

Amid the chaos, Vuca is the new normal in SA

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Vuca - the acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity - is the new normal within the South African political context, said policy specialist, Theo Venter.



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In other words, volatility is evident in the current weakness of the rand, there's uncertainty on government policy, complexity is found in the multi-layered cultural, economic and political relationships in the country and ambiguity includes the growing impact of fake news. "Social media is one of the biggest disruptors," he said.

Politics as an iceberg

Speaking at the Momentum Consult annual conference, Venter said politics should be viewed as an iceberg. The noise of fake news is the small proportion above the surface, but it is the most visible. To understand the situation, you need to "ignore the noise" and look at all the data beneath the surface.

"We learn from economists that the economy goes in a cyclical way and it is difficult to determine where SA is in that cycle."

While certain things like the banking system, free press and relatively good infrastructure are having a positive impact on the country, these are counterbalanced by the negative impact of the weak economy, unemployment and the disarray within the ruling party.

The current state of chaos is a result of years of neglect, corruption and weak leadership characterised by the Zuma era. “I subscribe to the view of a range of possibilities for SA’s future where one sees cyclical movements followed by periods of chaos. It shows how difficult it is to deal with a situation like the country is in now,” said Venter.

Perspective is reality

He pointed out that perspective is reality, and the brain comprises a myriad of little files that determine how you see the world. During times of disruption, “you go back to places that reinforce your ideas. Your mind is formed and fixed,” he explained.

“That is why it is so difficult for us to deal with the future. We only see things when a crisis opens our eyes. Usually we cannot ‘see’ what is emotionally difficult for us to see.

Vuca demands reframing. “The future can be more than one thing. Don’t let the current uncertainty stop you. In a Vuca environment you need a better vision. You need to know where you are going and you need more research,” Venter said.

The murky question of land reform

“If we talk about land reform as an inflection point, what happens is that people have difficulty entering the discussion process. Then comes a disruptive turbulence and chaos phase and only after that phase can you get into a new beginning which could bring consolidation.”

He said people should be allowed to enter the land reform discussion process at the point where they feel comfortable, as not everybody develops the same insight at the same time.

Venter doesn’t believe that expropriation without compensation is sustainable. “I don’t think the Constitution will be changed regarding land expropriation,” said Venter. “It is a mindset issue. We must get out of emotionalism to what we are doing and be solutions driven.”

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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