

PERSPECTIVES

Political analysis and commentary from Southern Africa

Dear Reader

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be able to present you with this first edition of "Perspectives: political analysis and commentary from Southern Africa".

Perspectives is a publication of the regional office of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Southern Africa. With this new publication, we intend to let experts from Southern Africa express their views about current political issues in their region. *Perspectives* will focus on South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, the three partner countries of HBS in this region. In addition to country-specific developments, we shall also deal with issues of interest to the entire SADC region.

I do hope that this series of publications will provide you with political analyses and assessments that are well-founded, concise and relevant. Our aim is to make a contribution to a highly diversified debate - a debate in which people from Southern Africa with a special insight into what is happening in this part of the world can express their thoughts. We intend publishing contributions from think tanks and universities, from journalists, politicians, as well as civil society representatives.

This first edition deals with the dramatic political changes within the ruling parties in Namibia and South Africa. In both of these countries, the parties that were elected by overwhelming majorities - the ANC and SWAPO - were given a political dressing down: in South Africa, the entire political leadership of the ANC was voted out of office, while in Namibia former members of the ruling party have founded a new opposition party. Our authors are investigating the reasons for the discontent with the party leadership in these two countries and look at the consequences this could entail for the development of democracy in Namibia and South Africa.

In the first article, Tangeni Amupadhi, Namibian

journalist and editor of the magazine *Insight Namibia*, describes how the creation of the new opposition party RDP (Rally for Democracy and Progress) has sounded the alarm bells for the ruling SWAPO party. Any votes gained by the RDP in the SWAPO strongholds in northern Namibia during the elections in 2009 could be a decisive test for Namibian democracy: would SWAPO accept the presence of a competing party in an area where previously nearly 100% of the electorate had voted for it? So far, few signs point in this direction.

In the second article, Jan Hofmeyr from the South African Institute for Justice and Reconciliation examines how the strong concentration of power in the President's Office under Thabo Mbeki and his attempt to exert control over large domains of public administration and the party ultimately contributed to his loss of power. From this perspective, Mbeki's deposition as party president is a sign of democratic maturity in the ANC or, in Hofmeyr's words, this development shows that "ordinary people still matter". What is still an open question, however, is how the ANC is going to deal with a party president whose reputation has been badly affected and who has to face a new corruption trial by mid-2008. A further challenge to South African democracy is the continuing power struggle between the two power centres - the "State" (Thabo Mbeki) and the "Party" (Jacob Zuma).

We hope that these two articles will make you look forward to the next edition of *Perspectives*. It will deal with the forthcoming elections in Zimbabwe, focusing, in particular, on the new presidential candidate, Simba Makoni, and the divisions within the ruling ZANU-PF.

Dr Antonie Katharina Nord
Regional Director HBS Southern Africa

Tremor shakes Namibian politics

A tremor has shaken Namibia's political environment. The throttle of election campaigning is already pressed for autobahn speed, though the elections are two years away. Namibia's political rulers, SWAPO¹, (a de facto one-party state since independence), appear to be pressing panic buttons. This is despite the fact that SWAPO has polled more than 70 percent of the votes in the past three elections since 1994.

The parliamentary and presidential elections are not expected until the dying weeks of 2009². This kind of early political excitement has not been seen in Namibia before, not even when Namibians were preparing to oust the South Africa apartheid regime in the first democratic multi-racial election in 1989. The reason for excitement among many, and anxiety for some, is the formation of a new political party, the 'Rally for Democracy and Progress' (RDP). Another party that was also formed (the 'All People's Party') at the end of 2007 has so far failed to ignite the passion that the creation of RDP seems to breed.

The main explanation for the enthusiasm that the new party generates is the fact that it is an outcome of faction fights in SWAPO. Bigger than a fragment compared to another breakaway from SWAPO nearly 10 years ago, RDP appears to have the ability to invade areas until now considered sealed for SWAPO. Namibia's northern regions, particularly north central and a half of the northeast have solidly voted SWAPO by more than 90 percent in all elections³. However, if the reactions of the country's President, Hifikepunye Pohamba, and SWAPO are anything to go by, the new party is to be taken seriously. Many ordinary Namibians and political observers believe RDP's chances of hurting SWAPO are strong.

Background

In 2004 SWAPO went through one of the most traumatic periods of its existence since 1960. The party needed a candidate for state president. This is because the Namibian constitution permits only two five-year terms for individuals. The decision to amend the constitution in 1998 for the first President Sam Nujoma to hold office for a third term had caused strains within the party.

SWAPO's most powerful committee, the Politburo, refused Nujoma the sole right to choose the successor. Nujoma did not take kindly to that. Three candidates were put forward for the SWAPO congress to decide. But the president of Namibia and of SWAPO at the time, Nujoma, went on a (sometimes vicious) campaign to block the nomination of Hidipo Hamutenya, who had for at least two decades been seen his natural heir.

Hamutenya was one of SWAPO's leading luminaries during the liberation struggle as well as a senior cabinet and party member. He controlled the party's propaganda machinery. Many of his comrades envied his closeness to Nujoma and had considered him clear frontrunner. Critics say Nujoma suddenly changed his stance towards Hamutenya. He then deployed a whispering campaign to denounce his struggle-days protégé. In 2004 he used thinly veiled attacks referring to Hamutenya and his campaign team as agents of imperialists. Just to be sure, Nujoma fired Hamutenya from government and appointed a presidential inquiry to collect dirt on Hamutenya.

The SWAPO congress got the message and endorsed Nujoma's candidate. Months later Hamutenya and his supporters or perceived sympathizers were humiliated by failing to be among the top of SWAPO's parliamentary candidates. Long-serving senior leaders lost standing nearly overnight. Many did not make it to parliamentary benches. The Nujoma phenomenon is that crossing paths with Nujoma means the end of a political career, especially in SWAPO.

The clique politics in a party that has long tried to project cohesion did not end quickly. Nujoma's faction prevailed strongly over Hamutenya's and neutrals from 2004 to 2007. By the run up to the SWAPO

1 The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) is Namibia's liberation movement and has been the ruling party ever since Namibia's independence in 1990 (the first democratic elections had taken place in 1989).

2 Parliament and President are elected for a five-year term. Last national elections took place in November 2004.

3 Namibia is divided into 12 regions. Especially the (in Namibian terms) densely populated 4 northern central regions - Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, and Oshikoto form the basis of SWAPO's support in the northern part of the country.

congress meeting at the end of November 2007, it was obvious the party leadership had failed to prevent division. The division was so bad that discussions were defined by the schism between the Nujoma loyalists and the Hamutenya faction. Hamutenya supporters complained that they were losing their jobs in state-owned companies because of their real or perceived support of Nujoma's former confidante. One of Hamutenya's closest allies in SWAPO, Jesaya Nyamu, a former cabinet minister, had been expelled in 2005. He had written about three 'options' regarding what Hamutenya supporters needed to do concerning the ostracism. The notes were stolen from his office by suspected state spy agents.

In the meantime, several attempts to get the Hamutenya group to retake the centre of SWAPO structures failed. Instead Nujoma's faction strengthened, clearing out many of those considered Hamutenya followers. Before the SWAPO congress in December 2007, Hamutenya, Nyamu and few other long-serving SWAPO leaders formed RDP. Attending the congress would have been futile. It was slated as the final clearout of the Hamutenya-faction.

The liberation struggle credentials of RDP main players will prove a major asset as SWAPO's opponents. At its congress in December SWAPO read out 14 names of senior leaders who resigned. This was to show that the rumoured mass defections from SWAPO to RDP were false. The resignations included Hamutenya and former National Council (second house of parliament) Chairman Kandi Nehova.

Despite the resignations, confusion and suspicion remains about who is still truly in SWAPO. So much mistrust has been created that even families are divided because of the formation of the RDP. A few people have already been expelled from SWAPO because of being suspected as RDP moles. A few more are expected to meet the same fate, though SWAPO is careful to not alienate too many innocents.

A few weeks before congress, the man most credited with SWAPO's formation, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, and another veteran SWAPO leader, Helmut Angula, felt pressured to deny links to RDP. They were responding to unpublished rumours. Yet in voting at the congress they suffered by not being returned to the top. Several former senior SWAPO leaders simply spared themselves the embarrassment by either withdrawing their names from the list for those to be elected to the Central Committee or boycotting the congress altogether.

Déjà vu?

The formation of RDP was not the bombshell that its leaders predicted to cause mayhem at the SWAPO congress. Nor was it the damp-squib whose explosion die-hard SWAPO supporters had hoped no one would hear.

While it caused a lot more excitement than another off-shoot from SWAPO nearly 10 years ago, many take a wait and see attitude.

"I think the RDP is different," says political analyst Bill Lindeke. "The key is, can they break that 90 percent support that SWAPO has [in northern Namibia]. It is still too early to tell. We can say there have not been massive defections from SWAPO's top leadership," says Lindeke.

The defections of top SWAPO stalwarts are seen in many quarters as critical for anyone to threaten its base.

This is largely a comparison with the formation of a fragment from the ruling party in 1999, the Congress of Democrats (CoD). However the CoD was led by a former SWAPO leader of middle-rank, an ambassador whose highest position in government was a deputy minister. It only ever managed to attract another deputy minister from SWAPO. At the time, the ruling party quickly deployed an incendiary campaign that instigated SWAPO members not to allow CoD to campaign in its stronghold of north-central Namibia. SWAPO told masses at public rallies that CoD will bring back apartheid and that they had collaborated with colonialists. The fear factor was effective in the rural population. SWAPO crashed CoD at the polls that year. CoD gained some 10% of the national votes. It got almost nothing in the northern central regions, where the majority of votes come from.

The RDP caught SWAPO napping. No elections have taken place yet, but RDP already looks like it can make inroads far more than CoD did in the northern rural areas. This threat saw President Hifikepunye Pohamba scurrying during his year-end retreat. In addition to public meetings held under the cover of introducing newly elected SWAPO leaders, Pohamba held private gatherings to bolster the party's support against the one month-old RDP. In one meeting he unsuccessfully tried to assure those present that SWAPO leaders in the region of his birth, Ohangwena, were not being hounded out of the party. People who attended the meetings say Pohamba was so worried he called meetings of ministers to devise strategies to make sure the

Ohangwena region does not fall to RDP.

Perceptions that Nujoma's clique had waged a tribal witch-hunt against the Kwanyama speakers in SWAPO had taken root. In a meeting with traditional and church leaders as well as the elders of Ohangwena, the President came under attack for suggesting the RDP was a party of the Kwanyama speakers.

Ethnic divide

The Hamutenya and Nujoma cliques brought to the fore divisions about which Oshivambo dialect controlled the heart of SWAPO⁴. Today, it is a tricky situation the ruling party finds itself in. SWAPO needs to convince supporters that perceptions that the Kwanyama were being purged from SWAPO and government positions were false.

At the same time, SWAPO is trying to spread the message that RDP must be viewed as a tribal Kwanyama party. By labelling RDP ethnic, SWAPO hopes to discourage many Namibians from switching allegiance from SWAPO. But it is also an attempt to counteract characterisation by Nyamu that an Omusati-clique was taking control of SWAPO⁵.

SWAPO's tribalism tactic could backfire. It might galvanise more Kwanyama to join RDP in solidarity. In such a case RDP will only have to show it appeals to other voters nationwide. Moreover, most non-Ovambo tribes have long accused SWAPO of using its northern ethnic domination (for years almost 100% of the Ovambo supported SWAPO).

SWAPO Secretary General Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana says accusations of ethnic discrimination are untrue. She argues that such attacks come from "a politician who reaches a cul de sac. These are personalities trying to find solace, comfort and protection from the community and to confuse others [by saying] that they are not wanted."

Antagonising the Kwanyama as a group is bound to destroy SWAPO dominance in northern Namibia. It is going to be difficult to convince many that the Kwanyama in SWAPO were not targeted for purging.

4 The Bantu language Oshivambo the original mother tongue of the Ovambo population of Namibia, which comprises roughly half of the total population of the country and forms the backbone of SWAPO's support. Together with Ndonga, Kwanyama is the most widely spread Oshivambo dialect.

5 Omusati is a region in northern Namibia from where Nujoma originates. It comprises a cluster of smaller dialects within the Ovambo group.

Identity politics

Across Namibia more opposition parties are increasingly choosing to carve out pockets of support. Many opposition leaders in Namibia seem to be gravitating towards their tribal groups just to stay in the game. To depend on one ethnic group outside the northern regions of Ovambo is of course futile, unless the party has no intention of taking government control.

Of the parties in parliament, CoD, SWAPO, and to a lesser extent Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) may be considered broad and nationalistic. The United Democratic Front (UDF) have decided to stick to the Damara speaking votes. Their leader is a Damara traditional chief. Monitor Action Group appear content with its white base. Although the Republican Party has made efforts to draw votes elsewhere it remains largely a party for Afrikaners. The National Unity Democratic Organisation's (NUDO) president is the Herero chief, Kuaima Riruako. Thus NUDO has claimed that ethnic territory.

Without capturing parts of the SWAPO areas to build a stronghold in northern Namibia, parties such as the RDP might get nowhere. This seems to be the advantage many observers see with the RDP. It has the potential to take substantial votes from SWAPO in northern Namibia. Such a momentum, with an excitement that it seems to have built up among the younger generation dissatisfied with the status quo, can propel it to edge out SWAPO in other parts of Namibia.

Taste of support

It is difficult to measure RDP's support just yet. Two elections in northern Namibia over the coming few months are expected to give some indication of its backing. What seems clear is that most of the people excited about RDP are relatively young. SWAPO (by implication Nujoma) will continue to get accolades for toppling apartheid South Africa. The brutality of the colonial rulers has given SWAPO and Nujoma the edge as the only ones to be trusted with ensuring that murder and mayhem does not return. However, that counts for little political capital among younger Namibians weighed down by poor education, unemployment (at over 35 percent nationally) and HIV-AIDS.

SWAPO itself has been frantic since the formation of RDP. It has held rallies to remind audiences of its liberation history and achievements since

independence. In some instance, in fact, the formation of RDP has awakened passion in SWAPO supporters who had taken its dominance as unassailable. The formation of CoD similarly galvanised SWAPO in 1999 to trounce the opposition with an increased majority.

But pundits say the excitement may not be as wildly misplaced this time. Tsudao Gurirab, a parliamentarian for CoD, says he does not see SWAPO getting more than 50 percent of the votes in the next elections. Gurirab believes RDP will win 25 percent of the votes, drawing substantially from the SWAPO strongholds of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto regions. The volatile Caprivi region is expected to swing away from SWAPO. Some SWAPO regional councillors have already defied the ruling party when choosing the head of the regional government.

However, political science lecture at the Polytechnic of Namibia, Andrew Niikondo, says the best RDP can hope for in the upcoming local elections in Omuthiya-Gwiipundi (Oshikoto region) is 10%. By contrast Niikondo believes that SWAPO might edge out the RDP only by a slender margin in a by-election of Eenhana constituency (Ohangwena region) to be held in three months.

SWAPO's advantage is its incumbency. In the past, the ruling party has used the state machinery in terms of policy and material resources to lure votes. Whether the patronage will continue to work as effectively remains to be seen.

SWAPO can outspend its opponents in sheer cash. It has been getting more than N\$12 million (1.2 million Euro) a year from the state over the past 10 years. The rest of the opposition parties in parliament shared 200,000 Euro over the same period. In contrast to opposition parties, SWAPO has profitable businesses that get multi-million dollar government contracts. Opposition parties that receive little to no state-funding (the RDP, of course, receives no state funding at all), may find it hard to sustain their campaigns until end 2009.

Popularity and dissatisfaction

Opposition parties will have to rely on growing dissatisfaction with SWAPO. Personality politics is expected to dominate because RDP leaders and those in SWAPO have worked side by side for decades. SWAPO is already complaining that the RDP has left moles among its ranks. The ruling party's youth wing has instigated proactive expulsions from the party.

This could play in the hands of the challengers if innocent people were caught in the crossfire. Nyamu says RDP has not planted its sympathizers in SWAPO. Nevertheless, several more former top leaders in SWAPO are expected to defect to RDP or simply resign from the ruling party to show displeasure.

These are people still bitter with being casualties of Nujoma's anti-Hamutenya campaign.

While Nujoma's retirement as SWAPO president in December 2007 might have deflated some huffing and further defections, Nujoma was given a *carte blanche* role in the party, and that is fodder for opposition attacks.

The concern on many minds is how SWAPO will respond to a formidable challenger in its backyard. If the ruling party were to lose any of the upcoming elections in the north, it could overreact with violence. Prime Minister Nahas Angula has already predicted that his party might not accept anyone campaigning freely in the four northern central regions. It is difficult to say with certainty how SWAPO will take being beaten in those areas because its support there has never been at risk before. A lot will depend on SWAPO and Namibia's President Pohamba.

Pohamba has been president of Namibia since March 2005. He took over the SWAPO leadership in December 2007. He is seen as a unifying figure in SWAPO. To non-SWAPO members his mild mannerism is more assuring than the antagonistic for-or-against attitude of former president Nujoma. However, how quickly Pohamba uses his newly consolidated powers, especially against Nujoma's wishes, remains to be seen. People in SWAPO say Nujoma remains powerful to the extent that ministers still take their cue from him in decisions that the Pohamba administration makes. A newly elected Politburo member said he will find it difficult to speak or vote against Nujoma who has been given all "rights and privileges and, at his discretion, to attend meetings of any party structure, in particular, the Central Committee and the Politburo".

Most important decisions in SWAPO are taken at the Politburo with the Central Committee and Congress often serving as rubber stamps. Pohamba still defers to Nujoma. It might be too much to read into the symbolism portrayed after Pohamba had been elected head of SWAPO to add to that of state president: Standing up to walk out of the meeting hall, Pohamba rushed Nujoma to take the lead. But Nujoma, perhaps acutely aware of the implications

or interpretation, motioned the head of state to take the lead.

It will be interesting to see how quickly Pohamba gets used to being the commander and no longer the most trusted Nujoma lieutenant that he has been since the 1960s. As Nujoma takes to the road to campaign against his former comrades in the RDP, it

could get nasty.

In the coming two years, if RDP's promise bears fruit, Namibia's democracy will be paraded and be shown up to have either matured or regressed to the level of other sorry states in Africa. For, a lot will depend on how SWAPO will handle defeat on a substantial scale.

Biography

Tangeni Josua Immanuel Amupadhi

Tangeni Amupadhi is a co-founder and editor of Insight Namibia, a monthly current affairs magazine. He is a Nieman fellow Class '07, Harvard, with undergraduate education from Cape Peninsula University of Technology in South Africa. He was the political editor of The Namibian, the country's leading daily newspaper.

From 1996 to 1999 Tangeni was staff writer at the Mail & Guardian, in Johannesburg, where started as an intern. He covered education, crime and human rights. His journalism career began at the Namibia Press Agency (Nampa) in February 1991.



Post-Polokwane challenges for the new ANC Leadership

By Jan Hofmeyr

If one were to write a script documenting Thabo Mbeki's dramatic rise and fall from the presidency of South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) in December 2007, it would arguably have begun with the following caution: "One temptation of a leader elected unopposed is that he may use that powerful position to settle scores with his detractors, marginalise them and surround himself with yes-men and –women ... a leader must keep the forces together but you cannot do that unless you allow dissent."

The wise counsel came ten years earlier in the sweltering heat of the Northwest Province town, Mafikeng, at the ANC's 50th National conference from none other than the then outgoing president,

Nelson Mandela¹. Whether the party's iconic leader was simply handing down party wisdom from one generation to another, or whether he sensed something about the inclinations of his deputy's leadership style at the time is uncertain. It is, however, common cause today that it has been Mbeki's failure to sufficiently heed the advice of his predecessor that has placed him in his current predicament.

To be sure, steering a country through a critical transitional period, as Mbeki had to do, required steely nerve and decisive leadership. While Mandela reigned over democratic South Africa's first five 'rainbow years', playing a unifying (and endearing) role after decades of legislated racial segregation,

¹ The 50th National Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) was held from 16-20 December 1997. At the Conference Thabo Mbeki was elected the new President of the ANC and successor of Nelson Mandela. He also succeeded Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in 1997.

Mbeki had to preside over the difficult period where strong medicine had to be administered to undo the structural legacy of apartheid. This not only related to the dismantling of discriminatory legislation, but also required the painful integration of an inward-looking and debt-ridden domestic economy into the global economy – a project that had already begun with the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Strategy during his deputy presidency. His success in the latter regard has probably been one of his greatest achievements. Together with a strong Treasury under Trevor Manuel (in concert with Pravin Gordhan's highly efficient SA Revenue Service), his legacy will be an economy with its fundamentals in place, an extended period of robust growth, and a surplus budget containing very low debt service costs. In addition the South African state is able today to provide various forms of social welfare to an unprecedented 12 million South Africans².

But the process of cementing the country's economic fundamentals came at a cost to Mbeki. The implementation of market friendly policies required belt tightening, which included considerable reductions in the budget deficit that negatively affected social spending; privatisation – or 'restructuring of state assets' as government euphemistically referred to it – that saw the shedding of millions of jobs; and the relaxation of import duties and other external barriers, which suffocated certain labour intensive, but uncompetitive industries. Because it was clear from the outset that the ANC's alliance partners to the left, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP)³, would interpret it as a betrayal of the alliance's economic direction at the time, Mbeki and his confidantes effectively sidelined them from all related planning and policy-making processes. Several alliance meetings to discuss the economy were called off at the last minute, and only resumed with grand promises of concessions in the run-up to critical elections. As far as influence within the ANC's most powerful structures, the National Executive Committee (NEC)⁴ and the National Working Committee (NWC), is concerned, Mbeki's centrists also had the upper hand.

2 Total population is currently estimated at 48 million (2007).

3 The ANC forms an alliance together with COSATU and the SACP. The parliamentary wing of this alliance is usually referred to as the "Tripartite Alliance".

4 The members of ANC National Executive Committee (currently 80 members) are elected at ANC national conferences. The NEC is the highest decision-making body between conferences. The NEC then elects its National Working Committee (NWC, currently 28 members). The NWC meets twice a month and is usually seen as playing a very active role in current party affairs.

Mbeki, who increasingly appeared to have more time for his panels of national and international business advisors than for his comrades in the alliance, fell out of favour with the left.

Central to his political governance strategy was the centralisation of power within the Presidency, which grew exponentially in its staff compliment, and ultimately resulted in the decline of the political influence of national parliament and the provincial legislatures. All director-generals of government departments are today appointed by the president and are in most instances political deployments with strong loyalty to the ruling party. Policy is crafted in the executive arm of government, and ANC-dominated legislatures have, with few exceptions, become the rubber stamps that ensure the passage of policy into law. The fact that all members of the national and provincial legislatures are appointed by their parties on the basis of a party list proportional representation electoral system, and ANC provincial premiers are imposed on provinces by the president himself, serves as disincentives for ANC public representatives to stray from party line. Those like former ANC MP, Andrew Feinstein, who have dared to do so in relation to the country's highly controversial arms deal⁵, incurred the wrath of the party, as he accounts in his recently released book, *After the Party*.

Strong arm tactics were also used against those who were perceived to pose a threat to Mbeki's firm grip on the party. In 2001 the late Minister for Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, stunned the nation when he linked prominent ANC businessmen Tokyo Sexwale, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Matthew Phosa (at the time regarded as three potential threats to Mbeki's reign over the party) to a plot aiming to oust the president. The allegation proved to be based on the word of a highly unreliable party source, but the episode gave rise to the first speculation that, when pressed, Mbeki might resort to the use of state apparatus to settle party scores. Shortly thereafter Jacob Zuma⁶, inexplicably, addressed a press conference to announce that he does not have presidential ambitions.

When Zuma, now an emerging presidential contender, was eventually charged with rape and corruption (2005), the incident described above

5 The South African ANC Government finalised the purchase of weaponry in a US\$ 4,8 billion deal in 1999. The whole process was allegedly heavily tainted by corruption and has become known as the infamous "Arms Deal".

6 Zuma was Deputy President of South Africa at the time.

became a key point of reference for accusations that he was yet another victim of a state funded party vendetta by Mbeki to eliminate his opponents. Of course, as we now know, these events set in motion a bitter polarising battle for control of the ANC with supporters of Zuma on the one side, and those of Mbeki on the other.

It is important to understand that this constellation of a very strong presidency, weak opposition parties, meek legislatures, loyal political deployments in the civil service (not least the intelligence and law enforcement agencies) and marginalised alliance partners vested considerable power in the hands of the president. It is the sheer magnitude of this power that allowed Mbeki to confuse South Africans with his unscientific views on HIV/AIDS, and retain the services of a highly ineffective Minister of Health⁷, simply because she shared these views. It is this power that has ran roughshod over the outcomes of public consultation processes, and that removed him so far from the lived reality of ordinary South Africans to state that the seriousness of crime in this country is a matter of perception rather than reality. Most significantly though, it is this very same power constellation that now has to be shared, and in less than one and a half years be transferred in its entirety to a new guard under Jacob Zuma. This is not to imply that the new leadership will overstep its power, but the apparatus and infrastructure to do so will certainly remain at its disposal.

It might be too early to predict what an ANC under Zuma would look like. This would probably also be the biggest challenge for the ANC in months to come – to create certainty and confidence amongst citizens and investors about the direction the country will be taking under the new leadership. The party is acutely aware of this. Prior to his election as ANC president, Zuma undertook a whistle-stop tour of North America, Europe, and Asia to ensure business leaders that under him there will be no major changes in economic policy and no populist politics of the kind that his detractors have warned about. Cosatu and SACP leaders have also been at pains to explain that they will not put undue pressure on Zuma to make radical interventions in the economy, despite their significant contribution to his election victory.

7 Manto Tshabalala-Msimang has served as South Africa's health minister in Mbeki's cabinet since 1999. She has repeatedly been the focus of strong international criticism as a result of her remarks on treating HIV/AIDS with vegetables such as garlic and beetroot.

One should also be careful not to overstate the potential influence of the alliance partners on future party policy. Obviously there will be rewards for their support, but the current structure of the global economy will make it extremely difficult to venture too far astray from South Africa's current policies. The re-election of Trevor Manuel⁸ (probably the one person apart from Mbeki who incurred the most scorn from the left) onto the NEC provides the most vivid illustration of how the market has forced itself on the Zuma lobby at the conference.

The key resolutions – some of them not so new – that were taken at the National Conference included amongst other things, the provision of free education to the poor up to undergraduate level; expanding “no-fee” schools to 60 percent (of all schools) by 2009; extending child support grants from 14 to 18 years; and the provision of anti-retroviral Aids treatment at all health facilities. While this can hardly be interpreted as a drastic swing to the left, all these proposals have cost implications. Their proponents suggest that for a country with a budget surplus, the cost should not be an issue. As clouds are gathering on the international economic front, such analyses will probably be reviewed.

The challenge of creating political certainty, it therefore appears, will not be as much a matter of the policy content, as it will be the ability to retain continuity in the interpretation and implementation of existing policy. A glance at the new enlarged NEC makes it obviously clear that, with the exception of Joel Netshitenzhe and Manuel, the body has been culled from most Mbeki loyalists. The new NWC, which is responsible for the day-to-day running of the party, contains only 7 out of the 26 members that sat on the previous NWC. Given the large number of new faces one cannot help but conclude that a new government in 2009 will look markedly different from the one that South Africa has today. This has probably been most evident in the election of the NWC with its operational mandate. Until December 2007 this body, with the exception of the top six in the party's leadership structure, was almost entirely populated by senior cabinet ministers. This provided a direct policy link between the party and its representatives in the executive. It is unthinkable that this link would be severed or weakened by the new guard.

8 Trevor Manuel has been South Africa's finance minister under Mandela and Mbeki since 1996. He is regarded as one of the key architects of government's GEAR macroeconomic policy, which has been the target of vicious criticism by the ANC's alliance partners on the left.

Apart from new faces in government, Mbeki's appointments in the civil service will probably also be reviewed. While a full-scale purge is unlikely, it is possible that the contracts of key civil servants will not be renewed. From a government efficiency perspective, the spectre of either a new minister or a new director-general or both will undoubtedly have significant implications for policy implementation and continuity.

While the ANC has already started to rearrange its parliamentary party caucus to bring it in line with the new leadership, such major developments will in all likelihood only materialise in 2009 when the new leadership moves into government positions. But it might be earlier, should the current "two centres of power scenario" (Zuma in charge of the party and Mbeki in charge of government) become an untenable arrangement for the party. Already the signs are ominous. Despite calls by the new party leadership not to confirm nominations for the new SABC board⁹, Mbeki has gone ahead and signed it into power. His absence from the first meeting of the new NEC and the 96th birthday celebrations of the ANC¹⁰ has also not gone by unnoticed. Zuma in return has warned that if government fails to implement the party's conference resolutions, means will be found to ensure that it does comply.

Even if it should happen that Mbeki is toppled by a vote of no confidence in Parliament – which at this stage seems unlikely – the problem of disunity will remain, and hence the healing of these rifts in the party will become one of its greatest challenges in the year leading up to the next general election in 2009. Although the Mbeki lobby received around 40 per cent of the vote at the 2007 ANC conference in Polokwane, its representation in both the NEC and NWC is far below this margin. Ways will have to be found to ensure their constructive participation in the party, and by implication also the governance of the country. Although a split in the party looks improbable at this stage, it would however be wise for Zuma and his leadership collective to reflect on Mandela's counsel to Mbeki a decade ago.

Probably the greatest political uncertainty centres around Zuma's impending prosecution by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) on several corruption-

related charges, for which a court date in August 2008 has already been set. As could be expected Zuma and his supporters have questioned the timing of the announcement (right after the national conference) and the political motive behind it. Against this background the Polokwane conference resolution to disband the Scorpions¹¹ that investigates his case, should not come as a surprise. It is however very disturbing to note the tone that members of the new party leadership have taken towards the independence of the judiciary in this matter. One can only hope that sanity will prevail.

In Zuma's defence it has to be said that the NPA's conduct in recent years has done little to allay suspicion that he is indeed a political target. It was after all their overzealous approach that led to the dismissal of his first corruption case on technicalities. Yet, whether targeted or not, the pronouncement of the Durban High Court that a highly questionable financial relationship existed between Zuma and his former financial advisor, Schabir Shaik, still stands. The High Court's conviction of Shaik has subsequently also been confirmed by the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein and the Constitutional Court, and failure to pursue this finding may further create the perception of political interference. This is something that the country can least afford at this point in time. Given the National Intelligence Agency's (NIA) embroilment last year in the Mbeki/Zuma leadership contest and the damaging current stand-off between the NPA and the SA Police Service, South African law enforcement agencies will have to restore public faith in their ability to protect citizens instead of fighting factional party battles.

It is still unclear at this stage what the ANC's strategy would be, should the case or its findings make it untenable for Zuma to remain in his current position. Already the name of the party's deputy president, Kgalema Motlanthe, has been mentioned as a possible replacement. A mild-mannered former trade unionist and, up to December, Secretary General of the ANC, Motlanthe has earlier indicated that he is not interested in running for the position. This may yet change. Should he be called to duty, this party loyalist will find it hard to decline. Asked about this on national television, his response was: "We will cross that bridge when we get there".

Interestingly, this has also become a stock phrase since

⁹ SABC is the state-owned broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation. In the past, it has been repeatedly criticised for self-censorship and lack of objectivity. The members of the SABC Board, who "manages the macro interests of the SABC" are appointed by the President of South Africa.

¹⁰ The ANC was initially established as the South African Native National Congress on 8 January 1912.

¹¹ The "Scorpions" (officially the "Directorate of Special Operations") are an elite unit of the NPA that investigates corruption and organised crime. The unit was set up in 1999 under the Mbeki government.

for party representatives to respond to several of the uncertainties mentioned above. It should however be asked how constructive this is for allaying investor fears.

What can we learn from the tumultuous two years behind us? Firstly, ordinary people still matter and political leaders ignore them at their peril, as so vividly illustrated on the first day of the Polokwane conference. This should be a lesson for the ANC as a party, but also for the ANC as a custodian of government. Its decision at the conference to scrap floor crossing¹² is a very important recognition of this problem, as is the resolution to allow its provincial premiers to be nominated by the provincial executive committees and not the president of the party. Yet, this needs to go further. The country has to rethink its current electoral system that does not encourage transparency and accountability of elected representatives. The Slabbert Commission has already done such a review for government, but it has since been gathering dust in the Home Affairs Department. Directly elected representatives in a hybrid system will arguably make our legislatures far more responsive to the needs of ordinary constituents.

In my opinion, however, the biggest weakness that has been exposed by the ANC's power struggle in the run-up to Polokwane, is the flawed relationship

that has developed between state and party. The ANC policy of making strategic deployments to leadership positions in the civil service and various other spheres of society appears to have backfired. Some of these deployments have extremely close relations, forged by shared struggle, to the party and to individuals within it. It was inevitable therefore, as the party divided into two camps, that strategically placed ANC cadres in the civil service would take sides. When the crunch came, it now appears, these close ties made it relatively easy for key state agencies such as the South African Police Service, National Prosecuting Authority, National Intelligence Authority to be drawn into, and employed by some of the main protagonists in the party. If this analysis is correct, it not only amounts to an abuse of state resources, but also to a prioritisation of party interests over state security. The lines have simply become too blurred.

While the ANC may still govern for years to come, its exposed fragility of the past year suggest that it might not be 'until Jesus Christ returns', as Zuma once famously predicted. For the present it has been entrusted with the custodianship of the state, but it may not lose sight of the fact that ownership resides with the people of South Africa. As before, citizens expect of the ruling party to nurture and vigilantly protect the state and its institutions for generations to come – regardless of who its custodian in future might be. It will ignore this at its own peril, and regrettably also, as the continuing controversy around the country's law enforcement agencies demonstrates, that of the state.

12 The name refers to so called "floor-crossing" periods (two weeks, twice in an electoral term). During these periods, Members of Parliament, Provincial Parliaments and Local Government councilors could change political parties (or form a new party) and retain their seats. The first floor crossing window was in 2005, and the last in 2007. Analysts have argued that the floor crossing system alienates voters, since it allows elected politicians to effectively 'reallocate' votes. Some critiques have also argued that it had opened the door to corruption and intimidation.

Biography

Jan Hofmeyr

Jan Hofmeyr is the acting Programme Manager of the Political Analysis Programme of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, a Cape Town-based non-profit organisation that works in the field of transitional justice in several African states. He is principal analyst of the Institute's annual national public opinion survey, and editor of its quarterly publication, the *SA Reconciliation Barometer*. Hofmeyr holds post-graduate degrees in Political Management and Journalism from the University of Stellenbosch.



Perspectives is published by the HBS Southern Africa Office in Cape Town.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the HBS.

Hard copies of *Perspectives* are available from our Cape Town office, and electronic versions at www.boell.org.za

Please send us your comments or suggestions to perspectives@boell.org.za

Edited by

Antonie Katharina Nord
Dirk Spilker

Layout & Design

Catherine Coetzer, c2designs

Heinrich Boell Stiftung Southern Africa
123 Hope Street, The Avalon Building I
Gardens 8001, Cape Town
Tel. +27 - (0)21 - 461 62 66
Fax +27 - (0)21 - 462 71 87
www.boell.org.za

BOILING POINT

Leonie Joubert

with photographic contributions
from Santu Mofokeng

Available at HBS office in Cape Town

