

Thursday, 7 December 2017

Belmond Mount Nelson

Dr Iqbal Survé Executive Chairman Independent Media, and the Sekunjalo Group and Chairman of the BRICS Business Council South African chapter.

At a seminar on:

Xi Jinping: Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and the official review ceremony of the new book *Xi Jinping: the Governance of China II*

Good morning

Ambassador Lin Songtian

Mr Huang Youyi

His Excellency Ambassador Du Quiwen

His Excellency Ambassador Liu Guijin

Panelists and esteemed guests

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to reflect and discuss two important events that took place this year, the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the second volume of Chinese President Xi Jinping's Governance of China.

I have been to China 15 times over the past ten years. To attend the WEF summit, the Brics Business Council Meetings and summits, G20 meeting, and on State and other media visits.

My visits have given me insights, it has been a learning journey to observe first-hand the humanitarian progress, technological progress and the progress in social cohesion, the reduction in inequality and the focus which China has on industrialisation, economic growth and more recently services business and technologies.

And above all of that, through my involvement in the BRICS Business Council and State visits, I have had opportunities to engage personally in forums with President Xi Jinping, and

recently had the pleasure of handing over the BRICS Business Council report to five BRICS presidents, including President Xi Jinping. In all of these interactions I have managed to glean what I would describe as my own personal remarks about President Xi Jinping.

1. These include that he is resolutely purpose driven and determined to create prosperity for all Chinese citizens
2. He is committed to global peace both, regionally and internationally
3. He is determined to root out corruption in China
4. He focuses on the development of people as opposed to the development of factions or groupings within China itself
5. He is determined to chart an independent way for China when it comes to economic growth, which includes bi-lateral and multi-lateral ties in regions that China is familiar with including Asia. The Asia development bank was established, the Silk Road Initiative and most recently the New Development Bank, also known as the BRICS bank.
6. The decades of Infrastructure development and investment in China has been exceptional. China looks very much like a new country. If you go Shanghai, Xiamen and Dalian the infrastructure is modern and new. Compare the same infrastructure to the UK or US and there is clearly no real infrastructure development over two decades, bridges are old and roads are collapsing.

Those are my personal remarks and learnings. My external remarks.

The war on poverty is important to us harmony and peace can only come when poverty is eradicated and hence a number of initiatives were put in place to be able to ensure that almost a billion people are able to come out of poverty in China.

Most importantly President Xi Jinping has provided leadership in an ecosystem of progress, peace and development in the framework of the Communist Party of China. Whilst outwardly the Communist Party is an important party and ideological vehicle for the Chinese leadership

it is not fixated on communism as an ideology, but rather its practical implementation of social policies and thinking that caused the economy to reach mature development, so that China emerges as a developing economy to a developed one and focus on citizens to enjoy moderate prosperity.

Africa and China is a partnership which is embedded in a socio-political genesis and historical counter party developments, by that I mean if you look at the demographic and socio-economic and political countries in Africa it mirrors China in the decades of the sixties seventies and mid-eighties.

Therein lies the hope that if China is able to advance substantially out of this period it can then serve as an example as a mechanism of advancement for Africa. So whilst in many ways African policies continue to be forward looking and progressive, it is the practical implementation of these policies that has made the difference to China and it is this practical difference that we ask the questions about how we are able to achieve this.

If China can take 700 million people on the journey of extreme poverty to minimum and moderate prosperity then there is no reason why SA and Africa, with its young population is not able to do the same.

Of course, not all aspects of practical implementation and socio-political development can be identical, especially since China itself was never colonised but Africa and its constituent countries were colonised and divided up as spoils for mostly European interests.

It is these artificial separations which in various ways have continued to hamper the progress of Africa. And forcing it to approach things from a country regional perspective as opposed to a continental perspective.

As an example, one of the key foundations for economic progress is transport, mobility of its populations in this instance in China has succeeded to make mobility an affordable factor by putting in place high speed train networks in various parts of the country, able to connect east and west and north and south - corridors which shape economic progress in various ways. This is no different to the progress done in the US with the Rockefellers who owned the railway lines, and caused the economic growth of the US. With mobility comes people and the movement of goods and people and resources which causes economic progress.

Africa does not have a high speed railway network able to connect regions and countries and cities together.

If this were made possible the movement of resources and people would be optimised, allowing Africans to continue to progress. These are the kinds of concrete examples of industrialisation and infrastructure spend which the Chinese have been able to achieve.

In many ways President Xi Jinping's second term is a continuation of his first term, but also a continuation of his predecessors. This says that the continuum of policy and practical implementation is a function of a multi-decade strategy to create economic progress.

Whilst the US remains the world's largest economy it is inevitable that it will be overtaken specifically by the Chinese economy, because the strategy is in place for moderate to high prosperity and it's a multi-dimensional multi-sectoral decades strategy which in a way says a lot about the economic development of the US China and Africa and in a way we have seen in the US foundational infrastructure investment occurring in early 20th century and eventually, in the latter part of the industrialisation and industrial revolution including digitalisation, but these were all built on the foundation of the agricultural revolution and then the first, second and third industrial revolution.

In China's case it is a marvel to watch how, with the second and third industrial revolution having been achieved, and the agricultural and foundational economies in place, it is now able to open its economy and resource base to a service-based economy, with a huge impact on elements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including robotics, artificial intelligence, genetics, genome interventions, the digital economy, The Internet Of Things. It's just a matter of time before we are able to use digitalisation and distributive ledgers to create Chinese cryptocurrencies which will dominate the world and backed up by manufactured assets and alliances and partnerships in resources.

Venezuela has just announced it will sell its oil using cryptocurrency. The lessons from President Xi Jinping is that what has to be long term forward thinking practically implemented and educate the population, build the infrastructure and then embrace fully the tech revolution, and to do this in a harmonious way by building partnership countries and institutions and focus on peaceful development as opposed to war and destruction which is not what the world need right now.

Unquestionably he is the world's most impressive leader, and will be written about for decades to come as someone who steered the Chinese economy through its initial challenges, someone who dealt with internal debt, corruption and a disparate group of ethnically different people.

China is all about scale and that is the issue with Africa, whilst we have one mass of land, which gives us the ability to do scale, we never utilise it because of the differences among countries.

Someone famous once said progress falls on those who want it, and Africa must want progress in order to achieve prosperity for its people. If Africa remains inward looking, ethnically **insular**, if it continues to behave in this way our progress will remain extremely limited.

President Xi Jinping's theory is an excellent start for Africans to understand the thinking, and the journey of China in a multipolar, technology driven, and at times dysfunctional world.

But its real success will depend on how Africans are able to take practical lessons from the Chinese journey and implement it for Africa's progress.