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BRIEFS

US-Africa Relations

In a recent op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said that US efforts in Zimbabwe were unlikely to succeed fast enough without increased engagement by Zimbabwe's neighbours. He said African leaders should 'play a stronger and more sustained role that fully reflects the urgency of Zimbabwe's crisis.'

Powell's criticism comes shortly before the US presidential visit to SA from 8–10 July. President Bush's visit to SA is part of a five-country tour to Africa that also includes Botswana, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda. It is expected that the Zimbabwe crises will feature prominently on the SA-US agenda.

However, there are several other issues that will have to exercise the minds of SA foreign policymakers. The recent US announcement of the suspension of military aid to 35 countries for their refusal to give US citizens immunity from the recently established International Criminal Court will certainly come up. SA is included on this list. Nigeria, Botswana, Senegal and Uganda have all signed Article 98 agreements that protect American service members from arbitrary or political prosecution by the international court and are therefore exempted. The US war against terrorism and this more recent development have introduced an ideological nuance to US bilateral and multilateral relations that Pretoria and the rest of Africa will have to inculcate in its conduct of relations with the world's biggest super power.

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The Elusive Search for Peace in the Congo

Should SA have adopted a different strategy towards the DRC in its attempt to facilitate peace discussions amongst the parties to the conflict?

The breakthrough in the SA-led peace initiative to end the ongoing carnage in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ostensibly occurred in December 2002. An all-inclusive power-sharing deal was signed to establish a government of national unity that would hopefully end the war which killed more than three million Congolese since August 1998. President Mbeki nursed the belligerents to the final agreement, which provided for President Kabila's remaining in office until the elections in 2004.

The agreement also made provision for four vice-presidents from the government, the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie-Goma* (RCD-G), the *Mouvement de Liberation du Congo* (MLC) and the unarmed political opposition. Moreover there was to be a 500-member National Assembly presided over by the MLC and a 120-member Senate. The accord also made provision for a Higher Defence Council and an integrated national police force whose task would be to provide security. By March 2003, these positive developments were further consolidated by negotiations in Pretoria where delegates agreed to a programme for the drafting of a constitution and the composition of a future unified army for the Congo.

However, peace has proved elusive for the Congo's long-suffering people. Despite these advances around the negotiating table, the military battles on the ground intensified. Indeed, at one stage, the RCD-G walked out of the talks in response to the Uganda People's Defence Forces capturing the northeastern town of Bunia, and in the process, driving the *Union des Patriotes Congolais* (UPC) which is allied to the RCD-G, out of the town. The RCD-G was also unhappy with the fact that government troops were strengthening their positions in the towns of Beni, Butembo and Lubero.

Thus on 29 March, on the very day that the RCD-G signed an agreement with the Kinshasa government on the future military structure and on the eve of the final session of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the RCD-G's 12th brigade captured the towns of Muhanga and Bunyatenge in a fresh new military offensive.

These developments clearly point to the fact that despite signing agreements, the belligerents did not trust one another and saw military might as their ultimate negotiating instrument. The discrepancy between the optimism of the negotiating process and the pessimism surrounding the military developments also point to the lack of control that the political leadership of the various belligerents have over their combatants. This latter point should have been factored into the design of the peace process by Pretoria's policymakers. That this was not done is a major indictment against SA's foreign affairs mandarins.

However, the negotiation process itself also points to deeper problems emanating from South Africa's approach to conflict resolution. It engaged in symmetric negotiations, treating each of the parties to the conflict as equal. Pretoria, however, should have understood that it was dealing

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with a classic case of asymmetric negotiations – where the power of each actor was markedly different from other actors. Amongst external actors, for instance, Rwanda could not be equated with Uganda. Rwanda defeated Uganda's armed forces three times in the Congo. Similarly, there was a tremendous power difference amongst internal actors to the conflict.

Whilst Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC is a major player in the conflict, his power and that of his party was severely diminished following his disastrous intervention in the Central African Republic. Similarly the power of the Kinshasa government has been weakened as its external allied forces in the form of Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia started to withdraw from the Congo.

At the same time, the relative military strength of the RCD-G was not taken into account during the negotiations at Sun City – leading to frustration on the part of the RCD-G during the SA-sponsored talks. The RCD-G felt that negotiations were fruitless considering that they could achieve their objectives through military means. Thus it should have been no surprise when the RCD-G engaged in a new military offensive and captured the town of Lubero on 19 June 2003. The town was previously in the hands of government forces and their ally, RCD-Kisangani/Mouvement de Liberation (RCD-K/ML).

Much of the alienation that RCD-G felt as a result of the negotiation process could have been overcome if South Africa had adopted an asymmetrical approach to the negotiations – an approach that factors in the relative and dynamic strengths and weaknesses of actors on the ground and allows this to filter into the way compromises are reached.

The recent macabre dance of death between Hema and Lendu ethnic militias in the Ituri Province of north-eastern Congo underlines the truism that there are several conflicts occurring in the DRC and that the withdrawal of external forces has created a power vacuum in which these communal conflicts have now surfaced. This, too, reveals another serious blindspot for SA foreign policymakers who failed to consider this when drawing up the timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Hussein Solomon, SAIIA Bradlow Fellow, 2003

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SA indeed has much to lose. The US has emerged as the biggest source of foreign direct investment into SA since 1994. The promise of a US-SACU FTA will provide significant access to US markets. The US is already the largest recipient of SA trade goods and SA benefits substantially from the preferential access granted under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

The Bush visit will be the fourth bilateral Heads of State visit since 1994. As the US takes a closer interest in African matters both in terms of support for Nepal and within the ambit of its own narrow national security interests, SA and Africa will need to chart its way forward with care.

Neuma Grobbelaar

Global Election Watch: July-December 2003

Rwanda	July (Presidential and Parliamentary)
Cambodia	27 July 2003 (Parliamentary)
North Korea	3 August 2003 (Parliamentary)
Somalia	August 2003 (TBA)
Benin	Spring 2003 (Legislative) (TBA)
Swaziland	September (Parliamentary) (TBA)
Liberia	14 October 2003
Central African Republic	November (Parliamentary) (TBA)
Mauritania	7 November 2003
Guinea	December 2003 (TBA)
Taiwan	December 2003 (Parliamentary) (TBA)

Latin-American leadership

A lack of visionary and informed leadership has emerged as the key variable that has determined the fate of many collapsing Latin-American states.

In 2002 the Latin American region experienced its most disastrous economic performance in two decades. With an economic contraction of 1.1%, most countries in the region could not ward off the negative speculation that sent jitters through their markets and led to large scale social unrest. Poor economic performance sent inflation and debt figures soaring, unemployment exceeded 20% in many countries and poverty levels grew significantly.

The economic crisis in the region acted as a catalyst for the political and social crisis that followed. Political leaders were blamed for the economic collapse in their countries and many were ridiculed for poor political management and corruption. Social unrest in response to the political and economic problems highlighted inefficient and dysfunctional institutions. This was most evident in Argentina and Venezuela, where clearly weak states were governing over equally weak societies.

The recent Argentine elections are a good example of the failure of some Latin American societies to insist on visionary, accountable leadership from its politicians. The elections were conducted on a highly personalised basis and driven by populist rhetoric. Although Carlos Menem did not earn a victory against his fellow Peronist rival, Nestor Kirchner, in the run-off round of elections, the fact that he reached the second round is difficult to fathom. Menem has been implicated in various corruption scandals, and mismanagement during his rule has been blamed for the economic collapse in Argentina.

The strong support he received in the initial election round indicates that either memories run short among Argentines or that they are very forgiving. The riots at the end of 2001, which caused 27 deaths, as well as the vilification of the political elite throughout 2002 would indicate otherwise.

Argentines probably offered support to Menem as they saw him

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Lesotho: Taking governance issues seriously

Lesotho has made significant strides in political accountability and governance. Recent corruption investigations in this small country hold important lessons for SADC states.

Many people reason that Lesotho is a tiny country and thus insignificant. But such an easy dismissal is inappropriate. Four years after the political unrest that swept through Lesotho in 1998, there are some positive signs, despite continuing political and socio-economic difficulties. Significantly, there are at least four reasons why Lesotho should be taken seriously.

Firstly, Lesotho has taken substantial measures to avoid events similar to those of 1998, when widespread arson and looting affected Maseru and other towns around the country. Following the cue of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) with its emphasis on good governance, Lesotho has made significant progress in this area. As illustrated by the peaceful and legitimate May 2002 elections, the mountain kingdom has succeeded in achieving peace and stability.

Two pivotal developments, a new electoral model and a restructured Interim Political Authority (IPA), were instrumental in this success. In contrast to the previous First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system, a mixed electoral system encompassing both proportional representation and the FPTP system was adopted. The mixed electoral system was applied during the May 2002 elections and for the first time in the country's history the elections proved to be successful both in terms of reducing violence and increasing legitimacy.

In addition, the IPA formed in accordance with the 1998 Interim Political Authority Act made enormous progress in creating a politically stable environment that facilitated peaceful elections and

that is now promoting a suitable environment for economic development.

Two newly-created institutions supported the IPA's work. The *Leaders Forum* allowed leaders inside and outside government to discuss and share issues of concern such as security and reconciliation. The *peace and reconciliation committee* oversaw reconciliation at grass roots levels and installed sufficient confidence to pave the way for a peaceful electioneering environment.

An associated and second reason why Lesotho deserves attention, especially after the 1998 political disaster, is the way Lesotho engaged with other regional partners, notably South Africa, to improve the two countries' political relations and to further developmental goals. Under the Joint Bilateral Commission of Co-operation (JBCC) signed in April 2001, South Africa agreed to assist Lesotho to improve its least developed status. There are presently 25 developmental projects in the pipeline, which the Lesotho government aims to have completed by 2005.

Thirdly, and arguably the most important reason why developments in Lesotho are significant, is the way the country has tackled corruption. The prosecution and sentencing of the former Chief Executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, Masupha Sole, on charges of corruption is indicative of the seriousness with which corruption is viewed. In addition, Acres International of Canada was also put on trial and found guilty of paying bribes for contracts on the multibillion rand Lesotho

Highlands Water Project. These developments have a direct significance for the ongoing definition of Nepad's mechanisms for political and economic governance. Therefore, it is crucial that the peer review mechanism and its provisions recognise the good examples offered by countries such as Lesotho.

Finally, on the socio-economic front, Lesotho has managed to make some progress in addressing the disastrous economic impact of the political riots of 1998. Despite a high rate of unemployment (31%) which is exacerbated by a 31% HIV rate prevalence, the country's SMME sector has played an important role in addressing the socio-economic challenges facing Lesotho. The sector has managed to flourish, despite lacking a comprehensive policy framework from the government. According to the Lesotho Chamber of Business and Commerce, the SMME sector in Lesotho is the third biggest source of employment after Taiwanese investment and the public sector. Clearly, the SMME sector remains critical in redressing these challenges.

In spite of its tiny size and development status, Lesotho provides a good example for other countries in the region. Significantly, Lesotho's response to corruption within the current corporate accountability discourse provides the region with a significant example to emulate. Moreover, the prosecution of Acres International holds an important lesson for multinational and local companies and could change the way especially big companies proceed when operating in small states.

Sipho Seakamela

South African Calendar of Events 2003

4-12 July
19-26 August
10-14 Sept
16-18 Sept

Second Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union
Annual SADC Heads of Summit Meeting
Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO
Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting

Maputo
Dar es Salaam
Cancun
Brunei

Indonesia's Wayward Province

Jakarta has opted for a military solution to the independence struggle of Aceh as the only way to ensure its territorial integrity.

The region-wide economic crisis of 1997 and 1998 left most states in Southeast Asia with the dual challenge of having to address both economic recovery and the social, political, ethnic and religious tensions that erupted following the crisis. This is nowhere more apparent than in the largest Southeast Asian state, Indonesia. Indonesia is the world's most populous state and the most populous Islamic nation. It consists of several diverse ethnic, religious and social groups spread across thousands of islands.

The republic's founder, former President Sukarno, succeeded in bringing these disparate interest groups together under a nationalist banner. The strong bureaucratic and military policies of his successor, President Suharto, held them together. Suharto's downfall and the economic crisis shattered this tenuous balance. Ethnic and religious violence erupted and secessionist struggles like that of East Timor came to the fore. The eventual separation of East Timor from Indonesia in 1999 raised concern among Indonesia's leaders that the country might gradually disintegrate, as one wayward region after another broke away.

The rapid succession of presidents after Suharto's downfall fractured an established elite and a system based on power, nepotism and collusion. A new challenge emerged from this disintegration of the old elite, namely the rise of Islamic fun-

damentalist political parties.

Distrust of the Islamists by the military, who fear the weakening of its influence over state affairs under Islamic fundamentalist rule, resulted in its alignment with nationalist forces in government. President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who rose to power on a democratic reform platform, has become a key ally of the military. Under her leadership, Jakarta embarked on a renewed nationalistic campaign in an attempt to bring the dissenters into line.

Since the early seventies, the rebel Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has been calling for an independent Islamic state in northwest Indonesia. The signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between Jakarta and the GAM on 9 December 2002 promised an all-inclusive dialogue based on the premise of independence or special autonomy for the province. The recent collapse of the ceasefire and of peace negotiations was a result of the GAM's refusal to accept Jakarta's demands to disarm, accept autonomy and renounce independence. This breakdown has resulted in a return to the violence that has plagued the province for more than two decades.

For the Indonesian military and the nationalist elements in the government, it is unacceptable for another province to go the way of East Timor, and Jakarta has opted for a military solution. The government has sought to control foreign

opinion about this decision by casting the GAM as a terrorist organisation whose victory would lead to the downfall of the Indonesian state. There is indeed a clear danger that the fighting might spread beyond Aceh leading to the destabilisation of the entire region.

However, there is a distinct difference between the separatist efforts of East Timor and those of Aceh. East Timor was never a formal part of the Indonesian state but had its beginnings as a Portuguese colony. In contrast, Aceh has always been an integrated part of Indonesia and played a critical role in its independence struggle against the Dutch.

It is from this premise that the SA government is taking its cue on the situation in Indonesia. Whereas Pretoria expressed support for the East Timorese in their struggle for independence, it strongly condemns the separatist movement of the GAM. It believes that Aceh should remain part of Indonesia and it views the territorial integrity of the Indonesian state as critical to the stability of the region.

However, the question should be asked whether the military option towards the separatists, that has been couched as a nationalistic response by the Indonesian government, is the only viable way to balance the concerns about territorial integrity and the wish for greater autonomy.

Natasha Skidmore

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as a messianic leader that could deliver them from their woes. He had 'delivered' before (as previous president of Argentina from 1989-1999) and it was fervently believed that he could do it again before introspection and external criticism changed the voters' minds.

This style of leadership, characterised by a strong personality and unmistakable charm, is not confined to Argentina. Hugo Chavez from Venezuela has used his superb orator abilities to elicit respect and disguise the managerial ineptitude of his government. Chavez's populist

policies have sent Venezuela into complete economic disarray, causing an 18% contraction in the economy and increasing the number of families living in poverty from 60% at the start of his term to 70% today. The Venezuelan masses have chosen to ignore government overspending on dubious projects and insist that Chavez's authoritarian tendencies are acceptable for such a great leader. But the facade cannot last forever.

This preference for strong, charismatic leaders is not new in Latin America. After all, leaders such as Fidel Castro, Juan Peron and the icon of the world revolution, Ernesto

'Che' Guevara have attracted a cult-like following. Naturally, they did use ideology and patriotic instruments to justify their cause and draw on support. However, it is clear that it was their charismatic personalities that truly rallied the masses to their cause.

The new leaders of Latin America will need to be more than just superb orators with a strong presence and unlimited charm. They will have to apply their talents to address other more pressing issues, such as instituting good governance and sustainable political and economic management.

Lyal White