

## **Fire or Backfire? Contribution to the Discussion on the Power – Its Use and Possible Misuse**

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This paper discusses the issues of cartoons as popular culture expressions with examples from South Africa and notes on the rest of Africa. It builds on my previous studies centering on two prominent and popular cartoons in present-day South Africa, the cartoons by John Shapiro and the cartoon strips called “Madam and Eve”. I will discuss (1) the context of democratic space, which is the prerequisite for critical cartoons, and also one of the campaign themes of cartoonist; (2) the contents and style of the cartoonists and their power, and investigate the spectrum of cartoons from democratic critique to strengthening stereotypes; (3) discuss the effects of internet and international distribution of cartoons.

On item (2) I will discuss whether cartoons by their focus on political top leaders contribute to an undemocratic political process (a debate which was initiated by Achille Mbembe and Francis Nyamjoh in their writing on Cameroonian cartoons); the South African Mohammed debate in which Shapiro took part in 2010 and which Mahmood Mamdani and others commented on.