

Exporting Apartheid to Sub-Saharan Africa

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
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& [Social Inequality](#)

This article was first published in [French in the Monde diplomatique in April 1997](#). It was then published in the African Journal of Political Economy and in my book entitled [The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order](#).

Author's Note

The policy of land expropriation in Mozambique leading to the establishment of White Afrikaner farms using indentured Mozambican farm workers had the support of the ANC government. It also had the personal blessing of President Nelson Mandela "who had delegated Mpumalanga Premier Matthews Phosa to the SACADA Board of Governors.

Premier Phosa, a distinguished ANC politician and among the most prosperous black businessmen in Mpumalanga province (East Transvaal), contributed to laying the political ground work for the expansion of White Afrikaner business interests into neighbouring countries.



The SACADA project was coordinated by the leader of the right wing Freedom Front and former South African Defense Force Chief General Constand Viljoen

Viljoen developed a close personal relationship with Nelson Mandela. He had convinced Mandela that promoting White Afrikaner farms in neighbouring countries "would provide food and employment for locals". What was not discussed was that this ANC government policy implied a de facto process of land expropriation which went against the basic tenets of the ANC's struggle for land rights for African peasants.

From the outset, international corporate agribusiness and the World Bank were involved in this project. It is worth noting that during the period of "Transition" preceding the 1994 presidential elections, General Constand Viljoen had been "plotting an Afrikaner guerrilla war against multiracial rule". (Financial Times, December 5, 2013)

While Mandela "believed in action" ... at the core of [his] militancy was always a desire to

get the white colonial regime to come to the table and talk.” (Mail and Guardian, December 12, 2013). This stance largely characterized his relationship with General Viljoen.

It is worth noting that in the 1980s General Viljoen as Chief of the South African Defence Force led South African troops into Angola. In 1993, he participated in the establishment of the Right wing racist Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF). He later formed the Freedom Front Party which presented candidates to the April 1994 elections.



The article on Exporting apartheid was the object of controversy.

Its publication in Le Monde diplomatique in April 1997 coincided with the hearings of the South Africa Truth Commission led by Rev Desmond Tutu, which focused on the role of General Constand Viljoen as South African Defense Force Chief during the Apartheid period. ([General Viljoen testified in May 1997 before the Truth Commission](#))

The article was the object of a June 1997 law suit claiming defamation directed against the author and Le Monde diplomatique by the South African Chamber for Agricultural Development (SACADA) and the leader of the Freedom Front and former SADF Chief General Constand Viljoen.

The law suit launched in Paris was subsequently thrown out by the Paris Court of Justice.

Michel Chossudovsky, December 12, 2013, May 14, 2022

Exporting Apartheid to Sub-Saharan Africa

by Michel Chossudovsky

April 1997

The right wing Afrikaner Freedom Front (FF) headed by General Constand Viljoen plans to develop a “Food Corridor” extending across the Southern part of the continent from Angola to Mozambique. Afrikaner agri-business is to extend its grip into neighbouring countries with large scale investments in commercial farming, food processing and eco-tourism. The agricultural unions of the Orange Free State and Eastern Transvaal are partners; the objective is to set up White-owned farms beyond South Africa’s borders.

The “Food Corridor,” however, does not mean “food for the local people.” On the contrary, under the scheme the peasants will lose their land, with small-holders becoming farm labourers or tenants on large scale plantations owned by the Boers. Moreover, the South African Chamber for Agricultural Development (SACADA) which acts as an umbrella

organization also includes, centrally, several right wing organizations including the Freedom Front (FF) led by Viljoen, whose grim record as South African Defence Force (SADF) Commander in Chief during the Apartheid regime is well known.

The Freedom Front, although “moderate” in comparison to Eugene Terre’Blanche’s far-right Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), is a racist political movement committed to the Afrikaner Volksstaat. The SACADA-Freedom Front initiative has nonetheless the political backing of the African National Congress as well as the personal blessing of President Nelson Mandela who has delegated Mpumalanga Premier Matthews Phosa to the SACADA Board of Governors. All the other governors are members of the Freedom Front. Premier Phosa, a distinguished ANC politician and among the most prosperous black businessmen in Mpumalanga province (East Transvaal), has also contributed to laying the political ground work for the expansion of White Afrikaner business interests into neighbouring countries.

In discussions with President Mandela, General Viljoen had argued that “settling Afrikaner farmers would stimulate the economies of neighbouring states, would provide food and employment for locals, and that this would stem the flow of illegal immigrants into South Africa.” Viljoen has also held high level meetings on Afrikaner agricultural investments with representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and other donor agencies.

In turn, Pretoria is negotiating with several African governments on behalf of SACADA and the Freedom Front. The ANC government is anxious to facilitate the expansion of corporate agri-business into neighbouring countries. As one newspaper account affirms, “Mandela has asked the Tanzanian government to accept Afrikaner farmers to help develop the agricultural sector” while SACADA itself has approached some 12 African countries “interested in White South African farmers.” In a venture set up in 1994 under the South African Development Corporation (SADEVCO), the government of the Congo had granted to the Boers 99 year leases on agricultural land; President Mandela endorsed the scheme calling on African nations “to accept the migrants as a kind of foreign aid.”

The African host countries have on the whole welcomed the inflow of Afrikaner investments. With regard to regulatory policies, however, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (rather than national governments) call the shots, invariably requiring (indebted) countries to accept “a wide open door to foreign capital.” In this context, the liberalization of trade and investment under donor supervision, tends to support the extension of Afrikaner business interests throughout the region. Moreover, in the sleazy environment shaped by transnational corporations and international creditors, corrupt politicians and senior bureaucrats are often co-opted or invited to become the “business partners” of South African and other foreign investors.

The expropriation of peasant lands

The “Food Corridor” initiative will displace a pre-existing agricultural system: it not only appropriates the land, it takes over the host country’s economic and social infrastructure and, almost inevitably, spells increased levels of poverty in the countryside. It will most likely provide a fatal blow to subsistence agriculture as well as to the peasant cash crop economy, displacing local level agricultural markets and aggravating the conditions of endemic famine prevailing in the region. As if this were not enough, Jen Kelenga, a spokesperson for a pro-democracy group in Zaire, also sees, at the heart of the initiative, the Boers “in search of new territories to apply their racist way of living.”

The “Food Corridor” if carried through, could potentially alter the rural landscape of the Southern African region, requiring the uprooting and displacement of small farmers over an extensive territory. Under the proposed scheme, millions of hectares of the best farmland would be handed over to South African agri-business. The Boers are to manage large scale commercial farms using the rural people both as “labour tenants” as well as seasonal agricultural workers.

Such initiatives also dovetail with World Bank directives regarding land-use in the region. Indeed, the Bank has pressed for land legislation throughout Sub-Saharan Africa that would abrogate the right to land of millions of small-holders, with identical land legislation now being enforced throughout the region. The national level land laws (drafted under technical advice from World Bank Legal Department) are with some variations “exact carbon copies of each other”:

“The constitution [in Mozambique] says that the land is the property of the State and cannot be sold or mortgaged. There has been strong pressure particularly from the United States and the World Bank for land to be privatized and to allow mortgages ...”

Under the proposed land legislation, both SACADA and the World Bank nonetheless tout the protection of traditional land rights. The small peasantry is to be “protected” through the establishment of “customary land reserves” established in the immediate vicinity of the White commercial farms. In practice, under the new land legislation, the majority of the rural people will be caged into small territorial enclaves (“communal lands”) while the bulk of the best agricultural land will be sold or leased to private investors.

This also means that peasant communities which practice shifting cultivation over a large land area, as well as pastoralists, will henceforth be prosecuted for encroaching on lands earmarked for commercial farming, often without their prior knowledge. Impoverished by the macro-economic reforms, with no access to credit and modern farm inputs, these customary enclaves will, as noted, constitute “labour reserves” for large scale agri-business.

Afrikaner farms in Mozambique



SACADA has plans to invest in Mozambique, Zaire, Zambia and Angola, “with Mozambique being the test case.” President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and President Nelson Mandela (1994 picture right) signed an intergovernmental agreement

in May 1996 which grants rights to Afrikaner agri-business to develop investments in at least six provinces encompassing territorial concessions of some eight million hectares. According to one South African official:

“Mozambique needs the technical expertise and the money, and we have the people ... We favour an area which is not heavily populated because it is an Achilles heel if there are too many people on the land ... For the Boers, Land is next to God and the Bible.”

In SACADA's concessionary areas in Mozambique, the Frelimo government will ensure that there is no encroachment; rural small-holders and subsistence farmers (who invariably do not possess legal land titles) will either be expelled or transferred into marginal lands.

In Mozambique's Nissau province, the best agricultural land is to be leased in concession to the Afrikaners for fifty years. At the token price of some \$0.15 per hectare per annum, the land lease is a give-away. Through the establishment of Mosagrius (a joint venture company), SACADA is now firmly established in the fertile valley of the Lugenda river. But the Boers also have their eyes on agricultural areas along the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers as well as on the road and railway facilities linking Lichinga, Niassa's capital to the deep seaport of Nagala. The railway line is being rehabilitated and modernized (by a French contractor) with development aid provided by France.

In the initial stage of the agreement, concessionary areas in Niassa province were handed over to SACADA in 1996 to be settled by some 500 White Afrikaner farmers. These lands are earmarked for commercial farming in both temperate highveld and sub-tropical lowveld. The available infrastructure including several state buildings and enterprises will also be handed over to the Boers.

The Boers will operate their new farms as part of their business undertakings in South Africa, dispatching White Afrikaner managers and supervisors to Mozambique. The Boers will bring from South Africa their Black right-hand men, their tractor operators, their technicians. In the words of the project liaison officer at the South African High Commission in Maputo: “Each and every Afrikaner farmer will bring his tame Kaffirs” who will be used to supervise the local workers. The number of White settlers in the concessionary areas in Niassa is likely to be small.

SACADA has carefully mapped out the designated areas by helicopter, South Africa's agricultural research institutes have surveyed the area, providing an assessment of environmental as well as social and demographic conditions.

Creating “rural townships”

Under the SACADA scheme, the rural communities in Niassa which occupy the Afrikaner concessionary areas are to be regrouped into “rural townships” similar to those of the Apartheid regime:

“What you do is to develop villages along the roadside close to the [White] farms. These villages have been planned very carefully [by SACADA] in proximity to the fields so that farm-workers can go back and forth; you give the villages some infrastructure and a plot of land for each household so that the farm-labourers can set up their food gardens.”

Unless token customary land rights are entrenched within or in areas contiguous to the concessions, the peasants will become landless farm labourers or “labour tenants.” Under the latter system applied by the Boers in South Africa since the 19th Century, black peasant households perform labour services (*corvée*) in exchange for the right to farm a small parcel of land. Formally outlawed in South Africa in 1960 by the Nationalist government, “labour tenancy” remains in existence in many parts of South Africa including East Transvaal and Kwa-Zulu Natal. Its reproduction in the form of rural townships in Mozambique will provide reserves of cheap labour for the White commercial farms.

This, plus the increasing derogation of workers rights in Mozambique and the deregulation of the labour market there under IMF advice, will enable the Boers not only to pay their Mozambican workers excessively low wages but also to escape the demands of Black agricultural workers in South Africa. Moreover, under the Mosagrius Agreement the Mozambican government will be fully responsible in dealing with land disputes and ensuring the expropriation of peasant lands “without prejudice or loss that may occur from such claims to SDM [Mosagrius] and other Mosagrius participants.”

Small wonder, then, that South Africa’s major commercial banks, the World Bank and the European Union have firmly backed the project. Indeed, “the Food Corridor” has become an integral part of the IMF-World Bank sponsored structural adjustment programme in Mozambique. In the words of SACADA Secretary Willie Jordaan: “SACADA has endeavoured to bring its policies in line with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and [is] set to become an international development agency” with a mandate to contract with donor institutions and carry out “foreign aid programmes” on their behalf.

The international community

In short, while the international community had endorsed ANC’s struggle against the Apartheid regime, it is now providing financial support to a racist Afrikaner development organization. Under the guise of “foreign aid,” Western donors are in fact contributing to the extension of the Apartheid system into neighbouring countries. The European Union has provided money to SACADA out of a development package explicitly earmarked by Brussels for South Africa’s Reconstruction and Development Programme. According to an EU spokesman, the project “was the best noise out of Africa in 30 years.” The EU Ambassador to South Africa Mr. Erwan Fouéré met General Viljoen to discuss the project. Fouéré confirmed that if all goes well, further EU money could be made available to cover the costs of “settling Afrikaner farmers in South Africa’s neighbouring countries.”

The initiative is categorized by the donor community as a bona fide development project which will benefit the peasantry in the host country as well contribute to South Africa’s Reconstruction. The fact that the scheme derogates the land rights of small-holders and replicates the system of “labour tenancy” prevalent in South Africa under Apartheid is not a matter for discussion.

Moreover, national investment priorities set by the donors in neighbouring countries (under the World Bank sponsored Public Investment Programme), are increasingly tuned to meeting the needs of South African business interests. In Mozambique, for instance, so-called “targeted investments” are undertaken with a view to rehabilitating port facilities, roads, water resources, river and lake transportation, etc. largely to the benefit of South African investors including SACADA.

Moreover, under the SACADA Agreement, Afrikaner investors “shall be allowed a right of first refusal” in privatization tenders in concessionary areas under their jurisdiction. In turn the country’s investment legislation (drafted with the technical assistance of the World Bank) will provide for the free remittance of corporate profits and the repatriation of capital back to South Africa.

The SACADA scheme is also likely to suck up a portion of the State’s meagre health and education budget. In Mozambique, under the terms of the Agreement the authorities are also to support the provision of Western-style health services as well as create a “sanitary environment” for the White Afrikaners settling in the territory. Part of the money provided by donors and international organizations for social programmes will also be channelled towards the concessionary areas.

Recolonization?

Add to these enormities the fact that the “export of Apartheid” to neighbouring countries seems to exemplify a literal “carving up” of national territories into concessionary areas. In Mozambique, for example, an autonomous territory – “a State within a State” – is being developed initially in Niassa province; the Mosagrus project controlled by the Boers (overriding the national and provincial governments) is the sole authority concerning the utilization rights of land in its concessionary areas (clause 34); similarly the territory is defined as a free trade zone allowing for the unimpeded movement of goods, capital and people (meaning White South Africans). All investments in the concessionary areas “will be free from customs duties, or other fiscal impositions.” In this way, concessions granted to foreign investors in various parts of the country (a pattern that is being duplicated [see accompanying box] in the tourism sphere, including in Niassa Province itself) begin to define a recasting of national territory into a number of separate “corridors” that is eerily reminiscent of the colonial period.



In short, the system of territorial concessions – with each of the corridors integrated separately into the world market – tends to favour the demise of the national economy. And the falling of such corridors under the political custody of donors, non-governmental organizations and foreign investors also means that these latter constitute a de facto “parallel government” which increasingly bypasses the State system. But this latter process dovetails neatly with other demands of donors, their requirement (in the name of “governance”) of the down-sizing of the central State and the “decentralization” of decision-

making to the provincial and district levels. Rather than providing added powers and resources to regional and local communities, however, State revenues will be channelled towards servicing Mozambique's external debt with "decentralization" predicated on fiscal austerity under the structural adjustment programme. Add all this up and the result is a considerable weakening of both the central and regional governments, and a further reinforcement of Mozambique's recolonization.

One may speculate, finally, as to why the ANC has made itself such a vigorous party to this process. Most charitably, one may conclude that the ANC has championed – albeit without serious debate or discussion – the granting of "Land to the Boers" in neighbouring countries as a means to relieving land pressures within South Africa: the policy is said to facilitate the ANC's land redistribution programme in favour of Black farmers.

Of course, there are good reasons to believe that, despite its merits, South Africa's Land Reform Programme is unlikely to succeed, this programme being increasingly undermined by the post-Apartheid government's own sweeping macro-economic reforms under the neoliberal policy agenda. In rural South Africa, the removal of agricultural subsidies, the deregulation of credit and trade liberalization (which is part of the Macro-economic Framework) have not only contributed to the further impoverishment of Black small-holders and tenant farmers, the measures have also pushed numerous White Afrikaner family farms into bankruptcy. Pretoria's structural adjustment programme thereby favours an even greater concentration of farmland than during the Apartheid regime as well as the consolidation of corporate agriculture both within and beyond South Africa's borders.

In other words, the Boers "Second Great Trek" to neighbouring countries does not contribute to relieving land pressures within South Africa. In fact the policy accomplishes exactly the opposite results: it maintains Black farmers in marginal lands under the old system of segregation. Moreover, it reinforces corporate control over the best farmland while also providing a political avenue to Afrikaner agri-business for "exporting Apartheid" to the entire Southern African region.

Note

Most of Mozambique's coastline on lake Niassa – including a 160 km. stretch in the Rift Valley from Meponda to Mapangula extending further North to Ilha sobre o Lago close to the Tanzanian border – has been designated under the project "for tourism and other complementary and subsidiary activities [which are] ecologically sustainable." The latter also include designated areas for Afrikaner investments in fishing and aquaculture on lake Niassa (displacing the local fishing industry). In turn, the Agreement hands over to the Boers, the development and operation rights over the Niassa Game Reserve on the Tanzanian border. The Reserve includes an extensive area of some 20,000 hectares earmarked for so-called "ecologically sustainable ecotourism."

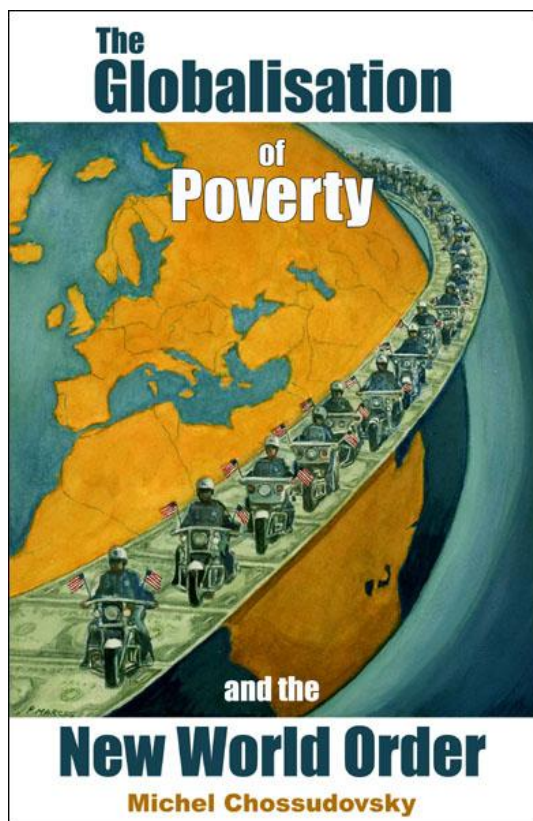
In a much larger undertaking, James Ulysses Blanchard III the notorious Texan tycoon, has been granted a concession over a vast territory which includes the Maputo Elephant Reserve and the adjoining Machangula peninsula south of Maputo. During the Mozambican civil war, Blanchard had provided financial backing to Renamo, the rebel organization directly supported by the Apartheid regime and trained by the South African Defence Force (SADF).

Blanchard intends to create an Indian Ocean Dream Park with a floating hotel, deluxe tourist

lodges at \$600 – \$800 a night and a casino. Large parcels of land in Manchangua have also been allocated to agricultural investors from Eastern Transvaal.

Local communities in Blanchard's concessionary area will be expropriated; in the words of his general manager, John Perrot:

"We're gonna come here and say [to the local villagers] `Okay, now you're in a national park. Your village can either get fenced or you can have them wild animals walking right through your main street'." (M.C.)



[The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order \(PDF\)](#)

by Michel Chossudovsky

In this new and expanded edition of Chossudovsky's international best-seller, the author outlines the contours of a New World Order which feeds on human poverty and the destruction of the environment, generates social apartheid, encourages racism and ethnic strife and undermines the rights of women. The result as his detailed examples from all parts of the world show so convincingly, is a globalization of poverty.

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