

IN THIS ISSUE

Published for the past 35 years, this journal has witnessed major social and political changes in Southern Africa, the wider African continent and the rest of the world. The *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* has responded to these shifts by aligning its analyses to capture the challenges facing Southern Africa within an increasingly interlinked and dynamic world. The rationale and context of such adjustments to new realities were assessed in the introductory essay to the last issue (No 1 of 2013), which also presented the 'new face' of this periodical. We shall, of course, maintain continuity by engaging with analyses of socio-political, economic and geostrategic developments that impact on or provide lessons for Southern Africa.

This understanding includes a wider concept of the region and the continual yet varying impact on Southern Africa from elsewhere. We thus welcomed the offer by two renowned scholars from the Nordic countries to act as guest editors of the thematic focus in this issue: the effects of the so-called Arab spring on French speaking Central and West Africa, in particular Mali and Mauritania of the Sahel region. Also, South Africa's military engagement in other parts of the continent has demonstrated that the inter-connectivity of societies and regions has reached new dimensions. As one of the most influential and powerful member states of the African Union, South Africa has resumed responsibility as a continental actor far beyond the Southern African sub-region. It is hence of direct relevance and importance what happens elsewhere on the continent in terms of transitions and conflicts.

Morten Bøås and *Mats Utas* put the research articles they guest edited for this issue into context in a separate introduction. *Nathaniel D Danjibo* presents an overview on the likely implications of the 'Arab Spring' for security issues, peace and development in- and outside of the region. Mali then is at the core of the subsequent contributions as the most directly and fundamentally affected society in the aftermath of the Libyan crisis. *Bruce Whitehouse* offers a fascinating psychological and cultural interpretation of the rituals and symbols of power related to the fight over personified control in the country. *Georg Klute* informs us on the interaction between Tuareg groups in Northern Mali and Niger, whose operations are not limited by borders of states. *Ole Martin Gaasholt* complements the perspectives on this most sensitive arena and brings into further focus local dynamics. *Christian Vium* then alerts us through his explorations into Mauritanian society to the many inter-related linkages, often not

obviously connected but existing in sublimity. We are grateful to the guest editors for preparing and sharing this 'package' of analyses with an audience mainly located further South, allowing greater understanding of a region hitherto largely ignored but deserving our attention.

As the repercussions of the drastic changes in power relations show, mainly in Libya and for the Sahel region, states and societies no longer live in a remote and protected distance away from what happens in a sub-region. The effects are visible also far beyond the direct arena of events. This is documented in a dramatic way through the humanitarian crisis the world watches, more or less idly, with regard to the refugees and so-called illegal migrants risking their lives in an attempt to reach the shores of Italy and other European countries bordering to the Mediterranean Sea. The horror footage of civilians drowning on an almost daily basis shows the sheer desperation of people in need. But the impact is not only northbound. Events in this part of the continent also affect other parts. The journal trusts that its readers will appreciate that we decided to provide space for nuanced and informed analyses, allowing us to get a better conceptual grasp of the dynamics unfolding.

We have added to this topical regional focus, on which the Research Articles concentrate, a general overview in our Analyses and Reports section on peacekeeping in Africa by *Oluwaseun Bamidele*. He presents within a general perspective the trends and dimensions of such interventions. We then follow up on the developments in Zimbabwe (discussed in the last issue by two articles published ahead of the elections on the regional dimension and the situation after the referendum) with a detailed account on the elections and their results by *Roger Southall*. This underlines our ambition to cover current affairs by means of solid and analytical reports. For similar reasons, we have this time also added a Comment by *Chris Saunders*, who critically observes the role South Africa plays in the continent as a military, interventionist power, seeking to promote security in conflict zones. Again we conclude this issue with book reviews on relevant literature and trust that our readers appreciate these as sources of information.

With this issue we have mastered the production challenges of a new format for a first year. We hope that we have managed to convince you as our readers that we deserve your attention also in the future.

Henning Melber
Editor-in-chief