

## Lekota: the Rainbow Reconciler

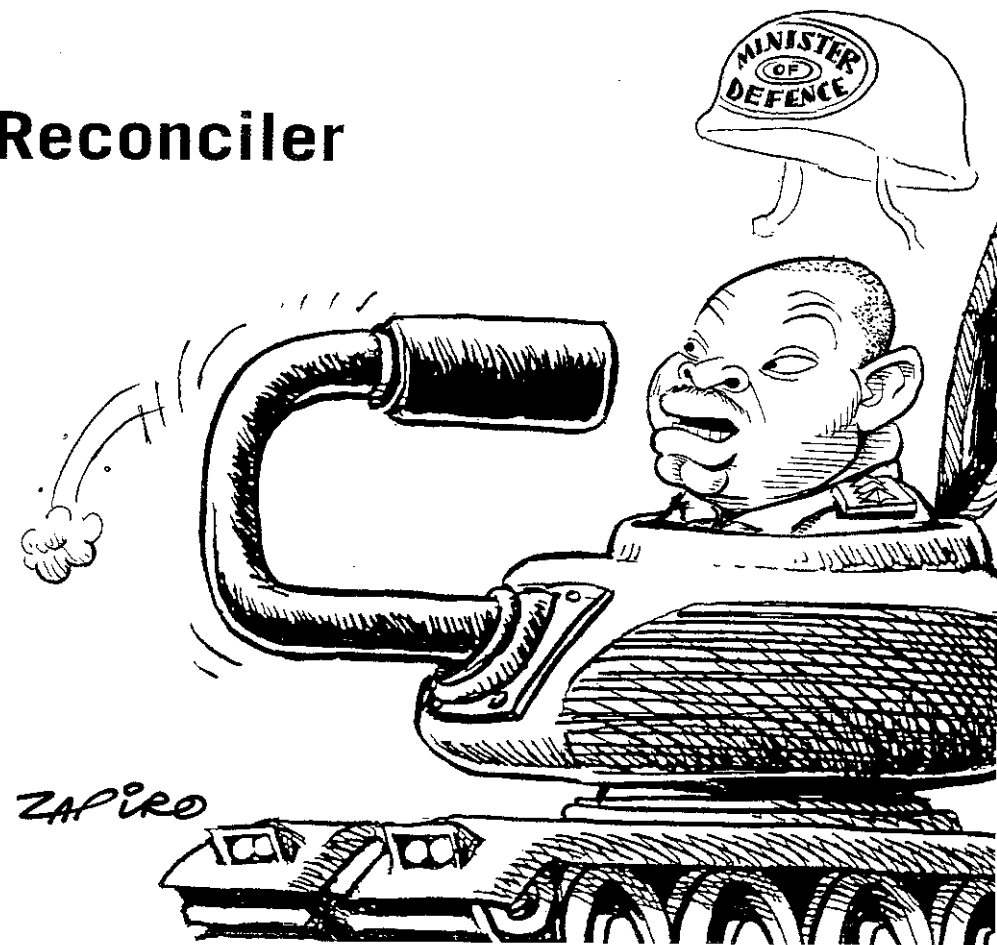
Some panelists drew a clear distinction between outright and compromise candidates, placing the Minister of Defence in the “compromise” category. A generic comment was how difficult it is for existing Cabinet members to be seen to be jockeying for the position of their boss, who remains in office until 2009 as head of the executive.

Mosioua Lekota is steeped in ANC tradition, is capable of unifying, has shown an endearing capacity for humility and has a democratic core. His name will always be floated and he is a serious contender.

One of his core assets is the affinity that people naturally have for him, and his ability to build bridges across races — qualities reminiscent of Madiba. As one panelist observed, “‘Terror’ can charm the milk out of your coffee.”

Given his strong struggle credentials as a United Democratic Front (UDF) leader, he has the advantage of an affinity with the constituency of the mass democratic movement, and the added benefit of his current position as party chairman. Some panelists pointed to his crucial role in luring opposition members to the ANC during floor-crossing periods, and his coup in securing the ANC-New National Party (NNP) agreement that broke the DA’s partnership with the NNP. If this strategic ability is wielded in the internal struggles that will precede the December 2007 conference, “Terror” Lekota will be a formidable opponent.

While Lekota can be media-savvy, he needs to do much more to instil confidence in his abilities and must



choose his battles more wisely. The panel argued that some fights he was sent into as the party’s “Mr Fix-it” may not have been good for him personally. One of these was the effort to unify the ANC’s parliamentary caucus on the Civil Union Bill prior to the vote in the Assembly. The perception of proximity to President Mbeki could be an Achilles heel, though it has been responsible for his emergence as a budding internationalist in peace-keeping and peace enforcement, in the context of both the African Union and the United Nations.

On the downside, panelists believed the ‘exile camp’ does not view Lekota as a heavyweight; that he alienated important ethnic constituencies in his role as trouble-shooter in the Eastern Cape, and that he can be tempestuous, blustery

and combative at times; rough edges that will require attention if he is to make a serious bid for power. The unseemly events during the Khutsong protests (described by one panelist as carried out “with the finesse of a mud wrestler”) were highlighted as an example of the down side of a more abrasive style of engagement, as was the recent embarrassment in the defence department with regard to Lekota’s response to allegations of the army’s equipment losses in Burundi.

The panel pointed out that, unlike the case in the PW Botha era, the ministry of defence is not a good launching pad in a country largely at peace with itself and the world. Some panelists did not believe that Lekota carries the

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weight within the party necessary to be its president, while others expressed concern that he does not present a particular direction for the party. Still others raised concerns about ethics — Lekota was one of those investigated by the Public Protector and Parliament's Ethics Committee for not disclosing assets in the Register of Members' Interests — issues ominously similar to those that dogged Jacob Zuma while he was still in Parliament. Some

argued that some ANC elements still bear grudges against Lekota for exchanging his black consciousness stance for a non-racial one. While his cross-racial appeal may therefore be important for the country, it may count against him within the party.

On balance, the panel believed that Lekota is a serious contender as a compromise candidate in the absence of a "grand bargain" with a different compromise candidate such as, for

example, Cyril Ramaphosa or Tokyo Sexwale. He was therefore slotted into a "second-tier" compromise category, with a possible further stint as party chairperson or deputy president of the party in the offing. In a different scenario, which pits Kgalema Motlanthe against him, the panel foresees a fierce contest in which Lekota is likely to emerge as secretary general. The panel raised the question — "does he want the job?". □

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## Ramaphosa: the People's Mogul

more broad-based deals, as well as harnessing personal wealth for societal upliftment. There is no reason why Cyril Ramaphosa cannot emulate Bill Gates in this regard. The key question is whether he wants the

job, and whether he will be willing to play "below the belt", which is the stuff of democratic politics — a willingness to take the blows and return them when needed, and a willingness to "plot" if necessary.

On balance, the panel of analysts agreed that Cyril Ramaphosa is a very serious candidate, but noted that his own dreams, desires and thoughts about the ANC presidency remain elusive. □

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## Sexwale: Not the Apprentice

The fact that his presence within ANC structures has not been felt as strongly since he left public office, a factor exploited by Motlanthe in his attack, may become important if the race turns on who can marshal the party structure better and with greater influence in the absence of a grand bargain. Whereas Cyril

Ramaphosa has remained on the NEC, Sexwale is merely an ordinary member of the party. The fact that he has not been involved in key strategic party decisions for many years could militate against him.

Panelists pointed out that in the case of both Sexwale and Ramaphosa an attempt may be made to turn the

debate into one about which class rules in the ANC, implying that people who are successful in business cease to live ANC traditions.

The panel had no doubt that Tokyo Sexwale will be a serious contender, depending on what happens between the "first-" and "second-tier" competitions. □

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## Zuma: the Machine Gun

Zuma's relationship with Schabir Shaik, apart from the ongoing prospect of corruption charges being reinstated, has raised serious questions about his judgement. Furthermore, he could easily be embroiled in court challenges for much of this year, given various cases pending before the courts. The most crucial

question is undoubtedly one of ethics. All other opponents in the race will have vital ammunition as the court cases drag on, attacking him for corruption, excessive spending, and dubious "financial advice" from Schabir Shaik, a convicted fraudster. While the ANC Women's League was fairly silent during the rape trial, it is uncer-

tain what the female delegates on the congress floor will do with their votes. This could be a wild card if Zuma survives for the duration of the race.

Barring the legal process removing Zuma from contention, the panel agreed that he remains a serious, if not the most serious, contender for the presidency of the ANC. □