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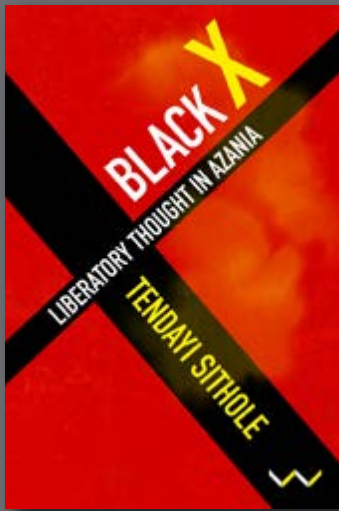
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2024

WAKE UP CALL

FOR THE LEFT



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Black X

Liberatory Thought in Azania

Tendayi Sithole

Black X: Liberatory Thought in Azania is a no-holds-barred critique of Marxism's and postcolonialism's inability to grasp the essence of Black suffering. It is also a brilliant triangulation of Azanian political theory and two interventions that emerged from the diaspora, Black Existentialism and Afro-pessimism.

— Frank B. Wilderson III, Chancellor's Professor of African American Studies, University of California Irvine

Professor Sithole expands his magnificent oeuvre even further with this philosophical reclamation of black radical memory in post-1994 South Africa. Against continuing black unfreedom, Azania as a liberatory signifier is invoked in the guise of the X. This tenacious and incisive attention to the conceptual force of blackness is Sithole's singular gift of thought.

— Joel Malesela Modiri, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Jurisprudence, University of Pretoria

In *Black X: Liberatory Thought in Azania*, Tendayi Sithole elaborates on the problematic signifier X, a marker of the dehumanization of the black subject, and makes an argument for the struggle for Azania as a liberatory project.

Azania refers to the land that became South Africa after its conquest by settler-colonialists. Sithole argues that post-1994 South Africa retains the markers of its colonial past and remains a territory of unfreedom for blacks. He shows that the colonial contract still stands, with the land question unresolved by the new constitutional dispensation. For Sithole, being and land are indissoluble, and the denial of the centrality of land restitution is a denial of the black being. Drawing on the Black Consciousness philosophy of Steve Biko, he critiques the manner in which Marx and Marxism evade the reality of antiblack racism and landlessness as drivers of colonial conquest and ongoing forms of oppression, and emphasises the existential struggle of the black subject as explicated in Mabogo P. More's African philosophy. Sithole gathers these iterations under the mark X, and shows how the black subject, as a dehumanized figure, continues to radically insist on alternative forms of being in an antiblack world, and on Azania as the true form of liberation.

This timely and relevant book offers a way to rethink the meaning of liberation in a country that has yet to rename and redefine itself.

About the Author

Tendayi Sithole is Professor in the Department of Political Sciences, University of South Africa and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation, University of Johannesburg. His recent books include *The Letter in Black Radical Thought* (2023).

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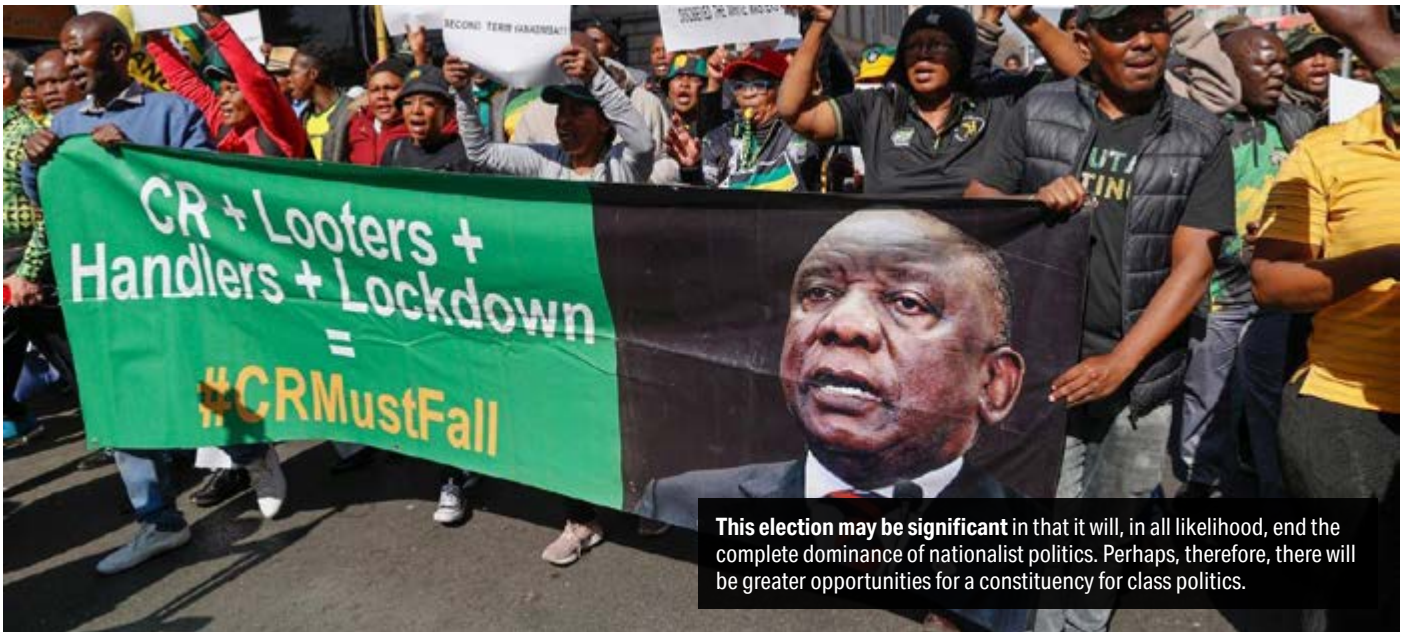
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2024:

WAKE UP CALL FOR THE LEFT



This election may be significant in that it will, in all likelihood, end the complete dominance of nationalist politics. Perhaps, therefore, there will be greater opportunities for a constituency for class politics.

THE COMING 2024 NATIONAL AND provincial elections are the most significant since the '94 'freedom elections'. Yet once again there is no credible left-wing or anti-capitalist force contesting. By all accounts, the ANC is not likely to win an outright majority, and new configurations of power might emerge. The failure to be present in these elections is indicative of the state of the Left and of the labour and social movements. They are a shadow of the movements which were so decisive in dislodging the racist National Party regime from the Union Buildings.

30 years of ANC rule has been a disaster for our country and for poor and working class people. The rate of unemployment has climbed to one of the highest in the world. Inequality has deteriorated to the worst in the world. Violence against women is at horrific levels. On average a woman is raped every 25 seconds, and one is killed by an intimate partner every eight hours. Most local municipalities are unable to provide basic services to their people because of gross underfunding.

The corporatisation and marketisation of state owned enterprises has been a disaster. Eskom and Transnet are in a death spiral. Highly indebted, they are unable to meet the electricity

and transport needs of people and the economy. The same is true of almost all other SOEs.

The Left vacuum

It is therefore tragic that the Left which has developed a cogent critique of neoliberal policies is not able to promote real alternatives, at the very time the electorate is wanting real solutions. All the fragments of the opposition to the ANC (and each day a new fragment emerges) offer largely superficial and false explanations for the current state of the nation. For the DA and its allies, it's corruption and cadre deployment. For the populists, it's either illegal immigrants or the failure to protect Christian family values. For the ANC breakaways, it's not enough BEE and the vacuous notion of radical economic transformation.

The failure of the Left to constitute a credible force has given rise to a farcical situation: corrupt populists, who once led the ANC, opportunistically repackage themselves as left-wing radicals. Zuma and his MK Party are just the most recent case. There is Ace Magashule and his African Congress for Transformation, Marius Fransman's People's Movement for Change and of course the EFF, where Carl Niehaus has found yet another home. For the

new kids on the block (parties like the Patriotic Alliance and Action SA), their election strategy is to appeal to the worst sentiments of a people made desperate by the socio-economic crisis. They outbid each other to be the most stridently xenophobic, homophobic and tough on crime.

The disastrous showing of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party in the 2019 elections has had consequences for the entire Left. It signals the demise of what was referred to as the 'Numsa moment' in 2013—an opportunity for the renewal of independent Left politics rooted in mass popular movements. It reinforces the mistaken idea that it is difficult to build democratic, radical, mass-based political movements which can successfully contest elections; the idea that electoral politics is not where the Left should intervene. Equally, the drift by the EFF towards crude nationalist politics, and its evolution towards becoming just a radical version of the ANC, will stand as a blockage to the renewal of a militant Left politics.

The consequence for a genuine, democratic socialist Left is that, even if it was in a position to enter the election fray, it would find itself in a congested field, struggling to distinguish itself from the many imposters.

And then there are the large numbers of the potential constituency of the Left who have become so disillusioned with this situation that they have opted out, not even bothering to register to vote.

Elections are expensive affairs. Mobilising finances to compete with bourgeois parties, without sinking into opportunism, bent by reliance on questionable donors, is potentially a massive problem for a Left dependent on the support of those who own nothing.

Resolving the electoral absence of a credible Left is urgent. It will require a deep rethinking of Left perspectives and strategy which will provoke a substantial reorganisation of the Left.

The long march to building a mass Left alternative to nationalist politics will face difficult strategic and tactical decisions, particularly with the decline of working class social movements, including the weakening and fragmenting of the labour movement.

Our starting point

Our understanding of the absence of an anti-capitalist party in the coming elections has to go beyond the analysis of Steven Friedman, who puts it down to the centrality of race and racial inequality. A good starting point would be to acknowledge the defeat of the Left in South Africa. The French socialist philosopher and activist, Daniel Bensaid, remarked, when assessing revolutionary strategy at the turn of the 21st century:

What are we coming from? From a historic defeat. We do best to admit it and gauge its scope. The neoliberal offensive of the last quarter century is both the cause of this defeat, its consequence, and its culmination. Something was accomplished at the turn of the century, between the fall of the

Berlin Wall and September 11. But what was it? The end of the 'short twentieth century' and its cycle of wars and revolutions? Or the end of modernity? The end of a cycle, a period of time, or an epoch?

Clearly the Left in South Africa has suffered in a similar way. But there are also elements specific to South Africa.

Firstly, it comes in the wake, and as a consequence, of the collapse of the socialist distortion, which was the USSR and its satellite states. Then, as Vishwas Satgar correctly explained:

Two decades of ANC-led neoliberalisation, which has surrendered democracy, development and state formation to capital, consolidated the strategic defeat of the Left and working class in South Africa. The 'National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) moment' and process, led by South Africa's largest (more than 330 000 members) and most militant trade union, is all about confronting this strategic defeat. It is about a battle to determine the future of South Africa and reclaim the strategic initiative for the country's working class.

Yet, it is the collapse of this 'Numsa moment' which makes the situation for the Left that much more difficult and complex. It is like having to rebuild from scratch. As Stuart Hall, the British Marxist, points out:

When a conjuncture unrolls, there is no 'going back'. History shifts gears. The terrain changes. You are in a new moment. You have to attend, 'violently', with all the 'pessimism of the intellect' at your command, to the 'discipline of the conjuncture'.

Stalinist politics prevailed

Why did the anti-capitalist Left in South Africa fail to put its stamp on this moment? Old-style Marxist Leninist dogma was dominant, with its in-built authoritarianism and its hold over significant bureaucratic machines such as the SACP, Cosatu and Numsa. This killed off the green shoots of a more open, democratic and pluralist emancipatory politics.

Amongst the protagonists behind the formation of the EFF and Numsa's SRWP, there may have been a break with the ANC / SACP but not with Congress / Stalinist politics and practices. This is particularly true in relation to the regurgitation of the notions of 'national democratic revolution,' the stagist theory of revolutionary change, underpinned by an alliance with the patriotic bourgeoisie, on behalf of the working class. The young activists and cadres thrown up by the worker, community and student struggles were absorbed by these bureaucracies as they searched for a stable income and personal security.

Acknowledging the defeat we have suffered is not to demoralise. It is rather to acknowledge a failure without capitulating before the enemy, knowing that a new beginning could take unprecedented forms.

Towards renewal

There will be no shortcut out of this state of decline. This election may be significant in that it will, in all likelihood, end the complete dominance of nationalist politics. Perhaps, therefore, there will be greater opportunities for a constituency for class politics. But in another sense it will be completely insignificant—it will have no effect on the material lives of the working class and the poor. It will not fix the broken water and sewerage pipes. It won't stop load-shedding. And above all it won't move the government away from the neoliberal direction that is shared by most of its political opponents.

For real change, there will be no alternative but to continue to build popular organisations, to fight to recapture the labour movement from its bureaucratic leadership, and to struggle to rebuild unity of the working class movement into a movement for socialism. There must be no more elections without a voice of the Left being on the ballot paper. And that voice must be rooted in active popular organisations.



The election will have no effect on the material lives of the working class and the poor. It will not fix the broken water and sewerage pipes. It won't stop load-shedding. And above all it won't move the government away from the neoliberal direction that is shared by most of its political opponents.

news briefs

Abahlali and the elections

Abahlali baseMjondolo issued a statement in February about its attitude towards the elections. In it, the organisation expressed the dilemma of so many popular organisations in the face of these elections, which is why we quote it at length:

Frantz Fanon said 'Each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it, in relative opacity.' The challenge of our generation is to move past the ANC, to build a politics of the future, a politics by and for the oppressed, a politics committed to humanising our country and the world.

In April it will be thirty years since the end of apartheid. In that time we have watched and suffered as the promise of the new society has been betrayed by the ANC. We have witnessed corrupt leaders continuing to enrich themselves and their families at the expense of the poor majority. We have seen inequalities grow as more and more people are unemployed or precariously employed, including by labour brokers. We have watched as the ANC continues to impose devastating economic policies, including brutal austerity, on the country as more and more people are pushed into poverty and the poor get poorer. We have seen that, year after year, there has been no real rural

or urban land reform. Many more people live in shacks now than at the end of apartheid. As food and transport get more and more expensive and the government cuts spending on essential public goods such as education, health-care and social grants the crisis lived everyday by the poor gets worse and worse.

Millions of people are without work and millions are going without food. The unionised working class is also struggling, and even many people in the middle classes are struggling and find that their salaries are finished after a week or two...

...There will be no left wing party on the ballot paper when the election comes this year, and no party committed to supporting the oppressed to build its own power. We do not have our own electoral instrument.

However, we cannot sit this election out. It is essential that the ANC is removed from power and it is essential that all politicians in all parties learn the lesson that they will not stay in power when they disrespect the people...

...One thing is for sure though. We will be voting against the ANC and urge all South Africans to do the same.

Sexual and gender-based violence is devastatingly prevalent.

Today, many Western states and private corporations, including South African ones, are complicit in the genocide in DRC through their extractivism and proliferation of the arms trade. The DRC is home to a majority of what are referred to as 'critical minerals' such as cobalt and copper, which are components in such objects as lithium batteries, electricity networks and electric vehicles. The diamond industry is also, arguably, one of the economic drivers of the conflict.

As the organisers of the march said, "We know that the racist violence of imperial and colonial genocide and extractivism is connected, from the DRC to Palestine, from Sudan to Haiti to Tigray, and so too should our responses and our resistance to imperialism be connected. It is in this spirit of internationalism, solidarity and in the quest for justice and an end to the genocide in the DRC that we march."

Zionist support in Global North beginning to fracture?

In March, finally, after supporting the genocide in Gaza for the previous 5 months, some parts of the US political class have started to stir. A group of senators including Bernie Sanders claim that it is against US federal law to: "provide military assistance to



Cape Town march against genocide and extraction in the DRC. Today, many Western states and private corporations, as well as South African ones, are complicit in the genocide in DRC through their extractivism and proliferation of the arms trade.

March against genocide and extraction in the DRC

On 16th March a march took place against injustice, genocide, resource extraction, and ecological devastation in the DRC. Since 1996, over 6 million people have been murdered in the DRC, and nearly 7 million people are internally displaced.

any country that interferes with U.S. humanitarian assistance." And the State Department has already admitted that "you have...ministers in the Israeli government blocking the release of flour...You have seen ministers of the Israeli government supporting protests that blocked aid from going in"

So, bizarrely, it's not the genocide that is the problem. After all, that's happening to Palestinians, not Americans. The problem is that the Zionists are blocking US aid. However, whatever the reason, we should acknowledge that the blanket support of the Global North for Israel is starting to shake. This is the result of the work done by protestors over the last months. The solidarity movement has demonstrated, once again, how crucial international solidarity is.

Equal pay

March 12th was equal pay day in the US. The reason for this date? Because that's how far into 2024 the average US woman would have to work in order to catch up with what an equivalent man earned in 2023. Among workers who have only a high school diploma, women are paid 21.3% less than men. Among workers who have a college degree, women are paid 26.8% less than men.

And if the overall gender pay gap isn't bad enough, the wage gap between Black women and white men is even larger: Black women are paid only 69.8% of white men's wages. Both gender and racial equality still have a very long way to go in the United States.

AI video—threat or opportunity?

Artificial Intelligence breakthroughs are coming thick and fast. The latest, in February, was [OpenAI's Sora](#). Now, once it comes onto the commercial market, we will all be able to create video from text. That means that we can write a

description of a scene and Sora will turn it into a video. With AI-generated images becoming harder to distinguish from the real thing (if there is such a thing), this is going to have a dramatic effect on all industries that create or use film or video. The question increasingly becomes, 'who controls this technology?' Its development has been left to the forces of the market. So all the big tech companies are competing with each other to develop AI capabilities. Without any social regulation, the threat to jobs, and even to those poor forms of 'democracy' we have, will be very dramatic.

The contradictions of high-tech warfare

Hi-tech hardware is very convenient for waging war. It's easier to keep your own people out of harm's way. But there are times when its contradictions can be exploited.

And that's exactly what the Houthis of Yemen have been doing. Their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have been very strategically targeted and they have caught the US and the UK in a trap. The Houthis have a significant arsenal of missiles and drones. A Houthi drone costs about £16,000. In order to shoot it down, the US and the UK have to use Sea Viper missiles costing about £1 million each. As a retired British admiral put it, "It's clearly not practical in the long term, either logistically or economically, to combat a mixture of medium and low-cost missiles and drones with very expensive high-end interceptor missiles."

It sounds very like what the US discovered in Vietnam many years ago. You can have all the expensive technology of warfare you like. But you may end up caught in a trap of your own making.

Hypocrisy continues

The Ukrainian President Zelenskiy reported in February that 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed in the first two years of the war. Almost the same number killed in Gaza in less than six months. Ukraine's population is 44 million; Gaza's is 2.1 million. These figures are very stark in the picture they paint. And the West arms both conflicts. Only that in Ukraine they are arming those who are defending themselves against aggressions. In Gaza they are arming the forces doing the killing. And their arguments for this hypocrisy are becoming thinner by the day.

Oil companies must clean up their mess

Shell is not the first company to try to sell its oil assets as a way to avoid cleaning up its mess. But this time it has met some opposition. Shell is trying to sell its Nigerian subsidiary, Shell Petroleum Development Company to a consortium of investors called Renaissance Africa Energy. Protestors from the Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre and its allies are demanding "No divestment without ecosystem restoration." We stand in solidarity with the Kebetkache women in their struggle.



Shell is trying to sell its Nigerian subsidiary, Shell Petroleum Development Company, to a consortium of investors called Renaissance Africa Energy. Protestors from the Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre and its allies are demanding "No divestment without ecosystem restoration."

Elections: WAY FORWARD FOR THE LEFT

By **Niall Reddy**

This is an edited version of a presentation to the Extended National Committee of Zabalaza for Socialism (ZASO).

WHAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT is the profound effect this election is going to have on shaping the medium-term political landscape in the country. That means that it's going to have a profound effect on how to go about trying to construct a Left party. And there are major strategic issues to discuss in relation to that. And I want to talk about the kind of principles that will have to underpin how such a party operates, as an exercise in imagining some distant future we want to see.

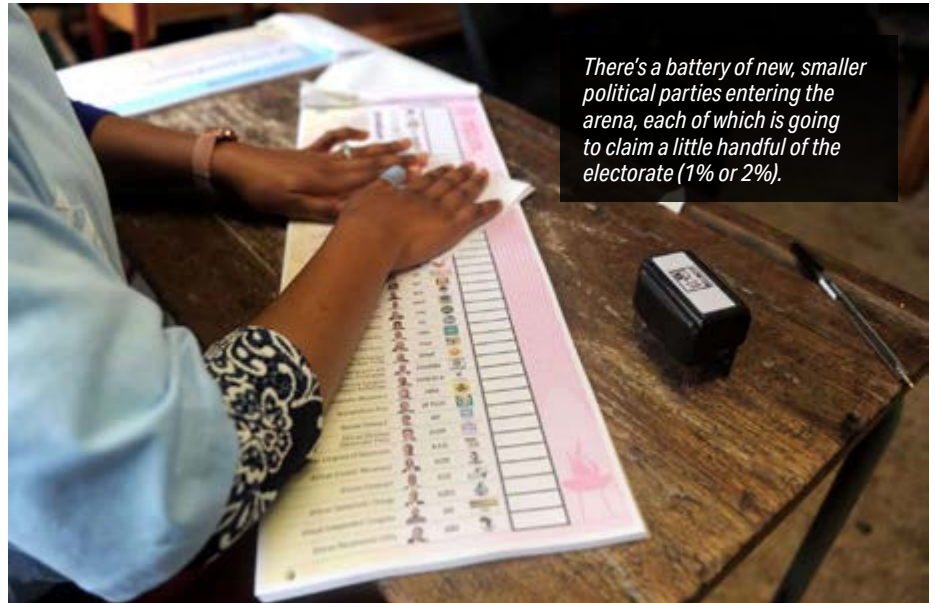
I think these questions have immediate relevance for us. As we have said, the overarching objective of ZASO is to try to catalyse a new political organisation. That means we have to be able to go to other activists and organisations on the Left with a compelling vision of what a new political party will look like. Why it will succeed where so many other similar ventures have failed in the recent past. And why people should be willing to invest their time and energy.

It doesn't mean we have to have a blueprint. But we have to be able to make the case compellingly for why the moment is now for a Left political party. And the principles under which we do it are going to be heavily shaped by the political conjuncture that's going to be shaped by this election.

What is this moment?

I think we are in a moment of recomposition. It's a moment of profound shifting and change in the political landscape. And the dominant trend is one in which a party that was overwhelmingly dominant historically, the ANC, seems almost guaranteed to get below 50%, and will be forced into a coalition of some kind. It's going to be an historic defeat.

But there's no new party ready and able to fill the vacuum. So instead,



There's a battery of new, smaller political parties entering the arena, each of which is going to claim a little handful of the electorate (1% or 2%).

we have what is likely to be growth at the margin for the other established opposition parties (the DA and the EFF). And then a battery of new, smaller political parties entering the arena, each claiming a little handful of the electorate (1% or 2%).

But there's a bigger dynamic going on here: the largest chunk of the ANC's own coalition is drifting away from the party. They are essentially de-aligning. They're not throwing their weight behind any of these new contenders. They are going to sit this election out. They don't see anybody who's actually representing their interests.

So the vote is going to get divided amongst an extremely large array of parties. But why this fragmentation? Part of it obviously has to do with the weaknesses and limitations of the existing opposition parties. If we had a more effective opposition, then there would be a chance that the ANC losses would be the victories of one of these parties. But they don't so far seem able to capitalise.

But there's a deeper underlying factor at play. And that's the fact that South African society is defined by relatively deep and profound social cleavages—issues that really divide society politically. That has been partially obscured by the ANC's very broad church coalition. But now,

as that coalition fragments, things are becoming much clearer.

Parties like the DA are hitting a ceiling, because they obviously want to try to appeal to a black electorate, but that offends some of the white power brokers in the party.

Another major cleavage that is almost a structural feature of society is the ANC's patronage machinery. It is a major economic force in this country. It has really created divisions in communities all over. On the one hand, those who benefited, and on the other, those on the outside who see this as an engine of corruption.

These new parties are not finding a way of navigating through the major divides in politics. When they come down on one side of an issue, it immediately isolates them from voters on the other side.

The other big issue is institutional: our electoral system provides very low barriers to entry. If you can get 1% of the vote, you have representation. Now we're entering an era of coalitions, it's easy to leverage up that very small chunk of representation. So every little political entrepreneur who fancies themselves as a popular person is going to throw their hat into the ring and try to get whatever they can.

Hence the fragmentation.

Opportunities for a new party of the Left

This creates both opportunities and challenges. It benefits us because it's better to be starting off in a relatively open political field, in which many of our contenders are small parties with a relatively small resource base. And in which, more importantly, there's a giant chunk of the electorate that is unaffiliated. If you're trying to launch a new Left party, you're trying to convince people who have no political home to join you. Convincing people to leave their existing political home is much harder. The ANC doesn't deliver anything, but it continues to win large majorities because of the deep loyalty some of the electorate feels towards it.

But this is not a situation that will last. Some, or one, of these political parties is going to start to gain momentum, to win more votes, more supporters. And it's going to translate those votes and supporters into greater resources. And it's going to build on that momentum. And the political field will be carved up. And then eventually the larger parties will start raising barriers to entry. They'll make it more and more difficult for new political parties to enter into the field. And they'll use all of the chaos around these coalitions as a justification for that.

So it means that there's an opportunity, but it's an opportunity that has a dwindling time frame. It's an opportunity we've got to seize now before it disappears.

The challenges

The big challenge lies in a ballot paper that's now 350 parties long. We're going to face the challenge of what the political scientists call party identification. When you launch your political party, you have to create some kind of brand for this party that allows it to stand out to voters now.

Leftists typically don't like this language of branding. They think we'll just come with a programme that really represents people's interests, and we won't have to do any of this work that other parties do to sell themselves. But ultimately, to succeed, we have to reach ordinary voters. We have to appeal not

just to people like ourselves who are activists, people who live, sleep, drink politics. We have to appeal to the majority of the population who actually detest politics—politics is a bunch of people lying to them, and then wrecking their existence. And to do that, we have to be

Choosing a message to focus on doesn't mean that we stop caring about any of the other issues. And it doesn't mean that we stop putting them into our campaign. But it means that we have to be very effective in how we choose a message.



Parties like the DA are hitting a ceiling, because they obviously want to try to appeal to a black electorate, but that offends some of the white power brokers in the party.

able to build a clear identity that's going to distinguish us from the others.

We might be the only genuinely Left party out there—the only party that really wants to represent the interests of working people. But parties that use the language of the Left while walking Right will be all over the place.

So what does that mean? What should our programme be? The only way that we're going to be able to discover the nature of an effective programme and manifesto for a Left party is by deeply embedding ourselves in communities and workplaces, and testing out our positions.

Two principles

There are two principles that I think have to guide us as we start to craft these policies. And these are principles that really apply to strategising in all sorts of domains.

The first principle is that we have to choose. If we are going to eventually build an effective electoral force in this country, we have to craft a manifesto and programme that selects clear priorities. Prioritising is the essence of strategy. Without priority, you're not choosing a strategy. Resources are finite. Prioritising is central to how you build political identity, how you build the brand, or new party.

The second principle is that to be effective on the Left, we have to be two metres ahead of the masses and not 2,000 metres. In electoral politics, maybe you can only be one meter ahead. That doesn't mean we can do what bourgeois parties do—conduct a poll to find out what the majority of people want and put that in the manifesto. We can't do that because we want to transform the world in a way that makes it better. If it turns out that some of our issues are not popular, we don't just jettison them; we have to find ways to make them popular. Our politics have to be responsive to where people are at today. We can't just imagine some future electorate will simply want to follow Marx and overthrow the bourgeoisie.

And we have to face the fact that current opinion polls show that certain of the issues that we on the Left care very deeply about, and that should be very central in any political platform, turn out to be issues that don't rate very highly when you ask people to name their priorities. For example, land reform, turns out to be very low down this list. When people rank an issue low, it doesn't mean that they don't care about the issue at all. It just means that they don't really prioritise it. Land reform is one of those issues.



Aftermath of KZN floods.

Less than 1% of respondents told surveys that climate change is the issue for them. That doesn't mean that we should now say we can no longer be eco-socialists. But we have to be clever about how we pursue that politics.

Racism is another issue that tends to fall relatively far down this list. Again, it doesn't mean that people in South Africa don't care about racism, or don't think it's an issue. It just means if you're going to pose an option to a person between a party that's going to find a way of solving the unemployment crisis, and a party that's going to focus all of its efforts on racism, people are going to make an obvious choice.

We have to be ruthless

So how can we navigate this? I'm going to focus on one issue in particular. And that's the environmental issue. These surveys show that climate change and environmental issues regularly ranked at the absolute bottom. Less than 1% of respondents told the surveys that climate change is the issue for them. If we tried to run an electoral campaign on climate change, like the Climate Justice Charter Movement, it's a completely losing strategy. People just don't prioritise it in a way that they're going to give their one vote to the party that makes that the issue.

That doesn't mean that we should now say we can no longer be ecosocialists. The reason that we are ecosocialists, and the reason that we try to agitate and

organise around climate issues, is that we know that this is an issue that is hugely important to the material life of the working class.

But it means if we are going to be effective in the service of creating a climate just world, we have to be clever about how we pursue that politics. We know that you can build climate change politics in communities that are deeply affected by this issue. And that means that you can build powerful movements that have mobilising capacity around climate change.

We have to get over the notion that has been unfortunately very common on the Left, the notion that if an organisation chooses not to prioritise a specific issue, they don't care about it, or they don't think that it's important. That's not at all the case. We might believe that climate change is the single most important issue in the country. But if there's no chance of building power around that issue, then logic and strategy demand we change tack; we find other issues around which we can build power, so that we can use that power to address everything that exists in our programme.

We have to take a leaf out of the book of the Right. They never won an election saying we're going to cut taxes,

we're going to slash spending on health care, and we're going to close your school down, because they know that's not possible. So they win on a whole bunch of other powerful issues, and then, when they get into power, they just do what's on their agenda.

We're going to have to be a little bit ruthless, in the same way that right wing political parties are.

ZASO has been formed too late to participate in this election. We have to learn that electoral politics is a different ball game to street politics. Our task is to prepare for the local government elections in 2026, which must serve as a springboard to the next national election. Our challenge will be to combine 'street politics' with elections, so that they can reinforce each other in the struggle for power.

Niall Reddy is a researcher at the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies and a member of ZASO.

ANC AND 2024 ELECTIONS:

A NIGHTMARE OF COALITIONS, SPLITS AND NEOLIBERAL CRISIS

By **Gunnett Kaaf**

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL Congress is certainly fighting its most difficult election since the dawn of democracy in 1994. This may sound like a cliché that gets echoed every election, but now it's true. The unabated decline of the electoral support of the ANC has been happening since 2009, when Zuma became President. It will now make the ANC fall below 50% of the vote. Almost all polls put the ANC around 45%, tending towards 40%. If you think polls are doomsayers, just look at the 2021 local government results—the overall ANC vote was 45.59%.

The trend over the last 15 years has been that local government election outcomes tend to be a precursor to national election results when it comes to the ANC. In the 2011 local elections, the ANC got 61.95%, and in the 2014 general election it declined to 62.15%. In the 2016 local elections, the ANC received 53.91% of the vote and even lost the big metropolitan municipalities of Joburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni and Nelson Mandela Bay. In the following general election in 2019, it declined to 57.50%.

The trajectory of the ANC decline will continue even in 2024, with it getting not far from the 45% it got in the 2021 local elections. It is also clear that the pace of the ANC decline has tended to be faster, considering the outcomes of the 2019 general election and 2021 local elections.

Thus, the ANC is facing a nightmare of unworkable coalitions and splits that mark the chaotic unfolding of the deepening ANC crisis, as it approaches the 2024 general elections, and beyond.

ANC engaged in a fake renewal

The nightmare is made worse by the fact that they have been pretending to be engaged in a renewal process to self-correct, since Jacob Zuma left the

nothing about corruption, look no further than their parliamentary list. You will see many of those implicated in the Zondo commission on state capture and corruption. Worse even: their current President Ramaphosa's ascent to high office was based on an anti-corruption

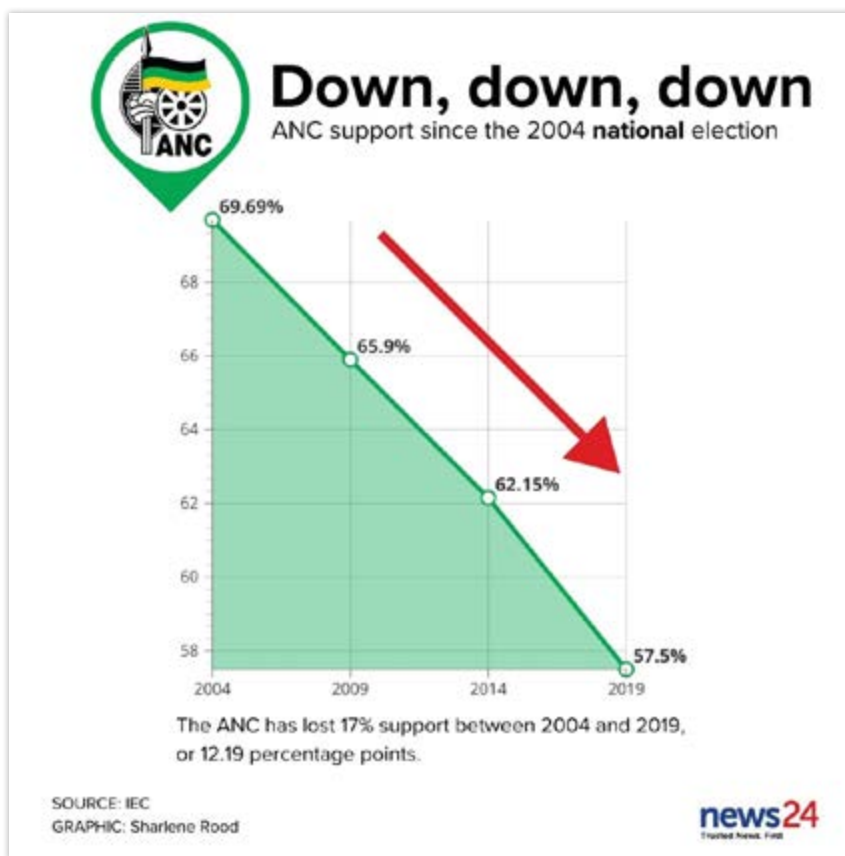
ticket. But he has a big cloud hanging over his head: the Phala Phala scandal that involves a stack of cash of more than half a million US dollars, whose real source remains unexplained.

The ANC used its majority in parliament to block the impeachment inquiry arising from serious violations and crimes by the President at Phala Phala, as established *prima facie* by the Independent Panel of two retired judges and one senior advocate. The formal reason they advanced when they were squashing the recommended parliamentary inquiry was that the President has taken the report of the Independent Panel on review in court. Once the ANC parliamentary majority voted down the report,

the President went back to court to withdraw his review, on the grounds that the report of the Independent Panel had become academic since parliament had rejected it. Those are pure monkey tricks of the ANC to evade accountability!

The arrest of the Speaker of parliament following a R4.5 million bribe scandal, during an election period, has added fuel to the flames.

Unemployment, poverty, the delivery of public services including health, education and housing, and the deterioration of public infrastructure have all got worse since Ramaphosa took



The unabated decline of the electoral support of the ANC has been happening since 2009, when Zuma became President. It will now make the ANC fall below 50% of the vote.

ANC presidency in 2017. This sham of a renewal process has made matters worse for them because they have claimed they are ditching corruption and embarking on a radical economic transformation; to restructure the Reserve Bank, implement a radical land reform, and redistribute wealth and income in the economy for the benefit of the poor black majority. This was all a blue lie, and they know it!

Now they are more discredited, even worse than in the Zuma years, because they don't have a Zuma and Ace Magashule to scapegoat for their mess. If you want to see that they did

over at the 2017 ANC conference, on the back of a radical economic transformation that was going to improve the lot of the poor black masses. There are no radical policy interventions that have been put in place. So both the proclaimed anti-corruption stance and radical economic policies, which are the twin pillars of the sham ANC renewal, have fallen flat.

On the contrary, we have witnessed heightened neoliberal austerity of budget cuts in important public services, including health, education, housing and roads, and on government workers' wages. Austerity has also extended to the reactionary, tight monetary policy of increasing interest rates. This is supposed to be to fight off inflation. But that inflation did not come from the oversupply of money, but from price increases by monopoly corporations and from imports due to breaks in global supply chains, following the Covid slump and the Ukraine war. This fiscal and monetary austerity has worsened the cost of living for poor families, workers and the middle classes.

The rise of the dangerous right: Zuma and his MK party

Ordinarily, Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe party should not be posing any serious threat to the ANC electoral support because, according to Ramaphosa's ANC, Zuma presided over "nine wasted years of corruption and state capture", and Cyril is a renewal man. If anything, the ANC should be saying 'good riddance' now that Zuma has his own party that is based on Zulu tribalist mobilisation and defending his legacy of corruption. But on the contrary, Zuma and his MK party have added to ANC woes, so they are terrified to the core.

Zuma's party is seriously threatening to take away significant ANC support in KZN, and in some parts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Some polls even put the MK party at 13% of the

national vote, ahead of the EFF. If this threat to the ANC electoral support is real and the polls are to be believed, then the ANC is a reactionary party that shares with the MK party reactionary tendencies such as backward tribalist mobilisation and corruption. The praises the ANC gave to King Goodwill Zwelithini and Mangosuthu Buthelezi on the occasion of their respective passing in 2021 and 2023

member, despite the fact that he has violated the ANC's own constitution by forming a party outside the Alliance and campaigning against the ANC. They only suspended his ANC membership long after he had announced the formation of, and started campaigning for, MK party. They claim their reason for not outright expelling Zuma is tactical; they don't want to make matters worse in an



Cyril Ramaphosa's ascent to high office was based on an anti-corruption ticket. But he has a big cloud hanging over his head: the Phala Phala scandal that involves a stack of cash of more than half a million US dollars, whose real source remains unexplained.

also bear testimony to this. They praised these two as great patriots who fought for peace and democracy. This is contrary to their recorded history as reactionaries derailing our democracy, apartheid collaborators and the mass murderer that Buthelezi was.

As part of this rightward drift of embracing reactionary traditional leaders, with the hope to lure rural votes, ANC has now secured the endorsement of the criminally convicted King Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo on its 2024 election campaign trail, after they wrestled him away from the EFF.

Zuma is a rightwing force whose danger to national stability and security was highlighted during the 2021 July unrest. Of course, Zuma's rightwing political rise is on the back of the declining democracy and the deepening neoliberal crisis.

The ANC fears Zuma so much that they have not expelled him as an ANC

election period. Yet they are busy fighting Zuma in the courts, trying to get his MK party deregistered and to stop using the uMkhonto weSizwe name and logo, since those are associated with the ANC brand.

Their approach on Zuma is confused because they are not principled and they don't have control of a lot of stuff in their terrain; it can blow up their face any time, because the ANC implosion resembles an empire of chaos. The Zuma split is part of the deepening ANC crisis.

The nightmare of unworkable coalitions

The experience of coalitions in municipalities has been bad, fraught with unstable coalition governments, wherein mayors, executives and council speakers are changed willy-nilly. Given the big possibility (almost a certainty) of the ANC falling below 50% nationally, and losing Gauteng and KZN, they are panicking

and want to be ready for coalition governments. They have attempted to make a law that would regulate the stability of coalition governments, but they have failed. They have also failed to formulate a coherent political strategy for coalitions because the ANC has become a political mess, unable to coordinate any big and complex political project. As Hein Marais correctly points out in his 2011 classic book, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit*:

The ANC now hosts such a disparate assortment of interests, ideologies and ideals that the progressive impulses are mitigated by a mishmash of coarse tendencies. The ANC can no longer credibly claim to be the custodian and manager of a coherent liberation project... Powerful sections of the ANC have acquired a reflective sympathy for policies that put the market ahead of society, and that push the pursuit of social justice deeper into the shadows.

The ANC can't agree among themselves to have a coalition with the EFF on the basis of a strategic perspective. They are also embarrassed to openly declare that they are more likely to go with the liberal DA. Maybe they will go with smaller parties if they fall below 50% only by a small margin.

Again, there is a permanent feud between ANC and EFF when it comes to agreeing on radical policy positions. EFF is always out to discredit the ANC as a sellout party. The 2021 experience of trying to amend Section 25 of the Constitution, in order to clarify the possibility of a radical land reform that is free of market forces, is a case in point. The EFF rejected the proposed amendment from the ANC-dominated parliamentary committee that was worded: "where land and any improvements thereon are expropriated for purposes of land reform...the amount of compensation may be nil." The EFF objected and instead insisted on the wording "expropriation without compensation". Thus the constitutional amendment to easily enable radical land reform did not pass, as it did not get the required two-thirds majority of the vote in the National Assembly.

It is not clear if the ANC will talk to Zuma's MK party to form coalitions, given the animosity between the two.

Despite desperate attempts ANC crisis deepens

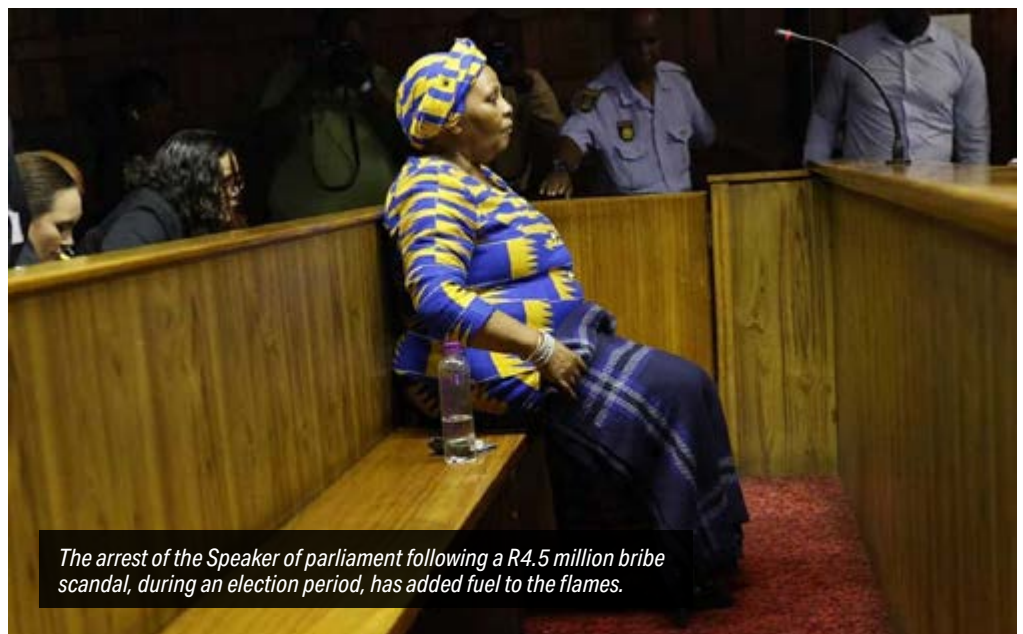
The ANC in Gauteng has been pursuing a massive programme of public sector employment. This should be commended. The neoliberal restructuring of the economy that has been consolidated by the ANC government since 1994 has been shedding jobs and making unemployment worse, with no private capital investment to expand output and create jobs on a large scale. Given the big numbers that are cited of those employed since last year (more than 90,000), these employment opportunities should be enhancing the electoral fortunes of the ANC in Gauteng, as a province where the ANC is set to lose.

However, it does not seem this employment scheme will work wonders for the ANC because it was implemented too late, close to elections, when the electoral noise and heat overwhelms everything. Most of those who got employed will probably vote for the ANC, but their number falls way too short to make a dent in improving their

sovereign development project. Instead, they succumbed fully to the dominant neoliberal development philosophy that allots a decisive role to market forces.

This election therefore depicts a decline of democracy, the deepening neoliberal crisis and the rise of the rightwing parties (MK, ActionSA, Patriotic Alliance, Freedom Front Plus) and rightwing social forces. The ANC decline continues unabated, yet there is no party that is winning an outright majority. It is a political crisis of absent political and social forces capable of posing an alternative, radical social vision that strengthens democracy and advances a development agenda that is buttressed in the social demands of popular classes, who constitute the majority of the population.

The ANC crisis has become an intrinsic part of the neoliberal capitalist crisis deepening in our country and globally. A meaningful exit out of this crisis is not to renew or reform the ANC. That is not possible. The ANC has to be transcended with a socialist



The arrest of the Speaker of parliament following a R4.5 million bribe scandal, during an election period, has added fuel to the flames.

desperate electoral fortunes in Gauteng. It is unlikely that other voters who are unemployed will vote ANC with hopes inspired by the employment scheme, believing that their turn is coming. They will probably not vote ANC because of the cynicism that is widespread among voters from accumulated disappointments and failures since 1994.

30 years is certainly a long enough period to fail, trying to pursue a development strategy and trying again, and again, until you succeed. But with the ANC, the failure has been dismal because they were not committed to any

revolutionary advance to exit from the deepening neoliberal crisis. Mass movements that wage mass struggles that have to register decisive victories must be built urgently. Of course, that has to be done outside elections but then exert political weight on elections, on the basis of political victories scored before elections, not after. Failure by the Left and popular classes to live up to this task and challenge will perpetuate the ruinous crisis as it gets worse.

Gunneth Kaaf is a Marxist activist and writer based in Bloemfontein.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

AUTOPSY CONFIRMS SA LEFT'S GLOOM-AND-DOOM PREDICTIONS

By **Patrick Bond**

“Our Future—Make it Work” reflected the power of self-interested extractive industries and deregulated financiers

THE TWO MOST PROMINENT openly pro-corporate politicians active in South Africa since the early 2010s—Trevor Manuel and Cyril Ramaphosa—teamed up in 2009–12, during Jacob Zuma’s presidency, to produce a National Development Plan (NDP). They were supported by a neoliberal-dominated National Planning Commission (NPC).

It could have been even worse

Three separate [NPC reviews of the NDP’s fate](#), published in 2022–23, cannot help admitting the worsening poverty, unemployment, income and wealth inequality, social stresses and ecological destruction since mid-2012. Of course it could have been worse, *had the NDP actually succeeded* in drawing resources into the two largest hare-brained schemes within the [Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission’s](#) Strategic Integrated Projects (PICC SIPs): an R800 billion high-pollution plunder of resources (nearly entirely coal) and massive transport upgrade from the Waterberg (next to Botswana) to Richards Bay (PICC SIP1); and a R250 billion Durban dig-out port expansion and refurbishment of the rail line to Johannesburg (PICC SIP2).

Thank goodness, in spite of the NDP’s enthusiasm for both, neither has been implemented. In part this is because the Manuel–Ramaphosa [diagnoses](#) of South African and global economic conditions were excessively optimistic: “The share of exports in South African output will rise and the profile will be more diverse, with a growing portion

of non-mineral manufactures and services.” The opposite happened: from 2008–19 (just before Covid-19 disruptions), South Africa witnessed dramatic deglobalisation, as [trade/GDP](#) fell from 66% to 54%. That ratio mainly reflects commodity prices, which rose again in 2021–22 but then crashed.

SOEs fall apart

Moreover, the parastatal corporations that the NDP relied upon began falling apart, beset by the overindebtedness and widespread corruption initiated under Thabo Mbeki’s rule, when Manuel was Finance Minister:

- In 2005, Transnet’s first megaproject was a multi-product petroleum [pipeline](#) from Durban to Johannesburg, whose cost [soared](#) from R5 billion to R28 billion;
- In 2006, in the wake of another FIFA scandal—Mbeki’s bidding team spent R190 million bribing two Caribbean and New York soccer scammers [to win 2010 World Cup hosting rights](#)—the R35 billion worth of [soccer stadium construction collusion](#) was initiated by 15 [major Johannesburg firms](#) (several of which were subsequently [bankrupted](#) by overcapacity);
- In 2007, Sanral’s [corruption-riddled Gauteng highway e-tolling](#) began, causing such intense controversies that, within a few years, the

consumer payment boycott rate had hit 75% and the project’s financial model [crashed](#);

- In 2007, Eskom awarded the main Medupi and Kusile 4,800 MW coal-fired power plant procurement deals (worth R38 billion) to Tokyo-based Hitachi, because of an [enormous kickback](#) given to the main investment arm of the ruling African National Congress, Chancellor House (later [prosecuted](#) under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, but not here).

Matters degenerated even more rapidly when Zuma ushered the Gupta empire into the heart of Eskom and Transnet in the early 2010s. Financiers (mainly [Western](#)) and suppliers (often [Chinese](#)) were perfectly willing to fund prolific Gupta-related graft in Durban port cranes, Transnet locomotives and Eskom projects.

The Ramaphosa connection

At the same time the NDP was coming together in the early 2010s, Ramaphosa was engaged in an already-dubious [partnership with the Switzerland-based Glencore](#) commodity trading firm (the world’s largest) run by Johannesburg-born [corporate tsotsi Ivan Glasenberg](#). Glencore was prosecuted in 2017–2022 in the US and UK, and fined \$1.1 billion, for [bribing politicians](#) in the Democratic



The two most prominent openly pro-corporate politicians active in South Africa since the early 2010s—Trevor Manuel and Cyril Ramaphosa—teamed up in 2009–12, during Jacob Zuma’s presidency, to produce a National Development Plan (NDP).

Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Venezuela. Of course, just as in the Hitachi case, no prosecution has been launched here. Recall that Ramaphosa's major Shanduka Coal mining investment, in partnership with Glencore, was in the notorious [Optimum Mine](#), which he chaired until 2014 when he became Deputy President.

At the same time, Ramaphosa held a [large investment in Lonmin](#)—more than 9% at the time he was Manuel's NDP deputy—which helps explain the NDP's overwhelming reliance upon the [“Energy Intensive Users Group”](#) agenda of mineral extraction and CO₂-intensive smelting, and exports. The extraordinary events at Marikana were recalled in a 2013 analysis by Niall Reddy: “On the 15th of August 2012 the NPC, three years after its establishment, announced the NDP to the nation. The next day, police shot dead 34 mineworkers striking to demand a living wage of R12,500.”

That very day of the NDP launch, the former trade unionist Ramaphosa was busy [sending email letters](#) (for which he later apologised) to the police and mining ministers and to Lonmin management, insisting that mineworkers were not engaged in a labour dispute, but instead were ‘dastardly criminal,’ requiring ‘concomitant action.’ For Reddy, “History may well judge the significance of the NDP launch based on how it channels or amplifies the political events unleashed by the massacre.”

The NDP's narrative

South Africa has to exploit its strengths to increase exports. If the economy is less competitive in one area, it will have to do better in others. The country's comparative advantages include its mineral and natural resource endowments, a sophisticated financial and business services sector, proximity to fast-growing African markets, high-quality universities and a modern, productive agricultural sector. South Africa also has companies that are global leaders in sectors like civil construction. South Africa holds large global shares in platinum group metals, gold, diamonds, manganese, coal, iron ore and uranium. Yet over the past decade, domestic mining has failed to match the global growth trend in mineral exports due to

poor infrastructure, alongside regulatory and policy frameworks that hinder investment. South Africa can benefit greatly from Asia's growing demand for commodities. To do so means improving water, transport and energy infrastructure, and providing greater policy and regulatory certainty to investors. This will enable the mining sector to deploy the skills, resources, know-how and capital that are available, and allow government to raise much more tax revenue than it does at present.



Kusile's broken chimney.

In 2007, Eskom awarded the main Medupi and Kusile 4,800 MW coal-fired power plant procurement deals to Tokyo-based Hitachi, because of an enormous kickback given to the main investment arm of the ruling African National Congress, Chancellor House.

Reality check

- The country's main source of [declining wealth](#) is the vast mineral and natural resource endowment depletion, destruction and pollution. Even a conservative [World Bank measure of wealth](#) (which ignores platinum, diamonds and other South African minerals) considers the local mining industry responsible for a negative net impact on the country's assets.
- The “sophisticated financial and business services sector” attracted an international [greylisting](#) due to rampant illicit financial flows.
- The “proximity to fast-growing African markets” caused a crisis for many firms when even 2010s stars Zambia, Ghana and Ethiopia [defaulted](#) on their foreign debt in the early 2020s after interest rates soared, and when Zimbabwe, Angola and Nigeria [wouldn't repatriate earnings](#) in US\$ to Johannesburg corporations.
- The “high-quality universities” were only rewarded with sufficient grants

by Treasury after the intense 2015–17 [#FeesMustFall protests](#) (and were subsequently [defunded](#) by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana).

- The “modern, productive agricultural sector” has suffered severe electricity, water and transport shortages thanks to the service delivery crisis, as well as a chaotic [global price structure](#)—and [still awaits land reform](#).
- The “global leaders in sectors like civil construction” [shrank rapidly](#) during the 2010s fixed-investment drought, partly when local procurement mafias shut down projects.

Finance is so uncritically blessed in the NDP that in a December 2023 *Report on Monitoring National Development Plan Indicators and Targets*, the NPC [claims](#) Treasury's “carbon tax gives effect to the polluter-pays-principle and helps to ensure that firms and consumers take the negative adverse costs (externalities) of climate change into account.” Yet [that tax](#) is only R6/tonne of CO₂ for Eskom and Sasol (by far the two largest emitters), whereas the comparable [Swedish tax](#) is R2,500/tonne—thus ensuring the SA economy becomes a victim of [European and UK climate sanctions](#) in 2026 and 2027 respectively.

NDP funeral

As one of the most embarrassing post-1994 policy failures, the NPC authors—now led by Ramaphosa—will end up burying their NDP work in the same dump where so many other diversionary rhetorical statements continue rotting away.

The NDP was meant to spell out government's long-term development plan. So it is central to any assessment of the last 30 years. The NDP sought to provide 5% per annum growth. Given the ANC government's neoliberal economic strategy, that was always going to be a pipedream. GDP ignores resource depletion, greenhouse gas emissions, other pollution and women's unpaid labour. Whilst GDP growth does not guarantee income goes to the poor and marginalised, the NDP's *status quo* strategy left South Africa with shrinking wealth, as mining stripped out natural capital. The NDP, in short, proved fatal to any hope of reversing unemployment, inequality, poverty, gender oppression and ecological destruction.

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Coalition governments

A LABOUR PERSPECTIVE

COALITION GOVERNMENTS HAVE LONG existed throughout the world. Some countries, particularly those in the Global North, have managed to overcome many of the initial challenges presented by the various political formations that needed to work together on often conflict-ridden issues. In some countries, coalitions are a norm rather than a novelty; institutional arrangements have been established to regulate them. South Africa, however, now 30 years into its democracy (and relatively young in comparison to other nations), has only recently had to start seriously considering the realities that are presented by coalitions.

SA coalition history

The first democratically elected ANC administration could be considered to be an initial example of a coalition, although perhaps not in the strict sense. To allow for the country to transition away from apartheid governance, a power-sharing arrangement was brokered between the incoming ANC and the outgoing National Party (NP). The result was a coalition of sorts. Then, as political parties and their related organisations began to reconfigure, emerge, converge, fracture, and even re-converge, various low-level forms of coalition were established.

However, in the early years of democracy this phenomenon was relatively insignificant, as the ANC was dominant in both national and local government elections.

Change began to occur once the governing party gradually started losing favour with the base, especially around the lack of adequate service delivery. Widespread allegations of malfeasance and corruption became a norm in the South African political lexicon, and they were primarily linked to mismanagement at the municipality level.

This sparked a period of community uprisings, commonly known as 'service delivery protests'. In-fighting, as well as breakaway political parties, disillusioned supporters on the ground; factors such as these saw the ANC lose considerable support in the 2016 and 2021 local government elections.

The City of Johannesburg

The City of Johannesburg (CoJ) is the largest metropolitan municipality in the country. The complex and intricate experiences that followed the decline of the ANC throughout the country in elections have been reflected in the CoJ. Initially, it seemed that the motivation of the opposition was to completely disempower and dislodge the ANC from governance structures in the City. Opposition parties, such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Democratic Alliance (DA), formed coalitions with each other and smaller parties.

However, this formula was complicated by ideological differences. These made it difficult for some coalitions to work sustainably over a long period. Policy formation is an extremely

contested political terrain and this placed parties at odds with each other. The South African political ecosystem is rich with parties and other formations from almost all ideological persuasions. These range from ultra-right wing conservatives and free-market neoliberalists, to political parties with a more nationalist orientation, to formations with a leftist perspective (an example of this would be the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party [SRWP]), although its critics have argued that it is leftist in name rather than substance). There are points on which some of these parties can agree for the sake of the coalition. However, disagreement is inevitable and the coalition begins to collapse.

The election of specific candidates, especially in the mayor's position, became a tremendous bone of contention for many parties. The coalition arrangements in the CoJ led to many votes of no confidence, as well as a handful of mayors each occupying the position for a short time. Furthermore, the element of individualism, as well as party-based personal ambition, started to feature heavily in decisions that needed to be taken within these coalitions. After the 2016 and 2021 local government elections, political parties experimented and actors tried to make sense of this essentially uncharted territory. Parties to the coalition often needed to choose between allegiance to their respective political homes and working as a unified and legitimate coalition government.

In all of this complexity and political manoeuvring, critical issues such as service delivery stagnated. For the most part, at least for the marginalised poor and working class, it seemed that the hope of a change in socio-economic conditions at the level of local government would not manifest. However, the pertinent question becomes: where is labour in all of this complexity?

Labour contained

We must first acknowledge that the Left has become significantly weakened. This is due to internal, external and global factors. Following the transition to democracy in 1994, the South African Left was at the zenith



The Intlungu yaseMatyotyombeni Movement protesting in Cape Town.

Widespread allegations of malfeasance and corruption sparked a period of community uprisings, commonly known as 'service delivery protests'. Factors such as these saw the ANC lose considerable support in the 2016 and 2021 local government elections.

Seven JoBurg mayors in the last five years.

The coalition arrangements in the CoJ led to many votes of no confidence, as well as a handful of mayors each occupying the position for a short time. In all of this complexity and political manoeuvring, critical issues such as service delivery stagnated.



of political discourse and activism. It played a significant role in the anti-apartheid struggle, especially following the banning of political parties such as the ANC and PAC. The strength of workers at the workplace, especially in key economic sectors such as mining and manufacturing, made the working class, including communities, a politically significant force.

This force needed to be quelled through legislation and policies, to ensure that capital could resume its endless march towards accumulation and profit-maximisation, without having to concern itself with an incredibly strong, well-organised and unified Left. Legislation to advance the interests of workers was passed, such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Skills Development Act, and the Employment Equity Act. Social dialogue mechanisms, such as bargaining councils as well as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), were created. This labour relations regime sought to bring trade unions within a regulated and significantly less confrontational institutional framework. Unfortunately, for trade unions in general and workers in particular, this agenda has been largely successful.

The Tripartite Alliance

Furthermore, the relationship between trade unions and political parties, in particular the ANC through the Tripartite Alliance, made it difficult for labour to fully express itself.

This is quite clearly seen in the policy formation space. Cosatu had been unrelenting in its opposition towards the free-market, fundamentalist macroeconomic policies that were developed and championed by the governing ANC. However, due to the unequal nature of the Tripartite Alliance, labour was often rendered mute in such key policy debates.

Despite these challenges, organised labour, through Cosatu, continued its support of the ANC in both local and national government elections. The close relationship between the ANC, Cosatu and the SACP, especially in the early years of democracy, gave trade unions some leeway in advancing the interests of workers. There has been much concern within Cosatu, as well as its affiliates, that should the ANC lose significant power in both the general and local elections, this would render labour completely marginalised. This is because many other political formations have been unequivocal about their positions on issues relating to the working class.

For example, it has often been argued by conservatives that the labour laws in South Africa are cumbersome and that the state is spending too much on social protectionist measures that should rather be left to the market. Such arguments have of course been a cause for concern amongst the Left that, should certain political formations gain significant electoral support, the historic gains made by Labour would be reversed.

However, the irony is that workers' interests have been progressively reversed by the ANC through its adamant insistence on continuing with its neoliberal policy trajectory.

Union fragmentation

Apart from these external challenges, internal issues continue to plague trade unions. Breakaway unions have formed and have only served to divide a thoroughly fractured working class. Ideological differences, coupled with the entrepreneurial spirit that many in trade unions have developed, have made the movement vulnerable to internal disintegration. These realities have made trade unions inward-looking and competitive amongst themselves, instead of operating in unison against the perils of the capitalist mode of

production that workers are constantly confronted with.

A coalition government in South Africa is almost a certainty at this point. However, the future seems bleak for the working class in such arrangements. On the one hand, continued support for the ANC ensures that anti-worker, neoliberal policies will proceed unabated. On the other hand, support for other political formations will ensure that those policies become cemented, and historic gains of labour will inevitably be reversed. Meanwhile, internal divisions and ideological divergences concerning political party choices among workers continue to fragment an already disabled trade union movement.

A way forward

It seems that the most plausible way forward lies in labour forming a 'coalition of sorts' amongst unions and across federations. What continues to make the Left weak is its undeniable fragmentation. Major federations and their affiliates, both in the public and private sectors, continue to pull in different directions on important social and economic policies that have significant impacts on their constituencies. These divisions have only served to weaken the once dominant working-class collective, and the prospects of finding a political party or a coalition government that *genuinely* caters to the interests of workers seems remote.

Therefore, as complex as the task of Left unity may seem under the current material conditions, it is now a path that needs to be taken to ensure that the interests of the working class, as well as communities, are maintained and championed.

The author is a trade union official and activist.

AFTER 30 YEARS, a middle class election

Amandla! interviews Moeletsi Mbeki



The founders of the ANC were a middle class created by British colonialism.

A!: Now, if we fast forward to the 1980s, we see an ANC which contains a variety of class forces. It's no longer just that middle class and hasn't been for a long time. How is it that the interests of that middle class prevailed?

MM: The mistake I think everybody made (and the Communist Party was one of the culprits in this) was to think that the ANC was no longer a middle class party, merely because it formed alliances with other social groups to fight apartheid. The Communist Party and other leftist forces thought that the ANC had ceased being a middle class party and had become what they called a multi-class party. Well, it never was anything like that.

And Mandela was very explicit in the Rivonia Trial, and after the adoption of the Freedom Charter in the late 1950s. He was always explicit that this is a party to create and to advance the interests of what he called the "Non-European Bourgeoisie". In the Rivonia Trial he was clear that the ANC is against socialism. It admires capitalism. It admires the British Constitution and the American Constitution. And it is fighting to remove racial discrimination, not to change the socio-economic system of South Africa. But nobody listened.

Mandela pointed to the coalition between the UK, the United States and the Soviet Union to fight fascism during the Second World War. This did not make the British and the Americans communists. He actually used that example. So many people mistook the alliance to fight apartheid, which was driven by the ANC, for change in the class character of the ANC. It wasn't anything like that.

A!: To what extent was the subsuming of civil society formations and the SACP under the ANC, through the Tripartite Alliance, key to this process?

Amandla!: You said recently that "Democracy during the years 94 to 2024 can be characterised as the period when the African Middle Class consolidated its hold on power." Could you expand on that a bit.

Moeletsi Mbeki: Many people in South Africa don't understand the nature of African nationalism. Andre Odendaal's [The Founders](#) is one of the most important books of the past few years. He went back to the middle of the 19th century to identify who the founders of the ANC were, what social classes they were. Very briefly, they were a middle class created by British colonialism. In the 19th century, it started off as a peasant class, collaborating with the British against sections of the indigenous communities in the Eastern Cape. In return for their collaborating with the British, they conquered land which the British distributed amongst them, as private property. That's where private property started, amongst the Africans, mainly the Khoi and sections of the Xhosa.

Together with education, new technologies in agriculture and Western medicine, this led to the emergence of a Westernised, Christian middle class amongst the African population. In 1853, the British promulgated the Constitution for the Cape Colony: if you could write your name and you had 25 pounds worth of fixed property, you were able to vote. There was no discrimination on the basis of race. And it was that middle class that drove the struggle for equality.

Then, after the discovery of the minerals, especially of gold, the British mining companies, were no longer interested in a peasant class. They were interested in a labouring class. So they started to reverse what the British government had done in the middle of the 19th century and reduce the number of people who could vote. And that was the origin of African nationalism—to defend the Cape Constitution of 1853, which the mining companies were opposing, because they wanted a proletariat.

MM: It was very crucial, because it actually neutered politically the working class, and in particular the black working class and civil society in general. It was critical to the consolidation of control by the middle class to have the trade unions in particular under their wing.

If you remember, the trade unions had come up with their own policy before the 1994 elections, called the RDP. It was a policy which was more working class oriented. Because it didn't have the infrastructure on the ground to fight the elections, the ANC adopted that policy to fight the election. Once it got into power and established itself, and then finalised the new constitution, it jettisoned that policy and replaced it with a policy that was worked out between the middle class, the banks, the World Bank, and big business. That was the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (Gear) policy.

AI: The trade union leadership that facilitated this process, which you have described as so destructive of the labour movement: were they naive, or were they cynical?

MM: Well, it's a combination of both. Just to give you an example: when I joined Cosatu in September 1990, one of the things I realised was that Cosatu had a lot of money—subscriptions from their members and pension funds. So I recommended to them that they should set up a commercial bank, along the lines of the cooperative bank in the United Kingdom. The President of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) actually offered for free to set up a commercial bank for Cosatu, but Cosatu rejected it. And they worked against it; and it never got off the ground. Yet a very few years later, these guys became partners of black economic empowerment companies. And they became very wealthy—people like Jay Naidoo, Jayendra Naidoo and Alec Erwin.

AI: What about the broader global trends? We're looking at a world dominated by neoliberalism for the 25 years before 1994. We have growing financialisation, the general uncontained power of monopoly capital. What about those factors in terms of constructing what we have?

MM: Yes, of course, those were parts of the broader trend, especially for a very Westernised economy like the South African economy, and a minerals-driven economy, which was dependent on selling minerals to the London Metal Exchange. But you know, the first person who phoned me to tell me that Gear was the wrong policy for South Africa was not Jay Naidoo. It was the Japanese ambassador. He called to tell me that Gear is not suitable for the level of development of our economy, that the Washington Consensus is not a workable model for an economy at our level of development. So the capitalist countries understood where the Washington Consensus could work and where it couldn't work.



The Tripartite Alliance actually neutered politically the working class, and in particular, the black working class and civil society in general. It was critical to the consolidation of control by the middle class to have the trade unions in particular under their wing.

AI: Yet 28 years later, broadly speaking, macro-economic policy is the same. It hasn't changed. Why is that? You don't have to be a revolutionary or anti-capitalist to consider that this is not the correct economic strategy for this country. What is it, then, that drives the ANC continuously down this same road, which appears to be having extremely poor results?

MM: No, the road the ANC is driving down has very positive results...for the African middle class. Remember, you have to understand what type of middle class we're talking about. We're not talking about a Western type of middle class; we're talking

about a colonial type of middle class. The colonial middle class did not have the production capacity of a Western middle class, or the economic knowledge and expertise, or the assets. It was a colonial middle class, which was an administrative class implementing the policies of the colonialists. So their mode of livelihood was through state employment.

The economic policies of the ANC have expanded enormously this bureaucratic middle class, which benefits enormously from taxing the rest of the economy. It hasn't worked for the working class, and for sections of the capitalists, but it works for the African middle class who control political power, who control the state. They use the state to enrich themselves through high salaries on the one side, and through corruption on the other.

AI: As you indicate, it doesn't benefit the working class and the poor. The toll that this project has exacted on the economy and society is huge. As you have said, they are in a shambles. How severe is that shambles? What are the contours of that shambles?

MM: One of the most important contours of the shambles was the destruction of the manufacturing sector in South Africa. For historical reasons, starting with the First World War, South Africa had to develop an import substitution industry, like Iscor, the steel industry, the electricity industry and so on. The African Middle Class destroyed that industry and replaced it with imports. For example, the state-owned steel company (Iscor) is today owned by an Anglo Dutch multinational, ArcelorMittal. But ArcelorMittal is only interested in importing steel from its global infrastructure, not in making it in South Africa. The middle class, who are not interested in production, don't care. They just charge a tax on what is imported and this goes into subsidies for themselves. In 1990, manufacturing in South Africa was more than 20% of GDP. Today, it's sitting somewhere around 11%. They de-industrialised the economy. But they don't care about production capacity. They care about the capacity to produce taxes. And the economy does produce taxes.

AI: So manifestly, none of this is in the interests of the working class. In fact, it's against their interests. And yet, 30 years later, Cosatu is going to go out and campaign for the ANC.

MM: Yes, but you know that just shows you that merely being working class doesn't make you a socialist. But to be fair to the working class, in 2011 there was a big survey of Cosatu shop stewards, and they said that Cosatu should set up a Labour Party, because they could see that the ANC was not advancing the interests of the working class. But the Cosatu leadership didn't do it. Why they didn't do it, you would have to ask them.

AI: In this situation, it's hard to see a way through even to achieving some measure of stability. Substantial parts of the infrastructure of the country have deteriorated dramatically, to the extent that it impedes the functioning of capital. From the array of parties in front of us, even if the ANC gets less than 50%, as it may, it doesn't look like there will be any significant change in economic strategy. So how do you see the next period after the election?

MM: I agree that, whatever the outcome relative to the ANC, it won't make much of a difference.

Our present policies will continue. Because what gets forgotten is that all our parties in South Africa are actually middle class parties. We don't have a party of the capitalists. And we don't have a party of the working class. We only have parties of the middle class.

The ANC is actually a party of the so called Black or African Middle Class. The DA is a party of the Wasps—the White Anglo Saxon Protestant middle class. But what is beginning to happen is that the capitalists are now taking over the parts of the infrastructure of the economy that they want—electricity generation during the green transition, the railways, the ports and so on.

AI: One last question. In this devastation, what should we be doing now? And how can we arrive at a situation, in five years' time, where we have a credible party that represents broad working class interests, the interests of not just workers, but the broader working class and the poor?

MM: Well, in my view there is one class which you are missing in your equation, and that is the capitalist class. What the ANC and its middle class elites are doing is making South Africa uncompetitive globally, by their lack of spending on human capital. But the capitalists in South Africa need to be competitive. In the past two or three weeks, the South African banks have been issuing their company

reports. And what came out was that they are now making most of their profits outside South Africa, in Africa. What is going to happen is that the Asians are going to start competing against our banks in Sub-Saharan Africa. The same with manufacture of processed foods, which we sell into the southern Africa region. And because we have an unproductive labour force relative to Asia, they're going to knock out South Africa.

So the capitalists themselves in South Africa are realising that the way in which the middle class are running the economy is also working against them. Will the capitalists find it in them to work with the poor and with those sections of the working class that are left in manufacturing? A big part of our working class now is in state employment, in partnership with this administrative middle class. The rest of the working class has shrunk enormously and has become very disorganised. The outsiders in our power game, who are not benefiting, are the private sector working class, the poor, the informal sector, the unemployed, the young people (young graduates increasingly) and the capitalists. Those are the outsiders who are not benefiting. How are these going to work together? Well, that's an interesting problematic for South Africa. Will they be able to act together?

Moeletsi Mbeki is Chairperson of the South African Institute of International affairs, an independent think tank based at Wits University in Johannesburg.

The road the ANC is driving down has very positive results ...for the African middle class.



THE FUNDAMENTAL FLAWS of the new Integrated Resource Plan

By **Andile Zulu**



These structural adjustments to the energy sector will hasten Eskom's death spiral and result in the loss of the energy sovereignty required to end energy poverty, secure electricity supply and effectively plan a transition towards a low-carbon economy.

How will South Africa overcome load-shedding and achieve a just transition to a low-carbon economy? The [Integrated Resource Plan](#), produced by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, is a blueprint which outlines the South African government's plans for the electricity sector in an attempt to answer this complex question.

The continuous shifting of South Africa's economic, energy and political landscape requires the plan to be regularly reviewed and updated, with its first iteration published in 2010. Two primary objectives sit at the core of the 2023 draft of the IRP:

- securing electricity supply (in consideration of demand, the environment and total cost of supply)
- pursuing a diversified energy mix that will provide energy security in the long-term, while aligning with the country's efforts to significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

The newest draft of the Integrated Resource Plan arrives as the country faces a series of severe and interconnected crises. In the past several years, the country has endured escalating levels of load-shedding—Eskom, the country's

ailing public electricity utility, has not been able to sustainably secure supply to meet demand for energy. This intensifying energy crisis converges with over a decade of lethargic and at times stagnant economic growth. This has produced rising levels of mass unemployment, poverty and financial precarity which only feeds South Africa's record-breaking levels of inequality.

Looming over all this is the spectre of climate change and ecological collapse. The continued and drastic rise of global temperatures and extreme changes to weather patterns are a threat that cannot be underestimated.

The latest draft of the IRP has been met with an understandable wave of frustration and disappointment from energy experts, civil-society organisations and climate activists across the political spectrum. But there is an underlying flaw with the IRP that has yet to be articulated. In both its formulation and in the context of ongoing efforts to unbundle Eskom while creating a competitive energy market, the IRP undermines its own stated objectives. These structural adjustments to the energy sector will hasten Eskom's death spiral and result in the loss of the energy

sovereignty required to end energy poverty, secure electricity supply and effectively plan a transition towards a low-carbon economy.

Beyond this fundamental flaw, the proposed interventions within the IRP, and its long-term vision for South Africa's energy mix, are woefully insufficient. One can understand this to be a consequence of three elements:

- flawed or undisclosed assumptions within the plan's modeling,
- inadequate comparative assessment of energy options and their technology costs, and
- an overriding disharmony with existing policy on electricity generation and the country's decarbonisation efforts.

Energy options and proposed interventions to end load-shedding

The draft IRP is divided into two sections, Horizon One and Horizon Two. The first section concerns how to secure electricity supply in the short-term, i.e solve load-shedding through addressing Eskom's weak generation capacity and constraints to expanding it. The second section turns its focus towards outlining South Africa's energy future between 2031 and 2050.

Five interventions are proposed as a result of Horizon One's scenario analysis. Firstly, there is the proposition to improve Eskom's Energy Availability Factor (EAF). Indeed, improving the utility's EAF is crucial to resolving load-shedding in the short-to-medium term. But this cannot be seriously undertaken if Eskom is shackled to a mandate unsuited to South Africa's developmental and industrial needs.

At the heart of Eskom's rapid decay is its corporatisation in 2001 and the adoption of an unsustainable financing model. Vital to Eskom's corporatisation was the utility's adoption of the full-cost recovery model and the 'user-pays' principle. This financing model mandates Eskom to operate like a private company, making it dependent on raising revenue through selling electricity to end-users in order to recover the costs of its operations, with additional profit and

market-rate debt being utilised to fund new projects.

The adoption of the full-cost recovery model is an indication of the incongruence between government policy and the harsh socio-economic realities South Africans face. Taking into account mass unemployment, rising levels of poverty and years of stagnant wages, it should not be surprising that citizens have for years not been able to pay Eskom's rising tariffs. The past several years have seen Eskom's revenue streams narrow as sales volumes decline, due to citizens finding alternative sources of energy, or hopping off the grid. A major factor in Eskom's precarious supply has been its immense struggle to raise sufficient revenue, so that the utility can conduct comprehensive maintenance and efficient operations.

Further restraining revenue streams are Eskom's growing debt-service costs (exacerbated by continued reliance on loans often denominated in foreign currency), and the cost of energy sourced from Independent Power Producers, alongside the climbing costs of diesel and fuel. Burdened by debt, riddled with high operational costs and chained to an unsustainable financing model, the likelihood of Eskom's EAF significantly improving is incredibly narrow. Eskom needs to be fully-funded and resourced in order to thoroughly repair and maintain its existing fleet.

No detail in gas proposals

The second intervention suggests "the deployment of dispatchable generation options such as gas-to-power in line with Section 34 Ministerial Determinations must be accelerated". This would be achieved by scaling up the allocation of gas-fired-power generation to 7,220 MW. Tangibly, this would entail South Africa importing gas in the short- to medium-term, and eventually pursuing gas exploration in the long-term, relying on domestic and regional resources.

Once again, Eskom's current state—specifically its financial precarity and legislative restrictions—must be considered in criticising this proposed intervention. A strong condition of the Eskom Debt Relief Act, developed by the National Treasury, is its prohibition on Eskom investing in new generative capacity for the next three years. Without this allowance, one questions how the IRP envisions the rapid deployment of gas-to-power occurring in a manner that would significantly reduce the instability of electricity supply. This appears to be a major instance of disunity in government policy as it relates to the energy crisis.

Of major concern with increasing gas-to-power generation are the



Taking into account mass unemployment, rising levels of poverty and years of stagnant wages, it should not be surprising that citizens have for years not been able to pay Eskom's rising tariffs.

implications for emission reduction, environmental harm and risks towards communities adjacent to gas production. Intense gas extraction will firstly entail severe risks for community water supply, as potentially poisonous contamination of water is a widely documented feature of the gas extraction processes such as fracking.

The threat posed by methane emissions, the chief component of natural gas, cannot be overlooked in the comparative assessment of energy options. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, "Methane traps over 80 times more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide during the first twenty years after its release. Its emissions bear significant responsibility for climate-related threats like more intense, severe and frequent extreme weather events, increased food insecurity, greater risk of infectious disease and heat-related illness and death".

Further harms associated with gas production are the degradation of land quality and marine life and losses in biodiversity. All these severe risks collide to thwart decarbonisation efforts as healthy ecosystems are a vital component to reducing the danger posed by climate change.

Energy experts generally accept that some gas production will be required in South Africa's future—and thorough energy planning must consider all forms of energy that are accessible—but the draft IRP does not go into detail regarding how government plans to mitigate or curtail the climate and environmental dangers of gas production. It is profoundly concerning that consideration of how people's lives

will be impacted and potentially ruined by gas production is glaringly absent. The cost implications of building the extensive infrastructure required for gas extraction and power plants are also noticeably absent in the draft IRP, and many have questioned whether these cost considerations have been factored into the document's scenario planning. For example, with reference to the IRP 2019, the [International Institute for Social Development](#) reported in 2022 that "to introduce the first 3,000 megawatts of capacity and gas supply by 2030 will cost at least R47 billion, which could be functionally squeezed out by cheaper, low-carbon alternatives".

The perils of carbon capture

The IRP 2023 makes another important shift, in comparison to the 2019 version, towards prioritising investments in clean coal technologies. It focuses on Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) as a technology option to mitigate environmental damage and reduce CO₂ emissions. Similar to the document's proposition of ramping up gas to power generation, there is little to no space in the document for a comparative analysis of risks associated with this technology.

High capital costs continue to be an obstacle to the deployment of CCUS, due to the large amounts of energy required to capture carbon in the atmosphere. These combine with design complexity and the slow pace of cost reductions in the past 50 years of the technology's commercial use. It is these barriers which have played a considerable role in halting carbon capture projects in countries such as Canada and Norway.

Compounding these obstacles are the geographical limitations of carbon capture technologies, with most carbon capture projects being ideally located in North America, the North Sea and East Africa. South Africa is geographically ill-suited for CCUS. This would necessitate the construction of extensive pipeline networks and infrastructure development. Furthermore, in the context of the limitations of CCUS, the risk of leakage and reports of frequent technical failures encountered at storage sites must also be taken into account in a comparative analysis.

Marketisation undermines energy planning

Since the drafting and publication of the 1998 *White Paper on Energy*, founded on neoliberal principles of political economy, the government has remained committed to fostering the genesis of a competitive electricity market. Fundamental to this process is the unbundling of Eskom, the transformation of its various parts into capitalist enterprises, the penetration of private sector actors into power generation, and the establishment of independent systems operators that will function to discipline Eskom entities while making the energy sector landscape hospitable to independent power producers.

After years of delay, the transition to a competitive electricity market is quickly unfolding, and this reality calls

the new draft of the IRP into question. If South Africa is to have an energy sector largely dominated by the private sector, alongside their interests and the imperatives of for-profit enterprise, how is it feasible or even possible to plan for securing electricity supply or decarbonisation? It is highly unlikely that Eskom's unbundled entities will be able to survive in a competitive market, considering the utility's financial woes, ill-suited corporate mandate and colossal debt. Moreover, the costs Eskom is likely to incur as a result of marketisation will result in the utility not being able to adequately invest and rapidly deploy renewable energy.

A liberalised energy sector will mean supply of electricity, its pricing and the proportions of the energy mix, will soon no longer be in the control of the government—at most, the state will play a regulatory role. But Eskom will not have the capacity, policy room or legislative ability to dictate the shape and direction of the energy sector towards the best interests of South Africans, as a result of providing significant leverage to independent power producers.

A viable way forward

To achieve the reasonable objectives of the draft IRP—securing supply and reducing emissions—Eskom must be transformed into a sustainably funded, de-corporatised and democratically governed utility. This requires ending the full-cost recovery model, halting unbundling and

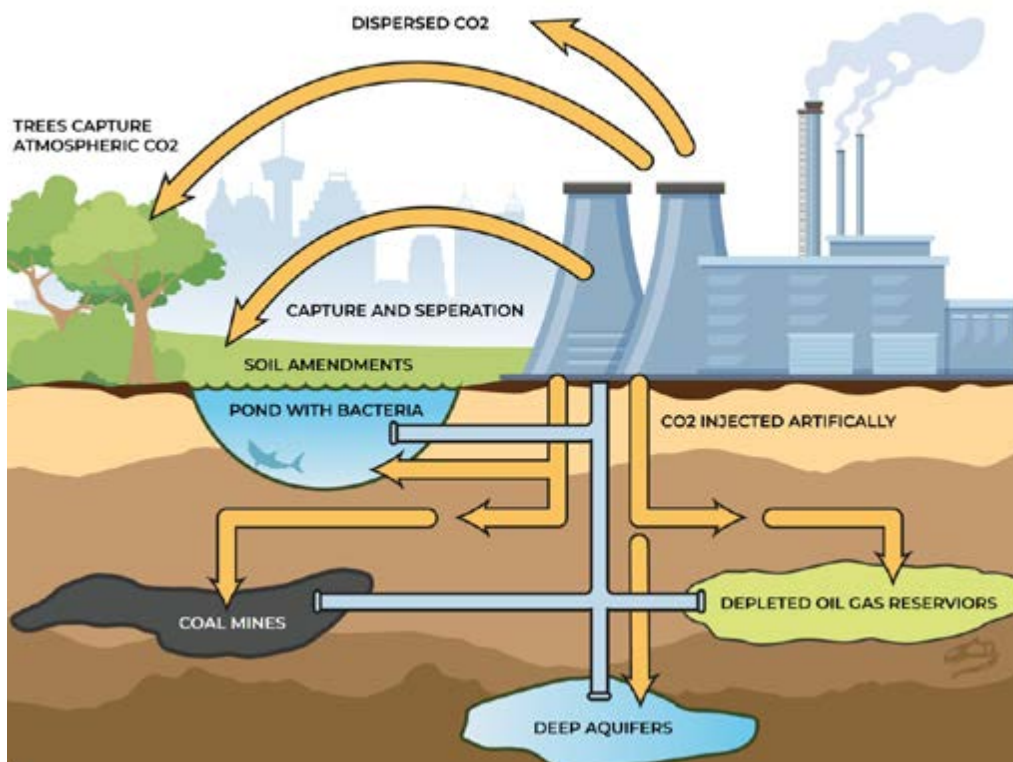
abandoning the user-pays principle, in order to shatter the utility's unhealthy dependency on tariffs and foreign debt. Boosting Eskom's generative capacity and improving its EAF can be achieved through introducing a progressive tax framework (a component would be a net wealth tax) alongside other measures to mobilise resources by curtailing illicit financial flows and ending the damage caused by profit shifting.

To retain and magnify South Africa's energy sovereignty, a transformed Eskom must drive a public-led expansion of renewable energy and invest in building or acquiring low-carbon technologies. For example, this can be achieved through diplomatic negotiation to secure technology transfer agreements that could trigger the development of a domestic renewable energy industry at a low and reasonable cost.

In other words, Eskom must be at the heart of South Africa's green industrialisation. This is crucial to avoid undergoing an ineffective and disorganised, market-led transition that will be dependent on profit maximisation. Without such efforts, Eskom will continue to die, energy poverty will persist and the country's poor, working class majority will not be prepared for the calamity of climate change.

Andile Zulu is a political writer and Energy Democracy Officer at AIDC.

Carbon Sequestration



The IRP 2023 makes another important shift, in comparison to the 2019 version, towards prioritising investments in clean coal technologies, specifically Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage. High capital costs continue to be an obstacle, compounded by the fact that South Africa is geographically ill-suited for carbon capture and storage.

Ayanda Kota:

the passing of a South African revolutionary

By **Brian Ashley**

DEAR COMRADE BABALWA, Ayanda's children, Mandisa and Ayanda's other sisters and family members, comrades of the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM), the Makhanda Citizens Front (MCF), and Zabalaza for Socialism, we mourn the loss of our comrade and friend, Ayanda Kota. We already miss him and feel the terrible vacuum he leaves in our movement.

We will not abandon his legacy. We will intensify our commitment to his struggle against mass unemployment and the capitalist system which underpins it. We will continue to journey with the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM) and the Makhanda Citizen's Front (MCF) to ensure that they flourish into movements that fulfil his unwavering commitment to organising the poor and downtrodden: to be their own liberators.

It was Ayanda's generosity of spirit, selflessness, humility, unwavering commitment and love for the people that inspired us and will continue to inspire future generations. His life, cut so cruelly short, reaffirms that people from humble origins can rise and achieve extraordinary things. He became a towering figure in the movements of the poor.

Committed to united front politics

Born in the Black Consciousness movement, Ayanda learnt to identify the real enemy and would never broker collaboration with the ruling class. As one of the earliest critics of the ANC government, Ayanda distinguished between the ANC leadership and its ordinary members, a huge percentage of whom are poor working class people, just like the members of the UPM.

Building unity in action was the mantra by which he strategically lived out his political life. In Ayanda's eyes, no successful mass action campaign or mobilisation was ever just a UPM initiative. He would reach out to a wide range of forces to draw into battle.

Ayanda believed in united front politics, but he never relinquished the responsibility of leadership. Here I am not referring to any fixation on being 'The Leader'. I am referring to ideological and strategic leadership. The battle of ideas was an important terrain for Ayanda's politics. He was inspired by many revolutionaries. He was a Fanonist, Bikoist, Cabralist, Neville Alexanderist, Maoist, Trotskyist, Luxemburgist—and the 'ist' of many other revolutionaries who shaped his constantly evolving thought.

From black consciousness to eco-socialism

Sometimes, it is important to set the record straight: Ayanda was black conscious in his thinking even though he had left the Black Consciousness movement in its different components. He believed in the slogan 'One Azania One Nation'. He believed that it was the black working class that would still need to lead the struggle to overcome oppression and usher in a liberated nation. South Africa, 30 years after the end of Apartheid, was not free.

But Ayanda's black consciousness was not one of identity politics, so in vogue today. He resisted the reduction of so-called 'whites' to the tagline 'liberals'. He saw many liberals in the new black middle class and had little time for them. On the other hand, he could discern those who came from the ruling class but had committed class suicide. He readily worked with them. For that, ironically, he was cursed for being in bed with liberals.

For Ayanda, post-Apartheid South Africa was the continuation of racial capitalism, which saw wealth concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority and the vast majority of the population impoverished. Ayanda despised the Motsepes as much as he despised the Ruperts.

Based on his understanding of the working of racial capitalism, Ayanda's black consciousness evolved into a revolutionary socialist consciousness. He recognised the system of capitalism as the real foundation for the oppression and marginalisation of people in South Africa and the world over. This is why he aligned with a range of socialist organisations in South Africa and beyond, eventually finding his home in Zabalaza for Socialism.

His concern for nature and the planet, in the context of the unfolding climate emergency, meant that, as early as 2011, at COP 17, he called for the renewal of socialism on an eco-socialist basis.

Ayanda's major concern was the precarious parts of the black working class. In the first instance, the 13 million unemployed, who for Ayanda were not an underclass but potentially the most militant part of the working class. They were the ones who have "nothing to lose but their chains"—the real gravediggers of the bourgeoisie.

The demands for a basic income grant and free basic services were the immediate issues around which their



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revolutionary consciousness could be enhanced. To catalyse the movement of the unemployed, in 2010 Ayanda staged a three-person demonstration, lying down on the road in front of Parliament, demanding decent work or a living income grant. This was to be the impetus towards the building of UPM and the Assembly of the Unemployed, launched in Makhanda in 2013. These were centred on the Right to Work and the demand for a million climate jobs.

He also saw the organising of farmworkers and small-scale farmers as critical. So, he gave his efforts to building the Inyanda Land Rights Movement and the Rural People's Movement in and around Makhanda. In Ayanda's view and praxis, the landless of the countryside were the 'cousins' of the urban unemployed.

A socialist practice

Ayanda led without wanting any privileges for himself. He sacrificed position and income, always favouring the Collective. He understood how money divided organisations and chose to promote others ahead of himself. He should have led the MCF in the Council—he declined, fortunately for those in power.

Ayanda knew that UPM and MCF cannot wait on government to deliver services to the people. In a period of extreme poverty and exclusion their immediate needs have to be addressed. Soup kitchens, repairing broken infrastructure, tending to the needs of children were integral to winning the confidence of an alienated and disillusioned people. Responding to social needs, coupled with mass direct action,

is an important method of rebuilding the popular mass movement.

Ayanda was deeply critical of the bureaucratisation of the labour movement. Only after the Marikana massacre, the emergence of Amcu as a militant mass trade union and Numsa's break with the Alliance, did he see the strategic possibility of building alliances with the trade union movement. He strongly warmed to the possibility of uniting social movements and trade unions in a movement for socialism.

Ayanda fought against the scourge of xenophobia or Afrophobia. He understood that the scapegoating of foreign nationals, falsely blamed for unemployment and poverty, diverted attention from the real agents of poverty, unemployment and inequality—capital and the capitalist state.

Ayanda hated sexism and the oppression of women. Patriarchy and capitalism needed to be simultaneously fought. He pushed UPM to lead struggles against gender based violence and struggled to build a stronger role for women in the leadership of UPM and MCF.

Building organisation

Ayanda did not just die. He was killed by the collapsing public health system, strangled by budget cuts, neglect and looting. He was convinced that the struggle against austerity was the most important fight for the workers and the poor to unite around. That's why he played a leading role in forming the Cry of the Excluded, to lead the struggle against austerity.

Although Makhanda (Grahamstown) was the immediate terrain of struggle,

Ayanda sought to build national movements. This is why he took the initiative to form the Assembly of the Unemployed. It is why he readily took UPM into the Democratic Left Front in 2008 and the United Front formed by Numsa, following its break with the ANC Alliance.

Sick as he was, he took part in giving birth to Zabalaza for Socialism in December last year. Leaning on Babalwa, he took the long walk each day from the Wits Residence to the Conference venue, to help shape our socialist cadre organisation. He even had time to participate in the caucuses shaping the leadership of this new movement.

Ayanda saw Zabalaza for Socialism as the logical extension of the social movements he had devoted much of his short life to building. He believed that the working class needs its own political movement, which can direct the class struggle for democratising the society on a socialist basis. Such a movement must be able to unify the everyday grassroots struggles at work and in the community with the struggle for state power—participating in elections. It must unify the oppressed and exploited layers of society around a programme for the reorganisation and transformation of this society.

The irony, that one of the most significant fighters against neoliberalism was killed by neoliberalism, is not lost on us.

Our pledge, as we bury our comrade and friend, is that we will do all we can to unite the oppressed and excluded to bring into existence a movement for socialism that can fight the system of capitalism in all its forms.

*Hamba Kahle dear comrade and friend!
Hamba Kahle Ayanda Kota!*

DEMOCRACY AND THE SECURITY STATE:



PROGRESS WITH THE 'SPY BILL'

By Heidi Swart

The State Security Agency's plans to legalise extra-judicial investigations into non-profits have been thwarted — at least for now.

PARLIAMENT'S NATIONAL Assembly has approved a new version of the notorious 'Spy Bill', aka the General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill of 2023 (GILAB). A [previous version](#) of the Bill, [approved by Cabinet last year](#), called for compulsory security vetting of non-governmental and faith-based organisations (NGOs and FBOs). Ostensibly, the purpose of this would have been to assess if organisations posed a threat to national security.

The Bill wasn't clear on the consequences of a negative vetting outcome for an organisation. But there were fears that an organisation might be forced to shut down, or that the state might require the expulsion of board members and employees that the SSA deemed untrustworthy. Needless to say, [civil society](#) was immediately critical.

A cautious celebration

Fortunately, the latest version of the Bill, approved by the National Assembly on 26th March, seems to have dropped the vetting provision entirely. After being rushed through the law-making process, which started in November 2023, the Bill is now with the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), and is [scheduled to be adopted](#) by the NCOP Mid-May. However, GILAB is a section 75 Bill, which means the NCOP's approval isn't required. It's therefore likely that it will be signed into law by the president before the national election in May.

It's a win for civil society members who fought hard against the proposed vetting. But the Bill's path through parliament made it clear that NGOs and FBOs should remain wary of state intelligence services. Throughout

the law-making process, and despite widespread public pressure, the SSA remained hellbent on legalising a practice commonly seen in authoritarian regimes. Think Russia and China, where no non-profit is free from state regulation aimed at stifling dissent.

After (and perhaps due to) widespread public criticism of the first version of the Bill, the second draft appeared. Explicit references to vetting of NGOs and FBOs had been replaced by a broader term: "persons or institutions of national security interest". In other words, anyone or anything that the SSA wanted to investigate behind a veil of secrecy. Again, civil society raised the alarm. The first version of the Bill had



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made the securocrats' intentions quite clear. There was no reason to believe that "persons or institutions of national security interest" would not include non-profits, churches, and even businesses.

In mid-December last year, parliament kicked off the legally required period for [public submissions](#) on GILAB. Several organisations used the opportunity to blast the intelligence services for the new vetting provision. Yet, despite major pushback, intelligence services stuck to their guns: in [its response](#) to the public submissions, the SSA again argued that the definition of vetting had to be broadened to allow it to investigate people or institutions of national security interest.

What is vetting?

To get a better idea of why this use of vetting is so problematic — and why it's a favourite with authoritarians — it helps to take a look at what vetting entails within a democracy, and how the SSA wanted to repurpose it through GILAB.

In democratic South Africa, vetting has always been applicable to people (like government employees or contractors) who would have access to sensitive, classified state information during the course of their work. The aim is to check that such a person is trustworthy. If, for instance, vetting reveals a person to be in debt, this could make them vulnerable to bribes from hostile foreign agents or criminals. If a person is married but having an affair, that may make them vulnerable to blackmail, or be an indicator that they are dishonest and untrustworthy.

To obtain information of such an obviously intimate nature, the SSA can legally access *any* personal information it deems relevant, including medical and financial records. Additionally, a person can be subjected to a lie detector test, and also have their personal communications intercepted.

After vetting, if the candidate is deemed low-risk, they are issued with a security clearance certificate, which means they can carry on working with state secrets. But if clearance is withheld, revoked, or downgraded, the vetted person's access to classified information will be restricted. The bottom line is that you cannot work with classified information if you don't have an appropriate level of clearance.

The 'greylist'

The SSA's rationale for vetting NGOs and FBOs is obviously a deviation from this norm. But they argue that it's a necessity to combat terrorism financing and money laundering. This stance is, at best, a sign of ignorance. At worst, it is sheer disingenuity.

Enter the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This is an international



During the Zondo Commission, details from an internal SSA report emerged, revealing how the agency had surveilled non-profit organisations, including Greenpeace Africa, the Right2Know Campaign, South Africa First, and the Council for Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC). The SSA also infiltrated the #ZumaMustFall campaign leadership and trade unions.

body that works with countries to improve local laws to combat cross-border financial crimes. The FATF put South Africa on a so-called ‘[greylist](#)’ because it had failed to comprehensively implement FATF standards for “anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT)”. (One of the many FATF standards, known as “[recommendation 8](#)”, specifically deals with non-profit organisations. In a nutshell, it requires countries to put policies in place and take firm action to prevent non-profit organisations from laundering money and supporting terrorism.)

Secret investigation

But the SSA’s idea of firm action was to investigate non-profits suspected of financial crimes, while avoiding the usual legal busywork reserved for ordinary folks. When, for instance, police investigate any crime, there are legal restraints. They must open a docket, collect and preserve evidence, and eventually charge the accused with a crime, after which the court will decide the matter. The accused person will also have a defence attorney who will have access to whatever evidence the state has against the accused.

Vetting, on the other hand, can occur in secret. There is no obligation in law for the SSA to explain what information it accessed, what they were investigating, or why they chose to withdraw, deny or degrade a person’s security clearance. In fact, the SSA can classify any information they deem necessary to protect national security. Thus, those being vetted have no protection from the courts, and little recourse should their security clearance be denied.

Existing laws sufficient

What makes the SSA’s proposal to use vetting to get South Africa off the FATF greylis even more bizarre, is that it is simply not necessary. The government recently enacted two new laws, specifically to implement FATF recommendations. These include the *General Laws (Anti-money laundering and combating terrorism financing) Amendment Act 22 of 2022*, and the *Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorism and Related Activities Amendment Act 23 of 2022*. These acts give both the police’s Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (the Hawks) and the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) greater investigative powers to address financial crimes.

Yet, if either of the first two GILAB versions were enacted, the SSA would effectively have been able to ride roughshod over the Hawks’ and FIC’s efforts; while the latter two would be dealing with warrants, affidavits and court applications, the spooks would be conducting off-the-book investigations without legal restraints.

Act 22 also aims to thwart financial crimes by placing new restrictions and more stringent reporting requirements on registered non-profits. These include, for instance, additional information (the nature of which is to be determined by the FIC and the finance minister) to be added to an organisation’s annual report to the Department of Social Development. Such information can include, for example, details about board members and management of operations. In another change, people found guilty of crimes like theft, fraud, perjury and forgery can no longer serve on non-profit boards.

Act 22 seems to have gone some way to improving the FATF’s opinion of South

Africa’s approach to its non-profit sector; as of February 2023, South Africa still had to address [eight ‘strategic deficiencies’](#) to get off the greylis, but none of them concerned the non-profit sector.

Reason for caution

Yet perhaps the most compelling reason to mistrust the SSA’s push for extended vetting powers, is its history of undermining NGOs in order to further the interests of certain factions within the ruling African National Congress.

During the Judicial Inquiry into State Capture Allegations (the Zondo Commission), details from an internal SSA report emerged, revealing how the agency had surveilled non-profit organisations, including Greenpeace Africa, the Right2Know Campaign, South Africa First, and the Council for Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC). The SSA also infiltrated the #ZumaMustFall campaign leadership and trade unions. It didn’t take much to warrant infiltration — “groups considered hostile” were generally targeted, according to the [Commission’s report](#) on the SSA.

Civil society may have won this round and successfully warded off draconian security regulations. But the drafting of GILAB has shed light on a terrifying reality: South Africa’s intelligence services simply don’t get democracy.

Heidi Swart is the research and journalism coordinator for [Intelwatch](#), a non-profit organisation based in South Africa, dedicated to strengthening public oversight of state and private intelligence actors in Africa and around the world.

Farewell to labour's living ancestor, Eddie Webster!

By **Dinga Sikwebu**

Thanks to Comrade Dinga for allowing us to publish his eulogy delivered at the memorial for Eddie Webster.

SINCE HIS PASSING, TRIBUTES TO Eddie Webster have been pouring in from across the globe. Different people have been giving testimonies of what Eddie meant to them. Different generations claim Eddie as theirs. A younger generation of sociologists call him a 'Sociology Madala'. In tributes, Eddie has been described as a living ancestor, a term that he coined.

I stand here to declare that Eddie was also a living ancestor of the labour movement. As many people appeal to ancestors to intercede on their behalf when faced with intractable challenges, the labour movement turned to Eddie Webster when it had massive challenges.

As a movement and
in return,

we received advice, caution and generosity.

Eddie not only researched and studied labour organisations. In his way, he contributed, for more than five decades, to the building of worker organisations in South Africa and abroad. It is therefore no accident that the country's two biggest trade union federations, with news of Eddie's passing, both dipped their flags and saluted him. Saddened by his passing, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) declared, "We will forever be grateful for the mentoring, guidance and expertise he provided for countless members of Cosatu and the trade union movement until his very last days". The South African Federation of Unions (Saftu) also acknowledged Eddie's contribution and said, "The democratic trade union movement owes its very existence to the contributions made by Professor Webster and his generation".

Examples of Eddie as living ancestor

Without going far back, I want to relate three recent instances that hopefully will show how the trade union movement regarded Eddie Webster as its living ancestor.

Firstly, Cosatu affiliates in 2005 were unable to deal with a chasm that emerged between the federation's top leaders. "New men of power", as American sociologist C. Wright Mills described modern-day labour leaders, were at each other throats, threatening to tear apart the movement that Eddie Webster and his generation built. Affiliates felt that mediation was required. And who did they turn to? Eddie Webster.

The second example to show that Eddie was not just a friend of labour, but its living ancestor happened in 2012. After six years without a director, the future of the Chris Hani Institute—a think tank that Cosatu and the South African Communist Party (SACP) established in the early 2000s—appeared very bleak. Who did the organisations turn to, to stabilise the Institute? Eddie Webster. Eddie served as the director of CHI from Sep 2012 to September 2015.

This week when I went back to some old union documents, I came across the third illustration of Eddie's 'living ancestor status' within the labour movement. I found an interesting report by the then Cosatu's secretariat coordinator, Neil Coleman. The report reads as follows.

A prominent academic, close to the labour movement, stated that Cosatu is often good at opening the doors through engagement, but not as good at walking through them in the sense of taking forward gains made. Cosatu has reached a similar conclusion and resolved to address this weakness. As a result of these discussions, the Cosatu Central Executive Committee (CEC) resolved in May 2008, to establish the "Walking through Open Doors Project".

Who do you think is the "prominent academic" referred to in the report? Take a guess. Eddie Webster.

Eddie not only researched and studied labour organisations. In his way, he contributed, for more than five decades, to the building of worker organisations in South Africa and abroad.



Forty years of collaboration

I first came across Eddie Webster's name in 1980, as a young worker employed at Metal Box in Epping Industria, Cape Town. His name and writings were all over the pages of a journal he founded and was associated with, the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB). Face-to-face, I met Eddie in 1985 at an annual conference of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA). Before 'decolonisation of universities' became a fashionable and career-advancing slogan, progressive academics such as Eddie opened academic conferences to activists. With the country under successive declarations of states of emergency and under a torrent of restrictive measures, ASSA conferences became platforms for animated discussions, involving academics and activists.

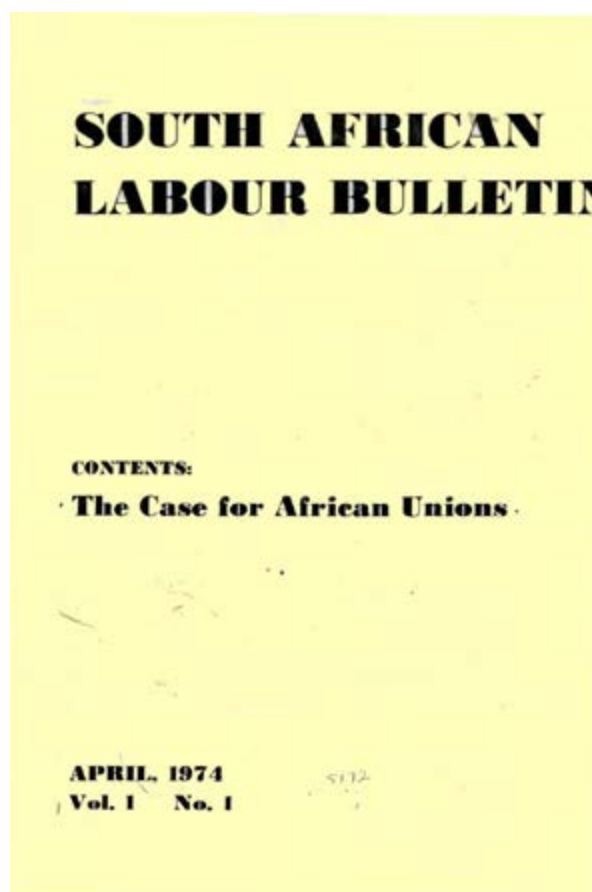
Since then, Eddie and I interacted and even worked together on projects. Together, we did a review of South Africa's preeminent social dialogue body, National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac). We co-authored a book chapter on tripartism in Southern Africa.

With an increased realisation of his status as a living ancestor of the labour movement, Eddie became emboldened to summon unionists like me for 'insider interpretations' of what was happening inside unions. "I need to talk to you". This will be the message on the other side of the telephone line. If not next to his pool or garden, the sessions moved to different spots around Johannesburg. Firstly, it was at the Radium Beerhall in Orange Grove. The sessions then moved to a Cut & Craft coffee shop on Kensington's Queen Street. Of late, Mike's Kitchen in Parktown was the venue I got summoned to. With his notepad, pen in hand, brushing and pulling his beard, Eddie will interrogate me about this or that development within the labour movement. Without verbally expressing it, Eddie had a way to say, "Cut to the chase".

Throughout these interactions, as the labour movement and unionists, we were showered with generosity. Before he initiated the Global Labour University (GLU) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Eddie moved the time for his Masters' course on industrial and economic sociology to late afternoons, so that working people and trade unionists,

could register and undertake the course. It needed someone with Eddie's knowledge to avoid the class descending into bullfighting between myself and the then-general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (Num). Eddie had to always remind us that we were in academic seminar, not in a Cosatu conference, known for robust exchanges between Num and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa).

It would be remiss for me not to tell this gathering that I am a recipient of Eddie's generosity. In 2005, I got into trouble with "union tops" at Numsa and I was thrown out of my union. When Eddie was convinced that there was an act of injustice in the actions of the union, he offered me a job at his research unit, the Sociology of Work Project (Swop) at the



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University of the Witwatersrand. I was fired by Numsa on 24 June 2005. As a real fixer, Eddie ensured that I had a contract and was able to start at Swop on the first day of the following month. He came with a plan in one week. I was with Swop for three-and-half years, as I fought for reinstatement through the courts. I left Swop after the Labour Court found that

I was unfairly dismissed and ordered my reinstatement. For his generosity, I will forever be indebted to Eddie.

To demonstrate how Eddie was also a man of principles, I recall when we did the review of Nedlac, the Department of Labour for whom we did the work did not agree with a recommendation that the council be moved from the department to the Presidency. The department did everything to dissuade us, but Eddie stood firm. "It's our recommendation and it stands".

Eddie's legacy lives on

Eddie's generosity and eagerness to support the labour movement did not mean fence-sitting when it came to issues of principle. He was not married to logos but in love with organisation of workers. The convoy of Uber scooter drivers that accompanied his coffin to the grave yesterday bears testimony to his ongoing search for the most appropriate form of organisation that workers can forge.

The last paragraph of his 2015 exit report as the director of the Chris Hani Institute (CHI) shows how Eddie was not afraid to raise the most difficult questions.

Our challenge will be to successfully create the CHI as a forum for overcoming the deep divisions that have emerged on the left over the past five years, and particularly since the Marikana Massacre. The question raised by the divisions in Cosatu House is whether the vision I have developed for the CHI can be achieved within Alliance structures, or whether a radical re-think of its current location and board membership is now necessary.

Although supportive and committed to the labour movement, as his definition of 'critical engagement' states, Eddie refused to let loyalty cloud evidence and his independent findings as a social scientist. Commitment did not replace his conscience as a human being. In death Eddie continues to be generous. Now gone

as a living ancestor, the labour movement does not have to embark on rituals to accompany (*ukuhapha*) or return his spirit (*ukubuyisa*). His work, writings and legacy are with us. We must turn to them. Long live the spirit of Eddie! Long live!

Dinga Sikwebu is a retired Numsa official and Global Labour University (GLU) Associate.



Austerity in recent years has not only resulted in a lower value of the grant and weakened coverage in terms of who receives it. It has also resulted in the deterioration of service delivery.

For a Basic Income Grant and against austerity

By Aliya Chikte

THE CALLS FOR A UNIVERSAL Basic Income Guarantee (UBIG) by academics, trade unions, and popular movements, such as the Universal Basic Income Coalition (UBIC), are mounting. There is growing local and international evidence that cash transfers can address some of the key socioeconomic challenges in South Africa. Yet the government's approach has been characterised by reluctance, and any meaningful steps toward establishing a Basic Income Grant (BIG) have been slow.

The grant and jobs

A UBIG set at a sufficient level will act as an income floor. It will safeguard individuals against economic precarity and ensure coverage of essential needs. [Research](#) by the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) suggests that a UBIG set at the Upper Bound Poverty Line (UBPL) will also improve the quality of jobs and nutrition, allow for the recognition of unpaid labour, and spur job creation.

The current Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant falls R326 below the Food Poverty Line (FPL). Beneficiaries cannot even cover 50 percent of the minimum nutritional energy intake needed per day. Implementation of a UBIG would effectively bridge the income support gap for individuals aged 18 to 59, constituting an important stride towards comprehensive social protection for all.

It is often [said](#) that South Africa has a large pool of grant recipients being funded by a small tax base. It is crucial, however, to recognise that the

vast majority of social grant recipients are children and the elderly, not the unemployed. Low wages and precarious employment mean that social assistance is necessary to mitigate the effects of systemic inequality. The grant system largely caters to households where there is some form of employment, but wages are set very low, and there are often no pension packages.

The grant system is arguably a result of the reluctance of the labour market and capital to provide people with dignified jobs.

Universal coverage

Coverage of the current SRD grant is sparse and insufficient. This emphasises the urgency of implementing a more substantial and permanent UBIG. Despite promises from the [President](#) and the [Minister of Finance](#) about an improvement and expansion of the SRD grant into a permanent Basic Income Grant (BIG), in March a meagre R20 was added to the R350 SRD grant. This is not only insulting, but it also speaks to the narrow imagining of the role the grant could play in adequately tackling poverty, inequality and mass unemployment.

A significant part of the unemployment problem comes from substantial [labour market churn](#); individuals frequently transition in and out of employment. When someone becomes newly unemployed, they are often not covered by the unemployment insurance fund (UIF). So they have to exclusively rely on other types of social protection, such as the SRD grant, for

their immediate needs. However, since there is a history of recent payments in their bank account, they have to wait before they can be approved by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). With universal coverage, this plunge into poverty can be averted.

Not enough, to not enough people

In a [statement](#), Cosatu welcomed the government's R20 increase: "whilst Cosatu had hoped such adjustments would have been made earlier and consistently with each Budget cycle, we nonetheless appreciate this increase by Government, in particular due to the impact the rising cost of living has upon working class communities." The increase, however, does not fully take into account the rising cost of living since the grant was first implemented. If the R350 SRD grant was to be adjusted for inflation, then the grant should be set at R440 in 2024, according to the UBIC. After the current increase, recipients are still R70 poorer than they were in 2020.

In an [interview](#) on Newzroom Afrika, the South African Federation of Trade Unions (Saftu) stated that the increase is a mockery, since R370 is R12 per day. That's not even enough to buy a loaf of bread. A purely inflationary increase, of course, would ignore that the initial amount was arbitrarily based on what the National Treasury deemed affordable, not on the amount of income needed to provide people with dignity.

There are approximately 16 million working-age people whose income falls below the food poverty line. Under current regulations, they all qualify for the current SRD grant. The 2024 National Budget, however, has only allocated enough funds for approximately 7.5 million recipients. Previous data from the Department of Social Development suggests that about 14 million people apply every month. Not only are there barriers of exclusion based on geography, literacy, and digital access, but there are intended errors of exclusion in the approval process for those who are able to apply.

Research by academics from Oxford and the University of Cape Town shows that the current low qualifying threshold of the FPL does not take into account how income flows. Essentially, because cash flows between households as well as within households, income or consumption per individual may sit below the FPL, but the movements of cash in and out of bank accounts inflate the figures. This results in a greater number of people who are wrongly disqualified from receiving the SRD grant.

The number of people who receive the grant is determined by the money the government makes available rather than the number who should receive it. Qualifying people are being deliberately excluded.

Austerity makes it worse

Austerity in recent years has not only resulted in a lower value of the grant and weakened coverage in terms of who receives it. It has also resulted in the deterioration of service delivery. Lack of domestic demand and insufficient buying power are largely responsible for South Africa's economic stagnation. A further reduction in public sector spending, driven by austerity, not only leads to worsened standards of living. It also increases the dependence of households on the private sector for basic services. This reduces the value of the grant: recipients need to spend on goods and services that would ordinarily have been provided by the state.

While the Department of Social Development has advocated for the implementation of a BIG, National Treasury has prevented any meaningful developments. Despite the President's public statements hinting at a BIG for South Africans, the National Treasury is being used as a scapegoat to delay its implementation. It is also blamed for designing the grant to prioritise reducing the number of people who wrongly receive it, rather than those who are wrongly excluded. The reluctance

to bring about a permanent BIG largely reflects the government's attitude to social protection. It uses cash transfers as a mechanism to appease rather than as a tool to empower people through a dignified income floor.

Recommendations

The Universal Basic Income Coalition (UBIC) is a growing group of over a dozen civil society and community organisations. Together, they have crafted a list of seven recommendations for the design, purpose and nature of a UBIG. The main recommendations include:

- an increase of the value of the SRD grant to at least the FPL,
- an extension of the eligibility criteria,
- action to fix administrative inefficiencies,
- more effective communications with applicants and beneficiaries, and importantly
- the urgent implementation of the long overdue BIG for those aged 18 to 59 years with little to no income, as part of a pathway towards a UBIG.

Others, like the Cry of the Xcluded, are demanding the introduction of a BIG of R1,500 per month, targeted at unemployed and low-income workers, coupled with the expansion of dignified

include maximising the progressivity of the tax system through the introduction of a wealth tax and removing and reducing tax breaks for high-income earners.

Opponents of UBIG often state that the government should rather be providing jobs. But social protection and job creation are mutually reinforcing. UBIC recognises that basic income alone does not translate into a progressive policy agenda. We have been stressing that income support should be part of a broader, comprehensive policy framework that encompasses fiscal, social, industrial and employment policy. In order to maximise the impact of increased income support, basic services should be strengthened.

With the current SRD grant falling significantly short of providing adequate support to millions facing poverty, the need for a substantial and permanent UBIG is becoming more apparent. National Treasury, however, remains an obstacle in securing its implementation. Austerity measures further compound challenges. They lead to weakened service delivery and an erosion of the real value of existing income support. A UBIG provides a window to address some of the deep structural socioeconomic issues, but its implementation relies on confronting budget cuts and the underlying fiscal framework that stands in its way.



The reluctance to bring about a permanent BIG largely reflects the government's attitude to social protection. It uses cash transfers as a mechanism to appease rather than as a tool to empower people through a dignified income floor.

free basic services. Either proposal will require additional funding in a context of low economic growth. There has been extensive **research** showing where the funding can come from. The UBIC recommends that financing should come through non-regressive measures, which

Aliya Chikte is a project officer at the Alternative Information and Development Centre and member of the Universal Basic Income Coalition (UBIC).

ANOTHER AUSTERITY BUDGET ATTACKS THE POOR

Amandla! correspondent

Amandla! rejects the 2024/5 Budget, which continues the government's failed and lethal austerity 'strategy'.

THIS IS IN SPITE OF THE injection of R150 billion from the Gold and Foreign Exchange Contingency Reserve Account. Rather than using that money to invest in the needs of the mass of impoverished people, government has decided to invest in the creditors by sinking this windfall in debt repayments.

This budget slashes spending in real terms by R21 billion. The budget for learning and culture is cut by R9.8 billion. This is at a time when our education system needs a complete overhaul and transformation of the curriculum to develop the skills needed in an industrialising economy. Health is cut by R8 billion, when huge additional resources are needed for the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI).

The result will be the teacher / learner ratio will get even worse and the queues at clinics and hospitals will get longer.

Through its austerity measures, government is systematically reducing not just the size of public sector workers' wages but the public sector as a whole, through job freezes and retrenchments. We are surprised at the lack of response by public sector unions in the face of this assault. The rebellion of the poor, over the crisis of the provision of essential services, will just become more widespread and anarchic.

The tokenistic increase in some grants must be seen as an election ploy and is not big enough to cover the needs of the people, let alone the increase in the size of the population. What is worse, there is no commitment or strategy towards creating jobs, which would lessen the terrible dependency on grants the ANC government has created over time.

A budget for profit

The government continues with the stubborn implementation of a set of inappropriate economic policies, including austerity, inflation targeting, liberalisation and privatisation of key sectors of our economy. This is done with the failed idea

of attracting foreign investors. But it is these foreign investors (many of whom made huge fortunes in SA) who are either taking their money out of our country or parking their capital in the job-destroying financial sector. Our minister plays to their rule book, simultaneously enabling and enriching them.

There are no measures to strengthen the capacity of SARS to stop the tax avoidance measures of big mining corporations that have been demonstrated in the case of Lonmin, Total Coal and Samancor. This bleeds the fiscus of hundreds of billions of rand, each year. And it fails completely to consider alternative tax measures, such as a wealth tax and increased corporate tax rates, to lessen the country's indebtedness.

The Budget fails to put in place a strategy to deal with the crisis of vital state owned enterprises, such as Eskom, Transnet and Prasa. Instead, it accelerates their death spiral by promoting privatisation, especially through Public Private Partnerships and concessioning. Just as electricity generation is being privatised through the promotion and subsidising of Independent Power Producers, so rail transport and our harbours are being privatised through private sector concessioning and financing.

Expand the economy, don't shrink it.

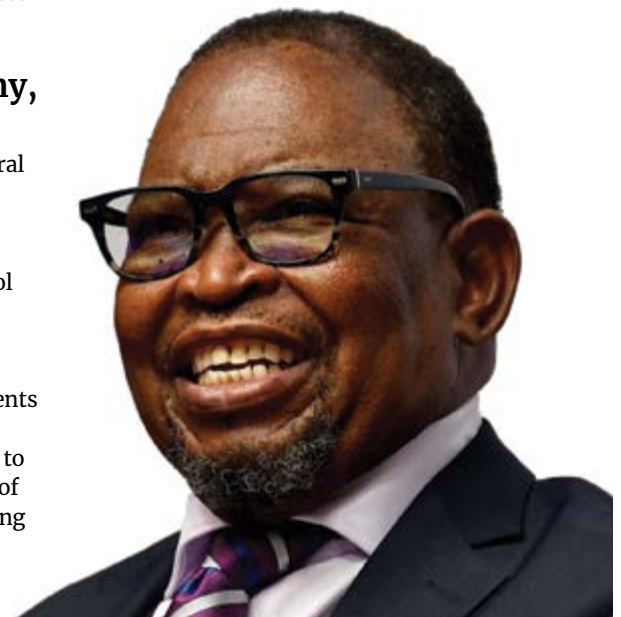
Another fundamental neoliberal feature of the Budget is the proposal for implementing a 'fiscal anchor'. This is a mechanism to 'anchor' control of spending in the law. The 'anchor' currently being used by government is the IMF-sponsored idea that governments must run primary budget surpluses. This is tantamount to legislating a permanent state of austerity, especially considering the permanent state of economic stagnation.

In this scenario, no government would be able to use the Budget as a redistribution tool. Nor would it be able to stimulate the economy through deficit financing, without first having to change the law.

The jobs crisis, which is overwhelming our society in a vortex of violence and crime, is an outcome of these policies. Eight million children go to bed hungry in a rich country blessed with trillions of dollars of natural resources, developed infrastructure and millions of young people willing and able to work.

We need an investment plan to meet the needs of our people. We need to direct state resources in a massive housing programme, expand public transport, and renew collapsing infrastructure, not least water, which could create millions of jobs. This in turn would lead to increased revenue for government and overcome the narrow tax base. Instead, the government cuts infrastructure spending.

This is why we need an alternative.



The government continues with the stubborn implementation of a set of inappropriate economic policies, including austerity, inflation targeting, liberalisation and privatisation of key sectors of our economy.

Who is afraid of the masses in Haiti?

A desperate humanitarian crisis is underway in Haiti. Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, the country has been gripped by crippling levels of gang violence characterised by regular street battles, kidnappings, sexual assault, and the destruction of life-enabling infrastructure.

By Will Shoki

This was first published as an editorial on the [Africa is a Country website](#). We republish it here as part of a sharing agreement with AIAC.

A DESPERATE HUMANITARIAN crisis is underway in Haiti. Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, the country has been gripped by crippling levels of gang violence characterised by regular street battles, kidnappings, sexual assault, and the destruction of life-enabling infrastructure. Moïse's successor, Ariel Henry, came to power with no constitutional mandate or parliamentary approval (Haiti's national assembly is defunct), with his only "legitimacy" stemming from the 2021 call of international diplomats for him to resume office.

Now, Henry is effectively in exile. Since traveling to Guyana in late February and then to Kenya ([to sign an agreement on the deployment of 1,000 Kenyan policemen](#) in Haiti), Henry has been unable to return to Haiti after gang leaders called on him to resign and vowed to ignite a civil war if he dares to step foot in the country (Port-au-Prince International airport has come under attack from gangs trying to seize control of it). Jimmy "Barbecue" Cherizier, the man making these proclamations, warned, "Either Haiti becomes a paradise or a hell for all of us. It's out of the question for a small group of rich people living in big hotels to decide the fate of people living in working-class neighborhoods."

How did Haiti get here?

AIAC contributor [Pooja Bhatia once quipped](#), "What comes first in Haiti: disaster or foreign intervention? The conventional, (mainstream) wisdom has it that "disaster comes first." In Bhatia's analysis—much concurred with by others—foreign intervention has created the foundations for dysfunction. The island nation is famously the site of the only successful slave revolt in history, earning a commanding place in the liberation canon as the one place where the ideals of Europe's enlightenment—freedom and self-determination—were universalised (remember that the French Revolution in 1789 had produced the Declaration of the Rights of Man, but these excluded the darker peoples and women). Now, [even The New York Times](#) can acknowledge that Haiti's development was hampered by the stranglehold of Western powers, chiefly France and the US. France imposed large reparations on its erstwhile colony Haiti in the 19th century to indemnify former French slave owners in exchange for diplomatic recognition, and the US occupied it from 1915 until 1934.

It didn't end there, and on two occasions the US backed the overthrow of Haiti's first democratically elected president, the socialist Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in 1991 and 2004 (before Aristide came to power, the US propped up the Duvalier dictatorships of Francois Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude, who together ruled Haiti for 41 years). This is, of course, not simply to portray Haitians as mere stooges, helpless puppets at the whims of foreign powers. Rather, as is the case everywhere else, powerful local elites

with their own political and economic interests and limited access to capital, engender a cycle of corruption by linking economic enrichment to access to state resources. Even nominally benign outside help—such as the influx of humanitarian organisations in the 1990s—created a "republic of NGOs," where building state capacity was neglected and aid substituted for government services.

What is to be done?

There's no denying that some degree of foreign support is unavoidable to help stabilise the situation. But the mistake the world has made in Sudan, for example, is insisting that the way forward is "brokered" by figures trusted not to rock the boat too much. This explains why the US maintains that the road to a political settlement must pass through Henry, even though he lacks popular legitimacy and support. Alternatives—such as the Commission for the Search for a Haitian Solution to the Crisis, a broad civil society platform comprising church leaders, peasant groups, and civic organisations—have received scant international recognition or empowerment. Why is everyone so afraid of political processes grounded in popular participation rather than elite brokerage?

C.L.R. James, who wrote the eminent account of the Haitian revolution, warned in *The Black Jacobins* that it is when "the masses turn (as turn they will one day) and try to end the tyranny of centuries, not only the tyrants but all 'civilisation' holds up its hands in horror and clamours for 'order' to be restored."

Will Shoki is editor of [Africa is a Country](#).

GENOCIDE IN GAZA

funded by the diamond industry

By Sean Clinton

THE INTERNATIONAL trade in diamonds, worth \$87 billion in 2021, conceals the fact that the industry is a significant source of funding for the genocidal apartheid regime in Israel.

Israel's genocide in Gaza, now in its sixth month, has killed at least 32,000 people, mainly children and women. It has turned to rubble over 70% of homes and destroyed Gaza's critical civilian infrastructure. And it has desecrated cemeteries, bulldozing graves and exhuming and scattering corpses.

Despite Israel's wanton genocide, there hasn't been a single word of condemnation from any of the leaders in the diamond industry, even though Israel is arguably its biggest net beneficiary.

The industry is a critical component of the Israeli economy, which is the primary source of funding that sustains the criminal Zionist project in Palestine. Diamond exports added over \$100 billion net to Israel's economy between 2010 and 2022.

To understand why this industry would tolerate a blood-plastered genocidal apartheid regime sheltering under its roof, one needs to be aware of how Israel's interests are protected by a myriad of vested interests within the architecture of the industry.

The global diamond industry

A small number of organisations control the levers of power within the global diamond industry:

- The World Jewellery Confederation (Confédération Internationale de la Bijouterie, Joaillerie, Orfèvrerie des Diamants, Perles et Pierres [[CIBJO](#)]) represents a wide spectrum of interests across the breadth and depth of the jewellery industry, from mining, processing and manufacturing to the retail sector. Its members include national and international trade organisations

The diamond industry is a critical component of the Israeli economy, which is the primary source of funding that sustains the criminal Zionist project in Palestine. Diamond exports added over \$100 billion net to Israel's economy between 2010 and 2022.



from more than 45 countries, as well as many of the leading corporations in the jewellery industry.

- The International Diamond Manufacturers Association ([IDMA](#)) represents 14 national associations, including from China, India, Belgium, Holland, USA and Israel.
- The World Federation of Diamond Bourses ([WFDB](#)) represents 27 different diamond exchanges around the world.

These [organisations collaborate](#) to mould rules and regulations that govern the industry. According to the CIBJO website, it received "official consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations." It acts as a technical expert, adviser and consultant to governments and the UN secretariat. And it is also a member of the UN Global Compact.

This access affords the diamond industry significant influence with governments and international organisations when developing standards for the industry. This is a role it has exploited to ensure polished diamonds at the consumer end of the supply pipe evade the strictures applied to rough diamonds at the mining end.

Blood diamonds

Over twenty years ago, under pressure from NGOs to end the trade in blood diamonds, the IDMA and WFDB established the [World Diamond Council](#). This represented the industry in negotiations that led to the establishment of the [Kimberley Process Certification Scheme](#) (KP) which regulates trade in rough diamonds.

The KP introduced the term "conflict diamond", which it narrowly defines as rough diamonds that fund violence by rebel groups against legitimate governments. While "conflict diamonds" are banned, other blood diamonds, that fund war crimes or genocide by government forces, evade sanction and are laundered through the legitimate market labelled "conflict free".

Aware of this gaping KP loophole, the WDC introduced a bogus "System of Warranties" (SOW) that the industry claims strengthens the KP and extends assurance for consumers of cut and polished diamonds at the retail end of the supply chain.

The SOW consists of nothing more than a statement on each invoice saying the seller believes the diamonds are from legitimate sources and are conflict free.

In a further effort to bolster public confidence, the industry set up its own accreditation body called the [Responsible Jewellery Council](#). The RJC developed Codes of Practice by which jewellery firms would be accredited if they complied with a range of workers' rights and anti-corruption measures, and if their diamond supply chain was KP certified and declared conflict free in accordance with the bogus SOW.

“Conflict-free” gaslighting

For over twenty years since the introduction of the Kimberley Process, the diamond industry has engaged in widescale gaslighting, fraudulently telling consumers and the public that diamonds which are KP certified are conflict free. This cover-up of the trade in blood diamonds continues today with the president of the [CIBJO cynically lecturing students](#) about sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies and responsible sourcing, as a diamond-funded genocide was unfolding in Gaza.

The “conflict free” charade was exposed in 2008 when government forces in Zimbabwe killed 200 miners, as the government sought to take control of alluvial diamond deposits in the Marange area. Although NGOs considered Marange diamonds to be blood diamonds (see [Amanda! 79](#)), they weren't “conflict diamonds” and couldn't be banned by the KP.

How Israel escapes action

In 2011 *Retail Jeweller* magazine published a comment of mine querying why Israel is allowed to dodge blood diamond rules. Israeli supporters in the diamond industry rounded on the magazine, forcing it to be [withdrawn from stands](#) at the Baselworld Jewellery Fair in Switzerland. The following month the editor issued an apology and published scathing letters from the presidents of the WFDB, CIBJO, IDMA, WDC and the Israeli Diamond Institute.

In 2015 the WDC proposed changes to the KP definition of a “conflict diamond” that would encompass diamonds that fund human rights violations by security forces downstream of the mining sector. That move was blocked by the president of the Israeli diamond exchange, Shmuel Schnitzer, as it would be [“disastrous” for Israel](#).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has once again exposed the duplicitous nature of RJC accreditation and KP certification. The industry is unable to ban Russian blood diamonds which don't fit the KP definition of a “conflict diamond”. The industry had to rely on governments to impose sanctions on Russian diamonds. This caused [turmoil in the RJC](#), leading to the resignation of a number of members and the executive director Iris Van der Veken.

Hypocrisy

The glaring hypocrisy of those who impose sanctions on Russian diamonds while Israeli diamonds are branded “conflict free” is starkly illustrated by the figures: the net value of [Russia's diamond exports in 2022](#) was \$4.47 billion and Russia's military expenditure in 2022 was [\\$73 billion](#). The net value of [Israel's diamond exports in 2022](#) was \$4.96 billion and Israel's military expenditure in 2022 was [\\$23.3 billion](#). The case for having diamonds from Israel labelled blood diamonds and banned is far more pressing considering the relative importance of diamonds to both

Similarly, when activists for Palestinian civil rights raised questions about Israeli diamonds at the annual Chicago Responsible Jewellery Conference, their concerns were given cursory consideration. There was no commitment to address this most glaring example of blood diamonds being allowed to flood the market unchallenged.

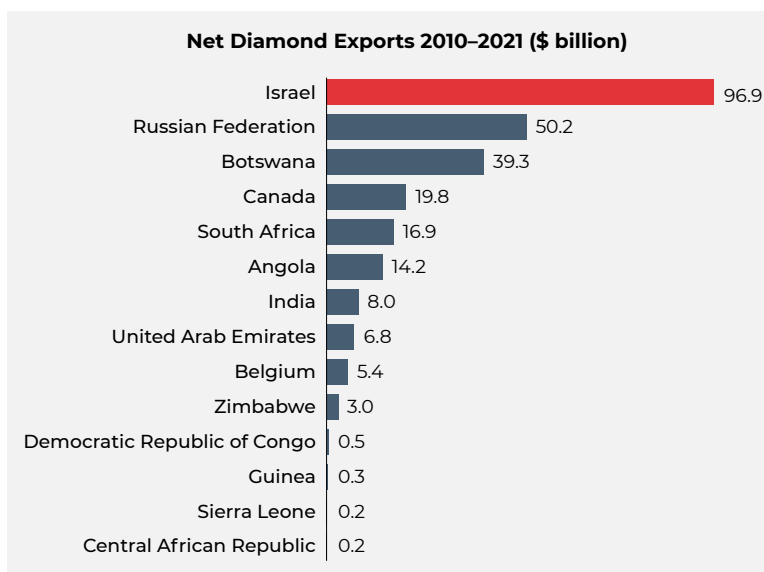
The [Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition](#) (KPCSC) is one of the three legs of the tripartite KP structure, which includes member states with voting rights and representatives from industry and civil society with observer status. I have previously outlined its [limitations](#). It is funded by the KP members to ensure their participation, which provides a fig leaf of accountability. It has had plenty to say about the importance of consumer confidence in the ethical credentials of diamonds. But, despite being prompted to do so, the KPCSC has never raised the issue of Israeli blood diamonds.

De Beers and PIC support Israel diamond industry

Civil society must give credit to the South African government for taking a case against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The plausible case of genocide, according to the ICJ, should have been enough evidence for international corporations with Israeli supply chains to immediately withdraw from Israel, just as they have from Russia. Yet, despite the overwhelming evidence of genocide in Gaza, De Beers Group continues to underpin the Israeli economy through its business links to the Israeli diamond industry.

One of Anglo American's biggest shareholders is South Africa's Public Investment Corporation (PIC). During the 2019 AGM, [questions were raised](#) by shareholder-activists. The PIC has responsibility for the investment of South African workers' pensions. Yet it continues investing in a company supporting the apartheid regime in Israel. Its continued investment in Anglo American is at variance with the South African government's action to hold Israel to account for genocide in Gaza.

[Sean Clinton](#) is a human rights activist from Ireland. He has written numerous articles critical of the double standards in the global jewellery industry.



economies and military spending, and the raw savagery of the US-supported Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The public rely on organisations such as Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Global Witness to expose human rights violations linked to the diamond industry. Yet they have turned a blind eye to Israel's [diamond-funded](#) grave violations of Palestinian human rights. This is puzzling, especially considering that HRW and AI have documented Israeli war crimes and apartheid, and both have reported on human rights violations linked to the diamond industry in other countries. But not in Israel, its biggest net beneficiary.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NAMIBIAN GENOCIDE

We will fully support the Namibian government if it approaches the ICJ regarding the genocide perpetrated in Namibia from 1904 to 1908 by German colonialism.



By **Shaun Whittaker** and **Harry Boesak**

THE MORAL VICTORY OF THE South African government at the International Court of Justice against Palestinian genocide can only be applauded. The symbolic significance of the former apartheid country taking such action is undoubtedly immense. Similarly, Namibia also suffered the scourges of apartheid and genocide, and that government therefore supported the standpoint of South Africa and strongly criticised Germany for publicly defending Israel on 12th January 2024. We will fully support the Namibian government if it approaches the ICJ regarding the genocide perpetrated in Namibia from 1904 to 1908 by German colonialism. In this context, it is relevant to reflect on the history of the Namibian genocide.

1904 uprising was anti-colonial

The anti-colonial uprising by the African people of Namibia on 12th January 1904 was momentous. There was resistance by Otjijherero-speakers and others against the dispossession of their land and cattle. Within a few days, the whole of central Namibia was under their control, and they destroyed most settler farms in the region.

Samuel Maharero and his sub-chiefs planned the insurrection well and along non-tribal or non-ethnic lines. In his famous letter to the Witboois (Khowesen), the Ondongos and the Basters, Maharero exhorted them “Let

us die fighting”. The ‘us’ without a doubt included other language groups. A fundamental point raised by Marion Wallace in her *A History of Namibia* is that “The diversity of the settlement patterns in central Namibia also meant that, even here, the war was never a purely Herero-German affair”. The Damara and San language groups, for instance, could not avoid the war situation.

The war was not a tribal/ethnic event, but a regional reality. In any case, mixed-language parentage was already the norm at that time. The false notion of homogenous and undifferentiated social groups was a deliberate divide and rule strategy of the colonisers.

So, the Namibian war of 1904-1908 cannot simply be called an uprising or rebellion by the Ovaherero and Nama. Couching it in tribal/ethnic terms diminishes its historical significance and mischaracterises it. The German colonisers would obviously not have admitted to the colonial nature of the war, but it is crucial that the formerly colonised must not make the same mistake. The ethnic categories emphasised by the coloniser were to isolate and crush the battles of different colonised groups. The extent of the events and the great loss of life from 1904 to 1908 also suggest that it was indeed a ‘war’, while describing it as merely an ordinary ‘uprising’ or ‘revolt’ might in fact imply that colonial rule was justified.

Since the Germans were unable to deal with the anti-colonial

fighting effectively, the extermination order (like the order against the so-called Hottentots/Khoe in the Cape) was intended to punish the combating group and to send a strong message to all the colonised. The 6,000 fighters of the Ovaherero and others at Ohamakari on 11 August 1904 did not have enough rifles, and therefore the one-sided event was over within one day. The 4,000 German soldiers had six canons and 14 Maxim machine guns during that massacre. The colonised were always at a disadvantage with conventional warfare. Even so, although the extermination order was formally rescinded in December 1904, the genocide continued in the five concentration camps in Namibia until 1908.

A nation in the making

The South African intellectual, Neville Alexander, in his *Three essays on Namibian history* maintained that the primary resistance phase of Namibian history ended in 1894 with the defeat of the Khowesen. The 1904-1908 war was therefore the beginning of the secondary phase of the anti-colonial struggle in Namibia, preceding the current national liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa.

When the great uprising began, King Nehale of the Ondongo immediately attacked the German fort at Namutoni and the Oshikwanyama-speaking fighters prevented the

Portuguese colonisers in Angola from coming to the aid of the Germans. In his seminal essay on Marengo, Alexander avers that when Marengo's fighters launched their guerilla war in July/August 1904, they "delayed and probably prevented the final solution of the Herero problem as the General Staff saw it". In other words, Marengo's armed struggle possibly averted the total annihilation of the Ovaherero. The anti-colonial resistance throughout the country hence embodied a nation in the making.

Marengo's guerilla fighters consisted of both peasants and workers, and many different language groups. The initial fighters came from the diverse community of Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape. Altogether, about 2,000 Marengo guerillas—with only a few hundred rifles—kept 15,000 German soldiers occupied for about 3 years with a protracted war strategy, from their internal base in the Great Karasberg mountains. They scored major victories against the German colonisers at Narudas (21 March 1905) and Narus (16 June 1905). The battle at Narudas between Marengo's guerilla army and the Germans was on the same scale as the encounter at Ohamakari. This time, however, the anti-colonial forces won. And it represents the greatest military victory against colonialism in Namibian history.

Why focus on Anglo-Boer war

In a remarkable piece in *The Journal of Namibian Studies* on Edward Pressgrave, the young 'white' Australian who fought

alongside Marengo, Peter Curson, raises several imperative issues. The number of deaths in the 1904–08 Namibian war of anti-colonial resistance was more than in the so-called Anglo-Boer war (1899–1902). But the focus has been on that South African war (in which many 'black' and 'brown' South Africans also perished) maybe because it involved the deaths of large numbers of 'white' people.

Due to the 1899 war, as many as 2,000 'white' Afrikaners (Dutch colonisers) moved across the Gariep River and worked as scouts and transport riders for the Germans during the 1904 war. Moreover, they also acted as spies and arrested Namibian anti-colonial fighters; and were eventually compensated with farms in southern Namibia.

The British, Dutch, and German colonisers were concerned that Marengo could spark an uprising throughout southern Africa. After his release from Tokai Prison (Cape Town), Marengo was on his way to join up with others to continue the war of anti-colonial resistance. So, when Major Elliot of the Cape Mounted Rifles caught up with him at Eenzamheid in the Gordonia region, the colonisers did not show any mercy: "at one point 60 men unleashed continuous firing on Marengo's party for ten minutes, firing about 5,000 rounds." (Martin Legassick). Marengo (with others such as Abraham Morris) could have militarily defeated the Germans, but the British and the Dutch intervened.

In the final analysis, Marengo was arguably the main leader of the anti-colonial war, and the confrontation was effectively over when he was killed by

the British on 20 September 1907 outside Upington. He had stood out above all the others due to his resolve, audacity, and astuteness.

Implications for reparations

The 1904 war holds many implications for the reparations debate. Besides the question about whether it might be reparations for colonialism, war or genocide, the discourse about 'affected communities' contains tribal/ethnic connotations. These actually weaken the reparations movement and do not make sense in the context of an anti-colonial war that exemplified a nation in the making.

It would accordingly be more appropriate for reparations to be used to develop the central and southern regions of Namibia first—since the genocide occurred there—and for us to completely discard the ethnic arguments. In fact, it is relevant to ask if the Northern Cape could not be included as a region in this discussion. And why should the demand for reparations be limited to the German government? What about the British government, the descendants of the Dutch colonisers, the private businesses, and the churches?

Finally, we call on the South African government to locate and repatriate the remains of Jakob Marengo. This is crucial for the Namibian nation to correct her history.

Shaun Whittaker and **Harry Boesak** are members of the Marxist Group of Namibia.

Prisoners taken during the 1904-1908 war. It was the beginning of the anti-colonial struggle in Namibia, preceding the current national liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa.



INDIA:

popular movements, not elections, will bring transformative change

By **Sushovan Dhar**

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A brief period, India has been more fortunate than many other nations in being able to maintain parliamentary rule over the last 77 years. With 900 million voters—more than the populations of Europe and Australia put together—the Indian elections are hailed as the largest exhibition and celebration of democracy. The nation's economic growth over the past 30 years—one of the fastest in the world—also makes the elections noteworthy on a global scale.

India is undoubtedly at the forefront of global capitalist expansion, despite the fact that this process has resulted in a massive rise in inequality. The proportions of this inequality are reminiscent of the darkest days of the colonial era.

The “Modi-magic”

Like his far-right and fascist predecessors, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi can gather sizable, adoring crowds both at home and abroad. Previously a key component of ruling coalitions, his party, the BJP, has had remarkable election victories since 2014 under his individualised leadership. With its dual emphasis on Hindu nationalism and neo-developmentalism, it has also been successful in establishing ideological dominance. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyse the BJP's nationalist views in detail. But we can fairly state that the party has created a new nationalist narrative that is widely accepted by a great chunk of the electorate. Over and above that, the BJP has also been able to define and refine the narrative about the economy and economic growth.

The BJP's strategy has been centred around a few key elements. Firstly, the



Like his far-right and fascist predecessors, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi can gather sizable, adoring crowds both at home and abroad.

Modi administration is unabashedly pro-business, especially when it comes to Indian-owned enterprises. He has also deftly connected India's prestige abroad with this unshackling of Indian business. For example, after getting elected in 2014, Modi audaciously pledged to propel India's placement in the World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business* rankings into the top 50 worldwide. India is rated 63rd out of 190 economies in the Bank's most recent annual ratings.

Secondly, Modi has been successfully able to flaunt his credentials as the best anticorruption reformer. He has proved capable of transforming mainly ineffective initiatives into media hits with his mastery of public harangue and message management. Thirdly, the prime minister's self-projection as the creator of the contemporary welfare state in India resonates with the voting public. However, the developments have given rise to concerns about the future of democracy in the country.

Systemic flaws

The Indian electoral system is fraught with systemic flaws. The first past the post (i.e., winner-take-all) electoral system, established by the Indian Constitution on the Westminster model, has been one of the major shortcomings. Previously, it had continued to give the Congress Party huge parliamentary majorities, even as its share of the popular vote began to dwindle. The BJP took advantage of this, and since 2014 Modi and his entourage have had a disproportionate presence in Parliament in relation to their vote share.

Secondly, it has become more and more obvious that money dominates Indian elections. The enormous expenditure has come to be recognised

and bemoaned as a fundamental aspect of the country's political economy. Furthermore, there is essentially little transparency about political contributions. It is nearly impossible to find out who has given money to a politician or party or where the politician gets funding for their campaign. Donors are hardly ready to make their political contributions public, out of concern that they may face a backlash if their chosen party loses power. In light of this, the Narendra Modi administration made a large announcement about “[electoral bonds](#)”, an ambitious ‘reform’ to election finance in 2017, and presented it as an attempt to increase political financial transparency.

According to a recent analysis, between 2016 and 2022 the BJP got three times as much money in direct corporate donations and electoral bonds (Rupees 5,300 crore [\$639.36 million]) as all other national parties put together (Rupees 1,800 crore [\$217.17 million]). The Indian voters certainly have the right to know the source of a party's funding for voter outreach. Are these bond-donating companies legitimate, or were they founded only to transfer black money to political donations? Are ‘[Public Sector Undertakings](#)’ (the Indian equivalent of State Owned Enterprises) being forced to donate?

In a recent development, the Indian government's electoral bond scheme was declared unlawful by the Supreme Court. It emphasised that the scheme, by allowing anonymous political donations, contravenes the right to information under the Constitution. One can only hope that the verdict allows the electorate to make more informed decisions and facilitates a more level-playing field

for political parties in the run-up to the general elections this year.

The verdict also made clear that this kind of right extends beyond exercising freedom of speech and expression. It is essential to advancing participatory democracy by keeping the government accountable. It emphasised the strong correlation between money and politics, and how economic inequality results in varying degrees of political participation. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that donating money to a political party would result in quid pro quo agreements. The court ruled that the amendment made to the Companies Act, which allowed corporations to make limitless political payments, was blatantly arbitrary.

Finally, the Election Commission of India, de facto, has limited independence and can be controlled and manipulated by the ruling dispensation.

attacks on religious minorities and discrimination against Muslims and Christians.

India has been classified as an “electoral autocracy” by the [Varieties of Democracy](#) (V-Dem) project and a “flawed democracy” by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#), highlighting the country’s democratic decline. The Indian government’s anti-democratic tendencies have increasingly intensified, leaving very little space for dissent and protest. Even the opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi, was expelled from parliament following a defamation conviction for a joke about the prime minister. The government also took control of one of the few remaining independent television channels, resulting in a significant drop in India’s 2023 World Press Freedom Index ranking. India occupies the 161st spot out of 180 countries.

in the Indian body politic is the popular mobilisations from below. A couple of years ago, the Indian farmer’s movement demonstrated that strong movements from below could have the potential to take on the Hinduvta juggernaut, much more than makeshift electoral alliances.

Social movements, however, have very little effect on electoral politics. Despite the protests by farmers in 2020–2021, the BJP won handsomely in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly elections, particularly in the farming region of Western UP, which is home to a sizable Jat population who supported the movement in considerable measure. Undoubtedly, the movement has motivated millions of people worldwide to struggle for equity, democracy, and solidarity; but it still has a long way to go to create a political hegemony beyond the militant protests. There have been significant mobilisations from many other

social groups; the challenge lies in figuring out how to bring them all together to develop a transformational agenda.

How can we explain the inability of the social movements to create political hegemony despite numerous struggles across the country? Well, the absence of the Left and progressive forces has created an ideological vacuum that leads many of the movements into a blind alley, even after accomplishing gains after painstaking struggles. Instead of forging solidarities and fostering alternatives, popular resentment and rage are fuelling the ascent of the right wing in India in the absence of an ideologically

driven anti-capitalist agenda. It is in this context that the rebirth of a radical new Left is more necessary than ever.

Postscript

A possible defeat of the BJP can surely offer a vital breathing space for the construction of an alternative agenda. However, it’s only a means and not an end in itself.

Sushovan Dhar is a political activist and commentator.



A couple of years ago, the Indian farmer’s movement demonstrated that strong movements from below could have the potential to take on the *Hinduvta* juggernaut, much more than makeshift electoral alliances.

Democratic institutions undermined

India is one of the prime examples of global democratic recession. Growing polarisation, media persecution, censorship, compromised electoral integrity, and a declining space for dissent are all threats to India’s democracy. The BJP-led administration, which took office in 2014 and retained it in 2019, has come under fire for its dismal showing on democratic indices.

[Freedom House](#) maintains India’s “Partly Free” status, but commentators argue that the country has become increasingly illiberal, ideologically. The BJP in power has encouraged radical Hindu nationalists, leading to increased

The forthcoming general Indian elections are going to take place in a context where the free and informed choice of the electorate is increasingly undermined by both structural and engineered factors. At this point in time, the common view is that the BJP is most likely to scrape through, even though the opposition is attempting to create a semblance of a united front against it. However, the opposition is equally embedded in the same neoliberal economic doctrines, and there’s little to choose between the two warring camps as far as policies are concerned.

Popular movements

The only force capable of bringing about a progressive and transformative change

#FeesMustFall in Nigeria

By Oyelumade Oluwakemi

This article was first published on the [Africa is a Country website](#).

Since the inauguration of President Bola Tinubu, a wave of fee hikes has swept through public universities and secondary schools in Nigeria. Across numerous campuses, students have risen in response to these policies, registering their dissent through campaigns, demonstrations, and protests. One such campaign, emanating from the University of Lagos (UNILAG), has rallied around the banner of #FeesMustFall—though not directly linked to the South African campaign of the same name—to echo the voice of students calling for a reversal of the fee hikes. Other slogans such as #LetJossitesBreathe, #SaveOAUStudents, #SaveUites, #SaveOOUITES have also inspired students at the University of Jos, Obafemi Awolowo University, the University of Ibadan, and Olabisi Onabanjo University, respectively.

However, the #FeesMustFall campaign in UNILAG, of which I have been a part, provides a unique window into the possible trajectory of student activism under the Tinubu administration. This is partially because UNILAG was the only institution whose fee hike was specifically [approved by the federal government](#). Even more important, however, is the stark reality that the #FeesMustFall campaign in UNILAG has proceeded largely independently of the historically radical, but now largely illegitimate, National Association of Nigerian Students (Nans). The interaction between the campaign in UNILAG and NANS might allow us to reflect on the past and possible future of campus unionism in Nigeria.

Campus unionism history and degeneration

With roots in the 1920s anticolonial organisations of West African students in Europe, Nigerian campus unionism has a long history of radical activism. It has been concerned not only with the local struggle of students on individual campuses but also with the issues of national sovereignty and economic emancipation. In the 1980s, NANS became the umbrella body of all student organisations in Nigeria and in the diaspora. It adopted its current name and signed a charter in 1982 that enshrined [anti-imperialism as the](#)

[union's essence](#). During this period, NANS was a radical platform that gave students an active role in the progressive transformation of society. It played a crucial role in the “anti-SAP” protests of 1989, organised against the structural adjustment programme implemented by the regime of then-president Ibrahim Babangida at the behest of the IMF and World Bank.

However, since the 1990s, NANS has [degenerated](#) at the hands of the main political parties, which have crippled the union and robbed it of its revolutionary potential. The student body has become a platform for careerist activists, political jobbers, and cultists sponsored by politicians to occupy leadership positions. The tragic state of student unionism in the contemporary period can be attributed to this crisis in leadership, from NANS at a national level to campus-level student union governments (SUGs). In light of its contemporary character, it came as no surprise that NANS and the faculty leaders in UNILAG [capitulated](#) to the school administration. They agreed on the spot to a cosmetic reduction without consulting the students they purportedly represent.

On July 21, 2023, in its official announcement of the fee increment, the UNILAG administration, under the euphemism of an “[upward review of fees](#),” proclaimed a five-fold increase for returning undergraduate students, citing prevailing economic realities as the [reason](#). The #FeesMustFall campaign would officially commence the next day.

Building an independent movement

Crucial for understanding the rise of the campaign is a brief introduction to the independent movement that has championed the cause: the Students’ Solidarity Group (SSG). The SSG was officially formed on July 22, 2023 by students, former students, and seasoned activists. The SSG sprung to action, convening a virtual public meeting to discuss the fee hike and other related matters affecting students and workers at UNILAG and other campuses across Nigeria. Participants at the meeting agreed that the fee hike was an attempt to further commercialise public education and price it out of the reach of the poor. They then resolved to hold a public symposium. The SSG intensified online demonstrations to publicise the campaign in the buildup to the symposium and managed to have #SaveUnilagStudents appear on the Twitter trend table during the early hours of Tuesday July 25.

The public meeting, held on July 28, was a success in at least one crucial respect: it forced NANS to submit a letter clarifying knotty issues and pointing to the undemocratic posture of the UNILAG administration. On August 2, a meeting was called by the UNILAG administration, and a communique detailing the outcome of the meeting was [published](#).

However, over the following month, the administration chose to shun negotiations. The SSG and other student groups decided to intensify



Student organising is resurging in Nigeria. But to have any impact, students must connect with struggles beyond campus. *Image courtesy Timmy Okanlawon © 2024.*

demonstrations, opting to intensify protest events until the administration was forced to bow to public pressure, announcing a [reduction in the fee hike](#) and a promise to restore the student union.

Embrace the anti-capitalist spirit

The current crisis in education demands a bold response: student resistance must evolve beyond local campus struggles. It is time to embrace the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist spirit that marked the heydays of a vibrant NANS, understanding that the fate of public education is inextricably linked to the broader struggle for social justice.

This necessitates a shift toward building a cross-campus front. The #FeesMustFall campaign can serve as a

powerful example, but its impact can be amplified by connecting with workers and other social forces impacted by neoliberalism. By forging alliances and aligning student demands with broader social struggles, the movement can garner wider support and wield greater power against the forces of capital. The campaign must evolve beyond local struggles that foster disunity and undermine mutual solidarity. The campaign must evolve nationwide to unify the struggles across all campuses.

In addition to solidarity, students must actively advocate for democratic participation in university governance. The proposal of the SSG in [negotiations](#) with the UNILAG management for a joint committee is a step in the right direction. This demand for inclusion extends beyond

individual universities, challenging the very neoliberal power structures that perpetuate inequalities in education.

The road ahead for the campaign is paved with challenges, but the potential for transformative change is undeniable. By embracing radical consciousness, fostering solidarity, and demanding democratic participation, students can become a driving force for a more just and equitable future, both within their campuses and across the broader social landscape.

Oyelumade Oluwakemi is a Students Solidarity Group member and a comrade of the Socialist Youth League (SYL), writing from Lagos.

THE END OF LABOUR OR THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CYCLE OF UNION GROWTH?

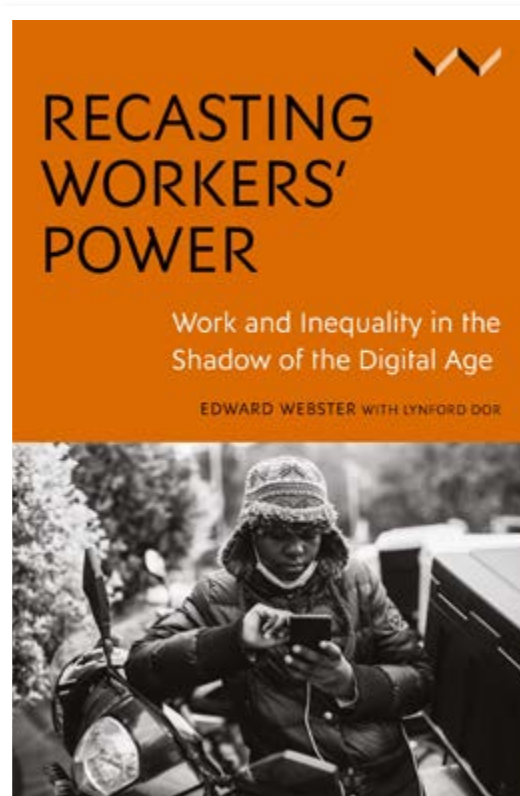
By **Edward Webster**

This an edited version of a talk I gave at the 6th Conference of the International Association of Strikes and Social Conflict (IASSC) in Cape Town on 6th February 2024.

EIGHT YEARS AGO, I NOTICED a growing number of motor bikes on Johannesburg's pot-holed roads. They were delivering food to private homes. Platform capitalism, in the form of Uber Eats, Mr Delivery, and Takealot, had come to Africa. It had created a new work paradigm where workers are managed through online platforms, monitored directly, and expected to produce measurable outputs.

Instead of clocking-in with their timecard, as at a traditional workplace, 'gig' workers log into an 'app'. In so doing, they become subject to a new business model based on a form of authoritarian algorithmic management that:

- translates consumers' demand into orders workers must deliver;
- determines what tasks workers must execute, where and when;
- directly or indirectly determines how much money workers will be paid for the execution of particular tasks; and



- through the algorithm, directly or indirectly controls the execution of the work and the worker's performance at work.

As we argue in [our recent book](#), *Recasting Workers' Power: Work and Inequality in the Shadow of the Digital Age*, instead of the bright new world painted by the global tech companies, what is emerging is a return to the working conditions of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the current world of platform work could be described as a form of 'digital Taylorism'.

End of labour?

There is a widespread view that the individualisation, dispersal and pervasive monitoring that characterise work in the 'gig economy' have made gig workers unorganisable. Worker resistance is increasingly futile, the experts say; it is the end of labour.

There is a lot going for these arguments. There is no question that there has been a decline of union membership and density, especially in the Global North. However, what we argue in our book is that the new technology is a double-edged sword—it extends control, but it also connects the riders together through the new technology. Precarious workers, we discovered, were experimenting with new hybrid forms of worker organisation, including different

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types of associations that blur the distinction between traditional unionism and informal workers' associations, co-operatives, micro-businesses and savings clubs (stokvels).

We focus our attention on the restructuring that takes place at workplace level, which we describe as a 'labour process fix'. Through these labour process fixes, capital ultimately seeks to buy labour power from workers on a more 'flexible' (that is, exploitable) basis, which entails bringing a whole new section of the working class into the economy for the first time. In our interest in understanding what future there may be for labour, we return to the foundational logic of Marx, and primarily the idea that 'where capital goes, capital-labour conflict follows'.

We explore how such fixes, particularly capital's introduction of new technologies and new forms of labour control in production, generate struggles from both older and newer sections of the workforce.

The Power Resources Approach (PRA)

The PRA is an organisational tool that we use to identify different sources of power and the new forms of worker organisation that are emerging. There are two key concepts which provide the basis for this approach: structural power (the power stemming from labour's position in the economic system and production process), and associational power (the power arising from collective political or trade union associations). We identify two other sources of workers' power—first societal power and then institutional

power. Societal power can be expressed in two ways—by building coalitions with other social groups such as social movements, and by influencing the public discourse. The concept of institutional power was introduced by researchers from Germany, who saw institutionalised labour rights and dialogue procedures as sources of power that labour could rely on even when structural and associational power were weakened.

Recasting workers' Power

The empirical heart of the book is a series of case studies of precarious work in Africa. Confronted by weak structural power, workers enhance their bargaining position by drawing on other sources of working-class power, such as associational, societal and institutional power. Their power is, in other words, recast. What implications does this recasting of power have for the future of labour? We identify four responses.

First, through externalisation and casualisation there is on-going **marginalisation** of traditional trade unions in Africa. Instead of organising the new layer of precarious workers, established unions are being marginalised by defending existing strongholds. In focusing on those workers in stable jobs, they are reproducing the dualities in labour markets. We call this second response, **dualisation**.

A third response is **substitution**. This describes a scenario where unions are no longer the only actors, and other organisations such as NGOs, social movements and cooperatives fill the vacuum of workers not having adequate representation, by providing specific

services and alternative organisational strategies

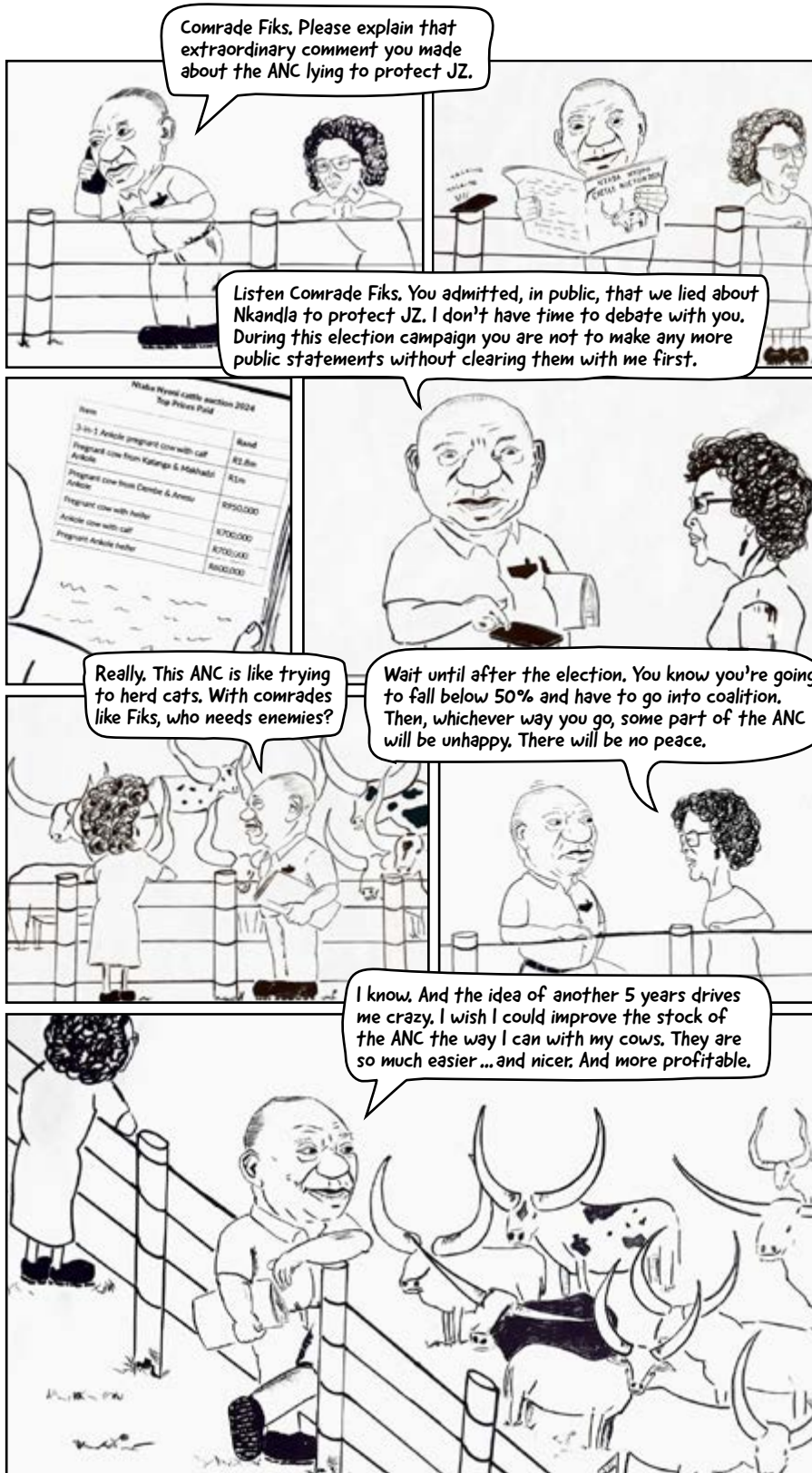
Finally, unions successfully **revitalise**. The clearest case we have of successful union revitalisation is the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU) in Kampala. By reframing informal '**boda boda**' riders (motor biker riders) as workers and therefore potential union members, they were able to foreground associational power and dramatically expand the union, from a declining 3,000 members to over 100,000 members. By forming an alliance with the established union, and gaining concrete support from the International Transport Federation (ITF), the boda boda riders were able to draw on associational and institutional power, which led to a decline in police harassment.

Our book points in the direction of a fifth response, where workers are experimenting with new forms of power and hybrid forms of organisation, among the growing swathe of precarious and informal labour in the Global South. We call it an **experimental** trend.

The question raised by our book is whether these embryonic forms of worker organisation are sustainable and could become the foundations for a new cycle of worker solidarity and union growth.

Edward Webster was Professor Emeritus at the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, and a long-standing analyst of the South African labour movement. He died a few days after sending this article to Amanda. We have published an obituary by Dinga Sikwebu on Page 26.

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SOLIDARITY WITH THE RESISTANCE COMMITTEES OF SUDAN



For almost a year now, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Hemedti, have been waging war against each other, dragging Sudan into the abyss, after fomenting a coup d'état together.

The victims are still the civilian population. Many have fled the combat zones. Those who have been unable to escape are being bombed and beaten by soldiers from both sides. The United Nations estimates that more than eight million people are displaced and 20 million lack food, a situation that could rapidly lead to "the worst food crisis in the world". All the more so as the belligerents are rejecting any idea of a truce or the setting up of a humanitarian corridor to allow the delivery of food and medicines. Al-Burhan stubbornly refuses to allow aid to enter via Chad for the people of Darfur.

As the linchpins of the Sudanese revolution, the activists on the resistance committees are continuing their work through solidarity actions. Emergency rooms have been set up

across the country, acting as temporary accommodation treatment rooms and canteens.

Through their networks, these grassroots groups are able to respond to the needs of the population, such as organising the evacuation of families in areas where fighting is raging, finding an electrician for a faulty installation, fuel for ambulances or generators to supply health centres. They are only just beginning to receive funding from the major humanitarian organisations.

These structures are a response to the failure of the state. This was already true of the resistance committees when Burhan and Hemedti were running the country, and it is even more true today. These self-managed structures symbolise the permanence of the Sudanese revolution and appear to be a credible alternative to the violent and corrupt Sudanese elite.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in [International Viewpoint](#) magazine