



**South Africa:
20th Anniversary of Freedom and the
General Elections of 2014
Overview of the Economic and Political State**

Synthesis

**Friday 22 November, 2013
9:00 am – 1:30 pm**



This synthesis was prepared by Ifri Team and does not commit the speakers.

This conference is jointly organized by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the French Institute in South Africa (IFAS), and the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri). It is part of the South Africa - France Seasons 2012 & 2013, www.france-southafrica.com.

Introduction

Dominique David, Vice-President, Ifri

Dolana Msimang, Ambassador of South Africa in France

Véronique Vouland-Aneini, Deputy Director for Africa and Indian Ocean, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Laurent Clavel, General Commissioners of the South Africa – France Season 2013



Dominique David introduced the conference reminding the audience how South African transition twenty years ago, leaving behind a bipolar system, is **still considered a model** today. At the time, it made the international community dream of a world of peace and negotiations, governed by the United Nations. The disillusion came soon and a totally **new architecture of international relations** emerged, built both by old and new actors. **South Africa is playing a key role** in this new architecture, both for Africa and for the world.



Her Excellency **Dolana Msimang** recalls that **many achievements** were realized since April 27, 1994, among which the Truth and Reconciliation process, painful but necessary, the building of democratic institutions and South Africa's insertion into the world. **Symbols** of the new democracy were adopted, a flag and an anthem embracing both the diversity and unity of South Africa. However, **challenges remain**, as the legacy of apartheid is still hard to overcome, in terms of education, housing, health, security, inequalities and poverty. Despite strong efforts to manage the economic and financial policy, the **international crisis worsened the situation**. Large investments still need to be done in rural areas and to restructure the economy; they can build upon the transportation, telecommunication and banking sectors as solid bases. After many years of isolation, South Africa joined the international community. The **organization of the 2010 Soccer World Cup** was in this regard a success, and the country met all the world expectations. Military and diplomatic interventions promoting the resolution of conflicts are based on the idea that the **country's faith is bound with the African one**. South Africa relations with France are ancient and have strengthened steadily along the years. The past two years and the South Africa

Seasons in France have in this regard truly provided a platform of exchanges and put South Africa on the center stage.



Véronique Vouland-Aneini

underscores that the President François Hollande's visit in South Africa opens a new phase in their bilateral relations, building upon a long partnership begun with Nelson Mandela and François Mitterrand. In many areas (military, cultural, political and economical), **South Africa is emerging as a strong power**, both on the African stage and at multilateral levels (involvement in the BRICS, G20 and Security Council), positioning itself as a possible bridge between the North and the South on global issues such as climate change or the gay rights. **Many challenges still lie ahead**, especially on social issues such as unemployment and inequalities, direct consequences of a heavy past. France sees South Africa as a strong emerging partner that **still needs support**. The French Development Agency (Afd) thus invested in the country 1.5 billion € over the last five years, mainly in capacity-building and training projects. South Africa is to play a decisive part in the coming *Sommet de l'Elysee pour la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique* (6-7 December 2013).



Laurent Clavel underlines that the idea of the South Africa France Seasons 2012 – 2013 was launched **at the highest political level** by both Presidents. Last year, South Africa

hosted a French Season, and in 2013 France organized in turn many events related to its South African partner. This season was extremely successful, with **50 French cities** organizing related events. There was a real **need to better know and understand South African** current challenges, aesthetics, social situation, etc. We can rely on South Africa's new ideas to help us shape a new world.

Roundtable I: State of the Nation: Economy, Politics and Society

Chair: **Jens-Christian Høj**, Senior Economist on South Africa, Economics Department, OECD, Paris

Speeches : ***The State of the African National Congress***

Anthony Butler, Professor at the Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town

The Tripartite Alliance under trade union pressure

Raphaël Botiveau, University of Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne, Paris

The South African economy during 20 years of democracy

Seeraj Mohamed, Director of Corporate Strategy and Industrial Development and Senior Lecturer, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



According to **Anthony Butler**, a lot of pressure is put on the ANC by the difficult economic and social situation in South Africa. But the ruling party is also facing four internal challenges.

First, **money is playing a way too important role in the country politics**; the pursuit of political office within the ANC is a way to control resources, which in turn enable to secure office. The obscure financing of the ANC through private donations is another aspect of this unhealthy link between money and politics. Secondly, the ANC is an “umbrella organization”, encompassing almost all the classes of the society; this situation integrates **social conflicts within the ANC** and represent a threat for its coherence on the medium term. Thirdly, certain **confusion in the state decision-making**, and in particular around economic policies, makes it unclear for voters what direction the ANC is taking on the long term. Finally, even though global membership to the ANC has grown and is likely to reach 2 million in the coming years, **the composition of these members is not solid**, in terms of competing provinces of origin, voters’ political maturity and commitment to the ANC founding values, etc. Nevertheless, **the ANC’s electoral prospects are rather good**, due among others to the lack of a strong opposition, the party’s capacity to “buy votes” and to present well-structured branches in every corner of the country. Moreover, Zuma is a fantastic campaigner and will make sure to put forward its religious positions and respect to traditions to maintain his position. The local elections in three years may represent a bigger challenge than these General Elections.



Raphaël Botiveau started from the **strike wave in the mining sector** in 2012 and the massacre of 34 strikers in Marikana to describe the state of trade unions in South Africa. The **Congress of South Africa Trade Union (COSATU)** is the main federation of unions and belongs to the Tripartite Alliance along with the ANC and the communist party. The **National Union of Mine workers (NUM)** used to be its largest member but faces a sharp decline, conceding the first rank to the **National Union of Metal Workers in South Africa (NUMSA**, around 300 000 members). However, NUM is still strong in terms of quality (as three ruling Secretary General of the ANC came from its ranks) and financial stability. A more recent and more militant trade union rose and organized the 2012 strikes: the **Association of Mine workers and Construction Union (AMCU**, around 150 000 members). Although the AMCU labels itself as apolitical and dedicated to the workplace, it is in a process of institutionalization and has to participate in the formal system of negotiation it rejected during the mobilization movements. The strikers indeed had two main demands: an increase in wages and the rejection of NUM intermediation between workers and management. The strike mostly touched the platinum sector (South Africa has around 90% of the world reserves) and spread to the gold sector. On the political level, **the transformation of the mining sector is a recurring debate** and was part of Zuma’s campaign promises, but it still fails to be translated politically and on the ground, leading to a general dissatisfaction with the ANC. Within the COSATU itself, divisions crystallize on the opposition between its **President Sdumo Dlamini**, supported by the NUM and the communist party (SACP), and the **General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi**, supported by

NUMSA. A future split of the COSATU is likely and the current crisis will certainly have long term consequences for South Africa mining sector and ruling power.



Seeraj Mohamed portrayed South Africa economic situation during the apartheid, underlying the high levels of unemployment, inequality and poverty. Based on the colonial model, [the state was playing a central role](#) in the domestic economy, even after the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. In the 1980s, the apartheid government's isolation and the changing international environment led to the [progressive adoption of a more neo-liberal economic programme](#), through financial liberalization, policies dedicated to fight inflation, privatization and outsourcing of public services. In the 1990s, the ANC continued this economic

approach, along with the black empowerment ideology, which mostly benefited to a newly formed elite. Some had expected that the ANC would adopt more developmentalist and social policies but neo-liberalism was the path chosen to face recurrent economic crises and achieve a so-called macroeconomic relative stability. Since the 1990s, [social progress was clearly made](#), in the fields of education or access to water and electricity for example. But [racial and geographic inequalities are still extremely high](#), as well as poverty. Today, the large domestic corporations are internationalized. Household's consumption rely mainly on credit, even if their savings are higher and higher. The [tertiary sector exploded](#), while primary and secondary sectors shares of employment fell sharply.

Roundtable II: South Africa on the International Scene, New Horizons?

Chair: **Hélène Quénot-Suarez, Research Fellow, Ifri, Paris**

Speeches: [The South African foreign diplomacy evolution over the past 25 years](#)
Thomas Wheeler, former Ambassador of South Africa (1961-2003), Research Associate, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg

[South Africa and the African Agenda as a centre-piece of its foreign policy](#)
Alfredo Tjiurimo Hengari, Head of the South African Foreign Policy and African Drivers Programme, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg

[The role of South Africa in conflict management in Africa](#)
Thierry Vircoulon, Associate Research Fellow, Ifri, Paris



Thomas Wheeler portrayed the evolution of South Africa foreign diplomacy since the end of the apartheid. In the 1980s, South Africa [was in great isolation](#) and its financial situation was critical. After the release of Mandela and legalization of the ANC in 1990, bilateral relations started with many countries, such as Russia, Turkey and Thailand. De Klerk President also launched a serious program to [dismantle South Africa nuclear weapons](#). After Mandela's election, de Klerk remained involved in the shaping of foreign policy, along [the lines established by Mandela \(human rights, democracy, equity and sustainable development\)](#). After 1999, Mbeki became a "foreign policy president", with little interest given

to domestic issues. He put a particular emphasis on the concept of African Renaissance, supporting the transformation of the OAU into African Union, the creation of the NEPAD, and worked to establish South-South cooperation. [Zuma's foreign policy, from 2009 on, is rather "care and maintenance"](#) of Mbeki's inheritance; he leans a lot on his administration, as well as think-tanks and NGOs to assist the shaping of the policies. One of Zuma's greatest successes was the integration of South Africa to the [BRICS](#). In 2007-2009 and then 2011-2012, South Africa occupied a non permanent seat at the Security Council, for the first time since 1945. The country has been very involved in [multilateral process and interventions](#) of all kinds, from climate international negotiations to peace-keeping

missions. In conclusion, in 20 years of democracy, South Africa has shifted from a pariah state to a leader of the African and developing world.



Alfredo Tjiurimo emphasized that three phases shaped the identity of post-apartheid South Africa foreign policy on the African continent. First as from 1992, Mandela focused its external relations on **democracy and human rights promotion**, based on his personal experience of apartheid. This position met resistances on the continent, some African leaders condemning its hegemonic and dogmatic tendency. After 1992, Mbeki promoted a **“multilateralisation of these norms”**, incorporating them within **a broader continental vision**, which translated in the creation of the African Union and of the NEPAD. Finally, Zuma’s positions on the continent are **less ideological** and more pragmatic. They still have to deal with an **internal tension** between a very liberal view of foreign diplomacy (based on human rights and democracy) and an anti-colonial position. This paradox forces South Africa to take positions that sometimes contradict its own values, like in the Cote d’Ivoire case. Today, South Africa has become a respected country in international affairs that participates in many multilateral initiatives and **can play a prominent role** on the African continent.



Thierry Vircoulon underscored that South Africa has been **very implicated in conflict management on the African continent**. The South African relatively peaceful transition was seen as a great **“exceptionalism”** in a very unstable continent. Moreover, the country based its external diplomacy on principles such as human rights and panafricanism, justifying with them its necessity to intervene. **South Africa is today present in almost all tension areas on the continent** (Erythrea, Madagascar, DRC, and so on), whether in diplomatic negotiations, peace-keeping efforts or military troops. South Africa is also chairing the Kimberley process to solve the blood diamond issue. It never acts alone but **rely on multilateral missions** (DRC, Darfur...). This positioning shows today some limits. The **country military capacities are over-stretched** and it is now impossible for them to contribute to additional peace-keeping missions abroad. In Central African Republic, the loss of 30 South African soldiers was a cold shower for the authorities and the public opinion. Overall, South Africa has often **more position than policy**, meaning its external policy is largely based on Mandela’s on the ANC legacy and ideas. In many cases, the decision to intervene was taken at the highest level, even when members of the government were reluctant. 2013 is a symbolic year as South Africa participated in one successful mission (DRC) and one failure (CAR).

Watch the videos of these interventions on our DailyMotion channel:

<http://www.dailymotion.com/lfri-podcast>

