

# Perspective on South African politics

**Marais, Hein. 2011. South Africa pushed to the limit: the political economy of change.** Claremont: UCT Press. 566 p.  
Price: R295,00. ISBN: 978 1 91989 540 6.

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This book by Hein Marais is a significant, comprehensive and in-depth account of the political and economic transformation of South Africa. In fact, Marais started his analysis far back in history, giving the reader a perspective on the growth of South Africa as a polarised society and how the armed struggle against apartheid started and eventually succeeded. As part of the bigger picture, the author also touches on the major issues of health (HIV and AIDS and TB) and education, as obstacles on the road to reconstruction of a viable society in postapartheid South Africa.

Unemployment, poverty and inequality are also addressed as variables and determinants that are changing the face of South Africa and that are making it almost impossible to transform the country in a peaceful way. Of course, this brings the clash of ideologies to the fore, namely Socialism and Communism, versus Capitalism, Democracy and possible alternative political philosophies. The debate in this regard is opened up by presenting the basic facts and realities of South African society. The recent Mbeki-Zuma battle and the real background to that is also discussed, giving the reader a glimpse of politics inside the ANC.

This book by Hein Marais on South African politics is, at present, arguably the most authoritative and comprehensive available, and any study on the general topic of South African politics will be inadequate without its inclusion. The topics addressed in the book are indeed also a necessary background to an understanding of further political and socio-economic developments in South Africa. Marais provides a crucial analysis for a valid perspective on the likelihood of

political radicalisation of South African society in future. This book is essential reading for anyone trying to understand the political transformation presently happening in South Africa.

*South Africa pushed to the limit* is well-suited as a textbook for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on South African politics as such, or transformation studies generally. This is also essential study material for civil servants across the board, but more specifically for those of the Departments of International Relations and Cooperation, Cooperative Governance, the National Intelligence Agency, Social Development, Tourism, and the Presidency. In addition, anyone who is interested in understanding present events and possible future scenarios in South Africa will find in Marais's book the necessary building blocks for such an endeavour. In future, as the day-to-day political reality in South Africa unfolds the importance of this book and the perspectives provided in it will become increasingly clear, especially with reference to the ANC's 100th birthday celebration this year, as well as the decisions the ANC in its National Executive Council will make during its meetings in 2012. The need for a second edition of *South Africa pushed to the limit* to catch up on recent developments is already discernable. Hopefully, Marais is working on that!