

Peace miles away

THE long yearned-for Namibian independence, after more than 70 years of South African rule, is clearly visible. But prospects toward a lasting peace in a future independent Namibia, and the entire region of southern Africa, is still miles away. There are two major areas of concern - the status of Walvis Bay and the Angolan war.

Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep ocean-going port, poses a single major threat to any post-independent government in Namibia as long as South Africa continues its claim over the port. Despite the United Nations ruling that Walvis Bay is an integral part of Namibia, Pretoria continues to regard and treat the port as part and parcel of South Africa.

Walvis Bay is not only a vital anchorage for imports and exports, but provides a large military base and airstrip for South Africa to continue its destabilising tactics against the neighbouring black African states. This will enable South Africa to keep war away from its mainland. No country has so far dared to launch a direct attack on the South African mainland while South Africa has used illegally occupied Namibia as a springboard for its periodic incursions into southern Angola.

Walvis Bay has even greater implications in terms of its relationship to a future independent Namibia. Since the port is part of South Africa, those Namibians residing in Swakopmund and elsewhere will need to have visas to leave and enter the port. And a horde of Walvis Bay residents employed at the Rossing Uranium Ltd, outside Swakopmund, will have to periodically renew their visas to enter and leave the port on their way to and from work.

Also, the SA officials travelling by road to Walvis will need to apply for visas to leave and enter Namibian territory. Walvis Bay also stands as a potential cover for any opponents of a new Namibian government, and might as well provide for their base.

And the fact that Pretoria and its surrogates might use Walvis Bay as a springboard for an attack on the Namibian heartland in the event of a major dispute, remains a subject of immense concern. Several African states which bore the brunt of SA attacks in the last two decades bear testimony to this.

Another hurdle on the road toward long term peace in the region is the 14 year old Angolan civil war which will continue to have repercussions in a post-independent Namibia. The

Tripartite Agreement between SA, Angola and Cuba, on December 22, had nothing to guarantee an end to the Angolan civil war or reduce US aid to Unita. This can only be weighed against the fact that it is pretty much within the interest of the west, or the US, to have Jonas Savimbi in power in Angola.

The war in Angola is thus not a war of liberation, but a struggle for power. The US justifies its support for Unita as a way to "combat Soviet expansionism". Hence the fear exists that a new born Namibian nation might go pro-east, and in the light of this the "crusade against Soviet expansionism" will continue. The misguided belief that the Russians are bent on 'world conquest' has given rise to one of the twentieth century misconceptions: whenever the third world nations rise and make a claim, they they must have been told by somebody else - if not the Americans, then the Russians.

This limits the world in terms of east and west, and undermines the sovereignty of other existing nations. Henceforth, there is nothing that rules out the possibility that any adversaries of a new Namibian government will find a helping hand in America and be used as instruments to make trouble in the interests of the west.

Zaire provides an excellent example of western stranglehold on a developing third world nation.

And while the US has been a major hurdle to Namibian independence since Reagan took office in 1981, the former US President has been credited for achieving a peace settlement on Namibia.

The American, or Western influence in Zaire, is sure to continue as long as it fits the former. But whether Zaire achieves economic stability through it or not, will remain a subject of secondary status.

Like Zaire, a 'doctored' Angolan government might constitute a potential source of threat, not only to a new Namibian state, but other nearby states as well. To this end the war in Angola serves the interest of neither Savimbi nor the Angolan government, but affects the entire region with Namibia directly bordering Angola in the south.

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