

A Common Subregional Agenda for Peace, Human Security and Conflict Prevention: A View

Mr John Dzimba

Head of Research, Lesotho Institute of Public
Administration and Management, Maseru, Lesotho

Introduction

This paper attempts to assess the agenda of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on peace, human security and conflict prevention, in order to establish whether there is a link between the idea of conflict prevention and the promotion of human security. It also debates whether SADC takes into consideration the principal dimensions of human security, at both regional and national levels. Strategies that have been put into place to deal with the major challenges of conflict prevention and the building of peace and human security are examined.

Before attempting to define SADC's common agenda on peace, human security and conflict prevention, one needs to have an understanding of the strategic context. This will give a clear picture of both the background and the future prospects for SADC as a regional body to champion the agenda on peace, human security and conflict prevention. The problems facing SADC in its search for a common regional security are also discussed.

SADC: institutional developments in the regional security arrangement

Origins

SADC evolved from the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC), formed in 1980. Its main aim was to reduce the region's economic dependence on apartheid South Africa and to coordinate investment and trade. Initially, SADC membership comprised only nine states: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, but Member States have now grown to fourteen with the addition of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa. During the SADCC era, its security functions were the responsibility of the separate Front Line States (FLS) grouping, which was established in the 1970s by the United Republic of Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia specifically to assist in the struggle for the liberation of the White-ruled states of Southern Africa. The FLS grew out of the Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa,¹ to which most of the members belonged. It had a security coordinating structure, known as the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC), which discussed security issues. At Summit level, the FLS included representatives from various liberation movements in its meetings. As other countries in the region gained independence from colonial rule, they joined the FLS. Thus, Angola joined in 1976, Zimbabwe in 1980, Namibia in 1990 and South Africa in 1994.

The end of apartheid in South Africa had an impact on the original mandate of the FLS with regard to security issues and to the objectives of the organization as a whole. The fact that the political climate in the region had changed from that of aggressive confrontation and White-dominated rule to that of regional cooperation and integration, meant that the FLS mandate extended to cover the political, military and security realms. These changes eroded the original objective of the FLS and meant that it required restructuring in order to retain its relevance and ability to address the new regional challenges.

These developments prompted the transformation of SADCC into SADC in 1992 at the Windhoek Summit. At this Summit the heads of state and government published a treaty that emphasizes human as well as state security, committing members to upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and setting out objectives which include economic integration and the promotion of peace and security. The treaty also called for the establishment of a framework and mechanisms to strengthen regional solidarity, and provide for mutual peace and security.²

In 1993, the SADC Programme of Action proposed the adoption of a 'new approach to security', which emphasized the security of people and the non-military dimensions of security; the creation of a forum for mediation and arbitration; reductions in force levels and military expenditure; the introduction of confidence- and security-building measures and non-offensive defence doctrines; and the ratification of key principles of international law governing inter-state relations.³

In July 1994, SADC convened a ministerial workshop in Windhoek on democracy, peace and security which marked a major step on the road to a common political and security regime. It recommended the formation of a Human Rights Commission headed by judges and eminent persons; a Conflict Resolution Forum comprising the foreign ministers of Member States; a Security and Defence Forum composed of ministers responsible for defence, policing and intelligence; a SADC Sector on Security and Defence; and an autonomous institute for strategic studies.⁴

The SADC Windhoek Summit of August 1994, attended by heads of state, approved the creation of a Sector on Politics, Diplomacy, International Relations, Defence and Security which was to operate according to certain terms of reference, protocols and guiding principles. The Windhoek initiative was strengthened by the decision of the FLS to dissolve and 'become the political and security wing of SADC'. This notion began to take shape at the SADC Foreign Ministers' meeting on defence and security, held in Gaborone in January 1996. The ministers agreed to recommend to their heads of state that the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security be created, which would allow greater flexibility and more rapid responses at the highest level to sensitive and potentially explosive situations. The assumption was that this agreement would allow for a permanent SADC mechanism, while maintaining the flexible approach of the old FLS grouping.⁵

In 1996, at the Gaborone Summit, SADC finally agreed to the establishment of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, which incorporated the ISDSC. Its mandate included a long list of principles and methods to be employed by the SADC Organ on the prevention, management and resolution of conflict by peaceful means. The list included provisions concerning preventive diplomacy, conflict mediation, negotiations, conciliation, arbitration, adjudication by an international tribunal, and the development of various protocols. The heads of state and government signed the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-

operation at Blantyre, Malawi, in August 2001. At the same Summit, the Council of Ministers considered and approved the SADC Mutual Defence Pact, which would be ready for signing by heads of state at the next Summit.

The objectives of the SADC Protocol range from safeguarding the development of the region to developing common approaches to foreign policy. It includes (Article 2h) consideration of the development of a Mutual Defence Pact which would regulate a form of collective security in the region. Such wide-ranging goals need a powerful structure if they are to be attained. The Organ is given considerable authority but the text makes it clear that the Organ cannot act independently and will have to report to the SADC Summit. The Organ chairperson will serve for only one year and can only table matters for discussion by the SADC Summit through the Summit chairperson. Article 6 of the Protocol outlines the Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC) which, in a region where diplomacy is often overshadowed by military force, has the rather unenviable task of performing 'such functions as may be necessary to achieve the objectives of the Organ relating to politics and diplomacy'. The ISPDC comprises ministers of foreign affairs and allows the Organ to pursue a diplomatic track independent of the ISDSC, which is more likely to be involved in military issues.

The Malawi Summit also confirmed the jurisdiction of the Organ, which is likely to be an important issue of debate. It may involve itself in intra-state and inter-state conflict in the region under many circumstances including conflict over territorial boundaries, a military coup, a condition of insurgency and large-scale violence such as genocide and ethnic cleansing. The Protocol recognizes 'State Parties' and 'non-State' parties and goes on to list procedures for dealing with each.

Article 11 (4d) states that the Organ will respond to requests by State Parties and will only use diplomatic means where this is not forthcoming. This makes it unlikely that enforcement action will be taken although this is allowed for. The Organ Chairperson, acting on the advice of the Ministerial Committee may recommend enforcement action to the Summit, though only as a last resort.

The main objective of the Mutual Defence Pact is to operationalize the mechanisms of the SADC Organ for mutual cooperation in defence and security matters. These include conflict resolution, military preparedness, consultation, collective defence, non-interference, identification of destabilizing factors and defence cooperation. Once

they are up and running, these initiatives by SADC Member States should go a long way towards ensuring the achievement of peace, stability, human security. They might even create an environment within the subregion that would allow SADC to concentrate its attention on resources, energy and creative policy formulations that could lead to economic growth and sustainable development.

Strategic context

The end of the Cold War and the imminent demise of apartheid as a government policy in South Africa created great opportunities and challenges for the SADC countries. These opportunities were demonstrated by a dramatic change in the political and strategic environment of the region. Most of the major historical conflicts had either been resolved or were in the process of being settled. This period witnessed the independence of Namibia, the withdrawal of the Cuban and South African troops from Angola, the commitment to a ceasefire between FRELIMO and RENAMO in Mozambique and, for the first time, democratic elections in Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho and South Africa. The advent of democracy in South Africa removed the dominant source of regional instability.

The rivalry between the two superpowers, Russia and the United States, to influence events on the subcontinent, the United Nation's role in regional and national conflict resolution and the ideological politics that had acted as a source of tension within and between the SADC countries, all came to an end at this time. The absence of these influences created an opportunity for peace among Member States. These were hopes of a transition towards stability in Zaire, when Kabila's forces forced President Mobutu to step down in 1997. Kabila's new government was thought at the time to offer a more democratic dispensation in what he renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Notwithstanding these positive developments, the transition to democracy was fraught with uncertainty and danger. In Angola, the ceasefire agreement and subsequent elections in 1992 were thrown into disarray, when UNITA rejected the election results. Since then the country has remained locked in civil war. In Lesotho, the newly-elected government became subject to a coup in 1994, while the 1998 election dispute resulted in a military intervention by SADC. Lesotho's democracy remains very fragile. In the DRC, hopes of

Kabila's government were destroyed by a new civil conflict, which threatened future prospects for peace in the region. The negotiated settlements in Mozambique and South Africa were threatened by ongoing political and criminal violence. In Zimbabwe, the long-standing unresolved land problem and mismanagement of resources began to threaten the democratic process. The Namibia and Botswana border dispute threatened to divide the Member States. These problems provide the new challenges to SADC's prospects for peace and security in the region.

Furthermore, SADC is wracked by a range of formidable problems for which no immediate remedies are in sight. These include an absence of effective governance; internal, political and ethnic conflicts; unstable civil military relations; a proliferation of small arms in private hands; chronic underdevelopment and the attendant consequences of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment; countless refugees and displaced people; a debt crisis and net outflow of capital; and rampant disease and environmental degradation. These are compounded by natural disasters like drought, poor planning and prioritization of programmes, corruption and mismanagement. All these problems are exacerbated by the growing political and economic marginalization of sub-Saharan Africa; all are a great threat to human security.

The question is: What opportunities or options are available for SADC to create a common security agenda to address these critical human needs?

Opportunities to create a common security agenda

SADC is characterized by the following strategic features, which provide a good argument for the creation of a common security agenda.

- First, almost all the major threats to the security of people and states derive from internal rather than external factors. The fact that the threats are not external is an added advantage in the sense that states should be able to control and deal with threats of their own making. Nevertheless, the domestic crises in some states are so severe that they undermine stability in neighbouring countries, and often provoke cross-border hostilities. All the same, this is a good reason for other states to assist. They should act as mediators to resolve the crisis, because their own security may be

threatened.

- Second, the most serious security problems are political, social, economic and environmental rather than military in origin and character. Although they may give rise to violence, leading to the deployment of the police and possibly even the armed forces, their solutions lie in socio-economic development and the consolidation of democracy.
- Third, certain critical issues such as refugees, environmental destruction, the depletion of natural resources and the proliferation of small arms are common to many countries and transcend national borders. Addressing them will therefore require a high level of collaboration not only among member states but in the wider world community.
- Fourth, in the absence of external military threats to individual states or the region as a whole, SADC could engage in a process of substantial disarmament.
- Fifth, there is the prospect of improving existing institutions and of creating structures to maintain peace, promote economic and social advancement and ensure a future that offers the children of the SADC countries better prospects than before.
- Finally, there is the opportunity to assert the common core values around which the region's ancestors united. The cultures and languages of the South African region are interconnected, and the common historical experiences, of the region's peoples, their common problems and aspirations, remain a firm and enduring foundation for common actions to promote regional economic welfare, collective self-reliance and integration in equity and partnership.⁶

All these opportunities can be turned into strategies upon which SADC can create a common agenda for peace, human security and conflict prevention in the region.

Approach to a common security agenda

SADC's conceptual framework on peace and security recognizes the new approach to security, which emphasizes the security of people and the non-military dimensions of security. The model also acknowledges that the security of states does not necessarily have the same meaning as the security of people. The philosophy of the SADC framework is based on the principle that security is a holistic

phenomenon that is not restricted to military matters, but incorporates political, social, economic and environmental issues. Its objects are not confined to states, but extend in widening circles to include a people, the inhabitants of a geographic region and the global community. Threats to security are not limited to military challenges, to state sovereignty and territorial integrity; they include abuse of human rights, economic deprivation, social injustice and destruction of the environment.

The objectives of security policy go beyond achieving an absence of war to encompass the pursuit of democracy, sustainable economic development, social justice and protection of the environment. The use of military force is a legitimate means of defence against external aggression, but it is not an acceptable instrument for conducting foreign policy and settling disputes. The framework also recognizes that states can mitigate the security dilemma and promote regional stability by adopting a defensive rather than an offensive military doctrine and posture.

The conceptual framework adopted by SADC also emphasizes that domestic security policy should pay greater attention to social sources of instability such as the problem of violence against women and children. Rape, wife battering, child abuse and diverse types of harassment have a traumatic impact on the physical and psychological security of over half the population, but are largely ignored by state agencies.

This concept of security sets a broad agenda. Defining problems such as poverty, oppression, social injustice, the need for good governance, the uneven distribution of income, wealth and power, ethnic tensions, poor health facilities, unemployment, AIDS, drug trafficking, and the need for land restitution, as security issues raises their political profile. SADC as a community has considered these factors as the greatest threats to domestic stability and economic development. Therefore these are what governments and societies have to address on a continuing basis. All SADC's protocols and terms of reference on a common regional security approach are based on these practical principles of the new approach to human security. They recognize the need to establish a framework and mechanisms to strengthen regional solidarity and provide for mutual peace and security.⁷ The common security regime will provide: early warning of potential crisis; the building of military confidence and stability through disarmament and transparency in defence matters; engagement in joint problem-solving and the development of

collaborative programmes on security issues; the negotiation of multilateral security agreements; and the management of conflict through peaceful means. The protocols are based on the recognition that war and insecurity are the enemies of economic progress and social welfare. Good political relations among the countries of the region, together with peace and mutual security, are critical components of the total environment for regional cooperation and integration.

Methods and strategies on peace and security

SADC adopted the strategies of disarmament, the peaceful resolution of conflict and institutional development as the foundations on which peace, human security and conflict prevention should be built. SADC also adopted a policy of 'freeing resources from military to productive development activities'.⁸ The rationale was that an arms build-up was dangerous for the region because it heightened political instability, the risk of armed hostilities and the human and economic costs of warfare. Further, it diverted resources from more productive ends and caused a major net outflow of capital, in this way contributing to underdevelopment in many countries and contribute.⁹

However, the disarmament policy has its own problems:

- It is not easy to integrate former combatants into civilian society and to find employment for them. In the case of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, most of the demobilized soldiers remained unemployed and resorted to banditry.¹⁰
- Defence budget cuts often lead to lower wages and deteriorating conditions in the armed forces, which in turn create a crisis of morale, which could result in an attempted coup, as in Lesotho.

Peaceful resolution of conflict

The Cold War perspective on the use of military force as instrument of foreign policy has not been completely abandoned by the SADC states. An example is the reinstatement of Lesotho's government following the coup in 1994, in which SADC's diplomatic efforts were 'reinforced' by the threat of a military blockade against the land-locked mountain kingdom.¹¹ A further example is the 1993 SADC Programme of Action, which states, 'there is a sense in which

military force is an acceptable form of foreign policy.¹² SADC would need to agree on conditions under which the use of armed force will be acceptable, and also consider conditions under which military intervention another member state might be permissible. This shows little appreciation by SADC of the most fundamental rule of international law, that the use or threat of force in international relations is only justified in the case of self-defence against an armed attack or, in the absence of an attack, with the explicit authorization of the UN Security Council. SADC's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution needs to be grounded in a formal endorsement of the law on armed conflict.¹³

Institutional development

The SADC Programme of Action of 1993 proposed the following strategies for advancing the regional security agenda:

- adoption of a people-centred security approach, which promotes the non-military dimensions of security;
- creation of a forum for mediation and arbitration;
- reduction in force levels and military expenditure;
- introduction of confidence- and security-building measures and non-offensive defence doctrines; and
- ratification of key principles of international law governing inter-state relations.

Most of these ideas need to be developed into concrete strategies, with established fixed procedures and mechanisms for their implementation.

Strategies on security and defence

The strategies on security and defence cooperation can be drawn from the objectives of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

- **Military threat:** The strategy is to develop a collective security capacity and Mutual Defence Pact for response to external and internal threats.
- **Peace-making, peace-keeping and peace enforcement:** The strategy is to develop a regional peacekeeping capacity within national armies, for internal or external use.

- Conflict prevention, management and resolution: The strategies are to use preventive diplomacy, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and adjudication by an international tribunal; to establish an early-warning system in order to facilitate prompt action to prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflict; to mediate in inter-state and intra-state disputes and conflicts; to develop conflict-prevention management and resolution capacity; and to have full regional cooperation in conflict management.
- Crime prevention: The strategy is to work in close cooperation in dealing with cross-border crime, and to promote a community-based approach to local crime.
- Foreign policy: The strategy is to develop a common foreign policy that promotes cooperation and common political value systems, so that SADC can lobby as a region.
- Human rights: The strategy is to develop democratic institutions and practices that observe and monitor international human rights conventions and treaties.

Progress on collective peace and security

In past decades, SADC heads of state have supported measures that promoted collective security in the region. On the political front, these measures included the formation of the FLS in 1970, SADCC in 1980 and SADC in 1992. Through these bodies, SADC has successfully established a political solidarity that has sustained and deepened the desire for regional integration. SADC has also created common political values, systems and institutions in order to build a firm foundation for democratic governance. This is illustrated by the fact that a majority of Member States has abandoned mono-party one-person rule and military authoritarianism since the 1990s, and embraced political pluralism and regular multi-party elections. This process of nurturing and consolidating democratic governance in Southern Africa is crucial, not only for the broadening of political participation but also to ensure the relative stability of political systems and the legitimacy of governments. SADC has also made progress towards political integration by establishing the SADC Parliamentary Forum outside the formal structures. This is a consultative body which lacks sufficient legislative powers to have real impact on SADC. SADC has also established a SADC Electoral Commissions Forum, which is again a consultative body, and also

lacks executive authority to make any real impact on the electoral process in SADC. Although much progress has been made in the holding of regular elections, the observance of human rights, the strengthening of local government, the active participation of civil society actors and the increased participation of women in the political process, much remains to be done to institutionalize democracy and translate the constitutional provisions of fundamental freedoms and rights into the political culture and practice of societies in the region.

The Malawi Summit in August 2001 agreed on a consolidated text of the SADC treaty which includes some important amendments. The changes have made the SADC bureaucracy bigger in some ways, but also clearer. There is now an Integrated Committee of Ministers which reports to the Council after reaching agreement by consensus. It will oversee core integration areas and be empowered to act without a formal Council meeting which has delayed matters in the past. The part of the treaty concerning the Organ (Article 10a) is made clearer (as discussed above) and the rules of reporting and decision-making are spelled out. The Council will meet four times each year and will be supported by the secretariat. The secretariat, which already has a long list of functions is now also responsible for, amongst others 'gender mainstreaming', 'devising appropriate strategies for self-financing' and 'undertaking research on community building'.

Progress on military and state security

A number of bilateral defence agreements have been set up. Among the more practical measures were the creation of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation in 1996, and the establishment of the Interstate Defence and Security Committee, the Regional Peace-keeping Training Centre and the Southern Africa Police Chiefs' Co-operation Organisation (SARFCCO). Most of these arrangements are currently operating, although in conflict situations there are still problems of overlap and divergent perceptions of what should be done, by whom, and how. These problems should be solved in the near future, since the heads of state signed the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation at the Blantyre Summit of August 2001 and the Council of Ministers approved the Mutual Defence Pact Protocol, which has to be

forwarded to heads of state for signature at the next SADC Summit. The Pact is important because it is the legal instrument empowering the operational mechanism of the SADC Organ for mutual cooperation in defence and security matters.

Some recent achievements of SADC in the realm of military security are:

- Through the ISDSC, SADC has successfully contained the intermittent political unrest in Lesotho. It also managed to restrain Angola from invading Zambia, accused of complicity in the rearmament of UNITA.
- The ISDSC has adopted six important regional policy documents concerning disaster management, satellite communications, action against coup makers, peace-keeping training, peace-keeping doctrine, and standard operating procedures for peace-keeping operations. The satellite communications network, which links regional leaders and key officials on a 24-hour all-weather basis, has already been installed.
- The ISDSC has been instrumental in efforts to establish a SADC peace-keeping brigade, which have been under way since early 1998.
- The two regional peace-keeping field-training exercises, Blue Hungwe and Blue Crane, were hosted in Zimbabwe and South Africa in 1997 and 1999 respectively, under the auspices of the ISDSC.
- The Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare has already trained over two hundred SADC students.

Conclusion

The following action could be taken for the peaceful and constructive settlement of conflicts.

- Creating a culture of democracy and tolerance would entail the creation of organs of civil society to carry out mass education on the concept and practice of democracy and tolerance. The establishment of forums and mediums would allow government to interact with the various sectors of the population, particularly in the design and implementation of public policies.
- Creating a human rights culture is the pillar upon which a democratic society is built. It is essential to establish and strengthen institutions that are specifically geared to informing and educating people about their rights. These bodies could also

serve as watchdogs, preventing government excesses.

- Creating a culture of constructive conflict resolution is essential. Proper techniques and strategies for alternative conflict management and resolution methods need to be developed. It is imperative that indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution be explored, as they could be applied to current types of conflicts. A wide level of educational training in the skills of conflict management and resolution would need to be employed.
- Promoting women's full access to, and control over, productive resources to reduce the level of poverty among women is another urgent task to bring about an improvement in social conditions.
- Strengthening SADC structures, such as the Parliamentary Forum and the Electoral Commissions Forum, would entail organizing workshops in order to equip functionaries with the necessary skills.
- Improving the management of the education system, apart from devising cost-effective ways of delivering education services such as cost sharing, joint procurement of school materials and mounting joint training programmes is an urgent priority for SADC countries.
- Helping to increase the capacity for HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, for planning and for research, is an essential activity to help address the AIDS epidemic.
- Instituting an operational legal mechanism to make the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security binding on all Member States is another important priority. This would also help to give direction in some areas where the Protocol articles are unclear.
- Establishing an early-warning system, with well-qualified personnel and a conflict management team to help deal with disputes and also to advise the Member States. Would assist SADC in defusing potentially destabilizing situations.

The role suggested above for civil society assumes that government and the private sector cooperate and participate in the process. Government can create the enabling environment in which civil society can be effective. Likewise, the private sector can assist by providing the necessary resources to carry out such activity.

Notes