



NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Sinking fast!

*We are taking on water, signals for help are ignored,
our leaders have abandoned ship*



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Cover Photo: The Raft of the Medusa
by French artist Théodore Géricault

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Editorial

Beyond the tipping point

By Martin Nicol

We have on the cover of *New Agenda* 88 a painting of a ragged raft at sea, bearing distressed castaways hoping against hope for rescue. Every person in South Africa is reminded of the desperation of our plight every day by the relentless electrical power blackouts.

Economists debate the impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and whether lost production should be measured in billions or trillions of rands. Ordinary citizens suffer transport disruption, cell phone outages and the closure of government offices, which shut down when the power fails – Home Affairs, courts, UIF, social grants offices, post offices ... Lives are just put on hold. Every day South Africans are faced with the relentless electrical power blackouts. Government has declared a “state of disaster”.

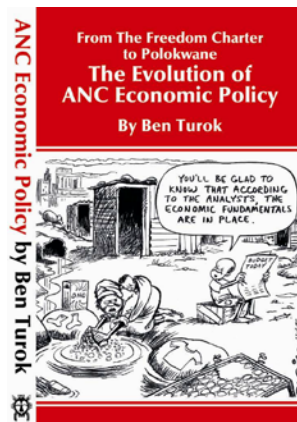
The huge impact of the loadshedding is ironic. Democratic South Africa has become much more widely dependant on electrical power and on government services because of the pro-poor policies of the ANC government.

As a retiree from government, with 12 years of pensionable service, I have been able to take an annual break on the rural Eastern Cape Wild Coast. In 2022, electricity arrived – or the poles and cables able to carry electricity did. The remote rolling hills are now spiked with an electricity reticulation system provided by a subcontractor to Eskom. This should herald development. “Soviets plus electrification equals socialism” was the slogan of Lenin in the 1920s. But the switch-on was delayed. And there is no promise of affordability or reliability of supply.

Our “soviets”, representative assemblies at all levels, are each in differing degrees of extreme crisis. They all reflect weakness in financial management, leadership and public confidence. From corrupt school governing bodies to the burnt-out benches of Parliament, our public sector is ravaged by institutional decline.

Fifteen years ago, the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), the publishers of *New Agenda*, issued a book reviewing ANC economic policy titled “From the Freedom Charter to Polokwane”. It was written by the founder of IFAA, the late Professor Ben Turok. The cover illustration was a Zapiro cartoon with a biting satirical comment against the then Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and his policies of austerity and fiscal discipline.

The cartoon features a young person – who would almost certainly be an unemployed youth still today – reading a newspaper (remember them!) in an abandoned informal settlement next to a city. The comment reading: “You will be glad to know that according to the analysts, the economic fundamentals are in place”.



Just a few years on, the question is what happens when the economic fundamentals are no longer in place?

Cde Trevor went on to head the National Planning Commission, a body tasked with plotting the next phase of developmental progress. The ten-year anniversary of the ambitious National Development Plan (NDP) went by completely unremarked in 2022. Government stopped publishing the useful annual statistical report on NDP performance several years before. The fundamental economic indicators have long been in the toilet.

One could talk further of the dystopian scenes of congested chaos every day on the crumbling N2 and N3 highways between the Durban airport and Pietermaritzburg – all made worse by the collapse of the Transnet rail network.

One could reflect on what happens when criminal gangs (in Cape Town too) begin to assume local state responsibilities as they take power over communities. (There are bleak parallels here with Haiti and with accounts of the role of violent extremist groups across Africa – see page 4, below).

And the beyond disgraceful behaviour of NEHAWU and its members in their strike against hospitals and patients.

But this does not give hope, or provide a way forward. The fact is that rescue can only come from ourselves. And that does not mean 4x4s to glide over potholed roads, gated security compounds and personal off-grid solar power. It has to come from strong institutions and from what I can only call “better behaviour”.

IFAA has in place initiatives

to support institutional recovery and development. The most recent is the project to Defend Constitutional Democracy (Decode) – supporting Parliament and civil society in implementing the specific recommendations of the Zondo Commission for improving the accountability of public institutions.

This issue of *New Agenda* reports on another new IFAA project, which is about re-jigging *New Agenda* itself to meet the standards for an accredited journal set by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Existing IFAA research projects are reflected in the section on Young Climate Voices, where the challenges of adapting to, and mitigating, the effects of global warming are considered by young scholars and analysts.

Other contributions include reviews of three new enticing and important books – on Tigray, on colonialism and on the defeat of apartheid. Also inside is an incisive analysis of the State Security Agency; and a controversial commentary on the history of Eastern Europe and Muscovy (to which reader reaction is invited). We are grateful to *Vrye Weekblad*

for permission to reprint a chilling article by Anneliese Burgess on Fort Hare University. In the face of university staff being murdered by corruption criminals it praises the determined fightback of its VC, Sakhela Buhlungu, to “uncapture” the university.

A slogan of hope, dating from the 1930s and widely used in South Africa in the darkest days of apartheid was: “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will”. In his reply to the debate on the 2023 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa criticised “merchants of despair”. So must we all. **NA**

We are sinking fast



For this issue of *New Agenda*, IFAA has chosen as its cover picture *The Raft of the Medusa* by French artist Théodore Géricault. A grim portrayal of human suffering, our aim is not to shock readers or cause dismay. This painting, which now hangs in the Louvre in Paris, was chosen as a symbol of our time and place. It powerfully captures the current national mood of despair.

As a country we are sinking fast. Our leaders have chosen their own interests over the common good and – without belabouring the symbolism – have cast citizens adrift in a sea of despair. It’s a heavy-handed metaphor but it speaks to us as a nation. We are taking on

water and our signals for help are going unnoticed.

Géricault’s painting caused an outcry when it was first publicly exhibited in France in 1819. It was roundly denounced for its compassion for the individual suffering of the poor and lowly – all of which was unusual for the time. *Salon* art traditionally featured the powerful and noble attending gracious occasions – and steered away from real-life drama.

For those unfamiliar with this piece of art, it depicts the aftermath of the 1816 shipwreck of French Navy frigate *Medusa* off the coast of Senegal, while on a journey to transport French officials to reclaim the territory as a colony. The captain with his senior officers and a handful of politicians, commandeered the few available lifeboats, leaving some 150 crew, slaves and destitute passengers adrift on a hastily improvised raft. After a 13-day ordeal, 15 survivors were found alive, five of whom died within days of their rescue, making this painting a not-very-subtle political statement about the rich and powerful, their determined self-interest and their cruel disregard for the rest.

Why refer to an icon of 19th century European art to tell us what we already know about the corruption and incompetence of those in positions of power who cruelly abandon the poor and powerless?

In the wake of our own steadily unfolding shipwreck what particularly resonates for us in South Africa is the apparently widely known lack of experience of the captain who was reported to be a political appointment with connections in the French monarchy who gained his rank despite his clear incompetence.

As it did then, Géricault’s painting exposed scandalous political implications and continues to loudly and boldly speak truth to power ...

... and the story goes that despite a promise to tow the raft behind them to safety, an officer in the governor’s lifeboat took an axe and cut through the rope to prevent it impeding the progress of the lifeboats, casting the raft adrift in the open ocean and abandoning its passengers without any means of navigating to shore. **NA**

Violent extremism in Africa

Case study: Mozambique

Resource survey by Martin Nicol

Dr Nicol is the editor of the Institute for African Alternative's flagship magazine, *New Agenda*. He was the senior researcher on IFAA's Checks and Balances Project and is currently the senior consultant on IFAA's Defending Constitutional Democracy (Decode) project. With a background in trade unionism, political activism and civil service, he retired from the research unit of the South African Parliament in 2019.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published a series of well-written, innovative research studies that focus on violent extremism Africa. In this effort to present the outlines of the UN research, MARTIN NICOL focuses on northern Mozambique – although the studies on which he draws cover the whole continent.

The long-running security crisis in Cabo Delgado, a province rich in natural gas and gemstones and once one of Mozambique's major tourist destinations, began in 2017 when a gang of some 30 local youths attacked a police station to steal arms. By 2019, insurgents were declaring allegiance to the Islamic State (IS or ISIL) – but this was as a “flag of convenience” for aggrieved local residents, rather than an indication of actual foreign participation (Vines, 2021). The Mozambican state, and the ruling

Frelimo party, have been harried by so many issues since independence in 1974 that remote areas of the country have been completely neglected.

As a respected analyst¹ has said: “The root causes of this insurgency are all Mozambican: inequality, abject poverty, local elite and ethnic politics, and organized crime” (Vines, 2021).

It is by exploiting localised grievances, and positioning themselves as alternative service providers to the formal state, that local ideological affiliates of global terrorist organisations such as ISIL and Al-Qaida have penetrated new areas. They are “grievance entrepreneurs” (Hamladji & Rizk, 2023).

The UNDP studies (2017, 2022, 2023) cover global violent extremist groups, such as Al-Qaida and Daesh, which have spread into many regions of Africa – Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, DRC, Somalia and Mozambique. Many local extremist groups have pledged their loyalty to one or the other.

Despite persistent and costly national and international efforts, states in most regions seem not to be winning the competition with them for control of their territory.

The UNDP (2022) observes that:

- these groups operate in the

complex, shifting conflict ecosystems of these regions;

- their progress must be viewed in the context of the relationships between populations and their ecosystems as well as between competing political elites; and
- they seem to be evolving from small bands towards protostate competitors for communities' allegiance.

Violent extremist groups in these regions are both global and local, both ideological and economic. Reform champions (and the groups themselves) operate within a wider political economy characterised by the “business models” of patrimonial elites.

“As they expand in size and resources, buttressed by a link to a global ideological orientation, some violent extremist groups organize in ways akin to local government structures. They begin to compete with the state not only by monopolizing the threat/use of violence – in this case, instilling terror – but also by promising some of the most essential local services that people are aspiring to, such as a relative sense of security, sources of income and swift adjudication of disputes” (Hamladji & Rizk, 2023).

Insecurity, poverty and violence are



Source: Flickr

no accident of limited capacity. They are a product of elite interests. These elites depend on the persistence of identity group grievances and fears to bolster their positions – grievances they may create as well as manipulate. That context means that agendas of reform, modernisation or countering instability and violence need to be realistic, reflecting the true room for reform within the balance of power among these competing forces. That, in turn, entails an up to date understanding of what enables or impedes the expansion and entrenchment of violent extremist groups.

They prey on local grievances, which cement their foothold within aggrieved communities. Through their local presence, they generate the (usually illicit) revenues required to operate group structures. Those activities bring them into contact with purely criminal groups, with whom they share an interest in weakening state capacity in the areas they control, regardless of their different motivations and ultimate goals.

Common threads running through these conflicts include:

- remoteness from the capital city (and a resulting sense of marginalisation, exacerbated

“

Violent extremist groups in these regions are both global and local, both ideological and economic.

by a capital-centric allocation of state resources) – Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, is over 1,600km from Cabo Delgado;

- a sense of unfairness, discrimination or victimisation among communities (which is readily appropriated for recruitment into extremist groups), often related to abuses by state forces or associated militias;
- perceptions of corruption (in the broadest sense of the word) among a wide spectrum of elites and powerholders;
- grievances over (perceptions of)

unfair land management, which is inextricably linked to water resource access, and associated land degradation (exacerbated by climate change); and

- slow or ineffective state provision of justice and dispute resolution.

Violent extremist groups may take advantage of environmental degradation and unfair land management to position themselves as righters of wrongs, regulators of access to natural resources and providers of justice and administrative services, as well as livelihood substitutes. Conflict analysis needs to include not only the political dynamics between various identities, livelihoods, political groups and violent mobilisers but also the “political ecology” relationship between human populations and their ecosystems.

EVERY PLACE HAS ITS OWN STORY

Each place is different and each has its own story. This is a critical point to remember when reading general summaries of trends in extremist violence. One has to understand the local, specific conditions. However, the situation seems to be generally ➤

evolving towards effective competition with the state.

The strategic threat may be shifting from the radicalisation of individuals – as explored in UNDP’s ground-breaking 2017 research study *Journey to Extremism* – to include this new dimension. As they get bigger and richer, some of these groups build local structures that are very like a state. Indeed, they begin to compete with governments not only through coercion but also by promising some of the most essential local services that people want, like safety and swift decisions on disputes. They may do so cruelly and oppressively, but even that may initially be attractive to communities that are weary of lawlessness and insecurity.

This is more evident in longer-standing groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia than in newer groups like those in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, while those in the Sahel are developing towards the type of capacity seen in Somalia. None is yet a “caliphate,” as Daesh (unjustifiably) proclaimed itself to be, nor are any yet in power like the Taliban in Afghanistan, but the response to the threat they pose needs a strategy that acknowledges this new state of affairs.

Insurgent groups are often associated with terms such as “warlord”, or “Big Man”. Some local extremist groups carry the name of their central figure but there is also some indication that groups are shifting structurally from being classic “Big Man” patron-client organisations to “Big Idea” formations that derive their cohesion from ideological rather than personal alignment.

Extremist groups seek higher revenues. A detailed understanding of their sources of income might enable disruption of those income streams. Similarly, understanding how extremist groups use the money they acquire could enable further disruption of their “business models”. However, that disruption will only be effective if it avoids undermining the legitimate

livelihoods and social fabric of specific communities.

‘GRIEVANCE ENTREPRENEURS’ – WITH IDEOLOGIES

One common finding in the UNDP studies is that “violent extremist groups rarely appear in places well served by stable, predictable governments and governance systems. Instead, they operate where there is already poverty and instability, away from capital cities, in marginalized places where public services are thin or non-existent – all of which are often the product of local powerbrokers’ interests” (Hamladji & Rizk, 2023).

Violent extremist groups’ state-like behaviour poses a fresh challenge to existing authorities to identify strategic options to hold areas under government control and retake areas under extremist control. Where the state has been experienced as abusive or ineffective, however, “the return of the state” presents a challenge. The question is “the return of what kind of state”? Over-militarised responses may indeed exacerbate the problem.

The leadership of these local groups have chosen to affiliate with a sanctioned global group. They may do so for a range of reasons. Undermining the local strategy of global groups requires an understanding of the cost-benefit calculations of local elites who join – or hold back from joining – them. However, a reductionist picture of these groups as purely economic actors – or, indeed as purely grievance entrepreneurs – would lose sight of the ideological aspects of their strategy, objectives and appeal, through which they filter local grievances to give them advantages in the competition with other elites.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way forward is, first to understand and then develop an inclusive, targeted response. There

is a need to frustrate the evolving strategies of extremist groups – beyond immediate responses to the trauma that they inflict.

The co-ordinators of the UNDP research draw the following conclusions:

A new approach is needed – one that first invests in understanding the complex ways in which these violent extremist groups win hearts and minds in different communities, acting as alternatives to state authority. With this knowledge, we can work together with national and local governments to ensure a developmental, preventive, inclusive approach where people have access to the rights, goods and services they need to live prosperous lives, thus removing the power that these groups wield. Rather than helping people to get by; getting ahead, with hope and dignity, should be the goal. Through this approach, we can improve the lives of citizens and communities across the region and turn back the tide of violence and despair. The challenge remains complex and urgent, and our collective responses must overcome by being more informed, adaptive, innovative and inclusive to promote and sustain development and peace. (Hamladji and Rizk, 2023)

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Vines, A. 2021. Responding to Mozambique's Islamic Insurgency: Will Foreign Military Assistance Make a Difference? *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. Available at <https://gija.georgetown.edu/2021/09/15/responding-to-mozambiques-islamic-insurgency-will-foreign-military-assistance-make-a-difference/>

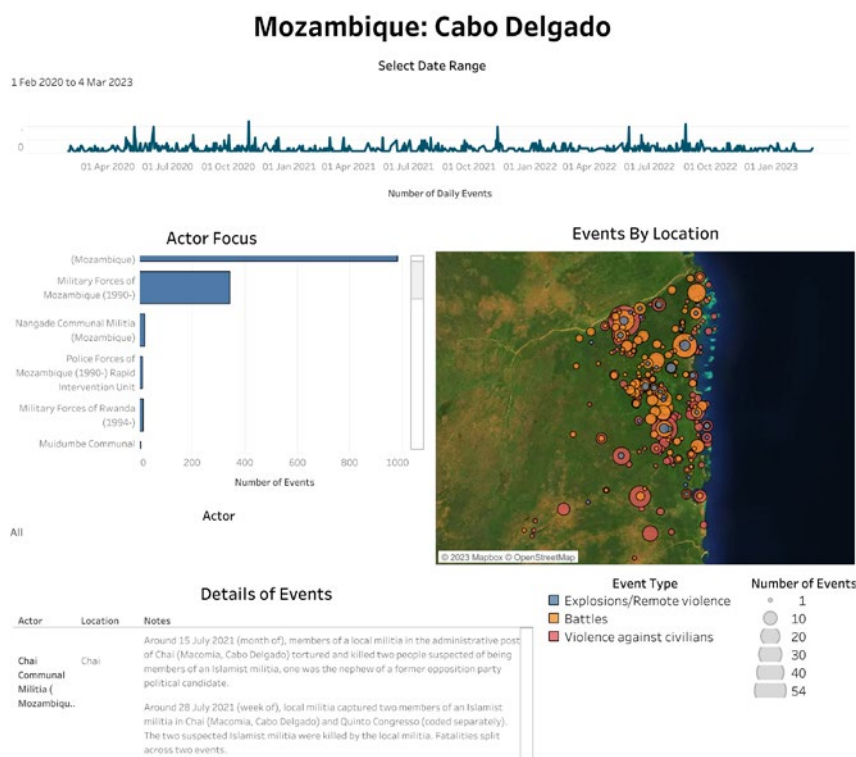
ENDNOTES

- 1 Dr Alex Vines has a long experience with Mozambique, working mainly for Chatham House, a 100-year-old, independent, international relations think-tank based in the UK..
- 2 Cabo Ligado – or 'connected cape' – is an internet-based "conflict observatory" launched by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Zitamar News, and MediaFax to monitor political violence in Mozambique. The project supports real-time data collection on the insurgency in the country's northern Cabo Delgado province and provides analysis of the latest conflict trends. Data are updated weekly..
- 3 "Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. Nevertheless, in recent years, terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate on how to address this threat. These groups' message of intolerance – religious, cultural, social – has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world." - United Nations. *The UN's Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism* (2016: 1/22) **NA**

Guides to monitor and interpret the jihadist insurgency

The conflict in northern Mozambique is often in the press – brutal acts of violence, attacks on foreign mine and gas workers, thousands of local people killed, perhaps a million people displaced; effective counter measures by Rwandan troops assisting the Mozambican government, after the failed employment of foreign mercenaries; the deployment of poorly resourced forces by the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). There is no end in sight. Things get better. Then they get worse (Davey, 2023; *Economist*, 2022 & 2020; Bofin, 2022; Vines, 2021).

Below is the most recent "dashboard" from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) online "terrorism tracker" featuring Mozambique's northern-most Cabo Delgado province, on the border with Tanzania. Also visit Events By Location online. [The interactive map](#) displays the location and the number of events recorded within the selected time frame.² The map rests on sophisticated data-bases and data-gathering that allow us to see the location and extent of harm from what is called "violent extremism".³ The Details of Events illustrate the human suffering.



Source: <https://www.cabolidado.com/dashboard>

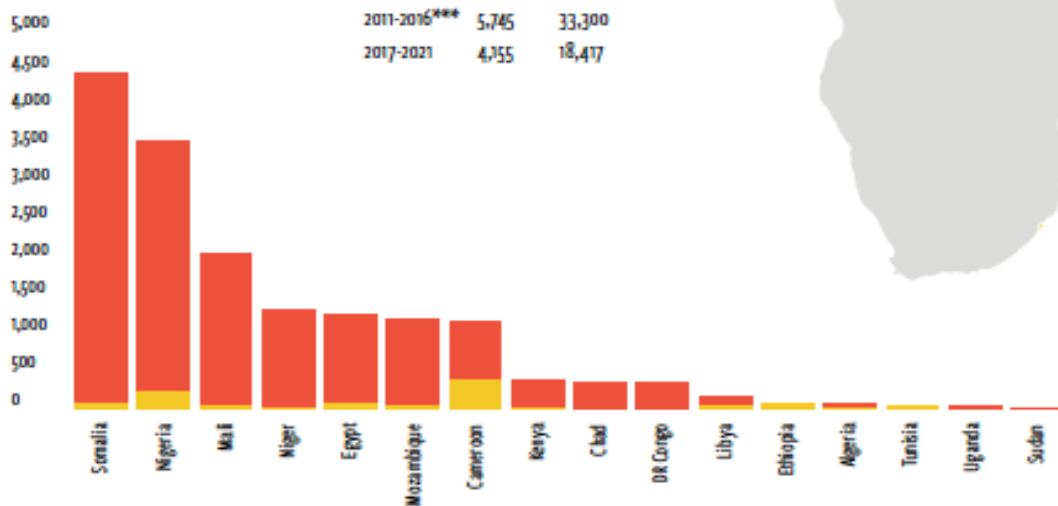
FIGURE 9 FATALITIES RELATED TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AFRICA (2017-2021*)

- Attacks carried out by groups associated with religious ideologies
- Attacks carried out by other groups

Size of bubbles correspond to the number of fatalities in a single attack, with smaller sizes reflecting lower number of fatalities. The number of fatalities during the time period range from 1 to 587.

- Fatalities in attacks carried out by groups associated with religious ideologies
- Fatalities in attacks carried out by other groups

NUMBER OF FATALITIES, by country**



* Does not cover the whole year of 2021

** Burkina not included.

*** Up to February 2016

Source: Dragonfly Terrorism Tracker, IEP Calculations

This map is from a United Nations research report released on 7 February 2023.

Source: UNDP (2023) IFAA thanks the UNDP for permission to publish this map. However, this does not suggest an endorsement of New Agenda or its contents by UNDP.

Dateline Africa

Africa tops international crisis list

1 NOVEMBER 2022- 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Eleven African countries are in the top 20 of the 2023 list of humanitarian crises in the world produced by the International Rescue Committee. Somalia is top of the list, with Ethiopia second, followed by the DRC (4th place), South Sudan (7th), Burkino Faso (8th). The top 20 include the following unranked neighbours, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Mali, Sudan and Nigeria. The annual listing focuses on “countries most at risk of new or worsening humanitarian crises in the year ahead”. Founded in 1933 in response to a call by Albert Einstein, the IRC works in more than 40 countries.

FEBRUARY 2023

25 February: Nigerians voted in presidential and national assembly elections, preserving 24 years of unbroken democratically elected rule, the longest stretch since independence in 1960. However, this does not make Nigeria a successful democracy. With a 27% poll turnout – the lowest in its electoral history – the election was dubbed “fraudulent” even before the results were released. The losing candidates wasted no time in challenging the poll as rigged and at the last count six states had asked the Supreme Court to void the results. This is a developing story and the details reported here were accurate at the time of publication. The new incumbent, Bola Tinuba, also known as the “godfather” for his divisive, behind-the-scenes political manoeuvring, looks to be as useless and disappointing as his predecessor, Muhammad Buhari – who was not on the 2023 ballot because he had already served the maximum eight years in office – who had already left Nigeria poorer, volatile and more insecure in the face of intensifying extremist attacks.



Voting in Nigeria. Source: Flickr

24 February: The African Union (AU) criticised Tunisia and urged it to avoid “racialised hate speech” after President Kais Saied ordered the expulsion of undocumented migrants – from sub-Saharan Africa. He said immigration was a plot aimed at changing Tunisia’s demography. For years, North African countries have been a stepping-stone for migrants hoping for a better life to reach Europe. Many die during the journey.

24 February: The South African government “noted” the decision by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international watchdog, to list South Africa as a “jurisdiction under increased monitoring”, commonly referred to as FATF’s “grey list”, based on its record in combating the financing of terrorism and money laundering by criminals. South Africa has promised to work actively, swiftly and effectively to address all problems with its existing systems for combating such forms of ongoing financial abuse.

17 February: Insecurity – caused both by bitter conflicts and a lack of food – topped the agenda at the annual summit of the African Union, which opened in Addis Ababa. ➤



Loadshedding in SA

9 February: South Africa declared a state of national disaster in the face of the most serious rolling electricity power cuts to date. This allows the government to resort to emergency procurement procedures with fewer bureaucratic delays but with less oversight. The promise was that hospitals and water pumping stations would be spared load-shedding, something the former CEO of Eskom, Andre de Ruyter, later warned would place the power grid under very serious threat of collapse.

9 February: A report from [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) confirms 10 African countries have reported cholera outbreaks. Worst hit continues to be Malawi, which is facing its worst cholera outbreak in two decades. Neighbouring Mozambique and Zambia have also recently reported cases. Also affected are Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. In March South Africa reported its first cases. The spread of the disease has been attributed to the climate crisis as well as conflict on the continent.

6 February: The number of people killed in violence linked to “militant Islamist groups” groups in Africa jumped by 48% in 2022, according to US military research. At least 19,109 people were killed, most of them in the Sahel and Somalia, surpassing the previous peak in 2015, and 15,258 “public violence deaths” were recorded in 2022 in Nigeria alone (according to Nigeria Watch). Such figures are hard to interpret without context and on-the-ground fact checking. (See more on militant Islamic activity in Africa on pg 4).

JANUARY 2023



Thulani Maseko. Source: AfricanDefenders

21 January: Thulani Maseko, a peaceful humanitarian and an activist lawyer against the brutal dictatorship in Eswatini/Swaziland, was assassinated at his home. After extensive unrest in 2021, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) – chaired by President Cyril Ramaphosa – compelled King Mswati to promise a “national dialogue”. The promise was never honoured and SADC never followed up.

16 January: A court in Egypt sentenced 38 people to life in prison for their role in anti-government protests in September 2019. Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt’s authoritarian president, has muzzled dissent, as evidenced in the finding that Egypt is the country in Africa with the most journalists in jail, according to The Committee to Protect Journalists, based in New York. Egypt’s total of 21 jailed journalists compares with Eritrea (16), Cameroon (5), Rwanda (4), Morocco (3), DRC (2), and Algeria, Burundi, Nigeria, Senegal and Ethiopia (1 each). Ethiopia banned journalists from covering the devastating civil war with Tigray rebels.



Tigray rebels. Source: Wikimedia Commons

11 January: Rebels in Ethiopia’s northern region of Tigray began handing over heavy weapons under a peace deal struck in South Africa in November 2022. The two-year civil war has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

11 January: Ghana became the fourth country to request debt restructuring under the G20s Common Framework initiative. The Finance Ministry will also want to include non-Paris club members, such as China, in debt relief talks. The country owes \$1.9 billion to Paris club members, who are the major creditor countries that aim to find co-ordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor countries. China, who is not a member of the Paris Club, is Ghana’s biggest bilateral creditor with \$1.7 billion of debt. Ghana’s government has slashed public spending, as it tried to contain a debt crisis that caused interest rates to soar and its currency to sink. It was in talks with the IMF over another rescue package, its 17th. Ghana has spent 22 of the past 35 years under the fund’s supervision. It is one of the most prosperous countries in the region and a lively democracy, but whenever they can get money, the politicians spend it (often on themselves and public servants).

8 January: Sudan’s political parties began talks aimed at restoring a civilian-led transition to democracy. Sudan’s military rulers reached a deal in December 2022 with pro-democracy leaders to establish a civilian-led government that will manage a transition to democracy. A previous power-sharing agreement struck after a coup in 2019 fell apart after a second coup in October 2021

6 January: The body of a man discovered stuffed in a metallic box in Kenya was identified as that of a popular Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) activist and fashion model Edwin Chiloba, amid the escalation of violence against the LGBTQ+ community.



President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Source: Wikimedia Commons

3 January: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania lifted a six-year blanket ban on the rallies of opposition political parties. Three weeks later, the main opposition leader, Tundu Lissu, returned from self-imposed exile in Belgium. He had lived there since surviving an assassination attempt in 2017 when he was shot 16 times. Rallies are an elemental feature of Tanzanian politics. The next presidential election is in October 2025.

DECEMBER 2022

22 December: Ghana announced it has suspending payments on most of its bilateral debt, a move the Ministry of Finance said was aimed at bringing the country's unsustainable debt level under control. The country spends between 70% to 100% of government revenue on debt payment.



Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project

21 December: Water began filling the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHPP) dam on the Rufiji River in southern Tanzania. Funded by Tanzania, with construction managed by the government of Egypt, the plant will produce 2,115 megawatts of electricity by 2024 and more than double the capacity of the national grid. Said to be the fourth biggest dam in Africa, it will provide a reliable supply of both water and power

for an economy long plagued by water rationing and power shortages. The dam impounds water from several rivers in the Selous Game Reserve. It will allow flood control and irrigated farming in the Rufiji delta, but is associated with extreme environmental risks.

21 December: President Adama Barrow, democratically elected as the leader of the Gambia in 2016, defeated an attempted coup engineered by supporters of the former long-term incumbent, Yahya Jammeh, now in exile in Equatorial Guinea. The Gambian army detained four soldiers linked to the alleged coup plot. Senegalese-led West African peacekeeping forces have been protecting Barrow and his government.



ANC national conference

16 December: The ANC conference in South Africa re-elected Cyril Ramaphosa as President of the party. A second deputy secretary general was added to the party leadership, turning the "top six" into the "top-seven", though that's unlikely to help the beleaguered ruling party given the lacklustre raft of members who were elected to fill its National Executive Committee.

14 December: Andre de Ruyter, the Eskom CEO, resigned as South Africa's electricity consumers faced the worst rolling power blackouts ever. He had been appointed just three years before to lead a team to rescue South Africa's state-owned electricity company, which has been hollowed out by state capture, looting and corruption. Shortly after his resignation de Ruyter reported an attack on his life by poisoning.

11 December: The bodies of 27 migrants from Ethiopia were found in Zambia, dumped by human traffickers

by the roadside after they suffocated to death in a closed container. They were believed to be on their way to South Africa.

7 December: Ndambi Guebuza, the son of Mozambique's former president, Armando Guebuza, was sentenced to 12 years in prison over a US\$2.2bn debt-and-corruption scandal. He has appealed.

NOVEMBER 2022



Kariba Dam

28 November: Zimbabwe stopped generating hydropower on the Zambezi River because of the extremely low level of the Kariba Dam. By 15 December the level of usable storage was 1.73%, compared to 21.36% on the same day in 2021. The water level in the lake decreased steadily in 2022 on account of low inflows from the mainstream Zambezi River and its tributaries. Hydropower will be restored only when the rainy season delivers new water, in the first quarter of 2023. The Kariba Lake reservoir has not been at full capacity since 2011 and, in this era of climate change, may only fill up again under rare circumstances. Kariba provides the bulk of electricity consumed in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

18 November: At the COP27 climate-change summit in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, "loss and damage" took centre stage. Rich countries, whose industrialisation has largely caused climate change, promised to set up a fund to redress the harms already done, or certain to be done, in poorer ones. Loss and damage becomes a new pillar in climate politics, alongside mitigation (limiting further damage) and adaptation (making countries more resilient). **NA**

South Africa's intelligence agency needs speedy reform – or it must be shut down

By Jane Duncan

Professor Duncan is Professor of Digital Society at the University of Glasgow. Prior to that she held the Chair in Media and Information Society in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University and later joined the Journalism Department at the University of Johannesburg. She has an activist background, largely in the community art centre movement, and for many years was the director of the Freedom of Expression Institute in Johannesburg. She holds a PhD, MA, Honours and BA in Fine Arts from the University of the Witwatersrand.

South Africa's *civilian intelligence service*, the State Security Agency, is a broken institution according to JANE DUNCAN. It is meant to provide intelligence to forewarn the country of national security threats, yet it has clearly failed to perform this critical role – if the failure of intelligence ahead of the *July 2021 riots*, for example, is anything to go by.

Powerful individuals aligned to former president *Jacob Zuma*, presumably at his behest, repurposed the institution to help him maintain his grip on *power*. It was one of many institutions that were repurposed for improper personal or political gain during his tenure (May

2009 to February 2018): a process that has become known as *state capture*.

His successor, President Cyril Ramaphosa, *promised* in 2022 to reform the agency so it would serve its original mission. He committed to returning it to the pre-2009 era of having separate domestic and foreign branches, each led by its own director-general.

This decision is a major positive development. The Zuma administration *merged the two branches* and abused the centralised model to protect the president from criticism.

Dismantling this architecture of abuse is happening too slowly, however, with no transitional plan having been announced publicly. Such a plan should include appointing interim heads for the domestic and foreign branches, rather than relying on people in acting positions. The government's underestimation of the time needed to restructure the intelligence agency could have potentially serious, even dangerous, consequences.

WHAT WENT WRONG

The government under Zuma established the State Security Agency in 2009 as an *amalgamation* of the *National Intelligence Agency*, the domestic intelligence service, and the *South African Secret Service*, the foreign service.

At that stage, the directors general and other intelligence entities *reported directly* to the Minister of Intelligence. A coordinating mechanism ensured overall coherence. But in 2021 Ramaphosa *dissolved* the ministry. The agency now reports to the Minister in the Presidency.

The intelligence agency during the Zuma era concentrated too much power in one entity, specifically a super director-general. Hence, it took very little to capture the entire entity for abusive purposes. Officials loyal to the former president used this merged structure to turn the agency into a *protective service* for him and those close to him politically.

Testimony before the state capture commission showed how the agency's resources were *used* to improve the

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During the Zuma years, the focus on protecting the president led to the intelligence agency prioritising domestic intelligence by spying on citizens at the expense of foreign intelligence.

fortunes of the governing African National Congress under Zuma's leadership, by providing his supporters with resources to campaign on his behalf.

Despite his administration's stated objective of integrating the two services, they continued to operate on separate tracks. In fact, the merger [eroded](#) the very essence of the intelligence mandate – of forewarning the state of national security threats. The failure of intelligence ahead of the [July 2021 riots](#) is a glaring example.

During the Zuma years, the focus on protecting the president led to the intelligence agency [prioritising](#) domestic intelligence by spying on citizens at the expense of foreign intelligence. Officials with ill intent also undermined the agency's intelligence gathering [capacity](#).

THE PLAN TO FIX IT

Following Ramaphosa's promises, then Minister in the Presidency Mondli Gungubele [committed the presidency](#) to ongoing reforms.

He highlighted the unbundling into foreign and domestic branches. This was one of the key recommendations of the 2018 High-Level Review Panel on the State Security Agency's [report](#).

This would be done through an intelligence laws amendment bill that the intelligence agency intends to introduce to Parliament by the end of the current financial year.

This is not the first time Gungubele has made this promise. He did so in May 2022, [saying](#) that the Bill had been finalised and would be submitted to Parliament in September of that year. So it should surprise no one if the new timeline isn't followed once again.

A new Bill should ensure that the new heads of domestic and foreign intelligence have more discretionary power, reducing the power of the director-general. Doing so should make it more likely that this person will confine themselves to an oversight role rather than becoming involved in operational matters.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE PLAN

The fact that the State Security Agency has been absorbed into the presidency – which is also [accumulating](#) other government entities and functions – could be a gift to any president intent on repeating the abuses of the Zuma administration.

One of the biggest dangers is a delay in appointing leaders of the domestic and foreign intelligence branches. They need direction. The head of the foreign branch was [suspended](#) in July 2021 and the head of the domestic branch [left](#) after his contract expired at the end of the same month.

The agency told me that they cannot appoint permanent heads until the Bill to restructure the agency becomes a law, and its disestablishment is complete.

The [2011 bill](#) that established the amalgamated agency took [20 months](#) to be signed into law. It would make sense

to have a transitional plan, appointing individuals on two-year contracts.

The Zuma administration was characterised by many [acting appointments](#) in key positions across government, including the State Security Agency and the [National Prosecuting Authority](#). Relying so heavily on acting appointments weakened the government structures, to enable state capture.

People in acting positions are unable to take strong positions as they lack the security of tenure to do so. But the domestic and foreign branches need strong positions to safeguard South Africa's security and stability.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The result of an intelligence service that is not fit for purpose is that the country is vulnerable to security threats from within and without. South Africans are living with the disastrous consequences – such as [rising organised crime](#).

Going back to separate foreign and domestic services is the last chance civilian intelligence has to re-establish its credibility.

The current round of restructuring the State Security Agency cannot fail. If it does it will have to be shut down and restarted from scratch.

The South American country Colombia did just that. In 2011, the government there [shut down](#) the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), after it went rogue and engaged in criminal activities under the guise of fighting the war on drugs.

Unless the Ramaphosa administration expedites the State Security Agency's restructuring, then the Colombian option will be the only one that makes sense for the agency.

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Two assassinations, a VC of steel

and the remarkable ‘uncapturing’ of Fort Hare

By Anneliese Burgess

Ms Burgess is an award-winning journalist with more than 20 years of experience in communications and the media. She is currently the co-editor of [Vrye Weekblad](#) and author of [Heist! South Africa's cash in transit epidemic uncovered](#). As an independent business owner she is also the creative director of [The Story Telling Agency](#).

The man uncapturing the University of Fort Hare from organised crime and other crooked interests is vice-chancellor Sakhela Buhlungu, who survived an assassination attempt earlier this year that claimed the life of his bodyguard, yet he remains resolute and refuses to go into hiding. ANNELIESE BURGESS writes about a remarkable ‘uncapturing project’ which could be a blueprint for every other state institution in South Africa, if only they had men of steel like this VC.

The first indication to the outside world of how deep and vicious the fightback against the University of Fort Hare (UFH) renewal programme had become

was on a Friday afternoon in May 2022.

Peet Roets, the university fleet and transport manager, was on his way home from the Alice campus through rush-hour traffic in East London. As he peeled off the N2 towards Gonubie, the seaside suburb where he lived, two men opened fire on Roets' vehicle, killing him, then sped off in a dark blue VW Polo with tinted windows.

It was a dramatic escalation of an increasingly fraught standoff with the organised criminal networks that had sucked UFH's coffers dry and whose tentacles vice-chancellor Sakhela Buhlungu was determined to cauterise in his ambitious plan to “renew” the university.

There was little doubt that Roets was killed for clamping down on corruption in the university's fleet network, but his murder was not the first time the criminal networks had flexed their muscle.

VIOLENT FIGHTBACK

Two months earlier, the homes of Buhlungu and another senior university official had been fired at. And a month later, a third senior official's home in

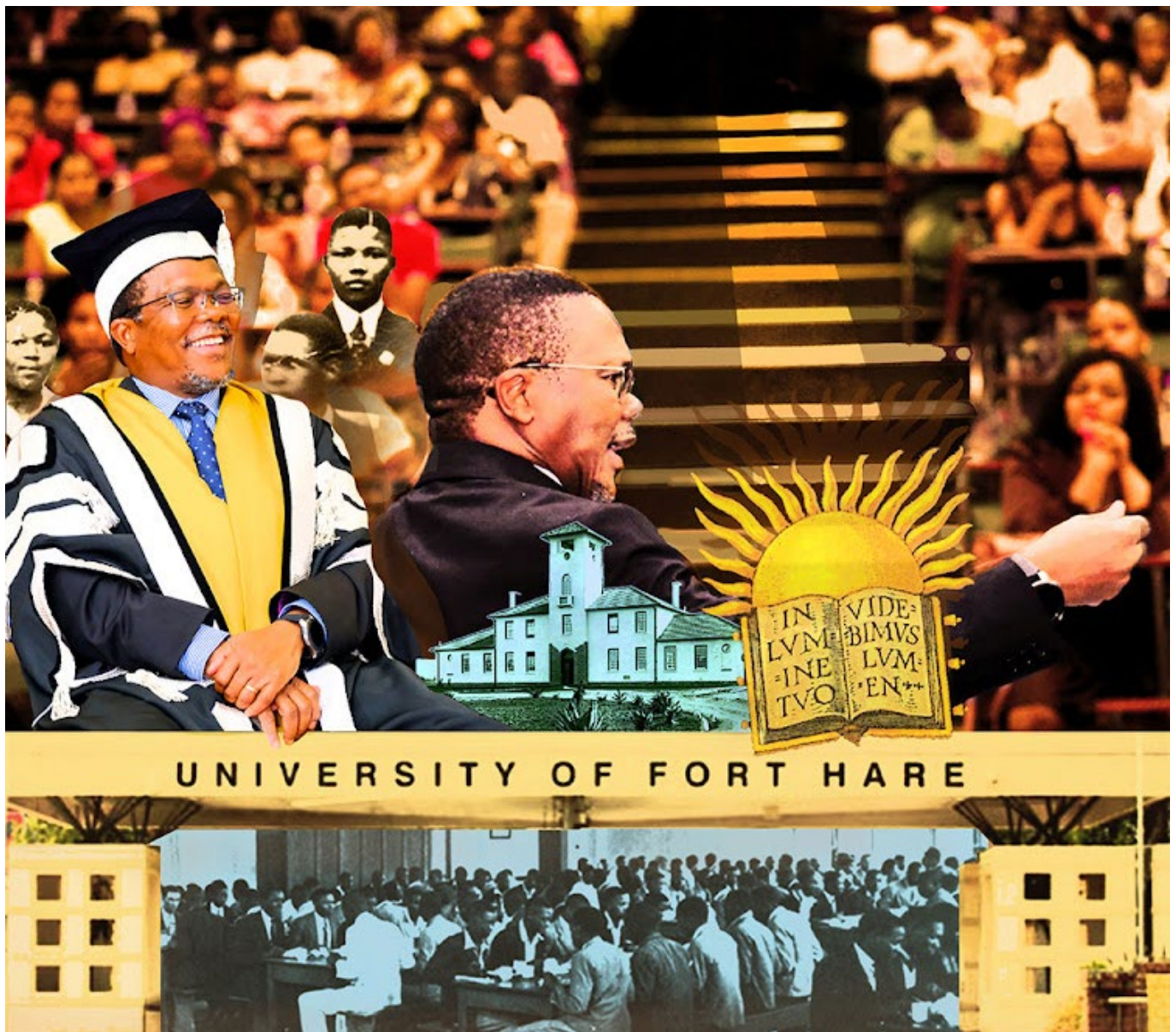
East London was attacked by gunmen. It had been clear for a long time that deep, dark forces were at play at Fort Hare, and just a year after he was appointed, it became necessary for Buhlungu to have a bodyguard.

Mboneli Vesele was a big man with a big smile. The burly former soldier became Buhlungu's shadow, accompanying him on his frequent walkabouts on campus, ferrying him to meetings and ensuring he got home safely in the evenings.

On a warm summer evening earlier this month (January 2023), less than a year after Roets was gunned down, Vesele was shot dead a short distance from Buhlungu's home in Alice.

It is suspected that Buhlungu was the intended target. Vesele had just dropped him off when gunmen pumped the vice-chancellor's vehicle full of bullets.

At an emotional memorial service, Buhlungu alluded to the ferocity of the pushback against his cleanup and the many fronts on which the battle was being waged. There was a long list of people being targeted in smear campaigns, he said. And all of them



IFAA thanks Vrye Weekblad and Angela Tuck at handsondesign@iafrica.com for permission to republish this graphic

had also either been shot at or had their lives threatened in some way by “unknown men”.

“They are hunting us down and killing us,” he said. “Nothing was done about (Roets’ assassination), which is why these criminals had the confidence to strike again. Now it’s Mr Vesele. The next coffin to come out of Fort Hare will be mine.”

Yet he remained resolute. Some days after the assassination attempt, he told journalists who asked if he planned to quit: “Why would I step down? Because some rogues fired bullets and killed somebody? No, it does not work like that.”

“Sakhela has a backbone of steel,” one academic told me. “What he is doing here is a blueprint of how to uncapture

an institution. But it requires an extraordinary personal commitment to unroot entrenched corruption networks.

“Sakhela is staring down the barrel of a gun but refuses to be cowed. He is a remarkable man. For him, it’s not only about fixing an institution, it’s also about the symbolism of this specific institution with its centuries-old legacy as a crucible for black intellectuals.” ➤

“

... here is a blueprint of how to uncapture an institution. But it requires an extraordinary personal commitment to unroot entrenched corruption networks.

LEGACY OF THE ANCESTORS

When Buhlungu was appointed in February 2017, the university was deeply troubled. Broke. Its buildings falling apart. Riven by tensions and mismanagement and paralysed by rampant corruption.

Buhlungu has a stellar academic record. He has held senior academic positions at Wits and the University of Pretoria, and before Fort Hare he was the dean of humanities at the University of Cape Town.

He vowed to break the back of criminal networks and restore governance to the university, but his first year at the helm was spent firefighting. In October, the campus exploded with chaotic student protests about water, electricity and Wi-Fi outages as well as National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allowances.

By the beginning of 2018, though, Buhlungu's vision was starting to coalesce. In his address at the opening of the academic year, he used a biblical story to send a message to those who had financially crippled the institution,

but also to the students and staff about the proud legacy of the institution and his commitment to restoring it to its rightful place.

The story is about Naboth, who had a vineyard adjoining King Ahab's palace. Ahab wants Naboth's vineyard and makes him an offer, but Naboth does not want to part with the land. "I inherited this vineyard from my ancestors. The Lord forbid that I should let you have it!" Naboth is stoned to death, allowing Ahab access to the vineyard. God is displeased and sends a message to Ahab saying: 'In the very place that the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will lick up your blood!'"

There was another covert message: Buhlungu was prepared to die to save Fort Hare's soul. While that may have been an unspoken echo at the time, it became prescient a few years later when the attempts on his life began.

Fort Hare was originally a British fort in the frontier wars between the British and the Xhosa in the 19th century. In 1839, Chief Tyali, the son of AmaXhosa King Ngqika, donated several acres of land to Lovedale College, which was run mainly by Scottish missionaries. Lovedale donated land to establish the South African Native College in 1916, and it later became Fort Hare, a fully fledged black tertiary institution that drew students from across the continent.

Those who studied at Fort Hare and later became leaders of countries were Kenneth Kaunda, Seretse Khama, Julius Nyerere, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. And, of course, a long raft of prominent black South Africans, including Govan Mbeki, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Robert Sobukwe and Desmond Tutu.

Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo met at Fort Hare. They founded the ANC Youth League there (and in a beautiful closing of the circle, in 1991, Oliver Tambo became the chancellor of his old alma mater).

EXTREME PUSHBACK

A central pillar of Buhlungu's renewal plan was to arrest the corruption and fraud that had Fort Hare shackled to penury. He would need the money flowing into the pockets of the tender mafia to make a dent in problems like the terrible state of teaching facilities, laboratories and student residences.

The first hammer blow fell in 2018 with fraud cases relating to contracts for cleaning and gardening services, student accommodation and maintenance and repair of air-conditioning systems. In time, the light began to shine in other dark corners with "allegations of maladministration in the awarding of honours degrees, mismanagement of funds and sourcing of public servants for study into various faculty programmes by an individual for personal gain," as a Special Investigating Unit (SIU) charge sheet put it.

But it was not only corruption. There were deep-lying problems with governance and the academic programme.

2018 was a year of severe pushback against the renewal agenda. There was a six-week staff strike that halted university operations, and a governance crisis in the council, the university's highest decision-making body, was careering out of control. In 2019, a small breakaway group attempted a "coup" by announcing itself as an alternative council. Much of the instability was linked to vested interests being threatened.

Once again, Buhlungu and his management team did not buckle. This time he called in the national department of higher education. Council operations were placed under administration, but the vice-chancellor and his management were not. It was unusual, but it allowed Buhlungu to continue his reform agenda. An assessor was also appointed to do a deep dive into the problems at Fort Hare and compile a report.

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The socio-economic environment and regional political dynamics contributed to some institutional governance and management problems.

BACK ON ITS FEET

Eighteen months later, in November 2020, Buhlungu announced on Twitter: “It’s official. The University of Fort Hare is no longer under administration!”

Normality was slowly creeping back. A functional council was in place and the assessor’s report was on the table, its content strengthening Buhlungu’s position. Apart from confirming the obvious – crumbling facilities and the “shocking state” of student accommodation – it highlighted the weakness of administrative structures and outdated policies.

The report made the following finding: “The socio-economic environment and regional political dynamics contributed to some institutional governance and management problems, [but] inside and outside the university, there seems to be a belief that UFH is, in the first place, an economic resource.”

This is the crux of the matter.

Buhlungu outlined these vested interests to the [Daily Dispatch](#): “Yes, there were small pickings for people

internally, but the larger bit of the free-for-all was for the people outside. Both people in private sector companies, service providers, and I’m even willing to say some politicians ... some business-connected politicians.”

SERIOUS ABOUT FRAUD

In the past two years, Buhlungu’s turnaround project gained real traction. Many fraud cases dating to 2018 came onto the front-burner. Last September, President Cyril Ramaphosa authorised the SIU to look into allegations of corruption and maladministration, focusing on four contracts, fraud in relation to awarding of honours degrees and NSFAS activities.

The university also fired and prosecuted Nigerian professor Edwin Ijeoma for irregularly registering and admitting two students who didn’t meet the criteria. According to media reports, one of those who was fraudulently admitted was Eastern Cape premier Oscar Mabuyane, although the university has never confirmed this. Some of the other allegations against him are that he stole around R5 million for unauthorised academic work and programmes at Eastern Cape government bodies and the legislature.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the Buhlungu administration’s crowning achievements was South Africa’s largest student housing project, a 2,047-bed village completed at the end of 2020.

“The changes here have been remarkable,” says a colleague who teaches at the university. “He and the team around him, many of whom are strong new appointments, have also completely lifted the academic game.

“And everything also feels and looks radically different to five years ago. There is water in the fountains,

and the gardens are no longer a complete wasteland. It’s so nice. This is a big, beautiful campus with historic buildings. Everywhere you can now see restoration taking place because the money is being used for what it was intended for.

“But what has happened here is essentially an uncapturing project. It is a blueprint for every other institution in this country. Buhlungu has shown how it is not quick and it is not easy. You must put in the very hard slog of getting correct procedures and policies in place to enforce accountability.”

About the importance of the policy reform, [Buhlungu says](#): “If you want to commit mischief, you first cause dust; there must be no rules, policies, procedures... governance must break down and then it becomes a free-for-all.”

THE COURAGE OF A LION

A colleague adds, “Ultimately, it all comes down to one thing. Suppose you want to successfully uncapture an institution, root out criminal networks and stand up to rogues that operate within state institutions; you must have the courage of a lion.

“Assassinations are commonplace in the Eastern Cape. Councillors, school principals, school governing bodies – everywhere there is money to be stolen, people are killed. Buhlungu is only the most high-profile person here this has happened to, but he is by no means the only one. But he is fearless and brave. He is a man of higher purpose, clawing back this university from the mafia economy and slowly leading the institution back to reclaiming its legacy as a crucible for knowledge and learning”.

IFAA thanks [Vrye Weekblad](#) for granting us permission to publish this article, which first appeared on its website on 27 January 2023. To subscribe to the newspaper, register [here](#). **NA**

Nazism, contemporary Europe and the war in Ukraine

By Ivor Chipkin¹

Dr Chipkin is the Executive Director of New South Institute. Prior to that he was Managing Director of the Government and Public Policy think tank and in 2009 founded the Public Affairs Research Institute, which has become one of the major research centres on institutions in the global South.

A key theme of Vladimir Putin's justification for the war against Ukraine is that Russia is threatened by a Nazi regime empowered by NATO who together constitute an existential threat to his country. A year since the beginning of the Russian invasion, IVOR CHIPKIN asks what we should make of this talk of Nazis and Nazism.

In an address to his country on the 21st of September last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated that the purpose of the special operation in the Ukraine was to “liberate it from the neo-Nazi regime, which seized power in [...] 2014 as the result of an armed state coup.”² In fact, he referred to the Ukraine government as neo-Nazis nine times in this speech alone.

It has been easy to speak truth to Putin's power. Greg Mills and Ray Hartley, responding to an article by Ronnie Kasrils, the former Minister of

Intelligence in South Africa, describe suggestions that Ukraine is a Nazi state as “sickening”. Kasrils nowhere makes this claim, though.³

What should we make of this talk of Nazis and of Nazism then? Is it a mere fig leaf for Russian aggression?

I think we should take it very seriously if we understand what is at stake. In Russia, Nazism does not fundamentally recall something that happened to the Jews. This is why it is not a contradiction for Putin to see a Nazi menace led by a Jewish, Ukrainian President. To understand how this is possible, we have to move past glib dichotomies about the war; the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, democrats and authoritarians.

I want to make three points: the first is about the relationship of Nazism to the Holocaust; the second about the relationship of many contemporary European nationalisms to Nazism; and thirdly, about the relationship of Nazism to the hatred of Slavs/Russians.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF NAZISM TO THE HOLOCAUST

Firstly, Nazism was about the extermination of the Jews and others deemed racially inferior. New histories of World War Two are slowly beginning

to unsettle the received wisdom, however, that the Holocaust was conceived, planned and orchestrated by an exclusively German command that implemented it as a great, bureaucratic operation. This conception of the Holocaust and of Nazism has stressed the “banality” of its evil, largely carried out by functionaries who participated in its mass killings as technicians and as administrators.

This image of the Holocaust is only partially true. Not only did millions die in German concentration camps where mass murder was conducted on an industrial scale in places like Treblinka and Auschwitz, millions more also died at the hands of local populations where the killing was so much more personal.

Lithuanians, for example, stabbed, starved, shot, decapitated, raped and burnt nearly 250,000 Jews prior to the arrival of German forces in 1941 (Vanagaite & Zuroff, 2020). The genocide in Lithuania was the most complete of the war. For South African Jews, the majority of whom are Litvaks, that is from Lithuania, it is a morbid realisation that those of our relatives who did not escape, died especially intimate, humiliating and cruel deaths. This was not evil as banality, but as manual, very personal slaughter.

“

Not only did millions die in German concentration camps ... millions more also died at the hands of local populations ...

The Croatian revolutionary movement known as the Ustaša imprisoned and murdered Serbians, Jews, Roma and dissident Croats, often in ways so intimate and brutal that even Nazi officials are reported to have complained. The history of concentration camps like Jasenovac in Croatia is largely unknown outside of the Balkans and even today in Croatia it is barely acknowledged (Zuroff, 2022).

Similarly, one and a half million Jews were murdered in the Ukraine after the German occupation in 1941, massacred by the Nazi paramilitary death squads or *Einsatzgruppen* with local supporters. I will return to this because it raises something fundamental about the present.

For the moment let us consider one of the consequences of this situation. If Nazism was not a terrifying although brief anomaly of German history, but a mass European social phenomenon, then we have to ask where do Jews belong? European Jewry could not have been expected to return to European societies to live as minorities there.

Many Jews, including Bundists and those that were not Zionists (the vast majority) sought refuge in America, Canada, Britain and South Africa, before immigration laws shut down that option except for the lucky few. Steven Robins has written a very moving



Crowd views the aftermath of a massacre at Lietukis Garage, where pro-German Lithuanian nationalists killed more than 50 Jewish men. The victims were beaten, hosed, and then murdered with iron bars. Kovno, Lithuania, June 27, 1941. Source: Genocide Encyclopedia

account of the correspondence between his father and uncle in Port Elizabeth and their parents in Berlin desperately trying to get out (Robins, 2016). It only strengthened the secular Zionist case for a Jewish majority state somewhere.

Where should such a state have been? Zionists considered many locations, from Uganda to Madagascar to the plains of Peru. That it happened in the former Ottoman territories of Palestine brought Jews into conflict with local, indigenous Arab populations – although a Jewish majority state anywhere would have made conflict almost inevitable somewhere. This was a catastrophe for the indigenous Arab population, though one not borne of Zionism as Western Imperialism – driven by Orientalist racism and capitalist expansion – but of Zionism as the expression of Jewish existential vulnerability and homelessness in the world. (I suspect that the conditions of peace lie in this realisation amongst the global Left, if not amongst Palestinian nationalists).⁴

THE RELATIONSHIP OF NAZISM TO CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN NATIONALISMS

Secondly, many European nationalists rose to prominence and power on the coattails of German occupying forces. The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was established in April 1941, a puppet state of fascist Italy and of Nazi Germany. The Croatian Ustaša combined various ideological elements, including Catholicism, nationalism and Nazi race theories.

In the Baltic, Lithuanian nationalists briefly restored Lithuania as a state as auxiliaries to the German invasion of the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. Contemporary Lithuanian “national heroes” such as Jonas Noreika were orchestrators of the near total destruction of the Jewish population. It took a biography by his granddaughter, Sylvia Foti, to place what was only whispered about in Lithuania in the public domain: that Lithuanian nationalism did not express itself only in relation to the defiance of communism but also in relation to the support of Nazism and the genocidal ➤

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... many European nationalists rose to prominence and power on the coattails of German occupying forces.

killing of Jews (Foti, 2021).⁵ Today, the Orwellian sounding National Genocide Centre in Vilnius (Vilna) is actually a centre of genocide denial.

In the Ukraine, “national heroes” are complex figures. Stepan Bandera was born in 1909 in what was then Austria-Hungary, becoming a leader of one of the factions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in the 1930s. By then Lviv and other areas where large Ukrainian populations lived formed the eastern edges of Poland, so that nationalist resistance took the form of attacks on Polish authorities. Bandera spent much of the late 1930s in a Polish prison and much of the early 1940s in a German prison after Hitler refused independence for the Ukraine. After the war, he became the leader of an overseas faction of the OUN (known as the OUN-B) where he orchestrated opposition to the Soviet Union until being assassinated by a KGB agent in Munich in 1959. While Bandera himself, unlike Noreika, was not personally involved in the Nazi genocide, the OUN was, allying with SS forces in pursuit of a Ukraine purged of Jews, Poles and Russians.^{6 7}

In 2005, pro-Western politician Viktor Yushchenko awarded Bandera the title “Hero of Ukraine”. There was nothing idiosyncratic about this reinvention. Philippe Sands has shown how quickly after 1945 American and British forces moved to rehabilitate former Nazis



Lithuanian [collaborators](#) guard Jews before their execution. Ponary, [Lithuania](#), June–July, 1941. Source: *Genocide Encyclopedia*

and in the fast-emerging cold war recast them as anti-communists. Yushchenko’s successor, pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych, had the title revoked.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF NAZISM TO THE HATRED OF SLAVS/RUSSIANS

Thirdly, Nazism was about the colonisation and extermination of Russians/Slavs. Drawing on the model of the American West, Hitler saw in the Ukraine Germany’s California, a space emptied of its existing population to make way for a superior race.

When the Soviet counter-offensive in 1944 routed German forces, the horrors that greeted the advancing Red Army are difficult to comprehend. Jewish populations had been decimated, but so had Soviet civilians been starved, reduced to slaves and massacred. In 2005 the historian, Tony Judt, estimated Soviet civilian deaths at 16 million and the total number of Soviet citizens (including soldiers) killed in the war at 24,600,000. Millions of civilians had been killed by “direct, intentional violence”,

more than two million died as forced labourers in Germany and over four million died of starvation and disease in German-occupied areas.

Today, even the figure of nearly nine million Soviet soldiers dead in the war is said to underestimate the millions that died as prisoners of war in horrific conditions in German camps. Russians formed the bulk of these casualties. To put these figures in perspective, the United Kingdom suffered less than half a million combined civilian and military losses. So too did the United States.

In the Soviet Union and in Russia today, Nazism was and is conceived as an existential threat to Russians and to Slavs in general. Part of that framing, it is true, betrays an antisemitic refusal to acknowledge Jewish deaths as Jewish deaths, as opposed to “anti-fascist” civilian casualties. But even taking account of the Holocaust, Nazism expressed a deep-seated hatred of Russians as Russians and of Slavs more generally.

The figure of the Russian and of the Slav, like the Jew and the Black, have long formed the tropes against

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Even taking account of the Holocaust, Nazism expressed a deep-seated hatred of Russians as Russians and of Slavs more generally.

which Western Europe and America defined both their whiteness and their civility. Churchill's infamous broadcast of 1939 describing Russia as a "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" goes to the heart of what Mark Smith calls "Russian anxiety", the idea that Russians are inscrutable, dangerous and driven by wild and bewildering forces (2019). It is not difficult to see how analysis of Putin and of Russia today reproduces many of these crude stereotypes.

In March 2022, for example, Stephen Kotkin, professor of history at Princeton spoke about Russia in ways that Africanists would recall from colonial historiography. "What we have today in Russia," he argued, "is not some kind of surprise. It's not some kind of deviation from a historical pattern. Way before NATO existed – in the nineteenth century – Russia looked like this: it had an autocrat. It had repression. It had militarism. It had suspicion of foreigners and the West. This is a Russia that we know, and it's not a Russia that arrived yesterday or in the nineteen-nineties. It's not a response to the actions of the West. There are internal processes in Russia that account for where we are today" (See Remnick, 2022).⁸

This image of an eternal Russia, largely without history, merely a story of endless repetition, is almost identical to the one repeated ad nauseum by racists about African societies, forever caught up in mindless and repetitive waves of tribal warfare. It is as much a nonsense about Africa as it is about Russia.

Russia is not the Soviet Union, however, whose ideological justification had collapsed long before the 1990s. As an old Soviet joke had it, the party pretends to rule and the people pretend to obey. Putin is not an artefact of Russian collapse, however, but of Russian nationalist assertion – one premised on appeals to a mystical and transcendent Russian soul as well as a deep sense of grievance and existential threat. It is not difficult to see how NATO encirclement, how the celebration of anti-Russian war criminals, how the effective banning of the Russian language in most public places in the Ukraine, how the overthrow of a legitimately elected pro-Russian leader and attacks on the Russian majority regions in the Ukraine resonate with Russian ideas of what Nazism is.

Glib words and actions that make Russians and Russia itself the object of denunciation, rather than Putin and his government, merely aggravate the very conditions of the war itself. Part of the problem is that so much analysis lacks a historical sensibility and without it, an understanding of the meaning of Nazism today. The conditions for peace and democracy in the region are not clear, but the path to nuclear war is.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Chipkin is a South African writer who comes from a family of Jews and Slavs.
- 2 Address by the President of the Russian Federation, Office of the President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/69390>, made on 21 September 2022 (accessed 9 February 2023).
- 3 For more on this exchange see Ronnie Kasrils, SA and Russia – from Soviet Times to Conflict in Ukraine, *News24*, <https://www.news24.com/news24/opinions/fridaybriefing/ronnie-kasrils-sa-and-russia-from-soviet-times-to-conflict-in-ukraine-20230126m> (accessed 08 February 2023). Also see the response by Greg Mills and Ray Hartley, 3 February 2023, *The Defence of Russia Risk Taking South Africa Down a Dark and Authoritarian Road*. Johannesburg: The Brenthurst Foundation, <https://www.thebrenthurstfoundation.org/news/the-defence-of-russia-risks-taking-south-africa-down-a-dark-and-authoritarian-road/> (accessed 08 February 2023).
- 4 See the excellent review of Daniel Randall's book, *Confronting Anti-Semitism on the Left – Arguments for Socialists*, by Derek Spitz.
- 5 Also see the documentary by Michael Kretzmer, "Jaccuse: a plea for justice from the killing pits of Lithuania".
- 6 The biography of Bandera by Rossolinski-Liebe is widely regarded as the most authoritative.
- 7 Zaitsev proposes that these movements be described by what he calls "ustasism" rather than fascism because they were revolutionary ultranationalist (integral-nationalist) expressions of stateless nations seeking "not [the] reorganization of an existing state according to totalitarian principles, but the creation of a new state, using all available means, including terror, to this end".
- 8 David Remnick interviews Stephen Kotkin. **NA**

Latest research from IFAA



One of IFAA's projects, Young Climate Voices (YCV), is a research-based online platform that provides a space for new voices and intergenerational conversations about the social, economic and political consequences of climate change in Africa. Funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, YCV describes itself as "citizen journalists amplifying the voices of young people fighting climate change in South Africa". Follow YCV on [Instagram](#).



Climate crisis response plans for hardest hit Southern African countries

By Élitz-Doris C. Okwudili

Ms Okwudili, a sustainability manager at the ECOWAS parliament in Abuja, Nigeria, was a youth delegate at last year's COP27 climate change summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. She has a master's degree in Environmental Sustainability and Management from Wisconsin International University, USA and a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management and Policy from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.

Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe have been particularly hard hit by recent powerful cyclones, which left a trail of death and destruction. ÉLITZ-DORIS OKWUDILI tracks the impact of Cyclones Idai and Ana¹ and presents the plans designed since then to manage the impact of climate change-related crises in these countries going forward.

Developing nations in the Global South are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to their lack of development, weak institutions, significant inequality, excessive reliance on agriculture, inadequate technology and improper resource management (Thinda et al., 2020:1–18). This has been particularly evident in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, which have been hit by powerful cyclones that had a significant impact on millions of their citizens (UNICEF, 2019).

Cyclone Idai made landfall as a Category 2 storm close to the capital of Mozambique, Beira, on 4 March 2019, affecting nearly 2.2 million people. Its torrential rains and

violent winds caused flash flooding, hundreds of fatalities, extensive crop damage and an unprecedented loss of property (World Vision, 2019). It left an estimated 3,000km² of land in central Mozambique submerged and damaged more than 240,000 houses. Following Cyclone Idai's landfall, more than 715,000 hectares of crops were destroyed (Relief Web, 2019). The cyclone made landfall during the critical harvest period, effectively wiping out the food supply of thousands of families and prolonging an already difficult lean season. Many children, elderly people and people with disabilities were unable to flee to safety and more than half of the affected people were children.

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Developing nations in the Global South are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change...

The cyclone also severely impacted livelihoods in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands (Chitongo et al., 2019) causing massive destruction in the districts of Chimanimani, Chipinge, Nyanga and Mutare (Tsuru Trust, 2019). A total of 51,000 people were rendered homeless, 340 people died and a large number of people went missing in the ensuing flooding and landslides (Chatiza, 2019). Infrastructure, agriculture and schools were severely impacted.

Fifteen districts in Malawi, in both rural and urban areas, were affected by major flooding caused by Cyclone Idai. Collapsed buildings, washed-away bridges, blocked highways and destroyed houses and property (Fröbe-Kaltenbach & Baulch, 2019) prompted the government of Malawi to declare a disaster (Humanitarian Coalition, 2019). Sanitation facilities also sustained considerable damage, increasing the danger of waterborne diseases (Humanitarian Coalition, 2019). Countless people were displaced and sought shelter in schools and temporary structures, increasing the risk of spreading diseases and posing problems for the privacy and protection of women and girls. The Department of Disaster Management Affairs reported that as of 22 March 2019, more than 850,000 people had been affected in Malawi alone. There were 59 fatalities, 677 injuries and about 87,000 individuals



Source: Wikipedia commons ILRI, Stevie Mann. Household takes refuge from the rain in central Malawi

were displaced (Fröbe-Kaltenbach & Baulch, 2019).

Just as these countries were trying to pick up the pieces and rebuild, Cyclone Ana made landfall in January 2022. It hit the entire northern region of Mozambique, causing fatalities and extensive damage, particularly to public infrastructures disrupting basic services and healthcare (Africa CDC, 2022). The cyclone flooded a total of 70,982 hectares, affected about 180,869 individuals, injured 207 people and killed at least 38 people in Mozambique (ReliefWeb, 2022).

Cyclone Ana hit at least six provinces in Zimbabwe, although worst affected was Manicaland province. The cyclone damaged Zimbabwe's public infrastructure to varying degrees in 11 of the 12 districts in the affected area with the loss of housing, water provision, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, livelihoods, and food security (ReliefWeb, 2022) as well as additional indirect effects such as trauma and injuries. Several communities along Zimbabwe's northern and north-eastern border were battered by moderate to severe rains with daily maximums of 80mm and wind gusts

reaching speeds of up to 80km/h (Brown, 2021).

Cyclone Ana also caused significant flooding in Malawi, particularly in the southern region. Houses collapsed and roofs were blown off, road systems were damaged, livestock and crops were washed away and water sources were contaminated. Some areas were designated disaster zones, and the entire nation experienced a power outage. Much of Malawi's public and private infrastructure was destroyed including homes, schools, hospitals and churches. A total of 49,214 individuals were displaced, including women, children and people with disabilities (Africa CDC, 2022).

PLANS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MANAGEMENT

For developing nations such as these, preparing settlements for climatic threats is a top priority. The dire need for effective adaptation strategies was demonstrated by the cyclones (Brown, 2021). The need to adapt infrastructure to climate change impacts is clear, both in terms of the role that infrastructure plays in protecting people and their assets from the direct and indirect



impacts of climate change, as well as the significance of infrastructure for all economic activities (UNFCCC, 2007).

The National Institute for Disaster Management, under the direction of the government of Mozambique, adopted an integrated coastal planning approach that is in line with strategic principles and best practice guidelines in terms of coastal management and responding to climate change. This approach aims to plan for and start prevention through the implementation of adaptation measures at the national level, based on science and in support of sustainable development (Theron & Barwell, 2012). It includes the following:

- Plan future coastal development a safe distance away from the high-water mark and re-establish natural defence systems with the required environmental permits.
- Develop and implement Coastal Management Programmes that include Shoreline Management Plans to carry out comprehensive planning and implementation.
- Establish a coastal development setback line that will shield beachfront developments from storm damage and exacerbated coastal erosion while also safeguarding the natural environment from building developments.
- Work in harmony with nature by preserving the integrity of buffer dune systems, which should be maintained and properly vegetated with the proper dune species in accordance with the

original natural zones.

- Maintain the sand reservoir (volume) in the dune systems at the same level or increase it.
- Protect, restore and maintain natural systems like mangroves and coral reefs.

The government of Malawi has produced the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to increase resilience and adaptive capacity while facilitating the cogent integration of climate change adaptation into pertinent new and existing policies, programmes and national development activities (Kamdonyo, 2019).

The NAP will include developing tools and capacity for coordination and execution of the NAP process, engaging stakeholders and developing their capacity, creating and strengthening Expert Working Groups, conducting assessments of climate change risk and vulnerability and, most importantly, integrating NAP adaptation priorities into ministry spending plans.

The Malawian government recognised the need for well-researched plans as the basis of the National Climate Change Investment Plan (NCCIP) (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Management, 2013:10-11). To ensure Malawi's economy and society develop to their full potential within a well-protected and sustainable environment, safeguarded from major climate change effects and with responsibility for present and future generations, the NCCIP will ensure that the key priorities of the actions to address climate change and its effects are timely and sufficiently resourced.

According to projections, Zimbabwe's climate will likely become more extreme and less predictable (Mhlanga & Nyikahadzoi, 2021:3) rendering the local practices, systems and infrastructure obsolete. Zimbabwe's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (its formal submission to the

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC]) outlines its plans for adapting to climate change. The NDC's adaptation plans include developing and maintaining an integrated approach in all sectors of the economy to reduce the impacts of climate extreme events, promoting climate indexed insurance solutions and market frameworks, and strengthening early warning systems on climate-related risks (Africa Adaptation Initiative, 2022). The NDC also outlines cross sectional adaptation efforts such as:

- Supporting capacity building through promoting research, development, informational outreach and training on climate change-related topics.
- Integrating gender-responsive climate policy and emphasising particular initiatives to support vulnerable groups (women, youth and children) in climate change adaptation efforts across all economic sectors.
- Supporting sustainable agroforestry practices and non-timber forest products to improve forest-based adaptation.
- Implementing management techniques for hydropower plants to increase their capacity to generate electricity in conditions where there is a lack of rainfall.
- Increasing reservoirs' water-holding capacity to prepare for increased abstraction and evaporation.
- Strengthening community capacities for diversifying

livelihoods and moving away from agriculture into other sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

At national and international levels public authorities are primarily responsible for adapting to climate change (Bauer & Scholz, 2010: 83-93). The development and deployment of research technology, collective action, public investment in critical areas like adequate infrastructure and early warning systems, information and advice for risk groups, and adjustments to public decision-making processes are all necessary for anticipatory measures to control risk and dangers.

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) suggests that coastal cities in Southern Africa embrace Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)² as it allows for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction while also offering services that can enhance people's quality of life (Swanepoel & Siyasanga, 2019). SAIIA recommends:

- Effective EbA governance and management in local governments, which requires suitable regulatory and legislative frameworks supported by long-term planning, sufficient resources, enabling tools, procedures and systems.
- Coordination and collaboration, which requires institutional agreements and partnerships, both across institutions and within departments. This will make it possible to strategically utilise the limited resources available



Source: GroundUp

across different institutions.

According to the World Bank (2015), adaptation to climate change in infrastructure planning and design will require a shift in perspective away from established behaviour and practices, with the aim of better integrating the knowledge of the relevant professions, such as climate scientists and design engineers. The following areas should be considered:

- Provide technical guidelines for incorporating climate change into infrastructure planning and design in climate-sensitive sectors. The development of voluntary technical guidelines on how to incorporate the concepts of climate resilience into practical infrastructure planning and design could be accomplished by a multi-stakeholder technical working group.
- Create an open data knowledge repository

for the development of climate-resilient infrastructure. There is a need to establish common data sources (on climate scenarios, hydrology, standard construction costs, etc.), which could be made public on open-data platforms hosted by African institutions (such as UNECA's African Climate Policy Centre) to reduce the cost of the analysis required to incorporate climate considerations into infrastructure development.

- Organise training courses for experts in climate-resilient infrastructure. Training programmes could be organised for professionals involved in the planning, design and operation of climate-sensitive infrastructure to >>

strengthen the technical skills needed to improve the climate resilience of infrastructure.

- Establish a facility for planning climate resilience projects in Africa. This must be sufficiently supported by grants or subsidised resources and could have various windows to meet the unique demands of different sectors or phases of the infrastructure development cycle. For instance, the facility could help develop master plans for climate-resilient infrastructure or the incorporation of climate resilience into specific projects.
- A climate-resilient infrastructure development observatory should be established in Africa to ensure that the work being done at the technical level (methodology, data and project preparation) and in training maintains visibility and connections with the policy level of decision-making.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The research for this article was completed before Cyclone Freddy hit Madagascar and Mozambique in February 2023, with devastating consequences. The cyclone, which hit Mozambique for a second time in two weeks, is the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record. At the last count before publication the death toll had reached more than 400 people..
- 2 Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), also referred to as Nature-based Solutions for Adaptation, involves a wide range of ecosystem management activities, such as the sustainable management of forests, grasslands and wetlands, that increase the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of people and the environment to climate change. **NA**

E-Waste Dumping

A brief survey of the laws that apply in East Africa

By Elkanah O. Babatunde

Dr Babatunde is a research fellow with the Global Risk Governance Programme at the University of Cape Town. His expertise cuts across international law, human rights and environmental justice. He has an LLB from the University of Benin, Nigeria and an LLM and PhD from the University of Cape Town.

The use of electronic devices has skyrocketed, which implies an increase in the number of devices that are being thrown away. The result is the production of large quantities of waste, known as electronic waste. The methods used to get rid of e-waste often pose serious threats to human health and the environment. ELKANAH BABATUNDE reviews the legal measures taken to curb the disposal and management of e-waste within countries in East Africa.

E-waste is a general term that refers to various forms of electric and electronic equipment, their components, sub-assemblies and consumables that have ceased to be useful to their owners.¹ As of 15 October 2022, *The World Counts*, had recorded almost 40 million tons of electronic waste globally. If the

trend continued, the amount of e-waste emitted in 2022 was expected to reach 50 million tons.

E-waste has become a global ecological issue (Ahmed, 2016). This is especially serious because only 12.5% of e-waste is recycled, allowing for huge amounts of e-waste dumping. The vast majority of e-waste is sent to landfills and incinerators to be burnt. Unfortunately, these electronics contain hundreds of substances that when released into the atmosphere, soil or water become toxic.

Examples of the harmful toxins found in e-waste are mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, selenium, chromium and flame retardants (Widmer et al., 2005). These toxins may cause brain damage, birth defects, allergic reactions and cancer. The most affected demographic includes children, pregnant women, the elderly, people with disabilities, workers in the informal recycling sector and waste scavengers (Global Green Growth Institute, 2022). The dumping and management of e-waste thus have the potential to negatively impact the quality of human life and of the environment (Ahmed, 2016).

It is estimated that 75-80% of the e-waste collected in developed countries gets dumped in developing

countries, particularly those in Asia and Africa (Widmer et. al., 2005: 442-443). Unfortunately, most of the e-waste produced or imported into these developing countries is not properly managed. It is often dealt with by the informal sector using crude methods including product reuse, crude recycling, disposal in landfills and burning in open fields (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007; Schluep, 2009). Given the highly toxic contents of e-waste, these crude methods of managing e-waste pose significant risks to human life and the environment. Furthermore, these electronics often contain materials that specifically cause damage to the central nervous system and kidneys.

In Kenya the e-waste from solar products was expected to be as high as 5,000 tons by the end of 2022 while that from computers and printers is an average of 3,000 tons each year (Balasubramanian, 2019:9). According to UNEP, the country generates a total of about 44,000 tons of e-waste every year (Odhiambo, 2022). This pattern is similar across other East African countries. In 2019, in Uganda the importation of e-waste showed an annual growth rate of 22% (Nyeko et al., 2022:239). In Rwanda, the amount of ICT equipment increased by 500% between ➤

2010 and 2014, and the growth in the importation of e-waste was estimated to be about 5.95% per annum.² The annual generation of e-waste was estimated at 9,417 tons.³ Similarly, Tanzania generated between 19,841 and 36,376 tons of e-waste in 2013. Computers alone were responsible for about 2,535 tons of e-waste in 2014 (National Bureau of Statistics & United Nations University, 2019:2). It is no longer in doubt that the storage, collection, transportation, and final treatment and disposal of e-waste has become a major problem in urban centres across East Africa.

REGULATION OF E-WASTE IN EAST AFRICA

International regulations

East African countries have signed various treaties and passed national laws and regulations to curb the disposal and management of e-waste within their countries. One of the most prominent among these treaties is the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. All East African countries are signatories to this treaty. The Basel Convention seeks to reduce and manage the transfer of environmentally and socially detrimental hazardous waste from developed countries to other parts of the world.⁴ The Basel Convention classifies electronic waste as one such hazardous waste, thus bringing it within the purview of the convention.⁵ The convention recognises the right of state parties to prohibit the importation of hazardous wastes and provides that other state parties comply with that prohibition by ensuring that they do not export hazardous wastes to any prohibiting country.⁶

State parties are prohibited from trading in hazardous waste, without prior written notification of consent between the trading partners, and

this waste must be managed in an environmentally friendly manner. The Basel Convention includes other obligations such as the duty to reduce the generation of hazardous waste, ensure the availability of adequate disposal facilities, manage waste in a manner that prevents pollution, minimise transboundary movement and respect any prohibition by a developing state party of the importation of hazardous waste.

Second to the Basel Convention is the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import to Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. Unlike the Basel Convention, the Bamako Convention does not expressly classify e-waste as hazardous waste. However, it defines hazardous waste to include waste that has certain constituents including metal carbonyls, copper compounds, arsenic, zinc, mercury and lead; elements that are often present in e-waste.

In addition, the treaty allows state parties to further categorise certain substances as hazardous.⁷ A state party could, therefore, expressly categorise e-waste or certain types of e-waste as hazardous thus bringing them under the purview of the Bamako Convention.

In line with the need to curb the importation of hazardous wastes, including e-waste, the Bamako Convention creates certain obligations. These include the obligation to develop a legal framework for the management of hazardous waste within their country, submit a hazardous waste report, reduce the generation of hazardous waste within their jurisdiction, ensure adequate management of hazardous waste and prevent pollution from the management of hazardous waste.

The Basel Convention and the Bamako Convention do not expressly prohibit the importation of hazardous waste. The responsibility is placed on each state to define what waste

is prohibited and the appropriate administrative and legal frameworks for enforcing such prohibitions within its territory. These treaties only oblige state parties to create the necessary legal and administrative framework for the prohibition of such waste, report on the movement of hazardous waste across their borders and respect any prohibition by other state parties.

It therefore becomes obvious that despite being signatories to these treaties, there is a need for national level e-waste control laws and policies for these treaties to become effective. In other words, the effectiveness of these treaties is dependent on the enactment and effectiveness of laws and practices within each of these East African countries.

National regulations

Most of the countries in East Africa do not have legislation that deals specifically with e-waste management. Often the relevant broader environmental legislation serves as the overarching legal framework for e-waste management. Where this is the case, the provisions concerning solid waste and hazardous waste are often applicable within the context of e-waste, but the inadequacies are obvious.

In addition to the lack of a legal framework, East African countries also face a capacity challenge. The necessary technical skill, infrastructure and financial resources are often absent leading to a poorly managed e-waste system. Like most African countries, East African countries also suffer from a lack of reliable data on the volume of e-waste at each level and within the country as a whole. This lack of data makes policy planning very difficult. It is difficult to improve upon what you cannot measure adequately.

Nevertheless, East African countries have made some progress in the last decade towards ensuring a more viable e-waste management

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It is estimated that 75-80% of the e-waste collected in developed countries gets dumped in developing countries.

system within their economies. The following subsections take a closer look at the national legal and institutional frameworks governing e-waste in four East African countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

E-waste management law in Kenya

Kenya has passed the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) and the Waste Management Regulations. Although neither the EMCA nor the Waste Management Regulations mentions e-waste, they nevertheless apply given their composition which includes a variety of hazardous substances as listed under the Act. Section 2 of the EMCA defines hazardous waste to include “any waste which has been determined by the Authority to be hazardous waste or to belong to any other category of waste provided for in section 91”.⁸ The EMCA goes further to prohibit the importation into Kenya of any hazardous substances.⁹ Furthermore, this law prohibits the transportation or disposal of hazardous waste without a licence from the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA). In order to get the licences, e-waste dealers are expected to show their readiness to reduce the environmental impacts of e-waste before these licences can be granted.



Source: Wikipedia commons

Like the Basel Convention and the Bamako Convention, the EMCA tasks the government with the responsibility to further develop a framework for regulating hazardous waste and materials, including e-waste. In other words, the EMCA provides a background for the general management of waste while allowing for the development of guidelines to regulate specific types of waste. In light of this, the Guidelines for E-Waste Management in Kenya was adopted in 2010.

These Guidelines define and describe e-waste within the Kenyan context. The Guidelines recognise that different groups may be involved in the handling of e-waste across the different stages of its life cycle and places the responsibility for properly managing the waste on each group at the various stages.¹⁰ Producers have the responsibility to establish channels for collecting the waste at the end of its life-cycle, implement individual take-back schemes, clearly label their products and comply with Kenya’s electronic manufacturing standards.¹¹

Importers of electronic and electric equipment have a responsibility to specify standards for products on the expected remaining lifespan of the product, notify NEMA for consent to

transport e-waste, state the number of years a computer has been used before importation, track the distribution of pre-destined end users to facilitate waste collection, indicate an envisaged lifespan and desist from importing hazardous waste.

Other key players in the life cycle of e-waste include assemblers, refurbishers and recyclers. These players have the responsibility to label products for easy identification, ensure unusable materials go to a licenced dispenser, provide incentives to the customer to donate used devices, establish recycling infrastructure, ensure that dismantling is done in an environmentally safe manner, etc.¹² Other e-waste policy guidelines have also been drafted and are at different stages of approval. This includes the E-Waste Regulation, National E-Waste Management Strategy and the Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations in 2020. NEMA is responsible for waste management in Kenya and for ensuring compliance with some of the laws and policies outlined above.

E-waste management law in Rwanda

At the national level, Rwanda has the Environment Organic Law No

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04/2005 which applies to waste in general but does not specifically create rules governing e-waste. E-waste is considered a subset of hazardous waste and the same rules and regulations apply.

In 2018, the National E-waste Management Policy for Rwanda (NEMPR) was adopted. The goal was to ensure effective and efficient management of e-waste for a safe environment and human health protection towards sustainable green economic development.¹³ The policy was built on the following major principles: (1) reduce, re-use and recycle e-waste; (2) resource recovery, i.e. collecting and dismantling to recover valuable metals from e-wastes; (3) handling and treatment of e-waste in a manner that avoids harming or endangering human health and the environment; (4) job creation and private sector development; and (5) sustainability.

Under the NEMPR, Rwanda's ministry in charge of Information Communications Technology has the responsibility to lead the development of an e-waste strategic plan and to oversee the implementation of such a strategic plan in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The ministry in charge of Health, on the other hand, will develop e-waste management policies as it relates to health and safety standards. The policy distributes other responsibilities among various government departments but goes no further to create any actionable obligations or criteria for the management of e-waste.

Regulation No 002 of 26/4/2018 Governing E-Waste Management in Rwanda sets out the legal framework for the management of e-waste in Rwanda. The Regulation places a responsibility on collectors and transporters of e-waste to ensure that any waste collected is packed and stored in a proper and secured manner, and to handle such waste in a manner that does not harm the environment or human health. Any truck or vehicle used for transporting

e-waste must be appropriately and completely closed, and e-waste may only be transported to a licenced e-waste facility.¹⁴

Collectors and transporters of e-waste are further obliged to keep records of the e-waste handled by them.¹⁵ While there is no responsibility to submit or report these records, such records must be made available upon demand by the Regulatory Authority.¹⁶ The Regulation also places a responsibility on dismantlers and refurbishers of e-waste to ensure the recycling of e-waste as much as possible, and where it is impossible, such non-recyclables must be sent to the authorised treatment storage and disposal facilities.¹⁷ Overall, the Regulation seeks to ensure that handlers of e-waste at the different points in its life cycle protect the human environment and health, encourage recycling and keep proper records.

The Regulation requires that to operate or carry out any activity related to e-waste collection, transportation, retail, importation, dismantling, recycling or refurbishing a person must have an appropriate licence issued by the Regulatory Authority.¹⁸ To obtain a licence, the applicant must demonstrate that they have an appropriate storage, dismantling, refurbishment and recycling facility.¹⁹

The Regulation provides further requirements for different types of licences.²⁰ These requirements include undertaking an environmental impact assessment, an environmental audit for existing facilities, compliance with all environmental standards, adequate equipment for collection and transportation of e-waste, segregation at source of e-waste from other types of solid waste, etc. Operating without a licence is punishable with a fine of between one million and five million Rwandan francs (about US\$1-5,000). Where a person who has been granted a licence contravenes any of the conditions of their licence, the licence

may be revoked or suspended.²¹

Importantly, Regulation No 002 prohibits the disposal of e-waste by reselling; auctioning or exchanging it; burning it; throwing it in non-designated waste receptacles; burying or throwing it away at a dump site; treating it in an environmentally unsound manner, causing the escape of hazardous waste or acids in an uncontrollable manner, or abandoning it in a place other than a collection centre or a licenced recycling facility.²²

E-waste management law in Uganda

The legal and regulatory framework for managing e-waste in Uganda includes the National Environment Act, the National Environment (waste management) Regulations, the E-Waste Management Policy, the E-Waste Management Strategic Plan and the E-Waste Guidelines. The National E-Waste Management Facility was also opened in 2021 to collect, sort, dismantle, recycle and dispose of e-waste.²³

The National Environment Act provides the framework for legislation on the environment in Uganda and provides for sustainable management of the environment. The Act prohibits or restricts the import, export, manufacture, formulation, distribution and use of hazardous chemicals and also makes provisions for the management of products containing mercury and ozone-depleting substances and products. Although several e-waste products will fall into these categories, it is necessary to note that there is no specific e-waste law in Uganda.

Rules 40 to 44 of the National Environment (waste management) Regulations govern the management of e-waste. The Regulations prohibit the disposal of e-waste in landfills or unauthorised places. They state there must be a designated collection centre for e-waste and it must not be disposed of with other types of waste.

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The storage, collection, transportation, and final treatment and disposal of e-waste has become a major problem in urban centres across East Africa.



Source: Wikipedia commons

Unlike Rwanda, a product steward or local government receiving e-waste in Uganda does not need a licence. However, the e-waste must be received and handled in a secure manner that does not cause harm to human health and the environment. These receivers of e-waste must also keep proper records of the quantities and types of e-waste received and exported or delivered to a waste handler.

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is

the principal government agency responsible for the management of the environment. NEMA coordinates, monitors and supervises all activities concerning the environment. The Ministry of ICT also provides institutional support for e-waste management by leading e-waste programmes and coordinating the establishment of safe e-waste disposal mechanisms and facilities. The National E-waste Management Centre for Uganda was launched in 2021.

E-waste management law in Tanzania

The principal environmental legislation in Tanzania is the Environmental Management Act. This law outlines the principles for management, impact and risk assessments, prevention and control of pollution, waste management, environmental quality standards, public participation, compliance and enforcement. The Act also creates an obligation to undertake an environmental assessment and ensure pollution prevention and control and waste management. Although the Act does not make any e-waste-specific obligations, the provisions on hazardous waste are generally applicable to e-waste.

In 2021, Tanzania adopted the Environmental Management (Control and Management of Electrical and Electronic Equipment Waste) Regulations. These govern the general management and movements of e-waste and its components in Tanzania. E-waste management in Tanzania is based on three principles: (a) precautionary principle; (b) polluter pays principle; and (c) producer extended responsibility. The producer extended responsibility implies that the producer or importer of a product must internalise environmental costs in the production of the products and in its whole life cycle.²⁴ The Regulations further oblige the owner or operator of

a facility that generates hazardous and toxic wastes to minimise such waste.

The Regulations also prohibit the manufacture or importation of any electrical and electronic equipment which contains lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls or polybrominated diphenyl ethers. Nevertheless, the minister may exempt certain categories of equipment and allow them to be imported or produced despite containing such substances.²⁵ Where e-waste is generated in the manufacturing process, the producer must ensure that such waste is handled in an environmentally sound manner and in line with the principles set out in the Regulations.²⁶

A person who is in possession or control of e-waste must ensure that it is separated at the source from other categories of waste, ensure safe custody and ensure it is deposited separately into receptacles.²⁷ E-waste may only be packed or stored in containers that meets standards set by the National Environmental Management Council. Failure to comply with this is punishable by a fine of not less than five million shillings (about US\$2,000) but not exceeding ten billion shillings or imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve years or both. The container must also be labelled with identifying information like the identity of the e-waste, the contact details of the generator of e-waste, the net contents, and so on.²⁸

When e-waste of up to one ton is to be collected and transported, the collector or transporter must apply for a permit. The main consideration in granting this permit is whether the applicant has the facilities to collect and transport that amount of e-waste without causing significant damage to public health and the environment.²⁹ The Regulation permits the export of e-waste subject to the granting of an export permit but prohibits the importation of e-waste into Tanzania. Nevertheless, the minister may, in ➤

consultation with relevant ministries and for public interest, allow the importation of e-waste into the country.³⁰ The Council is responsible for conducting regular inspections and monitoring compliance with the provisions of this law.

CONCLUSION

Steps have begun to be put in place by various East African countries to ensure the effective and environmentally sound management of e-waste. All four countries examined have some form of legislative or regulatory framework in place to address the management of e-waste. There is widespread recognition of the increase in the amount of e-waste in the region and the need to ensure that this does not threaten the environment or human health.

With the exception of Tanzania, where a permit is only required if the e-waste is up to one ton, most countries require a licence or permit to store or transport e-waste. This ensures that there is proper monitoring and control of the movement of e-waste in these countries. The different laws and regulations also reveal clear criteria for the granting of the required licences.

However, a specific e-waste law is still missing in most of these countries, making the legal status of other regulations uncertain. Additionally, the regulations as they stand are weak on capacity building and institutional frameworks. Even where regulatory bodies are established, there is very little provision on how to strengthen these bodies to better perform their objectives. Without strong institutions, the effectiveness of the laws is weakened.

It is also important to emphasise the role of manufacturers in e-waste management. Manufacturers must begin to rethink the life cycle of their products and their environmental impacts. Manufacturers must also assist

in the creation of e-waste recycling centres in developing countries rather than using them as dumping sites for used electrical and electronic equipment from developed countries.

Consumers can resist, or at least delay, acquiring new devices until absolutely necessary. They can repair devices, when possible, rather than abandoning them, and after a new purchase, they can resell or recycle their old devices. But consumer intervention only goes so far. Governments must regulate e-waste in a manner that best ensures that the environment and human health is protected.

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Climate diplomacy:

Harnessing AI for damage mitigation in Africa

By Sharon Tshipa

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The African Union's Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) highlights the use of computers and the internet as critical in building climate resilience across Africa. SHARON TSHIPA reviews research on the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in mitigating or reducing loss and damage from extreme weather and also natural events (such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions) across the continent.

INTRODUCTION

Young African climate activists such as Vanessa Nakate of Uganda, Lesein Mutunkei of Kenya, Yero Sarr of Senegal and Remi Zehiga of the Democratic Republic of Congo are among many youth voices calling on global leaders to urgently redress the climate crisis and limit global warming to 1.5°C in order to reach net zero CO₂ emissions

by 2050 (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2019). This bottom-up approach is inspired by the fact that although Africa's global contribution to harmful greenhouse gas emissions is only 3.8%, the continent is enduring climate change's most destructive effects (CDP, 2020).

While Africa's bottom-up approach is still in its infancy, Africa's top-down approach spans decades. The presence of Africa in the climate change debate two decades prior to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 shows that African heads of state and government have long appreciated the gravity of the climate change challenge (Lisinge-Fotabong et al., 2016). African political leaders (through institutions such as the African Union) have made a number of groundbreaking decisions to help member states deal effectively, efficiently and equitably with the risks posed (Lisinge-Fotabong et al., 2016). Though plausible, their efforts are continuously threatened by, for example, lack of scientific data.

The lack of data has resulted in Germany, Japan and India being placed at the top of the list of countries suffering from extended periods of heat although sub-Saharan Africa is dubbed a "literal hotspot of heatwave activity" – a weather-related loss event listed as a

major cause of damage (Eckstein et al., 2019; Harrington & Otto, 2020).

Lisinge-Fotabong et al. (2016) posit that African political leadership has recognised the importance and timeliness of Africa's active engagement in coordinated climate diplomacy and design of robust policies for a collective effort to confront complex climate change challenges. This article argues that for climate diplomats to succeed, they need to deliberately and actively take advantage of various modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to achieve sustainable goals (Galaz et al., 2021; Javaid et al., 2022; Yigitcanlar et al., 2020).

In May 2022, an experts' consultative meeting on developing a continental strategy for AI in Africa was held in Dakar, Senegal, enabled by the African Union High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET). APET views AI as worth harnessing for Africa's socio-economic development (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022). The APET AI for Africa report provides guidelines for African countries to exploit AI-based technologies for the continent's advancement (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022). Its AI strategy for Africa is due to be released in the first quarter of 2023 (AUDA-NEPAD, 2022).

This article contributes to the ➤

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If people know “what the weather will do” as opposed to just knowing “what it will be” they will be better prepared to evade severe loss and damage.

ongoing AI for Africa dialogue, and seeks to inform the development of strategic policies that will consider the uptake of AI in mitigating or reducing loss and damage. Taking into consideration the constant rise of extreme climate-related events and the world’s limited ability to prepare for them, this article argues in favour of AI, as it can play an important role in addressing the climate emergency (see Nordgren, 2022; Taddeo et al., 2021). To date, AI has been found to enable the estimation of extreme yield loss when crops are harmed by unusual weather conditions (see Zhong et al., 2022) and evacuation planning, while assisting with damage assessment (see Rolnick et al., 2022). This article aims to answer the following question: How can AI be used to mitigate or reduce climate-related loss and damage in Africa?

A review of the literature (using open-access journals) shows that AI can effectively be used to mitigate or reduce loss and damage caused (directly and indirectly) by earthquakes, floods, meteorological droughts, locusts, soil erosion, bark beetles, lightning strikes, volcanoes, cyclones, tsunamis and wildfires. AI can also be used to manage forest destruction, landslides,



Source: Rawpixel

electricity outages, food shortages and communication network damage. It can also boost the climate resilience of critical infrastructure, improve urban resilience, strengthen the resilience of vulnerable people in disasters and enhance smart farming to enable people to cope with the impacts of climate change extreme weather events on supply chains.

Floods

Among the articles reviewed, there is a strong consensus that floods are the most common natural hazards that frequently damage natural systems, threatening human rights to food, health and development (see Darabi et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2021; Shahabi et al., 2021 among others). Between 1996 and 2015, for example, 150,016 floods were recorded worldwide and they continue to increase in frequency and intensity, largely due to climate change (Auliagisni et al., 2022; Fang et al., 2021; Ghosh et al., 2022; Molina et al., 2022). To save properties and lives, accurate identification of

remedial measures for a flood are necessary (Waseem & Manshadi, 2020).

In assessing the potential of AI in mitigating or reducing loss and damage, the research for this article showed that machine learning and deep learning models¹ can be used to produce reliable flood susceptibility maps (see Darabi et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2021; Ghosh et al., 2022; Lei et al., 2021; Lin and Billa 2021; Shahabi et al., 2021). Studies analysed further concede that identifying floods and producing flood susceptibility maps are crucial steps for decision-makers to prevent and manage disasters – a shift from the flood defence approach. Since current flood maps are not easy to acquire and are hard to understand, climate diplomats should motivate for the development of more comprehensive and user-friendly flood maps using community-based information, which could help ensure that communities that don’t have the necessary knowledge don’t develop a false sense of security (Auliagisni et al., 2022). These can also assist local administrators to adopt

proper sustainable management plans to reduce future flood-related damage as this is one of the costliest natural disasters (Ghosh and et al., 2022; Wanghe et al., 2022).

Tropical storms

Cyclones, typhoons and hurricanes are also among the most intense and costly natural disasters (Sun et al., 2022). To prevent or reduce loss and damage caused by these storms, research findings show that machine learning models have been used to predict hurricane paths and assess damage using reanalysis data, while deep learning has successfully detected many severe storms and has also been used with other data sources like passive microwave satellite data for monitoring tropical cyclones (Sun et al., 2022). McCarthy et al. (2020) suggest that machine learning methods have demonstrated high-accuracy mapping capabilities on small spatial scales but require a large amount of robust training data. Efforts to map larger areas at finer resolutions may require hundreds of thousands of images and therefore encounter Big Data processing challenges.² Ruckelshaus et al. (2020) note that combining satellite-derived imagery with machine learning classification algorithms improves the opportunity to understand, map and respond to natural, climatic and human-caused impacts.

Since responsiveness and resilience to coastal disasters are critical for all development stakeholders, climate diplomats should consider the uptake of AI and Big Data technology by African countries, for example Google HydroNets, a specialised deep neural network architecture built specifically for water levels forecasting, and Google MetNet, a Neural Weather Model for precipitation forecasting. Hydrometeorological risk forecasting and early warning is viewed as key in typhoon-related disaster risk reduction and preparedness (Yu et al., 2021). If

people know “what the weather will do” as opposed to just knowing “what it will be” they will be better prepared to evade severe loss and damage and sustainable climate resilient development will be possible (Yu et al., 2022).

Wildfires

Among natural disasters with great loss and damage implications are wildfires caused by lightning, volcanic eruptions and spontaneous ignition, some of which are the results of global warming and all of which result in forest ecosystems destruction (Mohajane et al., 2021; Park et al., 2022; Waseem & Manshadi, 2020). Early fire detection and intervention are vital for damage minimisation. To this end, scholars such as Sun et al. (2022) note that machine learning methods have been used to:

- improve fire detection and prediction,
- classify and map wildfire severity,
- detect wildfires automatically using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or satellite images,
- improve smoke plume forecasting,
- assess human health issues connected to poor air quality, and
- trace human-caused wildfires.

Among other methods that can tackle various aspects of wildfires, Waseem and Manshadi (2020) highlight the use of the artificial neural network (ANN), which is an AI method that teaches computers to process data in a way that is inspired by the human brain. However, the scholars note application of ANN in large areas takes a lot of time, hence they point to the multi-threshold algorithm as a better option in such a scenario (Zhang et al., 2021). Since forests are a primary source of livelihood, to prevent forest fire disasters Mohajane et al. (2021) also point to the application of remote sensing and machine learning algorithms for forest fire mapping.

Earthquakes

The seismicity of Africa, according to Algerian Professor Djillali Benouar (n.d.), is mainly concentrated in South-East Africa and North Africa.

Given their frequency and devastating effects, extensive applications of AI techniques are considered crucial for earthquake forecasting and probability, and hazard, risk mapping and mitigation purposes. Freddi et al. (2021) also suggest that machine learning techniques are advantageous as they may be able to find relationships between event parameters and corresponding event losses that would otherwise elude ad-hoc and “traditional” statistical approaches. For example, the World Bank’s Geospatial Operations Support Team (GOST) in Guatemala City fed drone and street-level imagery to machine learning algorithms to automatically detect “soft-story” buildings or those most likely to collapse in an earthquake.

On the other hand, deep learning methodologies have accelerated the development of more reliable and efficient algorithms for earthquake monitoring (Sun et al. 2022). AI-based earthquake monitoring methods can result in advancing seismic hazard safety by empowering Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) systems with faster and more reliable estimations of earthquake parameters, and providing more complete and precise earthquake catalogues used for improving long-term seismic hazard assessments.

CONCLUSION

The research reviewed in this article determined the potential of AI in mitigating or reducing climate change-induced loss and damage and found that AI is already positively influencing the management of natural disasters. This worldwide use of AI points to the degree of ease associated with the use of the systems by varied sustainable development stakeholders. The article ➤

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... climate diplomats should motivate for the development of more comprehensive and user-friendly flood maps using community-based information.

urges African climate diplomats to consider advocating for and adopting the best AI technology for use in their countries (see Venkatesh et al., 2003). Research revealed that machine learning and deep learning approaches can be used to produce reliable flood susceptibility maps. Deep learning approaches can also successfully detect severe storms as they develop and improve earthquake risk assessment. Machine learning approaches can be used to detect and trace human-caused wildfires

These study results are timely and relevant given that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030 highlights the importance of scientific research, supporting the “availability and application of science and technology to decision making” in disaster risk reduction (Freddi et al., 2021).

This review of the literature shows that science and technology can play a crucial role in the world’s ability to reduce casualties, physical damage and interruption to critical infrastructure caused by natural hazards and their complex interactions, thereby ensuring the realisation of sustainable



Source: GroundUp

development goals. According to Freddi et al. (2021), the Sendai Framework encourages better access to technological innovations combined with increased disaster risk reduction investments in developing cost-effective approaches and tackling global challenges induced by climate change.

For this to be achieved on the African continent, African climate diplomats should support the progressive development of AI with relevant, adequate and correct data sets to evade flawed and damaging results (see Galaz et al., 2021). AI uptake by various African governments, the private sector and individuals, can ensure loss and damage mitigation and reduction across all industries on the continent whose economies are already facing challenges from the climate crisis.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 In layman's terms, machine learning and deep learning are both types of AI. Machine learning is AI that can automatically adapt with minimal human interference. Deep learning is a subset of machine learning that uses artificial neural networks to mimic the learning process of the human brain. Where machine learning algorithms generally need human correction when they get something wrong, deep learning algorithms can improve their outcomes through repetition, without human intervention. A machine learning algorithm can learn from relatively small sets of data, but a deep learning algorithm requires Big Data sets that might include diverse and unstructured data (see <https://levity.ai/blog/difference-machine-learning-deep-learning>).
- 2 Big Data refers to massive, complex data sets that are rapidly generated and transmitted from a wide variety of sources and that are too large or complex to be dealt with by traditional data-processing application software. **NA**

In pursuit of a New Agenda

On the path to renewal in 2023

By the New Agenda editorial collective

The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) has been presented with a challenge over the future of its flagship journal, New Agenda. This has set off an internal process of reflection on how to rigorously maintain the journal's intellectual standards while uncompromisingly responding to the demands of South Africa at this time. We invite you, our readers, to join us in this exercise. We will report in each issue on our progress as we tackle the need to preserve our accreditation status and we welcome your advice and feedback. Send your comments to production@ifaaza.org.za

New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy has taken its place in archives and libraries across South Africa – and also far afield – for more than two decades as a distinguished journal on the list of publications “accredited” by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

That means a lot, certainly for those

South African university academics who are able to claim financial rewards for their institutions from the DHET for every article published in *New Agenda*.

It also means a lot to us at IFAA for whom the journal's academic standing reflects a commitment to the rigorous standards of debate and discourse needed to defend and preserve our struggling democracy. Reliable information and clear-headed analysis are the tools the progressive, right-minded person uses to find a way through confusion and discord to a better place -- for all. We like to think that is what we have to contribute to the ongoing challenge of radical transformation. We also trust in our readers to call us out if we ever fail in that endeavour.

Our status as the publishers of an accredited journal was part of the legacy established by our founding editor, Prof Ben Turok, whose death at the end of 2019 threatened to disrupt the work of IFAA. Ben was well-connected and so strongly opinionated that when he was editor the content of each edition of the journal easily coalesced around him, driven by his instincts for what was important – and by the articles and interviews he would strong-arm from distinguished contributors.

In 2022, a review panel appointed by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) recommended that *New Agenda* be taken off the DHET-accredited journal list. The panel found that *New Agenda* “does not currently meet the standard for research-led academic publishing, and needs to clarify its standing in respect of academic publishing. The

journal should retain its current position as a home for contemporary policy debates led by practitioners in South Africa or transform into a proper academic journal” (ASSAf, 2022).

Until this time, *New Agenda* had maintained its DHET accreditation by complying with a list of generic requirements, as indicated by the Research Office at the University of Cape Town (DHET, 2021). These required that “the journal should clearly indicate the following: ISSN, publisher (including publisher's address and contact details), frequency of publication, editorial policy (including evidence of the peer-review process), details of the editorial board (including the status of the members of the editorial board and their institutional affiliations).”

IFAA, the publishers of *New Agenda*, was shaken by ASSAf's unexpected decision and requested clarification on the DHET's exact requirements for accreditation. It must be made very clear from the outset that ASSAf was, and continues to be, collegial, extremely responsive and helpful. ASSAf provided its guidelines for an academic journal and indicated that it has been tasked by the DHET to review all the journals on the accredited list to recommend which should stay and which should go.

From the ASSAf review it was clear to IFAA that, during the period under review from 2017 to 2019, the journal had failed to meet ASSAf's main criteria for a scholarly publication. IFAA appealed to ASSAf's review panel to allow *New Agenda* an opportunity to correct the weaknesses it had highlighted before making a recommendation to DHET.



“

Our status as the publishers of an accredited journal was part of the legacy established by our founding editor, Prof Ben Turok.

The panel agreed and amended their “consensus view” to allow the journal to remain on the DHET accredited list on condition certain editorial processes are instituted by the end of 2023.

Each issue of *New Agenda*, in 2023 will report on milestones and developments towards meeting ASSAf’s requirements. In response IFAA intends:

- Expanding the editorial advisory board, with the aim of including academic and policy leaders from beyond South Africa’s borders;
- Introducing appropriate article-management and peer review tracking systems.

The ASSAf review stated “this is not a research-led academic journal. Instead, the journal focuses on policy debates

and influence in the political domain, civil society, and academia.” However it also acknowledged the contribution *New Agenda* made “(a)s an engaged policy debates journal”.

“The journal focuses on policy debates and influence in the political domain, civil society, and academia. The focus of the journal is on stimulating policy-related debate in society and within the policy circle. The journal occupies a necessary space in the interface between research, policy debates, and civil society’s role in mobilisation for policy interventions.”

IFAA reiterates its commitment to ensuring that *New Agenda* brings solid, policy-relevant research to the public in an accessible and intelligible form. The journal carries research, opinions and interviews that focus on South African political and economic issues as well as those facing the African continent more broadly. It also carries relevant international news, book reviews and is in the process of researching and developing public discourse and knowledge on alternative economics.¹

IFAA said in its response to the review: “There is an emphasis in *New Agenda* on policy that is evidence-based and which is rooted in intellectual enquiry. There is equally an emphasis on research that is coherent and well-presented and that reflects on possible policy implications in the world beyond the academy. This stance may go beyond the requirements of the academic

research promoted by ASSAf, but it is appropriate for South Africa – and for the DHET - where the need for development and equity correctly challenge the “ivory-tower” approach to knowledge.”

New Agenda is not perfect, and the editorial board welcomes the constructive comments in the ASSAf review. We want to produce a journal that attracts new scholars from the universities and higher education institutions and is able to publish their work – when of adequate rigour - with due accreditation.

IFAA is firmly committed to the principle of recognising and advancing emerging academics from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and hopes to develop its mentoring capacity in this regard. Given its commitment to social and economic transformation, *New Agenda* provides opportunities for publication in an accredited journal to academics who may not normally be published in mainstream academic journals. *New Agenda* has published a number of articles featuring innovative and enterprising primary research and intends to develop this in the future.

In its earlier interchanges with ASSAf, IFAA explained why it values DHET accreditation: “DHET accreditation attracts potential authors to submit research articles to *New Agenda*. As it happens, most of these are rejected before peer review. But we actively work with younger academics, when this is justified, to address weaknesses ➤



and ensure that new, interesting and relevant research can be presented to our readers.”

The detailed requirements for *New Agenda* accreditation highlighted by the panel were laid out clearly:

- Including a formal abstract for academic articles at the beginning of each article;
- Improving the peer review process and maintaining records in this regard;
- Adjusting the composition of the editorial board (e.g. to include academics from other countries);
- Providing a clear statement of journal guidelines for different kinds of submissions;
- Clarity on the forms of referencing and citation for academic contributions;
- The addition of journal information on the IFAA website (to indicate e.g. the kinds of articles invited for submission, names and institutional affiliations of the editorial board, and a statement about peer review.)

New Agenda is now on a reform path, marked out by the ASSAf guidelines. It hopes to continue as a publication that straddles both academia and activism. The dual nature of this journal is clearly reflected in its editorial commitment to publishing, on the one hand, high-level, theory-based analysis and original

empirical research that interrogates current academic debates. On the other hand, it also publishes political commentary and vigorous, in-depth policy-related articles that contribute to public knowledge, open-minded debate and the spread of ideas to stimulate critical thinking in the political arena and broader civil society.

The journal is located in the important interface between research, policy debates and interventions, and civil society mobilisation for transformation and development. The overall mission of the journal is to help readers to be informed and active citizens who play a constructive role in political decision-making.

In pursuit of these goals, IFAA takes great care to make *New Agenda* attractive and accessible to a broad readership. *New Agenda's* target audience includes academics, decision- and policy-makers, students, activists, researchers, and political and business leaders. Without compromising the writing quality and style of its authors, IFAA ensures that content is clear, accessible and has undergone a thorough copy editing process. Layout and design departs from academic publishing to include photographs, colour and design features to enliven the pages, precisely to improve its appeal to its broad target audience. Social media platforms are used in an ongoing concerted effort to reach and increase its readership, in particular among students and youth.

New Agenda intends to preserve its unique dual character as an academic and activist journal. But we see a need to differentiate clearly between academic articles and opinion/policy-orientated content. Different metrics for quality assessment will be applied to the different types of articles and the guidelines for article submission will clearly distinguish between the two formats.

The aim is to clearly signal the separation between the two within the journal, using design features and typographical signposting. IFAA acknowledges the need for distinct publication processes for each format, with extended deadlines, uncompromising adherence to established academic standards and requirements, and rigorous selection and review procedures for the journal's academic content.

IFAA is also looking forward to revising the “look and feel” of *New Agenda* to bring it up to date with progressive online publishing, making full use of the interactive and easy-to-access features that digital publishing has to offer.

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ENDNOTE

- 1 See <https://ifaaza.org/new-agenda/> NA



How the townships of the Eastern Cape defied the apartheid war regime

Publisher: Jacana, Johannesburg. 2022, R420

Review by Dominique Souchon

This book's subtitle grabs the imagination. Strategies and tactics that organisations developed first in the Eastern Cape to resist the apartheid system were adapted and repeated by many organisational forms across the country over decades.

Rory Riordan is well known as a human rights activist. He was a key founder of the Human Rights Trust and its journal, *Monitor*, as well as a systematic recorder of many atrocities against both individuals and communities in the Eastern Cape during the 1980s and 90s.

In his book, Riordan shows that despite the apartheid regime's extreme efforts to oppress and repress resistance to it (particularly in this region), ultimately the defiance of Eastern Cape communities and organisations were key to apartheid's failure.

He begins by illustrating the deep roots of resistance to racism in the Eastern Cape from the 1940s. The building of mass-based and representative organisations started at this time and in these places, and patterns that were established then were repeated right up to the end of 1990.

The book sets the scene with the life stories of stalwart ANC leaders Raymond Mhlaba, Govan Mbeki and Wilton Mkwayi as they moved the ANC into becoming a mass representative organisation. Their individual life

decisions, political education and support of each other's political work shows how much can be done by so few. Individual activists and leaders are quoted at key points of the book. Their personal and political decisions are powerfully outlined, which inspires one to apply these reactions to the injustices that we still face today.

Raymond Mhlaba's political journey starts with the simple act of needing to find work in Port Elizabeth to support his impoverished parents. Soon after landing a job he joined a trade union and became its organiser by 1943 – all of which he described as obvious decisions that anyone would make in similar circumstances.

The ANC chose the township rent increases in 1945 by the Port Elizabeth City Council for their first resistance campaign. The victory which it won resulted in a large increase in its membership, and provided vital lessons for the future.

This early history shows that the ANC in Port Elizabeth organised and attracted a cross-class and cross-race membership before detailed debates were held about these issues. It drew people into its campaigns according to their needs and accepted whatever useful assistance was offered. The cross-membership of individual activists in unions, the ANC and the Communist Party led to solidarity across organisations and cross-pollination of

strategy and tactics.

The book provides comprehensive coverage of oppression, dispossession and resistance to repression from the 1940s to 1994. Its main – persuasive and controversial – claim is that the defiance of the people of the Eastern Cape demonstrated that apartheid could be defeated, just as the Soviets’ 1942 holding of Stalingrad during World War Two showed that Hitler’s armies could be beaten.

The author sets out the extent of the cruelty of the apartheid oppressors from the 1950s to the 1980s. Vigilante killings, forced removals, detentions and torture were used to destabilise organised resistance. He quotes horrifying individual accounts documented from several sources, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's amnesty hearings, Eastern Cape academics, and those that he personally documented and published while editing *Monitor*.

The apartheid state used the 1966 Vietnam war-based study, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War* by the USA's Colonel John J. McCuen, as its guide. The systematic and interlinked strategies to destroy people, communities and their organisations in the Eastern Cape came from lessons outlined by McCuen. This is demonstrated by linking detailed events with quotes from McCuen.

An example of this intricate war strategy is the description in the book of how the forced removals of »

communities in Gqeberha and Kariega were planned in order to destroy community, social and organisational relationships by forcibly moving people far from their work, without access to transport, water or sanitation. Simply staying alive took up all the people's time. They had no space for planning and carrying out acts of resistance. The simultaneous killing of people by vigilantes and the notorious South African Police unit of "special constables" or *kitskonstabels*, as well as the detention and torture of thousands and the assassination of leaders, were all aspects of this "counter-revolutionary war" against the townships of the Eastern Cape. This approach completely abandoned any semblance of reform for South Africa.

The creativity and the solid organisation by all the organisations of the Eastern Cape stand out. The main coordinating force, the United Democratic Front (UDF), carried out a consumer boycott of white businesses which had the effect of pitting the

business community and the apartheid system's forces against each other.

In 1985, the ANC called on people to make black townships "ungovernable" and to eliminate the Black Local Authorities by means of rent boycotts and other actions. The UDF and its affiliates asked councillors and township police to resign their positions. Where this failed, municipal buildings and the homes of African councillors and collaborators were attacked. As the state's administrative system broke down, people established their own democratic structures, street committees and people's courts to govern their communities themselves.

What would have added to the book's description of the extent of human rights abuses of the apartheid regime and its terrible devastation of communities and people was how the various actions and strategies of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and its units interacted with the UDF, street committees, trade unions and other social structures in this period.

All of the above bears testimony to the book's claim that just as the Soviet's grim defence that denied the Nazi regime the capture of Stalingrad showed that Hitler's armies could be beaten, it was the efforts of the Allied armies and navies and the great sacrifices made by men and women in various resistance movements that defeated Hitler's Nazi state.

The book provides evidence that it was the defiance of the people of the Eastern Cape that demonstrated that apartheid could not win and that the defeat of the apartheid state was carried out by multiple resistance movements, their allies and the historical balance of geopolitics of the time.

I recommend *Apartheid's Stalingrad* as a shocking and fascinating read. It provides a real feeling of what was happening at the time, and how the actions of people and organisations achieved crucial gains against a brutal system.

It also provides inspiration to act creatively against injustice today – which is another good reason to read this book. **NA**



Is it time to abandon decolonisation?

Taking African agency seriously

Olufemi Táíwò

Publisher: Hurst, London, 2022. R388

Review by Anye-Nkwenti Nyamnjoh

Does decolonisation, as an intellectual project, harm scholarship in and on Africa? Should it be abandoned? According to Olufemi Táíwò, Professor of African Political Thought and current Chair at the Africana Studies and

Research Centre at Cornell University, USA, the answer to both these questions is yes.

In his book, *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously*, in Hurst publisher's *African Arguments* series, the philosopher contends that we

should limit our use of "decolonisation" to what he considers its original – and much more clearly delineated – meaning: namely, self-government in politics and economics.

When the idea of "decolonisation" becomes ubiquitous and is applied to

all ideas – from philosophy to literature to political theory – the project fails to take African agency seriously, argues Táíwò. It unhelpfully traps intellectuals into notions of authenticity, nativism and atavism. This version of “decolonisation”, he says, is a kind of intellectual xenophobia. It makes its mission the purging of any ideas with foreign provenance; “anything that is present while colonialism lasted is irremediably sullied by the colonial imprint, and, therefore, can have no place in the world beyond colonialism.”

Such a project puts colonialism on a pedestal. It makes just a few decades of African history an all-powerful master-signifier, the lens through which all post-colonial life is seen.

This flawed approach, according to Táíwò, inflates colonialism’s significance in two ways. Firstly, it fails to distinguish between changes that were part of the colonial project and those that were merely incidental to it. Secondly, it undermines African agency by discounting Africans’ capacity to domesticate and appropriate ideas. It condescendingly presumes that if Africans see value in foreign thought, it must be because their minds remain colonised.

Much of Táíwò’s frustration stems from the way in which certain narratives of decolonisation turn Africans into “permanent subalterns” prohibited from appropriating and domesticating ideas from those in other parts of the world, as humans have done for time immemorial.

Táíwò’s critical interventions in *Against Decolonisation* have been echoed by other theorists. In South Africa, where talk of decolonisation is popular, Jonathan Jansen has questioned the tendency to treat Africa and the Global South as inherently peripheral. He uses the idea of distinct “knowledge regimes” – of which colonialism is one of many – to warn against reducing complex problems to a single source. Debates within *Southern theory* similarly unsettle the narrative of an omnipotent

Global North and powerless Global South by offering thick descriptions of how agency is exercised in an unequal global knowledge economy.

Philosopher Paulin Hountondji also disapproves of ideas that essentialise Africanity. He aims instead to *open up* “the possibility for a plurality of philosophical traditions and objects of inquiry that the African philosopher might turn to, by not making him or her the prisoner of any identity-based prescriptions of what ‘authentically’ African approaches and themes have to look like”.

Elsewhere, Souleymane Diagne has argued for the treatment of Africanity as an open question, emphasising the importance of a continuous process of “translation” in developing a notion of “lateral universalism”. And one could also invoke Achille Mbembe’s calls to “de-substantialise” Africanity, a theme that resonates with Afropolitan reimaginings of Africanity as a transcultural phenomenon.

These debates raise key questions about the interplay of nationalist and cosmopolitan orientations to Africanity in intellectual life. Do we celebrate what Francis Nyamnjoh has described as the “incompleteness” of being and the “permanence of debt and indebtedness” that demands conviviality? Or do we look to partition and sort ideas and people into rigidly bounded enclaves according to race, nation, ethnicity, geography, etc?

It seems to me that an important question raised by Táíwò is the possibility of a “critical universalism” and whether this requires abandoning the vocabulary of decolonisation. By critical universalism I mean the belief that a meaningful engagement with Africa in all its specificities can include the pursuit of universal goals and the discovery of common concepts and values. A project, to borrow from Michael Cronin, that is sensitive to both the pathologies of difference – which risk separatism by conflating contact with contamination

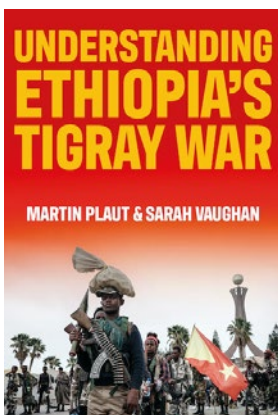
– and the pathologies of universalism – which risk erasure of, and violence towards, otherness.

For Táíwò, the narrative of decolonisation is unsuited to this project because it gives up on the “oneness of humanity”. Some may disagree with him, seeing his characterisation of decolonisation as an unflattering caricature of the mission to take seriously historically induced silences and erasures. But the ideas Táíwò critiques are nonetheless present and recognisable. They go as far, as I have experienced, as claiming Africans should renounce “English” names because they constitute a colonised subjectivity. Such an argument can only work, Táíwò would argue, if it treats naming practices as either singularly colonial or decolonial.

Against Decolonisation is a rigorously combative intervention in the application of decolonisation to thought and ideas. Though the author opts for ditching this project altogether, his overarching argument is better seen as cautioning against decolonisation’s fetishisation into a *buzzword* by encouraging readers not take its meaning for granted.

In my view, Táíwò offers a distinct critique of *decolonisation-as-confinement*, though other meanings of the term are possible and desirable. Nonetheless, his warning against intellectual enclosure whereby only certain topics, tones and modes of expression are available to Africans has important ethical significance. It highlights how intellectual decolonisation can fall into a politics of belonging in which the boundaries of Africanity are policed and contested. Amidst the current clamour to decolonise this and that, *Against Decolonisation* invites readers to critically interrogate the boundaries of Africanity.

This review first appeared in *African Arguments*. It is part of a series of *book reviews* in collaboration with *Debating Ideas* and was published under a Creative Commons Licence. 



Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War

Martin Plaut & Sarah Vaughan

Publisher: Hurst Publishers, London. 2023, 392 pgs

Review by Phillip van Niekerk

Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War, an account of the conflict and its long and complex historical roots by Sarah Vaughan and Martin Plaut, former Africa Editor of the BBC, was recently published by Hurst Publishers.

What they have to say is explosive: that the entire justification for the war was based on a lie – the claim that the Tigrayans started it by attacking the Northern Command Headquarters in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, on 3 November 2020 and that the federal government's response was a "law and order operation to counter a traitorous terrorist attack" by the Tigrayans.

The authors reveal in great detail that the motivation for war was long "in gestation and preparation" as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pushed to centralise power after 25 years of Tigrayan-dominated ethnic federalism under the [Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front](#).

From July 2020, the authors recount, there were explicit social media calls for Ethiopia and Eritrea to act against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was identified as "the source of all our problems". Abiy and his associates began a programme of hate speech against Tigrayans, calling them monsters and saying they should be the last of their kind. Tigrayans were expelled from the military and the civil service, and thousands withdrew into

Tigray. The anti-Tigrayan sentiment was channelled into millions of Ethiopian homes on satellite television.

An important context is that this was not a civil war but a regional war in which the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) allied with Eritrea, [whose leader, Isaias Afwerki](#), had a long-standing beef with the Tigrayans dating back to the 1970s. The two countries, along with Somalia, formed a tripartite alliance on 27 January 2020, nine months before the outbreak of war, and the weapons and troops were moved into place well ahead of 3 November.

"Everyone knew this was coming," Plaut told the Commonwealth Institute at the launch of the book earlier in 2023. "This was no surprise."

AN INVASION LONG IN THE PLANNING

Plaut cites Professor Mirjam van Reisen, from Tilburg University in the Netherlands, who was working on a research project with academics from Mekelle University when she received a call on the night of 3 November 2020 from a colleague, saying that there was gunfire in the city.

Van Reisen later learnt that two Ethiopian Air Force planes had landed at Mekelle airport, pretending they were bringing in new banknotes, but actually ferrying in special forces.

"The ENDF were sent by plane to capture and kill the leadership of the

regional government," said Plaut. "That was the spark that led to the outbreak of the fighting."

The Tigrayans then went to the regional command in Mekelle and told them to hand over their weapons or they would be arrested. Many did, but some fought back and there was fighting at other bases in Tigray.

The very next day – 4 November – Ethiopian, Eritrean and Somali troops, along with Amhara ethnic militia, began their invasion of Tigray. The Eritreans took Western Tigray so they could cut off the supply lines to Sudan. Mekelle fell on November 29 and the TDF was driven into the mountains from where it launched a guerrilla war.

The rest is history. The war fell into several phases: the occupation of Tigray (November 2020); the recapture of Mekelle by the Tigray Defence Forces (June 2021); the TPLF march on Addis Ababa (August to November 2021); the retreat back to Mekelle (November 2021) and the final assault by the Eritreans, ENDF and Amhara militias (April 2022), ending with the November 2022 cessation of hostilities.

Atrocity comparisons tend to be odious, but the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified 7,199 civilian deaths in Ukraine, a sickening level of mass murder for which Russian President Vladimir Putin bears full responsibility. The number of combat deaths is in the

tens of thousands.

By contrast, the number of casualties in Ethiopia might never be known. The best estimates have been put together by Jan Nyssen, a geographer at Ghent University in Belgium, who has calculated that up to 600,000 non-combatants died during the Tigrayan war between November 2020 and November 2022. Many of them starved to death. If one adds fighters who died in combat, the total number of deaths could approach one million.

At the recent Munich Security Conference, US Vice-President Kamala Harris accused Russia of committing crimes against humanity. But given the simultaneous near-planetary silence on Tigray, it is safe to conclude that not all crimes against humanity are equal.

President Joe Biden's administration did start a review last year to determine whether genocide had been committed in Tigray, but then backed off so as not to impede the peace process that culminated in the Pretoria and the Nairobi peace agreements in November.

The peace that has accompanied the signing of the accord has provided a shield against asking too many difficult questions or delving too deeply into the Tigrayan conflict – and provided an opportunity for Abiy, who recently hosted the African heads of state summit in Addis Ababa, to take a victory lap.

The authors can expect angry pushback to their book, especially on the fake narrative claim, as this has become an article of faith for the defenders of the military operation.

But the question can be asked in a different way: which side was ready and prepared to fight a war on 4 November 2020? Tsadkan Gebretensae, the Tigray Defence Forces' (TDF's) legendary commander, was scathing in his criticism of the TPLF for their lack of proper preparation when all the signs were there.

Within the first weeks of the war, a number of war crimes had been committed, such as the extrajudicial

killings of hundreds of civilians in Axum in November 2020 and the brutalisation and rape of Tigrayan women. "They were raped at random," said Plaut. "Sometimes many, many times over many days."

Still to come were the mass arbitrary arrests of tens of thousands of ethnic Tigrayans, the aerial bombardment of schools and hospitals and the use of starvation as a weapon of war through the blockade of Tigray, which included the deaths of thousands of children.

There is no denying that the TDF responded by inflicting atrocities too, but the case that this was an ethnically motivated war aimed at subjugating and eliminating an entire nation can only be made against one side.

DREDGING UP OLD HISTORY

There are those who will ask, with the peace accord now signed and in place, what is the purpose of dredging up this now-old history?

The best answer is the same reason that South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established – that the victims should have a voice too. And they are Africans too.

This is especially true when one considers that, for much of the war, Tigray was cut off from the rest of the world, without internet or telephone access. To this day, reporters remain highly restricted. The Ethiopian government, its control of state media and its army of social media trolls have a unique ability to tell their story or digitally assault anyone who strays from the official line.

Plaut and Vaughan welcome debate – and they hope that more books will be written. The conflict in Ethiopia is not over by a long shot. The search for the truth does not end with one book.

The peace accord, they say, has not resolved the fundamental underlying conflict in Ethiopia over a communal national identity and issues around it such as ethnonationalism, land hunger and score-settling.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) could be blamed for authoritarianism and lapses in the 27 years it ruled the country, but in the years since Abiy took power in 2018, the levels of conflict, division and violence have been unprecedented.

This is not to deny that the peace accord was a significant achievement. The role of South Africa and former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya – and the US behind the scenes – probably saved many thousands of people from starvation and death.

The Pretoria Accord was at its root an admission that the TDF was exhausted and on its last legs, the Tigrayan people starving and facing an overwhelming regional force armed and financed by powerful international players.

Vaughan fears that aspect of the accord that reinforces the message that "might is right and you can win by force of arms".

She points out, Tigray is only one of the dynamics that have marked Ethiopia in this period. "Even after the cessation of hostilities on November 22 last year, the conflict has been metastasising into other spheres."

Now with the Tigrayans out of the game, the struggle for domination in Ethiopia is being played out between the Oromo and the Amhara.

Ethiopia has veered away from the careful ethnic balancing act of the EPRDF era, which may have been an imperfect response to the problem of multiple ethnicities, into what Vaughan now calls a "zero-sum game" where the choice of identity is much starker.

"Until Ethiopia's elites come to terms with a more positive, constructive approach to this issue, this peace deal may just stick but the underlying problems won't be resolved," she says.

IFAA thanks Daily Maverick and Phillip van Niekerk, editor of DM's Africa Unscrambled weekly newsletter, for permission to reprint this article. NA



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