

Ecologies of Change

Ecological and agricultural change, technological changes, economic policy, gender transitions and the dynamics of a developmental state including accountable intelligence services, people-oriented foreign policy implementation are among subjects that are in this journal edition. These are subjects that have long been in mega discussions about strategic political dynamics of southern Africa and Africa. They are about thinking afresh on questions that have a bearing on the lives of the 450 million people of the region. These are discussions that focus us on the age-old pursuit of a state that responds to human needs. These issues cannot be addressed without research that seeks to clarify what these needs are and what this desired state might be, research that reflects on what work has been done in these directions.

In this edition, the authors also thus contribute to the much-needed expansion of what strategic studies in Africa would entail, that it would imply much more than an outgrowth of military or war studies as it unfortunately has been in Eurocentrism. The expanded purview of strategic studies concerns us with human interests, social welfare, environmental justice and technological innovation for human good as much as it focuses on questions of hard power, security and the state.

Elias Phaahla looks at how the relationship between a thriving competitive party politics and an advancing developmental state project has played out in the island state of Mauritius, showing how the party system is geared towards social causes linked to development needs of the country. Botswana's success in balancing multiparty democracy with the pursuit of socio-economic development is also at the centre of Mabutho Shangase's discussion of how to upscale regional economic integration pivoting on the Southern African Customs Union on the basis of a holistic macro-economic convergence across the region. The instruments of public policy that have people's interests at heart are critical in this regard. The subject of a developmental state as the basis of a developmental regional integration envisioned in the SADC RISDP is that requires case studies of the nature presented in these two articles.

Malawi's pursuit of agricultural development and food security in the context of ecological change is the subject of Bryson Nkhoma's historiographical essay. It shows how historical analysis has evolved from modernist to developmentalist, providing insights into how colonisation disrupted indigenous patterns of food production in ways that outlasted colonial rule. It also shows that current efforts may fail if they are not sufficiently comprehensive and strategic to reverse this curse of Berlin on Africa's food situation.

For Odidile Ayodele, information infrastructures constitute a strategic pathway to 'governmentality' where information and communications technology infrastructures evolve into infrastructural power that connects biopolitics and technopolitics. For this reason, infrastructural power is proposed as a conduit for de-peripheralising Africa in the world experiencing development-enhancing digital revolutions. Thus, she redefines and re-presents the idea of conduit power in ways that illuminate implications – challenges and prospects- of digital transformations for Africa

Very strategic also for the region is the assessment of gender policies as instruments of empowerment and transformation rather than mere window-dressing. Amupanda and Thomas critically analyse the 50-50 gender policy of the governing SWAPO in Namibia on the basis of

data from parliament in order to understand the value derived in this regard. They argue that SWAPO has promised more than it has delivered simply. Of course, true gender transformation require more fundamental transformation of politics as a practice and art.

Lona Gqiza and Olusola Ogunnubi provide a critical historical analysis of continuities and changes in the manner in which the ANC-led governments have implemented South Africa's foreign policy. This show greater amount of continuity than change although the geopolitical environment regionally and internationally has been evolving in ways that require careful navigation of established priorities, principles and practices. Still on South Africa, Sandy Africa provides a wide-ranging and engaging analysis of the state of accountability systems and mechanisms on intelligence services in South Africa in the face of major debate about accountability gaps in the SA state system.

Taken together, these articles provide food for thought in relation to expanded conceptions of strategic studies, enabling us to ask new questions about what are challenges and prospects underpinning strategic dynamics in Africa and southern Africa. This should stimulate research and discussions on such issues as digital transitions, ecological justice, risk analyses, and institutional effectiveness in the region and beyond. The hope is that this edition will stimulate further research into the region we want, an Africa Africans desire.

We invite retorts, responses, rejoinders and debate articles designed to engage with some of the articles in this edition.

I take this opportunity to report that there has been growth of the editorial board over the past year as reflected in the first page of this journal. We welcome new members representing a blend of experience and youthful energy as well as a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. We thank the associate editor, Prof Everisto Benyera, and book review editor, Prof Kgothatso Shai, for their dedicated service.

Siphamandla Zondi

Editor-in-Chief

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