

FUTURES

... FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

AS THE architects of apartheid began to dig in their heels, the world turned its back on the inhumane project and South Africa found itself walking apart from the global community. After 1994, the new government made enormous efforts to narrow the gap and build bridges, and today South Africa walks with the world.

Overleaf, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane outlines the government's plans for international co-operation for the next five years. Aziz Pahad argues that Africa should continue to take centre stage in our policy. But there's the danger of being blinded by loyalty to African brotherhood. Because it's not just about walking. It's about how we walk and who we walk with to stay on the right path.





Foreign policy looks to partnerships in the South

BY FIONA FORDE

AS THE curtain came down on apartheid in 1994, the country's first democratic foreign affairs minister set about reintroducing South Africa to the global community, including Africa.

During the second administration, which began in 1999, Africa became the cornerstone of foreign policy. Post-2004, the accent on continental unity deepened as the African agenda widened.

"Going forward, the South-South co-operation pillar will occupy great prominence without reversing our gains on the consolidation of the African agenda front... as well as our participation in global governance," says Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, formerly known as the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Limpopo-born minister is a newcomer to national politics, although she spent her lifetime in the fold of struggle politics before becoming a diplomat post-1994. On her return to South Africa, she was elected a member of the national executive committee of the ANC in 2007 and was appointed to the cabinet in May this year.

The department's name change, she says, "is to ensure a holistic approach to foreign relations which reflects our developmental agenda and co-operation... with countries on the continent, the developing and the developed world."

The South-South focus will play out through the yet-to-be established South African Developmental Partnership Agency, which will facilitate greater bilateral political and economic co-operation with key southern partners.

Multilateral engagements will also be critical "to help us develop common positions on issues of development and transformation of international systems for equity and justice," Nkoana-Mashabane says.

That harks back to Nelson Mandela's days when he pushed for a human rights approach to South Africa's foreign policy, a moral thread that will continue to weave its way through departmental thinking "consistent with the ideals upheld by the freedom struggle", she adds.

"We are also pleased that our trade relations with China have improved significantly, to the extent that today the country is one of our biggest trading partners," the minister says.

She points out that trade figures have ballooned from R5,2 billion in 1998 to R88,3bn by the end of 2008 "and South Africa regards China as a strategic partner and acknowledges the growth of the relationship into a dynamic one", though most would argue that the trading relationship is heavily skewed in China's favour.

GOING GLOBAL



TAKING A NEW APPROACH: Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane says foreign policy is not the domain of governments only. PICTURE: DAMARIS HELWIG

"Surely, the forthcoming envisaged state visit by President Jacob Zuma in 2010 as well as our participation in the Shanghai World Expo next year will accrue economic and social benefits for South Africa in the short to medium term?" she argues, pointing out that an invitation has been extended to China's President Hu Jintao to attend the World Cup next year, which "bodes well for strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries".

The emphasis on the south will not be at the expense of the north,

the minister cautions. Shortly after Zuma came to power this year, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited South Africa and "to us, this signified a step in the right direction in the history of relations between the two countries," she says, coy words for what many perceive to be a warming of relations that had somewhat frosted during the Thabo Mbeki era, though she refuses to put it as such.

"During this visit, we agreed to elevate our bilateral mechanism with its various working groups to a ministerial level and even explored

the possibility of establishing a business council to expand ties between our respective governments," the 46-year-old minister explains.

"From our side, we will continue to work on relations with the US, including providing and sharing ideas on how best to fight together the scourge of HIV and Aids," she says, "as well as sharing notes on the peace and security situations of our region – the SADC – as well as developments on our continent," something that would have been anathema to the previous

administration and a point on which she won't be further drawn.

When it comes to the United Nations, the minister is equally vague.

Though she says all the right words about pushing for reform via the New York-based UN Security Council Reform body and how "South Africa's experience as a non-permanent member of the UNSC has redoubled our commitment and sense of urgency towards the reform of this institution", she will not say whether South Africa is prepared to push for a permanent seat on the council.

"Our approach to the issue of the permanent seat... is informed by the African common position on this matter, which is known as the Ezulwini Consensus."

She is more forthcoming on the push to harmonise domestic and foreign policy and talks of her department's annual conference which closed a fortnight ago addressing that issue and which "inspired the awareness that foreign policy is no longer the preserve of the states but that non-state actors working together with government needed to create a dynamic interlinkage between our foreign policy and our domestic ambitions, encapsulated in the form of our national priorities," she explains.

"The two are closely related – our national interests are about what will benefit our people and our country."

"The interplay (is seen) in the values we cherish – non-racism and non-sexism, the supremacy of our constitution and the value we attach to human dignity and the respect for human rights," she explains.

She talks to Independent Newspapers just months ahead of the World Cup, an event that will not only afford that interplay but which presents the country with an unmissable opportunity to strengthen international relations.

Last week her deputy, Sue van der Merwe, travelled to London as part of a mission to assure the world that not only will South Africa be ready to host the World Cup, but that the country's doors will be open to the world "in the spirit of peace and friendship through the people's game," the minister says.

In South African diplomatic missions all over the world, the message is the same she says.

During the soccer tournament next year, Nelson Mandela will celebrate his 92nd birthday and in keeping with the 67-minute tradition started this year to contribute one's time to a just cause, the same will happen on July 18, 2010, when everyone, South Africans and foreigners alike, will be invited to give again of their time.

The message will be a strong one she says.

It will say: "Ke nako, Africa's time has come... which will help cement the relations that South Africa has already built."



www.dstvskenics.co.za

www.mybigdebate.com

This week on **The Big Debate**, host Redi Direko chairs an expert panel as they unpack the complexities of international relations in a post-democratic South Africa

CHANNEL 403 - exclusive to DStv PREMIUM and DStv COMPACT



PRIME TIME. ALL THE TIME.

Get online to



BY
PETER
DRAPER

THE EUROPEAN CONNECTION

WHAT are the possible futures of relations between southern Africa and the EU, viewed through Dinokeng Scenario lenses?

The common thread is woven into the fabric of existing relations, in terms of which the EU still dominates trade and investment patterns in a largely one-sided set of relationships stitched together with development assistance flows. This can be seen particularly at the level of bilateral relations, but also in terms of regional economic integration in which primarily European donor support and Western-oriented financial institutions underpin regional institutions and infrastructure development. The "European model" of integration also serves as an ideational basis for the regional effort.

But there are limits to "European" influence, as Europeans, notwithstanding their formal integration in the form of the EU, are often divided in their approaches to foreign engagements and, with the notable exception of trade policy (a competence of the European Commission), do not yet have a unified foreign policy. So, it is not surprising to find that old colonial relationships and networks resonate throughout the region and that competition among EU member states is alive and well.

And southern Africa is hardly a unified entity. What do Angola and Malawi have in common, besides a shared African identity? South Africa stands out as the exception, to the extent that some African elites do not regard South Africa as "African".

Difference is everywhere, not just in the political realm.

Yet there are some common threads that bind southern Africa, particularly the nature of the state. All the states in the region are post-colonial, and with few exceptions still governed by the same dominant party that secured liberation. Those that are not governed by the original liberators find the practice of representative democracy challenging; one (Swaziland) has eschewed it altogether. Domestic politics tends towards authoritarianism and single-party dominance, even though democratic shoots are taking root in places and, in South Africa at least, are in relatively fertile terrain. Furthermore, states in southern Africa are, with a few exceptions, institutionally weak, and, as is the case worldwide with weak states managing poor populations, prone to corruption and chronic institutional failure.

The dominant European political tradition, by contrast, is one of representative social democracy deeply rooted in strong civic cultures and mostly effective state bureaucracies, particularly in western Europe. This gives European politics a strong ethos of political accountability to voters, which in European foreign relations in general and development assistance in particular translates into an



INFLUENCE: A couple look at a map of Africa and Europe at an EU-Africa summit in Lisbon. The EU still dominates trade and investment patterns in southern Africa. PICTURE: ARMANDO FRANCA / AP

Hardly unified, southern Africa rarely walks together

emphasis on the "governance agenda". Given the limitations of southern African democratic accountability, that is an appropriate thrust, but it is thwarted by political complexities enmeshed in former master-servant relationships. As a result, some authoritarian leaders in southern Africa, such as Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, are able to manipulate European-African relations towards their own ends by invoking the spectre of "recolonisation".

Furthermore, the EU is not the only actor in town: the US maintains a substantial presence; China's footprint is being felt everywhere; and South Africa looms large in the rest of the region. The growing contest for influence,

control over markets and resources offers a double-edged sword: more actors means more negotiating leverage for southern African governments and more economic growth opportunities, but such leverage is not necessarily wielded in the interests of society and is often appropriated for elite gains. As civil society structures are generally weak and funded by foreign, especially European, powers, accountability from that quarter is necessarily tenuous.

Considering the diversity of states in the region, it would take a brave commentator to venture an opinion as to where the region as a whole is heading, never minds its relations with Europe; this one will not do so. Rather, I offer a few snapshots and leave the reader to

draw his/her own conclusions.

The "walk apart" road with its destructive consequences plays out in some regional settings. The dramatic Zimbabwean case demonstrates this most forcefully; it is possible that Madagascar may be traversing similar terrain despite the reform trajectory of recent years. In this context, relations with Europe act primarily as a check on the more venal tendencies of some in the elite, using development assistance and investment levers primarily. In the cases of Zimbabwe and Madagascar, relations with Europe are strained, though not beyond repair.

The region also has a few relatively strong authoritarian states that may be increasingly intolerant of civil society activism.

The introduction of restrictive media laws in Botswana come to mind, but Namibia and Angola could also fit into this category. So the "walk behind" scenario finds some regional resonance. Again, in this context, relations with Europe could curb the worst excesses, but may also lead to strained relations, as has been the case with Namibia and its trade relations with the EU.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find clear examples of the "walk together" scenario in southern Africa, although South Africa and perhaps Botswana arguably come closest. This reflects the relative newness of states in the region and our relatively immature democratic roots. To the extent that there are examples, those states' relations with Europe would presumably be positive, as they would be based on common ideational foundations concerning state-civil society relations. From the standpoint of a civil society commentator, this would be the most ideal outcome.

This brings me to arguably the most contentious issue in European-southern African relations: trade. This is currently focused on securing "economic partnership agreements" (EPAs) designed to replace the decades-old system of (southern) African duty-free access to the EU market. EPAs have proved controversial, especially in southern Africa. They have precipitated a potential political rupture between the most powerful state in the region, South Africa, and the EU. Within southern Africa and particularly the 99-year-old Southern African Customs Union (Sacu), they have pitted Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland against the regional giant. They threaten Sacu's future. Regardless of whether it is to blame, the EU is directly implicated in this dismal situation and as a result many regional leaders are deeply suspicious of European intentions.

While European relations with southern Africa go well beyond trade, this issue, more than any other, has the potential to undermine regional trust in Europe. This dovetails with the aftermath of the global economic crisis in which Western models of economic management are seen in some quarters to be discredited in favour of particularly Asian authoritarian approaches.

The resultant mix may be a tacit alliance between those who seek to mobilise mistrust of Europe and the West for domestic purposes with those who favour authoritarian forms of political and economic management.

Grafted on to the dominant regional reality of chronic state weaknesses, this outcome could push the region, in a general sense, towards either "walking apart" or "walking behind", depending on the capacities and traditions of the state in question.

Neither outcome is desirable, so European states should do what they can to prevent it.

● Peter Draper is the head of the development through trade programme at the SA Institute of International Affairs.



BY FIONA FORDE

South Africa leads, but there's always a danger of moving too aggressively



ALL TOGETHER NOW: South Africa has a presence in more than 40 of Africa's 53 countries – the country is not an island, says Aziz Pahad.

LONG before the ANC came to power, Aziz Pahad began to focus his attention on Africa... 26 years in exile he studied the field from an academic perspective in England. He later joined the liberation movement's department of international affairs, and when it was reconstituted, he was appointed Thabo Mbeki's deputy in the department. He then became the ANC's representative on the short-lived transitional executive council's sub-council on foreign affairs...

anything other than inextricably linked to that of the continent would come as a surprise to me," he says. "I don't see Africa as a separate continent... Africa has always to make major contributions and it should stay that way... Our initiatives and activities on the continent are unprecedented for a developing country..."

"It's only natural," he says. "And if it's anything new from the formation of the African Union, we are committed to Africa and have seen our own future as part of Africa... It's a long-standing policy reflected in ANC thinking for years, ever since 1989, right up to the time we placed South Africa firmly in Africa... We grew up with that thinking in the movement..."

WALKING TOGETHER We are African. We are not a European country in Africa... having Africa as the cornerstone of our foreign policy has allowed us to make major contributions and it should stay that way.



AZIZ PAHAD

as we would if we were part of the African group... "I see Africa as a continent... the African agenda is a challenge facing most of the continent generally... And helping our neighbours also helps us... "South Africa may be the strongest economic power in Africa... But Africa is small and unless we are able to function within a broader context, in an African context, we can't make as important an impact as we would if we were part of the African group..."

market is Africa", not only in terms of having a ready export market, but also in terms of opportunities for South Africa's private sector and people to do business in Africa... "Our challenge is not what," he says. "It's not about the relations themselves, but about how we relate. And South Africans really need to control of their destiny and making mistakes history is on the side of those who use coups or change constitutions to stay in power... Africa isn't used to a precedent... It's a long-standing policy reflected in ANC thinking for years, ever since 1989, right up to the time we placed South Africa firmly in Africa..."

COURTING THE CONTINENT

PICTURE: KWANA NGWENYA

African heads have tendency to support and embrace each other

THIS satirical novel, A Man of the People, the great Achike compares the archetype of Africa's "big man" in the form of Chief Honourable MA Nanga. MP He is the embodiment of the imperial ambition, demanding absolute loyalty, dominating the machinery of government, while treating the public fiscus as a personal bank account and silencing all dissent and opposition. Behind his avuncular manner, he ruthlessly uses the militia together with an intimate circle of friends and relatives, to secure his foothold in power...

WALKING APART BLIND BROTHERHOOD

BY DR GARTH LE PERE



SOLIDARITY AND SOVEREIGNTY: Thabo Mbeki with Robert Mugabe in Harare. African leaders tend to blindly support and embrace each other.

The current crop of AU leaders is hardly any different. Elections are often tainted by a precedent farce... Former president Thabo Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy" in Zimbabwe... The legacies of colonialism have not been shed... The AU's predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, was a "trade union of dictators..."

Mbeki's 'quiet diplomacy' in Zimbabwe must be the high-water mark in aiding and abetting Mugabe's despotic behaviour

been severely affected. Many African countries – but especially the 34 that are landlocked – have suffered from human development indicators. Cyclical drought, famine and food shortages add another layer of insecurity to Africa's problems. But it is the trauma of poverty that really haunts Africa, with poverty below poverty thresholds. And although gains have been made in reversing the scourge of HIV/AIDS, it is still the cruelest that will shape the future of Africa's youth at a time when the continent is expected to triple in population size...

Colonial rule was hostile to any form of popular representation and participation... The African Union (AU) has inherited this system of personalism... The legacies of colonialism have not been shed... The AU's predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, was a "trade union of dictators..."



BRIDGING THE SOUTH DIVIDE

A common agenda will ensure that government institutions, scholars, NGOs and professionals of the South can 'walk together'



HOPEFUL: Ambassador R Carlos Sersale di Cerisano says co-operation can have a great effect on economies. PICTURE: PATRICIA HAGEN

BY R CARLOS SERSALE DI CERISANO AMBASSADOR OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC TO SA

SOUTH-SOUTH co-operation is a concept that involves activities in almost all dimensions of international relations. It can be implemented at global, inter-regional, regional and bilateral levels and, therefore should be integrated in the policies, programme strategies and operational activities of all multilateral organisations and bilateral aid co-operation programmes, including at a triangular level.

The concept has been seen by many as an opposition to the North-South co-operation. On the contrary, South-South co-operation deals with all the issues that developing countries are facing from a developing country perspective, sharing their own best practices with the aim of self-reliance and self-sufficiency in a complementary fashion with the rest of the world, rather than against the world. It is a concept that can contribute to eradicating the aid dependency syndrome, which has been called into question in many arenas.

The theoretical framework for the concept and the various forms of international development co-operation among the countries of the South were developed as far back as the 1960s.

In that context, a number of multilateral instruments and bilateral programme strategies and related activities were implemented and incorporated in the budgets of some international organisations.

Some of them were successful and others just remained as no more than a policy debate in which the terms of reference were "idealism vs realism".

However, even the failures, in terms of concrete results achieved, should be seen as part of a long process in how developing countries should include the South-

South co-operation dimension into their foreign policies in order to deal with most of the issues that are part of the international agenda in today's world: the promotion of democracy; the advancement of human rights; facing conflicts that affect peace and security; moving towards regional integration; promoting economic growth and sustainable development; achieving social development; and reaching the Millennium Development Goals according to the deadlines agreed.

Obviously, all these issues should be dealt with in a complementary fashion with each country's own domestic priorities, strategies and policies with the ultimate aim of self-reliance.

The factors that will allow government institutions, non-governmental institutions, universities, scholars and professionals of the South to walk together, in classic Dinokeng jargon, is a common agenda, although it in itself will always need to bear in mind the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the countries and the sub-regions in which the co-operation is going to be implemented, based on the structural characteristics of the developing world. They share a common pattern in the challenges facing them: all of them have suffered from colonialism – the legacy of which is still present today in a number of different ways. They each have unresolved governance issues. And how best to

deal with structural, economic and social problems, largely stemming from unequal income distribution, is still a priority in their domestic agendas.

Other factors that justify the co-operation of the countries of the South is the international context characterised by hegemony at a military level, fragmented economic powers and protectionist trade policies in developed countries in sectors where developing countries are competitive.

In consequence, if we accept that developing countries have common global challenges; if we define South-South co-operation as "neutral" and "politically correct"; and if we assume that we share some characteristics that restricts the way out of our own governance and economic and social structural problems, therefore, we will agree that there are enormous opportunities for South-South co-operation at "policy" and at "operational" levels.

In this regard, the agenda for the South, particularly among the "progressive" countries of the region, should include strengthening multilateralism with the aim of global governance; promoting democracy and human rights; enhancing peace and security; eliminating the vestiges of colonialism in the world; economic growth and sustainable development (negotiations at WTO and G20 among others); and social

development. All of these concur at a policy level.

At an operational level, the countries of the South need to find the means and build the instruments to facilitate trade and investments; they need to transfer technology; step up training and education; utilise the UN system at country level; and enhance bilateral and triangular co-operation.

Increasing trade and investments among the countries of the South is not horizontal co-operation, per se.

Obviously, increasing international trade and promoting investment should be encouraged but this is something that is going to happen regardless by way of business opportunities.

The role of the main actors recognised in the Dinokeng scenario "walking together", should be the identification, design, approval and enforcement of the strategies and, as well, the policies and the operational modalities required to facilitate international trade and investments.

It is quite evident that the existing instruments are not adequate to promote trade and investments between the Souths.

There is enough scope for co-operation at the level of policy in the negotiations with the North and to identify operational activities aimed at facilitating regional and inter-regional trade and investments through regional trade agreements, investment promotion

and avoiding double taxation.

Trade and investment should be the two faces of the same coin.

The potential exists and should be explored through concrete activities in which governments should create and facilitate the policy framework and develop some related instruments.

Another good example is the role of science and technology linked to investments.

Transfer of technology and training should be a component of any foreign investment related to the production of goods and services.

In addition, the association between companies from countries of the South with local entrepreneurs of the country in which the investment is going to be made should be encouraged in all foreign investments. Joint projects in science and technology between research institutions connected to the real economy will have a multiplier effect in all sectors.

South-South co-operation will have a real impact in the economies of their respective regions.

Co-operation at a regional level will contribute to the complex task of regional integration.

Sharing best practices can only have a positive impact at institutional, economic, social and educational levels as well as on all activities related to training.

Therefore there is a role for progressive governments of the South walking together with all their relevant actors in their own societies to lead a convergence process towards horizontal co-operation at policy and operational levels with the terms of reference described above.

It would not only benefit their respective societies but it will also contribute to a better and fairer world.



HERE we are together, just a few days before the opening ceremonies of the first African Olympic Games. We gather to celebrate this country's newest university, a university designed specifically for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and a university that is a concrete illustration of the co-operation between our two countries.

As we think about the rich web of co-operation between our two nations, it seems important to reflect on the extraordinary path American-South African relations have taken over the past decade.

The colourful celebrations we have witnessed today have brought former presidents Obama and Zuma together for a long overdue reunion in Africa. This has given us all a chance to enjoy the real warmth so central to our partnership – an international version of what Dr Mamphela Ramphele once called the Dinokeng “walking together” vision.

Indeed, it is possible this Olympics might not have come to South Africa at all, but for a former American president who put himself at the service of South Africa's bid for the games in recognition of the two countries' relationship, at least after Chicago chose not to bid for the games again.

In the days ahead – as athletes gather in Durban and Cape Town for swimming and other water sports, and around Gauteng for the many track and field events, we can say the Olympics have finally reached every continent.

Of course, the Olympics are just one symbol of the partnership that now flourishes between our two countries. How could anyone miss the co-operative research that has exploded in the wake of the successful joint effort to produce HIV/Aids vaccines that now save millions of lives. This astonishing success began with the first small, joint clinical trial in 2009 in both countries. And a whole range of tropical diseases is now being pursued as well by American and South African researchers through dozens of joint programmes that link our medical schools, hospitals and research institutes. Scientific co-operation is not limited to health and medicine. A transnational project about to start will use the new SALT-2 observatory, the massive data-handling capacity of the newest SECOM wideband cable and the combined resources of MIT and Cal Tech – with UCT, Wits, and now this newest university here on the beautiful Garden Route. Among other things, this partnership will allow scientists to carry out astronomical research right to the edge of the universe.

And then there are the bi-national campuses here that reach students eager to enjoy a cost-effective American-style education responsive to the needs of this continent – especially now that many parts of their programmes can be delivered by electronic means. South Africa has responded energetically to these opportunities and, partly because of these joint ventures, South Africa is the centre of academic excellence for the continent. This contributes to this country's own academic growth even as it acts as an Africa-wide engine for education.

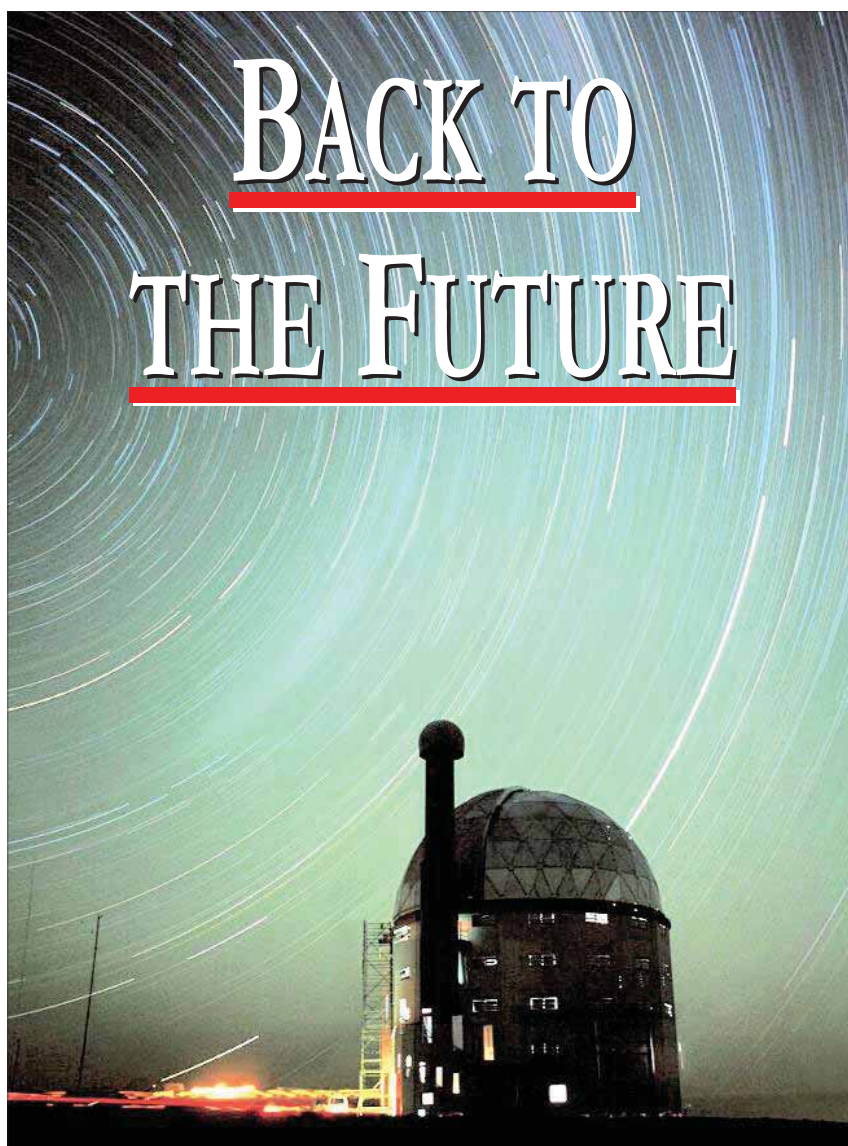
The benefits of this wide-ranging co-operation have reached well beyond science or education.

Once Zimbabwe's political impasse was resolved, here was

Text of the speech by the American Ambassador, as prepared, on the occasion of the opening of the Garden Route International Knowledge University, August 1, 2020, as envisaged by...



BY J
BROOKS
SPECTOR



BACK TO THE FUTURE

NEW ERA: The Southern African Large Telescope at Sutherland in the Karoo. The writer envisions a future where this facility will be used by SA and US scientists in cutting-edge space research.

another opportunity for our two nations, this time with the Zimbabwean people and other nations in the region, to come together in a unique partnership to rebuild Zimbabwe's wounded economy.

That success was a jump-start for an even more ambitious effort to harness South African industrial capabilities to make use of innovative technologies for agriculture, for water resource management, solar power generation and cost-effective desalination, among others. The result, South Africa has gained a place of leadership in the green technologies industrial revolution.

Investment growth funds took advantage of the boom in South

African industry – young venture capital investors came to South Africa to set up the “21st Century Ubuntu Fund” with its catch phrase, “500 million young Africans eager to buy things must make sense”. The fund's first project was the R500 solar-powered computer.

Two million units were shipped in the first full year of production, then four million the year thereafter.

Veteran environmental campaigner Al Gore teamed up with local investors to build and market these PCs – nicknamed Sassy's, shorthand for South African solar systems. Some of this country's newest designers have created Sassy's covers, using some dazzling ethnic patterns. I am told

that a Sassy's is a must-have accessory for students from Dakar to Durban.

Then there were niches no one had thought of before. South African entrepreneurs realised the country had real competitive advantages for high-end leisure communities pitched to America's healthy-wealthy retirees. With top-line medical care, a solar-powered, zero-carbon footprint energy consumption pattern, all the amenities – plus the country's unparalleled scenery and weather – these communities quickly became global market leaders.

An unexpected side benefit was that this helped reverse a generation-long medical brain drain here – especially since

Internet-based diagnosis made it easy for doctors to draw upon top specialists anywhere in the world.

These jobs pay well and they are located in some of the most pleasant parts of the country. Filling these communities has become much easier since the South African government decided obtaining a long-term visa is a simple one-stop process.

Seeing this success story, it seems impossible to believe the story could have turned out any differently. But, had things turned out differently back in the first Zuma administration, resentment over the trickle of foreign aid and investment and negative job growth here might well have led to pressures for protectionist trade policies to salvage a shrinking industrial base and protect threatened jobs. In return, one new success story of South African industry, the all-terrain, all-electric Safari vehicle, might well have been subject to American protectionism to help the fading fortunes of America's vulnerable motor vehicle manufacturers. This would have helped no one.

And growing competition between America and China for primary minerals might have led to a kind of crony-capitalism that would have choked off investment interest by American fund managers. There were many BRIC-style investment opportunities around the world in such disparate places as Chile, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Morocco and Tunisia that offered excellent returns on investment with far less political risk. The period 2008-10 had been such a close shave for investment managers that risk was Wall Street's worst fear and there was no reason to suffer threats of expropriation or nationalisation when so many choices existed. Or, our relationship might have gone awry another way if the two nations – stung by increasingly bitter foreign policy disagreements over how to deal with a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, the gradual decline of civil order in other neighbouring nations and the role of South Africa as a regional arbiter of order – had drifted further apart into an increasingly acrimonious relationship.

At the UN, South Africa and America would have found little common ground while SA looked for new friends among resource-rich but autocratic regimes around the world. Chinese investment funds might well have become a major source of capital for government-driven infrastructure investment – but too often without a real regard for the needs of open, transparent governance.

But, of course, a bit of luck and some wise leadership animated the evolution of the America-South Africa relationship over the past decade. A growing wave of people who travelled between the two nations on business, and in research and education, and warmer co-operation between NGOs and government helped too.

So, join me in a toast to this new university in one of South Africa's most beautiful natural settings – and to the success of your Olympics and to the efforts of both our countries' athletes.

(With an acknowledgement to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, HG Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes* and Arthur Keppel-Jones' *When Smuts Goes*.)

● *J Brooks Spector is an independent commentator, analyst and retired US diplomat*



BY
PETER
FABRICIUS

It's about the company we keep



THE DINOKENG Scenarios may be applied to the international stage. We know that South Africa is an enthusiastic multi-lateralist, so in that sense it walks in the world not alone but with many others.

And we know that the Zuma administration in particular wants to "domesticate" foreign policy to make it responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa, such as eradicating poverty. In that sense it tries at least to walk with its people.

But is South Africa walking the world stage with the right nations to serve the interests of the South African people?

Let's take a slurp of the ghastly alphabet soup of international organisations and consider the interesting and revealing case of Bric and Ibsa and South Africa.

Bric stands for Brazil, Russia, India and China.

The global securities firm Goldman Sachs coined the term Bric in 2001 when it predicted that by 2050 these four emerging economies would be wealthier than most of the current world powers.

In June Bric graduated from a mere investment concept to a potentially formidable political bloc when Russian President Dmitry Medvedev invited the Bric leaders to Yekaterinburg for the first Bric summit. Commentators hailed this event as heralding a new global force of the countries of the South, and the four leaders ended their summit with a declaration calling for a "multipolar world order".

This event rattled Pretoria because two members of Bric - namely Brazil and India - are also members of Ibsa and those Bric declarations echoed many of Ibsa's. Ibsa, the India-Brazil-South Africa forum, was conceived in 2003 as part of former president Thabo Mbeki's efforts to forge South-South alliances to counter the predominance of the North (or West, as it's more commonly called).

Ibsa was raised to summit level in Brazil in 2006 and completed its first round of annual summits in India last year. The fourth summit was scheduled to be held in Brazil

on October 8 - to coincide with President Jacob Zuma's state visit to the country. But it was quietly and mysteriously cancelled.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's absence was officially just the result of an innocent scheduling clash.

But the non-summit fuelled the jealous misgivings that Pretoria had begun to feel, after the Yekaterinburg summit, that Brazil and India had jilted it and run off with the more attractive China and Russia.

These misgivings had surfaced in August when Ayanda Ntsaluba, director-general of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, said Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane was in Brazil for an Ibsa ministerial conference to discuss the coming summit and especially "how to create synergies between Ibsa and Bric, given the participation of both India and Brazil in the Bric formation".

Nothing seemed to come of that.

In October Ntsaluba had expressed ambivalent views about the possibility of South Africa joining Bric.

First he suggested that South Africa was too far below the league of the Bric members to entertain the ambition of membership.

"Brazil, Russia, India and China are trillion-dollar economies. South Africa is not a trillion-dollar economy," he said.

But then Ntsaluba noted that "South Africa has certain strategic advantages... a significant place on the continent and... a significant player among the formations of the South", and that South Africa's "points of convergence are much more than the points of divergence" with the Bric nations.

Ntsaluba also suggested that South Africa had not joined Bric because India and Brazil had firmer and more open ambitions to get permanent seats on the UN Security Council than South Africa had. By contrast, "South Africa is navigating very carefully the issues about making sure that we walk together with Africa, whatever our views and our ambitions are".

This referred to South Africa's insistence on respecting the indecision of the African Union (AU) on which countries should represent the continent on the

security council if it were ever expanded.

And the AU's insistence that if the continent does get permanent seats, they must come with veto rights, as do the current five permanent seats.

This position caused a breach with the Group of Four (G4) - India, Brazil, Germany and Japan - which were campaigning for permanent seats without veto rights, knowing that to demand that would make a difficult ambition impossible.

Pretoria's insistence on sticking to the AU position and not joining the G4 in an open and strong campaign for permanent seats damaged the G4 campaign.

And, as Ntsaluba hinted, this may have been why India and Brazil switched their energies to Bric - and did not invite South Africa to come along.

But Ntsaluba also intriguingly said there was an "ongoing debate" about whether South Africa should "modify our stance on this issue".

This suggested that South Africa might abandon the AU and campaign on its own for a seat, not only for its own sake but also perhaps to qualify for Bric.

Ntsaluba said South Africa had good strategic relationships with the Bric countries and "if... they would like to invite South Africa, then it would most probably view that positively".

Whether it serves South Africa's national interest to walk together with the Bric/Ibsa emerging powers is a major, complex strategic question.

Some might see in Bric's apparent snub a warning that our ambitions to be a major player in the South-to-punch above our weight - are a little fanciful and that India and Brazil are just humouring us by joining Ibsa.

But let us assume that joining Bric is possible and helpful.

The next question is whether it has served our national interest to "walk together with" the AU on the question of security council membership and thereby apparently jeopardise our chances of "walking with" an organisation, Bric, that would probably much better serve the national interest - at least economically?

Not to mention all the other benefits that a permanent seat on the security council might bring.