

# Madonsela brings Zuma to the brink

There did seem to be undue haste from Thuli Madonsela to finalise her last order of business as public protector.

After seven astute years, the citizens of South Africa would not have begrudged her a more lackadaisical exit. She'd definitely earned it.

Instead, Madonsela was as industrious as ever, spurred on by a peremptory need to reveal at least preliminary findings into the so-called Gupta state capture probe before her successor, Advocate Busisiwe Joyce Mkhwebane, begins her term of office next week.

Predictably, President Jacob Zuma, mindful of Madonsela's limited time, has frustrated the process, culminating in yesterday's notice to halt the release of her report, which was expected today.

Likewise, the Gupatas have done their bit to drag proceedings out beyond her term, and the ANC's kindergarten wing has drawn on the full extent of its revolutionary vocabulary to cry foul.

It goes without saying that this particular investigation is important, especially after the ANC's national executive committee achieved very little with a similar internal inquiry a few months ago.

Theirs was bound to be tainted, anyway.

But such was Madonsela's intent in her final weeks it must surely point to a smoking gun. Many are speculating this explosive nugget came courtesy of Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan. We'll have to see.

But it does make for an interesting observation. Why, if Madonsela had so far uncovered nothing of significance, would she be so determined with public disclosure?

Likewise, why would Zuma be so eager to quiet her?

Her critics want us to believe hers is a vendetta. But Madonsela is unlikely to allow personal animus to dictate circumstances. She risks her entire legacy if she falls at the last hurdle because of feelings about Zuma.

Perhaps she simply fears the independence of her successor. Mkhwebane's appointment seemed well-scripted in parliament.

Or maybe, just maybe, there exists a genuine article of concern for Zuma, which would explain his agitated response. How apt that Madonsela, our vanguard, on the eve of her departure, has brought him and his cronies to the brink. All that's left is the fall.

# Opinion & analysis

## FROM THE SCRIPTURES

"This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another'."

Zechariah 7:9 NIV

## TODAY IN HISTORY



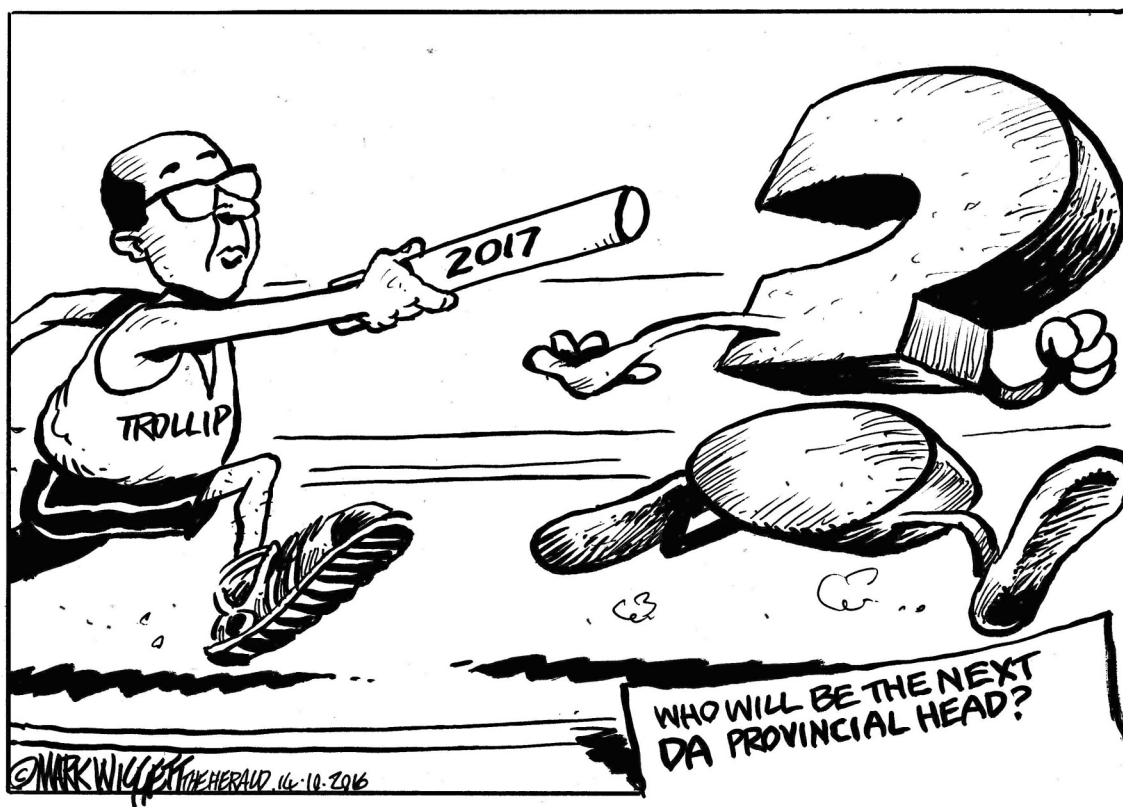
1899 Anglo-Boer War 2: Start of the siege of Mafeking under Colonel Robert Baden-Powell by the Boer forces.

1964 US civil rights leader Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr, pictured, wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

1974 Sports minister Dr Piet Koornhof announces a relaxation of apartheid rules for sport and that the government is working towards eliminating racial discrimination in the selection of contestants for international events.

1989 More than 150 000 people take part in 17 marches nationwide organised by Cosatu to protest against the Labour Relations Act.

Source: South African History Online



# Is SA ready for shale gas mining?

Is South Africa technically ready for the shale gas industry? This is the question addressed in a report released on Wednesday, titled *South Africa's Technical Readiness to Support the Shale Gas Industry*, commissioned and funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The report, produced by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSA), with inputs from a panel of leading South African and international scientists, was handed to DST's director-general, Dr Phil Mjwara, at a function in Pretoria.

The text and subtext of the report is, at the same time, enlightening, ominous and contradictory, with conflicting warnings and recommendations from the ASSA.

On the one hand, it warns that South Africa is not technically ready for a shale gas industry.

It recommends that before any exploration or exploitation of shale gas can even be considered, it will require far more research and analysis of critical technical, legal, environmental, social and economic questions, such as how much gas there even is.

On the other hand, the report recommends that South Africa "must commit to a balanced, long-term shale gas exploitation strategy".

It makes recommendations on the exploration phases and interventions that are required for a shale gas industry, including specifics such as "high quality cement and steel to ensure well integrity".

At the same time, it points out that South Africa is in a substantially different position

## In my View



Heather Dugmore

to the US and the UK, both of which have extensive, well-established gas industries and distribution networks.

### THE KAROO'S INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURE

A problem in the report is its myopic description of the Karoo. It says: "The Karoo is a place of unique biodiversity, stark beauty, wide-open vistas and unsurpassed night skies. Yet, the Karoo is also a place of intense poverty, with marginalised, structurally unemployed people and some of the greatest chasms between the rich landowners and those who own nothing. Therein lies the dilemma for decision-makers."

This is a worrying generalisation that omits the Karoo's significant contribution to food security and employment.

The Eastern Cape region of the Karoo produces more than 30% of the red meat in this country. Add the Western and Northern Cape regions of the Karoo and it goes up to approximately 50% of the country's red meat production.

The question that many people

are asking is whether shale gas mining would destroy the Karoo's agricultural economy and associated jobs.

The report raises concerns about the employment potential of shale gas mining given the expertise it requires, which would necessitate importing of skills until South Africans can be trained.

That said, let's get down to three of the many key questions addressed in the report – how much shale gas there is in the Karoo, would the Karoo's freshwater be threatened, and which potential exploration/exploitation areas are being considered?

### HOW MUCH SHALE GAS IS THERE?

The reports says "there is presently very limited knowledge about the 3-D geology of the Karoo Basin and its gas-shales, hence the very large range of estimates of potential shale gas resource, ranging from 10 trillion cubic feet (TCF) to 500 tcf. Recent geological and geochemical evaluations range between 19 and 23 tcf of recoverable reserves".

To ascertain this, the report recommends that exploration should be conducted in two phases, with remote geophysical sensing and deep-cored drill-holes implemented during Phase 1 to determine the subsurface distribution of gas-shales and location of "sweet spots".

Phase 2, the reports says, would need to use hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to evaluate the retrieval success of the shale gas.

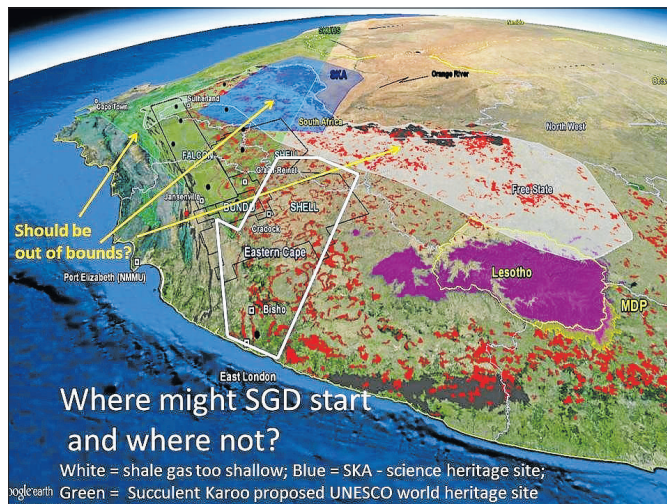
### WHICH POTENTIAL EXPLORATION/EXPLOITATION AREAS ARE BEING CONSIDERED?

The report says the potential exploitation area where initial shale gas exploration could be done at depths of more than 1 500m, is an area between Cradock-East London-Jansenville.

The report advises that any area where the shale gas occurs at depths of less than 1 500m should be excluded from exploitation to minimise the risks of groundwater contamination.

### WOULD THE KAROO'S WATER BE THREATENED?

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### ARE THERE AREAS BEING CONSIDERED?

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### WOULD THE KAROO'S WATER BE THREATENED?

The report points out that groundwater boreholes are the major source of water supply for many communities, small

towns, farms and other users in the Karoo. Most existing water boreholes in the Karoo are less than 150m deep, but the same groundwater may go down to depths of 500m or more.

The report warns that the greatest concern is that during and following fracking, saline groundwater and/or fracking fluids "could severely contaminate scarce groundwater sources via defective gas-wells and/or naturally occurring fracture zones, as well as from spills and leaks on the land surface due to accidents and poor work practices".

The report adds that this is unlikely to happen if exploration/exploitation is well-managed and regulated.

This needs to be contrasted with the emphatic assurances from Shell and other oil and gas companies that fracking is completely safe, there is no risk of groundwater pollution, that the chemicals used in the process are non-toxic and there is no possibility of technology, casing or drilling-associated problems.

The report then adds the following about the vast amounts of water required in fracking: "Given that it is most unlikely that it will be acceptable to use groundwater from shallow aquifers, the main source of water will be from deep saline aquifers. Operators will have to present detailed water management plans, eg. source of

water, chemicals injected, reuse and recycling plans and waste water management."

### BASELINE PROJECTS IMMEDIATELY REQUIRED

The report advises that comprehensive baseline projects are required and should include surface, groundwater and subsurface research.

It recognises the Karoo baseline research projects being undertaken by the Africa Earth Observatory Network of the Earth Stewardship Science Research Institute (AEON-ESSRI) at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, as being timely and exemplary.

Without a comprehensive forensic baseline of how the Karoo

looks today, "any contamination of groundwater or destruction of ecosystems related to hydraulic fracturing and harvesting of gas cannot be determined with sufficient accuracy or proven beyond reasonable doubt, rendering litigation around damage and externality costs of exploitation of the gas almost impossible".

The report recommends that South Africa invest in academic and professional institutions to further develop the necessary baseline and monitoring capacity, and to establish an applied and experimental "Karoo Shale Gas Laboratory and Training College", possibly in the Eastern Cape.



KAROO LAMB: The report omits to mention that the Karoo produces about 50% of South Africa's red meat. Picture: ROB SOUTHEY

## We do not have adequate legislation in place

LEGISLATIVELY, South Africa remains on shaky ground where fracking is concerned. We do not have adequate legislation on best practice, pollution and rehabilitation in place. The validity of the regulations promulgated in June 2015 by the minister of

mineral resources has been challenged and will be heard in the High Court in May next year. Our law stipulates that only the minister of environmental affairs has the power to make such regulations.

"STUDENT leader". That's what the journalist called Mcebisi Dlamini.

I reread the paragraph to check if I'd missed a line somewhere, perhaps one in which Dlamini was described as a fantasist who admired Hitler, who called Jews "devils", who claimed that Wits had head-hunted him to do a "secret" degree in nuclear physics, and who was now leading a minority of students at the university. Nope. It just read "student leader".

Because, of course, that's how we roll. An integral part of our shared South African-ness is a refusal to name things as they are. We can be outspoken, loud, even rude, but without fail we'll call a spade a fork.

Decades ago, politicians enforced white supremacy but called it "good neighbourliness". They shot schoolchildren but called it "restoring order". These days the policies have changed but the coyness remains. When Julius Malema threatened journalists with violence, their colleagues giggled and called him "charismatic" and "controversial". When corporations collude to fix prices we are told that "free enterprise" can be "complex".

Of course, none of this is new to any of the angry South Africans dispirited by this country's ongoing rush towards insignificance. But what is remarkable is that our angriest, most outspoken critics seem themselves to be indulging in a strange kind of denial.

You see it in our incredulous responses to the latest abuses of power. We find it shocking that the SABC has lost R400-million and disgraceful that Hlaudi Motsoeneng is still employed. We wonder exactly what Blade Nzimande is paid for, given the omishambles that is higher education. And as for Zuma, well, don't get us started! Has he no shame? Why would

## The Big Read



Tom Eaton

he do everything he's done when he knew he'd be found out?

I don't want to knock anyone who voices these sorts of ideas. It is important to speak out against bad government.

But here's the thing. Zuma isn't in government. Neither is Nzimande. Because there is no government.

Hlaudi doesn't work for the national broadcaster because we don't have one.

South African Airways isn't a dysfunctional airline

because it's not an airline. What they are – what all of it is, from the corridors of the Union Buildings right

down to crumbling rural municipal offices – is an ATM.

The entire edifice that we still insist on calling "the public sector" is a vast cash-dispensing system, and everyone with the PIN code has only one job: withdraw as much as you can, as fast as you can.

This shouldn't surprise anyone. In 2010, Zwelizima Vavi famously warned us of a "predatory elite". The SA Communist Party dispensed with its usual gobbledygook long enough to use the word "looting". Even Gwede Mantashe admitted that people in the government were using their positions as "a stepping stone to power and accumulation".

But I would argue that, for all our huffing and puffing, we remain naive. After all, you're only shocked by Zuma if you believe that he is a civil servant answerable

to the public. You're only outraged by Hlaudi and the SABC if you believe that they are still somehow connected to a functioning bureaucracy. You only talk about money being "lost" if you believe that there is a system in place and that something has gone wrong. Which, of course, is not the case.

"Why do they do it when they know they'll be caught?" Well, it's basic maths. By the time they're caught they'll have pocketed tens of millions. And what does "caught" actually mean? Nothing. If the only price of acquiring multi-generational wealth is to be called a thief by some columnists, many more of us would climb in with both hands.

All of which is why the outrage is starting to sound a bit foolish. When people get robbed by a gang dressed as police, they immediately recognise that they've been

duped. Not us. We're still aghast, telling each other "Sjoe, those were really unprofessional cops, hey?"

The looters have about 30 months left. That takes us up to the 2019 elections, at which point the ATM's code will be changed and a lot of peripheral gang members will be cut off. Those B-grade gangsters will need to crack on if they're going to take their R10- or R15-million before they're ousted or audited. They know what they need to do.

And so do we. For starters, we need to take our collective head out of our communal arse and dispense with naive beliefs. We need to look past the illusion of politics and see the ATM.

Journalists need to say "stolen" instead of "lost"; "looted" instead of "misallocated". For our own intellectual clarity, we need to stop believing that these are good people doing their job badly and start understanding that they are bad people doing their job well.

And in 30 months, either they go or we do.

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