



FIRST SCENARIO

WALK APART

This is a scenario of “*musical chairs*” or “*reshuffled elites*”. It is triggered by the failure of leaders across all sectors to deal with our critical challenges. This failure is the result of political factionalism and weak unaccountable leadership, weak capacity in government departments, and tightening economic constraints that are not dealt with realistically or inclusively. Civil society increasingly disengages as public trust in public institutions diminishes. The state is increasingly bypassed by citizens, resulting in unaccountable groupings assuming power over parts of society. The gap between the leaders and the led widens. Citizens eventually lose patience and erupt into protest and unrest. The government, driven by its inability to meet citizens’ demands and expectations, responds brutally, and a spiral of resistance and repression is unleashed. Decay and disintegration set in.

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW ARE THE SAME: 2009 – 2011

After the 2009 elections, the government attempts to address the country's critical challenges but it struggles to find the managerial and technical capacity to deliver on its election promises. Leadership of the government changes, but it continues to ignore available expertise in civil society and in the private sector. The ruling party is challenged by the split in the party in 2008 and the exodus of cadres to a rival party in 2009. Unsure of itself, the party "purchases" political loyalty through the promise of jobs or patronage. This cripples already weak capacity.

The economy is under strain as the impact of the global crisis begins to manifest more strongly in South Africa. Government, business and labour develop an economic stimulus package, a "crisis pact", which attempts to alleviate some of the worst effects of the crisis. More generally, however, the relationships between the three continue to be plagued by trust deficits. The Presidential Working Groups and a beefed up Nedlac create the illusion of engagement, but the real deals get struck between alliance leaders of the ruling party.

The new government, confident after its electoral victory, announces the implementation of its election promise to create jobs and alleviate poverty. But new jobs are hard to create without new investment, so by early 2010, in the Budget, the government expands the Public Works Programme to create jobs in home-based care, construction and roads projects.

However, municipalities and provincial government are unable to spend their budgets effectively. In healthcare, the local health authorities which manage the programmes are unable to allocate the home-based care projects equitably through their areas. In construction, the tenders are awarded to companies with political connections but with little experience in mass housing construction; the projects are slow to get off the ground and the very poor remain without the work that was promised to them in the elections.

At the end of 2010, the government feels buoyed by a successful World Cup, but the relief is short-lived. The ongoing economic crisis diminishes government revenues further as tax returns continue to decline in 2011. There are also signs that, in spite of the huge allocation to the Public Works Programme, these funds are not yielding value for money. Certainly, the programmes are not denting the high unemployment rate. The infrastructure projects funded by the Public Works Programmes have not met completion targets. In a bid to ameliorate the effects of poverty – and consequent social unrest – government promises to increase welfare grants in the next Budget.

TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES: 2012 – 2014

Deteriorating energy, transport and telecommunications infrastructure discourages wary investors, who are already rethinking investment in emerging markets. Growth stagnates. The rate of investment declines. This, added to large-scale retrenchments in our export industries, mainly in the mining sector, worsens unemployment. For the first time in nearly two decades, no new jobs are created.

As unemployment worsens, poverty compounds. The pressure for a further increase in social grants becomes greater. Social grants are easier, administratively, to deliver than jobs in Public Works Programmes, so the government adjusts its allocations in the 2012 budget, arguing that quick relief for the poor is necessary.

The civil service, the one key asset that the government controls, becomes an instrument of economic reward to shore up declining political support. Party loyalists, rather than professionals, are given senior jobs. Those with marketable professional skills, such as dedicated teachers, doctors, nurses and engineers leave the public service. Many leave the country altogether.

As a result, healthcare deteriorates. This is exacerbated by a lack of skilled engineers to manage water systems; so preventable diseases, such as cholera, become endemic in some areas.

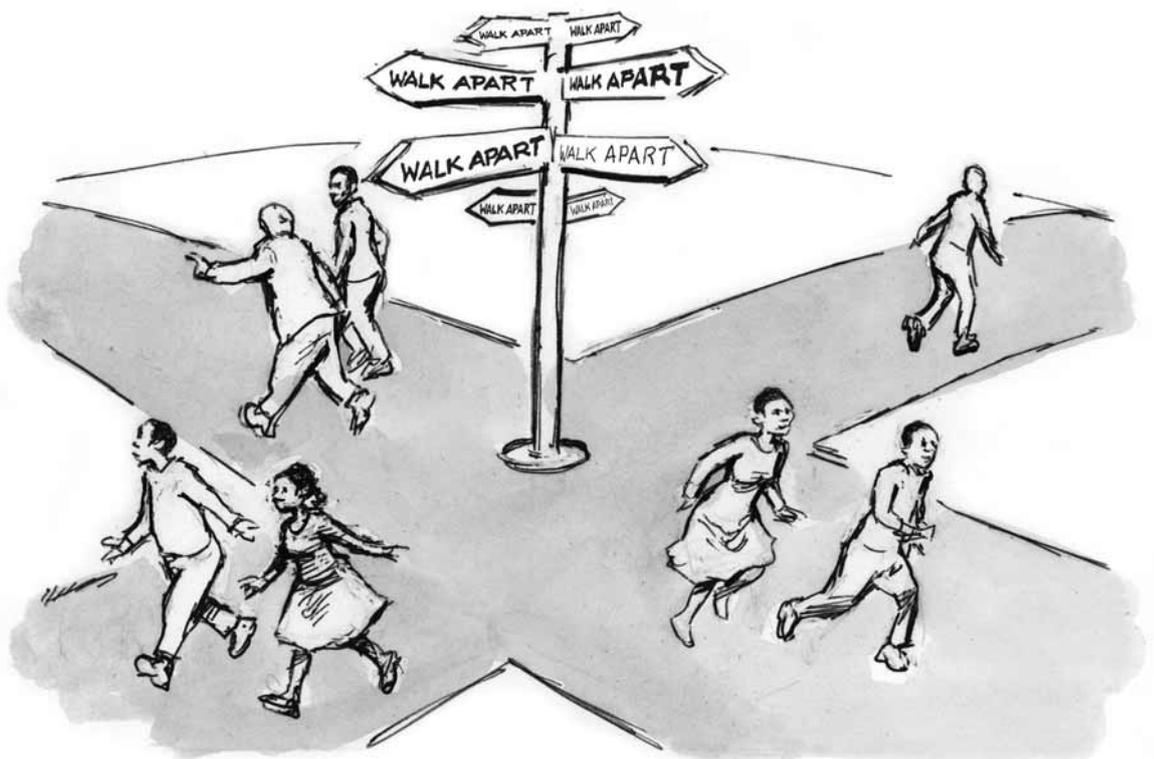
The education system declines. There is no immediate political return in investing money in classrooms, libraries or laboratories, and so school facilities deteriorate. To appease the unions, teachers are awarded higher pay packages but with no commensurate improvement in performance.

This pay increase comes before the 2014 elections, and is awarded to all civil servants, regardless of performance. This further drains the fiscus, making ongoing investments in economic development more difficult.

The economy, constrained by a worsening skills shortage, is now stultified. The education system fails to produce the skills required for a developing society and as a result the unemployment situation worsens.

Domestic investors hold onto cash reserves instead of investing. Foreign investors simply stay away.

A small group of BEE tycoons continues to find favour with government and is well positioned in terms of government tenders and contracts doled out by party political appointees in the civil service, some of whom get attractive kickbacks. However, the majority of the middle-class and aspirant entrepreneurs do not benefit from such largesse; they become increasingly disengaged and disillusioned by both the integrity and capacity of the state.



A WIDENING CHASM

The chasm between the leaders and the led increases as civil society disengages from this elite pact. Passive resistance gives way to increasing disgruntlement and pockets of active resistance grow.

Aware of the increasing discontent among the population, the ruling party contests the 2014 election with promises to increase social grants, address the minimum wage and crack down on crime. The ruling party's election manifesto pays little attention to job creation or economic growth. In the run up to the 2014 election, government runs up a bigger budget deficit and again increases the size of social grants by 20%, along with the increase in public sector salaries. Opposition parties warn that the increases in social grants are unsustainable. The tax base has got smaller, not bigger, over the past three years and the number of social grant recipients has increased. This means fewer and fewer taxpayers are supporting increasing numbers of grant recipients.

The real issue is job creation, but few in government talk about that anymore. More and more people have to rely on the informal sector to eke out a living. The ruling party and government are “tinkering around the edges”, without confronting the fundamental issues.

The private sector is dismayed that new minimum wage legislation has been mooted without consultation. This, it warns, will further restrict new investment. In response to business's stance, the unions call a general strike. Thousands of workers are dismissed in the wake of the strike. Government tries to intervene to persuade business to take back the workers and in some cases it is successful. But by this time, confidence in the economy has been knocked. Investors are wary, and growth is flat. Although the developed markets have begun to pick up in the past two years, investors are still conservative. There is scant portfolio investment in the emerging markets and little foreign direct investment.

As joblessness increases, so does crime. The first-line victims of criminals are the working poor, those who still earn wages, who are robbed or pick-pocketed on the taxis that take them to and from work. The elite are also targeted, but generally they live in well-guarded homes and have the umbrella of insurance to protect them against loss.

Given the ensuing social pressure, the emergence of a strong autocratic leader to “restore public order” in the 2014 elections, becomes increasingly appealing. The ruling party is restored to power in 2014 on the strength of a populist leader who promises further increases and improvements, but its majority is reduced. The civil service, pacified by salary increases, and some of the electorate, happy with higher social grants awarded in the run up to the election, are still prepared to be patient.

THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN: 2015 – 2017

However, in the period after the 2014 election, the cracks in the system deepen. Government has borrowed heavily to fill the gap created by the decrease in tax revenues. Short-term public sector wage increases and increased social spending has forced government to increase the deficit again. Yet, there is little improvement in the quality of service delivery. The pressure of increased migration to the informal peri-urban areas becomes a powder keg.

Organised civil society groups grow weaker and disengage because the social ills seem too vast to tackle, and government is utterly uninterested in engagement. The elites buy their way out. Poor people become increasingly resentful and lose patience. As a result, social cohesion and any sense of national consciousness unravels. As delivery fails, social unrest spreads further.

At its worst, this scenario develops into a situation where unaccountable but powerful groupings outside the government provide protection or deliver services in exchange for support and patronage.





“It is not inconceivable that we could end up with a Colombian mafia-type scenario where gangs become a form of social delivery.”

The state’s lack of capacity is reflected in groups outside of government, such as organised criminal gangs, carving out areas of control and patronage. In informal settlements, gangs become a vehicle for social delivery. Self-declared “mayors” collect local taxes from hard-pressed residents in return for protection, land allocation and services. They also impose their own crime control in numerous areas, resulting in vigilantism and, at times, ethnic flare-ups.

In the richer suburbs, the private security industry proliferates. The middle classes live under siege in high security complexes and the cost of security spirals. By 2017, private security guards outnumber the police by three to one, and increasing numbers of disillusioned police officers apply to join their ranks.

For those who cannot afford armed guards around the clock, a small extra payment to the police ensures that officers leave their stations and keep watch over a private house or complex for a period.

The police pay lip service to law enforcement, and occasionally exchange “soft shoes for hard boots”. By 2017, there have been scores of cases alleging police brutality, but these are seldom investigated.

There is scant investigative capacity by this stage, and in any event, most organised gang leaders have worked out the simplest way to bribe senior police officers, ensuring that their juniors turn a blind eye to crime when ordered to do so.

The justice system is heavily compromised by appointments of people who are seen as favourable to the ruling party. This cascades down to the lower courts, which become easily intimidated by powerful figures in business or politics, or by gang leaders.

Public transport deteriorates because of severe budgetary constraints. Taxi associations run almost all transport systems by 2017. They carve up routes between them, and persistent disagreements are usually resolved by violence. Terrified commuters have no option but to use the taxis, which are now no longer subject to any safety regulations.

This scenario becomes a “witches’ brew” of political contestation, opportunism and discontent.

Lack of accountability and transparency worsens. This increases the level and tolerance of corruption. Squandered funds mean that the returns on social expenditure are minimal. This demoralises citizens and repels all new investors, thus entrenching poverty.

RULE OF THE STRONGMAN: 2018 – 2020

Dangerously, this scenario depicts an increasing intolerance for opposition on the part of the government. While it does not have the capacity to become fully authoritarian, it clamps down on the media and suppresses protests where it can, using tools ranging from anti-defamation laws to the security forces where it has to.

“There are seeds of anarchy and authoritarianism in our present right now. For example, “shoot to kill” is indicative of a mindset. There is also vigilantism and small-town anarchy.”

Thus, the ruling party enters the 2019 election on the defensive, patently aware of the rising discontent and its lack of control over key areas. In dark back rooms, the ruling party seeks the support of the local warlords and self-declared mayors, especially in the peri-urban areas. An unspoken election pact is forged between the ruling party and local warlords and militia. This unleashes a reign of fear and terror: warlords and self-appointed ‘mayors’ find their way onto the election list of the ruling party, and vigilante elements are given the nod to police certain areas to contain any opposition.

The majority of citizens who are vulnerable and poor are threatened with violence and withdrawal of services, including social grants, if they do not vote for the ruling party. In the run-up to the 2019 election, there is a clampdown on the media and the opposition. Journalists and civil society leaders are heavily restricted in terms of what they can say or print. A media tribunal, created after the 2014 elections ostensibly as a “monitor” of the media, is now given legislative powers to adjudicate press coverage and prevent offending editors from operating.

With so little transparency, few trust the results of the 2019 election. The Independent Electoral Commission has been packed with officials sympathetic to the ruling party, the media is restricted in its election coverage and many editors have a sword hanging over their recalcitrant heads.

Hence, the huge majority garnered by the ruling party is not credible to many citizens. Others go further and say that the election outcome is rigged. Yet reporting that the election is “rigged” becomes an offence without “proof” approved by the government. The state broadcaster, which reaches millions more people than the print media, endorses the outcome of the election.

The ruling party has cemented its coalition with local warlords in some areas, and is now more secure in the belief that it can control those outlying areas that have slipped out of its grasp in the past five years.

As 2020 draws to a close, the government response of repression and co-option of elite groups leads to further resistance and unrest. The gap between the leaders and the led widens, while corruption and lack of accountability worsens. Politicians become rulers, citizens become subjects. A spiral of resistance and repression is unleashed, leading to social and political instability and further investor flight. This leads to violation of law and order on the side of the “securocrats” and “shoot to kill” orders to quell unrest. South Africa degenerates into rule by state of emergency; whereby the state and local warlord militias instill fear into the hearts of civilians.

No accord yet in sight for crisis group

Johannesburg,
November 30, 2010

The “crisis group” comprising government, business and the trade unions, was still locked in talks in the early hours of this morning with no agreement in sight about how to deal with the threatened stalemate over 50,000 striking miners from the Midas Platinum Mine.

The “crisis group”, formed in early 2009, to deal with the effects of the global economic downturn, agreed to meet for the first time since talks were scuttled late last year. Talks broke down last October when the unions walked out after refusing the mine’s proposal that miners accept a 25% wage cut in exchange for a job guarantee for two years.

The six-month stalemate has seen a prolonged strike and lock-out. Workers have not been getting wages since January this year.

Until this week, both the mining companies and the biggest union federation, COSATU, have boycotted the regular “crisis groups” talks.

work. Khumalo said government had a duty to create jobs to deal with the growing unemployment crisis, caused by large-scale layoffs in the private sector.

Stellenbosch V-C bows to pressure to go

Cape Town, February 3, 2012

Embattled vice-chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch, Professor Fred Botha, announced his resignation today.

His resignation comes after a year of often violent protests on the campus calling for his removal. Botha believes the call for his resignation was sparked by his affiliation with the Democratic People’s Party, which went head-to-head with the ruling African National Congress in last year’s local government elections in the Western Cape.

“I believe this is a grave infringement on academic freedom,” he said yesterday at a press conference to announce his resignation. “However, I believe that I cannot effectively continue in my position given the lack of support from the Council of the University.”

Commuters stranded after lines bombed, buses torched

Johannesburg, July 5, 2013

Tens of thousands of commuters were left stranded today after the main railway line between Soweto and Johannesburg was blown up, and hundreds of municipal buses torched by irate taxi drivers.

The taxi drivers are protesting against a government plan to increase subsidies to trains and municipal buses. In February, Finance Minister, Ms Qedani Naidoo, announced that R400 million would be allocated to Metro Rail and Gauteng’s municipal buses, in an attempt to make public transport more affordable for hard-pressed commuters.

However, a number of taxi associations, testified before the Parliamentary Finance Committee that such a subsidy would negatively affect their profits. “It is only fair that we should be the only transport on the road,” said Mr Jake Brown, the chairman of the Spotted Hyenas Taxi Association. “Our industry supports thousands of families and provides an essential service.”

Billions more to Public Works

Cape Town,
February 15, 2011

National Treasury will allocate an extra R3 billion to Expanded Public Works Programmes, in addition to the R15 billion allocated in last year’s Budget.

Finance Minister, Ayesha Khumalo, announced this during her Budget speech today.

“We must invest in more roads and more low-cost houses, but most of all we must invest in jobs,” she told the National Assembly.

The Expanded Public Works Programme is expected to create 10 million days of

Public Works Millions Missing

Pretoria, October 24, 2012

Millions of rands allocated to Expanded Public Works Programs have gone missing, according to the Adjustments on National Estimates of Expenditure tabled in Parliament today. Other money is unspent.

The Treasury’s mid-term report shows that more than R100-million allocated to home-based care projects in KwaZulu-Natal has not been spent, and a further R350-million allocated to Eastern Cape road works projects cannot be accounted for.

“This is a problem for the provinces to sort out. It is not our problem,” said a Treasury spokesperson.



Huge rise in social welfare

Cape Town,
February 17, 2014

Government is to increase its allocation to social welfare by nearly 33%, Finance Minister Qedani Naidoo announced today.

This would provide a cushion against rising unemployment, now estimated to be in the region of 37%, up from 24% just five years ago.

The government's much-vaunted Public Works Programmes are to be scaled down.

"They are not working very well," Naidoo conceded in the pre-Budget press briefing. "Not enough work has been created and it is hard to keep track of the money in some of the provinces."

Drug trade finds new avenues in face of state failure

Richards Bay, March 6, 2017

Evidence of a large underground illegal drugs syndicate, which doles out ARVs and antibiotics to people at prices well above the average costs that hospitals charge, has been unearthed in Manguzi in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Local police, working with volunteers from the Treatment Action Campaign, yesterday raided a makeshift "clinic" near Ndumo. They collected about R5 million worth of ARVs and several other medicines estimated to be worth another R3.5 million.

The "clinic", which operates out of a hut in the middle of the Mbangweni forest area near the Mozambique border, has apparently been selling drugs for nearly two years, according to one local resident interviewed near the site.

The resident, who did not want to be named, said the clinic had opened after the kaNgawanase Hospital in nearby Manguzi began to regularly run out of drugs two years before.

"We know it is illegal, but what else can we do? Many of the people here have AIDS and it is the only way we can get the drugs," he told a reporter.

Drugs run dry in Mpumalanga clinic

Nelspruit, March 11, 2015

Hundreds of people left a clinic at Siyabuswa empty-handed today after clinic staff told them that the anti-retroviral drugs they had come to collect had not arrived from Pretoria.

About 500 people infected with the AIDS virus attend the Siyabuswa clinic weekly to collect the drugs. This is the third time in the past six months that the drugs have not been available.

"I have been waiting here for 12 hours. I am sick, and standing in the sun is tiring," Mr Simon Sibanyoni told *These Days*.

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which has been monitoring delivery of drugs around the country, said today that this was the fourth provincial clinic that had run out of ARVs in the past four months. ARVs have to be taken regularly to be effective. "Many people's health has now been seriously prejudiced," said TAC spokesman Vusi Sithole. "This shows an outrageous lack of compassion by government."

No one from the Mpumalanga provincial department of health was available for comment at the time *These Days* went to press.



Three dead in battle over “tax”

Polokwane, July 23, 2017

Three people were killed yesterday in Sibasa and their houses razed to the ground in ongoing community battles that have plagued this northern Limpopo village since last year.

The victims have not yet been officially identified. However, it is believed that they are among a group of villagers who refused to hand over an informal tax earlier this year to the “Committee of 10”, a shadowy group that has set itself up in opposition to the local council.

The “Committee of 10” claimed a few months ago that it was helping residents access basic necessities such as water and transport. However, disgruntled but frightened residents have claimed that the Committee dispatches armed men every month to collect a “tax” from residents. They say the Committee has dug boreholes and some pipes have been laid. Several Committee members also own and run taxis in the area.

In March, a group of about 100 residents marched on the local council offices demanding an end to the informal “tax” and demanding more protection from police.

The three residents who were killed in yesterday’s attack are believed to have been among the organisers of the protest that took place in March.

Big Victory Claim by Ruling Party

Durban, 3rd May, 2019

The ruling party won an overwhelming victory in last week’s elections, it has announced.

The claim comes amidst protests from opposition parties who claim the election in several areas was rigged.

However, in terms of the Electoral Coverage Amendment Act of last year, this newspaper is unable to report further details.

35 gunned down in jobs protest

Durban, April 2, 2020

Police opened fire yesterday on thousands of protestors who gathered outside the President’s holiday mansion in Umhlanga Rocks, killing at least 35 people and injuring hundreds.

The President was not there at the time. He is believed to have been in his private apartment in Sandton, Johannesburg.

The protests follow widespread riots around the country in protest against lack of jobs and lack of service delivery. In some areas, water has been cut off. In others, notably southern KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, hundreds have died of cholera because of the collapse of the sanitation systems in those areas.

The protests took place in defiance of an edict issued by government last month banning all outdoor meetings.

A spokesman for the Presidency declined to comment.

SUMMARY: SCENARIO 1: WALK APART

| YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW ARE THE SAME: 2009 – 2011 | TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES: 2012 – 2014 | THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN: 2015 – 2017 | RULE OF THE STRONGMAN: 2018 – 2020 |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruling party retains majority. • Global crisis leads to declining investment, growth and tax revenues. • Crisis pact between government, labour and business fails. • Government expands the Public Works Programme to create jobs. • Citizens get restless and government increases social grants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cronyism and corruption in government appointments and tenders. • Education and health care deteriorate. • Rift between government and citizens. • Government increases social grants and civil servant pay: social grant recipients now outnumber taxpayers. • Ruling party wins elections with reduced majority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime increases: private security guards outnumber police 3 to 1. • Criminal justice system becomes more inefficient because of cronyism and corruption. • Unions lobby government to increase the minimum wage. • Investment shrinks further; unemployment grows. • Service delivery fails; alternative modes of delivery develops and shadowy forces become more powerful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cracks widen; budget deficit balloons; delivery worsens. • Elites buy their way out and poor people lose patience. • Gangs, self-appointed mayors and taxi associations rule local areas. • “Strongman” wins election, outcome contested. • Protests spiral and government declares state of emergency. |