



STRATEGIC REVIEW

FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Vol 47 No. 2 2025

ISSN 1013-1108

Published by



Strategic Review for Southern Africa

Editorial Group

- Victoria Graham, University of Pretoria
- Christopher Isike, University of Pretoria
- Henning Melber, Nordic Africa Institute and University of Pretoria (Co-Managing Editor)
- Patience Mususa, Nordic Africa Institute
- Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, University of Pretoria
- Heather A. Thuynsma, University of Pretoria (Co-Managing Editor)

International Advisory Board

Kwesi Aning, Ghana	Martin Rupiya, Zimbabwe
Andre du Pisani, Namibia	Kataboro Miti, Tanzania
Monica Juma, Kenya	Jan Mutton, Belgium
Carlos Lopes, Bissau-Guinea/ Ethiopia	Gladys Mokhawa, Botswana
Maxi Schoeman, South Africa	Paulo Faria, Angola
Cyril Obi, Nigeria/US	Alois Mlambo, Zimbabwe
Funmi Olonisakin, Nigeria	Bizeck Phiri, Zambia
Eugenio Njoloma, Malawi	Dimpho Motsamai-Deleglise, France
Teboho Lebakeng, South Africa	Chambi Chachage, Tanzania
Mafa Sejanamane, Lesotho	Cyril Musila, Democratic Republic of Congo

Journal Manager

Dominique Wnuczek-Lobaczewski

Layout

Media Chef

Aims and Scope

The Strategic Review for Southern Africa is an accredited on-access journal listed in the IBSS index. It has since 1978 been a platform for strategic and political analyses of themes and socio-political developments that impact on or provide lessons for Southern Africa. As a multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary journal, the Strategic Review facilitates vigorous and enlightened debate among scholars, policy makers, practitioners, students and activists in order to contribute to the wider global discourse on changing strategic and political dynamics within and beyond nation states.

The journal publishes two regular issues a year (May/June and November/December) with a possibility of one additional guest special issue per year as need justifies, subject to editorial group approval. Issues are available mainly as an open access online platform licensed under creative commons. Printed copies can be ordered. All submissions are subject to double-blind peer review by at least two appropriately qualified reviewers.

The Strategic Review invites submissions sent electronically to:

https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/strategic_review/about/submissions conforming to author's guide.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.



Contents

Editorial	6
Henning Melber and Heather Thuynsma	
Eulogy for Prof Maxi Schoeman	8
Daniela Marggraff	
Articles	
South Africa's Foreign Policy since the End of Apartheid: Continuities and Discontinuities	10
Arrigo Pallotti	
Prayers, Politics, and Peace: the Role of Religious Institutions in Conflict Onset and Prevention in Mozambique and Tanzania	28
Stephen Buchanan-Clarke	
Revisiting French Influence in Francophone Africa: A Case of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	41
Gallous Atabongwoung and Mosa Nkoko	
Beyond Liberation Hegemony: Electoral Realignments and the Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in Southern Africa	53
Octavious Chido Masunda	
A Mission of Transformation: The ANC's Historical Project Turned One-Party Demise	66
Andrea Francke and Nicola de Jager	
Beyond Neoliberal Paradigms: Integrating Ubuntu and Sam Moyo's Political Thought in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Policy	79
Thabiso Jeremiah Musendame and Emmanuel Matambo	
Reports	
The Cost Ineffectiveness of Armed Conflicts in Africa, 2000-2025	92
Geoff Harris and Mosa Nkoko	
Media coverage of sidelined voices (youth, women, and persons with disabilities): Magnifying the political environment during Namibia's 2024 elections	101
Dennis Uatuuapi Zaire and Filippus Edwardu	

Editorial

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v47i2.6986>

This edition of the Strategic Review for Southern Africa (SRSA) arrives with both scholarly contributions and profound loss. We begin by acknowledging the sudden passing of Professor Maxi Schoeman. She played a decisive role in transforming this journal and served as an active, distinguished member of our International Advisory Board, both of which formed part of her unwavering commitment to building a new South Africa. As a scholar whose influence extended far beyond the pages of this journal, she was honoured and recognised on the occasion of her 65th birthday with a *Festschrift*.¹ On that occasion, Ambassador Kingsley Makhubela observed: ‘There are many of us who have crossed Maxi’s path, in various ways over the years, who have been influenced in one way or another by her person, warmth, intellect and political insights’. In what was to be her final contribution to the SRSA, Professor Schoeman edited a special issue on the Ocean Regions Programme earlier this year. Her scholarly legacy, characterised by intellectual rigour, analytical depth and an unwavering dedication to asking uncomfortable questions, shaped the academic discourse on African security, foreign policy and international relations. Her absence is palpable as you will see in the eulogy that was delivered by her last doctoral student, Daniela Marggraff, at her memorial service in September 2025.

Professor Schoeman’s influence endures in the questions this journal continues to ask about Africa’s place in a complex and evolving world order. The contributions assembled in this volume continue to reflect these foundations and probe the strategic challenges that confront the African continent and its engagement within a period of unique global dynamics. At a moment of significant political transitions, institutional pressures and evolving security threats, the articles featured in this issue offer critical analyses of democratic processes, foreign policy trajectories, conflict dynamics and the role institutions play in shaping peace, stability and governance across Southern Africa and beyond.

Arrigo Pallotti, for instance, provides a comprehensive examination of South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy, tracing continuities and discontinuities across the administrations of Mandela, Mbeki, Zuma and Ramaphosa. His analysis situates South African diplomacy within evolving global power dynamics, regional integration efforts and domestic imperatives, revealing tensions between economic pragmatism, solidarity with the Global South and the pursuit of African Renaissance ideals. The article examines how South Africa’s international positioning reflects both enduring strategic objectives and the constraints imposed by shifting geopolitical alignments.

Stephen Buchanan-Clarke’s article explores the complex role of religious institutions in conflict prevention and community security within Mozambique and Tanzania. The study demonstrates how formal and informal religious structures can either mitigate or exacerbate conditions conducive to violent extremism. His comparative analysis underscores the importance of understanding local religious dynamics and institutional resilience in designing effective counter-terrorism strategies that respect rights and promote social cohesion rather than relying solely on militarised responses.

Gallous Atabongwoung and Mosa Nkoko examine the declining French influence in Francophone Africa, focusing on Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Their analysis reveals how anti-French sentiment, catalysed by France’s failure to address jihadist insurgencies and compounded by corruption scandals and economic dependencies, contributed to the recent wave of military coups in the Sahel. The study highlights how the decline of French influence has created room for alternative security partnerships, notably with Russia’s Wagner Group, fundamentally reshaping regional security dynamics and challenging traditional post-colonial power arrangements in Africa.

In their report, Geoff Harris and Mosa Nkoko offer a sobering assessment of armed conflicts across Africa between 2000 and 2025, evaluating their cost-effectiveness through a systematic analysis of human, economic and social costs. Their findings reveal that military approaches have consistently delivered extraordinarily high costs with minimal effectiveness, which should prompt an urgent rethink of alternative peacebuilding strategies and institutional mechanisms, including potential ministries of peacebuilding, that might achieve security objectives through non-violent means.

The issue also covers the quirks of democratic transitions and political representation, especially for liberation parties that have sustained their dominance. Octavious Masunda, for example, provides a comparative analysis of electoral realignments following the decline of liberation movements in Southern Africa, examining the ANC, ZANU-PF, SWAPO and FRELIMO. The research identifies two divergent pathways: democratic renewal in South Africa and Namibia, where electoral decline has fostered greater pluralism and coalition politics, versus authoritarian resilience in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, where ruling parties have maintained power through coercion and institutional manipulation. Masunda argues that the erosion of “liberation legitimacy” stems from corruption, socio-economic crises and

generational shifts, with younger “born-free” voters prioritising contemporary governance issues over historical liberation narratives. The study demonstrates that the implications for democratic consolidation are shaped by institutional strength and opposition coherence. Andrea Francke and Nicola de Jager continue this exploration by tracing South Africa’s African National Congress’s trajectory from liberation movement to governing party. They analyse how the party’s historical mission of transformation has encountered the structural constraints and internal contradictions that accompany prolonged political dominance. Their article contributes to ongoing debates about the sustainability of dominant-party systems and the conditions under which transformative political projects either consolidate democratic governance or contribute to institutional decay and public disillusionment.

Picking up from this analysis, Dennis Uatuupi Zaire and Filippus Edwardu’s report examines Namibia’s 2024 elections through the lens of media coverage. They highlight how newspapers addressed, or failed to address, the concerns of marginalised constituencies including the youth, women and persons with disabilities. And their analysis reveals how media narratives privilege dominant political parties and elite actors while sidelining the voices of those whose material conditions and political agency are central to democratic legitimacy. Like Francke and de Jager’s article, this report raises fundamental questions about inclusive representation in electoral processes.

Finally, Thabiso Jeremiah Musendame and Emmanuel Matambo challenge dominant neoliberal paradigms in land reform policy by proposing a humanistic framework grounded in Sam Moyo’s political thought and African epistemologies such as Ubuntu. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of Zimbabwean stakeholders, their study reveals critical tensions between policy intentions and lived experiences in Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform Programme, exposing elite capture, gender and youth marginalisation, disconnection from spiritual and cultural dimensions of land and inadequate institutional support. Their framework reconceptualises land as intrinsically linked to human dignity, justice and communal identity offering a normative roadmap for reimagining land reform that addresses both material redistribution and the restoration of humanity severed by colonial dispossession.

These articles delve into several interconnected themes that define Africa’s contemporary strategic environment. These analyses resonate with the scholarly commitments that Professor Schoeman championed throughout her career: rigorous engagement with empirical realities, critical examination of power dynamics, attention to African agency in global politics and the recognition that scholarship carries an obligation to contribute to a more just, peaceful and democratic future. As Southern Africa confronts an uncertain political landscape marked by economic constraints, governance challenges and shifting international alignments, the work of understanding these dynamics with clarity, nuance and intellectual honesty becomes ever more essential.

We invite readers to engage critically with these contributions, to consider their implications for policy and practice, and to recognise that the pursuit of strategic understanding is inseparable from the broader project of building more equitable and sustainable political orders across the continent. In this spirit, and in memory of Professor Schoeman’s dedication to engaged scholarship, we present Volume 47, Issue 2.

Henning Melber and Heather Thuynsma

Managing Editors

¹ *The undiscovered country. Essays in honour of Maxi Schoeman*. Edited by Vasu Reddy and Heather Thuynsma. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies 2019.