

There will be no (South) African Spring

 By [Sid Peimer](#)

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Clem Sunter points out a number of red flags that will lead us to a ruinous state. The flags include nationalisation, gagging the media and land grabs.

He also points out that we have the similar components required for South Africa's own version of the Arab Spring: High youth unemployment, growing alienation between the people and the state as well as active social networks. [1]

Well, that is not going to happen. Here's why.

It's a bling thing

Our youth admire anyone with bling, irrespective of how they got it. If you own a shoe store, it was reasonably safe to display just one of a pair outside the store - who would want to steal just one shoe? Well, things have changed with the new wars being fought by the youth in the township who eagerly await the next *izikhothane* battle. This is no ordinary war.

It started in the smaller communities of the East Rand and quickly spread to Soweto. The battle scene is nothing the world has ever experienced before: young people taking expensive items and destroying them, mainly by shredding and burning. No explanation has been forthcoming, however this is the way kids establish their status amongst their peers. Buying a bucket of KFC, throwing it onto a fire and then stomping on it with a R2,000 pair of (mismatched) sneakers which you then also burn, would be just one illustration of the types of 'dance' one can do at the party. The more money you burn, the more respect you earn.

What division will we play in?

We do have high unemployment that facilitates most negative outcomes such as crime, decreased investment, and emigration of key talent. In addition, there is rampant corruption and inefficient public administration.

I agree with Clem that the chances of us heading into a failed state is greater than it was five years ago (albeit only 10% by his prediction), however there will be no African Spring - the majority of people don't feel alienated by the fat cats of government. Also, the youth have turned their struggle inward. The social networks are used to reinforce their connections to society in personal ways, rather than to engender revolt against the ruling party.

A country needs only two things

I believe a country is like a household is like an individual is like a child. There are only two things required for healthy growth: love and boundaries. Although we claim to have a constitution, those in power flagrantly overstep our boundaries. We might have the love, but if you miss the boundaries, you land up with a spoilt brat who lands up in the gutter.

We are one of the few countries without enemies at our borders - somewhat an unkempt Switzerland of Africa. We have no civil wars and a growing middle class. It's such a pity that no one took advantage of 'selling' South Africa with these unique attributes during Madiba's dedication ceremony, or the more recent State of the Nation Address. I think Madiba would have wanted that - anything that makes South Africa a better place.

Reference:

[1] Clem Sunter. *The latest South African scenarios*. News 24, 2012.

Sid Peimer is a freelance strategist resident at www.stratplanning.com. Besides Comstrats overnight, he can also facilitate exciting Brand Days.

ABOUT SID PEIMER

A seasoned and insightful executive with multisector experience in roles as diverse as senior management, strategic planning and copywriting. I am a qualified pharmacist with an MBA from UCT. I am also an accomplished keynote speaker and presenter.

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