

## IN THIS ISSUE

South African Finance Ministers (notably in the plural, given the events since December 2015) face multiple challenges. They deal not only with an economy in stagnation through an austerity policy as recently presented by Pravin Gordhan in his Medium Term Budget in late October, but also with the sobering results of the limited socio-economic transformation since the end of *apartheid*. The contradictions prevailing since then are reflected not least in the devastating crisis sweeping across South African universities. As if that is not enough, a Finance Minister concerned about good governance is also waging an uphill battle to reduce damage by trying to protect the state and its assets from further capture by predatory elites. Considering all of this, it is not surprising that a critical analysis of what is termed *economic freedom*, an interpretation of the meaning and its consequences, is a fitting contribution to the *Strategic Review*. *Joleen Steyn Kotze* presents such an examination in the first article of this issue. Her reflections compare and juxtapose the different notions and ideologies of economic freedom and the effects these may have if turned into policy. This invites further debate regarding the transformation of South African society, which inherited one of the most grossly unequal societies in our world, a condition yet to be markedly reduced.

Debates are also required about other aspects that are relevant for a journal focused on regional strategic issues. These include not least the notion of *human security* and the role of the military. *Thuso Benton Mongwaketse* relates directly with his contribution, to a subject raised in recent issues.<sup>1)</sup> By concluding that "security and human security in particular, is fundamentally about responsiveness, accountability, and transparency in governance", he more than indirectly links the discourse on the role of a national defence force to the socio-economic dimensions dealt with in the first article.

South Africa's active role in the continent's *peace and security* architecture and the centrality of Africa to its foreign policy is at the core of the analysis presented by *Faith Mabera*. She identifies gaps in linking peace-building efforts and a developmental agenda and partnership and argues for "greater coherence among diplomatic, defence and development cooperation stakeholders". From a different perspective, these suggestions again remind us that the role of the military might be

more constructive and effective when engaging in civilian affairs than in warfare.

*China's role* and impact on societies on the continent has also been the subject of previous issues.<sup>2)</sup> The notion of the developmental state is re-examined by *Job Shipululo Amupanda* from a perspective of potential lessons for Namibia as a case study. He alerts us to the inherent ambiguities of the developmental state, since it presents very different options for a state promoting development: does such development benefit the vast majority of ordinary citizens or a small rent-seeking elite? Once again, if only implicitly, this links up with the notion of economic freedom and its different interpretations, as the core subject of this issue's first article.

The focus on China's role in Africa is also of concern for *Chien-Kai Chen*, who presents a summary overview on the conflicting results and interpretations as regards China's impact as an emerging major player in Africa since the turn of the century. As he points out, a sweeping generalisation does injustice to the different Chinese interests and agencies, which pursue at times very different agendas if one looks at official foreign policy on the one hand and private economic interests on the other. The expansionist course of private Chinese investors and its effects present one of the big challenges, also for the Chinese government which has to deal with the variety of interests and practices representing and shaping the image of China locally.

Last but not least, the review essay by *Dirk Kohnert* completes this continued engagement with the new power operating currently in most African countries. His special focus is on the physical dimension and impact of Chinese migrant entrepreneurs and their interaction with local counterparts, an important next step in de-constructing the all too general (and generalised) debate to gain new insights based on empirically rooted case studies. The four books under review are a step towards closing the gap.

This issue again continues to offer profound reflections through essays that offer deep thoughts on relevant issues. *Carlos Lopes* examines *Pan-Africanism* as understood and promoted by Thabo Mbeki. He thereby adds a more nuanced perspective to a wide range of contributions recently published in an edited volume bordering on iconography.<sup>3)</sup> Stressing Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance links implicitly to the current debate over South Africa's (and other African states') intention to withdraw from the International Criminal Court

(ICC).

It remains a contested issue whether such a move strengthens the role of Africa both in the world and the responsibility to protect citizens in African countries from war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Pan Africanism should certainly not translate into less humanity and an erosion of human rights. It is a legitimate matter to resist the hegemony of the powerful states in the world as represented by the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council (of which four are directly involved in a warfare which would merit investigations by the ICC if they only had ratified the Rome Statutes and would thereby be subject to the Court's jurisdiction). But this should not come at the price of abandoning the moral high ground. This might be a necessary debate in some of the next issues.

Finally, and somewhat related to more general thoughts on how humanity finds adequate expressions between cultural relativism and universal values, or rather between the nation and the world, *Colin Chasi* engages somewhat philosophically with the movie "Man on Ground" by Akin Omotoso that connects the lines between *xenophobia*, disruption and *nation*. As he summarises: "Going beyond nativism and xenophobia, this synthesis speaks of the need and possibility to craft common human ground that enables people to become the most they can be".

It is the intention of this journal to offer thoughts and reflections which are indeed at times able to promote and initiate further exchanges motivated by the goal of contributing to a world with less discrimination, less violence and more human dignity. For such discourses we need fresh voices too. It is therefore with some degree of satisfaction to notice that once again the contributors to this issue represent a variety of younger and more senior scholars and a high degree of truly African ownership. In times where the internationalisation of knowledge still reflects mainly a dominance of the global North, we are confident that we can contribute to the much-needed diversification and counter-hegemonic efforts required for meaningful scholarly exchanges and a cross fertilisation stimulating the search for common values and their translation into best practices.

For the past four years, as from Vol 35, No 1, this journal has been fully *open access*. All its contributions can be downloaded from the website of the University of Pretoria's Department of Political Sciences.<sup>4)</sup> We are proud to have been at the forefront of journals that

seek to challenge the neoliberal dictum of commercialised and highly hegemonic knowledge production and dissemination as concentrated in the hands of a few publishing houses. This business practice not only limits access but also reinforces the asymmetric North-South dichotomy. It strengthens the haves further at the expense of the have-nots. We concur that "equal access to knowledge and the equal production of knowledge are jeopardised when knowledge is privatised and commodified" as stated in the editorial of the first open access issue of another local journal.<sup>5)</sup> We confidently trust that this is appreciated by both our authors as well as readers and hope that these will benefit from what follows in this and future issues.

**Henning Melber**  
**Editor-in-chief**

## **Endnotes**

1. Most notably Abel Esterhuyse, "Human security and the conceptualisation of South African defence: Time for a reappraisal", Vol 38, No 1, May 2016; and Sandy Africa, "Human security in South Africa", Vol 37, No 1; but also some of the other contributions to this guest edited special issue on "Human security, peace and conflict: African perspectives".
2. See Theo Neethling, "China's international peacekeeping contributions and the evolution of contemporary Chinese strategic considerations", Vol 37, No 2; and the special focus on China and Africa in Vol 38, No 1, with the articles by Carlos Lopes ("Reinserting African agency into Sino-African relations") and Khwezi Mabasa and Zukiswa Mqolomba ("Revisiting China's developmental state: Lessons for Africa").
3. Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu and Miranda Strydom (eds), *The Thabo Mbeki I Knew*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2016.
4. <http://www.universityofpretoria.co.za/en/political-sciences/article/19718/strategic-review-for-southern-africa>.
5. Dirk Postma, "Open access and epistemic equality", *Education as Change*, Vol 20, No 2, 2016, p 2.