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PUBLIC SERVICE AMENDMENT BILL
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REFORM EVIDENCE-BASED 100 THINK
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100 THINK TANKS

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

IVOR CHIPKIN

In this newsletter, we reflect on the past quarter and share key milestones from our work. 2023 has been marked by significant progress across the New South Institutes' (NSIs) programme areas, with important research outputs, policy contributions, and new initiatives taking shape. Across all our programmes, we produced work that not only shaped national debates but contributed directly to strengthening South Africa's institutions.

Our work on state capture and corruption helped clarify the systemic risks facing the country and informed public discussions on accountability and reform.

Our migration programme delivered some of the most comprehensive Africa-wide insights on mobility, reshaping how policymakers understand movement within the continent.

Through our South-South Dialogues, we deepened thinking on Africa's foreign policy posture in a rapidly changing global environment.

And with the launch of our Histories of Governance programme, we began telling the institutional stories that will guide future reform, including an important study on the history of the National Treasury.

A defining moment this year was the passage of the Public Service Amendment Bill, a historic shift that will help professionalise the public service. We are proud of the role our team played in supporting this reform.

What sets the NSI apart is not just the quality of our research, but our commitment to ensuring it has practical impact. This year affirmed that mission.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our work. Wishing you a restful and joyful holiday season.

NSI UPDATES



Nicole Fritz: The appointment of a new NDPP cannot substitute for institutional reform

Nicole Fritz, an NSI affiliate researcher, published an article in *Business Day* arguing that South Africa's National Director of Public Prosecutions' (NDPP) appointment process is unfolding without confronting the real crisis inside the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). She highlights that the controversy surrounding candidates such as Menzi Simelane reflects a deeper issue: no individual appointee, however capable, can repair an institution that remains structurally weakened, internally divided, and vulnerable to criminal infiltration.

The article forms part of a broader NSI research project, soon to be released as a policy brief, which stresses that the NPA's dysfunction is systemic rather than episodic. Nicole argues that the Presidency should have commissioned an institutional diagnostic before shortlisting candidates, to ensure the appointment process is grounded in a clear understanding of the NPA's risks, capacities and reform needs.

[Read the article here](#)

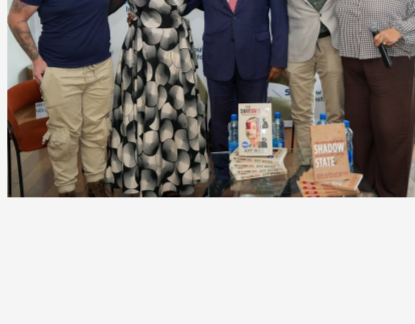


What South Africa teaches us about today's capture politics

At the end of October, NSI co-founders, Jelena Vidojević and Ivor Chipkin published an op-ed on the *Brave New Europe* website, probing state capture as a deliberate political project, not merely corruption. Drawing on South Africa's experience, especially the Zuma-era radical economic transformation narrative, they show how political elites use populist and decolonisation rhetoric to justify weakening oversight bodies, reshaping procurement, and consolidating control of the state.

What they sought to highlight is that today's state capture survives not only through networks and deals, but through the narratives that political elites use to justify their actions. Strengthening institutions is therefore essential. They must be robust enough to resist political pressures in whatever form they take.

[Read the article here](#)



NSI convenes discussion on state capture's continuing threat

On 5 November, the NSI hosted a discussion at GIBS Business School on the evolving nature of state capture, drawing on two important works: Ivor Chipkin's book *Shadow State: The Politics of State Capture* and Jeff Wicks's *The Shadow State: Why Babita Deokaran Had to Die*. Jeff and Ivor were the speakers, but the panel also featured as discussants Special Investigating Unit Head, Advocate Andy Motlhi, and NSI Board member and whistleblower Martha Ngoye, who brought the human dimension sharply into view.

Jeff described "unseen capture", corruption embedded so deeply within institutions that it can eliminate those who challenge it, as seen in the case of Babita Deokaran. Martha highlighted the personal risks whistleblowers take in defending the public interest. The discussion made one point clear: state capture remains alive, adaptive, and reliant on institutional fragility. Addressing it requires protecting capable institutions, supporting whistleblowers, and strengthening accountability systems.

[Read more](#)



Reflections from NSI's shadow state seminar

Martha Ngoye's speech, delivered at the NSI's recent shadow state seminar, was also published by *News24*. In her reflections, she speaks candidly about the moral courage required of whistleblowers and the dangers they face. She reminded us that accountability should never be a life-threatening act, and that South Africa urgently needs stronger protections for whistleblowers and a culture that genuinely values truth-telling.

[Read the article here](#)

NEWS FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM PROGRAMME



NSI dialogue on African statecraft and governance

On 26 November, in partnership with Afrospectives, the NSI hosted a virtual discussion on governance reform in Africa. The event coincided with the launch of the volume *Beyond Mimicry: The Potential of African Endogenous Governance Systems*.

Our panel, Professor Augustin F.C. Holi, Dr. Lisa Aubrey, Dr. Ali Moussa Iye, and Professor Benson Basheka, discussed Africa's endogenous governance and justice systems: sophisticated, ethical, community-rooted traditions that shaped collective life for centuries.

A central theme was that our task is not to romanticise the past, but to remember and re-work what has always existed – consensus-driven, restorative systems grounded in community legitimacy – in ways that respond to today's political economies and rights frameworks. The discussion urged us to move beyond imported templates and to draw more confidently on Africa's own intellectual and institutional heritage.

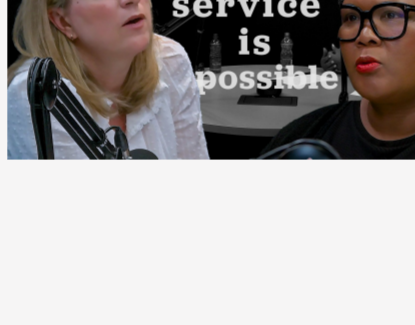
[Watch the video here](#)



Mr President, South Africa needs the Public Service Amendment Bill

The NSI also engaged with mainstream media following the passing of the PSAB by the National Assembly. In our view, the Bill represents South Africa's third transition: a historic reform that seeks to legally separate political and administrative powers in government, a major shift that could significantly curb political interference and corruption. [Read more here](#).

Please watch this interview in which Head of the Public Service Reform programme, Yoliswa Makhasi, engages with SABC TV on the PSAB [here](#). Yoliswa also spoke to Newzroom Africa about the Bill and the work the NSI has consistently done to help move this reform forward. You can watch her interview [here](#).



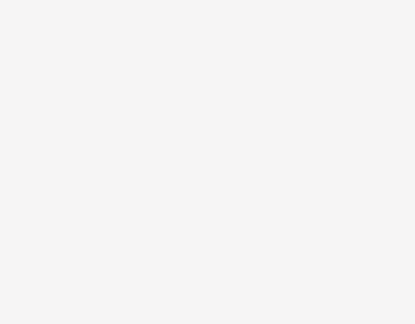
Governing Tomorrow Episode 5: Why Public Sector Reform Cannot Wait

Our latest podcast is out. This fifth episode of the *Governing Tomorrow* series features a powerful conversation between human rights lawyer and NSI affiliate researcher Nicole Fritz, Executive Director of the Campaign for Free Expression and author of the NSI report *Appointing the next NDPP: vital but insufficient to guarantee NPA turnaround*.

In this episode, Nicole and host Yoliswa Makhasi reflect on recent progress on the PSAB, an important reform that could help protect the public administration from political interference, but only if the implementation is bold and sustained.

[Watch the podcast here](#)

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUES PROGRAMME



Rethinking the AU-EU Partnership

Head of our South-South Dialogues programme, Jelena Vidojević, and Mandira Bagwandene published an op-ed on the *Brave New Europe* website, reflecting on the AU-EU Summit in Luanda.

They argue that despite 25 years of "strategic partnership", the relationship remains constrained by Europe's security-first approach. Meanwhile, African states are increasingly looking East, not ideologically, but because Eastern partners are delivering infrastructure, financing and policy space that Europe has struggled to provide.

If it fails to address these structural inequities, the EU risks becoming less relevant to Africa's development priorities.

[Read the article here](#)

NEWS FROM THE MIGRATION GOVERNANCE REFORM IN AFRICA (MIGRA) PROGRAMME



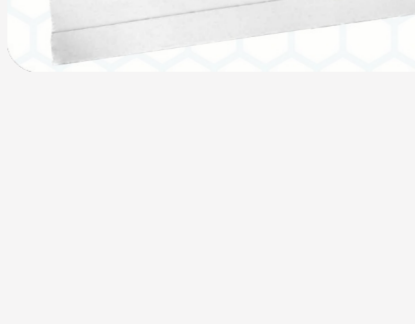
NSI webinar: Do Africa's regional institutions help regularise the mobility of people?

On 2 December, we hosted our annual migration webinar, reflecting on the set of NSI papers, produced this year, that examine regional approaches to mobility and integration across the continent. These outputs include a paper by Victor Amadi on free movement in West Africa, a study on Migration Governance in East Africa by Alan Hirschi, Head of the NSI's Migration Governance Reform in Africa programme, and a joint paper by Alan and Victor analysing the African Union's approach to continental mobility.

The webinar brought these strands of work together, offering a comparative view of how Africa's regional institutions shape people's ability to move across borders regularly and safely. Brian Chigawa and Ottilia Anna Maungandize provided reflections on the policy implications, highlighting both the progress made and the persistent barriers, from documentation and border management to lack of trust and political will, that still limit mobility across the continent.

[Watch the webinar recording here](#)

NEWS FROM OUR HISTORIES OF GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME



Introducing the NSI's Histories of Governance research programme

We are proud of what we've achieved this year, including the establishment of a major new research programme, with much of the groundwork now complete and a full public launch planned for the new year.

At our recent webinar, we announced the NSI's Histories of Governance research programme. This initiative will deepen both historiographical and policy debates in South Africa and the wider Global South by tracing the trajectories of state-building through the histories of key public institutions, from national departments to regulatory agencies, tax authorities and prosecuting bodies.

With forthcoming studies on institutions such as South Africa's National Treasury, emerging urban governance dynamics (including the rise of "ex-urbanisation" onto traditional land), and the NPA (referenced in this newsletter), the programme aims to generate historically grounded, academically rigorous work on the state. Its core ambition is to take African institutional experience seriously as a source of theory, not merely context, challenging government thinking shaped largely by European and American models, and opening space for approaches rooted in local histories, practices and political economies.

Stay tuned, much more is coming.

We thank you again for your interest in and support of our work

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