

**Address of the Patron of the TMF, Thabo Mbeki,
at the Inaugural Session of the
Aziz Pahad Annual Peace, Security and Human Rights
Dialogue:
DIRCO Headquarters, Tshwane:
O.R. Tambo Building,
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Programme Director;
Minister Ronald Lamola;
Professor Angina Parekh;
Ambassador Gjermund Saether:

The Minister and Ambassador Nhlapo have helped by making the necessary acknowledgements.

Thank you to all who are in attendance this morning and thank you to you Minister and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation for the initiative to name this dialogue series after Aziz Pahad.

I am glad that we decided to honour him in this particular way.

If we take our three administrations of 1994, 1999, and 2004, I am sure you will agree with me that, the one person in those administrations who was most experienced in international relations was Aziz. He was indeed, in a sense, the expert on whom we depended for guidance with regards to these issues.

I am very glad that we have decided to say something at this meeting about his book, *The Insurgent Diplomat*, because that tells a particular story, which is important.

All of us will recall the time when the US, supported in particular by the United Kingdom, went to war against Iraq in 2003. We were very interested in stopping that war before it broke out.

So, what happened was that, Aziz had to engage, Saddam Hussein on the issue of the cooperation of Iraq with the UN Arms Inspectors who were led by the Former Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans Blix, because it was clear to us watching at a distance that not enough cooperation was happening, and indeed, Hans Blix was talking publicly about that.

To avoid a war, which would be caused by that, Aziz engaged the then President Saddam Hussein to convince him of the importance of cooperating with the UN and indeed dealing with that challenge related to weapons of mass destruction, and Saddam agreed.

As a consequence of which Aziz led a delegation to Iraq, of the people in this country who had been responsible for dismantling our own nuclear weapons, and we were also familiar with what had happened with regard to the chemical and biological weapons. He led a delegation to Iraq, to engage the Iraqis on whether they owned weapons of mass destruction. The delegation led by Aziz wrote a report and said there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The report was submitted to the United Nations Security Council. When President George Bush called me to say that he was very concerned about the possibility of this war, and wanted to avoid it if he could, I said to him there is a report at the UN Security Council which says there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and he should please access that report.

I don't know if he did. But I am telling you this story because this was an indication of the kind of serious engagements in which Aziz would be involved. And of course we all know when the war broke out and the

search started for these weapons of mass destruction, and the result confirmed what Aziz and his team had said, that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I am also mentioning the *Insurgent Diplomat* book, because one of the things that it deals with is a period of four years which focused on preparing for the transition from apartheid to democracy, in which Aziz was involved. A group of leading Afrikaners - academics, businesspeople, leaders in the church, and professionals - who I could say undertook a voyage of discovery, which was to talk to the ANC to find out what the ANC is, and what does it think? What is its view about the future of South Africa?

They had to discover this because they had brought themselves up on a fake notion of what the ANC was. Aziz engaged in this discussion for four years, and they would ask questions like, "*when you say the people shall govern, what do you mean?*" In their understanding, we meant the ANC shall govern. There would be an election, one election, and the ANC would win and stay in power forever.

We had to explain all of this, we had to explain when we say South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, after all of these centuries of oppression by the white minority, what do we mean? Aziz was a part of the process of explaining what that meant, and what it would mean once South Africa was liberated.

I am saying all of this, because I am quite sure that Aziz would have been very shocked if he read the executive order that was issued on the 7th of February by the President of the United States, which we will recall said:

"In shocking disregard of its citizens' rights, the Republic of South Africa (South Africa) recently enacted Expropriation Act 13 of 2024 (Act), to enable the government of South Africa to seize ethnic minority

Afrikaners' agricultural property without compensation. This Act follows countless government policies designed to dismantle equal opportunity in employment, education, and business, and hateful rhetoric and government actions fuelling disproportionate violence against racially disfavoured landowners."

I am saying Aziz would have been shocked to listen to that, because he spent many years explaining what the ANC stood for and what it would mean for South Africa, what that would mean for South Africa when South Africa was liberated, that you could have a false statement like that is being propagated.

But Aziz would have treated this as a wakeup call, in this sense. The fact that an outright fabrication had been accepted by a major Government as the truth indicated that it was imperative correctly to understand the world in which we engage in foreign policy and international relations - to understand how any government could so readily accept a falsehood of that kind - to understand the world in which we engage in foreign policy and international relations.

Therefore, Minister, on behalf of Aziz, let me ask some robust questions:

- does DIRCO understand the world in which it engages international relations on behalf of the people of South Africa?
- does it have the internal capacity to develop this understanding?
- in practice, what is done, practically, to get this understanding?
- what is done to relate policy to that understanding?

I think these are very serious questions which Aziz would have raised so that whatever we do is on the basis of an objective understanding, an understanding of the objective world within which policy develops, which might have explained why a falsehood like this claim about the persecution of Afrikaners, was accepted by an important government in the world.

In that context of understanding the world, let me make some remarks about the United States.

Earlier this month of March, the US issued its Annual Threat Assessment developed by the US Intelligence Community. It is important to study and understand this as part of understanding the objective world within which we operate. The US intelligence Threat Assessment, among others, has a section headed Major State Actors which says that:

"Several major state actors present proximate and enduring threats to the United States and its interests in the world, challenging U.S. military and economic strength, regionally and globally. China stands out as the actor most capable of threatening US interests globally, though it is also more cautious than Russia, Iran, and North Korea about risking its economic and diplomatic image in the world by being too aggressive and disruptive. Growing cooperation among these actors expands the threat, increasing the risk that should hostilities with one occur, it may draw in others."

This assessment of the US intelligence Community about Major State Actors, also contains a section dealing with *Transnational Islamic Extremists*, and it says:

"ISIS's most aggressive branches, including ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K), and its entrepreneurial plotters will continue to seek to attack the West, including the United States, via online outreach and propaganda aimed at directing, enabling, or inspiring attacks, and could exploit vulnerable travel routes.

It says, *"In 2024, the ISIS spokesman publicly hailed the group's Africa expansion, highlighting the growing importance of the continent to the group. ISIS-Somalia has doubled in size during the past year, ISIS West Africa remains the largest branch and leads in numbers of claimed attacks, and ISIS-Sahel is expanding into coastal West Africa.*

It then says, *"Al-Qa'ida maintains its intent to target the United States and U.S. citizens across its global affiliates..."*

And, *"Al-Shabaab—al-Qa'ida's largest and wealthiest affiliate—remains focused on attacks in Somalia that further its regional objectives, provides funding to al-Qa'ida efforts outside of Somalia..."*

I think the legitimate question that arises from these quotations is what the implications for Africa of these assessments are, concerning Major State Actors and concerning Transnational Islamic Extremists as the US intelligence report says.

So far, of course, there is no Africa policy from the Trump Administration which policy would have informed us about whether these intelligence assessments have an impact in terms of US policy towards Africa. I am saying so far there isn't such a policy, but in December 2018, during President Trump's first term, Ambassador John Bolton, who was the National Security Adviser to President Trump, spoke about the Trump Administration's new Africa strategy, and here is what he said:

"We have prioritized everything, developing this new Africa strategy document because we understand that lasting stability, prosperity, independence, and security on the African continent are in the national security interest of the United States. We want our economic partners in the region to thrive, to prosper, and to control their own destinies. In America's economic dealings, we ask only for reciprocity, never for subservience".

And, *"Second, countering the threat from Radical Islamic Terrorism and violent conflict..."*

He went on to say:

"Great power competitors, namely China and Russia, are rapidly expanding their financial and political influence across Africa. They are deliberately and aggressively targeting their investments in the region to gain a competitive advantage over the United States..."

"China uses bribes, opaque agreements, and the strategic use of debt to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands." And continued, "Its investment ventures are riddled with corruption, and do not meet the same environmental or ethical standards as U.S. developmental programs..."

And he went on to say that "Russia, for its part, is also seeking to increase its influence in the region through corrupt economic dealings. Across the continent, Russia advances its political and economic relationships with little regard for the rule of law or accountable and transparent governance.

"It continues to sell arms and energy in exchange for votes at the United Nations—votes that keep strongmen in power, undermine peace and security, and run counter to the best interests of the African people..."

"In short, the predatory practices pursued by China and Russia stunt economic growth in Africa; threaten the financial independence of African nations; inhibit opportunities for U.S. investment; interfere with U.S. military operations; and pose a significant threat to U.S. national security interests.

And, "Equally concerning at this time," he said, "the lack of economic progress in the region has accompanied the proliferation of Radical Islamic Terrorism, and other forms of violent conflict, across Africa.

"Countering these serious threats is the second priority under our new Africa strategy..."

And he also said, *"We will focus our economic efforts on African governments that act with us as strategic partners, and which are striving toward improved governance and transparent business practices.*

"As our partner nations develop economically, they will be better prepared to address a range of security threats, including terrorism and militant violence."

Minister, we do not know whether the current Trump administration will persist with these positions concerning what it has described as its strategic adversaries according to its Threat Assessment.

I have read these paragraphs, because it may very well be that the current Trump Administration, may take what John Bolton said on behalf of the first Trump Administration as a framework within which to formulate its Africa policies. If that is the case, Minister, the question arises, what does Africa do, in the light of that eventuality?

In 2022, the US Defence Intelligence Agency said that:

"Terrorism remains an active destabilizing influence with al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist groups and ISIS gaining influence and in many cases territorial control in the Sahel, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and elsewhere on the continent..."

It said, "The al-Qa'ida-affiliated group Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin continues to increase attacks in Sahelian states, especially Burkina Faso and Mali, and to threaten littoral countries, while ISIS-Sahel is focused on rebuilding itself in Niger after leadership losses and setbacks in 2020 and 2021. ISIS-West Africa mostly defeated Boko Haram in 2021, incorporating many former Boko Haram fighters in the process and allowing the group to expand its area of influence and continue attacks on regional security forces in the Lake Chad Basin..."

It said, *"In Mozambique, ISIS-Mozambique expanded operations, conducting deadly attacks and temporarily taking terrain that threatened Western economic interests in the oil-rich province of Cabo Delgado...."*

And it said that, *"In South Africa, ISIS elements have used the country as a conduit for illicit financial transactions."*

This situation, described by the Defence Intelligence Agency of the US, is not likely to have changed by 2025, except for the worse.

So, the question arises, what do we do, as the Continent, in light of what Bolton said about countering the threat from radical Islamic terrorism and violent conflict and the commitment he made that the US would intervene in Africa to achieve that objective. What do we do?

Another matter which is of importance relates to the global economy, raised in the context of what the Trump administration has been saying about raising tariffs on many products. It raises a question, therefore, not only of tariffs, but of the economy. In terms of the global economy, what does the Trump administration think?

Alistair Crooke is a former British Ambassador and belongs to a group called the Conflicts Forum, and in this regard, talking about the economy, he makes an interesting proposition.

He writes: *"The post-WWII geo-political outcome effectively determined the post-war global economic structure."* And says, *"Both are now undergoing huge change."*

He says, *"The US has been forced into two major conclusions: First, that the budget deficit coupled with exploding Federal debt finally has turned the 'Resource Curse' back onto the US."*

Crooke continues to say, *"As the 'keeper' of the global Reserve Currency, it has necessarily made America's primordial export to become the US dollar. By extension, it means that the strong dollar (buoyed by a global synthetic demand for the reserve currency) has eviscerated America's real economy - its manufacturing base."* And he says, *"This is 'Dutch Disease', whereby currency appreciation suppresses the development of productive export sectors..."* and that, *"the dollar's global role contributed to financialization at the expense of investment in the real economy..."*

And says, *"the Reserve Currency (and consequentially strong dollar) has pushed many US military supply lines out to China. And he says, "it makes no sense, the Pentagon argues, for the US to depend on Chinese supply lines to provide the inputs to US military manufactured weapons..."*

Crooke writes that *"The US administration has two answers to this conundrum, which is to weaken the value of the dollar and therefore to increase the value of the partner's status currencies. Thus, the US solution is to force the rest of the world to appreciate their currencies to improve the US export competitiveness."*

"The second option", he says, "is a unilateral approach. In the unilateral approach, a 'user fee' on foreign official holdings of US Treasuries would be imposed to drive reserve managers out of the dollar - and thus weaken it."

Crooke further says a *"US economic rebalancing is coming"* and says, *"Putin is right, the post-World War two economic order is gone"*.

This analysis may be right or wrong, but I think the size of the issues it is raising, concerning a country which can still make a major impact on the global economy are important, and therefore emphasises the need to understand the global economic objectives of the Trump administration.

Alistair Crooke said Putin was right that the old economic order was on the way out, creating new possibilities. He was talking about what Putin had said earlier this month when he addressed the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. Of course, he was talking about Russia, in the context of this economic world order that is on its way out.

Putin said:

"Sanctions are neither temporary nor targeted measures; they constitute a mechanism of systemic, strategic pressure against our nation. Regardless of global developments or shifts in the international order, our competitors will perpetually seek to constrain Russia and diminish its economic and technological capacities..."

And he said, "I reiterate: sanctions and restrictions are the reality of the existing new stage of development that the entire world, the entire global economy, has entered. The global competitive struggle has intensified, assuming increasingly sophisticated and uncompromising forms..."

"(But) The so-called Western dominance is slipping away, and new global growth centres taking the centre stage is a long-term trend, and I want to emphasise that. Yes, of course, we are fully aware of the advantages offered by our so-called Western partners, such as advanced technology and production process organisation..."

"We should keep in mind that growth rates in various regions of the world will remain stable over the next several decades. And the fact that we have, to a certain extent, refocused our priorities (not through our fault, by the way) due to a number of circumstances may be a good thing. We are shifting our focus to global promising markets. All things that we need we will get one way or another."

"Of course," he said, "this long-term trend will remain unchanged. It will be bolstered up by, among other things, the BRICS development platform that is currently taking shape."

What Putin was arguing here is that despite all obstacles, essentially because the old order in the economy, globally, no longer holds, as Alistair Crooke said, "Russia will succeed".

What is our reading, Minister, about this? Is the world order, the old economic order, on the way out? Are Putin and Alistair Crooke, correct? And where does that position us and position the African continent, if that is the reality?

Some have correctly suggested that that despite this changing world, it is still necessary to make an objective assessment of the power of the United States, given its prominent economic, technological, and military standing globally.

In this regard, the US Professor Paul Poast wrote in January this year, and said that:

"Some might question whether the U.S. is still the world's hegemonic power, or the key country that can shape and alter the course of international politics. If it's not, then Trump's behaviour, while concerning, can be dismissed as the flailing of a declining power. But even if the U.S. is still not hegemonic, much of the world—be it nations of the Western Hemisphere residing directly in the U.S. orbit, the network of allies that rely on U.S. protection or the international institutions that rely on U.S. support to function—still view the U.S. as the central actor in the world. Moreover, the U.S. remains, "one of the few countries in the world with the power and resources to largely shape world politics in a manner that serves its interests. It would seem to be a wasted opportunity not to."

US Professor Paul Poast said this early this year. It was followed by another US thinker, Connor Echols, who wrote under the heading, *Trump's Power Problem*.

He said: *"Whether Trump likes it or not, the unipolar moment—that brief post-Cold War period of true American primacy—is over, particularly in economic terms, and Washington's leverage is an easy resource to squander... Trump can get modest short-term wins by threatening sudden economic shocks. But over the long term, countries will try to limit their exposure to a volatile trading partner..."* And he said, *"For most of the post-World War II era, America has used its status as the dominant global economic power to shape the rules of trade and hem in its adversaries. That power is still huge, but preserving it depends on a certain level of restraint, especially given all the other powerful states in the game today. The more that Washington hits other countries with sanctions or tariffs, the more it encourages other states to find ways to cut their ties to the American economy... Washington's economic sword, once the world's sharpest, is growing dull through a thousand mindless blows."*

Professor Paul Poast concluded:

"The U.S. under Trump appears bent on fully leveraging its outsized position within the world's trade, security and financial networks to coerce better deals. If others don't like it, they won't even be given the dignity of a kind word. The U.S., in Trump's view, has been played for a sucker, and he's determined to change all that..."

He went on to say, *"(Trump) also thrives in being highly transactional. This will tilt the U.S. toward being more a predatory hegemon in the coming years, one that destabilises and disturbs more than it comforts. But it also won't be fully outside the bounds of how the U.S. was long perceived by others."*

South Africa itself, of course, has been exposed to some action by the Trump Administration. The challenge remains, with all these various assessments of what the Trump Administration stands for, how should we relate to the US, under the Trump Administration? In my view, this is not a very straightforward matter, but I believe that in this regard, DIRCO must give us the lead.

As Aziz insisted, we are seeing the emergence of a multipolar world; the issues we have been discussing are part of that multipolarity.

Many were surprised when the new US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, said during an interview on the 30th of January 2025:

"So, it's not normal for the world to simply have a unipolar power. That was not – that was an anomaly. It was a product of the end of the Cold War, but eventually you were going to reach back to a point where you had a multipolar world, multi-great powers in different parts of the planet." He said, "We face that now with China and to some extent Russia, and then you have rogue states like Iran and North Korea you have to deal with."

In the same interview he said:

"The way the world has always worked is that the Chinese will do what's in the best interests of China, the Russians will do what's in the best interest of Russia, the Chileans are going to do what's in the best interest of Chile, and the United States needs to do what's in the best interest of the United States."

It seems right, Minister, that, inspired by what Marco Rubio said, we must also insist that Africa must do what is in the best interest of Africa.

It is obvious that an important part of what is in the best interest of Africa is its correct and timely positioning in the evolving multipolar

world, so that the emerging global order places our Continent in a better position to address its many challenges of the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment, silencing the guns, ensuring that the people govern and ending Africa's international marginalisation.

The serious challenge in this regard is that there is no evidence or sign anywhere that Africa's political and intellectual leadership is not only conscious of the need to define our Continent's place in the emerging multipolar world, but is also ready to act on this urgent matter.

Given its recent performance with regard to many of Africa's contemporary challenges, it is very doubtful that the Continental body, the African Union, would be up to this task.

This problem is compounded by the reality that over the years the spirit of Pan Africanism among our African political leadership in general has waned significantly, such that, to borrow a favourite Aziz expression, "very few among these eat, sleep and dream while at the same time focusing on addressing the historic task of achieving Africa's renaissance".

It would therefore be very apposite that as DIRCO is engaged in this Inaugural process of honouring a giant thinker and practitioner in the field of international relations, Aziz Pahad, it should resolve to lead the process whereby our country, a Member State of the African Union, would present to the AU, a concrete programme Africa should follow practically to define and find its rightful place in the emerging multipolar world.

Thus, at last, would Aziz's dream be realised of ensuring that Africa interacts with the rest of the world as an equal among equals. I am suggesting, Minister, that DIRCO must face all these challenges understanding precisely this world in which we live, and elaborate the required policies so that the African continent engages its challenges in a

way that produces results, including that it is positioned correctly in that multipolar world.

I apologise that I did not have time to address the topic on our Programme about The Role of Constitutional Development, and so on. It must be addressed at some point. And in that regard, I would like to say *môre is nog `n dag!*

Baie Dankie.