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# Clouds at the horizon?

Security challenges in South Africa's post-transition period

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## Sammanfattning

Denna rapport analyserar den politiska utvecklingen under Sydafrikas post-transitionsperiod, med avsikt att peka på möjliga hot för den interna och regionala säkerhetssituationen. Rapporten, som är skriven inom ramen för Afrikaprojekt vid FOI, är indelad i tre delar. En första ambition är att beskriva huvudsakliga tendenser som har trätt fram som allt mer överhängande problem under ANC's styre hittills. Detta inkluderar problem på gräsrotsnivå, liksom svagheter i samhällsstyrningen. I rapportens andra del analyseras betydelsen av de senaste politiska händelserna i Sydafrika, inklusive det nya politiska ledarskapet och det förändrade politiska landskapet.

Slutligen diskuteras möjliga innebörder av den rådande politiska kontexten för Sydafrikas interna säkerhet, liksom för Sydafrikas vilja och kapacitet att engagera sig för fred och demokrati i regionen. Detta inbegriper en bedömning av hur Sydafrikas inrikes- och utrikespolitik kan utvecklas under den nya presidenten Jacob Zuma. Det är troligt att landets starka engagemang när det gäller afrikansk fred och säkerhet kommer att skifta till ett fokus på att leverera på den inhemska arenan. Angående Sydafrikas diplomatiska engagemang i Zimbabwe, är bedömningen att detta kommer att vara begränsat de kommande åren. Andra regionala risker inkluderar ett sviktande internationellt förtroende för Sydafrika, vilket skulle underminera dess roll som en stabiliserande kraft i regionen. Inrikespolitiskt sett kan fientliga protester och lokalt våld bli konsekvensen av brustna förväntningar hos befolkningen, samt av den osäkerhet som det nya politiska landskapet fört med sig. Framväxten av en styvare opposition kan också på ett mer framgångsfullt sätt exponera problem som associeras med ANC:s styre. Detta riskerar utlösa en våldsam reaktion bland människor som tjänar på vänskapspolitiken och beskyddarsystemet, samt leda till att det styrande partiet anammar ett mer auktoritärt styre för att kunna säkra sitt grepp om makten.

Nyckelord: Sydafrika, post-transition, demokratisering, säkerhetsutmaningar, utrikespolitik

## Summary

This report analyses political developments in post-transitional South Africa, with a view to signal possible threats to the domestic and regional security situation. The report, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, is divided into three parts. A first ambition is to describe key tendencies that have emerged as increasingly pressing problems during the ANC rule up until now. This involves community level concerns, as well as governance issues. Secondly, the significance of the latest political events in South Africa, including the new political leadership and an altered political landscape, is analysed.

Finally, some implications of the current political context for the South African internal stability, as well as for South Africa's will and capacity to engage in peace and democracy in the region, are discussed. This includes assessing the development of South African domestic and foreign policies under the new president Jacob Zuma. The country's strong commitment in terms of African peace and security is likely to be shifting towards a focus on delivery at the domestic front. Concerning South Africa's diplomatic engagement in Zimbabwe, it is assessed to be limited in the coming years. Other regional risks include a declining international confidence in South Africa, which would undermine its role as a stabilising force in the region. On the domestic level, hostile protests and local violence could be the consequence of failed expectations among the population as well as of the uncertainty brought on by the new political landscape. The growth of a tougher opposition could also expose problems associated with the ANC rule in a more successful way. This risks provoking violent reaction among people benefiting from the patronage and crony systems, as well as leading to the ruling party taking a more authoritarian approach to secure its grip on power.

Keywords: South Africa, post-transition democratisation, security challenges, foreign policy

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>7</b>
Background.....	7
Community level concerns .....	7
A worrying political governance trend.....	8
New political leadership .....	8
New political landscape .....	9
Democratic process at a crossroads .....	9
Security challenges.....	10
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Background .....	11
1.2 The aim of the report .....	12
1.3 Method and outline of the study .....	13
1.4 Material and delimitations.....	14
<b>2 Problems of the democratic transition era</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Community level concerns .....	16
2.1.1 Socio-economic hardship.....	16
2.1.2 A culture of violence.....	17
2.1.3 Xenophobic violence and ethnic divisions .....	18
2.1.4 Failing leadership .....	20
2.1.5 Local leaders as instigators of violence .....	20
2.2 A worrying political governance trend .....	21
2.2.1 Questionable independence of state institutions .....	22
2.2.2 Power-games and ensuing weak capacities .....	23
2.2.3 Patronage and crony system .....	24
2.2.4 Ethnicity as a tacit factor .....	26
<b>3 Recent political developments</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 New political leadership.....	27
3.1.1 Zuma's leadership style .....	27

3.1.2	Zuma’s legitimacy .....	29
3.2	New political landscape .....	31
3.2.1	The elections results .....	32
3.2.2	Possibilities for a more dynamic political landscape.....	35
3.2.3	Cope’s real contribution .....	36
3.2.4	Electoral bases .....	37
3.2.5	Political parties – prospects and challenges ahead.....	39
<b>4</b>	<b>Clouds at the horizon?</b>	<b>43</b>
4.1	Policy orientation under the Zuma-government.....	43
4.1.1	Domestic orientation .....	43
4.1.2	Foreign policy.....	45
4.1.3	South Africa’s engagement in Zimbabwe .....	50
4.2	Risks for instability .....	54
4.2.1	Domestic instability .....	54
4.2.2	The regional level.....	58
<b>5</b>	<b>Concluding remarks</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>63</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>64</b>

## **Executive summary**

### **Background**

On 22 April 2009, the fourth democratic elections in South Africa took place. The ANC weakened its support among the electorate for the first time since 1994, but still won an overwhelming victory and could elect the controversial Jacob Zuma as the country's new president. However, new dynamics on the South African political scene had been created, with the formation of Cope, the ANC break-out party, adding an element of contest. These significant changes in the domestic political environment signal the start of a new era in South Africa's transformation. The country is now moving past its transition period, with an uncertain leadership and a sprouting opposition at hand. It is of interest to see if and how these changes, together with other challenges that face South Africa, will affect the stability of the country and the region. The specific aim of this report is to analyse political developments in post-transitional South Africa, with a view to signal possible threats to the domestic and regional security situation.

In order to respond to the aim, it was of importance to first understand key tendencies that have emerged as increasingly pressing problems during the democratic transition era. This involves community level concerns as well as governance issues. Having discussed this context, the significance of the new political leadership and the new political landscape were analysed. Following this, the potential implications of the recent political developments and the problematic tendencies on the country's future internal stability were analysed. Possible effects on South Africa's will and capacity to encourage peace, stability and democracy in the region were also examined.

### **Community level concerns**

In the discussion of the problems of the democratic transition era, the study points to a number of concerns. Among these is the poor population's increasing frustration about the delayed service-delivery. Their shattered expectations of the new democracy has contributed to a situation where competition to ensure livelihood has turned into a source of community-level violence. The maintenance of the use of violence as a coping strategy to address grievances is a worrying factor in this context. The readiness to attack and kill people perceived as outsiders was manifested in the xenophobic attacks in 2008. The established 'us/them-think' and the strong group pressure in South Africa remain, and further attacks are likely. The lack of tolerance is also very prevalent between political leaders, and at the community level, local leaders have taken part in instigating



political violence by inciting the youth. Local leadership breakdown has shown to be a factor that triggers violence, and the prevalence of areas where there is a political power vacuum is a serious concern, as it opens up for informal power struggles.

## **A worrying political governance trend**

Challenges also exist in terms of political governance issues. The boundaries between the ANC, the state and the independent institutions are becoming increasingly unclear. The judiciary is a sector of specific concern, a case in point being the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) which by many is seen as having bowed to political pressure by halting the prosecution of Jacob Zuma. A related development is the tendency of the ANC playing out their internal political power-games in the institutions. In this way, the bureaucracy is out-powered by individuals and further politicised. With the institutions being caught up in power-struggles, their capacity to act on their mandate is undermined, with a notable consequence being incompetency. On top of this, South Africa has a well established patronage and crony system in place. This adds to the focus on personalities and personal links, at the expense of neutral administrations. Lately, an added degree of ethnicity has been introduced in politics, and as Zuma's ability and willingness to control this tendency seems unclear, this could potentially affect governance efficiency in the future.

## **New political leadership**

In addition to the above worrying tendencies that have grown under the ANC rule, the recent political developments also raise concerns. South Africa's political leadership has been a strongly contentious issue for years, and even if ANC stalwarts managed to provoke Thabo Mbeki's resignation in 2008, Zuma still had to deal with the judicial process against him, as well as several different accusations about his moral personal stands and populist tendencies. However, among Zuma's many followers, his legitimacy has rather increased during these difficult times. Even if many other South Africans remain sceptical as concerns Zuma's credibility, people's focus has turned to the question of what is to be delivered under his presidency. A more direct threat to Zuma could be coming from his own party, as ANC stalwarts will watch the new president carefully, and could maneuver him away from the real centre of power if he does not acquit himself as they expect. Zuma's 'listening-and-making promises' approach has so far guaranteed his popularity among the population. A certain tension could arise as Zuma's new position risks coming at the expense of his relationship with the population. This could result in an exacerbated expectation gap among the people. However, with Zuma's consultative and indecisive leadership style, the

structure around the new president is sure to have an important say during his presidency.

## **New political landscape**

The formation of Cope is a development of great significance in South Africa's democratic period. It is the first time that the ANC has been confronted with a potential threat from its own ranks. Even if Cope lost momentum in the election campaign, the party did very well in the elections considering it was so recently formed. Nevertheless, Cope faces a number of challenges in living up to its position as the second biggest opposition party. The extent to which it will manage to establish itself permanently on the political scene, as well as the degree to which the DA will discharge its new position as governing party in the Western Cape province, are two factors of crucial importance for how the South African democracy will develop. The ANC has suffered psychological setbacks through the weakening of its mandate, through losing its status as biggest party in the Western Cape and through the establishment of Cope. The new party has served as a catalyst, re-energising the political debate and opening up the political space in South Africa. The ANC could react in different ways before the possibilities of a more dynamic political landscape with an opposition that is gaining some of the loyalty that the ruling party could previously take for granted: either the ANC will reform and transform into a modern political party, or it will become more authoritarian in order to secure its grip on power.

## **Democratic process at a crossroads**

Being about to enter the post-transitional period of its democratisation process, South Africa now stands at a crossroads where democracy can either mature further or be subjected to setbacks. The challenge, thus, is whether the country will manage to consolidate the democratic system and to get democracy to work in practice. An important aspect here is the government's ability to take in and act on the concerns of the grassroots population. The focus of the new government indeed appears to be on improved delivery to meet people's basic needs, however, carrying this ambition through could turn out to be problematic with the global economic recession approaching South Africa. Concerning the institutional weaknesses, the new president has claimed that he will have no tolerance for non-performing public servants; apart from this, there are no clear indications that these governance problems will be addressed. The new leadership and the policy priorities of the new government are likely to imply some reorientation for South Africa, even if no drastic changes will be made. For Zuma, much will circulate around maintaining a balance act between stakeholders and policies. Concerning the sprouting signs of a stronger opposition, this is a positive development for South African democracy, even if

added elements of contest and increased dynamics also opens up for negative turbulence. For the opposition parties to be able to have a lasting effect on the South African political scene, a key issue is how well they will perform at their new positions.

## **Security challenges**

The extent to which democracy is consolidated will have implications for how the internal and the regional security situation is going to develop. Taking the above problematic tendencies and political developments into account, the prevalence of clouds at the horizon cannot be dismissed. While reasons also exist for having an optimistic outlook of South Africa's internal and regional security, this report seeks to signal those threats against stability that can be noted, through a worst-case perspective. When combining the new political leadership and the new political landscape with concerns at the community level and for the country's political governance, potential risks do arise. At the South African domestic level, there are dangers involved with the increasing desperation and the growing expectation gap among the poor population, as well as threats entailed with the new political uncertainty and the higher stakes that follow. To this should be added the worrying consequences of a developing authoritarianism and the heated reactions that an increased questioning of benefit systems can activate among people whose livelihood is secured through personal connections. With these factors and developments interacting, it is argued that South Africa risks becoming increasingly vulnerable to the extent that future internal instability – including areas and periods seeing a breakdown into violence - cannot be disregarded.

As concerns the foreign policy level, the above developments can affect South Africa's political willingness and capacity for engaging in peace, democracy and security in the region. Risks here involve a decreasing South African ambition and engagement on these important issues for Africa, including a withdrawal of peace-keeping troops and a limited lead role as concerns support for the Zimbabwean political process. Another risk is a declining international confidence which could undermine South Africa's role as stabilising force in the region and on the continent. The likelihood of close south-south relations is also pointed to, which the possible consequence of a diminishing South African emphasis of human rights and democracy. This scenario implies that there could be a negative impact on already vulnerable security situations and conflict zones in Africa. In sum, there is a risk that instability in Africa could be intensifying in the years to come.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

On 22 April 2009, South Africa held its fourth democratic election. Through these polls, party representatives for the National Assembly and for the nine provincial legislatures were elected. As expected, the African National Congress (ANC) secured an overwhelming victory. The new members of parliament could thereby elect Jacob Zuma as the new South African president. The 2009 April elections were of vital interest, not least for having been the most contested ones since the ANC took power in 1994. It was the first elections where the ANC faced opposition from its own ranks, as the new party Congress of the People (Cope) had formed as a break-away from the ANC. Related events in the political turbulence leading up to the elections included the resignation of then president Thabo Mbeki as well as different twists and turns in Zuma's court process. The controversies around the political leadership and the emergence of an opposition alternative have rejuvenated the campaigning parties, invigorated political debate and awoken a higher interest from the South African electorate.

The significant changes in the domestic political environment, confirmed by the elections, signal the start of a new era in South Africa's transformation. With Jacob Zuma as the new – controversial - president and the ANC's renewed – although weakened - mandate as a leading party, South Africa is entering a post-transition era. This new phase implies moving on from having established democracy as the governing system, to a new period which is about how to get democracy to work in practice. South Africa's political leadership, the ruling party, and the general context have all changed since the transition period.<sup>1</sup> The elections have been the marking point, and South Africa is now standing at a crossroads. What are the prospects for South Africa's future political development? Will the democracy mature further, or are democratic setbacks to

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<sup>1</sup> The elections constitute a turning point for the following reasons: Mbeki has been President and Deputy President during South Africa's transitional period, during which democratic state organs have been established and the strength of institutions increasingly tested. Democratic rules of the game have been consolidated during this transition period. While this formal aspect of democracy has been completed under Mbeki, South Africa is entering a new phase where there is scope for more focus on the more informal culture of democracy – at the political elite level but also in society, including an emphasis on the voice of the people. With the 2009 election, installing Zuma as president, a real transferral of power has taken place, opening up for a changed focus. Another aspect is that many of the ANC's policies emerged during Mbeki's Deputy Presidency/Presidency. With Zuma's coming to power means policy direction could change. Finally, the advent of Cope also makes the elections a marking point, opening up possibilities for South Africa to move towards a stronger multiparty system. This development could increase democratic maturity by pushing the ANC to set out its future course in a clearer way, with a greater focus on political issues rather than accommodating the broad based alliance members.

await? It is of interest to see whether the weakness in the institutional set-up of the state will be addressed, and whether there will be serious efforts to take into account and efficiently deliver on the concerns of the grassroots people. The question of whether the new leadership and the policy priorities of the new government imply a new orientation for South Africa is another topic of interest, as well as the sprouting signs of a stronger opposition and its effect on the South African political scene.

Understanding how South Africa's post-transition process proceeds, and what the political changes entail, is important for several reasons. Within South Africa, the extent to which democracy is consolidated will have implications for how the internal security situation is going to develop. Analysing the political developments will increase an understanding of whether peaceful coexistence and development will be the norm, or whether simmering frustrations will be expressed through increased intolerance and a resort to violence. The elections outcome, the road that the South African democratisation process will take and the future stability of the country, is of vital interest also from an international perspective. As a major African regional power, depicted as "the engine of Africa" and respected for its peaceful political transition, the maintenance of the political and economic stability in South Africa is key. If a leading country like South Africa does not manage to set the example for democratic transition, it would have little say – and capacity - in encouraging a constructive development in other recovering African states. Instability in South Africa would also risk spreading further in an already unstable region. Furthermore, a democratically mature and stable South Africa is crucial for the development of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU). The perception of South Africa as a deteriorating democracy would also contribute to it losing its credibility among political and economic stakeholders around the world. Under Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, South Africa has been very active in its efforts for peace and security in Africa. Thus, in addition to following developments at the domestic level, the capacity and political will to maintain this foreign policy is a fundamental aspect to consider under the new South African leadership.

## **1.2 The aim of the report**

The aim of this report is to analyse political developments in post-transitional South Africa, with a view to signal possible threats to the domestic and regional security situation. More specifically, some major public concerns in the South African society will be examined, with a specific focus on the recent changes in the political environment. Possible effects of these concerns and changes will be explored as concerns South Africa's future internal stability. Potential implications on South Africa's will and capacity to encourage peace, stability and democracy in the region will also be discussed.

It should be emphasised that the instability risks discussed in the report constitute potential negative developments. The risks are rather to be viewed from a perspective of a worst-case scenario, than as a complete assessment of the actual threat against the South African internal and regional security. The circumstances that speak against a negative development are taken into account throughout the analysis, however they are not elaborated upon in full in this report. Thus, the aim of the study is not provide a balanced estimation of South Africa's future security, but to draw the reader's attention to some possible – but real – security risks.

### **1.3 Method and outline of the study**

In order to respond to the queries above, this study will depart from two main research questions: 1) What are some key political developments and concerns in South Africa today? 2) How could these affect the security situation in the coming future? As concerns the first question, the selection of relevant study areas for analysis, the point of departure has been the issues and stakes around the April 2009 elections. These issues and stakes originated or grew stronger during Mbeki's rule, and have accelerated in the latter part of his second presidency, especially as from December 2007.<sup>2</sup> Another aspect orientating the study was the decision to take both the national and grassroots dimension into account, in order to reflect developments at both these levels of society. With these criteria as a start-out point, a literature review was made and discussions were held with South African stakeholders, after which relevant study areas emerged. The new political leadership and the new political competitor (Cope) are vital factors for change, and were evident topics. Other politically charged issues that came up were social concerns among the population, as well as the state of health of the democratic governance.

When it comes to the second research question, the decision was made to interpret 'insecurity' as violent manifestations between sizeable mobilised groups of people. Concerning security at the foreign policy level, the decision was made to focus on South Africa's efforts and engagement for bringing about peace and democracy in the region, being the most concrete indications of security. A closer analysis of South Africa's policies towards Zimbabwe is also made, as this is the most directly relevant foreign policy engagement from the perspective of South African self-interest, specifically as concerns the country's future stability.

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<sup>2</sup> At the ANC conference in Polokwane in December 2007, Zuma won the post ANC President from Mbeki. 2008 saw the Zimbabwe crisis escalating, ensuing xenophobic violence in South Africa, Mbeki's forced resignation as well as developments of Zuma's court procedure.

The study is divided into three parts. A first ambition is to describe key tendencies that have emerged as increasingly pressing problems during the ANC rule up until now. This involves community level concerns as well as governance issues (chapter 2). Secondly, the significance of the latest political events in South Africa, including the new political leadership and an altered political landscape, is analysed (chapter 3). Finally, some implications of the current political context for South African internal stability, as well as for South Africa's capacity and will to engage in peace and democracy in the region, are discussed. This includes assessing the development of South African domestic and foreign policies under the new president, as well as analysing instability risks at a more long term perspective (chapter 4).

## 1.4 Material and delimitations

Delimitations have had to be made throughout the study. To start with, the concept 'security' cannot be easily boiled down. Throughout the report, insecurity is generally referred to as instability. Even political insecurity, or political instability, is not easily defined. In the report, there have been no attempts at strictly defining these terms. The focus in the report is on social and political unrest that could lead to violence.<sup>3</sup> Following an interpretation of insecurity as "violent manifestations between sizeable mobilised groups of people", important elements of South Africa's stability are likely to have been omitted. For instance, various types of criminal offences – organised crime, drug trade, gang violence – can be argued to be rooted in political frustrations. The ambition in this report is however to consider violence where traces of political mobilisation and social unrest is noted. Concerning stability outside South Africa, no systematic account of the country's peace efforts have been made; rather, the topic is discussed from a more general perspective. Another delimitation regards the examination of major public concerns in the South African society. This is an extensive area, and a selection has had to be made, where concerns that figured specifically in the political debate were focused on. Crucial topics such as the HIV/Aids, crime and the land reform have not been dealt with specifically, but are rather viewed as part of the general theme of socio-economic frustrations. The magnitude of these problems, and their specific link to South Africa's future security, would require more space than this study provides. Therefore, an inclusive perspective has been maintained as concerns these three topics.

The material that the study is based on consists of first-hand observations and interviews with stakeholders in South Africa. These stakeholders include non-governmental organisations and think tanks, academia, political parties, South

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<sup>3</sup> The distinction between social and political aspects of unrest can be hard to make.

African government departments, as well as international and Swedish representatives. A total of 21 interviews were held, during February and March 2009. The organisation/institution/party interviewed appears in the references, while the name of the interviewee is not stated. Anonymity was assured in order for the interviewees to share the information more freely. Academic articles and analyses constitute other material used for the study. To a greater extent, however, news articles are used as a source. This was necessary as the events analysed in this report unfolded concurrently with the writing of the study.



## 2 Problems of the democratic transition era

This chapter paints a picture of areas of concern in South Africa of today. These concerns have emerged as increasingly pressing problems, and are examined in an attempt to analyse their potential to affect the future stability of the country.

### 2.1 Community level concerns

The South African population faces several challenges in their everyday life. Some key issues include the socio-economic hardship, the culture of violence, xenophobia and ethnic divisions, a failing leadership, and local leaders who act as instigators of violence. These issues are discussed in this section.

#### 2.1.1 Socio-economic hardship

15 years into the work of redressing past injustices, South Africa remains a country with huge socio-economic challenges. The great masses live their everyday life in poverty. Certain achievements have been made in providing shelter and basic facilities, but overall the development has been very slow and not matched stated ambitions. Housing, water and electricity are still in shortage. The basic education system is of poor standard, with the consequence that many South Africans do not have basic capacities and skills enough to ever be employable. Unemployment reaches, at low estimate, 25-30% and has increased between 1996 and 2006.<sup>4</sup> Serious crime and youth violence is major concern for all South Africans on an everyday basis. Corruption is pervasive in the communities. Another problematic sector is the health system, with up to 2/3 of the cost for the health care being swallowed by the huge number of HIV-positive South Africans.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, successful development has occurred on a macro-economic level. During Mbeki's rule, South Africa has experienced sustained growth, which has produced a new black middle-class. However, the huge socio-economic inequalities in society have not been eradicated. Instead, wealth is more unevenly distributed than ever before and the numbers living in severe poverty are believed to have doubled in a decade<sup>6,7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk): 'Why Mbeki had to go', 21 September 2008. Other assessments speak of up to 40% unemployment (News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma now has to deliver', 23 April 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 17 February 2009.

<sup>6</sup> News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk): 'SA's Mbeki says he will step down', 20 September 2008. News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk): 'SA's widening divide', 14 December 2007.

The delayed service-delivery has given rise to increased frustrations among the population that remains poor, and shattered their high expectations of the new democracy. The tendency of growing socio-economic inequalities exacerbates the disappointment, especially among the many unqualified South Africans. With hope continuing to fail year after year, desperation is ripe. As a result, competition in accessing jobs, welfare, influence and resources has become intense and turned into a source of community-level violence. In a maturing developing democracy like South Africa, the extent to which an individual succeeds in that competition has major effects for his/her future survival. Thus, the high stakes of the conflict in ensuring access is accompanied with a high degree of desperation, which in turn entails closeness to violence. Ironically, the fact that service-delivery does takes place to a certain extent – even if slowly - leads to a situation where resources continue to be strained, since development in the South African urban settings works as a pull factor for migrants from rural South Africa and from countries in the region. Thus, urban density is expected to increase, with migrants competing for the already strained resources in the townships.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1.2 A culture of violence

Commentators talk about the prevalence of a “culture of violence” in South Africa. This culture is in part manifested through the high levels of violent crime. The country’s history is one explanation for the establishment of the culture of violence, as harsh oppression and sharp inequalities for so many years prevented the population from expressing its discontent in a constructive way. Peaceful protests were met with repression, often violent, setting the norm and the options for interaction. Today, the lack of education, capacities and confidence, together with the level of frustration about life opportunities and lack of ways to make their voices heard, are factors that maintain the use of violence as a coping strategy. With little to lose, people – youngsters especially – are easily incited and mobilised<sup>9</sup> to use violence as a means of addressing their grievances. Few

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<sup>7</sup> Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: CSV, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 17 February 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The hand out of t-shirts, dancing and toyi toyi are examples of simple methods used to mobilise people.

role models who show and establish alternative norms exist in the township. Rather, observers talk about a culture of impunity, where violent behaviour and criminal offences often pass without reprisals<sup>10</sup>. Alternatively, informal justice measures are applied, for which the norms do not always respect the human rights that are officially protected by the South African state.<sup>11</sup>

In the official debate, democracy and reconciliation are emphasised as important values in the new South Africa. The constitution proudly enshrines human rights. However, even if these concepts are often referred to, the implication of democracy is not internalised among all South Africans at the grass-roots level. Civil society at local levels is often well organised. Nevertheless, social scientists and community workers observe that there is still little civil education in the communities about what democracy means in practice. Furthermore, the relapse of the democratic culture that have recently occurred at the national level, with deceitful power-games, rivalries, as well intolerant debates among political leaders, has also set the example to people in the communities. This means that there is limited appreciation of what can be achieved through democratic, respectful relations with opponents. The lack of insights and skills in this respect allow behaviour to be guided by spontaneous emotions<sup>12</sup> rather than by reason. This leads to situations where differences are often resolved through unconstructive or violent behaviour. Also in relations at the very micro-level (such as among family members and neighbours), the absence of a culture of democracy is noticeable.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.3 Xenophobic violence and ethnic divisions

In May 2008, xenophobic attacks perpetrated by South Africans left 62 people dead and more than 100 000 internally displaced. There has been a growing discontent among South Africans towards foreigners, with xenophobia noted

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<sup>10</sup> Many of the perpetrators of the xenophobic attacks in May 2008 enjoy impunity (Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009). Another example of the culture of impunity is the fact that no one has been fined since 1994 for breaking the IEC Code of Conduct (which details behaviour in election campaigning), despite the fact that many breaches of this code have occurred. (Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 February 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: CSVR, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Cope is felt to be 'traitors!' (Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, 20 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: CSVR, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 February 2009. Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Violence still blights South African politics', 1 April 2009.

already in the early 1990s. Today, frequent and often fervent rejection of foreigners is a reality in South Africa. According to recent research, at least two thirds of the population believes that illegal migrants should be extended no rights or protections.<sup>14</sup> The general perception is that foreigners are better than South Africans at accessing social welfare and housing, that they take job opportunities; there is also resentment due to the fact that foreigners hold economic positions in the townships. Foreigners, in particular Zimbabweans, are perceived as a permanently increasing and threatening influx.<sup>15</sup> Instigators of the xenophobic attacks are continuously issuing threats<sup>16</sup> towards foreigners, while low scale violence is ongoing. An important aspect is that the xenophobia is not only directed towards foreigners but is also a South African inter-ethnic issue. Social divisions in the townships are strong, and have quite a clear ethnic component where certain groups are seen as outsiders. During the May 2008 violence, South Africans from Limpopo, Venda and Mpumalanga<sup>17</sup> (who are Sothos and Shangaans) were attacked.<sup>18</sup>

South Africa is characterised by a strong “group think”, in particular among people at the community level. Partly, the race/group affiliation and the tendency to think in terms of “us against them” is a heritage from the apartheid years. Recent research shows that still today, black South Africans stick to their own group because of a feeling of inferiority and anxiety of not being good enough in relation to the white population.<sup>19</sup> A trace from the apartheid era left today is that many South Africans easily join in mass action, where it is easier to communicate and act on dissatisfaction. The confidence that arises from belonging to the own group is likely also to be valid when it comes to ethnic affiliation. Mobilisation for the local political power struggle partly takes place on ethnic grounds. There is also a strong inflammatory group pressure, for instance, making it hard for individuals not to participate in rallies and other group activities in the communities. In sum, the readiness to attack foreigners and internally displaced people (IDPs) from different ethnic group has not

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<sup>14</sup> Journal: Migration Policy Series, Crush: ‘The Perfect Storm...’. Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009.

<sup>15</sup> The perception that the number of arriving Zimbabweans is constantly increasing is not true. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Threats such as “when they come back to our communities, we will start again” and “with the regime change, we South Africans will not miss the chance to take back our rightful place”, have been noted. (Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009).

<sup>17</sup> These people are often economic IDPs.

<sup>18</sup> Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. IOM Report: ‘Towards tolerance...’, February 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Research also shows that white South Africans tend to avoid interaction with blacks for fear of being confronted with accusations about racism, as they are concerned about being stereotyped. Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.

decreased since May 2008, but is still very much prevalent. The fact that there appears to be limited real integration in the communities between foreigners and South Africans is a factor that adds to the disturbing picture.<sup>20</sup>

#### **2.1.4 Failing leadership**

A worrying matter at the community level is the prevalence of areas with low voter turnout, weak municipal institutions and ineffective local leadership. A breakdown of local leadership and of ministerial structures, caused by ANC leadership fragmentation, result in a power vacuum or self-appointed political structures. This sets the stage for informal power struggles. The fragmentation of the ANC leadership has been even more confirmed by the recent ANC split. A strong correlation has been noted between areas where these circumstances prevail and areas where the xenophobic violence took place in 2008. As noted, xenophobia is widespread in the South African communities, but the real concern is the status of the local political situation, as failed leadership has shown to be a factor that triggers actual violence. As a matter of fact, leadership breakdown presents a clearer indication for violence outbreak than unemployment and other socio-economic indicators.<sup>21</sup> The limited prevalence of leadership skills - and the fact that these skills are not growing - is disturbing. Evidence speaks of local leaders making disrespectful and aggressive statements, even when facing each other in the legislature. The deployment of the police in these problem areas does not always work well – sometimes they refuse to go into these townships, other times the police is bribed, or they do not themselves respect the rights of foreigners. Responses by political parties at national level to the xenophobia have been criticised for being “too little, too late”, with suggestions that this could be a conscious decision ahead of the elections in order not to lose votes amongst an electorate displaying high levels of xenophobia. In short, while national leaders do not call sufficiently for tolerance, local leaders do not take the message to the ground, often as a result of the power struggle they are involved in.<sup>22</sup>

#### **2.1.5 Local leaders as instigators of violence**

When it comes to gang and mob violence, an important aspect is the role of leaders in the communities. For obvious reasons, it is not possible to make a

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<sup>20</sup> Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. IOM Report: ‘Towards tolerance...’, February 2009.

<sup>21</sup> IOM Report: ‘Towards tolerance...’, February 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 February 2009.

general assessment of the extent to which local political leaders are implicated in the violence. Officially, the parties distance themselves from the hostilities. However, even if not a party directive, many observers and news reports witness of local politicians insinuating violence in a subtle way. Easily incited youth, with nothing to lose, are seen as useful for the purpose of intimidating the opposition. Local political leaders capitalise on the youth emotionalism for their own ends and directly fan the flames by increasing the negative feelings about the opponents. This has especially been noted in the KwaZulu Natal province. When it comes to the responsibilities of the local political structures, it is again difficult to establish the degree of organisation. As an example, buses carrying party supporters to rallies are indeed organised by these structures, while the attacks carried out by the party supporters at the rallies are unlikely to be direct instructions. Furthermore, in a context where, by many, it is still accepted to push politics by using violence, the reports that local police, religious leaders and local polling agents also take part in intimidation cannot be ignored. To some extent, the calls for tolerance that do occur from higher level politicians could be interpreted as lip service as local leaders who make intolerant, provocative statements can continue to do so without suffering consequences. Another reason for the absence of setting the desired moral example is the shortage of leadership skills; when it comes to taking a stand against violence, capacities among leaders are weak. Certain observers also argue that local leaders capitalise on the widespread xenophobia.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.2 A worrying political governance trend

In addition to the signs of a disturbing development in the communities, issues that relate to the political governance of South Africa is another area of concern. To put the independence of the state institutions to a proper test, to see if they exist only on paper or if they really can resist political pressure and other challenges, is a crucial and decisive phase in a democratisation process. This section examines some problematic areas in this respect: the questionable independence of state institutions, the tendency for power-games and ensuing weak capacities, the patronage and crony system in place and the tacit importance of ethnicity.

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<sup>23</sup> Interview: Wits/FMSP, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: CSVR, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 February 2009. Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009.

### 2.2.1 Questionable independence of state institutions

A key issue is the protection of South Africa's state institutions, with the boundaries between the ANC, the state and the independent institutions becoming increasingly unclear. Many institutions, such as the Constitutional Court, the Police and the South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) are headed by people with ANC allegiances. Several institutions (as well as the constitution itself<sup>24</sup>), are currently under strain as their strength is being tested. The independence of other institutions, such as the high level police, has not yet been thoroughly tested. Some analysts argue that the performance of the national level institutions is at an overall reasonable level, but that the local municipal ones constitute a bigger problem in this respect.<sup>25</sup>

A sector of specific concern is the judiciary. A general assessment of the judiciary would claim that it has, up until recently, sustained reasonably well. So far, the Constitutional Court and the High Courts have shown a fairly good track record. As for the Zuma trial, the courts have withstood the pressure in a very satisfactory way (however, it should be noted that no real coercion towards these institutions has been revealed). In sum, the neutrality of the judges of higher level courts is all in all unquestioned; possibly the situation differs when it comes to the lower level courts and judges. Nevertheless, as recent events have shown, political influence on the judiciary remains a problem. The case in point is a series of developments within the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). In December 2008, ex-President Motlanthe dismissed the former National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP), Vusi Pikoli. The dismissal was surrounded by controversy: despite being deemed fit for office by an official enquiry, Pikoli was discharged from his position.<sup>26</sup> Pikoli was also acknowledged for uncompromisingly standing up for checks and balance. Furthermore, the disbanding in January 2009 of the NPA's directorate of special operations, the Scorpions, is another worrying sign for judicial independency. As a part of the NPA, the Scorpions had both prosecuting and investigative powers, and was a

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<sup>24</sup> Even if the underlying principles of the constitution are not acutely threatened, the ignoring of the constitution is a more real threat, as lack of impartiality and capacity hinders the institutions from acting without fear or favour or prejudice, or even, acting all. (Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.)

<sup>25</sup> Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Pikoli was suspended from his position in September 2007 by Thabo Mbeki. An enquiry to examine whether Pikoli was fit for office found no basis for the suspension and recommended Pikoli to be restored to the office of the NDPP. Nevertheless, Pikoli was dismissed, with reference to his deficiencies in operating in a strict security environment. For more details on the reason for dismissal, see news article, [www.politicsweb.co.za](http://www.politicsweb.co.za): 'Pikoli will be relieved of his responsibilities', 8 December 2008. Pikoli is currently challenging his dismissal in the Pretoria High Court.

specific resource to fight corruption and organised crime.<sup>27</sup> Considering the high number of ANC politicians accused for corruption, the undermining of the Scorpion special unit appears grave.<sup>28</sup> The latest and most manifest setback, however, concerns the NPA's decision on 6 April 2009 to halt the prosecution of Jacob Zuma regarding the charges of corruption, fraud, money laundering and racketeering. As an attempt to preserve the integrity of the government and "national interest", this decision is widely perceived as the NPA bowing to political pressure. This development can be seen as effectively undermining the NPA, which is mandated by the Constitution to prosecute people without fear, favour or prejudice. The upcoming appointment of the NDPP<sup>29</sup>, as well as of Constitutional Court judges by the end of the year, will be of interest, to see if the tendency to place ANC affiliated individuals at important positions will be applied in the future for the judiciary. Clear is that Zuma's involvement in these appointments would be a conflict of interest<sup>30 31</sup>.

## 2.2.2 Power-games and ensuing weak capacities

In addition to safeguarding independence from political pressure, several institutions are or have recently been involved in litigation, examples being the Intelligence, the Police, the NPA/the NDPP and the Director General of the Civil Service. The court cases are internal political ANC fights that are played out in the institutions, in an effort to find a solution of political problems via the court. Thus, instead of providing a neutral bureaucracy, the administration has largely been out-powered by individuals and personalities. The strong tendency to involve the institutions and their representatives in legal action could be potentially weakening, as the institutions become absorbed by and caught up in a

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<sup>27</sup> News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Cope slams Pikoli's dismissal', 8 December 2008. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'Opposition: Scorpions bill mark dark day in SA history', 30 January 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Motlanthe has shown hesitance to exert political power in these two cases, but analysts suggest that he is under pressure to follow strong ANC voices.

<sup>29</sup> The NPA decision was made by Mokotedi Mpshe, acting NDPP since Pikoli's suspension in September 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Even if highly unlikely, the NPA has the possibility of reinstating the charges against Zuma. The NPA decision did not consider the substantive merit in trying Zuma or the practical implications of continued prosecution. Instead, the decision rested on policy aspects militating against prosecution, with the NPA claiming that there had been political interference in the process, as the timing of the decision to charge Zuma in 2007 had been manipulated in order to impede Zuma's obtaining the presidency of South Africa (ISS/ASAP Daily Briefing, 6 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Opposition parties slam NPA', 6 April 2009).

<sup>31</sup> News article: [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com): 'The NPA and Zuma – who did what and when', 6 April 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009.



power-struggle. The establishment of these kinds of power-games is by many seen as a heritage from the Mbeki period, where such manipulations of the institutions were used in the struggle around the presidency of the ANC and of the republic. A consequence is the development towards a politicisation of the institutions.<sup>32</sup>

Recent surveys show that the population's trust in the state institutions is diminishing considerably.<sup>33</sup> As has been argued, this is due to a perception of the institutions as being politicised and lacking impartiality. In addition to this, the internal power-struggles have also undermined the capacity of the institutions to act on their mandate and contributed to incompetency. The "appoint comrade attitude" has at times resulted in non-qualified people obtaining positions, and, as a consequence, flawed leaderships have developed. Behind the façade of the well-established South African government structures, its human resources suffer from low capacity and competence. The ability to prevent hardships and to deal with effects is lacking, something which has been clearly revealed in response to the issue of xenophobic attacks. Another example are the Public Protector and the Human Rights Commission - institutions which were set up with the purpose of protecting the South African people from excessive state power - which do not always respond adequately and are not seen as totally impartial. However, this is to a great extent because of low capacity and insufficient funding. Also the media - even if assessed as relatively impartial - has problems of professionalism because of capacity and funding difficulties. Another example of weak capacities is the Department of Home Affairs, which has been widely accused of mismanagement and of responding inefficiently to immigration matters. The lack of adequate competencies is especially notable at middle-management levels, as well as in provincial and local institutional structures.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.3 Patronage and crony system

As argued above, a tendency of political meddling in important state institutions is emerging in South Africa. In addition to this, observers claim that a high percentage<sup>35</sup> of public sector positions are politically appointed, something which ensures ANC control over civil servants. Behind this politicisation lies the

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<sup>32</sup> Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Research report: South Africa Reconciliation Barometer (November 2008), p.10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: The IFP, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 April 2009.

<sup>35</sup> No exact figure has been confirmed. Information obtained from opposition parties claim that between 25 – 60% of important positions in society are politically appointed (Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009).

prevailing attitude that “civil servants who do not sympathise with the ANC will make the (ANC) government’s work inefficient”. The above pattern of political linkage can be found also at other levels of society, and gives witness of an extensive patronage system in place. In the view of the opposition parties, South Africa is perceived as an overwhelming ANC environment, where the many people without the right party connections are in a difficult position to succeed in their daily lives. Other observers confirm the picture of a system of mutual favours and rewards in place, where many people join the ANC in exchange for personal benefits and to secure their livelihood and job opportunities. The ANC Youth League members have been criticised for being activists not because of ideological reasons, but because of the prospect of a political carrier ensuring future positions in society. However, the nepotism also shows in less formalised structures in the communities. A promised vote, party allegiance and support can be the favours requested in order to facilitate the needed service delivery. Observers point to a general perception among many people that the ANC has the absolute responsibility to deliver for them, irrespective of their own effort. It is suggested that this heritage of the past has given rise to an ‘entitlement mentality’ among many South Africans with a view that “we are entitled because we struggled; we were victims so now we should be given or compensated by the government”.<sup>36</sup> Little difference is made between the government/the state and the ANC – something which the political appointment of public sector positions contributes to – hence, the natural thing to do is to lend the support to an ANC local leader. In this way, the mutual system of support is perpetuated. The inclination described here goes together with a recent noted attitude among certain South Africans that “I am tired of the ANC, so I am not voting this time”. This indicates that there is no real alternative to voting ANC<sup>37</sup> if wanting to be assured of benefits. It is “either I vote for the ANC, or I am not voting at all - who else would deliver for me?”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009.

<sup>37</sup> There are also other reasons for traditional ANC voters not wanting to cast their vote for another political party. The allegiance to the liberation movement is strong, and for many people it would feel like a betrayal to vote for another party. Group pressure is another factor, with people being inclined to vote ‘like everyone else does in the community’ (Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Interview: UCT/Department of Psychology, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: The IFP, Durban, 24 February 2009. Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 April 2009. Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009.

## 2.2.4 Ethnicity as a tacit factor

In terms of dealing with issues of race and ethnicity in politics, South Africa has come a long way since the fall of apartheid. Even if political party affiliations largely coincide with race (ANC/blacks, DA/whites, ID/coloureds), and sometimes with ethnicity (Freedom Front +/-Afrikaaners), tribalism has so far largely been kept out of politics during the ANC rule. An ethnic dimension to South African politics can still be noticed, but there is a great deal of denial of this in South Africa, wanting to picture itself as the 'Rainbow Nation'. Lately, an added degree of ethnicity and "tribal" language has been introduced in mainstream politics. Some Zuma supporters display his coming to power as a Zulu "project", and Cope and Mbeki as representing the politically influential Xhosas. Julius Malema, President of the ANC Youth League, has opined that the Xhosas were favoured under the Mbeki rule. At the same time, word of mouth claims that one explanation behind Cope presidential candidate Dandala's rise is that he was chosen on ethnic grounds by a Xhosa leadership faction. Zuma himself has been accused of using ethnic references in his campaigning and blamed for emphasising a Zulu tribal approach. Hence, the question is whether Zuma can or wants to control the tendency of introducing ethnicity in politics. Currently, the ethnic card appears more often at the local level. It would be an unfortunate development if the new president brings ethnicity further into the political governance. However, it should also be pointed out that the use of ethnic rhetoric has also backfired, as many South Africans rather get discouraged by ethnic arguments.<sup>39</sup>

The above sections have aimed at providing a general description of disturbing matters that have relevance in post-apartheid South Africa: concerns among the population at the community level as well as the developing governance tendency. In addition to this situation, the democratisation process is now facing two new and significant developments: a new political leadership and a new political landscape. The following sections will examine these factors closer.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Malema warns of civil war', 28 October 2008. News article, [www.thecitizen.co.za](http://www.thecitizen.co.za): 'Cope to be Xhosa-led party', 26 March 2009. News article, [www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk): 'Jacob Zuma – deadly serious', 11 April 2009. News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Zuma will limp into presidency', 6 April 2009.

## 3 Recent political developments

This chapter turns to the changes in the political environment in South Africa, analysing the significance of the new political leadership and the new political landscape.

### 3.1 New political leadership

It is apparent that Jacob Zuma as South African president implies a clear shift in personality from previous presidents Mandela, Mbeki and Motlanthe. Much has been reported about Zuma's polygamy, homophobia, traditionalism, level of education, rape and corruption accusations, court cases and so on. However, the issue of what Zuma's leadership style will imply during his tenure deserves to be put more in focus. Considering the fact that the elections almost exclusively were an issue of for or against Zuma, the legitimacy of the new president in South Africa is also a topic worth to explore.

#### 3.1.1 Zuma's leadership style

Zuma is portrayed as charismatic, pragmatic, down-to-earth, open, and as a respectful listener with good negotiating skills. However, he has earned a reputation of saying what people want to hear and of changing his mind depending on the audience, for instance, attracting businesses one day only to reassure communists and trade unions the next. Tailoring his message to his audience has prompted him into often contradictory statements, which signals an indecisive and inconsistent approach. Zuma has appealed to populist sentiments for death penalty and against gay marriage, and the above characteristics has led observers to describe him as a populist politician. Other negative assessments about Zuma are based on his unwillingness to clearly distance himself from Julius Malema's aggressive statements, neither has he firmly and swiftly called for calm and tolerance on relevant occasions, such as during the xenophobic attacks in 2008 or during election violence. Nevertheless, Zuma enjoys vast support and popularity, much due to him being largely felt as representing the average South African voter.<sup>40</sup>

A leadership style that implies close contact and connection with people at the grassroots level, listening in to their needs and responding with promises, is likely to raise expectations among the population for service-delivery and other sought after changes. During the Mbeki presidency, it became evident that little

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<sup>40</sup> Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma rides towards presidency', 19 April 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'Zuma the chameleon brings South Africans joy and fear', 20 April 2009.

could be expected in terms of a direct people-president dialogue about the socio-economic frustrations in the townships. As concerns Zuma, on the other hand, poor South Africans are likely to have even higher expectations for delivery than during the Mbeki years, with the perception that Zuma will be continuing to listen to their concerns. However, the status Zuma holds as a listener can turn to his disadvantage, as there is a clear risk for a growing expectation gap. Firstly, Zuma's background and strong side is understanding the grassroots view, rather than taking an overarching perspective. Accordingly, his promises for delivery have not been based on an analysis of macro-economic developments and of the capacity to deliver in the long run. False or unrealistic promises are likely to give rise to failed expectations, especially in a time of a global economic crisis. Secondly, Zuma is likely to calm down his populist rhetoric once having obtained power. In the role of president, governing the country, he will be forced to taking a more sensible and reflective approach, and to relate to key stakeholders and structures, which could be at the expense of his direct relationship with the population. Zuma will also have to consider South Africa's financial tradition of fiscal rigour. Both options are risky roads. An injudicious loosening up of the fiscal policies in order to deliver, providing easy economic solutions with quick support, is neither a lasting or functional solution during times of an economic recession. On the other hand, Zuma's criticism of the market economic approach and emphasis of left policies - while still maintaining the market economic policies in place - is playing with people's expectations. The expectation gap is exacerbated when not living up to promises of delivering services. Zuma's populist approach can be dangerous also from a human rights perspective. Using an us-them rhetoric to win support comes with risks of a divided society with little tolerance for people belonging different ethnic or political groups.<sup>41</sup>

The media attention and controversy around the new president could be misleading in the sense that it puts the focus exclusively on Zuma himself. However, Zuma is not necessarily the real leader; the ANC structure behind him should not be ignored as it will ultimately have sway over him while in power. Due to what seems to be the absence of a clear strategy of Zuma, and due to his reputation as a listener, the whole new leadership; new government ministers and advisers, will play a key role. Zuma is not seen as a decisive character and is not expected to be setting new agendas. Instead, he is likely to be a consultative president, which signals that the structure behind him will have an important say under his presidency. Observers also opinion that Zuma's national working

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<sup>41</sup> Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma now has to deliver', 23 April 2009.

committee is more diverse than that under Mbeki, and that it will have more balance and counter-balance built in.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.1.2 Zuma's legitimacy

The new president's leadership style, personality, as well as the controversies associated with him, has resulted in Zuma being a topic that does not leave many South Africans indifferent. His status among the population ranges from extreme popularity to tremendous unpopularity. The discussion about his legitimacy as president - which has for a long time been central in the public debate - intensified even more recently as the long time court charges against Zuma were dropped on 6 April. The outcome of the judicial process has consequences for the lasting perception, and legitimacy, of Zuma.

Many South Africans are sceptical of Zuma as he "coincidentally" was saved by the NPA bowing to political pressure just two weeks before the elections. There is a belief that there has been abuse and that none of the reasons given by the NPA to withdraw the case are justifiable. The NPA is seen as having been used as a tool of political faction under Mbeki, and now as well under Zuma. After the case was withdrawn, Zuma attacked the conduct of the judiciary and questioned the supremacy of the Constitutional Court, saying that "is not God" and that it should be overseen. He also criticised other judges who ruled against him in his corruption court appearances and accused the Deputy Chief Justice of declaring war on the ANC. This attitude towards the judiciary's independence and supremacy by the new president make a lot of South Africans feel that Zuma is not a legitimate president. Another aspect is the fact that the NPA ruling denied Zuma the opportunity to clear his name through a court of law. As was pointed out earlier, the verdict did not prove Zuma's innocence. On the other hand, the NPA stated that it had been given no reason to change its mind about the merit of the charges. This situation has led to the notion that there is still a legal cloud hanging over Zuma's head and that there is still a strong case to be answered. The whole question whether Zuma is guilty is as unsettled as before and it will not be settled. Thus, there is a perception in society that Zuma has a credibility problem that he has not addressed, and that his name is irreparably damaged.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. [www Zuma better than Mbeki](#)

<sup>43</sup> News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](#): 'Opposition to fight Zuma decision', 7 April 2009. News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](#): 'Joy and fury at Zuma charges move', 6 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](#): 'Zuma suspicions remain', 6 April 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](#): 'There is no cloud over Zuma', 12 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](#): 'Cope: Zuma bullying the judiciary', 9 April 2009.

For numerous other South Africans, the withdrawal of the case against Zuma is perceived as obtaining the final victory in the political power-game. It is also seen as the proof that Zuma has been a victim of political badgering and that previous accusations have been part of a long process of defamation of the new president. In a recent Ipsos Markinor poll, more than 50% of those polled stated that they are more likely to vote for the ANC because of the (unfair) charges.<sup>44</sup> Many South Africans have little trust in the judiciary institutions, which they see as a remnant of the white rule. The NPA decision is thus seen as a victory in the sense that the judiciary this time did not provide unfair treatment; it could not be subjected to political influence neither from Mbeki camp nor from white South Africans. Several people have gathered behind Zuma as they doubted that he would achieve a fair rule by the judiciary. The accusations of corruption have been seen as exaggerated. Firstly, amongst people who were part of the liberation struggle, many have lived and continue to live in a context where “comrades share all”. Zuma’s alleged misbehaviour is therefore viewed as a case where he has benefited from a form of “social assistance”. This networking system permeates society – favours and mutual favours are how things work, and it is thus not seen as corruption. Furthermore, Zuma’s case was at a small scale compared to how other comrades have managed to enrich themselves. Zuma is therefore perceived to be a scapegoat. On top of this, South African analysts claim that politicians’ moral behaviour is not a major voting issue. The lack of the electorate’s opinions when it comes to moral aspects stems partly from limited education.<sup>45</sup> Most South Africans vote after what they benefit from and what they are mobilised into – as has been shown, Zuma provides the hope for improved delivery. In KwaZulu Natal, Zuma earns legitimacy as he is a leader who is seen to be genuinely and truly Zulu, embracing the Zulu traditions and having cordial relations with the king. In short, the ANC is likely to have lost some support because of Zuma’s corruption charges, but not were it mattered most: with its mass support base. The corruption charges damage does not extend significantly to the rank and file, to supporters or to voters.<sup>46, 47</sup>

With the dropping of the corruption charges, Zuma now appears to have taken some steps away from the troubles that for a long time have haunted him. The question still remains, however, how the way he escaped the court room has affected his future legitimacy and that of the ANC. The decision by the NPA probably had little impact on the vote. Public opinion was already divided, and most minds already made up, as Zuma’s legal problems has dominated the media

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<sup>44</sup> News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): ‘What the ANC victory means’, 17 April 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009.

<sup>46</sup> It should also be reminded that apart from the factors described here, and irrespective of Zuma’s personal charm and personality characteristics, he is also respected for what he has achieved during his long and distinguished political carrier with the ANC.

<sup>47</sup> News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): ‘Zuma going strong’, 13 March 2009. Television documentary: ‘Behind the rainbow’, SVT2, 12 and 19 April 2009. Informal debate...Durban, 24 February 2009.

for several years. As concerns the fierce anti-Zuma camp, people here are not likely to change their positions but will remain sceptical about the new president for a long time ahead.<sup>48</sup> When it comes to South Africans who have had doubts about Zuma, but not been fiercely against him, the picture might look different. As people are focused on delivery and results, politicians are not necessarily tainted for a long time. Once Zuma takes the presidency, the past scandals are likely to be felt as irrelevant and, with time, to a large extent forgotten.<sup>49</sup> People will be interested in seeing what is in the new mandate period for them; how they can benefit. If Zuma will not perform according to the expectations, the most tangible reactions would possibly be a lower voter turnout during next elections. Thus, the new president's reduced legitimacy among the population is not likely to have any immediate consequences. A more direct threat to Zuma personally could be coming from his own party. Zuma was a convenient device for the ANC to get rid of Mbeki. He also makes it possible for the ANC government to reclaim the ANC on the ground and to reunify the movement. Furthermore, Zuma has been useful as he is loyal to Polokwane resolutions. However, there is still an ANC division about Zuma's future, with camps within the ANC that would not have minded if the court would have got rid of Zuma. Observers argue that the Zuma support is perhaps not so real, but rather a manifestation of anti-Mbeki feelings. If Zuma does not acquit himself well, the ANC stalwarts that got rid of Mbeki could maneuver him away from the real centre of power.<sup>50</sup>

## 3.2 New political landscape

On 22 April 2009, the election of party representatives for the National Assembly (NA) and for the nine National Councils of Provinces (NCP) took place. There was much excitement about the elections, as an added element of contest existed with the newly formed party Cope, breaking out from the ANC by the end of 2008. Even if nobody doubted the ANC's victory, new dynamics on the South African political scene had been created. This section looks into the election results, the dynamics of the altered political landscape and, specifically Cope's contribution to these dynamics. The political parties' electoral bases are also discussed, and the parties' prospects and challenges ahead analysed.

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<sup>48</sup> One estimate claims that 40% of South Africans believe Zuma is guilty concerning the charges there were laid against him. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'There is no cloud over Zuma', 12 April 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Mbeki's denial of HIV/Aids is one example; towards the end of his term people were no longer talking much about the president's earlier so contestable view on the topic.

<sup>50</sup> News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'There is no cloud over Zuma', 12 April 2009. News article, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk): 'Joy and fury at Zuma charges move', 6 April 2009. News article, news24.com: 'Zuma better than Mbeki', 1 April 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.



### 3.2.1 The elections results

The national level elections produced the following results<sup>51,52</sup>:

Party	Percentage of votes 2009	Percentage of votes 2004	Seats the 2009	in NA	Seats in the NA 2004
ANC	<b>65,89%</b>	69, 69%	<b>264</b>		279
DA	<b>16,66%</b>	12,37%	<b>67</b>		50
Cope	<b>7,41%</b>		<b>30</b>		
IFP	<b>4,54%</b>	6,97%	<b>18</b>		28
ID	<b>0,92%</b>	1,70%	<b>4</b>		7
UDM	<b>0,84%</b>	2,28%	<b>4</b>		9
NNP		1,65%			7
FF+	<b>0,83%</b>	0,89%	<b>4</b>		4
ACDP	<b>0,80%</b>	1,60%	<b>3</b>		7

On the regional level, the elections results were the following:

2009

Party	Total number of seats in all NCPs
ANC	126
DA	16
Cope	16
IFP	9
ID	3
UDM	3
FF+	3
ACDP	3

<sup>51</sup> This list shows the eight biggest political parties. Five more parties obtained seats in the national assembly: PAC (1), UCDP (2), Azapo (1), APC (1), MF (1) (News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'ANC dominates parliament again', 25 April 2009). In 2004, four other parties obtained seats in the national assembly: UCDP (3), PAC (3), MF (2), Azapo (1).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. IEC results report: [www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za), 28 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'South African elections', 25 April 2009.

2009

Province/Party/ Percentage of votes	ANC	DA	Cope	IFP	ID	UDM	FF+	ACDP
Western Cape	32,89%	48,83%	9,07%		4,49%			
Eastern Cape	69,79%	9,97%	13,32%			3,95%		
Northern Cape	61,18%	13,09%	15,96%		4,73%			
North West <sup>53</sup>	73,96%	8,71%	8,44%					
Free State	71,99%	12,11%	11,12%				1,61%	
KwaZulu Natal	64,07%	10,35%	1,55%	20,55%				
Gauteng	64,83%	21,29%	7,78%	1,47%				
Mpumalanga	85,90%	7,60%	2,89%				0,83%	
Limpopo	85,37%	3,71%	7,22%					0,63%

On the national level, the ANC took home an overwhelming majority, being far from seriously challenged by the DA, Cope and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). On the regional level, the ANC obtained majority in all provinces except for the Western Cape province, where the DA was the biggest party with 48,83%. The DA became biggest opposition party in four more provinces, Cope in three provinces and the IFP in one province.

Despite its clear victory, the ANC's support among the electorate weakened for the first time since 1994.<sup>54</sup> The party lost 3,8 percentage units from the last

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<sup>53</sup> UCDP obtained 3,94% of the votes, as fourth biggest party in North West Province.

elections. A major issue had been whether the ANC would secure 2/3 of the votes, which would make it possible for the party to undertake constitutional changes without consulting other parties. This had been a key concern among those who feel that Zuma is little inclined to protecting the integrity of the democratic institutions. However, with the ANC support declining – in all provinces except for KwaZulu Natal - the party fell short of obtaining 2/3.

Another key result was the ANC losing its status as biggest party in the Western Cape to the benefit of the DA. In this province, the ANC will be excluded from power-sharing, with the Western Cape being the only province where the ruling party's influence is not extended to. Apart from increasing its support with an impressive 21,91 percentage units in the Western Cape, the DA also yielded higher figures on the national level, increasing 4,29 percentage units, thereby reinforcing its position as South Africa's biggest opposition party.

As concerns the newcomer Cope, its performance can be seen as very successful considering the fact that it was established only four months ahead of the elections. On the national level, no party - apart from the DA, the IFP and the defunct National Party - has managed to obtain more than 7% in any of the democratic elections. Apart from becoming the official opposition in three provinces, with figures ranging from approximately 11 to 16%, Cope secured positions as the third biggest party in all provinces but KwaZulu Natal, with figures in nearly<sup>55</sup> all provinces revolving around 7-9%. This means that Cope has managed to establish itself throughout the country.

On the other hand, the IFP confirmed its downward tendency that has been noted in the last two elections, losing 2,43 percentage units at the national level – and its place as third biggest opposition party to Cope. Many former IFP votes went to the ANC, much because of Zuma emphasising his Zulu origin. The ANC defeated the IFP in its traditional stronghold province KwaZulu Natal for the second time, with the IFP losing more votes than ever before. The election's losers were also the several smaller parties, which clearly dropped from their previous percentages in 2004.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Even if the voters' support has increased in terms of percentage of overall votes for the ANC from 1994 to 1999 to 2004, it should also be noted that the voter turnout has decreased during the same period.

<sup>55</sup> In one province, Mpumalanga, Cope obtained 2,89% of the votes and in KwaZulu Natal 1,55%.

<sup>56</sup> IEC results report: [www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za), 28 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'South African elections', 25 April 2009

The voter turnout amounted to 17,680,729 people, which implies 77,3% of those 23,181,997 South Africans that had registered to vote.<sup>57</sup> The turnout has been on a decline since 1994, however, this trend changed with the fourth democratic elections. Around 2 million more people voted in 2009 in comparison with 2004 and 1999<sup>58</sup>. The number of people registering to vote also saw a clear increase in comparison with previous elections.<sup>59</sup>

According to the SADC electoral observer mission and the South African IEC, the elections were free, transparent and credible, and they took place in a peaceful atmosphere.<sup>60</sup> With the high turnout, not all people queuing to vote had managed to do so at the closing time of the elections. Certain polling stations also ran out of ballot papers and boxes. However, voting hours were extended to deal with these problems.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.2.2 Possibilities for a more dynamic political landscape

The interpretation of the elections results clearly show that the South African people once again have given a decisive mandate to the ANC and to the party's presidential candidate Jacob Zuma. The ANC will be able to govern based on a massive support, and can refer to its clear backing among the population when implementing policies. The opposition parties are far behind in popularity, and do not have the mandate to constitute a seriously threatening counter-balance. In all but the Western Cape, the ANC received enough support to form majority governments.

Nevertheless, the fact that the ANC performed worse than in the two previous elections is still a psychological setback to the party. With the DA's clear advance and Cope's establishment on the political scene, this indicates that future voters, displeased with the ANC, could be open for alternative solutions. The DA's and Cope's relative successes also bolster a more vibrant political landscape and hint on the possibility of a more credible opposition in the future. In the Western Cape, the DA offered Cope and the ID one minister post each in the provincial government. While the ID accepted, Cope declined, stating that the

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<sup>57</sup> It has not been possible to obtain information about how many people were allowed to register to vote.

<sup>58</sup> In 1994, almost 2 million more people voted than in 2009 – however, no pre-registration was required at this point. In 1999 and 2004, the voter turnout was 89% and 76% respectively, but the amount of people that were registered to vote for these elections was less than in 2009. (News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'South African elections', 25 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Results of South African elections', 25 April 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> An exception was a Cope official who was shot dead in what appears to be a politically motivated crime. There were also isolated attempts of ballot rigging.

<sup>61</sup> News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Elections fair, peaceful – SADC', 24 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma: There will be no surprises', 25 April 2009.

party prefers to remain independent 'at this stage'. This is an unfortunate development, as working closely together would have given an opportunity for Cope and the DA to practise power-sharing and could be the beginning of the crafting of a governing alternative for future elections.<sup>62</sup> Future closer relations between the two parties in the Western Cape can however not be excluded. Such a cooperative relationship between the DA and Cope would mean a major political realignment on the South African political scene, which would be necessary in order to seriously challenge the ANC. The effectiveness of the DA alone in leading the opposition alone could be questioned. Seeing to South Africa's demographics, there is likely to be limits to the DA's future growth, as the party will have a hard time to remove its label as primarily white. If the opposition is lead by Cope instead, which has a broader support among all ethnic groups, the potential for growth ahead of future elections will be bigger. In this way, Cope could provide the assistance that the DA needs in winning over more black voters from the ANC. In general, Cope has an important role as a bridge-builder, making it easier for ANC voters to leave the party for other alternatives.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.2.3 Cope's real contribution

Yielding 7,41% nationwide, Cope has established itself as a minor opposition party. Hence, the initial high expectations that were held on the new party in the period after its formation were not realised. Nevertheless, Cope's significance so far must not be under-estimated. The birth of the new party is a watershed development, revealing the chink in the ANC's armour. It is the first time that a real challenge to the ANC is presented from the party's own cadres (and from ex-members of the party claiming allegiance to the Freedom Charter). It is also the first time that an element of competition has been introduced during South Africa's democratisation process. Even if Cope appeared to lose momentum some weeks into the election campaign, an important effect had already been achieved: there was a perception among the population that some provinces could be contestable. Cope differed from previous ANC break-out parties in that it entered the political arena with what initially appeared to be the potential to mobilise a strong political backing.

Cope's most important contribution is however not about its competing for political representation. Instead, Cope has served as a catalyst, re-energising the political development in South Africa. On the one hand, the sheer existence of a

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<sup>62</sup> Indications of opposition parties' willingness to work together have already been noted, with the combined court challenge by the DA, Cope, the ACDP, the UDM and the IFP to the NPA decision to drop charges against Zuma. Pre-election statements from Cope also show this willingness (News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'What the ANC victory means', 17 April 2009).

<sup>63</sup> News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'DA likely to go into coalition', 23 April 2009.

new credible party has rejuvenated the ANC, which drastically increased its election campaigning and internal debate. On the other hand, Cope's critique, for instance on constitutional issues, has revitalised the political debate and interest among ordinary South Africans. People are starting to see that the liberation movement is not the only way. Cope brought out a hope that there could be an alternative to the ANC in South Africa, and a realisation amongst people that a decisive number of the population would possibly be supportive of a different development than the one witnessed so far. In short, a new kind of transition is being sensed among South Africans. The voter turnout confirms this reasoning. When more people voted, the ANC received a smaller proportion of the votes, indicating that disillusioned and formerly abstaining voters gave the elections another chance. Cope has opened up opportunities in the sense that people begin to feel safe voting outside the ANC – as Cope is an offshoot of the ANC, they are not voting completely against their identity.<sup>64</sup> Cope's biggest contribution is, thus, opening up the political space and awakening the population and the debate. On the other hand, as the elections drew closer, Cope's campaign proved to be weak, with the party gaining low visibility and having difficulties in getting its messages across to a broader public. This benefited the DA, which to some extent focus on the same issues as Cope (the independence of the institutions, the protection of the constitution). The DA emerged as a more credible and established alternative than Cope for the voters whose interest in politics had been invigorated. This is one explanation for the DA's rise in the April 2009 elections.

### **3.2.4 Electoral bases**

At this point, it cannot be established with certainty from where the increased DA and the Cope support stems. Disappointed ANC voters are likely to have voted for Cope, but to some extent also for the DA. The first time voters are another possible support group. They belong to the so-called "born-free generation", and have no historical affiliation to the ANC. The number of voters was also higher than in the previous elections, and it is possible that South Africans who abstained in the last two elections – perhaps out of discontent with the political parties which have brought few improvements in their lives - were enthousiased to come out to vote for Cope or the DA. It could also be that people previously voting for the smaller opposition parties chose to cast their votes for Cope or the DA, but there is no clear indication establishing this scenario. The fact that the lost IFP votes benefited the ANC can be argued with certainty, on the other hand.

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<sup>64</sup> News article, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com): 'ANC still dominates South African politics', 19 April 2009.

The Cope break-out initially weakened the ANC, as the party lost skills with members defecting to Cope.<sup>65</sup> For instance, the party's mobilisation structures were undermined, and in this respect the ANC largely had to rely on the ANC Youth League, whose leader Malema is said to have caused more damage than benefit to the ANC. This cost the ANC some support, specifically the fact that Zuma and the party leadership did not clearly reject Malema's hard-line statements.<sup>66</sup> The ANC's self-enrichment tendencies, the failure to deliver, and the worry of Zuma implementing left-leaning and nationalising policies also contributed to decreased support for the ANC.

As president Motlanthe pointed out in a recent speech, the voting patterns in the fourth elections reflected South Africa's racially divided past.<sup>67</sup> Pre-election surveys also show that South Africans to a great extent vote after racial lines. Almost 80% of the black population supports the ANC, while not even 1% would vote for the DA. Almost 60% of white South Africans votes for the DA, while only 4% of this group votes for the ANC. The majority of the DA support comes from the white, the coloured and the Indian population. About 22% of coloureds and nearly 14% of the whites surveyed would vote for Cope.<sup>68</sup>

A rural-urban division can also be noted for the parties' electoral bases. The ANC pulls almost half of its support from the rural areas and the DA almost 70% of its support from towns and cities. Also Cope enjoys support mainly in the urban areas, even if the party claims voters in the black and coloured townships in the Western Cape.<sup>69</sup> A possible future development could see the ANC focusing more on its traditional support base in the poor rural areas and the townships, partly as the party stands a good chance to turn them away from the opposition parties. The DA and Cope has so far been perceived as an option among the educated elites and other middle-class voters. However, to challenge ANC dominance, it is necessary to attract the support of the poor unemployed black South Africans. If the opposition does not succeed in this endeavour, it would be a recipe for failure as for obtaining more political power. However, there is also another way of looking at this development. If Cope would publicly recognise the elites and the middle-class as being their electoral target, this would imply a profiling of the political parties in a more distinct way. Such a distinction would help consolidate the pluralisation of the political scene.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.

<sup>66</sup> News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'What the ANC victory means', 17 April 2009.

<sup>67</sup> News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Freedom day address', 27 April 2009.

<sup>68</sup> News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'What the ANC victory means', 17 April 2009. News article, [www.dn.se](http://www.dn.se): 'Långa köer när Sydafrika röstade', 23 April 2009.

<sup>69</sup> News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'What the ANC victory means', 17 April 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Research memo, Sonnichsen: 'Quo vadis South Africa, a follow-up...', 21 January 2009.

### 3.2.5 Political parties – prospects and challenges ahead

#### *The ruling party*

As noted previously, the ANC has come out strong from the elections, backed by a very clear majority of the South African population. Nevertheless, the emergence of Cope and the invigorated opposition is a sign that the ANC's popularity is not unshakable. The party now finds itself in a situation where it is under clear pressure to deliver, as the future confidence of the South African electorate cannot be taken for granted. The question is how the ANC will respond to the prospect of an emerging (viable) multiparty system. One possible outcome is the opening up of the political space, with a revigorated debate. This development would see the ANC being forced to listen to and act on the criticism that is directed to them from the opposition. This could mean improvements and reforms in the problematic governance areas elaborated on in previous sections. Popular resentment of the ANC has increased due to the poor governance and delivery record. Public opinion has also responded negatively to the ANC's internal political upheavals played out publicly in the media, and to its widespread involvement in and complaisance for corruption. Thus, a stronger political opposition and popular disapproval could turn out to re-energise the ANC. This effect has already been noted during the election campaign, where the ANC invigorated its efforts to win the voters' support. However, a less positive scenario could not be excluded. An ANC feeling threatened could take a more authoritative approach to ensure political power and (in some ANC views) stability. The fear of competition and of revelation of weak points could provoke the ANC to reinforce its control over state institutions such as the judiciary and the media, as a means of silencing critique. This would mean that the difference between the ANC party and the state would continue to erode. The system of patronage would in this case be more developed to ensure the support base.<sup>71</sup>

Against this background, a key challenge for the ANC is to hold the party together and prevent further disintegration. The birth of Cope has made divisions within the party - between the reformists and the old school liberation heroes – even rife. Indications are that elements within the latter view multiparty democracy and diversity of opinions as disturbances for the ANC work. A liberation mentality is still present among these stalwarts, where the ANC's legitimacy as the South African leading party cannot be questioned. The threat from reformists inside the party, could lead these liberation fighters to take an even tougher stance to secure their control of future developments. Within this camp, many follow the paradigm of the past, having the need to feel that 'the

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<sup>71</sup> Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, 16 February 2009.



revolution continues' and to continue to use the struggle rhetoric. With this perspective, organisational change is rejected<sup>72</sup>. These inner divisions mean that the ANC stands at a tipping point as concerns its future orientation. The new generation of "born-frees", who have no personal experiences of the liberation struggle, is likely to feel less affiliation with an ANC deriving its legitimacy from its past achievements. However, reformists within the party have a tough way to go. Promotion within the ANC is to a great extent based on loyalties rather than appreciation of creative or intelligent ideas.<sup>73</sup> The supporters that the ANC Youth League produces are illustrative: loyal followers, supporting their leaders "no matter what".<sup>74</sup> A second challenge for the ANC is the vast ideological differences that the party – or the movement - encompasses, ranging from radical social democrats to liberals. These big policy implementation differences make it difficult for the ANC to rule with optimal efficiency. Thirdly, the Mbeki-inflicted distance between top and local structures within the ANC is another reality that the party is facing. The party has been described as "two ANCs", and the leadership needs to reconnect with the lower level party structures and the issues of their concern. It remains to be seen if Zuma can bridge this divide, and if his balance act will manage to live up to national or local expectations. Thus, in short, a major challenge is whether the ANC will succeed in transforming from a broad liberation movement, justified largely because of past achievements and structured around personalities and social networks, into a modern political agenda based party, relevant to the present South African society. The extent of the party's modernisation is a crucial factor for the future development of the South African political landscape.<sup>75</sup>

### *The opposition*

The opposition in South Africa is facing an extremely popular liberation movement - observers describe its vast legitimacy as a result of "blind loyalty" among ANC supporters<sup>76</sup> - which has established itself in the governing seats for the last 15 years. This presents several challenges, one of which is to counter the established system of mutual rewards which has grown under ANC rule. As

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<sup>72</sup> According to ex-ANC members, a resolution about organisational change was prepared for the Polokwane conference, but rejected. (Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009).

<sup>73</sup> FOI report, Adolfo (May 2009): 'SADC Liberation Movement Mentality...', p.23.

<sup>74</sup> The infamous statement of Julius Malema, President of the ANC Youth League: "we would kill for Zuma" should be considered in this context.

<sup>75</sup> Interview: Swedish Radio correspondent, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: CSV, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: Botswana High Commission, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009.

<sup>76</sup> News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Opposition parties to changes strategies?', 26 April 2009.

noted previously, the population votes to a great extent after what it benefits from in practical terms, thus, personal links to ensure livelihood is a very important factor when casting the vote. To undermine this system, the opposition would have to offer an alternative structure, with tangible, convincing and immediate measures that the population would benefit from. This is not a task that one opposition party can deal with rapidly, but a long term undertaking which requires concerted efforts. Hence, the immediate challenge for the opposition parties is to start to work together, in order to build a credible alternative for the future. Differences in personality and policies will make such a collaboration challenging.

Explanations for the DA's relative successful performance in the elections include the good results demonstrated as a governing party in Cape Town, as well as the popularity of its party leader, Helen Zille. The DA has also made efforts to modernise. However, the key challenge remains; to reach beyond its traditional support base among the white population. The DA champions pro-business policies and is seen by many as a front of white business. The party has not capitalised enough on the problems in the townships, which prevents it from attracting the decisive support of the great poor masses.<sup>77</sup> Another challenge for the DA will be governing at provincial level. As a minority party in a South Africa largely based on ANC networks, the DA will also be put to test in the maintaining of constructive relations with the dominating party at all levels, while at the same time striving to make its mark on the Western Cape and showcase its governance in the province.<sup>78</sup>

The future development and maturing of Cope<sup>79</sup> is important for how well the seed of multiparty democracy is to be nurtured. The prospects of the party are hard to assess at this early stage. Cope has the infrastructure, the fund-raising and the technocrat skills; in other words, much experience and capacity as former ANC members. To Cope's advantage is also that it is the only party likely to break the racial divide. The fact that Cope succeeded in establishing political representation throughout the country is encouraging. This is however likely to be the result of disappointment with the ANC and a desire among South Africans for new alternatives, rather than indications of Cope as a viable party. The

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<sup>77</sup> News article, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com): 'ANC still dominates South African politics', 19 April 2009.  
News article, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk): 'Zuma challenges', 25 April 2009.

<sup>78</sup> News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Will ANC thwart the DA in the Western Cape?', 25 April 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Cope portrays itself as a center-left party, inspired partly by the Scandinavian social democratic model. On its agenda is to address South Africa's politicised governance, to promote economic liberalisation, to remove ethnically based structures (such as the BEE policy) and to provide for service-delivery. Cope is playing on people's wish for something new as opposed to the ANC's weak performance, with corruption and nepotism. (Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009).

enthusiasm of and hopes in a new political choice could wane if Cope does not prove to be a credible party that has the capacity to deliver. The party still has to go through the phase of establishing itself, dealing with infighting and maintaining party unity, with the perception of it as a “losers club” as well as other organisational challenges. There are also financial difficulties for Cope, low visibility, along a stigma of being a middle class party. A key difficulty for Cope is to profile itself clearly and present a concrete action programme instead of its current general and abstract promises. Cope is largely seen as having the same policies as the ANC, being little different than the ruling party. Just as the DA, Cope would have to widen its electoral base (from a more wealthy ethnically mixed middle-class and dissatisfied former ANC members) to include the poor black electorate, in order to have a real stake. However, such a multi-targeted approach risks watering out its action programme further and will also fail to differ Cope from the ANC. As a new-born party, it will be a demanding task to serve as the official opposition in three provinces. The success of Cope also depends on how it will perform in this role. If Cope does not succeed in meeting these challenges, there is a risk that the party will regress into a regional party, or dissipate, with some members possibly reintegrating into the ANC. However, if Cope does survive these pitfalls, it could grow to be a serious contender in the 2014 elections. A first test for Cope will be the municipal elections in 2011.<sup>80</sup>

The IFP emerged as a major loser in the elections, raising questions whether it will be fading further as a regional party in the coming years. The long time party leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, is more than 80 years old and is looking increasingly tired in his capacity as the pillar of the IFP.<sup>81</sup> However, IFP loyalty has for a long time been part of the identity of many Zulus in KwaZulu Natal. Allegiance to the party might resurge the day that Zuma leaves office - his Zulu ethnicity was a crucial factor in attracting traditional IFP supporters to vote for the ANC. However, meanwhile, the ANC is likely to further increase its influence among the grassroots people by expanding the personal networks that are already being established.<sup>82</sup> Winning back the support base and securing a hold on society will be difficult for the IFP.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: CSVR, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: The IFP, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Radio correspondent, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. News article, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk): ‘QA SA’s general elections’, 7 April 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): ‘What the ANC victory means’, 17 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): ‘Opposition: are we still needed’, 24 April 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009.

<sup>82</sup> News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): ‘Opposition parties to change strategies?’, 26 April 2009.

## **4 Clouds at the horizon?**

The previous chapters have discussed the political situation that South Africa presently stands at. In this chapter, possible future developments in terms of domestic and regional security will be explored. The potential impact of the recent political events on the stability is analysed, as well as the impact of the pressing problems that South Africa are facing. As a backdrop to this analysis, South Africa's future policy orientation and engagement in Zimbabwe will be examined.

### **4.1 Policy orientation under the Zuma-government**

Any policy changes that will follow with the new government will only be made known towards June 2009. Thus, at this stage, it is still too early to assess in detail how policy areas of importance for the domestic and regional security will develop. Nevertheless, the broad impression of the new government's steering course can already be sensed, and will be analysed below.

#### **4.1.1 Domestic orientation**

Zuma has generally been portrayed as a politician committed to the traditional ANC orientation, in other words, defending clear socialist or even more left-leaning views. His election as ANC president at Polokwane 2007 was a result of the decisive support he enjoyed from the ANC alliance partners: South Africa Communist Party (SACP), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the ANC Youth League, all of these being strong left forces. In the power-struggle with the market-friendly liberal Mbeki, Zuma has appeared as the counter-weight alternative, firmly rooted in the traditional ANC socialist perspective. Zuma's recent promises to poor South Africans of free social services are another indication of his policy stand. With this background, expectations – and fears – have risen about a shift in the economic policies, with increased state interventions in the economy. After the elections, Cosatu rapidly came out with a statement, making expectations clear of its increased participation in the transformation of South Africa under Zuma's rule. The Cosatu Secretary General hailed the end of the workers marginalisation and emphasised that the workers are expecting results from the Zuma administration. Pressure will thus be put on Zuma to repay the gratitude debt owned to his supporters. On the other hand, Zuma has clearly signalled to investors that he does not intend to undertake any major reorientation of the state economy and that he will not switch to high-tax redistribution. It is in Zuma's interest to keep

the current investment climate and to refrain from impacting negatively on the macro-economic atmosphere.<sup>83</sup>

Zuma's efforts to address this contradiction appear in the new cabinet. The government is a carefully constructed compromise, which among other things aims at balancing between the great poor masses' demands of state spending and the business community. Concessions to the left were made through the appointment of seven leaders from the ANC alliance partners at government positions. Among the key ministries allocated to the left is the newly created Economic Development Department, headed by Cosatu's Ebrahim Patel and the Department of Higher Education and Training, led by SACP General Secretary Blade Nzimande. Meanwhile, Zuma appointed Pravin Gordhan as new Minister of Finance, who enjoys the confidence of the business sector and is seen as a sign of continuity of previous macro-economic policies. Furthermore, the former Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, is kept at the heart of policy making. Manuel is to head a new powerful structure created in the form of a National Planning Commission, which is placed in the president's office. This commission is to draw up the strategy and formulate policy for the entire government.<sup>84</sup>

With Manuel, Gordhan and Patel all involved in economic affairs, it is still unclear who will have the final say in economic policies. It remains to be seen how the precise division of power will look and how much influence Patel and the new Economic Development Department is granted. The left-wing stakeholders' inclusion in the government will give them a possibility to contribute with their viewpoints on an alternative economic approach, which was not the case during the Mbeki rule. However, it is possible that this could be a way to somehow defuse the left. The pressure from the allies could in this way be reduced. Manuel and Gordhan, representing the liberal factions, have indeed secured powerful positions. As argued previously, the formation around Zuma will be of great significance. The new structures created in the Presidency indicate a centralisation of decision-making, and it is interesting to note that the experienced Manuel is Zuma's choice of closest advisor concerning policy.<sup>85</sup>

All in all, no major changes, right or left, are expected in the short term. Zuma has also stated that there will be "no major surprises" in the new administration's

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<sup>83</sup> Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma: There will be no surprises', 25 April 2009'. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma now has to deliver', 23 April 2009.

<sup>84</sup> ISS/ASAP Daily Briefing, 11 May 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'New Cabinet seen as coup for the left', 11 May 2009. News article, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk): 'Zuma calms markets with new cabinet', 10 May 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma Cabinet bad news – Zille', 10 May 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'Zuma: Planning head Manuel knows government inside out', 10 May 2009.

programme of action. However, the far-reaching changes to the structure<sup>86</sup> of the government and the Presidency emphasise the focus on delivery and of implementing the government's socio-economic vision. It can be assumed that Zuma will be inwardly focused for at least the next 18 months, due to earlier promises and popular expectations. The effects of the economic recession will be felt hard in South Africa, which also forces Zuma to concentrate on countering job losses and other negative developments on the home front. Even if the exact extent to which policies will be different is still unclear at this point, it can be predicted that the style and the emphasis of the Zuma administration will differ. For instance, more public sector emphasis could be expected in the "little systems" of education, health, employment, etc, in accordance with the Polokwane resolutions.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Foreign policy

South Africa's foreign policy has emphasised efforts to bring about peace in Africa. Some examples include Burundi, the DRC, and Sudan, where much time and resources have been devoted in terms of mediation efforts, peace-keeping troops and post-conflict reconstruction. South Africa has also made substantive conceptual and financial contributions to the build up of the AU and other institutional architecture on the continent. Another key element of its foreign policy is about advancing the African economic growth – relations with most African countries revolve around economic interests and efforts to stimulate the private sector<sup>88</sup>. Development cooperation with African countries has been initiated under Mbeki, but a structured system is still not entirely put in place. Since 1994, the ANC has worked to formulate, and then, put in place, consistent policies suitable for governing the new democratic South Africa. This means that the ANC is not particularly keen on rupturing the politics that has been carefully crafted over a long period. As mentioned in the above section, there is an interest in policy consistency. This includes the foreign policy, which will not be

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<sup>86</sup> In addition to the new National Planning Commission, a structure for monitoring and evaluation of government performance has also been created within the Presidency. Furthermore, certain new departments have been created while others have been restructured or renamed, in an effort to step up delivery.

<sup>87</sup> Interview: South African Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 18 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: South African Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Zuma: There will be no surprises', 25 April 2009. Journal, [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com): 'Africa's next big man', 16 April 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Business was ascribed a key role in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.110.)

drastically or quickly changed under the new political leadership.<sup>89</sup> There will be a continued emphasis on the use of multilateral channels, such as the SADC and the AU. One month ahead of the elections, Zuma told foreign diplomats that “the ANC aims at strengthening South Africa’s role in peace, reconstruction, development and integration, especially in southern Africa and the African continent”. Zuma also stated that “we will continue to explore and deepen our multilateral and bilateral relationships globally”.<sup>90</sup> The ANC has also claimed that South African peace-keeping troops will remain engaged to the same extent as currently<sup>91</sup>, a view that seems to be shared with opposition parties. As concerns the economic dimension of the foreign policy, this also appears to be staying intact. The Polokwane resolutions, which Zuma is largely expected to follow, took further steps in facilitating for South African businesses opportunities in Africa.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, even if a certain Mbeki-momentum will follow on as indicated above, it appears likely that a foreign policy reorientation will come with time. There would be little difference in substance – South Africa will not be moving away from Africa – but fewer priorities and other emphasis might be seen under the Zuma administration. Furthermore, the style and symbolism of the foreign policy can be expected to be differing in the coming years. Even if Zuma has quite extensive foreign policy experience<sup>93</sup>, he does not have the same capacity

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<sup>89</sup> At the Polokwane conference in December 2007, certain claims for change were expressed in the resolutions on international relations. However, these refer mostly to a difference in style and degree of engagement, and indicated that in many areas there will be a continuation of the Mbeki government policy as for engagement on the African continent. (Interview: ISS, 17 February 2009, Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): ‘South African Foreign Policy...’ p.111-112, 119).

<sup>90</sup> Zuma’s statement also included the following: “Unity of the African continent, both politically and economically, will remain the ANC’s major foreign policy thrust. The ANC must emphasise what our icon, former President Nelson Mandela said in 1992; that the primary task of the ANC’s international policy was to be a friend to every nation in the world.” “We seek the partnership of the international community as we work to achieve our goals. We will be strengthening our economic relations on both a South-South and North-South level.” “The ANC government seeks to strengthen its multilateral relations and work together with the south for a more equitable distribution of power”. (News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): ‘Zuma spells out foreign policy’, 12 March 2009).

<sup>91</sup> Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Furthermore, according to a United Nation Mission DRC (Monuc) representative, Zuma showed strong interest in February 2009 to send troops to Monuc. Interview: Monuc Pretoria Liaison Office, Pretoria, 17 February 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: South African Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 18 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): ‘South African Foreign Policy...’ p.110-114

<sup>93</sup> As Deputy President of South Africa, Zuma was part of mediating efforts in a number of African conflicts, especially in Burundi. He also chaired the Bi-national Commission with Sweden. Zuma

and zeal as Mbeki. Perhaps even more importantly, the foreign policy is not seen to be a core project and interest for him in the sense that it was for Mbeki, who travelled around Africa and the wider world in efforts to implement his grand African renaissance ambitions<sup>94</sup>. Even if the core policies will remain the same, the foreign policy will not be as expansive as under Mbeki, as there is likely to be more of an ad-hoc approach and less vision under Zuma's rule. The new president is less likely to be an intellectual leader of the continent in the way Mbeki aspired to be, and this will contribute to South Africa withdrawing somehow from the international scene. The appointment of the new Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, is inexperienced and little known in diplomatic circles, which contributes to the impression of less weight being given to the foreign policy. As Mbeki was criticised for having been too outward-looking, Zuma will adhere to the calls for a focus on the home front. Another factor speaking for down-scaling is the fact that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) is clearly over-stretched. With the global economic crises, Zuma will have to spend money internally and can hardly afford to boost the MFA. Despite ANC statements claiming the opposite, there appears to be an ambition to withdraw peace-keeping troops, whose deployment is an expensive cost. A certain withdrawal has been initiated after Mbeki left office. Certain sources speak of reducing the troops from 3000 to 2000, probably starting in Burundi. However, a clear decision on timetable or substance does not seem to have been taken. Another reason for taking home the troops is the ongoing priority reorientation for the Armed Forces. The army will be supporting the police in preparation for events such as the World Cup in 2010 and the Confederation Cup in 2009. There is also a possibility that the troops will be redeployed for border control, and used to support the police in the event of domestic instability such as further xenophobia attacks or other turmoil.<sup>95</sup> Another restraining factor for South Africa being active within peace-keeping is

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also served as the ANC representative and Head of Intelligence in various African countries during exile under apartheid.

<sup>94</sup> Under Mbeki, South Africa established itself as an important interlocutor for Africa in global fora, a strong advocate of South-South solidarity and reform of the outdated global governance architecture, and a leader in the reconstruction of Africa's institutional architecture. Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.109-111. Research report, Adebajo, Adedeji, Landsberg (2007): 'South Africa in Africa...', p.27-39.

<sup>95</sup> The xenophobic attacks in May 2008 were the first time that the army was ordered out onto the streets to quell unrest since the end of apartheid. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'SA army kills man during anti-immigrant unrest', 24 May 2008.



the state of the Armed Forces. While there is no shortage of quality material, the military stands before serious human resource problems. The staff is not qualified enough and is in insufficient physical shape. Furthermore, the army has also been losing personnel, and 25% of the troops are HIV/Aids affected.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to these upcoming constraints for the South African foreign policy, its ambiguous role as a regional power must also be taken into account. Zuma's new administration will have to consider what approach to take in this respect; to what extent the previous policies will be followed. So far, South Africa has been very careful not to assert itself in the region, and has strongly emphasised its intention to build relations with other African countries as an equal partner, especially in the sub-region. This low profile strategy is partly an attempt to counter-balance criticism because of its strong economic dominance in the region<sup>97</sup>. However, the efforts to avoid being portrayed as a hegemony also stem from a will to entrench its identity as African, to earn the solidarity, respect and credibility as an African state on the continent in order to establish itself as part of Africa.<sup>98</sup> In the sub-region, it is very important for the ANC to safeguard the solidarity among the liberation movements.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, African countries expect and want South Africa to take the lead at certain times. Also the West has expectations on South Africa to act internationally. Perceiving the country as a custodian of peace and as an advanced democracy, South Africa is assumed to take action in the AU and the SADC on human rights issues and the like. South Africa has tried to balance between expectations to take

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<sup>96</sup> Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: South African Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Manuel heads powerful planning commission', 11 May 2009. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'Zuma's new Cabinet 'efficient and caring'', 11 May 2009.

<sup>97</sup> South Africa benefits from clear trade advantages through the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). Furthermore, the South African business sector is a very active investor throughout Africa. Because of this kind of economic dominance, it is strategic for South Africa to keep a humble and low profile politically, not to be perceived as bully in the region. (Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.111, Research report, Adebajo, Adedeji, Landsberg (2007): 'South Africa in Africa...', p.27-39)

<sup>98</sup> This approach was reinforced after failed diplomatic experiences the late nineties. In 1996, Mandela took a strong stand against the Nigerian military's human right abuses and in 1998, South Africa intervened with peace-keeping forces in Lesotho. These actions failed devastatingly and awoke the wrath of other African countries, instead of gaining their support as was expected. (Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.111, Research report, Adebajo, Adedeji, Landsberg (2007): 'South Africa in Africa...', p.23)

<sup>99</sup> For more on the decisive importance of the liberation mentality among SADC-countries, see FOI report, Adolfo (May 2009): 'SADC Liberation Movement Mentality...', p.23.

responsibility, its strategy not to appear to take the lead, and its active participation in continental challenges and institutions. This has made its long term interest and identity appear somewhat confused.<sup>100</sup>

A relevant question now is whether Zuma's take over will imply changes in South Africa's balancing act. Opinions have already been vented that Zuma is undermining South Africa's own democratisation process, being part of politicisation of the judiciary, and making statements about reinstating the death penalty and limiting homosexuals' rights. This view of the new president speaks against South Africa taking a lead in addressing human rights deficits elsewhere on the continent.<sup>101</sup> With a public opinion which is upset with South Africa giving priority to acting abroad before dealing with domestic concerns, lowering ambitions with peace-keeping engagements are also not unexpected. At the same time, it appears beyond doubt that the new government will prioritise continued engagement with the liberation movements in the region. Regarding party-to-party relations, the Polokwane resolutions emphasised that priority should be given to support and cultivate relations with former liberation movements. Zuma recently went to see liberation governments in Angola, Namibia and Mozambique, while the ANC met with Mugabe's Zanu-PF. The ANC has also expressed a certain irritation about "the West's prescriptions on how the South African democracy should look"<sup>102</sup>. The scepticism among western states towards Zuma could reinforce a tendency for South Africa to focus more on relations with African states and South-South cooperation. Zuma's own identity is also clearly African, which might help South Africa to reinforce its African identity. The new president's legitimacy among the Southern African countries is also helped by the fact that he has first hand experience of the SADC countries, having lived in the sub-region in exile. The SADC context will thus continue to be important for South Africa, even if Zuma will not have the same ambition for the organisation as Mbeki had. In the absence of a clear agenda for SADC, Zuma's continued position in the region will depend on how he handles SADC issues that will come up during his presidency – as South African president, he will not be able to avoid to take a role in SADC, either he desires to or not. Another aspect is that, for Zuma, the SADC could also be used as a convenient tool to refer to, in order to avoid taking active bilateral initiatives for peace and

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<sup>100</sup> Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: South Africa Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 18 February 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Certain observers point to the recent refusal by the Motlanthe government to grant the Dalai Lama a visa to South Africa (to attend an international conference for Nobel Peace Laureates) as an indication of South Africa's readiness to compromise its human rights principles.

<sup>102</sup> Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. The ANC has also issued a specific resolution calling for "Africa to remain united and resolute in the rejection of AFRICOM" (the newly established US Africa Command), which was characterised as "the latest American design to interfere in continental affairs". (Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.113)

security efforts. Concerning engagement for the AU, nothing indicates that South Africa's policies are changing, nevertheless, the same reasoning applies as earlier; Zuma's interest in the AU is not comparable to that of Mbeki. Even if Zuma gives priority to (sub)-regional relations, his immediate focus will not be on reaffirming South Africa's place in Africa. Furthermore, questions can also be raised about South Africa's actual capacity to take a leading role – there is no clear credibility in this respect, and it is not expected to grow stronger under Zuma. Again, of key importance for the development of South Africa's foreign policy for the next 1,5-2 years will be the fact that the new president will be occupied at the home front. Zuma will also not engage in any possibly controversial foreign policy action that could upset the international community before the World Cup has taken place, before the economic recession has turned and before service delivery has improved. Being a pragmatic personality, Zuma realises the importance of maintaining good relations with Western partners and to prove that South Africa is a secure climate for investors. A wait and see approach could be expected on many foreign policy areas for the near future.<sup>103</sup>

#### 4.1.3 South Africa's engagement in Zimbabwe

The South African response to the growing crises in neighbouring Zimbabwe has been widely criticised within and outside of South Africa. The reactions included disappointment about the South African government's resistance to put official pressure on Zimbabwean president Mugabe's regime, and a lack of understanding for Mbeki's quiet diplomacy approach. In March 2007, the SADC appointed Mbeki as mediator in the Zimbabwean crisis. After serious setbacks, a Government of National Unity (GNU) was finally agreed on and installed in February 2009. The power-sharing process is however far from proceeding smoothly and the economic and humanitarian situation in the country remains catastrophic.

South Africa's point of departure has been respect for the sovereignty of its neighbour. Rather than seeking to impose a solution, Mbeki tried to get the parties to reach an agreement, even if this meant bringing Mugabe into the warmth. Mbeki's mediation has not been seen as neutral, with little condemnation of Mugabe's violation of human rights; it is also generally argued that the Zimbabwean opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was bullied into accepting the GNU. Given Mbeki's preference for foreign policy, it is difficult to distinguish to what degree South Africa's position on Zimbabwe has been a reflection of his personal approach. Some would say it has been highly affected

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<sup>103</sup> Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The ANC, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.113, 119.

by his liberation affinity to Mugabe<sup>104</sup>, respect for an elder – and an old mentor – as well as mistrust in the Zimbabwean opposition, with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) having its roots in the trade unions (and not in the liberation movement). However, Mbeki's preference for "African solutions for African problems" is neither his trademark nor exclusive to South Africa, but resonates throughout SADC and the AU. This would largely be true for the aversion towards too much influence by former colonial powers as well – something Mugabe has managed to play well throughout the process. Another aspect to take into account is the rife speculation that South Africa is benefiting from the situation in Zimbabwe. This includes brain-gain of relatively skilled migrants, as well as alleged concessions in Zimbabwean mines and Zimbabwe-held concessions in the DRC, where access for South Africa is secured in a Mugabe influenced government.<sup>105</sup>

The question what position the Zuma-led South African government will take towards Zimbabwe is of interest. Zuma has earlier been an outspoken critic of Mugabe, which has raised hopes for a tougher South African stance. It should also be taken into account that Zuma's power-base remains in Cosatu and the SACP, which are both highly critical of Mugabe – and more open to the MDC as a party with roots in the trade union. It could therefore be argued that Zuma would be pressed to deliver on their demands for a harder South African position. The South African opposition, Cope and the DA, is also adding pressure, insisting that Mugabe should be removed. The new Zuma-government would also have had the time to grasp the destabilising effects that migration from a crisis-ridden Zimbabwe can cause. The xenophobic attacks in May 2008 – which were unleashed largely in response to South Africans' perception of a rising and threatening influx of Zimbabwean migrants - had severe consequences with several people killed. Such internal instability could be recurrent and spread further. In the short perspective, it could jeopardise the 2010 World Cup. In future, it is likely to result in a reduced confidence in South Africa from the outside world. An escalation of the neighbouring crisis is also likely to present challenges for South African trade, as Zimbabwe makes out South Africa's most important trade route on land for the rest of the region. Zimbabwe itself remains one of South Africa's key trading partners. In short, the Zuma government is

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<sup>104</sup> For more on the influence of the solidarity between African liberation movements, and how this has affected South Africa's stance on the situation in Zimbabwe, see FOI report, Adolfo (May 2009): 'SADC Liberation Movement Mentality...', p.23.

<sup>105</sup> Interview: Swedish Embassy, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: IOM, Harare, 3 March 2009. Interview: South African Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CSVR, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009.

painfully aware that a further escalation in Zimbabwe would be damaging for South Africa.<sup>106</sup>

However, despite the above reasons, an increased engagement in Zimbabwe and a tougher stance against Mugabe is not the most likely scenario to be expected from Zuma. First of all, Zuma could not afford to shift his focus away from the domestic issues, as argued in the previous section. Accordingly, less rather than more attention on Zimbabwe is to be expected from South Africa. Again, keeping a low profile on the foreign policy front – Zimbabwe included - is the most beneficial strategy for Zuma in the coming year, in the SADC forum and bilaterally. Furthermore, Zuma can still refer to South Africa taking a responsibility in the SADC, as Mbeki still has the position as mediator. In addition, having Mbeki struggling with harmonising Zimbabwean relations is more beneficial for Zuma than involving himself in that difficult challenge, with a risk to fail and get negative exposure. As for Zuma's earlier criticism of Mugabe, it could also be seen as part of his effort to get rid of Mbeki; to score political points and win sympathies. Zuma is likely to take a cautious approach and softer tone once he assumes the institutional role of the Presidency, being accountable to the ANC, to the government, to SADC and to SADC countries – who all protect Mugabe's back. If concessions are to be made to Cosatu and the SACP, it will probably be through other means. Zuma also shares many of the restrictions that prevented Mbeki from taking a harder position on Mugabe. Even if Zuma is not motivated to secure Mugabe's solidarity in order to realise a grand foreign policy agenda - the way Mbeki was – the new president is still very much governed by the liberation movement affiliations and historical ties, as argued previously. Challenging Zimbabwe is specifically complicated, and would be seen as South Africa resorting to a bullying approach, as Zimbabwe is a regional leader in the SADC. Being tougher on Mugabe implies that Zuma risks undermining South Africa's efforts to earn respect and identity as an African state, something which Zuma as a pragmatic would not deliberately engage in. Furthermore, an articulated support by Zuma for the MDC could also build up discontent within powerful segments within the ANC, which could feel that Zuma is siding with the 'imperialist' West, protecting the interest of the former colonial powers. Zuma's support for an opposition party, like the MDC, is also unlikely in that it would indicate that a liberation party – the ANC - encourages political opponents. This does not rhyme with the self-perception as having unquestionable legitimacy. Increasing the pressure on Mugabe could be interpreted as undermining the ANC's right to dominate the South African state. Furthermore, Zuma is not the right person to speak out against a ruling party and a president entrenching its power grip on public institutions. The allegations that

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<sup>106</sup> Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: CSV, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: South African Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 18 February 2009. ISS/ASAP Daily Briefing, 16 March 2009.

South Africa has benefited economically from the crisis in Zimbabwe should also be considered. As the economic recession approaches South Africa - while the population is expecting promises about service-delivery to be met - motivations for South Africa to keep economic advantages will not wane under Zuma's initial presidency. As concerns the negative effects from the Zimbabwean migration, this does also not appear to be strong enough reasons for South Africa to address the root cause of the problem. Instead, ways are found to deal with the symptoms of the crisis in first hand. Plans to beef up border security with the South African army are being discussed.<sup>107</sup> A decision to grant Zimbabweans temporary residence and work permits was also recently taken, to avoid the problems associated with handling the excessive amount of political asylum applications<sup>108 109</sup>.

In addition to a lack of political will, the question of capacity should also be considered. To take a practical view, 'a tougher stance' could at best mean a stronger rhetoric. There could be no open criticism. Any sort of intervention is unthinkable option, not only because of the above mentioned political reasons, but the Zimbabwean military would also present a challenge to South Africa. Zuma's personal capacities are also an issue. In relation to Mugabe, he stands out as uneducated, and cannot match Mugabe's skills in rhetoric debate. His legitimacy as 'a folksy man of the people' will not be the credentials needed to put pressure on the Zimbabwean president. Furthermore, the respect for Mugabe as a senior statesman and an elder also applies to Zuma. In short, the above factors indicate that there will be no difference between Mbeki and Zuma policies on Zimbabwe and no difference in outcome; if anything, South Africa is likely to decrease its political/diplomatic engagement on the Zimbabwe issue.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Interview: South African Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009.

<sup>108</sup> News article, [www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk): 'South Africa permits for Zimbabwe', 3 April 2009.

<sup>109</sup> Interview: South Africa Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CSV, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.

<sup>110</sup> The above reasoning does not seek to neglect the fact that a South African-Zimbabwean dialogue is still maintained, where existing bilateral political, economic, trade relations are being discussed along with the migration issue. Among other things, this takes place through the SA-Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation (JPCC), which recently met to discuss the humanitarian situation and how the two countries can strengthen their cooperation. The focus is also on economic aid. South Africa was the first country to commit funds to Zimbabwe after the instalment of the GNU (R300 million to agriculture subsistence for farmers) and discussions about continued financial assistance are ongoing. South Africa has issued calls to the international community that sanctions against Zimbabwe should be lifted. Finally, it should be underlined that the South African civil society is active in building capacities in Zimbabwe, for instance as concerns the MDC skills. (Interview: South African Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 18 February 2009. Interview: UCT/Department of Law, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. ISS/ASAP Daily Briefing, 16 March 2009).

A strong South African leadership could have taken the lead in preparing for engagement during the Zimbabwean constitutional referendum and ensuing elections which are upcoming in the next 1,5-2 years. Another role for South Africa could have been to maintain for SADC to have an official monitoring role on the breaches of the GNU. However, this commitment is not likely to be forthcoming. Furthermore, South Africa is stepping down as chair of the SADC in August 2009. This means that the SADC will, in the double sense, be left with a leadership vacuum on Zimbabwe at a period of time that is decisive for Zimbabwe's recovery.<sup>111</sup>

## 4.2 Risks for instability

Taking South Africa's pressing problems and recent political developments into account, this section examines future risks for the country's internal stability, as well as consequences for the security situation at the regional level.

### 4.2.1 Domestic instability

Many feared that the aftermath of apartheid had left South Africa in such a vulnerable state that a breakdown of society into further violence was to be expected. Instead, South Africa managed to take successful steps towards building a new democracy, and emerged as one of the most stable countries on the African continent. Much of the consolidation of this stability was thanks to Mbeki's steadfast macro-economic policies, which moved South Africa into a growing liberal market economy. Economic stability was achieved by giving priority to the creation of a black middle-class – often ANC allied businessmen and politicians. This secured a prospering and independent South Africa, which did not have to be subjected to the IMF, the World Bank or other international institutions. Making sure that South Africa occupied the place as Africa's economic engine secured its political position on the continent and internationally.

#### *Expectation gap and increased desperation sparking hostile protests*

South Africa is still perceived as a stable outpost in a turbulent Africa. However, behind the surface of an advancing democracy, a number of political and social developments are ongoing which, when combined, is reason for future concern.

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<sup>111</sup> Interview: South African Department of Defence, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CSV, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: IJR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009. Interview: Idasa, Pretoria, 16 February 2009. Interview: SAIIA, Johannesburg, 19 February 2009. Interview: ISS, Pretoria, 17 February 2009. Interview: CCR, Cape Town, 23 February 2009.

Mbeki's policies ensured the (initial) security of the South African state, but less so the human security aspect, as his measures were taken at the expense of improving the situation more rapidly for the great poor masses. Their socio-economic stagnation and their growing impatience for a better life is a key risk to South African stability, as there has been little mitigation of the social consequences. Violent protests over service-delivery issues are already frequent, with burning barricades, running battles with the security forces and attacks on the homes of ANC officials.<sup>112</sup> With the new president pursuing a populist approach, the risk for instability is exacerbated. The promises of service-delivery will be hard to live up to, especially in light of the economic crisis. Zuma is also likely to maintain Mbeki's macro-economic policies as far as possible. This approach might widen the expectation gap even further with Zuma's supporters. Impatience and frustration about a continued "crony capitalism" could contribute to social unrest. With increased desperation, more attacks on foreigners competing for jobs and housing could be expected, as well as us-them gang violence and other crime in order to make a living. In short, the grass-roots people that gave Zuma a decisive victory are also the ones that pose a big threat to the domestic security, as well as to the new president's future popularity and to the ANC's survival.

*Higher stakes and political uncertainty setting off spiral of violence*

The situation of a more dynamic political landscape is a positive development. At the same time, more parties and challengers to the ANC is a fundamental change for South Africa, and as such gives rise to more insecurity about the future. With ANC-defectors being felt as traitors, emotions run high, and the potential for politically motivated violence in the local communities will continue to be prevalent. If the political parties step up their campaigning in each other's traditional strongholds, this can provoke violent response. The increased competition is perceived as threatening, especially as it puts people's access to livelihoods at risk, with their connections to local leaders being challenged. Desperation and humiliation among the losers have already been manifested, with an IFP councillor and IFP supporters killing an ANC member in KwaZulu Natal in the aftermath of the elections. A number of murders, which appear to be politically motivated, also took place in the pre-election period.<sup>113</sup> There is a threat that areas, specifically in KwaZulu Natal, could erupt into turmoil ahead of the 2011 municipal elections as local leaders try to hold on to power.<sup>114</sup> Violence is especially likely in those areas where there was fighting between the ANC and

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<sup>112</sup> News article, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk): 'Zuma's challenges', 25 April 2009.

<sup>113</sup> Five politicians have been killed since January 2009. (News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Violence still blights South African politics', 1 April 2009. News article, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com): 'Ex-speaker's murder political?', 5 January 2009).

<sup>114</sup> News article, [www.thetimes.co.za](http://www.thetimes.co.za): 'Democracy of South Africa comes of age', 28 April 2009.



the IFP in the early 1990s. The emergence of new political contenders, such as Cope, is also likely to lead to additional contestation in those areas where there is a leadership vacuum. This is particularly serious, as research shows that such areas with a high level of political uncertainty are vulnerable to violence.<sup>115</sup> As the lines between political and social violence draw close once the violence is sparked, unrest could spread quickly on a larger scale. The readiness to use violence as a response to frustrations or to push politics, the culture of violence, is a worrying factor in this context. Equally disturbing is the failure of politicians, president Zuma included, to clearly and swiftly reject aggressive statements and acts. The president's characteristics to turn the coat after the wind is a reason for concern in this respect. However, once Zuma is in power, he is not to the same extent dependent on his hard-line youth supporters and he might take steps to alienate them. A consequence of this though could be that these 'politically deserted' and angry, mobilised youth spiral out of Zuma's control, expressing their socio-economic frustrations through a culture of violence in less controlled contexts, or lending their person-cult support elsewhere. At the local level, petty violence has been widely tolerated by politicians. Once hostile behaviour is accepted, there is a risk for these politicians to lose control, with the relation between rivalling groups spiralling further out of control. During recent local taxi violence outbreaks, calls were made to bring in the army to quell the hostilities. With the army being used against the citizens, with resulting casualties<sup>116</sup>, there is a risk for further escalation. The reorientation of the South African army to internal stability could potentially confirm this development. With the new political landscape, stakes have been higher than usual in the past election campaign, which led the opponents to take a more aggressive and radical stance. Setting the norm at this level leaves an infected trace for continued relations at the intergroup and interparty level. The possibility of using dialogue as a means evaporates.

*Authoritarianism and repression in face of popular discontent*

The new political landscape also has potential implications for the stability in terms of governance. The ANC is already threatened by the prospect of a stronger multiparty system and political competition. If the opposition parties continue to grow in the next elections, and the ANC support base would weaken further<sup>117</sup>, there is a risk that the ruling party could take on a more authoritarian

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<sup>115</sup> IOM Report: 'Towards tolerance...', February 2009.

<sup>116</sup> The army shot one person dead during the xenophobic violence in May 2008. News article, [www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za): 'SA army kills man during anti-immigrant unrest', 24 May 2008.

<sup>117</sup> The number of South African born-frees voters are increasing. One possibility is that these voters will be less inclined to give categorical support to the ANC than the previous generations. This implies that the ANC risks weakening its links to the youth generation of South Africa, which would inevitably decrease the future ANC support.

approach to stay in control. The divisions within the party are rife, and the battle for the soul of the ANC is not over with the end of the Mbeki-Zuma struggle. The liberation propagators' view of democracy does not bode well. The norm as for politicising and abusing institutions, including hand-picking loyal individuals, has already been established, and thus, risks being further entrenched if liberation propagators feel threatened. The culture of comrade networking – corruption – within the ANC is already worrying, and an authoritarian development could see the attitude growing that such networking is needed in the name of furthering the revolution and to keep the ANC in power. The weakening of the judiciary institutions, which has been witnessed lately, is particularly serious in this context. An element of additional concern is the new president, who is felt to have less respect for the integrity of state institutions than his predecessors. These governance deficiencies would exacerbate the weak capacities of the institutions. Civil servants preoccupied with avoiding corruption charges lead to inefficiency. As a result, service-delivery could go down further, increasing popular discontent even more. These developments risks triggering social unrest, which could have severe consequences if the ANC government was to shift towards increasingly authoritarian and repressive responses in line with the reasoning above. If recent resort to using the army to handle domestic instability has set the precedence, it could be misused in situations of social unrest. Another scenario would be the use of the - already corrupt - police force to respond to ANC critics in a biased way.

*Increased debate on benefit systems provoking violent reaction*

With the tendency of a rejuvenated political debate, following the emergence of Cope and the strengthening of the DA, the opposition is motivated to continue to enhance public discussion about concerns in society and pursue their political agenda. With such opening up of the political space, there is likely to be an increased debate questioning the patronage system where cronies - and possibly people of the same ethnicity - are being privileged. However, serious political efforts to change these established networks could provoke violent reaction among those people who secure benefits based on the present system. The freedom of expression, but also assembly and association cannot be taken for granted. Disruption of rallies has already occurred on repeated occasions, where political supporters intimidated, hindered and assaulted each other.<sup>118</sup> Local leaders have shown the aptitude of inciting people around bread and butter issues, to play on the widespread us-against-them mentality and to instigate violence.

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<sup>118</sup> Symposium/debate: KwaZulu Natal provincial legislature, 24 February 2009. Interview: Accord, Durban, 24 February 2009. Interview: Cope, Cape Town, 21 February 2009. Interview: The DA, Cape Town, 20 February 2009.

#### 4.2.2 The regional level

As pointed out previously, South Africa is not expected to be withdrawing from Africa. On the other hand, under Zuma, the country does not appear to be a strong and ambitious actor in the same sense as before – less of a hegemony. What consequences will this development have for peace and security in the region?

##### *A decreasing South African engagement for African peace and security*

Regional stability is enhanced by the prevalence of a hegemonic power. This ensures a leadership which will emphasise and underwrite the system that the common security is based on. If not, commitments and agreements which support constructive relations risks watering out. In this report, Zuma's ability and motivation to lead the way forward during a crisis has been assessed as low. Unpopular decisions, which could serve to create conditions for peace in the long run, are not likely to be taken by the new president – especially not in the first part of his presidency. This term coincides with a time period where Zimbabwe's development towards stability is at a tipping point, and where South Africa's and the SADC's readiness to support this process could be crucial. Certain signals also indicate that South Africa's willingness to continue to set the standards when it comes to defending the human rights is questionable. The decay of a previous role model in the region could demotivate other states in the region to pay attention to human rights issues. Furthermore, under Mbeki, South Africa has remained engaged in the post-conflict phase in countries where it assisted with the conflict resolution. This type of support is crucial for these countries, in order for them not to relapse into armed struggle. However, with a less dedicated foreign policy in terms of peace and security, South Africa's engagement in recovering trouble spots risks being one of the priorities to be downscaled. The withdrawal of South African peace-keeping troops will already affect the stability in those countries concerned; fewer troop contributions for other African conflict zones is equally problematic. In the context of cutting down on resources, it also remains to be seen whether South Africa will continue to provide the same amount of financial and moral support to the AU and other African institutions. Furthermore, the same reasoning as above goes for these last points: if South Africa as a perceived leader is decreasing its engagement, this could prompt other African countries to limit their input to a minimum.

##### *Declining international confidence undermines South Africa as a stabilising force*

Another issue is the future international confidence in South Africa. If the domestic situation evolves along some of the negative lines described in the

previous section, the perception of South Africa as a stable country will be damaged. The lack of confidence among investors could contribute to an economic decline, which would also be detrimental for the rest of Africa and have effects on vulnerable security situations throughout the continent. Seeing to the trade dependencies between South Africa and Zimbabwe, the effect on the latter would be extremely destructive during a South African economic regression. This development would have a seriously negative impact on Zimbabwe's attempts to build security. A lack of international confidence would also affect South Africa politically. It would not be given as big weight as previously, something which would further increase the uncertainty about the regional power balance, and step up concerns about the scope for - and agenda of - other actors, such as Angola.

*Growing South African emphasis on south-south relations*

An interesting question is what international audience the new Zuma-government will find most important: Africa, the West, or other southern countries? South Africa under the controversial Zuma is likely to be held in less high regard by western countries than under Mandela and Mbeki. The West's confidence has already been chipped during South Africa's tenure on the UN Security Council and because of its stand on Zimbabwe. Credit to Zuma could be somewhat restored if he was to acknowledge that these issues have been a contentious South African approach. Zuma is indeed likely to be avoiding more international critique and exposure, to turn the negative trend and reporting that he has subsisted. As mentioned previously, the timing is also not good for him to stick his neck out and to increase the West's suspicion about his credibility. As a pragmatic, Zuma will continue to grow the relations with the West. However, the emphasis at the Polokwane conference should not be overlooked: the reinforcement of an anti-imperialism rhetoric, the clear expression of solidarity with liberation movements and the commitment to helping Africa.<sup>119</sup> A few years into Zuma's term, more priority could be given to the South-South relations, especially since the confidence issue might be of less importance among these actors. The changing global context, with multi-polarity and emerging economies building strong links, could prove to be convenient for the ANC stalwarts with a firm liberation mentality. South Africa recently signalled China's importance by denying Dalai Lama entrance visa. For an ANC that does not like seeing its dominance threatened, relations with countries that do not ask questions about democracy and human rights could be a better alternative. If Zuma wishes to strengthen the solidarity-identity in the sub-region, the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist views that linger there could also be of use. If Zuma is to maintain his

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<sup>119</sup> Journal: South African Journal of International Affairs, Sidiropoulos (December 2008): 'South African Foreign Policy...' p.116.

populist approach, there is a risk that he expands on these views and encourages a negative notion about the West, including a racial undertone that might not be desirable. South Africa's interest in maintaining constructive relations with the West will however prevent such an approach from going overboard. The extent of such a scenario is also dependent on how the battle for the soul of the ANC develops; the reformists within the party are even more likely to see the need for balanced western relations. It should also be noted that the Polokwane resolutions on international relations were not contested within the party (the topic was not in focus for the conference). This implies that the foreign policy could still be subjected to future debate. To some extent, the scenario also depends on how successfully the DA's critique against any anti-west notions will be received within South Africa, and on whether Cope will live to criticise.

## 5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has depicted potential risks that arise when combining the new political leadership and the new political landscape with concerns at the community level and for the country's political governance. At the domestic level, it has pointed to the dangers involved with the increasing desperation and the growing expectation gap among the poor population, the threats that the new political uncertainty and the higher stakes entail, the worrying consequences of a developing authoritarianism and the heated reactions that an increased questioning of benefit systems can activate. With these factors and developments interacting, it is argued that South Africa risks becoming increasingly vulnerable to the extent that future internal instability – including areas and periods seeing a breakdown into violence - cannot be disregarded.

The chapter has also discussed how the above developments can affect South Africa's political willingness and capacity for engaging in peace, democracy and security in the region. Risks here involve a decreasing South African engagement on these important issues for Africa, as well as a declining international confidence which could undermine South Africa's role as stabilising force in the region and on the continent. The likelihood of close south-south relations is also pointed to, which the possible consequence of a diminishing South African emphasis of human rights and democracy. This scenario implies that there could be a negative impact on already vulnerable security situations and conflict zones in Africa. In sum, there is a risk that instability in Africa could be intensifying in the years to come.

The risks outlined above should be seen as a worst-case scenario rather than a complete assessment of the real threats against South African internal security. A clear advantage in South Africa is that the risks above are constantly and publicly discussed, and there is a good understanding of the problems that the country and the region face. Intimidation of critical voices has so far been limited, and a free debate on these issues is taking place in the media. In South Africa, the pride of what has been achieved in terms of democratisation is also an important factor. This is a positive preventive force, which ensures that there is political will and resources to deal with the violence. Up until now, it has largely been possible to prevent violent outbreaks from derailing. A common argument is that on the whole, South African institutions are solid enough to resist political pressure. This view is confirmed by the fact that so far, the institutions have fared relatively well. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the risk does not foremost lie in a direct aspiration by Zuma to undermine the institutions, but is rather a more long-term problem with the political leadership's acceptance of letting the public system degrade along these lines. A reason for an optimistic outlook of South Africa is the fact that against tough odds, the country has managed to stay stable. Even if there is a culture of violence, there is no history

of full-scale war to fall back on. In contrast, South Africa in the early 1990's had a unique leadership and people had higher hopes than now. The question is how much more patience the population harbours. Zuma may be able to buy some more patience, using the economic crisis as a justification for not delivering as promptly as promised. Another aspect is that the political contestation could have a positive effect. It could trigger the ANC to work more effectively on the home front, and force the party to give more reformist members space. On the regional peace and security front, arguments can also be found for a less dramatic development than the one depicted above. As pointed out previously, South Africa's relationship with Africa ensures its own stability and prosperity. The solidarity with other African countries also helps South Africa to create and maintain a new identity. These are important reasons for South Africa giving a continued priority for peace and security in the region. Furthermore, Mbeki's rule has left an active foreign policy machine in place, as well as established expectations on South Africa's role in Africa. Breaking with this pattern and steering of from this existing path might not be entirely possible for South Africa. In other words, positive developments are a possible scenario for peace and security issues, both at the domestic and regional level. This possibility, however, does not mean that the potential risks are less real and that they can be neglected.

## Acronyms

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
ANC	African National Congress
APC	African People's Convention
AU	African Union
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
Cope	Congress of the People
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
FF+	Freedom Front +
ID	Independent Democrats
IDP	Internally Displace People
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
JPCC	Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MONUC	United Nations Mission DR Congo
NCP	National Council of Provinces
NDPP	National Director of Public Prosecutions
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
SABC	South African Broadcasting Cooperation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
UDM	United Democratic Movement



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