

SOUTH AFRICA-ZIMBABWE RELATIONS

*An assessment of South Africa's mediatory role In Zimbabwe (2007-2013),
as well as the current state of South Africa – Zimbabwe relations and possible future developments.*

31st August 2015, at the University of Cape Town (UCT)



INTRODUCTION

This policy brief is based on a workshop held on August 31st 2015, which was designed to serve as a premise for SALO's South Africa – Zimbabwe Volume II publication. Volume I focused on the layered political, historical and economic relationship between the two countries, with an emphasis on the political and economic crisis that engulfed Zimbabwe in 2000, and South Africa's response, engagement and support up to late 2006. Volume two will cover Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity (GNU) Phase, and the 2013 elections, as well as contemporary concerns pertaining to South Africa – Zimbabwe relations. The UCT Zimbabwe Society assisted SALO with the hosting and organisation of the event, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) contributed immensely to the workshop.

The workshop was attended by UCT academic staff, students and members of the UCT Zimbabwe Society, as well as a number of African diplomats including Mr Boniface Mugobogobo, the Consul-General from the Zimbabwean Consulate in Cape Town. Speakers included Prof Mills Soko (Associate Professor of International Political Economy at the UCT Graduate School of Business), Prof Brian Raftopoulos (notable Zimbabwean scholar and activist; Director of Research and Advocacy- Solidarity Peace Trust), Sanusha Naidu (IR Specialist and Researcher), Webster Zambara (Senior Project Leader for the Southern Africa Desk at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation- IJR), and Bram Hanekom (member of the ANC Alliance, Founder and Chairman of People Against Suffering Suppression, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) all of whom have an

excellent historical and contemporary comprehension of the relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe. The “Policy Dialogue Report” of the workshop provides a more detailed summary of inputs by individual speakers.

ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

An Assessment of South Africa’s mediatory role In Zimbabwe

Mbeki Era (1999 – 2006)

There is a perception that South Africa’s approach to Zimbabwe during this period was shaped and influenced by economic and commercial considerations. The speakers argued that even though economic and business interests *were* major considerations underlying mediation efforts, during the Mbeki era, South Africa’s policy towards Zimbabwe was also influenced by a number of ideological and political concerns which were encapsulated in president Mbeki’s policy of Pan-Africanism. These included among others:

1. The desire to do away with South Africa’s ‘big-brother’ image on the African continent.
2. The belief that African leaders, rather than Western powers, should resolve Africa’s problems.
3. Reinforcing South Africa’s identity as an African state.
4. Mbeki’s multi-lateralist stance; in which he viewed the issue of Zimbabwe as one that had to be resolved multi-laterally through institutions such as SADC.
5. The policy document on SA’s role in Africa, which was built on peace, stability and development. And furthermore, the notion that whilst apartheid South Africa destroyed the region, democratic South Africa would rehabilitate it.

The view that Mbeki’s government explicitly sided with ZANU-PF was expressed, citing that he preferred reform within the liberation movement, rather than seeing the opposition come in to power. It was noted that Mbeki’s mediation focused largely on stabilisation, to the detriment of democratic issues, and this was evident in the way in which the Global Political Agreement (GPA) was negotiated and implemented.

Zuma Era (2007 – 2013)

It was noted that Zuma’s mediation efforts were shaped by the same considerations as Mbeki’s, but that the Zuma administration had a more assertive and balanced approach, which highlighted the importance of reform in order to ensure stability..

It was observed that during this period, SA continued to assert its position as a regional power. Regarding this, Prof Soko indicated that three things need to be taken into account about leadership and how a country is perceived and these are: acceptance, capability (military and economic) and willingness. Whether or not SA has these three key characteristics of a regional power remains a major question among many, he argued.

It was interrogated whether the mediation process was adequately successful. The speakers viewed it as relatively successful from a South African perspective; as it brought both political and economic stability, and led to the stabilisation of the currency. Furthermore it facilitated a relatively conducive atmosphere for elections and protocols. The speakers argued that the democratic deficits within the GPA were disregarded in favour of stabilisation.

South Africa's conflict resolution model

In its peace and security efforts through mediation, South Africa seems to believe that the model of peace, reconciliation and democratic consensus (the CODESA model) is essential and could be accepted across the continent. This derives from the experience of its transition from apartheid rule to democratic rule, and the success it has been, through the above mentioned core values (peace, reconciliation and democratic consensus). The end of the GNU demonstrated the failure of this model, and this failure has been evident in other countries such as the DRC, Burundi, South Sudan, Ivory Coast and Madagascar. This failure highlights the reality that: liberation movements differ- there is a need for strong and capacitated opposition, and the economic configuration of the state needs to be considered during the mediation process, if negotiated peace is to be sustainable.

The aforementioned examples illustrate that this model of negotiated peace has a limited lifespan; depending on the country and the obtaining conditions. Furthermore, it does not work well under conditions where there is a structure that is unwilling to respond to change and to electoral reform. Therefore, the speakers argued that SA's peace and security intervention model in the continent is a one-size-fits-all, which papers over the cracks without addressing the core causes of conflict, and is thus fundamentally unable to bring about genuine reconciliation.

The current state of South Africa – Zimbabwe relations and possible future developments

It was noted that SA has disengaged from Zimbabwe since the end of the GNU. The speakers pointed to the fact that in terms of SA current foreign policy agenda, Zimbabwe is not a priority. However, **Mr Boniface Mugobogobo** emphasised that the two countries 'need each other' and have a 'special relationship' underpinned by a shared history of colonialism as well as shared kinship ties and values. He also noted that the two countries 'share cordial diplomatic relations', which can form the basis for the formulation and implementation of "appropriate policy interventions" in future by key stakeholders from both countries .

Brian Raftopoulos argued that SA will stay out of Zimbabwe unless there is a new political explosion or an unprecedented massive movement of people, furthermore Sanusha Naidu pointed out that this is due to a lack of a strategic orientation with regards to SA's Africa policy. She argued that under the Zuma administration there has been a lack of a central organising idea as well as a conceptual framework for an Africa Policy. Other speakers added that this lack of engagement is also due to:

1. SA's domestic problems SA's focus on the BRICS countries, especially China
2. SA's unwillingness to engage due to fatigue; Zimbabwe has occupied SA's foreign policy attention for many years

A contributor from the floor asserted his view that the current ANC leadership does not have what it takes to be able engage with President Mugabe, and that ZANU-PF has no respect for the ANC

In terms of China's role in Zimbabwe:

- China is viewed as being the most influential foreign power in Zimbabwe and this influence seems to translate to legitimacy among the political elite in the region
- China is very intent on safeguarding its commercial interests in Zimbabwe

This disengagement and lack of clear strategic direction by SA has raised concerns amongst SA companies operating in Zimbabwe, because these companies have no intention of leaving Zimbabwe.. He stated that at the

moment there is no reason to engage because ZANU-PF is at peace (in terms of external opposition) and engagements may be revived if tables turned against ZANU-PF and it is threatened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SA needs to re-engage in Zimbabwe

SA bears the brunt of the crisis in Zimbabwe, in that it has had to accommodate hundreds of thousands of migrants from Zimbabwe. Therefore a stable Zimbabwe may help to curb the issue of xenophobic attacks in SA, furthermore, with reduced number of Zimbabwean migrants, SA may be able address some of its domestic issues. In the context of SADC, Zimbabwe is very important in terms of resolving political, security and economic problems and therefore, a strong Zimbabwe is vital in terms of stabilising the SADC region.

SA has to have a clear strategic objective towards Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of SA's very important trade and investment partners and SA companies operating in Zimbabwe need the assurance that their capital is protected. The momentum of SA's policy regarding Zimbabwe needs to be restored. In the context of a changing regional environment, where countries like China are asserting themselves, SA needs to be actively involved in order to protect its interests.

The mediation model of SA needs to be addressed

SA needs to get out of the tick a box type of mediation; it needs to strengthen its role as a mediator, by learning from the experiences in Zimbabwe, Burundi, the Ivory Coast and elsewhere.

Liberation Movements need to advise each for the advancement of the country and not self-preservation

SA and other SADC countries need to appeal to President Mugabe to resign, so that he can create room for an orderly and peaceful succession. A leadership vacuum may result in chaos and even spark a civil war. The ruling party ZANU-PF requires a reorientation so it can stop using Zimbabwe as its personal property. Zimbabweans need to go back to the drawing board, including the opposition parties and ZANU-PF; they need to find a solution towards improving the material conditions of their people

Academics and researchers have to play a significant role

African solutions for African problems have to come from learned positions, not from just narratives and therefore, the academicians and researchers have to interrogate issues that add value to Africa. It is important to understand how the Chinese Communist Party operates and what its intentions are, in the future it will not be unthinkable for China to use military force to protect its interests in Africa. A contributor from the floor argued that the relationship between SA and Zimbabwe is the same as that of apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia and thus in looking for solutions it is vital to interrogate the past.

It was concluded that South Africa is moving its foreign policy in alignment to the regional and continental consensus, and that it *cannot* be defined outside of the democratic deficit which characterises African politics at large. Going forward, SA and Zimbabwe need to focus on their shared values such as the issue of the reform of Global Institutions, the UN reform, the World Trade organisation (WTO) reform, structural economic transformation and greater regional economic integration.

ENDS

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Brief do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the Policy Brief are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

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