NEWSLETTER

Government in Numbers series expands with second report

In May, the New South Institute launched the second report in its Government in Numbers series, 'Talent Management in the South African Public Service: Evidence from Provincial Departments of Health', authored by Professor Albert Weeks.

Drawing on unsystemised Portal data from the provincial departments of health in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, the report examines how talent in the service is prepared to attract, develop, and retain the skills needed for the future. It identifies challenges relating to workforce ageing, succession planning, and the recruitment of professional nurses, and argues for a more strategic approach to talent management across the public service.

Read the report here...

Contributing to public service reform debate

On 4 May, NSI Researcher Sebowa Makhura joined a webinar hosted by the South African Association of Public Administration and Management University of Mpumalanga Student Chapter on the professionalisation of South Africa's public service.

The discussion explored the role of the PSA in professionalising the public service and the public service. Joining Dr Jabangibone Mahanjana, Chief Director at the National School of Government, Sebowa reflected on the policy design and implementation of professionalisation reforms, offering insights into what the recent legislative changes mean for the future of public administration and service delivery in South Africa.

Public service reform on Power FM

Over Chipkin joined award-winning journalist and former editor-in-chief of Ujo Press, Mondli Makhanya, on Power Talk on Power FM on 25 May to discuss the PSA.

Over explained how the legislation seeks to strengthen the professional autonomy of senior public servants by reducing political interference in the administration of government departments. He also reflected on the Act's significance as part of South Africa's broader public service reform agenda reflecting the state capture years.

Listen to the interview here...

Seminar on public service reform

The NSI, in partnership with the Kornhof Akimasan Stiftung and the University of Pretoria, hosted a seminar on public service reform in South Africa on 27 May.

Drawing on the NSI's recent research, the seminar considered the implementation of the PSA16, and the institutional changes needed to build a more professional, capable, and accountable public service. Discussions focused on the relationship between political and administrative leadership, talent management, demographic change, and state capacity.

Speakers included NSI Director Sven Chipkin, Professor Albert Weeks (Gordon Institute of Business Science), Professor Gerda van Dijk (University of Pretoria) and Professor Somadoda Fikeni, Chairperson of the Public Service Commission.

Watch the seminar, access the presentations and read the related reports here...

South Africa's Third Transition

On 29 May, Over Chipkin addressed an online seminar hosted by the University of the Free State on 'South Africa's Third Transition: Elite Competition and Public Service Rationalisation.'

Over discussed how political competition has shaped appointments to senior positions in the state and considered what the PSA16 may mean for the relationship between political leadership and the public service. The discussion also reflected on the role of public service reform in strengthening constitutional governance and such broad appointments.

Access the presentation here...

Africa Public Service Day Webinar

To mark Africa Public Service Day on 23 June, the NSI hosted an online discussion on public service reform in Africa, bringing together participants from across the continent.

The webinar formed part of the 11th Continental Africa Public Service Day commemorations and was held under the theme of transforming public institutions through innovation, accountability, participation and inclusion.

Speakers included Rethuang Lekalake, Director of Analysis at Afrobarometer; Jon Chipkin, and Jacob Nato, Policy Analyst at the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis.

The discussion considered public service reform from three perspectives: citizen experiences of service delivery across Africa, South Africa's current reform moment, and lessons from Kenya's efforts to professionalise public administration.

Participants raised questions about institutional readiness, political administrative relations, corruption, digital public services, and the need to translate policy reform into visible improvements in service delivery.

Watch the webinar here...

Over Chipkin featured on "STIT Talks" podcast

On 24 June, Over Chipkin joined Enrique Mendelsohn on 'STIT Talks', the podcast of Ola Thale Tanka, to discuss South Africa's PSA16, public administration reform and the role of think tanks in shaping policy.

The conversation reflected on the significance of the Act, the importance of expressing political leadership from public administration, and the process of building support for institutional reform over the longer term. Over also discussed the role of research, public engagement, and coalition building in achieving policy change.

Listen to the conversation here...

Evidence-based perspectives on migration governance

During the quarter, the NSI published two commentaries on migration governance and anti-foreigner sentiment.

Writing in the **Sunday Times**, MIGRA Programme Head Alan Hirsch argued that, while South Africans' frustrations are real, lasting solutions require stronger institutions, better migration governance and political leadership, not scapegoating. He writes that recurring outbreaks of anti-foreigner violence are rooted not only in concerns about migration and migrants, but also in unemployment, weak public services and declining trust in public institutions.

In a second commentary for **The Conversation Africa**, Alan sets out practical steps that government, political leaders and civil society can take to reduce tensions, strengthen migration governance and build a more cohesive South Africa. The article was republished by media outlets in South Africa, the United States, Kenya, France and several other countries.

Alan Hirsch on migration governance

A public debate around migration intensified in South Africa. Alan Hirsch joined Turkish broadcaster TRT World to discuss the deeper structural issues shaping the current moment.

Rather than reducing the debate to simplistic narratives about migrants "taking jobs", Alan highlighted the underlying drivers of public frustration, including unemployment, poverty, housing pressures, and declining confidence in public institutions. He argued that addressing these challenges requires credible migration governance, effective political leadership, and a commitment to the rule of law, rather than hostility or violence towards foreign nationals.

The interview also unpacked how South Africa can strengthen the management of undocumented migration while upholding constitutional values and social cohesion.

Following his first appearance on 16 May, Alan was invited back to TRT World on 28 May to provide further analysis as developments unfolded. The second interview is available to watch here.

South Africa's Pan-African commitments

In a Daily Maverick article published during the quarter, Mandlin Bogwanshe of the NSI and Aadyah Sayed reflected on the relationship between South Africa's pan-African commitments and the country's recent experiences of anti-migrant sentiment.

The authors argue that the current debate extends beyond migration policy, raising broader questions about political leadership, the rule of law, and South Africa's commitment to the values of dignity, solidarity, and inclusion.

Read the article here...

Research in the Media

Research by NSI's Over Chipkin and Jelena Valojevic continues to shape public debate. Their scholarly article, Elite Contestation in South Africa, 2008–2024: The Building and Unmaking of a Power Elite', published in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, argues that South Africa's political landscape is undergoing profound change, challenging conventional understandings of power, protest, and elite politics.

Building on the research, the authors contributed an opinion piece in **The Conversation Africa**, reflecting on how South Africa's elite is reshaped by contestation, and what this means for democracy and accountability. The article was republished by outlets in South Africa, the United States, Hong Kong, France, and other countries, extending the reach of the research beyond its original academic audience.

The publication also generated broadcast interest. Over discussed the findings in interviews with **Ukhozi** and **eNCA**, contributing to the national conversation on South Africa's evolving political landscape.

Over also translated his article into **Xosa** for **Ukhozi FM**.

Read the journal article here...

New working paper revisits the anti-apartheid struggle

In May, the NSI published a new working paper by Elizabeth Sosa, Researcher in the South-South Dialogues Programme. Titled **'Another World was Possible: Anti-Apartheid World-Making and the Unfinished Struggle for a New Global Order'**, the paper argues that many anti-apartheid actions understood their struggle as part of a broader global movement against racism, colonialism, imperialism, and economic inequality.

Drawing on archival research, the paper traces the international networks and political ideas that shaped the anti-apartheid movement and relates these to contemporary debates on global justice, solidarity, and South-South cooperation.

Read the working paper here...

Reflecting on a new global order

In an article published by News24 on 2 June, Elizabeth Sosa reflects on the idea of a New International Economic Order in the context of rising inequality, democratic backsliding, and shifting global power.

Drawing on her NSI working paper (mentioned above), Elizabeth argues that the anti-apartheid struggle was also a struggle to reshape the global order. She considers what those ideas might offer as countries respond to today's political and economic challenges.

Read the article here...

'Missing Voices' interview re-published by *Russia in Global Affairs*

The latest interview in the NSI's **'Missing Voices: Critical Thinking in Times of Polycrisis'** series has been republished by *Russia in Global Affairs*, a journal covering international affairs and global politics.

The interview features Kanyi Kanyi, co-founder and fund of the Sanco Podcast and Adjunct Professor at NYU Shanghai. Curated by Jelena Valojevic, NSI Co-Founder and Head of the South-South Dialogues programme, the 'Missing Voices' series brings diverse perspectives into conversation on the changing global order.

Read the interview here...

Civilisation-states and the changing global order

In a News24 article published on 18 June, Jelena Valojevic considers the growing influence of the idea of the 'civilisation-state' in countries such as China, Russia, India, Turkey and Iran.

The debate about multipolarity continues to shape international relations, but Jelena argues that the real contest is between modernism the Africa and South Africa. The article considers how civilisational politics may influence the emerging global order and what this could mean for African countries.

Read the article here...

NSI Research featured at national workshop

On 19 June, the Gauteng City-Region Observatory invited NSI's Head of the Elements of Government Programme, Andiswa du Toit, and researcher Andrew Charman to present their working paper, **'Urban Settlements on Traditional Authority Land: Four Case Studies'**, at the 'National Workshop on Extended Urbanisation in Former Homeland Areas'.

The presentation drew on research published by the NSI in March and analysed the rapid growth of urban settlements on land administered by traditional authorities. The findings contribute to current discussions on land governance, service delivery, and local government reform in South Africa.

Read the working paper here...

Annual Report 2025/26 launched

On Africa Day (25 May), the New South Institute officially launched its 2025/26 Annual Report, reflecting on our of research, policy engagement, and public dialogue.

The report documents the NSI's work across its research programmes, our growing public influence and impact, and highlights key developments during the year, including the passage of the PSA16 and our contribution to public debate on the professionalisation of the public service and democratic governance.

Read the Annual Report here...

Save the Date - Conference 2026

In September, the NSI will host a two-day international conference on "Civil Service Reform and Democracy", bringing together researchers, practitioners, policymakers and public leaders to discuss the future of democratic governance and public administration.

To express your interest in attending, please email info@nsi.org.za with the subject line Conference 2026.

Further details, including the programme, speakers, and registration information, will be shared soon.

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