



Liaison, Dialogue and Research

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Policy Brief

22 July 2021, Zoom Platform

SALO Regional Dialogue: South Africa, Eswatini and Zimbabwe.

S A L  REGIONAL PUBLIC
DIALOGUE: SOUTH AFRICA,
ESWATINI AND ZIMBABWE

THURSDAY 22 JULY 11:00
TO 13:00 (SAST)



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Introduction.

There are three over-lapping legacies in post-settler colonial states that have left their mark on countries in Southern Africa:

1. Forms of Political Settlement.

Post-colonial political settlements in Southern Africa were often the outcome of particular sets of national, regional and international dynamics. Whilst these settlements provided for certain forms of inclusive arrangements for racial political elites, brought some closure to violent conflicts, and opened new democratic spaces, they failed to deal with the more long-term forms of structural inequality inherited from colonial rule. Nor did they democratise the more 'traditional' forms of rule that fostered ethnic identities

2. State Capture.

As a recent document from the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance has observed:

“One of the most challenging features of post-colonial politics has been that, given the limited opportunities for the growth of an emergent black capitalist class in the private sectors, the state has become the centre of capital accumulation. This has resulted in various forms of state capture and corruption as ruling elites combine their monopolisation of state power with the use of public resources to control different natural resources for corrupt accumulation. The modality for such accumulation has involved the abuse of state-owned enterprises as well as the military in opaque forms of wealth accumulation, to the detriment of the general citizenry.”¹

3. Civil Society and the Struggle for Democratisation.

The interventions of civil society movements remain critical for the advance of democratic spaces in post-colonial states. Civic pressure for the provision of social and health services, human rights, structural economic change, as well as the fight against state capture has been critical in keeping questions of state accountability in the public sphere.

Central Issues Raised in the Discussion.

In the three presentations several key issues were raised:

¹ Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, *How can Ethical Leadership, Democratic Governance and Strengthened Institutions advance Sustainable Development in Africa*. 15 June 2021.

- I. The liberation movements in Southern Africa have become consumed with their internal factional struggles and distracted from dealing with central issues of democratic governance. This problem has only been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic which has laid bare the weaknesses of the states in the region and their increasing resort to coercion as a mode of rule.
- II. In parties like the ANC Members of Parliament and Provincial Councils are elected largely on the basis of party affiliation, and not on the ability of individuals. As one commentator has noted such an electoral system ‘passed political authority exclusively to ANC party headquarters as the real government, unaccountable to voters,’ thus paving the way for ‘extreme corruption’.²
- III. The role of the military has grown increasingly prominent in the region, as most recently demonstrated by the coup in Zimbabwe in November 2017. Moreover, the growing influence of the military has resulted in the proliferation of cartels in the economies, and the corruption that has become embedded in many states.
- IV. The inherited forms of rule from the colonial period have resulted in the persistent and populist politicisation of racial and ethnic identities. This was most apparent in the recent turmoil in South Africa in which, as Bishop Rubin Phillip noted: *“KZN communities were at each other’s throats”*.
- V. The continuing structural inequalities inherited from the colonial period have resulted in a lack of social cohesion. There is a dire need to address an essential existential question: **What does it mean to be human?**
- VI. Southern Africa, and indeed the global polity, needs a new emancipatory vision that moves beyond the agenda of past liberation movements and builds on broader societal responses and capacity. This will require a radical pessimism that moves, in the words of Richard Pithouse, beyond the glib narcissism in South Africa and the *“compulsory optimism, myth and lack of dealing with reality”*.

The Way Forward

- There is a need for a more differentiated analysis of the use of the military in the region and to set out more effective and democratic ways in which it can be deployed.
- While technocratic solutions can provide some steps forward in dealing with economic and social problems, only alternative political processes will be able to deal with the long-term

² Paul Trewhela, A system in need of reform: The stage is set for a showdown between the ANC’s ‘inzile’ and exile political cultures. Daily Maverick, 22 July 2021.

structural inequalities in our societies. Such new political interventions could then lay the basis for a more inclusive and democratic social contract for the citizenry.

- Many civil society organisations, in their current form, are not dealing with the reality and demands of the dominant ‘informalisation’ in our economies. There is an urgent need to include marginalised and community-based organisations in local and national decision-making processes. To achieve this objective, Tessa Dooms proposed two sets of reforms:
 - Electoral reforms that serve the majority and legitimise their community forms of participation. Democratic nation-states cannot be constructed solely on coercion, and the response to poverty should not be securitised.
 - Democratising the economy by empowering the local modes of economic survival in the informal sector.
- Finally, it is imperative to return to the question of what it means to be human in the current context of the dire economic and political conditions of global politics.

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 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.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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