

IN THIS ISSUE

THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL

It is no news to anybody that the power structures in our world have considerably shifted during the last quarter of a century. Glasnost and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union towards the end of the 1980s brought an end to the bipolar world dominated by the East-West conflict and the Cold War since the aftermath of World War II. The end of the Soviet bloc also paved the way towards an appeasement strategy in the Southern African sub-region. What was praised as "the end of history", meaning the ultimate victory of capitalism as the uncontested mode of production structuring societies (and classes), however, led to an only short-lived sole hegemony of the main Western powers and in particular the United States (US) during the 1990s. These were the days when 'good governance' became the terminology of a crusade against which regimes were measured and judged. The criteria were based on Western capitalist notions of development as conceptualised and imposed by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). But as we know, little changed for many towards the better. The problem of affordable access to higher education, a demand erupting these days forcefully on South African campuses, was not least enhanced through policy recommendations in the 1990s, which neglected such investment in the social and intellectual capacity of countries and their people.¹⁾

While old conflicts were solved, new conflicts and ideological battlefields emerged. The rise of China as the world's next superpower marked the beginning of the 21st century, and the shock waves sent through the world with 9/11 opened a new era of "war against terror", in which human rights were the first victim. Development and security became integral elements of a global governance system, which since the turn of the century set paradigmatic frameworks, first with the Millennium Development Goals and now with the Sustainable Development Goals, while continuous efforts to achieve agreed measures to curb carbon emissions and bring environmental degradation and climate change to a halt have remained futile efforts. The tokenism so far only shows that governments continue to remain loyal to their own agendas. Guided by such shortsightedness, they do not act in solidarity with humanity as an integral part of nature and habitat to increase the

chances for survival. Profit maximisation at all costs remains the ultimate goal even if in the long term at too high a price.

But also other new trends that emerged in the era of neo-liberalism in so far unknown fashion and extent remain dubious in spirit and intention despite setting new agendas in promoting so-called development. The widely praised philanthropic initiatives by the wealthiest among the wealthy, who spend a small part of the money generated through their worldwide business enterprises, display the ambivalences of our times. Using little of the money generated at the cost of others for projects with the aim to improving living conditions are not really in pursuance of an overhaul or transformation of the economies from which the profits of the enterprises are extracted. The root causes for the misery of so many people are not treated, only the symptoms. Rather, philanthropic empires and other multinational private players — including some of the biggest companies — hijack global governance by setting the agendas of initiatives, which should actually control them for being part of the problem, instead of being controlled by them. As long as United Nations (UN) organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) or the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) receive more funds from such third parties than the UN Secretariat and its Member States have allocated to them as their own operational budget, agenda setting might evolve in spheres and within agencies, which ought to be controlled instead of holding the power of definition.

What became increasingly anchored beyond and behind the new markers was the neoliberal project, which encroached further on regions and governments and turned even hitherto more welfare-oriented social systems into agencies for privatisation and profit maximisation at the cost of the majority of the world's population. While poverty according to aggregated figures has been reduced on a world scale (mainly by the socio-economic advancements in India and especially China, lifting hundreds of millions of people measured by their *per capita* income above the poverty level of one US Dollar a day), it has remained chronic in parts of the world, including Africa. The nature of economic growth and its distribution has also contributed to an ever-growing discrepancy in wealth and poverty both nationally as well globally, with the rich getting richer while the poor are getting poorer.

This does not mean that the African continent hardly saw any changes. While poverty remained a challenge, the resource boom of the early 21st century provoked new interest in investments in the ex-

tractive sectors and new external actors seeking to access these resources. A run on minerals, oil and other strategically relevant resources (including land) provided at least a temporary boom and economic growth rates in resource-rich countries. As a kind of by-product local elites benefitted from the rent-seeking structures of the economy, and investments also resulted in a growing segment of society now dubbed the emerging middle classes. These are widely considered as a positive trend towards the transition of societies towards the better — based on the assumption or belief that middle classes are the kind of progressive forces seeking more social change also for the benefit of others than merely securing their own interests.

These new trends often reproduce old wine in new bottles. They are visible in different forms and require our attention and analyses. Some of these phenomena emerging more recently are a matter of description and analysis in this issue's contributions. In line with the journal's conceptual understanding, as outlined in issue 1/13, we consider a wider perspective necessary for a better understanding also of regional Southern African developments and challenges. As mentioned, China emerged as a new global player with massive impact on the world economy but also posing global governance issues. With its own new interests in other parts of the world, not least in the African continent, its foreign policy was adjusted over time. Despite an erstwhile adherence to a strict policy of non-intervention, China's more recent contributions to peacekeeping are one significant indicator also for the evolution of more general strategic considerations. *Theo Neethling* traces these shifts since the end of the Cold War. As he shows with reference to several cases, but especially the South Sudan, the new agenda of Beijing is increasingly different from the old core principle of non-interventionism. After all, when there are new interests, they require also new forms of protection.

The overview by *Mark Fulloon* offers another example of shifting grounds with regard to the utilisation of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in conflict zones where states for policy reasons are reluctant to send their own troops into military operations. That PMCs mushroomed was also visible in post-*apartheid* South Africa on different levels of organised privatisation of security matters, both at home and abroad. In many cases, those employed in the booming sector had previous experiences serving under political regimes whose sell-by date had passed. While the old regimes had withered away, the need

for military operations has not ceased. What used to be post-World War II mercenaries in the 1950s and 1960s (and occasionally still later on), who did the dirty work that governments officially could not afford to be associated with, have now transformed into PMCs. Only that the terminology had been modified to cover up what is done.²⁾ Fulloon's article assesses the different roles of PMCs and offers a systematic classification of their operations, which are as much a phenomenon of our current world as the foreign policy interests of the new and old big powers.

Somewhere in this new map of global interests is also the need for the South African government to position itself. Global matters do of course have regional and local consequences and impacts — a prominent example has been that with the end of the bi-polar world *apartheid* had reached its expiry date in Namibia and soon afterwards also in South Africa. While national liberation movements are quick and at ease to claim that this was a victory of the anti-colonial struggle, the global shifts in power structures also had a significant role to play in these processes. After all, these were transitions following negotiations and not victories on the battlefield with the capitulation of one of the parties. The old at least partly survived in the new.

But governments and political systems changed, and with the end of *apartheid* the (relative) giant at the Southern tip of the continent became Africa's big brother able to punch above its weight. The series of global summits and other conferences, two terms as African member in the UN Security Council so far, as well as membership of BRICS (albeit as the obvious junior partner in terms of the real economic power — or rather lack of it), show that the days of the pariah are in the past. But in the post-Mandela era, South Africa still needs to formulate a coherent foreign policy and pursue it strategically. Opportunism alone is not a good concept. This requires more than only a blue print or white paper and its occasional implementation (or not).

Fritz Nganje points to an important, often missing link, between the national and the provincial governments in South Africa. His analysis of the first 20 years comes to the sobering conclusion that provincial governments were to a large extent absent from foreign policy formulation and implementation. But his analysis is at the same time a necessary reminder that these institutions of governance do exist and might have a role to play. The same can be said for the complementing article by *Lesley Masters*, which traces and assesses the role of Parliament in the foreign policy process. Her conclusions are as

sober as those regarding the role of provincial governments: parliamentary diplomacy as a contributing factor to the country's foreign policy is largely underutilised if recognised at all. Both examine with their articles hitherto largely ignored aspects of foreign policy formulation and implementation.

While this issue has a central focus on international developments and related matters with a link to South Africa's foreign policy, one more research article engages with the domestic features of the neoliberal project, most spectacularly erupting in the state's violence against the striking miners in Marikana. *Nico Buitendag* and *Neil Coetzer* do not only add another critical analysis to the many reflections, which — rightly so — have already engaged with this scandal. Instead, they enter new ground by applying a combined historical and legal/judicial perspective, recapitulating the history of organised labour protest and state repression against workers for a century. As they show, Marikana is not the exception but rather the rule and instead of a turning point more of the same. The sobering lesson is that despite all rhetoric of the government in democratic South Africa, the new era resembles more features of the old system than those in political and economic power want the citizens to believe.

Two contributions to a special Analyses and Reports section complement the thematic focus of this issue. They are the result of a conference, which was devoted entirely to the new relations between South Africa and Russia. We thank *Deon Geldenhuys*, whose initiative provided us the opportunity of publishing these texts. His own analysis concentrates on the essence of the strategic partnership that evolved between the two states since 2006. This informs on an important aspect of South Africa's role as a relevant agent of the global South, not least also in the BRICS constellation. That this also includes — surprise, surprise! — to a large extent the economic interests of the partners, is documented by the survey of *Gerrit Olivier* and *Dmitry Suchkov*. Strategic alliances, while benefitting from political and ideological affinities, are at the same time also business relations. Russian enterprises and investments on the continent and in South Africa are therefore matters which deserve attention.

These two concluding reports reinforce the thematic focus of this issue. While the collapse of the Soviet Union created new space and opportunities, new players have been able to occupy this space partly and in turn influence and shape the new global map. China, as much

as Russia and the BRICS, by doing so also demand recognition in foreign policy matters, not least in a country like South Africa. So does the changing situation of conflicts and security, both internationally as well as domestically. This issue of the *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* seeks to add insights and knowledge to some of the world affairs impacting on Southern Africa, while at the same time looking at South African governance and policy issues in response to such challenges. Book reviews on the history and present of the Congo and Zimbabwe, as well as the Chinese engagement in Mozambique complement the efforts to translate the global into the local. We trust that readers find useful information and inspiring analytical insights in the pages that follow.

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Endnotes

1. This issue is published at a time, when in South Africa — as elsewhere around the world before, including Germany and the UK — students are in protest against the increase of study fees. While education is not only to be considered a human right but also a necessary investment into the social progress of societies, higher levels of education become increasingly unaffordable again for those, who in South Africa have for generations before been systematically excluded from its access. Rich human resources and potential risk to be wasted again and sacrificed on the altar of a neoliberal policy, which perverts transformation into a pact among old and new elites.
2. The infamous 'collateral damage' referred to in justification of the bomb attack by the US Army on a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders in the Afghan war zone in Kunduz on 3 October 2015, which strictly speaking was tantamount to a war crime, is a recent example of the euphemisms seeking to give atrocities a different name. At the time of writing in mid-October 2015, it remained a matter of controversy to which extent this bombing was 'by accident' or indeed a planned attack based on the (wrong) assumption that the hospital would also cater for wounded Taliban. Even in the latter case, however, it would have remained a violation of humanitarian law.