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'Zimbabwe is the New Bantustan'

There is nothing that South Africa can learn from Zimbabwe about land reform, says Moeletsi Mbeki, speaking to Jannie Ferreira.

The South African government should never have allowed President Robert Mugabe to destroy his economy. It is in South Africa's national interest that neighbouring states do not collapse. Zimbabwe has now become a South African homeland, says Moeletsi Mbeki, businessman and political analyst who used to work in Zimbabwe as a journalist.

'What we have here is a good example of a failed South African foreign policy,' he said.

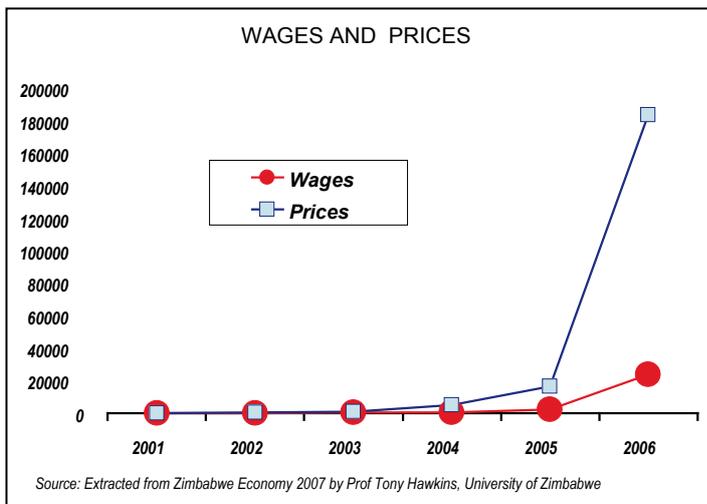
'If Dr (Hendrik) Verwoerd (former prime minister of South Africa) were to return to South Africa today, he would have been very sad that his Bantustan (homeland) policy had failed. But if he looked across the Limpopo, he would have seen that there was at least one place where it worked.'

'I do not know whether the South African government wants a Bantustan. They have diagnosed the problem incorrectly. They have treated the wrong ailment, namely Zimbabwe's national sovereignty. Instead of protecting our national interests, our government concerns itself with theories of sovereignty.'

But to understand Zimbabwe correctly the background must be seen in context, Mbeki explained. South Africans had never correctly understood the nature of the problem in Zimbabwe.

The first problem is the economy. Zimbabwe had a few export products that carried its economy for the greater part of the 20th century. These key products were asbestos, tobacco and gold.

Problems with asbestos began to develop when, towards the end of the 20th century, the use of asbestos was banned for health reasons, and gradually it was phased out of the basket of export products. The same started to happen with tobacco



as a result of increasing anti-smoking sentiment. Zimbabwean tobacco was highly sought after among the wealthy, but in time it had to be sold to poorer consumers in Asia. And while the gold price was about \$800 per fine ounce in 1980, it dropped quickly to \$300 in the years that followed.

Mbeki said that Zanu-PF always aspired to running a one-party state, and openly said so. It could, however, not entrench this in legislation because by the time Zimbabwe achieved majority rule, the idea of one party states had already been discredited in Africa. Although Zanu-PF strove for this, it was never introduced.

What it did was to place Joshua Nkomo's Zapu under pressure, with, among others, the assistance of the (North) Koreans. Zanu-PF committed atrocities against Zapu on the pretext that the latter was a front for the erstwhile South African apartheid regime. There was never any evidence for this, and the allegation was pure rubbish, said Mbeki.

Through this suppression of Zapu, the Mugabe regime murdered an estimated 20000 of their fellow countrymen. Zanu-PF did achieve one of its objectives, namely to force Zapu to amalgamate with them.

When the economy started to decline, urban dwellers were the hardest hit. Income from exports dropped, inflation rose and workers started to

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Editor: Tom Wheeler

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blame the government for the developing crisis. The consequence was that in 1999 the trade unions and non-governmental organisations established a political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Around the same time the constitution was amended and tested by means of a referendum. Mugabe's party received a hiding in the referendum.

The result of this was that Mugabe reverted to violent methods. He tried to suppress the MDC and intimidate its supporters, in the way he had done with Zapu in the 1980s. He could, however, not use the violent methods the military's Fifth Brigade had used and turned to his secret service and police to carry out the task.

Mugabe needed a new scapegoat because South Africa's National Party government was no longer there to blame. The 'new bogeymen' he discovered were the commercial farmers. They were blamed for Zimbabwe's economic problems, and Mugabe decided that the solution was to hand over agricultural land to the masses.

Some members of the South African government thought that this was really a very good idea, but land reform was not really what it was about for Mugabe, explained Mbeki. 'It was simply an excuse for oppression.'

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Zimbabwean economy. Even the manufacturing sector processed agricultural produce, for example the textile industry used locally grown cotton as its raw material. When the agricultural sector was destroyed, other parts of the economy started to disintegrate, and within five years Zimbabwe's whole economy was destroyed.

'What we have here is a good example of a failed South African foreign policy,' said Mbeki. 'The consequence is that, according to our government, we have between 2 and 3 million Zimbabwean refugees in our country.'

'We should never have allowed Mugabe to destroy his economy. We should have known that this was going to result in a flood of refugees. Now we are treating the symptoms.'

'What has happened therefore is that Zimbabwe has become a Bantustan (homeland)

of South Africa. Because its economy has been destroyed, Zimbabwe now depends on the money remitted by its citizens in South Africa.'

Is there anything that the South African government can do now? 'The answer is no. Zimbabwe has no economy left to speak of. All you can do is to try to keep Zimbabwe's degree of dependence to a minimum, but how do you do that?' said a downcast Mbeki.

South Africa's director-general for foreign affairs, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, recently admitted to parliament that not much had happened on the Zimbabwe front at Foreign Affairs. The department's annual report contains long sections on a variety of countries, but just 11 short lines on Zimbabwe.

Mbeki said that after Mugabe had rigged the elections in 2002, he began intimidating the

for fear of the outbreak of a 'civil war or the like' in the near future.

'Mugabe is the principal architect of this mess,' said Mbeki without hesitation. He is already busy with a plan to postpone the Zimbabwe elections again from 2008 to 2010.

In response to a question whether the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community could not contribute more to solving the crisis, Mbeki said: 'The crisis does not affect them that much. It affects the neighbouring countries most directly – South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. It is they who suffer.'

On whether his brother (President Thabo Mbeki) should not have handled the Zimbabwe issue more assertively, he replied: 'I do not want to personalise this. At the end of the day, it is the cabinet that takes decisions, not one man.'

Mbeki said that the accusation that land reform did not make progress because the British did not carry out their promises was another old wives' tale that the South African government wanted to believe. He said the agreement was that after independence the British would give 50% of the funding for land reform projects, on condition that the Zimbabwe government provided the balance, as well as the necessary infrastructure, such as schools.

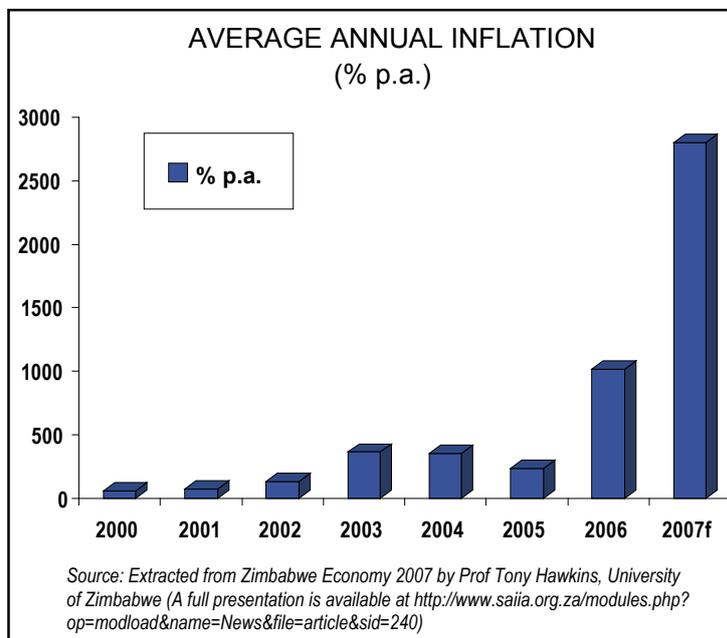
'This happened for the first five years (of Zimbabwe's independence), but since then the Zimbabwe government has failed to meet its side of the bargain.'

'In addition, Zimbabwe's idea of land reform was to give most farms to ministers. It was therefore the Zanu-PF government that stopped land reform in Zimbabwe. All this talk in the South African government that we must learn from Zimbabwe is rubbish. There is absolutely nothing that we can learn about land reform from Zimbabwe.'

Is it a sad story?

'Yes, it's a very sad story.'

This article was originally published in Die Burger on 9 December 2006. It was translated from Afrikaans by Tom Wheeler and is published in this form by kind permission of the author.



MDC, made false accusations against its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, and had people murdered, raped and tortured.

'This has been possible all because of our view of state sovereignty. Our government should have seen what was coming. We were far too concerned about questions of sovereignty, and not about South Africa's national interests.'

Mbeki said there is a feverish rush among foreign powers, such as the Russians and the Chinese, to get their hands on Zimbabwe's minerals. This development will make it that much more difficult for Zimbabwe to recover in the future.

Ordinary Zimbabweans are not waiting to be invited to plunder their country's minerals to the greatest extent possible and then to get out,

South Africa's Vote on Myanmar in the UN Security Council

Even before the transition to democracy, Nelson Mandela called on the military regime in Myanmar to release Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi from detention. In his speech when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 he called on the regime to engage in dialogue with those who had given Suu Kyi a resounding victory in the democratic elections of 1990. The junta ignored this call and others like it and they continue their repressive rule until today.

After the elections of 27 April 1994, South Africa was caught up with many other issues closer to home and the problems in Myanmar disappeared from its list of priorities.

This changed on 12 January this year when South Africa, newly elected to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, chose to use the opportunity to display how it planned to act in the Council. It voted against a resolution calling for the Myanmar junta to initiate democratic reform, release political prisoners and stop using rape as a weapon of war.

As justification for its vote, government spokespersons have emphasised a legalistic approach to the issue. The Security Council is not the forum to raise this issue, they said, as in the view of its neighbours, Myanmar does not constitute a threat to international peace. They cited the views of fellow Council member Indonesia as a justification. Yet Indonesia chose to abstain, not oppose the resolution.

The correct UN forum for this question to be raised, South Africa argued, is in the new UN Human Rights Council. They characterised this as a decision taken on a matter of principle. Yet in reality the record shows that the new UN Human Rights Council, set up to replace the discredited Human Rights Commission, has failed in the first year of its existence to address any of the human rights issues that are crying out for attention – and has focused instead on the only easy target, Israel.

On 17 January Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad held a press conference at the Union Buildings at which his remarks ironically were prefaced by an extract from a decision of the ANC's National Executive Committee on 8 January 2007. It read:

Our fortunes as a nation are intimately interconnected with the fortunes of our neighbours, our continent and indeed all of humanity. It is therefore on this basis both of moral responsibility and collective self-interest that we continue to be actively engaged in the effort to build a better Africa and world...

In deciding to vote against the resolution, South Africa was the only non-permanent member of the Council and the only African member to adopt this position. Neither of the other two African non-permanent members voted against the resolution. Congo (Brazzaville), representing the Chair of the African Union, abstained. Ghana voted in favour. This means there was no agreed common African position. When the question was posed why Ghana had supported the resolution, the answer was concise and, one would argue, closest to the position of the African Union: Ghana does not support military regimes. There are too many such regimes as it is. The African Union does not recognise regimes in Africa that assume power by overthrowing governments by non-democratic means, i.e. military coups.

“South Africa was the only non-permanent member to vote against the resolution.”

The decision of the South African delegation, presumably on instructions from Pretoria, to vote against a pro-democracy, pro-human rights, pro-women resolution caused a storm of criticism in the print media and on radio talk shows. Cartoonist poured scorn on those perceived to be responsible for a vote that:

- Ignored the ANC's oft stated policy of supporting human rights, improving the lot of women and a better life 'in Africa and the world', as reflected in the NEC's statement quoted above.
- Aligned South Africa with two permanent, veto-wielding members of the Security Council who are perceived internationally as having scant regard for human rights domestically or in their dealings with countries abroad.
- Sacrificed the moral high ground it occupied in 1994 on the altar of legalistic and technical arguments to justify its stance. In doing so it brings to mind that the apartheid regime used similar arguments at the UN over many decades to deflect the pressure placed on it by the liberation movements and UN members well-disposed to their cause. Its election to a Security Council seat should have reaffirmed, rather than eroded, that moral high ground. South Africa referred to the rule of the military junta in bland terms in the Security Council and nearly a week later Pahad only expressed 'deep

concern' rather than condemnation.

None of the many efforts of the department of foreign affairs in wordy op-ed articles or on talk shows to justify what they had done made any impact. The desperation of the department in the face of this withering criticism is reflected in a piece on "Frequently Asked Questions" placed on the department's website three weeks after the Security Council vote. But to no avail. The issue will not go away. After all, in politics 'perception is reality'.

The South African public's perception was that their government had erred. It had, in their view, surrendered to legalisms and concerns about national sovereignty and not acted on principle on how the UN should deal with issues. It turned its back on the battle to achieve a better world in some ephemeral attempt to reform the UN, when it is clear that the many and diverse vested interests among UN members would cause that to fail.

An alternative way of addressing the conflict between its moral position on human rights and its campaign for UN reform would have been for South Africa to record an abstention. Instead, it now has the dubious honour of delighting the repressive Myanmar military regime with a victory for their method of governing, as they would read into the failure of the resolution condemning them. Is this the company we want to be seen in? Is this the message we want to send the Burmese people?

South Africa's error did have one positive outcome. It raised the public profile of the Myanmar issue to an unprecedented level within South Africa and abroad. If 'all publicity is good publicity', the groups campaigning on behalf of the Burmese people have something to thank the South African government for. Their issue is on the international horizon, in public debate, in the media and on the blogs, in a way they could have hardly dreamed of.

It is astonishing that the astute political leaders of the ANC did not expect the furore that their decision would cause.

Whatever the reason, the government and the department of foreign affairs have created a public relations disaster for themselves that they should have foreseen and could easily have avoided. And it is not going away.

Tom Wheeler
The SA Journal of International Affairs
 Vol.13.2 has an article by Prof Deon Geldenhuys on the situation in Myanmar.

The KPCS: A Once-Off Success or Template for Good Governance?

Although the first meeting of the Kimberley Process took place in May 2000, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was formally adopted on 1 January 2003. The scheme makes it illegal, globally, to trade any diamond without a government-issued certificate warranting that the diamond has not been mined in an area afflicted by conflict.

The KPCS may most accurately be described as a work in progress. Much progress, but much more work to be done. To date the Kimberley Process cannot claim to have halted civil wars, but it may confidently claim that since its adoption, civil wars have not re-ignited in Angola and Sierra Leone, and that conflict in Liberia has ceased.

The cases of Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) present more challenging test cases for the KPCS. Yet even in these two civil-war-ravaged countries, there are indications that the KPCS has delivered tangible benefits.

The DRC's case is most striking in that its official diamond revenues rose dramatically from \$331 million in 1995 to \$895 million in 2005. Similarly, in 2000, Sierra Leone recorded practically no revenues from diamond sales, yet now the figure is \$142 million.

Digging deeper into the underlying challenges

But perhaps the most difficult test still awaits the KPCS. The phenomenon of conflict diamonds has been and continues to be centred on the small-scale artisanal extraction of diamonds from alluvial deposits.

The problems confronting artisanal diamond diggers themselves are daunting. It is estimated that there are as many as

"The phenomenon of conflict diamonds has been and continues to be centred on the small-scale artisanal extraction of diamonds."

800 000 artisanal diggers in the DRC, 120 000 in Sierra Leone and tens of thousands more in Angola, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

The recognition of the threat posed by the vulnerability of artisanal alluvial diamond mining has led to a number of recent initiatives to ameliorate the unacceptable conditions of these miners. Perhaps the most significant programmatic 'off-shoot' of the KPCS has been the founding of the Diamond Development Initiative (DDI) in 2005.

In summary, the DDI seeks to improve the work environment and earnings of artisanal diggers. The initiative will involve education for miners, access to credit, the provision of artisanal mining equipment, training in diamond evaluation, government intervention to streamline marketing and to improve labour law.^a The DDI is significant in a number of key respects. First, it is a confirmation of the value and necessity of the trilateral (government, industry and NGO) partnership approach forged in the KPCS.

Second, it focuses on the critical area of the relatively unregulated and highly problematical artisanal diamond mining in Africa.

Third, the DDI is a progression from policy formulation, regulation and monitoring, to active engagement in the qualitative improvement of the conditions of production in the areas most susceptible to conflict and illicit diamond trade.

Fourth, it is a recognition of addressing challenges to human security intrinsic to the current mode of alluvial diamond mining in West and Central Africa.

The DDI is an acknowledgement of the need to close the yawning gap of poverty, exclusion and exploitation that confronts some one million artisanal diamond diggers in Africa. More profoundly it acknowledges that without improving the supply-side conditions of alluvial diamond production in Africa, the potential for conflict and illicit diamonds to enter the market will remain an ever-present threat.

Conclusion

Despite the deep concerns expressed, particularly by the NGO community and echoed to a degree by the industry, regarding

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weaknesses of the KPCS in the run-up to the three-year review, the outcome of the 2006 Gaborone Plenary was highly satisfactory.

A number of corrective, constructive and progressive measures emerged. Plenary agreed to publish the names of countries habitually failing to timeously submit their statistical records and to strengthen measures against illegal shipments. Summary statistics for all production and trade in 2004 and 2005 would be released onto the public access section of the KP website.

New measures were approved to suspend (rather than simply expel), non-compliant members until they meet all KP requirements. Encouragingly too, the plenary agreed to examine future funding and resource requirements to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. In acknowledgement of the deep and structural challenges confronting the KPCS from the artisanal-alluvial sector, the plenary also approved the creation of a Working Group on Artisanal-Alluvial Production headed by Angola.^b

Thus, despite its travails and challenges, the KPCS emerged from the Gaborone Plenary closer to achieving four more 'C's': credibility, co-operation, clarity and clout.

Endnotes

^a The Diamond Development Initiative, Conference Report – Report of the Conference Proceedings of the DDI Conference, 28-31 October, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

^b Final Communique, Kimberley Process Plenary, November 6-9, 2006, Gaborone, Botswana.

Adapted from an article by Tim Hughes in the South African Journal of International Affairs Vol 13.2.