in the hands of the president.

The second key factor defining Russia's relations with the West is the state of its economy. In this respect Russia is at best a middle power, with an economy about the same size as Switzerland's. Its economic integration with the rest of the world is still minimal. Its share of global trade is under 2 per cent, less than that of Belgium, Mexico, Singapore, and Spain; its exports consist largely of oil, gas and metals; it attracts little foreign direct investment; it carries a debt burden of about \$ 143 billion (2002 figures); and is experiencing a demographic collapse (its population is shrinking by about 750 000 a year). Economic growth is relatively high (about 6 per cent a year since 2000), but high oil prices since Putin took office have helped to camouflage many unresolved domestic economic problems. Putin still has to deal with the stark reality that the majority of Russians continue to live in poverty.

Economic imperative

His pro-Western policy is therefore driven by the imperative of constructing an economically strong Russia, or, more pointedly, halting its decline. This pro-Western stance is not popular among attentive Russians; most Russians are still anti-American, and sceptical of the West. Even so, while they know that Russia is too weak to challenge the West or to transform its economy without the West's involvement, Putin remains under pressure to come up with the dividends of his pro-Western policy, and to show that it is in reality a pro-Russia policy. Russia's accession to the Group of Industrialised Nations (G7/8) has been a major symbolic achievement, but its membership of the WTO still hangs in the air as the ultimate test of Russian acceptability in the new globalised economy.

Relations with Asia form the third circle of Russia's geopolitical interests. Yeltsin sought a 'strategic partnership' with China mainly for four reasons: to finalise the 4 000-kilometre border between the two countries; counter 'American hegemonies'; safeguard Russia's territorial integrity in event of a Chinese spill-over into the largely vacant Siberia; and establish Russia as a Eurasian global power. Although Yeltsin's Asian policy was generally successful, he never got China, India, and Iraq to join Russia as a countervailing force to stem the Pax Americana, mainly because good trade relations with the US were more important to them. Putin, being less dogmatic and more pragmatic about American hegemony and superpower status, is looking at every opportunity to expand economic relations with China and other countries of the East. He prefers a step-by-step approach, letting

things develop. His administration has concluded friendship and co-operation agreements with China and North Korea; strengthened ties with India; and participated more actively in regional bodies such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO, also known as the 'Shanghai Five').

Finally, not much is left of the Soviet policy to cultivate special relations with 'progressive' countries in the underdeveloped southern hemisphere. With the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist fervour gone, and Soviet ideology consigned to the dustbin of

history, Moscow sees very little of strategic and economic value in these relations. The candid truth is that it no longer has the resources to play a meaningful role in the south. It has simply lost interest, and prefers to give priority to its own transformation and development. It

no longer makes high-sounding statements in the UN and elsewhere about its 'solidarity' with developing countries, the inequities of 'neo-liberalism' and globalisation, or the sins of colonialism. It is also no longer interested in canvassing developing country support in the UN and other international fora to promote its global agenda. Although the Kremlin is careful not to alienate Africa diplomatically, and to make favourable statements at the right occasions, for all practical purposes the continent has disappeared from the Kremlin's radar screen. As already mentioned, larger countries in the south such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Brazil are being singled out for special attention, but in most cases the substance of these relations is declining as Moscow focuses its time and resources on promoting its relations with the CIS, West, and East.

How will Russia's foreign policy change and develop? Much depends on whether or not Putin will decide to amend the Russian constitution in order to prolong his presidency. Under his leadership Russian foreign policy has matured and become more predictable, and the country has become more respected in international circles. If he decides to prolong his tenure, which is quite possible, and the Russian economy continues to improve, also to the advantage of the underprivileged Russian masses, the country might edge its way back to a stronger position in the international power hierarchy.

Danger signs

But there are also danger signs on the horizon. While Putin obstinately refuses to seek a negotiated political settlement in Chechnya, and uses terrorism and the Chechen war as the reasons for Soviet-style concentration of power and personal political advantage, Russia's relations with the democratic West are bound to suffer, and its fragile economy in particular will feel the results. A final choice will have to be made: between democracy and respect for human freedom and a continued economic and security partnership with the West on the one hand, and a concentration of power, alienation from the West, and economic decline on the other. Putin is smart enough to make the right choice. ■

Prof Gerrit Olivier is the director of the Centre for European Studies at the University of Johannesburg.

No much is left of the Soviet policy to cultivate special relations with 'progressive' countries in the underdeveloped southern hemisphere

South Africa's nuclear programme in safe hands

Louisa Zondo, outgoing CEO of the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR), talks to **Garth le Pere** about why nuclear energy remains controversial, the proposed pebble-bed reactor at Koeberg, and walking the line between nuclear promotion and nuclear regulation

Louisa Zondo obtained a B Proc degree at the University of the North, an LLB at the University of Natal, and an LLM in Public Law at the London School of Economics. She then practised as an advocate at the Johannesburg and Durban bars. Prior to taking up her current position, she served as secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation in Vienna, Austria.

Can you talk generally about the NNR, its terms of reference, and why the organisation is important to our national life?

The NNR was established by the National Nuclear Regulator Act 47 of 1999, which came into effect in 2000. The Council for Nuclear Safety was thus transformed into the NNR. Importantly, the country then separated the promotion of nuclear energy from the regulation of nuclear energy. We joined the ranks of regulators that internationally seek to achieve independence in the regulation of nuclear safety, both *de jure* and *de facto*.

The NNR Act also introduced some important new provisions. Among these are that our processes and decisions regarding the issuing of nuclear licences must now involve public participation. We issue various types of authorisation, including certificates of registration for activities that are not thought to be as risky as those that require nuclear licences, such as nuclear insulation and nuclear-propelled vessels.

The board of the NNR is now compelled to call for public comment on any application for a nuclear licence. If there is evidence that there are concerns, such as health and the environment, and that there should be further engagement with the public, public hearings will be held.

Members of the public should give reasons for their concerns, which the board has to consider in its decision to grant or refuse a licence.

The NNR's primary function is to protect the public, property, and the environment from the risk of nuclear damage. Thus our regulatory function currently covers operations at the Koeberg nuclear power station, which is operated by Eskom; the activities of the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA) at Pelindaba; and the radioactive waste repository at Vaalputs.

We also regulate the activities of the mining and minerals processing sector, which generates naturally occurring radioactive material, and those of other small users generating radioactivity up to the level that we are required to regulate.

We ensure that the public is aware of our regulatory processes. Our annual report refers to the status of workers' health, the status of the environment, and the monitoring reports we receive from operators. This is a licensing requirement, and we try to ensure that the public can scrutinise the extent to which we are protecting them.

Emergency preparedness is one of our key functions. We have to consider the emergency plans for nuclear installations to ensure that they remain viable under any circumstances that may occur in an emergency situation. We have emergency exercises at 18-month intervals, and involve a wide range of stakeholders. They are invited to test the viability of our emergency plans, and comment on their shortcomings. In some instances operators comment on the focus of the regulator, and we take that into account during the inspection and overall compliance assurance processes.

There are so many technical components to nuclear energy. Can you explain why

nuclear energy is so controversial?

I think it has to do with its legacy. It is well known that the science and technology around nuclear energy was primarily developed for armaments, and not for peaceful purposes. And the use of nuclear technology has had some very serious consequences for humanity – Hiroshima and Chernobyl being prime examples. These instances form the basis of the non-acceptance of nuclear energy. Hence it is very important for the international community to focus on the safe use of nuclear technology, particularly for peaceful purposes.

The lead organisation in this regard is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The purpose of the IAEA is not only to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, but the safe use of nuclear technology. It also promotes and advances nuclear technology.

Safety is a crucial aspect of the use of nuclear energy in any country. This is an international concern, because the risks emanating from its use affects the entire world. That is why it is such a controversial issue world-wide.

Are you satisfied that the NNR safety regime complies with the international requirements of the IAEA?

Currently, the NNR is quite confident that the South African nuclear regime is in line with international standards in all respects. However, we are constantly improving our standards and procedures.

One of the things we are working on right now relates to medical surveillance. We are interacting with other organisations in the country to thoroughly examine the systems and processes they follow. In order to ensure that potential occupational hazards are addressed, we want to compare our own system to

other systems in the country, and also get information from regulators in other countries. The key challenge is how we keep on improving the regulatory programmes and systems we have put in place. At this stage, therefore, the attention of our board is focused on the health of workers, not because it is lacking but because we want to continuously improve our systems.

Is South Africa the only country on the continent with a nuclear capability?

We are the only African country with a reactor that generates nuclear energy for public use. There are some research reactors, one of them in Egypt.

What co-operation is there continentally around nuclear energy, especially after the signing of the Pelindaba Treaty for keeping Africa free of nuclear weapons? Is there a dialogue on a continental level?

There is a lot of international co-operation, and it is happening around the IAEA. The African co-operation programme is called the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology. We support it via a number of activities, including training, benchmarking regulatory regimes, and establishing the appropriate competence level for the regulation of radioactive material in various countries. As a country, we have co-ordinated many activities in this regard; for example, NECSA has played a big role in Africa around the disposal of disused radioactive sources.

The NNR has also hosted a number of IAEA training courses on the transport of radioactive material. Involving African states in this is important, because while the risk occurs in one part of the world, its effect is felt in others. It is within this framework that we regard international and African co-operation as crucial.

Our resources are limited, but we always make an effort to send our people to other parts of Africa in order to engage in the international co-operation programme.

Would you say something about the disposal of nuclear waste? Is there an active



Louisa Zondo ... 'South Africa's nuclear regime is fully in line with international standards'.

North-South and IAEA dialogue on this?

There is dialogue at various levels, including the political level. I am not involved in it, and am not necessarily best placed to comment on it. But certainly there are political aspects to the management of nuclear waste. It is a global issue, and so you would expect those North-South dimensions to enter the dialogue.

Could you elaborate on South Africa's international nuclear treaty obligations, and how it complies?

There are a number of international instruments aimed at ensuring compliance with international standards, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which requires a review every three

Our resources are limited, but we always make an effort to send our people to other parts of Africa in order to engage in the international co-operation programme

years. The NNR has already submitted South Africa's report in terms of the convention. We were tasked with co-ordinating the South African report, because we carry the primary responsibility for ensuring nuclear safety in this country.

There is also a convention on nuclear waste which South Africa is thinking about signing.

We are attached to an international reporting system on nuclear accidents, and have the capacity to call on whatever international assistance is required in case of a nuclear accident.

The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management is under consideration. A position has been developed, and there is consultation among the relevant departments.

We are also responsible for overseeing responsibilities that arise from marine pollution and the dumping of waste, which requires us to interact with a number of other organs of state. Our act paves the way for this; it requires us to have co-operative governance relationships with organs of state responsible for controlling and monitoring radioactive material.

In order for us to oversee how the country is doing in terms of these conventions, we need the co-operation of those organs. That's why we are co-ordinating the drafting of the report on the convention of nuclear safety, but with inputs from other stakeholders.

How about the production and sale of uranium? Does that also fall within your purview as a regulator?

We do not produce uranium in this country; the uranium we do have is a by-product of gold mining. We regulate the Nuclear Fuels Corporation (NUFCOR), which is responsible for processing the uranium oxide that is exported.

We do not regulate weapons-grade and enriched uranium. What we do have is about 14 000 tons of uranium-contaminated scrap metal from NECSA's previous operations, which are presently stored at Pelindaba. Most of this metal consists of about 36 000 separation elements, which, in accordance with non-proliferation agreements, should be completely destroyed. NECSA regards smelting as the most appropriate and cost-effective method for doing so. There is a whole regime to ensure that safeguards remain intact, and that the IAEA does regular inspections.

What is the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR)?

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Sudan's civil war goes beyond religion and ethnicity

The ongoing peace process in Sudan will not succeed unless conflicting paradigms among the various parties demanding change are identified and resolved, writes **John G Nyuot Yoh**

The marathon Sudanese peace process in Kenya has brought new ideological and political factors into the Sudanese political arena. These ought to be recognised not only by the Sudanese, but also by the regional and international peace-brokers active in Sudan. Traditionally the conflict in Sudan has been regarded as one of identity, religious intolerance, and political and economic imbalances between the central government and the 'marginalised areas'. Over the past 20 years, however, new ideological realities have turned the South into the centre and the driver of attempted reform.

Three realities

Moreover, the Machakos and Naivasha peace process cannot be understood without recognising that these peace 'road maps' have been informed by three political and ideological realities brought about by the problem of Southern Sudan, especially during the past 49 years. Since independence, the Sudanese state has been controlled by the Northern Sudanese political elites, who have therefore been in control of the dynamics of war and peace in the Sudan. These minority elites of Arabic descent used to determine who would represent the South; dictated the agendas of peace talks; interpreted the causes of the problems, and prescribed solutions that suited them; decided on the modalities of the peace processes; and dictated their outcomes. They also reserved the right to decide whether they would implement peace agreements in their entirety, or only partly. This was the case with the round table conference held in March 1965, the Addis Ababa agreement of February 1972, and the Khartoum and Fashoda peace agreements of April and September 1997.

During the past three decades, new political and socio-economic issues have emerged. The first is the question of national identity: whether Sudan is an Arab or African nation, and whether all its inhabitants can call themselves Sudanese. Second is the issue of the economic imbalance between the centre and the regions. The riverine elites in Khartoum control the national economy. Third is the question of which political system would be most suitable for Sudan.

One of the differences between the current peace process and previous efforts is that the South has not only taken the initiative, but has also introduced two new paradigms aimed at providing a final and hopefully just solution to the conflict. For the first time in Sudan's history, the main Northern Sudanese political parties and their allies in North Africa seem to have significantly less impact on the transformation process.

The three paradigms informing the current peace process are the 'Old Sudan', the 'Two Sudans', and the 'New Sudan'. The 'Old

Sudan' signifies the existing state, that is, the current system of government and administration as inherited from the Anglo-Egyptian colonial state in 1956. The supporters of this paradigm acknowledge that the current system is unbalanced in terms of political power and economic privilege, but are calling for symbolic reforms only which will not necessarily do away with the current quota arrangement between the riverine Northern elite (the Sudanese minority who trace their origins to Arab descent) and the marginalised regions. They are offering to partially reform the federal state system without fundamentally altering the riverine elite's domination of the executive, legislative, and judiciary, as well as the economy. The power brokers of the 'Old Sudan' regard any call for the restructuring of political and economic power relations, or the secularisation of politics, as a call for the destruction of the dominant Arab and Islamic culture.

The 'Two Sudans' paradigm is the dominant ideology in Southern Sudan. It developed out of sustained Southern Sudanese attempts to convince both the Anglo-Egyptian colonial powers and various Sudanese central governments that the South was characterised by distinct historical, political, and socio-economic realities that were not necessarily similar to those in the rest of the country. Initially, in the 1940s and 1950s, the 'Two Sudans' paradigm was a modest call for the South to be given greater autonomy, involving certain safeguards and guarantees from the central government. Later it developed into a demand for a federal arrangement between the South and the North. By the 1960s, the South was calling for a process of self-determination which would allow the people of the South to decide whether they wanted to remain part of a united Sudan or establish a state of their own.

Brutal wars

During the negotiations leading up to Sudan's independence in January 1956, it was understood that the wishes of representatives of the South would be addressed as soon as independence was achieved. More specifically, the North agreed in principle to introduce a federal arrangement immediately after independence. However, it reneged on its promise, resulting in a series of brutal wars between successive central governments and Southern liberation movements. The central governments, whether military or civilian, did not address the issue of the Southern Sudan as a national concern; instead, they regarded the southern demands for reforms as secessionist. According to proponents of the 'Two Sudans' paradigm, it is the North that has been secessionist and not the South, because it was the North that refused to accept the federalist approach to unity, thus pushing the South towards secessionism.



Women line up to receive food at a camp in northern Darfur. Over the past two years alone, the conflict in this region has claimed tens of thousands of lives, and displaced some 1,6 million people. *PictureNET Africa/AP Photo/Marcus Prior.*

The third paradigm is that of the 'New Sudan', another Southern Sudanese proposal for settling the conflict. Its adherents regard the South as the base for the political mobilisation of all the marginalised regions in the Sudan. This paradigm includes developing a new political contract between the centre and the regions, which would provide a new basis for changing the distribution of power and wealth in the country. For the 'New Sudan' school, unity entails mutual respect for one another because a Sudanese is equal to his/her fellow Sudanese by virtue of their shared humanity. A restructuring process should not favour the centre, but the regions, where the majority of Sudanese live. They also advocate replacing Arab-Muslim cultural domination with a 'new Sudanese' cultural affiliation, reinforced by a secular system of governance, to which all Sudanese could subscribe. Changing power relations in the country should include redefining what Sudan means to the majority of Sudanese. The ultimate objective for the 'New Sudan' paradigm would be to separate religion from politics and to do away with cultural chauvinism as the basis of the acquisition of power by the elite in Khartoum.

During the past two decades, the proponents of the 'New Sudan' paradigm, currently represented by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), have entered into a series of

alliances with the marginalised people of Western, Central, and Eastern Sudan. The coalition is diverse in terms of ethnic backgrounds and political and economic programmes.

Machakos Protocol

Against this background, the Machakos protocol of 20 July 2002, which provided a 'road map' for the current peace process, led the parties to the conflict to identify three important issues. Their ultimate aim is to rectify the shortcomings of the 'old Sudan' paradigm, and implement the reforms which the 'Two Sudans' and 'New Sudan' paradigms are calling for.

The first issue is whether the SPLM and the ruling National Congress (NC) could jointly commit themselves to democracy, and the secularisation of national politics. This will determine the viability of permanent political, economic, and judicial arrangements between the South and North. What is expected from the NC and the SPLM is the creation of a democratic Sudan. Given that the NC represents the 'Old Sudan', and the SPLM claims to represent the 'New Sudan', one wonders whether the vagueness of the references to democracy in the Machakos Protocol was not intentional, due mainly to the compromises that the two parties had to make during the negotiations.



President Omar El-Bashir of Sudan, his first vice-president, Ali Osman Taha, and the chairperson of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), John Garang, moments after signing a peace agreement on 9 January 2005. Continuing violence in Darfur is threatening to undermine this historic accord. *PictureNET/MAXPPP*

The second issue is that of the unity of the country and its implications for the sharing of political power and wealth between the centre and the regions, including the South. As noted earlier, the SPLM favours an entirely new dispensation – it is demanding the abolition of the current political system and the establishment of a ‘new Sudan’. However, the current peace process, specifically the Machakos Protocol, seems to be following a reformist approach, and does not favour the dismantling of the old Sudan system as called for by the SPLM.

Self-determination

Then there is the issue of self-determination, and the impact it will have on national politics in the post-interim period should the South opt to secede. The SPLM is a coalition of two political wings, with contradictory views on the sharing of power and wealth in Sudan. The unionists favour the ‘New Sudan’ formula, as outlined in the SPLM Manifesto of 31 July 1983. The separatists advocate the ‘Two Sudans’ formula, as outlined in the Nasir Declaration of 28 August 1991, for creating an entirely independent Southern Sudan.

The unionists are closely allied to the traditional political parties: the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Umma Party, and other left-wing and nationalist parties. As noted earlier, the SPLM is also allied to political and military groupings in the marginalised areas of Central, Eastern, and Western Sudan. All these groupings reject the current structure of the Sudanese state, but disagree on how it should be changed. Whether these alliances

will assist or hinder the implementation of any final agreement between the SPLM and the NC remains to be seen.

The concept of ‘marginalised areas’ has deep political and economic connotations, and has a lot to do with the evolution of the three paradigms mentioned earlier. The marginalised areas are the central Sudan (Nuba Mountains), Darfur (Masalit, Zagawa and Fur), the Ingassana Hills in Southern Blue Nile, and Eastern Sudan regions (Funj, Beja, Uduk, and others). Their political role can be traced back to the 1940s, when politicians from these areas and the Southern Sudan formed what was then called the ‘Black Forum’. Later on, politicians in these areas formed their own regionally based political organisations. In ethnic terms, the people of the marginalised areas are black Africans. However, unlike the majority of the people of the South, they are Muslims by faith, and have been part of what was traditionally known as the ‘Northern Sudan political establishment’.

Throughout Sudan’s modern history, people in its marginalised regions have constantly disagreed with the riverine Northern elites over the sharing of power and wealth. They argue that, like the people of the South, they have been marginalised from national politics, and that, although they are Muslims, they have not been allowed to occupy the ‘sovereign positions’ in Sudanese government – the presidency, prime ministry, first vice-presidency, and the ministries of finance, foreign affairs, national economy, energy and mining, and home affairs.

The people of Eastern, Central, and Western Sudan have also

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SADC's electoral guidelines: what's new?

SADC heads of state adopted regional rules to govern elections in Mauritius last year. **Khabele Matlosa** compares these new standards to existing instruments, and finds some complementarities

While multiparty elections serve a variety of functions, the two most important ones are to enhance the political participation of citizens in the governance process, and to allow the formation of a legitimate parliament that is truly representative of key political stakeholders. All SADC member states bar three (Angola, the DRC, and Swaziland) claim to exhibit these key features of a working democracy, albeit to varying degrees.

Political culture

As elsewhere in Africa, a participatory mode of governance and representative government is a relatively new political culture in most SADC member states (save for Botswana and Mauritius), as they have only been part of the democratic transition since the early 1990s. At the heart of this new political culture – one that has jettisoned authoritarian modes of governance – is regular multiparty elections. However, it is one thing to stage multiparty elections, and quite another to ensure that the electoral process satisfies all the contestants. This is why, over the past decade, much time and energy has been invested in designing and developing norms, standards, guidelines, and/or principles for effectively managing elections that add value to democratic governance in the region.

It is against this backdrop that the significance and possible impact of the newly adopted 'SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections' should be assessed. This article reviews this SADC initiative in a context where similar initiatives already exist. It seeks to answer two basic questions: First, what are the contextual and explanatory factors behind the SADC 'Principles and Guidelines'? And, second, do they contain any new ideas on best

election practice in SADC?

The 1990s ushered in what could almost be described as 'revolutionary' political practices in the SADC region. First, single-party and military authoritarianism were jettisoned in favour of multiparty governance. Second, the new-found commitment to democratic governance was translated into the political practice and culture of regular multiparty elections. It is now a cliché to observe that elections, in and of themselves, do not amount to democracy. Yet democracy cannot exist without regular multiparty elections. Conversely (and paradoxically), a country can hold regular elections and yet fall far short of achieving democratic standards.

Major challenge

One of the major challenges confronting the democratic project in SADC since the 1990s has been sporadic and/or protracted violent conflicts, and resultant

A country can hold regular elections and yet fall far short of achieving democratic standards

political instability. These have tended to escalate during and around elections. Put differently, elections are high-stake contestations that make conflict more likely. The challenge is therefore not so much to wish away conflict, or bemoan its occurrence, but rather to devise institutionalised mechanisms for managing it constructively. In short, election-related conflict and disputes are a reality of politics. The challenge for the democratic project in SADC is to anticipate these conflicts and put in place effective mechanisms for managing them. It is against this backdrop, then, that we are able to understand and appreciate the essence

and significance of various initiatives aimed at putting in place guidelines and principles for managing elections.

Explanatory factors

Various continental and regional institutions have tried to introduce common performance measures in respect of democracy and elections in particular. The democracy and governance declaration of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its twin initiative, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), are examples of such endeavours. The idea behind these initiatives is to nurture and consolidate nascent democratic governance on the continent, and promote political stability. It is precisely in pursuit of democratic consolidation and political stability that, during their meeting in Durban in July 2002 OAU/AU heads of state and government adopted the 'Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa'.

This initiative clearly set the stage for continental and regional efforts towards acceptable, credible, and legitimate elections, conducted on a level playing field, and amid a minimum of conflict. Among other things, the declaration commits member states to the following principles:

- democratic elections are the basis of the authority of any representative government;
- regular elections constitute a key to the democratisation process and are therefore essential for good governance, the rule of law, and the maintenance and promotion of peace, security, stability, and development; and
- the holding of democratic elections is an important dimension in conflict management and resolution.

It states that democratic elections should be conducted:

- freely and fairly;
- under democratic constitutions, and in compliance with supportive legal institutions;
- under a system of separation of powers that ensures, in particular, the independence of the judiciary;
- at regular intervals, as provided for in national constitutions; and
- by impartial, all-inclusive, competent, and accountable electoral institutions staffed by well-trained personnel and equipped with adequate logistics.

In a nutshell, the AU embraces the idea that elections have to add value to a vibrant democracy, and not detract from it. This idea then challenges SADC member states to constantly review their electoral processes in order that elections do build firm foundations for working democracies devoid of violent conflict.

It is in this context that we can identify the origins of the SADC principles, adopted during the annual summit of the heads of state and government in Mauritius in August 2004.

Similar initiatives

Taken at face value, they obviously seem to be an attempt by the region to translate the AU's commitment to democracy into a regional initiative. However, they may also be viewed as a reaction to other similar initiatives which the SADC document does not even acknowledge. These are the SADC Parliamentary Forum's 'Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC Region', an initiative of parliamentarians in the region; and the 'Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation' (PEMMO), developed by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) and the SADC Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF), an initiative of civil society organisations (CSOs) and electoral management bodies (EMBs) in the region.

The SADC-PF first published its norms and standards in 2001, and has used them as a basis for observing all elections in the region since that time. They cover elections and individual rights; elections and the government; and fostering transparency and integrity in the electoral process.

EISA and the ECF developed PEMMO in 2003, and have used them as a basis for

observing the elections in South Africa (April 2004), Malawi (May 2004), Botswana (October 2004), Namibia (November 2004), and Mozambique (December 2004). Like the SADC-PF instrument, PEMMO outlines problems typically facing SADC countries during elections, and offers best practices for improvements. It covers numerous aspects of the electoral process, including the institutional and legal framework; the pre-election, election, and post-election phases; and observation and monitoring.

The SADC-PF initiative is essentially a contribution of parliamentarians to the process of electoral reform in the region, while PEMMO is an initiative by both civil society and electoral commissions in the region towards the same goal: democratic consolidation and political stability.

At this stage, it is tempting to ask whether the SADC principles contain anything really new, and how they could relate to their predecessors. Briefly, they have five main components:

- basic elements for levelling the electoral playing field;
- the establishment and deployment of SADC election observer missions (SEOMS);
- a code of conduct for SEOMS;
- the rights and responsibilities for SEOMS; and
- the responsibilities of member states holding elections.

As regards the first component, which contains the core of the principles, there are no fundamental differences between

SADC has been very good at making progressive-sounding declarations – but seldom produces the political commitment needed to implement them in practice

the SADC guidelines and those of the SADC-PF and EISA/ECF. This has prompted some political observers to call for the three sets of guidelines to be merged into a single instrument. However, they have failed to appreciate that the three instruments come from diverse and also divergent political forces, with often contradictory interests and perspectives in respect of democracy and governance. SADC-PF represents parliamentarians in

the region, and could be perceived to be closer to the executive branches of governments, which to all intents and purposes are what constitutes SADC. But the SADC-PF's inclusion of opposition MPs makes it suspicious in the eyes of the executives that drive SADC – hence the tenuous relationship between the two bodies. EISA is a non-governmental organisation, while ECF is an 'autonomous' regional election management structure; SADC does not easily collaborate with outside actors beyond the control of its heads of state and governments.

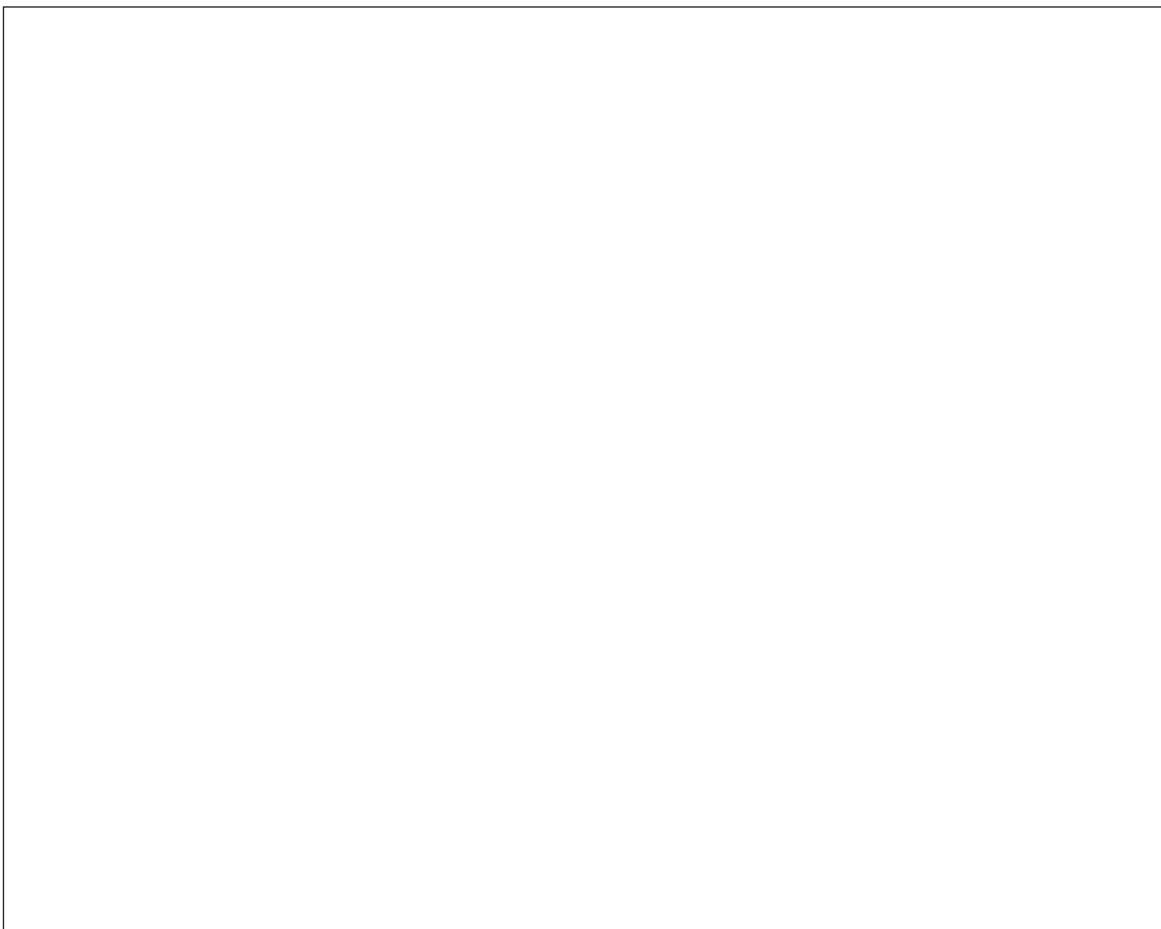
Election management

Ironically, while best practice in election management is the most important means of levelling the electoral playing field, it is the shortest section of the SADC document. It is reproduced in full, as it is the most relevant section for the purposes of this discussion. The document commits SADC member states to the following best practices:

- the full participation of citizens in the political process;
- freedom of association;
- political tolerance;
- elections at regular intervals, as provided for by national constitutions;
- equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media;
- equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for;
- the independence of the judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions;
 - voter education;
 - political parties' acceptance of the election results proclaimed to have been free and fair by competent national authorities in accordance with the law of the land; and
 - challenging of the election results as provided for in the law of the land.

Analysts agree that these are commendable principles, but this is as far as the SADC declaration goes; both the SADC-PF and EISA/ECF instruments are far more detailed on this score.

Paradoxically, most of the SADC document is devoted to election observation rather than election management. It therefore suffers from a kind of schizophrenia: it is more of a guide to observing elections than managing them,



Police restrains Zimbabwean voters outside a polling station in Harare. The sadc principles challenge member states to ensure that their electoral processes really work to enhance democracy. *PictureNET Africa/Joao Silva*

although the SADC leaders tend to think the opposite. Even the title of the document belies its form and content: it should really have been 'Principles and Guidelines for Observation of Elections'.

By contrast, both the SADC-PF and EISA/ECF instruments say more about election management than about monitoring and observation, and do so more comprehensively. Therefore, the SADC principles add nothing new on the topic of best election practices in the region. However, they are more comprehensive on the subject of election observation, and could prove useful in this particular area. This is the only area where the three documents meet comfortably, and needs to be exploited by key democracy stakeholders in the region if duplication in the advancement of best election practices in the region is to be avoided.

The SADC 'Principles and Guidelines' represent an unprecedented public declaration by regional leaders on electoral

best practice. Having said this, we need to add that SADC has been very good at making progressive-sounding declarations – but seldom produces the political commitment needed to implement them

While there is little that is novel or ground-breaking about the SADC document, it amplifies the previous documents in some areas

in practice. Thus the key issue surrounding the new electoral guidelines is the extent to which SADC will manage to apply them on the ground. This will become clear after the principles have been put into effect in the recent and forthcoming elections in Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Mauritius and the DRC. For example, it will be most interesting to see what SADC will do if a member state is found wanting – that would be the ultimate test of

commitment to the declaration by member states.

We have shown that while the SADC principles and guidelines are relatively weak on election management, they are strong in respect of election monitoring and observation. The converse is true for the SADC-PF and EISA/ECF instruments. Therefore, while there is little that is novel or ground-breaking about the SADC document, it amplifies the previous documents in some areas; they all have their own strengths. There is no need for concern about duplication, since they could be used in a complementary manner to achieve the same goals: democratic consolidation, and political stability. Attempts to merge the three would therefore be unnecessary, and calls to do so are misguided. ■

Dr Khabele Matlosa is director of research at the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA).

Caveat emptor?: towards a SACU-China FTA

South Africa should follow Australia's lead and venture cautiously into free trade negotiations with China, writes **Peter Draper**

On current trends, China will be an economic superpower within a generation. Therefore, engaging China politically and recalibrating South Africa's economic policies are absolute necessities. This logic underpins the South African government's decision to negotiate a free trade area (FTA) with China while conceding to it 'market economy status' in trade remedy (anti-dumping) investigations. This negotiation will be conducted by all the countries of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

Some sections of organised business and labour in South Africa are hostile to these initiatives. Detractors argue that China is not a market economy, and there is great fear of potentially increased Chinese competition associated with an FTA. An FTA could be fraught with difficulties if the South African government has to resort to dragging reluctant social partners along

with it. Therefore, it is imperative to carefully assess the economic implications of engaging China via the process that government has set in motion, especially the FTA component.

China's economic reforms, locked in through its commitments in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), suggest that it is close to being a market economy. While a small portion of these reforms still have to be phased in, by the time the process is complete the 'non-market economy' criticism will no longer hold the validity it once did. US and EU filibustering on this issue is more a reflection of their protectionist instincts than legitimate concerns.

An FTA with China requires a recognition of China's market economy status. However, it is not clear that South Africa requires an FTA with China in order to cement political relations. Furthermore, if the FTA would cause – as critics of this predict – widespread economic dislocation, then the political case would be undermined. Therefore, the South African government needs to spell out its political logic so as to help alarmed stakeholders understand its position.

Trade data

Trade between South Africa and China has grown rapidly over the past decade, especially the past five years. Based on South African figures it now totals about R23 billion, with the bilateral trade deficit ballooning to about R10 billion. The deficit is a lightning rod for alarmists. Yet Chinese figures tell a different story, reflecting a small surplus in South Africa's favour. At the very least, this huge discrepancy in trade data needs to be resolved if any clarity is to be achieved on this matter.

Even if the South African view is correct, a large deficit need not be a major cause for concern. What matters is a country's overall balance of trade, not bilateral balances. Unfortunately, notwithstanding this elementary economic logic, the deficit is becoming something of a political football. This should not detract from the serious business of analysing the economics of an FTA.

FTAs are largely about securing market access through reducing formal barriers to trade. At their heart is goods trade (agricultural and industrial) and, depending on the negotiating partner, services trade.

On the goods trade front it is important to note that both South Africa and China, with trade-to-GDP ratios of 65 percent and 50 percent respectively, and weighted average tariff levels of about 7 percent in both cases, are already open economies by developing country standards. Given the size of the Chinese economy this is truly remarkable, and distinguishes it from other giant economies with trade-to-GDP ratios typically in the 25 per-



A stall with fake branded clothing accessories in Beijing. Hasty liberalisation of clothing and textile imports could devastate the local sectors. *PictureNET Africa/AP Photo/Str*

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Globalisation and war

The International Peace Academy makes another important contribution to the study of civil wars with a book that goes where others fear to tread, writes

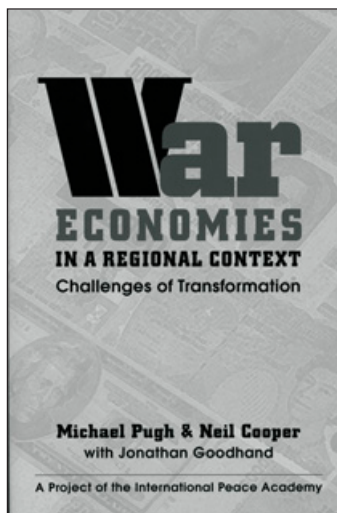
Christi van der Westhuizen

The study of war economies is a recent addition to analytical approaches aimed at understanding civil conflict. The investigation of the political economy of war is nuanced when compared to other modes of analysis, which typically reduce conflict to 'ancient ethnic hatreds', irrational criminal behaviour, or the failure of domestic politics. A more holistic approach is clearly necessary to comprehend why prolonged civil conflicts have increased after the Cold War, with actors succeeding in re-creating and reinforcing conflict conditions.

This work is a significant contribution to the field. As the title suggests, it moves from the position that economic factors are central to understanding civil wars. It contends that a narrow focus on domestic situations is insufficient for grasping the factors that cause and sustain civil war.

War economies makes the causal connections on a regional level without losing sight of the global links. Moving beyond the greed-versus-grievance debate (articulated in the International Peace Academy's often cited *Greed and grievance: economic agendas in civil wars*), this analysis navigates a criss-cross of economic and political actors and networks on multiple levels. Theorising is backed with detailed, on-the-ground case studies of the 'conflict complexes' of Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These case studies are not only different in terms of regions and history but also in terms of their stage of peace-building, a diversity that facilitates comparative analysis and policy-making. The latter is another advantage of *War economies*: it emphasises analysis for practical application in policy planning, and therefore not only contributes meaningfully to the debate but also provides a basis for actions directed at ending profit-based war.

The book reveals an intimate knowledge of the conflicts in the regions covered, including the political and eco-



War economies in a regional context: challenges of transformation.

By Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper,
with Jonathan Goodhand.

London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004

omic actors, the trade routes, and the various goods and services involved in these war economies. The authors contend that peace interventions based on oversimplified conceptualisations of conflict are destined to fail for exactly that reason.

Timely alert

While the authors may be too convinced of the singularity of their emphasis on the regionality of civil conflicts, their work serves as a timely alert to the folly of ignoring regionality in peace-keeping efforts. While the role of Liberia's Charles Taylor in the conflict in Sierra Leone is known, the authors succeed in illustrating the interconnectedness of the conflict in Sierra Leone with Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, and Ghana. Afghanistan's conflict is elucidated by exposing the linkages with Pakistan in particular, but also with Saudi Arabia, Russia, India and, further afield, the US. Similar to Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herze-

govina's conflict cannot be separated from its position as a geo-economic transmission zone in which Serb, Italian, Albanian and Croat 'war entrepreneurs' operate.

But the book's greatest feat is the problematising of the study of civil wars by contextualising these conflicts, raising the effects of an unequal and inequitable world order, and questioning the agendas of global actors. The authors succeed in showing how the dominant ideological paradigm of the moment – neoliberalism – not only creates the conditions for civil conflict but perpetuates predatory activities after the end of a conflict. The reason for this is that the neoliberal tenet of downsizing the state – a specific prescription followed in Sierra Leone and Bosnia Herzegovina before conflict broke out – further erodes the capacities of already weak states. Such a state's inability to assert its claim to the monopoly on violence creates the space for war profiteers to persist with income-generating warmongering. Borderlands in particular are vulnerable, as these areas are usually distant from the seat of government and provide opportunities for illicit trade, smuggling, currency speculation, and the illicit control of cross-border access and transit routes.

Moreover, deregulation and export-oriented policies render countries on the periphery of global capitalism vulnerable to the vagaries of world markets. These policies, together with privatisation, result in mass unemployment in such countries. Poverty is deepened, inequality exacerbated, and social stresses heightened. These conditions necessitate the entry of more people into shadow economies where the lines between licit and illicit economic activities are blurred. As shown by the authors, war economies are usually built on shadow economies that existed before the conflict and which continue after it, thus complicat-

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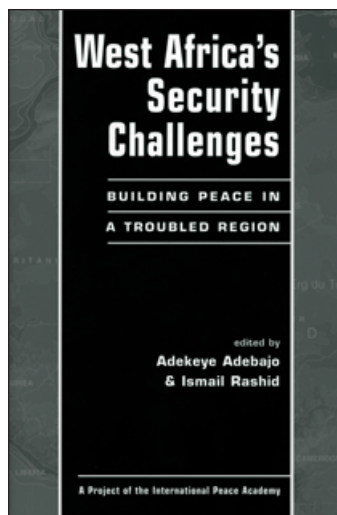
Fresh perspective on West African conflicts

This collection of essays on the peace and security landscape of West Africa will prove invaluable to scholars and policy-makers, writes **Abdul Rahman Lamin**

This collection of essays is a timely contribution to the debate about the nature, character, and outcomes of protracted armed conflicts in West Africa. Written largely by African scholars, researchers and civil society leaders, it attempts to fill the gap in certain academic and policy analyses of the cycle of conflict in one of the world's most volatile subregions.

Divided into three parts, the volume opens with an overview of the subregion, provided in the introductory chapter by Adekeye Adebajo. Adebajo contends that instability in West Africa has neatly coexisted with progress toward democratisation and good governance, particularly over the past decade and a half. Adebajo argues that, notwithstanding turmoil in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire during this period, 'West Africa has also recorded some successes in the areas of democratisation and regional security', as evidenced by the progress towards political pluralism and greater citizen participation in the democratic processes unfolding in countries as diverse as Benin, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, and Nigeria (p 2).

All three essays in part 1 examine efforts and challenges during the past three decades to promote regional political and economic integration in West Africa. The aim is to clearly set out a context in which to locate the analyses provided in subsequent chapters. For instance, the intellectual father of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Adebayo Adedeji, retraces the historical path that finally led, in 1975, to his ideas being translated into reality. Although that journey was certainly torturous, Adedeji observes that some progress has been made since the organisation's birth, particularly with respect to bridging divergent Anglophone—Francophone visions of regional integration. He cautions, however, that in the long run economic cooperation and



West Africa's security challenges: building peace in a troubled region.

Edited by Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid. Boulder.

Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004

regional security will only be achieved if there is 'genuine economic integration' in the subregion. For that to happen, 'a strong and sustained political commitment' is needed from the subregion's leaders. Overcoming the scourge of war and armed conflicts remain the major obstacle to true integration in West Africa, and for that reason Adebajo calls for 'proactive leadership', similar to that which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in the founding of ECOWAS in 1975.

Human security

His reflections and contextual framework are reinforced by S K Basante and Daniel Bach, both of whom address practical challenges facing the subregion as it struggles to integrate the political economies of member states.

The essays in part 2 are largely preoccupied with broader issues of human security and their implications for stability in West Africa. A lack of democratic

governance, the often frosty relationship between the civilian and military sectors of society, the recruitment of children as armed combatants, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all have a significant impact on the security landscape in West Africa, according to various authors. Amos Sawyer, for instance, argues that the 'magnitude of human tragedy, as manifested in the massive killings, internal displacement, refugee flows, plunder and pillage ... serves as a vivid reminder that the rudimentary requirements of human security have yet to be fully met in most West African societies' (p 93). Sawyer contends that human security can only be guaranteed if West African societies develop viable forms of democratic governance.

This argument is taken further by Jimmy Kandeh who suggests that 'the conditions that give rise to military intervention persist and may yet obstruct and derail the subregion's fragile democratic experience' (p 145). Kandeh calls for a 'radical rethinking of national security' which takes into account first and foremost 'the nature and types of security threats that states have to deal with in the subregion' (p 151). In other words, the state-centric approach to security may after all not be entirely enough to guarantee stability in this volatile subregion.

Because the end of the Cold War has reduced the level of external threats faced by African states in general, Kandeh advocates a paradigm in which preference is given to the identification of internal threats that affect the stability of the state. Hence he calls for security sector reform that takes into account issues such as the recruitment and training of military personnel, the size of military budgets vis-à-vis pressing needs in the social services sector, the democratic control or 'subordination' of the military by civilians, and so forth.

Two other essays in this section take serious issue with the interpretations and

analyses of conflicts in the subregion by certain western scholars and analysts. Ismail Rashid and Ibrahim Abdullah's essay entitled 'Rebel movements' and Eboe Hutchful and Emmanuel Kwesi Aning's 'The political economy of conflict in West Africa' collectively challenge western analysts such as Paul Collier, William Reno, Stephen Ellis, Robert Kaplan, David Keen, and Chris Allen, among others, whose interpretation of the wave of conflicts in West Africa is held to be inadequate at best, and misguided at worst.

Legitimate grievances

Rashid and Abdullah argue that some of these analysts have persistently used so-called 'rational choice theory and market-centred analyses' to explain the prevalence of conflict in West Africa, failing to factor in other important variables. In a similar vein, Hutchful and Aning argue that a clear understanding of African conflicts require analysts to identify 'the particular patterns and processes of politicisation of subaltern and oppositional groups that tend to differ from country to country', rather than simply attributing them to 'greed' and the struggle for power by rogue elements in these societies.

Together, Rashid, Abdullah, Hutchful and Aning reject this interpretation and analyses, suggesting that it is insufficient since it somehow discards the very legitimate 'grievances' of marginalised groups in these societies, many of whom end up joining the ranks of insurgency groups.

The essays in part 3 address the role of regional and external actors in the management, resolution, and transformation of the conflict environment in West Africa. The authors focus in on key actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs) which during the past decade have moved across geographical boundaries to build alliances designed to promote conflict prevention, management and resolution activities in the troubled subregion. Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff's essay on this subject is insightful in that she captures succinctly the important role CSOs have played in promoting peace, both at the national as well as subregional levels. By forging alliances among themselves, and putting pressure on belligerents to seek

peaceful resolution of conflicts, CSOs have played a constructive role in West Africa. Jusu-Sheriff's selection of four case studies—two each from Anglophone and Francophone West Africa—is also quite instructive in that it helps the reader conceptualise the patterns and approaches adopted by various groups in these two zones.

For his part, Adekeye Adebajo examines the intervention of ECOWAS in four different theatres of conflict in West Africa—Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire—underlining the challenges faced by the organisation in all four cases. He outlines steps taken toward institutionalising a 'new security infrastructure' in the subregion with the creation of the ECOWAS security mechanism in 1999. Adebajo argues that, notwithstanding the difficulties encountered during the process leading to its creation, this effort should be seen as a laudable step by the subregion's leaders, and could invariably have long-term positive impacts on security in West Africa. He warns, however, that for the mechanism to realise its full potential, the

This book departs from the traditional analysis of African conflicts that all too frequently interpret them as mere struggles for power by rogue elements in these societies

'flaws' of ECOMOG's interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau 'must be corrected'. Furthermore, it is important for a genuine partnership to be cultivated between the international community and ECOWAS, so as to develop the capacity of the new mechanism, and thus enhance its ability to maintain long-term peace and security in the subregion.

James Jonah, a seasoned diplomat of more than three decades who retired from the UN in the early 1990s and later served in the government of Sierra Leone in various capacities, explores the UN's role in the subregion, particularly its attempts to forge a relationship with ECOWAS in order to promote peace and security. Jonah takes his reader through the controversies and internal tensions between the two bodies in their collec-

tive, if sometimes varying, approaches to the complex web of conflicts in West Africa. In the end, Jonah, like Adebajo, argues that where peacekeeping in Africa generally and West Africa in particular is concerned, a mechanism of 'burden-sharing' is urgently desired. Such a mechanism would ensure that UN peacekeeping missions could work effectively together with a regional group such as ECOWAS, 'provided proper arrangements have been made regarding the division of labor between both organizations' (p 342).

The final essay by Kaye Whiteman and Douglas Yates examines the security role of France, Britain and the US in the subregion, both from a historical and contemporary perspective. They highlight a number of cases—particularly during the Cold War—where these powers were involved, sometimes through direct military action, in protecting their respective 'spheres of influence'. This historic pattern may explain why the British intervened directly in Sierra Leone at the height of that country's conflict in the late 1990s, just as the French did when the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire escalated in 2002. Whiteman and Yates conclude their essay by examining the post-11 September 2001 global environment, and the US-led 'war on terror' and its implications for security in Africa generally.

Ismail Rashid's concluding essay, entitled 'West Africa's Post Cold War Security Challenges', aptly summarises the pressing challenges in the subregion highlighted by the various authors. He identifies issues such as good democratic governance, an improvement in civil-military relations, and addressing the problem of 'youths', particularly in the urban areas, as key guarantors of long-term security in West Africa.

This book is a very useful resource for scholars, policy-makers, and social and political activists at the national, regional and international levels. Written by experienced scholars and practitioners, its strength lies partly in the fact that it departs from the traditional analysis of African conflicts that all too frequently interpret them as mere struggles for power by rogue elements in these societies. Rather, it adopts a holistic approach

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Interview – continued from page 11

The PBMR is a graphite-moderated, gas-cooled reactor using a direct gas cycle to convert heat, generated by nuclear fission and transferred to the coolant gas, into electrical energy by means of a helium turbo-generator. It is based on a high-temperature gas cooling system, whereas the system that we have at Koeberg is based on a light water, pressured reactor. In the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor, the fuel is contained in pebbles that will move up and down inside the reactor and will be cooled by gas and not water.

This is new age technology which South Africa is considering developing in order to ensure that the energy needs of the country are met.

The NNR is busy reviewing the PBMR licence application; it will have to go through a whole range of processes, including public participation.

Where else has this technology been tried and tested? Or is it a South African invention?

It is not a South African invention. The Germans licensed this technology, but they do not operate high temperature gas-cooled reactors. The Chinese also have a research reactor which is based on this technology. Knowledge about this reactor and its design therefore exists elsewhere in the world. However, South Africa has adapted the technology in certain ways in order to develop the pebble bed reactor.

What is the origin and function of Women in Nuclear South Africa (WINSA)?

WINSA originated from the realisation that there are women working in nuclear energy globally. WINSA is looking at ensuring the wider participation of women in nuclear-related activities, so that opportunities are created for research generated by women. It also seeks to share information, build solidarities, and support women's leadership of nuclear activities.

In 2001 the then deputy minister for minerals and energy suggested that we should explore the idea of starting our own association in order to enable women to gain more information on the nuclear sector, participate in the sector; and support those who are already active in the sector to get into the mainstream, and realise their full potential.

We recently had our annual general meeting where we had interest not only from women in the technical area, such as scientists and engineers, but also in the communications and the legal areas, who felt that there are unique aspects about those areas in the nuclear sector that we ought to be focusing on. This is encouraging.

Our programme of action involves going out to schools, targeting girl children, and raising awareness among women about the possibilities of science and technology in the nuclear sector, which has many applications that people need to be made aware of. ■

Sudan's civil war – continued from page 14

been the main power base or 'votes bank' of almost all the major Northern Sudanese political parties, such as the Umma Party and the National Islamic Front (NIF), forerunner to the NC. The first time that the marginalised people of Sudan opted for armed struggle as a means of alerting the central government to their demands was in 1985 when the people of Southern Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains joined the SPLA in its war against Khartoum. In the 1990s the Beja and Funj peoples of Eastern Sudan also joined the armed struggle against the central government.

The main support for the two factions of the NC (that of Ali Osman Taha and General Omar Hassan Al-Bahsir on the one hand, and of Dr Hassan Abdallah Al-Turabi on the other) is drawn from the Darfur regions, where the people are Muslim. The NC came to power in June 1989 with the support of many Darfurians. They expected the NC government to implement developmental projects that would make good the unfulfilled promises made to them by various previ-

ous governments. When that did not occur, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and the Justice and Equality Party (JEP) took up arms in March 2003. They called on the government to address their grievances in the same way it had addressed the problems in the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, Abyei area, and Southern Sudan. Like the SPLA leaders in the Nuba Mountains, Eastern Sudan, and southern Blue Nile regions, the leaders of SLM and JEP are calling for a federal government, and the equal distribution of power and wealth between the centre and the regions.

The government's reaction to the rebellion in Darfur has highlighted an important political reality which was not evident at other stages of the conflict in Sudan. As noted earlier, the conflict was commonly regarded as one between Muslims and Christians, or Arabs and Africans. However, the rebellion in the Central, Western, Eastern and Southern Blue Nile has revealed that Khartoum has been fighting the South and other marginalised areas in order to maintain the status quo.

In Darfur and Eastern Sudan, mosques and Islamic religious sites have been bombed, and Muslims indiscriminately killed. The war in Western Sudan has also revealed that the conflict is not necessarily a religious war but rather a war against underdevelopment, poverty, and the political and economic marginalisation of the majority of the Sudanese by a small minority in the Arabic North. This may explain why the government has armed Arab militias in Western Sudan under the pretext of protecting national security. These militias are made to believe that the war in Darfur and other regions is a continuation of the ongoing war in Southern Sudan, which government propaganda portrays as a war against Islam.

This background enables one to better understand the current conflict in the Darfur region, and the brutality with which it is being waged. Like the SPLM, the marginalised people are calling for a 'New Sudan'. Although the marginalised areas are Muslim, to some extent Arabised, and have been part of mainstream

national politics, they feel discriminated against in terms of service delivery and political participation. These areas have largely remained underdeveloped and lack infrastructure such as water, sanitation, health, education, and roads, as well as recognition as part of the national political system.

The Darfurians, Nuba, Beja, Funj, and others are fighting for the establishment of a 'new Sudan' in which all religious and ethnic groups will coexist peacefully. To them, this will be the best guarantee of social and political equality, justice, and freedom for all Sudanese. However, the extent to which the ongoing peace processes in Naivasha and Njamina will

help to achieve this dream remains to be seen.

To sum up, the peace process facilitated by the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) is part of the lengthy evolution of the Sudanese conflict, culminating in three contradictory paradigms. These frameworks aspire to varying degrees to introduce a kind of new social and political contract among Sudanese. The question is whether the Machakos and Naivasha processes are capable of concretising and mediating between these contradictory approaches, thus providing genuine solutions to the Sudanese problem, or whether they are simply serving to identify the problems, thus leaving the

solutions to be determined during yet another round of civil war after 2010. ■

Dr John G Nyuot Yoh is a lecturer in African and international politics at the University of South Africa.

Editor's note: On 9 January 2005 the Sudanese government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) signed a historic agreement ending 21 years of civil war. Aspects of the settlement include power-sharing in the central government and in three disputed regions; autonomous status for the south, culminating in a referendum to decide on independence for the south; and protocols on the sharing of oil revenues.

Caveat emptor? – continued from page 18

cent range. Clearly there are major opportunities in the Chinese market for those with the savvy to take advantage.

The structure of bilateral trade is a classic story of comparative advantage. According to data sourced from Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies, South Africa mostly exports commodities, primarily minerals and base metals, fuelling China's industrial boom. It also exports some agricultural products, although these constitute a tiny proportion of the total.

Minerals and base metals account for about 65 percent of total South African exports to China, and more than 90 percent of current South African exports there attract tariffs of 10 percent or less. Thus not much extra market access will be attained via an FTA. There could be value in reducing tariffs where appropriate on these goods, if only to ensure that South Africa remains competitive with Australia, New Zealand, and South East Asia, who are also considering FTAs with China.

China, on the other hand, exports manufactures to South Africa – primarily electrical and electronic machinery. This reflects an intra-Asian shift of assembly plant location to China in line with China's foreign direct investment boom. South Africa also imports traditional labour-intensive goods from China, concentrated in clothing, textiles, and footwear. They account for about one third of total Chinese exports to South Africa, and face tariffs above 20 percent. Clearly China could gain substantially if tariffs on these goods were reduced – as

would South African consumers.

Yet overly hasty liberalisation of these sectors could devastate them locally – hardly a recipe for social stability. Conversely, high tariffs will not shield these sectors forever, and restructuring is imperative. Their future is further clouded by the fact that US and EU apparel quotas will be phased out next year, potentially reducing quota-hopping investment in South Africa and the region. Whichever way you look at it, potentially serious dislocation lies ahead for South Africa's labour-intensive industries. This process will occur regardless of whether it negotiates an FTA with China. But it will probably be hastened by an FTA.

Agriculture is a different story. Based on current trends, China is increasingly a net food importing nation. Furthermore, its burgeoning middle class consumes an increasing quantity of prepared foods and other consumer goods. South Africa is well-placed to supply such products, provided its officials can negotiate an array of product-specific protocols. On the defensive side, China also has the potential to be a major exporter of basic commodities and value-added products. Overall, the Department of Agriculture is cautiously optimistic about an FTA.

Incidentally, the trade structure suggested here raises serious questions about the trajectory of our industrial strategy. Can it competitively export value-added manufacturing products to China and other markets? Can it compete with the Chinese in regional markets for these

products? And will China's sustained industrial boom continue to raise commodity prices, thereby underpinning the strong rand? Is China's (and India's) secular expansion condemning South Africa to primary products export status? And would this necessarily be a bad outcome?

The services front is more difficult to fathom. Clearly China requires a range of services inputs to feed its gargantuan industrial machine. South Africa can competitively provide some of those, such as in construction, finance, and media. However, it is not clear that an FTA will provide greater market access. First, China's WTO services commitments are extensive, so it is not clear what further access South Africa could gain through an FTA. Second, services negotiations are essentially about rules and regulations, which China will not easily alter for small partners.

On balance, therefore, the South African government should proceed with caution. It is instructive to note that the Australian government is doing just this, consciously taking 18 months to fully study the implications and desirable dimensions of a potential FTA with China. This is raising serious questions about Australia's economic (and political) trajectory in a new era of globalisation with China at the centre. The South African government should similarly conduct its homework as it enters this process. ■

Peter Draper is trade research fellow at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).

Book Review: Globalisation and war – continued from page 19

ing peace-building efforts.

The authors provide an excellent critique of neoliberal policies and its 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The discourse will be familiar to South African readers, including a quotation from a Bosnia-Herzegovina government policy document after the war: 'Government cannot create jobs. But they can create the conditions in which private enterprise can thrive and generate growth and with increased employment' (p 169). The authors make use of Mark Duffield's critique of 'liberal peace' as 'a paradigm that gives priority to the rule of law rather than to social justice, to quick-fix elections rather than to political accountability, to neoliberal policies rather than state direction (dirigisme) to increase purchasing power, and to widening external influences rather than strengthening autonomy in the underdeveloped world' (p 6). Liberal peace, he states, is like global 'riot control'. It is aimed at 'keep[ing] the lid on growing insecurity without addressing the core reasons for dissent' – what Paul Rogers has called 'liddism' (p 195).

This unflinching analysis extends to reminding the reader of the historical origins of Sierra Leone's conflict: colonial authorities granting the De Beers diamond mining company a 99-year mining monopoly over the entire country after diamonds were discovered in the 1930s. Predictably, this led to Sierra Leoneans

raiding the diamonds fields. De Beers' legal hijacking of diamond mining was later used as political capital by politicians to gain power and legitimise their own involvement in the shadow diamond trade (p 101-102).

The book is filled with such meaty facts, another example of which is Afghanistan in the 1980s: the CIA together with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence supported the mujahidin financially and militarily – the same mujahidin who were producing more than 800 metric tons of opium by the end of the 1980s (p 51). And all of this during the Reagan administration's much-vaunted anti-drugs campaign!

Ultimately, the authors succeed in exposing these post-Cold War civil wars as being intrinsically linked to the workings of the global capitalist system – licit and illicit. These conflicts cannot be dismissed as merely the failure of the states concerned, compromised as they are by colonial and imperialist incursions. Such wars are the symptoms of the continuing marginalisation of the world's poor. Attempts to address these conflicts would be naïve if they did not include going to the heart of a system that militates against the interests of the poor. ■

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that locates the prevalence of conflicts in this subregion in a much broader regional and international context. Perhaps its only shortcoming is that it does not pay enough attention to the challenges of building peace in post-conflict eras, particularly with respect to issues of reconciliation and justice. As is already widely known, a dual process—a truth and reconciliation commission and a special court—was instituted in Sierra Leone in 2002, designed to promote reconciliation and seek justice at the same time. In Liberia, following the signing of the Accra Peace Agreement in 2003, a truth commission process was initiated in order to address past atrocities and promote reconciliation.

The fact that this aspect of peace-

building is not explored in detail is problematic but perhaps understandable, given that by the time the book was published, these processes were still under way in both countries. Thus it may have been a wise decision by the editors and contributors alike to withhold judgment on this issue until the processes are concluded, by which time their respective impact on long-term peace can be fully analysed. That said, anyone seriously interested in understanding the forces and dynamics of the peace and security landscape in West Africa must read this book. ■

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