

Succession battle blights Mbeki era, says study

Mixed messages in campaign against corruption, argues top academic

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WHILE President Thabo Mbeki's presidency has been defined by consistent economic growth and black empowerment, it has also been characterised by a high level of dysfunctionality, in part as a result of the succession struggle in the ruling African National Congress (ANC).

The lack of political will to fight corruption has damaged Mbeki's political legacy says Prof Roger Southall.

He was addressing the launch in Johannesburg yesterday of State of the Nation: South Africa 2007, a collection of expert and academic research and critical essays published by the Human Science Research Council on the effect of SA's economic, political, social and foreign policies.

In his essay, *The ANC's State: More Dysfunctional than Developmental?*, Southall argues that several developments in the past few months have undermined the state and the ruling party.

He says there has been a systematisation of corruption motivated by the state's drive to establish a representative government. This has created a culture of entitlement where "state positions have become essential for securing access to opportunity and wealth".

Southall says while there are many state institutions and laws to combat corruption, the ANC has sent out mixed messages.

The ruling party has attempted to clamp down on number of probes such as the arms deal. There has been a half-hearted prosecution of MPs involved in the Travelgate scandal and a reluctance to investigate allega-

tions that state resources are being used to the ANC's advantage, as observed in the Oilgate saga, Southall says.

Southall also argues that the ANC's succession debate has endangered Mbeki's drive to strengthen state capacity to increase delivery.

He also bemoans the uneven economic opportunities between the poor and economically empowered blacks.

Southall says the working poor are being condemned to surviving from the informal economy.

His critique also argues that SA as a developmental state requires compromise between classes, involving a common vision that combines growth with a socially equitable society.

"Many of these elements were in place in 1994 but now appear to be in danger of unravelling, expressed by the bitter battle for the presidency."

Southall says Mbeki should "open up the contest" and democratise the process of electing ANC leaders.

"By abandoning the habits of a liberation movement and embracing those of a modern





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political party, the ANC could resolve its divisions and select a leader capable of appealing to the entire nation," says Southall.

Commenting on the book, analyst Prof Siphoo Seepe said it

was shocking that most experts' views on SA highlighted the worrying trends of growing graft at all government levels.

He said it seemed the bigger question that analysts needed to

answer was "why the ANC was succeeding as it was equally failing" on delivery and on other critical policies issues.