

Chapter TWO

The Labour Market



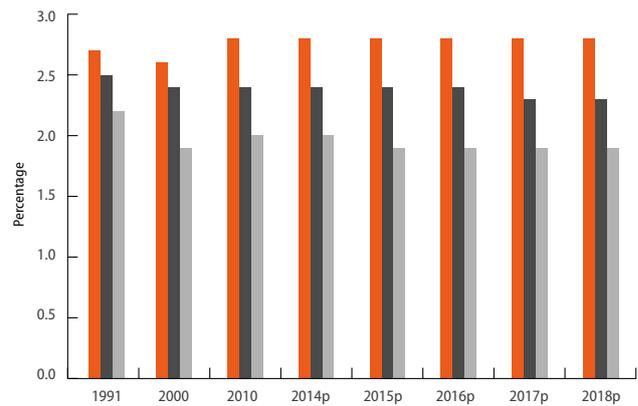
The Labour Market at a Glance

The unemployment rate increased to 25.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2014. While the size of the labour force grew, the labour force participation rate decreased between 2008 and 2014. This is indicative of an increase in the number of discouraged job-seekers. South African youth remain disproportionately affected by unemployment compared to the adult population. Individuals with less than a matric are most affected by unemployment. The unemployment rate among those with a tertiary education remained low compared to other educational levels, but it is important to note the unemployment rate has grown slightly among the tertiary educated.

While Brazil's overall unemployment rate was lower than South Africa's, its youth-to-adult ratio was higher, indicating that the youth are most negatively affected by unemployment in Brazil. Equally, the youth-to-adult ratio of unemployment was higher for developed countries and the European Union than it was for sub-Saharan Africa.

South Africa's vital labour statistics				
	1991	2000	2008	2014
Unemployment rate (official)	24.4%	23.3%	21.4%	25.3%
Labour force participation rate	53.7%	59.5%	55.3%	53.5%
Labour absorption rate	40.6%	45.7%	43.5%	40.0%
Not economically active	–	10 930 000	15 343 806	17 746 715
Labour force	12 473 900	16 078 000	18 975 639	20 411 857

Youth-to-adult ratio of unemployment, world economies, 1991–2018

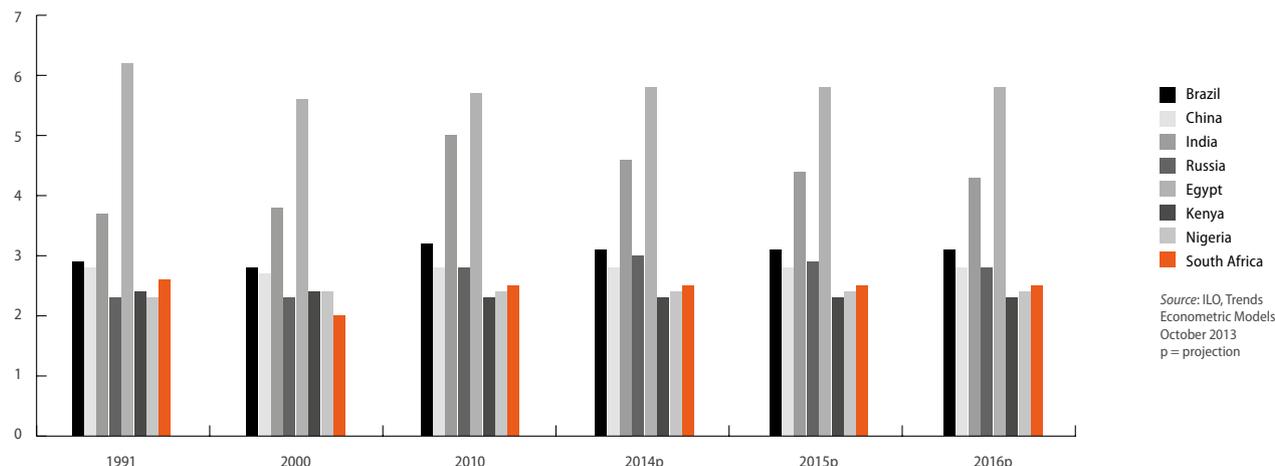


Legend:
 World (orange)
 Developed economies and European Union (dark grey)
 Sub-Saharan Africa (light grey)

Source: ILO, Trends Econometric Models, October 2013
 p = projection

Source data for 1991 labour force and labour force participation rate from the ILO, Estimates and Projections of the Economically Active Population (EAPEP), 2013 Edition (update July 2013)
 Source data 1991 for labour absorption rate: ILO, Trends Econometric Models, October 2013
 Source for 2000 Stats SA, Labour Force Survey, Historical Revision September series 2000 to 2007
 Source data for 2008 and 2014 own calculations based on Stats SA; 2014 QLFS (2nd quarter revised estimates) and 2008 QLFS (4th quarter revised estimates)
 Data note: 1991 figure not available for Not Economically Active

Youth-to-adult ratio of unemployment, BRICS and Africa's largest economies, 1991–2016



Legend:
 Brazil (black)
 China (light grey)
 India (dark grey)
 Russia (medium grey)
 Egypt (lightest grey)
 Kenya (medium-dark grey)
 Nigeria (medium-light grey)
 South Africa (orange)

Source: ILO, Trends Econometric Models, October 2013
 p = projection

Unemployment rate by level of educational attainment, 2014

22.4%
Less than primary
completed

32.7%
Secondary not completed

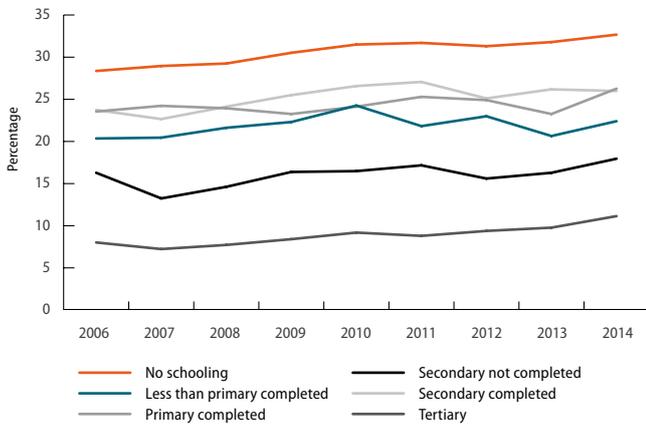
26%
Secondary completed

11.2%
Tertiary

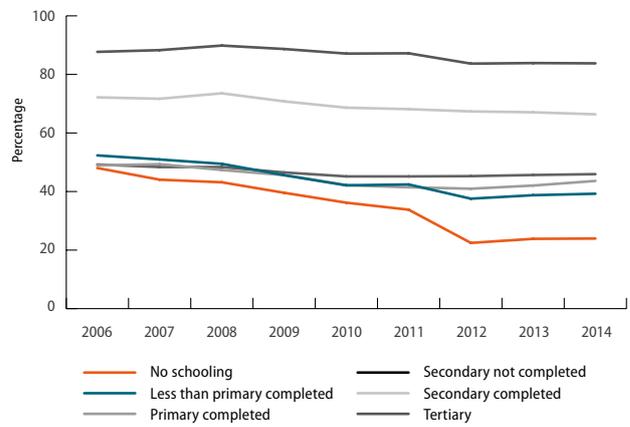
26.3%
Primary completed

18%
No schooling

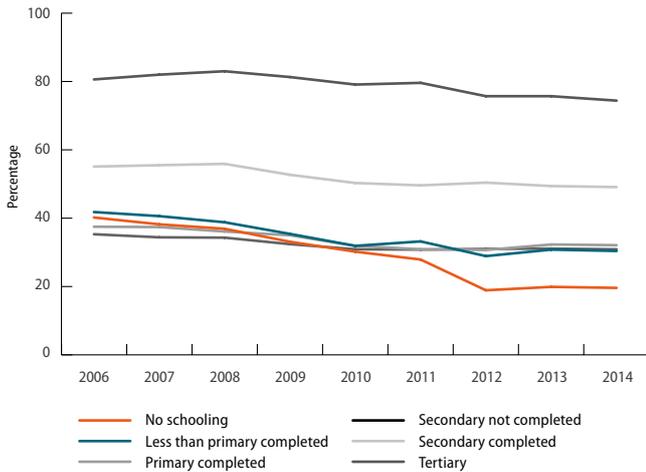
Unemployment rate by level of educational attainment, 2006–2014*



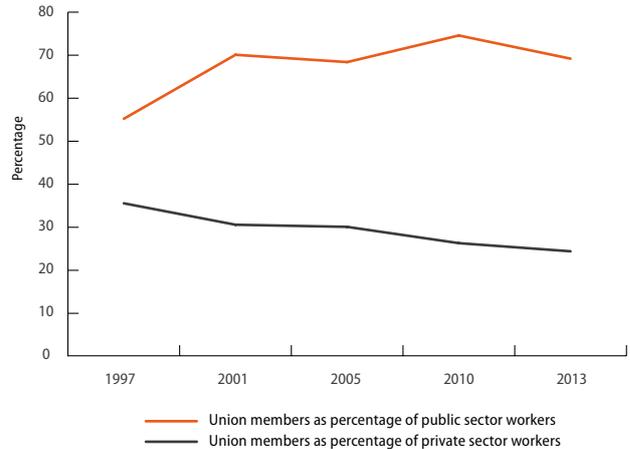
Labour force participation rate by level of educational attainment, 2006–2014*



Labour absorption rate by level of educational attainment, 2006–2014*



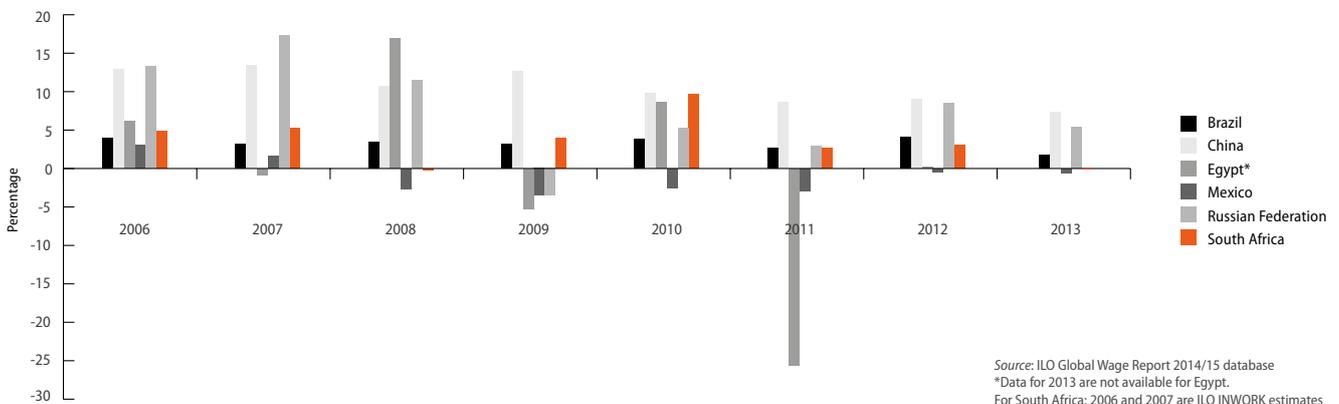
Trade union membership, 1997–2013



Source: Borhat, Naidoo & Yu (2014: 5), Trade Unions in an Emerging Economy

*Source: 2012–2014 own calculations based on Stats SA Revised QLFS 2012 (Q4), QLFS 2013 (Q4), QLFS 2014 (Q2). Data for 2006–2011 from Stats SA, Labour Market Dynamics in South Africa, 2011

Real wage growth in the largest emerging and developing economies, 2006–2013



Source: ILO Global Wage Report 2014/15 database
*Data for 2013 are not available for Egypt.
For South Africa: 2006 and 2007 are ILO INWORK estimates



The changing labour union landscape
after the Marikana massacre

Terry Bell

There are none so blind as those who will not see. This 16th Century proverb applies very much to Marikana, a name now etched bloodily into South African labour history, for the massacre at Marikana on 16 August 2012 and the events leading up to it did not emerge out of the blue. In fact, voices had been raised for several years warning of impending catastrophe (see <http://www.bench-marks.org.za>; Bell 2012), but they were ignored. However, none of these more aware observers, researchers and commentators foresaw paramilitary police units using live ammunition to gun down striking miners. It was this that made Marikana different and the symbol of so much that has gone wrong, and is wrong, within South African society.

Marikana has highlighted, to varying degrees, the different strands and historic currents that have come together and have scarred the political and social topography of the country. In particular, it has made clear the existing fissures in the labour movement and the body politic. It is likely to remain as much of a political symbol as was Sharpeville in the decades after 1960 (Bell 2013).

Also now exposed more widely are the decades of neglect and insensitivity that contributed towards the squalor and desperation that remain the lot of so many South Africans. The glaring failure of companies (in this case, Lonmin), the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the government at all levels to act to improve the lot of increasingly desperate and angry migrant workers was compounded by the virtually feudal and frankly xenophobic attitude of a traditional tribal authority, the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN).

At the core of the Marikana tragedy, however, is the migrant labour system, honed over more than a century by the great mining houses and well explained most recently by Rankin-Smith, Phillips and Delius (2014). Fit, bright young men, usually neither literate nor numerate, were recruited from rural areas throughout the sub-continent on six-month or one-year contracts. Tested for their physical fitness, given basic training and housed in the utilitarian barracks of single-sex hostels, they were fed a cheap, precisely measured diet and policed by compound managers and mine security. In classic divide-and-rule manner, the hostels were segregated according to 'tribe', and inter-tribal competitions, including *malita* stick fights, were encouraged and organised by mine management.

Generations of young men lived through this experience, sometimes to return home prematurely aged and breathing with the rasping sound of silicosis, which would cause their steady decline and eventual, painful deaths. Such experiences are etched deep in the folk consciousness of rural villages in regions such as Pondoland in the Eastern Cape. Mzoxolo Magidiwana, a Marikana miner crippled for life by police bullets on 16 August, notes in a documentary film about the massacre, 'Miners Shot Down':

We work like slaves. Even our fathers were rock drillers.
Either they die or go back home still as rock drillers.



At the core of the Marikana tragedy is the migrant labour system, honed over more than a century by the great mining houses.

Poverty forces you to forget your ambition, leave school and work as a rock driller at the same mine where your boss will be the son of your father's boss. (In Desai 2014)

All of this was supposed to change, not only after miners showed their potential power by means of a lengthy strike in 1987, but certainly after the political transition of 1994. Change did come, but not in the manner many miners had hoped for, and the changes in some ways created still greater problems, problems that could – and should – have been foreseen and catered for.

Even before the formal political transition, the influx-control laws of the apartheid state had broken down. No longer could people be restricted, by executive fiat, to specific areas on pain of detention; and freedom of movement was confirmed in 1994, as the last violent convulsions of the fragmented, pro-apartheid 'white Right' ended. It was then that the major migrations from rural areas to urban centres really began. Mining areas were also targets for migrants seeking jobs and a better life.

As a report of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) relating to Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) notes:

With the end of influx control, and particularly during the early 1990s, workers also started bringing their wives to live with them. A number of informal settlements sprang up, often situated very close to mine hostels though just outside of mine property. As the informal settlements grew larger, they also began, increasingly, to accommodate people from the Transkei who were not Amplats employees (or their wives) but lived within the broader economy of these settlements. Thus, by the mid-1990s, not only sections of the hostels, but also important sections of the informal settlements, were predominantly Xhosa in character. (Bruce 2001)

This report reflected on some of the consequences of the fact that the mining companies, no longer able (or, perhaps, willing) to enforce the compound/hostel system, pledged better housing, but found a less expensive alternative –

'living-out allowances'. Migrant workers would no longer have to sleep, like human artefacts, on tiered bunks against the walls of their hostels – they could 'live out', finding their own homes to rent or buy and, possibly, even have a family life. At the time of Marikana, mining companies were providing between R1 500 and R1 800 a month to facilitate 'living out'.

For miners earning as little as R4 500 a month, this was a considerable boon and meant that they could perhaps send slightly more money back 'home' to the rural areas, where many of them still supported up to ten dependants. However – as mine management, unions and government officials at various levels must have been aware – there was no adequate accommodation to be had in the vicinity of the mine at Marikana or, for that matter, at many other mines. The land in the Marikana area is all 'tribal land', under the jurisdiction of the RBN.

In what perhaps reasonably can be described as a decision motivated by xenophobia, the RBN decreed that non-Bafokeng could not own, live permanently or legally trade on RBN land. As the first RBN population and land use audit of 2011 noted: 'Non-Bafokeng living on RBN land cannot legally apply for a residential or commercial stand, and are consequently dependent on Bafokeng landlords' (<http://www.bafokeng.com/sites/default/files/Pula>). The report added: 'In certain instances, land tenure by non-Bafokeng is illegal, or not secured by the necessary legal documents.'

Unsurprisingly, the audit also discovered that 'non-Bafokeng have less access to water, sanitation and electricity', that most work on the mines and 'are far more likely to live in corrugated iron dwellings'. These are the un-serviced one-room shacks, boiling in summer and freezing in winter, that make up the squalor that is the township of Nkaneng, home to many of those who died on 16 August.

Details of life in Nkaneng and similar townships were readily available in the months and years leading up to the strike and massacre at Marikana. For the most part, the media, the mining companies and the various government structures, along with the NUM, chose to ignore the implications. Yet, what existed was a social powder keg fuelled by human misery. In this sprawling shantytown, 'shack lords' demanded rentals of R500 a month, and the money lenders (the *mashonisas*) and their enforcers prowled the area.

Life underground was tough, but life in the 'informal settlements' above ground was often even tougher in different ways. There were gangs and individual gangsters in areas where the justice system simply did not function, giving rise to self-styled vigilantes, to whom protection money had to be paid. Even when the gangs and vigilantes did not intrude, the absence of rudimentary services created problems. In this sordid environment, the only available recreational facilities were the squalid shebeens with their cheap, potent home-brewed liquor.

This situation was summed up in the 2001 CSV report, as follows:

Prior to the emergence of these settlements, the main areas inhabited by the mineworkers had been the hostels, which had at least a rudimentary form of policing in the form of the mine security. However, the emergent settlements had no established policing system. Furthermore, the formal policing structures of government essentially failed to adapt to this new development, with the result that, initially at least, these settlements had no formal policing structures. The proximity of the settlements to the hostels, and the low level of security maintained in the hostels, also meant that the settlements could serve as a type of springboard for attacks on persons staying in the hostels. The violence when it emerged therefore affected both the hostels and the informal settlements. (Bruce 2001)

Here, the CSV report is referring to the murders and thuggery that accompanied a 1996 wildcat strike and the subsequent emergence of the Workers Mouthpiece Union (WMPU). This development is dealt with below. However, the conditions outlined in 2001 applied in 1996 and in 2012.

Complicating matters in the shantytowns was the presence not only of a small army of desperate job-seekers, but also of men who had found work through various contractors. Contracting companies, providing outsourced services to the mines, have proliferated in recent decades. Unlike the specialised groups such as shaft sinkers that have been employed on a contract basis almost since the advent of deep-level mining, the outsourced companies provide, on a tender basis, workers who would normally have been employed by the mining companies. This gives the mining companies a set cost, often for short-term contracts, with the responsibility for employee welfare passed on to the contractor.

Section 198 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, even before its 2014 amendment tightening up the clause, made it clear that contract workers were employees of the labour contractor and subject to the same conditions and protection in law as any other employees. However, this legal requirement was often breached, especially by smaller labour-broking companies, which tended not to make provision for benefits such as overtime, sick leave or pension or provident funds.

Wage differentials between company employees and 'contract workers' also became a bone of contention, as did the support of the NUM for the equalisation of mining wages.





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Wage differentials between company employees and 'contract workers' also became a bone of contention, as did the support of the NUM for the equalisation of mining wages. Resentment was felt especially among the muscular elite of the subterranean workforce, the rock-drill operators. Without these workers, as mining bosses readily concur, no mining can take place. These are the men who handle the noisy, heavy and powerful drills that hammer holes into rock, sometimes kilometres underground. Into these holes go the explosives that loosen the mineral-bearing rock to be shipped to the surface for crushing and the extraction of ore. They are not the pick and shovel brigade or the pushers of coco pan trolleys loaded with ore. They are the men who carry out the bone-jarring, muscle-wrenching labour that carries with it the cachet of physical strength while taking an extraordinary toll on human bodies.

The role of the union in managing the workforce was a given. As former mining company executive turned scenario planner and business commentator, Clem Sunter has noted on several occasions: 'The companies outsourced their line management to the NUM.' Among many miners, this was seen more as co-option of the union by the mining companies. However, the overall effect was that mine management did not keep a close watch on developments among the workforce; this was left to the union officials who, while enjoying their status, did not function as wholly effective line managers. It was a disaster in the making.

The offices, cars and cell phone contracts provided by the companies to full-time shop stewards were an ongoing cause of dissent. More aware miners, sometimes pushing political agendas, were prone to mention how former senior union officials had migrated to the boardrooms of the mining houses. Prime examples quoted were former NUM president James Motlatsi and his general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa. Also thrown into this mix were former NUM deputy general secretary Marcel Golding and former union negotiator, Irene Charnley, both now billionaire business people. All of this helped to encourage the perception that 'the workers have been sold out'.

The fact that these former unionists, transformed into extremely wealthy business people, came from minority communities in the mining industry also played a part. For,

in Marikana, and several other mines, the bulk of migrant labourers are isiXhosa speakers from the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. In particular, they hail from the region in the Transkei known as Pondoland. This has a special significance for Marikana, because the epicentre of the strike and the resistance to the company was a rocky outcrop near the mine and the township that the strikers referred to as *intaba* (the mountain).

This, in itself, should have made it obvious to any who knew their history that most of the strikers were probably migrant Mpondo workers from the Transkei. The use of the *intaba* meeting place is important because it provides evidence of residual folk memory of another *intaba* from the days of the fathers and grandfathers of those at Marikana (Bell with Ntsebeza 2003). It was, however vaguely conceived, a repetition of the brave stand and bloody slaughter at Ngquza Hill near the rural centre of Lusikisiki on 6 June 1960.

Most of South Africa knew little or nothing of what transpired on that hilltop in 1960, until evidence was provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 36 years later. Of course, the people of the region were aware of what was happening from day one. Tales of heroism, treachery and bloodshed spread throughout the lands of amaMpondo and were embellished upon; but what the story of the mountain signified, above all, was pride and the spirit of resistance.

It is easy to put too much stress on this factor, or too little. What happened in 1960 can be summarised in a few words: amaMpondo decided that they had had enough of being pushed around. They rebelled, not only against the apartheid state, but also against the autocratic tribal authorities. The rebel leaders met on Ngquza Hill and demanded negotiations with the authorities. The apartheid state used this as an opportunity to launch perhaps its first airborne assault, under the command of a notorious police Special Branch killer, 'Rooi Rus' Swanepoel.

While the history of 1960 may often have been rather muddled, judging by conversations with Marikana miners, what is clear is that the idea of resistance, drawing on the past, remained strong, as was the notion of resisting not just the mining bosses, but also, in this case, the union authorities. These were men, as Mzoxolo Magidiwana notes above, who knew that generation after generation of young men, driven by poverty, merely filled the shoes of their fathers.

Many better-educated workers and, all too often, union officials, referred to these miners as the *amaqaba* (the uneducated and illiterate). These were men who, in other circumstances, might have been referred to as cannon fodder. Mainly from the Transkei, but also from Mozambique and Lesotho, they made up an outsider majority in platinum belt shack-lands such as the Nkaneng 'informal settlement'. Yet, most miners, whatever their backgrounds, had hoped for a better life following the much lauded transition to a non-racial parliamentary democracy in 1994. There were, after all, promises aplenty. However, few were kept. Little was done,

for example, about converting the soulless barracks of the hostels into the projected family and single apartments. Resentment grew and, sooner or later, it was sure to flare up.

Marikana was by no means the first such manifestation of anger and outrage, but it was the one that did not flicker brightly for a moment and then fade into the background. It became the symbol of anger, demoralisation and sudden awareness, and all that flowed from this. Despite accusations to the contrary, the situation was not manipulated by a variety of barely hidden hands with highly dubious agendas. This certainly had happened in the past; usually for much the same genuine reasons – disgruntlement over pay and service delivery and the lack of adequate responses by the major union, the NUM, coupled with poor communications and historic distrust.

The first of these rebellions occurred in 1996, and the trigger seems to have been poor communication by both management and the NUM about possible pension payouts at Implats. The 'Five Madoda', five men who were members of a self-styled 'worker committee' that had links with vigilante groups and criminal elements in the shack-lands, capitalised on legitimate grievances and anger among the miners. The strike exploded into violence, with NUM shop stewards targeted. Implats responded by sacking the entire workforce.

The majority of the sacked workers were subsequently rehired, but those who remained jobless formed the core of what then became known as the WMPU, which linked up with a Rustenburg lawyer and two insurance salesmen (<http://mg.co.za/article/1997-07-18>). It was nothing more than a scam based on members having to buy insurance policies and to pay as much as R500 as a 'union-joining fee', but such was the anger at the mining companies and the NUM that hundreds joined.

Ultimately, the WMPU fragmented and ceased to be a player. However, the memory of the 'Five Madoda' as having risen up against management and a union perceived to be in league with the company remained. So, the concept of the 'Five Madoda' resurfaced, both at Lonmin's Marikana and at Impala Platinum (Implats) in 2012 among miners organising for the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU).

AMCU, today the largest union on the platinum belt, was the major gainer on the union front as tens of thousands of NUM members defected and joined the newer union. Before details emerged, especially at the Farlam Commission (www.marikanacomm.org.za) into the massacre and the earlier deaths at Marikana, there was a barrage of allegations directed against this union and its president, Joseph Mathunjwa. Unsurprisingly, many of these came from the NUM, but the most vociferous attacks originated from the South African Communist Party (SACP) and its general secretary, Blade Nzimande (<http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=6525>).

According to Nzimande, AMCU was a 'pseudo union' that had been established 'by BHP Billiton', today the world's

largest minerals company, but a company that does not have a presence on the platinum belt. In fact, Billiton came into being when the Afrikaner nationalist Gencor company bought, for \$2.1 billion, a shelf company, Billiton, in 1993 from Royal Dutch Shell (Bell 2001). The former mining executive, Derek Keys was finance minister, and Gencor 'reversed' its major assets into Billiton, a company listed in London. Several months later, Keys resigned as finance minister and became chair of one of Billiton's divisions, based on the isle of Jersey.

This history, generally known to trade unionists and politicians, was ignored. Billiton, which had grown into BHP Billiton with the acquisition of BHP in Australia, became the nominated scapegoat. AMCU was claimed to be its pawn, a 'vigilante union' set up to disrupt the NUM. Even the mildly spoken SACP deputy general secretary, Jeremy Cronin maintained that the strikers were part of a 'third force'. They were also, he reportedly noted, a 'Pondoland vigilante mafia'. Explaining his position to a lunchtime gathering at the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) congress only weeks after the Marikana massacre, he claimed that the 'Five Madoda' had re-emerged, and that this gangster union was again causing problems.

At the time, the idea of the 'Five Madoda' was being used as an organising concept at Implats, as AMCU gradually gained more members there than the NUM. There was violence, but all evidence points to the fact that the overwhelming majority of miners had turned their backs on the NUM. In negotiations with the police at Marikana in the days leading up to 16 August, the miners also elected five representatives. However, there seems to be no other link, apart from the number, with the previous – and highly problematic – grouping of 1996.

NUM statements also implied that AMCU had suddenly emerged and had been sponsored by other mining companies, as well as BHP Billiton, to 'undermine the NUM'. However, union officials must have known that this was not true since AMCU was one of the smaller, albeit quite successful, breakaways from the NUM. In fact, when there was a strike and incidents of violence at Implats in January and February 2011, the NUM denied management claims that this had anything to do with rivalry between the NUM and AMCU. At the time, AMCU general secretary, Jeff Mphahlele noted: 'We have fewer than 1 000 members at Implats out of about 25 000 workers and, as a union, we are not involved there.' The NUM spokesperson at the time, Lesiba Seshoka, concurred: 'A small minority could not have caused this. The real trigger was management unilaterally announcing an 18 per cent bonus for miners only' (See terrybellwrites.com/2012/.) This bonus announcement was made in December and immediately led to disruption at Implats, because the skilled and generally higher paid rock drill operators felt they had been excluded. They demanded an after-tax wage of R9 000 a month, which they saw as maintaining the differential between themselves and the ordinary miners.

It was clear then that the NUM not only knew of AMCU,

but accepted the union as a smaller player on the labour front. It had, as Mphahlele admitted, a very small footprint in the platinum sector. AMCU's main base at that time was in the east, in the coalfields of Mpumalanga. It was there, in 1998, at the Billiton-owned Douglas Colliery, that miners, most of them members of the NUM, went on strike and staged an underground 'sit-in'. Their union chairman was Joseph Mathunjwa. However, the strike was not condoned by the NUM leadership, although Mathunjwa supported it (http://www.miningmx.com/special_reports/mining-yearbook).

A laboratory assistant at the mine, Mathunjwa had already had an acrimonious falling out with the then general secretary of the NUM, Gwede Mantashe, a former chairman of the SACP and now secretary general of the ANC. Mantashe ordered Mathunjwa brought before a disciplinary hearing chaired by himself and when Mathunjwa refused, he was expelled from the NUM. The Douglas Colliery miners reacted by resigning *en masse* from the NUM, and AMCU was born, with local schoolteacher Jeff Mphahlele roped in as general secretary. By 2001, the union had organised itself sufficiently to be formally accepted by the registrar of trade unions. It was one of a number of smaller unions providing an alternative to the mainstream COSATU organisations, and became affiliated to the politically independent and formerly black consciousness oriented National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU).

According to the check-off lists for union subscriptions, most of the miners at Marikana who went on strike in August 2012 were members of the NUM, the initial protest being a march to the union offices on 10 August. It had been evident for some time that there was growing dissatisfaction and that protests could erupt. Bench Marks Foundation monitors reported on these facts, which were supported by a Foundation report on the situation in the area. However, even after evidence at the Farlam Commission, there is still no clarity about what actually happened at or near the NUM office on 10 August.

The author received a telephone call from a Bench Marks monitor on that day to report that two strikers had been shot dead 'by security' while marching on the offices, but he admitted that he had not seen what happened and had only been told by one of the strikers who, it later transpired had 'heard from someone else'. Within hours, various reports were circulating that two strikers had been shot dead by 'security in NUM T-shirts', by 'NUM members' in numbers ranging from ten to 15, and by 'the NUM executive'. The rumour mills were grinding away in a manner that is not unusual at times of dramatic uncertainty. All that was certain was that there existed a widespread perception that unarmed strikers had been killed by NUM officials with or without the assistance of mine security.

This was a turning point in the unfolding developments at Marikana, in terms of both the levels of violence and the surge in membership of AMCU at the expense of the NUM. Although AMCU had virtually no presence at Marikana when the strike

began, the union had gained a substantial foothold among miners at the nearby Karee shaft, and these miners joined the Marikana protest (Desai 2014).

As miners began to defect from the NUM, another union – the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) – also gained at its expense. It had had a presence on the mines for many years, primarily in the skilled welding and smelting sections. Then, still not yet openly at loggerheads with the leadership of the COSATU federation, NUMSA tried to downplay the fact that former NUM members were approaching their union to join. 'It would create big problems,' NUMSA general secretary, Irvin Jim, said at the time, aware that allegations of 'poaching members' – always an argument within COSATU – were regarded in a serious light.

As events unfolded at Marikana, culminating in the massacre of 16 August, there appears to have been very little influence by political parties or groups in the strike and the attitudes and organisation of the miners. The presence of AMCU, mainly through members from the Karee shaft joining the strike, seems merely to have opened up the prospect of an available and alternative union structure for miners to join.

However, the dramatic week leading up to the bloodshed on 16 August triggered a rush of interest and involvement, supportive, defensive and opportunistic. All of this added to the mix that would ensure that Marikana signalled a major factor in post-apartheid South African history and one that is likely to resonate for decades.

The NUM, as an integral part of the ANC-led alliance, via membership of COSATU, was, along with its allies, put solidly onto the defensive, and this opened up a particular advantage for the expelled president of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, and his 'Friends of the Youth League'. Among other political groups to intervene were the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), which appears to have had some contact in the area before the strike, and the Democratic Left Front (DLF), a small umbrella organisation of left-wing groups. Bantubonke Holomisa, head of the United Democratic Movement (UDM), also arrived in Marikana to pledge support for the miners and, obviously, to win credit for his party (www.iol.co.za/). The UDM was the only party represented in Parliament that intervened in this way, and several of the miners killed or wounded at Marikana came from Holomisa's 'home area' of the Eastern Cape.

For the ANC and its allies, the massacre at Marikana also came at a time of considerable tension within the governing party, with a leadership battle predicted for the 53rd congress of the party scheduled for little more than four months away at Mangaung. The expelled Malema refused to go quietly into a very early retirement. In fact, he was one of the first politicians to make waves at Marikana, turning up to support the strikers and organising legal aid for those wounded by police bullets (www.bdlive.co.za).

An immediate knee-jerk reaction within sections of the ANC was to call for Malema, the 'counter-revolutionary', to be

arrested. Such suggestions were dismissed by the party's National Working Committee, which drew up a report on Marikana in September 2012 (www.citypress.co.za/). This report is a good reflection of the level of ANC concern, especially about Malema. One paragraph notes: 'The Marikana tragedy has been exploited by many forces, among them Malema and the Friends of the Youth League, opposition parties, a section of the clergy and some within structures of the ANC'. There was also an oblique reference to Malema in a comment that there existed the possibility of armed counter-revolutionary movements emerging because of the 'prominence of the destructive role played by populism and mavericks'.

Despite some vociferous denials of wrongdoing by the police in the days following the massacre and claims of the 'forces of law and order' being attacked and having to defend themselves, it was evident that considerable damage had been done to the image of the ANC and to its standing among workers and the electorate at large. This became worse in succeeding weeks and months, as more evidence of what had occurred became known. However, the ANC and its allies remained in defensive mode, with only defence minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula suggesting that the ANC should apologise for the deaths at Marikana, which she found 'shocking' (www.news24.com).

Her statement was an exception and was not repeated, and little attempt was made to build bridges or to admit any fault on the part of the governing party, its allies or the police. Instead, there was an initial retreat behind a flimsy wall of rhetoric and then, as more and more evidence emerged of the apparently deliberate killing of strikers, there was a stubborn refusal to acknowledge that, post-Marikana, the mood among large sections of the electorate, and especially within the labour movement, had changed. The official view seemed to be that the ANC was beset by 'counter-revolutionary forces'.

Echoing and amplifying these fears, which sometimes seemed to verge on paranoia, was the SACP, which tended to concentrate its attacks on AMCU. This is understandable, because, in the labour stakes, Marikana meant an even heavier loss for the SACP than it did for the ANC. In accordance with the SACP medium-term vision, published in 2007 (www.sacp.org.za/), but in line with SACP tactics over decades, one of the prime goals of the party is control of the trade union movement.

This it managed in the 1950s and in the exile years with its control of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), proclaimed as the only 'true representatives of South African workers'. This claim meant that the exiled SACP and SACTU opposed the independent unions that emerged in South Africa after a wave of strikes in 1973 (MacShane, Plaut & Ward 1982). Even the formation of COSATU in 1985 was initially opposed, since it challenged the claimed hegemony of SACTU. Only after a meeting in Lusaka in 1987, and when the



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ANC and the SACP had begun to make substantial inroads into the new COSATU unions, was SACTU disbanded.

This history is important because it carries with it the seeds of some of the divisions that bedevil the governing alliance and that were germinated by the bloodshed and subsequent storms of Marikana.

It is unsurprising that of all the unions affiliated to COSATU, it was NUMSA that appears to have read the change of mood correctly and to have led a rebellion against the political alliance. The core of what became NUMSA, was the 'workerist' Metal and Allied Workers' Union that denounced the SACP as 'Stalinist', once labelled the Freedom Charter of the ANC a 'bourgeois document' and called for the formation of a workers' party, governed by a workers' charter. In 1989, NUMSA's 'workerist' general secretary, Moses Mayekiso, having spent years in detention and having survived a treason trial, was recruited to the SACP and ANC by the militant SACP leader, Chris Hani. Mayekiso left the SACP after the murder of Hani in 1993, and became an ANC MP in 1994, leaving Parliament after three years. He joined the Congress of the People when it was formed in 2009, becoming a member of the Gauteng provincial legislature. After Marikana, he joined the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and stood as its presidential candidate in the 2014 elections.

It was the presence at Marikana (and in its immediate aftermath) of members of the DSM and the DLF and their supporters that led Gwede Mantashe, in his role as secretary general of the ANC, to blame 'foreign forces' and 'outsiders' for what had happened at Marikana (www.citypress.co.za/). He maintained that the strike and the violence were part of a conspiracy orchestrated by these 'forces'. By implication, Julius Malema and his 'friends' were also part of this. It is understandable that political parties and groups, especially of the Left, would provide practical solidarity in a situation such as Marikana, while hoping to capitalise in terms of image, membership numbers and even votes.

However, although both the DSM and the various groups affiliated to the DLF have international contacts, there is no evidence that they had any influence before the strike and massacre and very little subsequently, but, especially in the

case of the DSM, they made seemingly convenient scapegoats at the time. Mantashe was able, in particular, to point to the fact that a Swedish immigrant, married to a South African, Liv Shange, was prominent in addressing strikers in the aftermath of the massacre. An Irish Socialist Party parliamentarian, Joe Higgins, with links to the DSM, also visited Marikana to express solidarity (www.dailymaverick.co.za/).

Mantashe was aware that the DSM is, in effect, the South African franchise of the Communist Workers' International, which, in turn, is influenced by the ideas of the Socialist Party of England and Wales, headed by Peter Taaffe (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Taaffe). The South African group has its origins in the Marxist Workers' Tendency that was expelled by the ANC in 1985. The British party grew out of divisions within the once quite powerful Militant Tendency that was expelled by the British Labour Party and is one of several groups broadly labelled Trotskyist.

The DLF also comprises groups that fall under that label, including members of the Fourth International and the Keep Left local franchise of the British Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). Unlike Liv Shange, who was named, the ANC did not specify who else constituted the 'foreign forces'. However, senior members of the alliance were infuriated when a post-Marikana book, carrying interviews with strikers, and the hard-hitting and award-winning documentary film about the massacre appeared. The driving forces behind both are Keep Left and DLF supporters. The fact that Jim Nichol, a volunteer attorney for the miners killed at Marikana is British and an SWP member added fuel to Mantashe's xenophobic spark that failed to catch fire.

The publicity generated around the involvement of the DSM, was perhaps part of the reason that this group decided to capitalise on the political disillusionment by establishing a potential mass workers' party 'armed with a socialist programme'. Moses Mayekiso was recruited as a presidential candidate but other Left groups kept away, and in the May 2014 elections the WASP gained just 8 331 votes out of more than 18 million cast.

For the most part, the DLF latched onto Julius Malema and his 'friends' as a wave that they might be able to steer to their various visions of a revolutionary future. Malema, after all, had been accorded a reception by the Marikana miners better than any individual apart from Joseph Mathujwa. So when, like the DSM, the Friends of the Youth League decided to establish a political party to contest the 2014 elections, the DLF was in support. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) came into being with Julius Malema as 'commander in chief'. Academics such as Jane Duncan of Rhodes University (sacsis.org.za/site/article/1899) and Imraan Buccus of UKZN (www.citypress.co.za) as well as the present author (terrybellwrites.com/tag/fascism/) saw in this the possible emergence of a home-grown fascism. Perhaps unfortunately, the SACP also took up this criticism and the DLF, for the most part, became virtual standard-bearers for the EFF.



The biggest political and trade union fallout that can be attributed, at least in part, to Marikana is the emergence of NUMSA as a potential catalyst for the fragmentation of the ANC-led alliance.

In terms of support among miners on the platinum belt and youth around the country, the DLF correctly assessed the appeal of the EFF, which now has 25 seats in the national Parliament, having garnered just short of 1.7 million votes after only eight months of existence. In party political terms, the EFF can rightly claim to have been the major gainer from the fallout of Marikana. The UDM also increased its vote slightly to 184 636, but this was still a far cry from the EFF surge (<http://www.elections.org.za/>).

In trade union terms, AMCU was clearly the major gainer and although there has been some media speculation about links between the union and the EFF, Mathunjwa has categorically denied them. He and his union remain supportive of the NACTU position that trade unions should not ally themselves to any one political party, and that they should use their numerical and organisational strength to leverage 'pro-working-class policies' from any party in power.

However, the biggest political and trade union fallout that can be attributed, at least in part, to Marikana is the emergence of NUMSA as a potential catalyst for the fragmentation of the ANC-led alliance. NUMSA was also a major gainer numerically from the events at Marikana, its membership rising from 216 652 to more than 320 000, much of it at the expense of the NUM, which, until Marikana, had been the largest affiliate of COSATU. This position was taken by NUMSA within a year of the bloody events on the platinum belt.

The membership surge in both AMCU and NUMSA was one clear indication of leakage from cracks in the political dam wall of the ANC. Several commentators had predicted this and they were right, but the manner of the leakage and the continued build-up of pressure behind the wall was not generally foreseen. In the first place, as has been the case increasingly for every election since the first non-racial poll in 1994, more potential electors did not vote or did not register to vote. In the 2014 poll, there were more non-voters than there were votes for the governing party.

Yet, in the immediate run-up to the election there was another sign of change in the political topography: former intelligence services minister, Ronnie Kasrils, and former

deputy health minister, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, launched a campaign to get voters to the polls either to vote tactically against the ANC or to spoil their ballots. *The Sidikiwe* (we are fed up) *Vukani* (wake up) campaign called on voters to 'stop the rot' in the governing party (www.sidikiwe.co.za/). This too, was largely a reference to Marikana. However, while there was a slight increase in the number of spoiled ballots, it was not enough to be significant.

While it is impossible to gauge the impact of the Sidikiwe-Vukani campaign on the actual results, it certainly generated a great deal of debate about the nature of the ANC and the way forward. It also caused near apoplexy within senior government ranks, with a series of often vitriolic outpourings along the lines of those earlier directed at AMCU. On top of this came the decision by NUMSA not to support the ANC in the May elections.

One probable impact of this was the large stay-away in the east coast Nelson Mandela metro area, home to a large number of NUMSA members. In the 2009 elections, 80 per cent of registered voters turned out. This time, fewer than 55 per cent cast their ballots, in stark contrast to the nearly 74 per cent recorded nationally. The ANC vote also fell to 49.17 per cent of those who cast their ballots (<http://www.financialmail.co.za/>).

On the face of it, little has changed: the ANC remains in charge nationally and in eight of the nine provinces. However, the party's share of the vote declined from 66 per cent to 62 per cent while that of the major opposition, the Democratic Alliance increased, in round figures, from 16 per cent to 22 per cent. One might add that the ANC's 62 per cent translates into less than 40 per cent of the number of potential voters. What has been called the 'Marikana effect' clearly came into play.

It was the new kid on the block, the red-beret-wearing EFF that caused the greatest upset, becoming the official opposition in two provinces and scooping up more than 6 per cent of the national vote. This raucous polyglot of radical ideas ranging from nationalising the ocean to physically destroying the e-toll gantries on the main highway between Johannesburg and Pretoria, has a solid support base in townships such as Nkaneng.

However, potentially more important politically, and certainly so in the labour sphere, is NUMSA and the way the union and its leadership reacted in the aftermath of Marikana. What Marikana did within the ranks of COSATU was to bring to the surface tensions that had been simmering for more than a decade. There were many within the labour movement who agreed with Kasrils when he maintained that the killings at Marikana were worse than the shootings at Sharpeville in 1960. Those, Kasrils said, were the result of panic on the part of the police, whereas what had happened at Marikana was deliberate (www.bdlive.co.za/).

COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, one of the main cheerleaders of the 'Zuma tsunami' (announced at the 2006

COSATU congress), had become critical of the government and its policies in the wake of the 2009 election. In 2010, he stated:

We are heading rapidly in the direction of a full-blown predator state in which a powerful, corrupt and demagogic elite of political hyenas increasingly controls the state as a vehicle of accumulation. (www.cosatu.org.za)

This did not endear him to fellow members of the SACP or to the majority of the Cosatu executive, but he tended to be backed most openly by NUMSA.

Then came Marikana. Vavi blamed the strike, the deaths and the massacre on 'shocking levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality'. He added: 'It is creating what until recently Cosatu has called ticking bombs. After the events at Marikana on 16 August 2012, we now must talk of exploding bombs.'

The lines were drawn. The old, simplistic liberation movement dictum came into play: those who are not for us are against us. The scene was set for political turmoil that would go beyond the EFF and unions challenging the dominance of COSATU. The personality clashes and apparent ideological differences all played out against the backdrop of Marikana. Increasingly, trade unionists were seeing that the tactic of unions aligning themselves with the ANC and SACP to oppose an apartheid system that damaged everyone had perhaps reached or gone beyond its sell-by date.

There were those, however, who held firm to the old certainties, to concepts such as colonialism of a special type, which provided the SACP with the excuse not to stand apart from the ANC, to the idea that only the ANC-led alliance was the ordained vehicle to carry the masses to true liberation. As some critics, including the author, maintain, this sort of thinking has more to do with blind belief than reality.

These battles, and the resultant paralysis, date back to the 1980s (Kraak 1993) and were still ranging as 2014 was drawing to a close, causing what Vavi admits is an ongoing 'paralysis' within the country's major trade union federation. NUMSA continues doggedly to argue for unity, despite having been expelled by the majority of the COSATU executive. However, this is effectively a recommendation that can be ratified or overturned by a national congress. So, NUMSA and

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its supporting unions continue to demand the constitutional right to have a special national congress called while, at the same time, it has gone ahead with organising for a united front and for a 'socialist conference'. In this capacity, the union says it is acting as a catalyst for the formation of a political alternative to the present order.

Marikana clearly provided a wake-up call for NUMSA and the unionists supporting the initiatives launched by that union. However, it was also an alarm bell for the mining houses, in particular. For them, Marikana signalled the beginning of the end of cheap, labour-intensive mining. Not only are they confronted with the demand for decent housing, but also for much better wages and conditions, all of which are additional costs.

The companies and the government are also aware that, sooner or later, recycled platinum will start to undermine demand and prices unless some new large-scale use for the metal can be found. This is because the main use for platinum is as a catalyst in the auto industry, which means that it can constantly be reused. It was estimated that by 2012 more than 2 million ounces a year was coming to market (www.miningweekly.com)?

Another worrying factor within the South African platinum group metals industry is that palladium is increasingly being used as an autocatalyst in petrol engines, with only small amounts of platinum and rhodium added where necessary. Thus, while the southern African region contains perhaps 80 per cent of known platinum reserves, Russia probably has a similar advantage with palladium.

These factors, combined with the social, political and economic fallout of Marikana, hastened decisions at company level for greater mechanisation and increased reliance on open-cast methods to mine for shallower reserves of platinum group metals. However, because of the way in which underground mining has been designed, it will be extremely difficult in many cases to move to much more mechanised mining (<http://www.mineweb.com/mineweb/content>). Therefore, several shafts seem certain to be shut down.

This is happening at a time of ongoing global economic crisis, and raises the spectre large-scale retrenchments. If 30 000 or 50 000 miners end up being retrenched because

of circumstances beyond their control, this will trigger what can only be described as a social catastrophe, because, by most estimates, every miner supports between eight and ten dependants, mainly in the rural areas, and primarily in the Eastern Cape.

Without income from migrant workers, millions more hungry and desperate men, women and children will inevitably drift, in hope, to towns and cities, to urban areas where infrastructure is already inadequate and jobs for the unskilled are virtually non-existent. As has already been flagged by Vavi, such a situation in the mining areas raises again the prospect of more Marikanas.

Should anything along these lines occur, there will be elements within the business sector that will lay the blame on Marikana and on the wage increases, union fragmentation and militancy that flowed from the events of 16 August. Marikana was the culmination of many factors and became the final straw or, to use Malcolm Gladwell's (2000) term, a tipping point, largely because of inadequate communication and the insensitivity of both management and union officials.

On the face of it, therefore, the short- to medium-term future may prove to be much more exciting and tumultuous politically than was the 2014 election. There are already signs of fracture within the EFF and there is no certainty about where the proposals of NUMSA as a 'political catalyst' will lead. Ahead, however, are the 2016 local government elections that are contested on both a list and ward or constituency basis. These could provide an opportunity for the various emerging groups and factions, including the EFF and whatever political structure emanates from the NUMSA process, to stake a claim at local level.

Depending largely on how various forces and alignments of forces do, 2016 may well determine the line-up for the 2019 general election. However, for this to happen, the way ahead would have to proceed under much the same conditions that have pertained to date, and there is considerable doubt about whether this would be possible, unless the economy improves and many more jobs are created. A much more likely scenario, especially in the event of greater social turmoil, would be a crackdown by the government, including, perhaps, the declaration of a state of emergency.

As fairly recent history in other parts of the world has shown, an efficient authoritarian regime, while terrible for human rights, is not necessarily bad for business, Chile being a classic example. However, it is also possible that a new and more democratic direction may be found. Whatever happens, the way ahead seems rocky.

What appears most likely is that there will be a degree of fragmentation within COSATU, with perhaps the bulk of NUMSA breaking away. Should this happen, it is likely that elements of the seven supporting unions – SACCAWU (SA Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union), CWU (Communication Workers' Union), FAWU (Food and Allied Workers' Union), SASAWU (SA State & Allied Workers' Union), PAWUSA (Public

and Allied Workers' Union of SA), DENOSA (Democratic Nursing Organisation of SA), SAFPU (SA Football Players' Union) – along with a substantial number of members of the South African Municipal Workers' Union and, especially in the Eastern Cape, members of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, will also break ranks.

Initially, such a development would weaken the trade union movement severely. However, NACTU, which received a desperately needed transfusion of members with the influx of workers on the platinum belt into AMCU, has indicated willingness to join with a breakaway NUMSA.

NACTU and the Federation of Unions of South Africa have set up what, at this stage, amounts to the shell of a combined federation, the Southern African Confederation of Trade Unions. Mathunjwa maintained, in an interview with the author in late November, that this could provide a readymade vehicle for a new 'super-federation'. This is a possibility that, in the medium to long term, could strengthen the labour movement as a whole.

However, numerous problems would have to be overcome before such an amalgamation could seriously be contemplated. Not least among these is political outlook. Although NUMSA has now eschewed party political involvement, its leaders continue to describe the union as 'anti-imperialist, socialist and revolutionary', terms more appropriate to a political party.

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