

Journal of Security Sector Management

Published by:
Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform
University of Cranfield
Shrivenham, UK

ISSN 1740-2425

Rocky Williams' Tribute Issue - March 2005

Ensuring Strategic and Institutional Inter-Operability: The Organ on Politics, Defence and Security and the Challenges of Managing Regional Security in SADC¹

Dr (Col) Rocklyn Williams

It is an oft-quoted dictum, beloved of soldiers and managers alike, that structure follows strategy. Yet, very much in the vein of Napoleon's dictum that "the mean are powerless to secure the future; institutions alone can fix the destinies of nations", attempts to resolve conflict tend to focus on organisational rather than strategic resolutions.² Notwithstanding the strategic origins of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as a political entity, the recent attempts at resolving the impasse within the sub-region have focused on organisational rather than strategic solutions. Notwithstanding the establishment of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS), and the Strategic Indicative Plan (SIPO) required for its operationalisation, there is still a need to flesh out broader strategies and processes whereby sub-regional security integration can be secured.

Unless a degree of political, policy, and strategic coherence is achieved within the sub-region and its security architecture, attempts to secure

regional consensus and cohesion will be continually thwarted. This chapter focuses on the recent divisions within SADC and maintains that an essential prerequisite for securing higher levels of regional cohesion, will be the identification of those issues and common processes, which SADC needs to address in order to best manage its regional security more effectively. It proposes that, in tandem with the considerable work currently underway towards the operationalisation of the OPDS, it is also necessary to adopt a new strategic architecture within which SADC analyses both itself and its diverse conflict. Towards this end, a series of political and military confidence and security building measures via which current and future organisational mechanisms can be created are proffered.

1997-2001: SADC Unravelling?

For many years during the 1980s, the Southern African Development Community was regarded as a model of a functioning and cohesive sub-regional organisation. In both public and private discussions, foreign diplomats and government officials alike would tell their Southern African counterparts that SADC was a sub-regional arrangement that other regions and sub-regions within and without Africa could well do to study and, possibly, even emulate.

Indeed, many Southern Africans themselves took pride in the level of cohesion and solidarity that they had achieved over the past two decades. They possessed a loose but profound collective identity that had been forged in common political struggles that stretched, in some cases, back to the early 20th century and in armed struggles that started, more or less together, from the early 1960s onwards. This identity was strengthened by the ferocity of the onslaught, which most Southern African countries were to face from South Africa's PW Botha administration between 1978 and 1989. These experiences created bonds, which were based on more than mere sentiment and were, as a result, rooted in deep historical, political, moral and ideological affinities.

Yet, from 1997 onwards, these bonds started unravelling, as intense intra-state and inter-state rivalries, many of them occasionally alluded to but never fully comprehended, fractured the edifice of SADC unity. The trigger for these developments was the incorporation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) into SADC - a decision motivated, ironically, by a desire to avoid future instability in the DRC itself.

The underlying causes of this unfolding conflict, however, had as much to do with the different economic, political and national interests of the various SADC countries (and the extent to which these translated themselves into often conflicting foreign policy objectives) as the decision to incorporate Africa's fourth largest country into SADC. Clearly the sub-region had, in effect, been divided along political and economic lines for many years prior to the ending of apartheid; and the emergence of new elites within the SADC countries and the reconfiguration of existing elite interests contributed to the countervailing forces that were, after 1996, to impose such severe strain on the thin fabric of unity that held SADC together.

As a result of this development, nascent alliances and blocs within SADC were exposed as different groupings within the sub-region responded to the unfolding crisis in the DRC. SADC became, from early 1997 onwards, essentially a bipolar sub-regional entity with its two sub-regional powers and their respective allies adopting strategies towards the resolution of the conflict within the DRC that were qualitatively and quantitatively dissimilar.

The 'defence treaty' bloc (referred to thus because of the collective security agreement signed between the four countries in 1998) was led by Zimbabwe - and by no means without its own internal fissures and contradictions - and included Angola, Namibia and the affected country, the DRC. The common feature of the strategy adopted by this grouping to the ongoing conflict in the DRC, was the premium it placed on the centrality of state sovereignty to the political architecture of the region and the need for appropriate security arrangements, most typically modelled on the traditional collective security arrangements of other sub-regions, towards the resolution of sub-regional conflicts in general. This philosophy underpinned the defence pact between these four countries and their subsequent motivation for intervention in the DRC.

The reasons for the adoption of this strategy were threefold - political, economic and strategic. Politically, it reflected the concern of all four countries, all of them post-liberation states of some sort, with the centrality of statehood, nationhood and sovereignty to their political existence. The threat posed to the DRC by Rwandan and Ugandan-backed insurgents and by their respective armies could be seen as setting a precedent for the redefinition of Central and Southern African political architecture.

Economically, it was clear that all four countries could benefit from a mutual pact, which saw the expulsion and or neutralisation of those opponents confronting the Kabila government from the DRC. These countries were facing economic crises of varying magnitudes and required new business initiatives to both boost their economies and sustain their respective governments. The post-Mobutu DRC provided a fertile ground for new investments. It abounded in natural and mineral resources (most of them seemingly under-utilised), it possessed more than 80% of Africa's surface water (essential for both industrial development and hydro-electric purposes), and its strategic location in Central Africa provided it with access to contiguous markets in the north and east of the continent.

All four countries stood to benefit strategically (in both the political and military sense) from a well-disposed and obligated president in the DRC. Militarily, two of the 'defence treaty' countries - Angola and the DRC - required a DRC that was purged of the complex web of adversarial military groupings that threatened their sovereignty and political survival (UNITA in the case of Angola and the UNITA/ Eastern DRC rebel groupings/Rwandan force alliance on the other). Both Angola and Zimbabwe's involvement in the DRC reflected their real or desired superpower status and was clearly an attempt to control the sub-regional environment within which they operated.

The interests of countries such as Namibia were more modest and were motivated partially out of economic interests - Namibian business secured limited mining concessions in the country - and fraternal commitments to past allies such as Angola and Zimbabwe. In essence, all four countries stood to benefit from a more closely knit relationship capable of countering the diverse political threats to their national interests and from which the economic growth of their respective countries could be facilitated.

The 'defence treaty bloc' was not without its own internal fissures as was evidenced by the growing concern within Zimbabwe over the inherent unreliability of Kabila as a long-term strategic partner. The cancellation of mining contracts secured by Zimbabwean business interests in the DRC and Kabila's apparent inability to provide the resources required for more intensive Zimbabwean military involvement in the DRC contributed to these tensions. Indeed, many of the rumours alleging both Zimbabwean and/ or Angolan complicity in the assassination of Laurent Kabila, reflected the recognition of these nascent tensions within this alliance.

The 'peacemaking bloc' led by South Africa (and also not without its own internal fissures and contradictions) included Tanzania, Mozambique and Botswana, but also relied on the implicit support of Zambia, Swaziland and Malawi. More disparate and less coherent than the 'defence treaty bloc', the 'peacemaking bloc' was united by a broad normative and strategic approach towards the resolution of the conflict in general and within the DRC in particular.

The common feature uniting the 'peacemaking bloc' was its commitment to the utilisation of diplomatic and political strategies as the primary instrument for the resolution of conflict in the region. Undoubtedly, countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique were strongly influenced by their own experiences in this regard. Tanzania had emerged as one of the key peace brokers in the Burundian crisis and South Africa and Mozambique had bought peacemaking strategies to bear in the resolution of their own internal conflicts. All countries (bar Tanzania) had been extensively involved since 1994, in the attempted resolution of the Lesotho constitutional crisis and South African foreign policy was inclining in the direction of a peace building agenda (as exemplified in the pronouncements of the South African White Paper on participation in peace missions).

This bloc was less cohesive than the 'defence treaty bloc' and was certainly not formally united by the treaty obligations that bound the latter. Members of this bloc, South Africa for instance, had also not hesitated to use force when intervening in domestic crises as they had done in Lesotho in 1998, although this was justified as being a SADC intervention.

But Why SADC?

The reasons for the fracturing of SADC unity are too complex to analyse in detail within this chapter. Three observations are, however, ventured in

this regard. First, the era of the Frontline States and the South African Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) had clearly masked more fundamental differences within and between SADC states than had hitherto been acknowledged. Post-independence governments within Southern Africa had developed definite geo-strategic and national interests, which only became more apparent with South Africa's acceptance into the Southern African Development Community.

Although, as stated above, these interests had much to do with the shared historical and strategic interests of certain blocs within SADC, they were also determined, to no small extent, by a complex web of ideological, personal and, in some cases, pragmatic interests. None of these blocs were absolute in nature and many of them contained within themselves, the potential seeds of future conflict. Although, in some cases, strong historical ties had existed between different countries of the region (Angola and the South African ANC for example), these relationships were to sour as governments redefined their national values and national interests. Indeed, an interesting parallel highlighting the short-term nature of many of these alliances can be provided by an examination of the tensions that began emerging between Uganda and Rwanda (regarded, historically, as close allies) from the late 1999 period onwards.

Second, and related to the above, was the changing nature of the threat in Africa and the implications of this for the conflict resolution strategies adopted by the various governments in the region. The pre-1994 period had seen SADC united against a massive and singular threat in the form of South Africa. This rendered the formulation of policies, strategies and plans within and between SADC states a relatively easy exercise. The post-apartheid and post-Cold War period, however, unmasked many of the latent conflicts within the region and the relevance of traditional 'threat assessments' for the African continent was found wanting.

The source of current conflicts, almost without exception, has its origins, primarily, in a variety of environmental, demographic, economic, political and developmental factors - factors which, notwithstanding the role of military force in credible conflict resolution, demanded socio-economic and not military strategies and responses. Military conflict within this 'new' scenario translated itself mostly into either intra-state conflict between opposing political or civil groups or between the central government and secessionist or guerrilla movements, or inter-state conflicts of a qualitatively different nature to those of conventional inter-state warfare (the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict being an anomaly in this regard).

The third observation, once again related to the observations ventured above, concerns the utility of our present conceptual and strategic architecture in understanding the myriad causes of conflict within the Southern African region in particular and the African continent in general. The Cold War period, and indeed the apartheid years, bestowed an unwarranted intellectual simplicity and a strategic reductionism on many of the key political and intellectual discourses dominant within the SADC region.

The causes of conflicts, and their proposed resolution, were reduced to a set of simple postulates, which corresponded either to the strategic divisions of the Cold War period, the political divisions within Southern Africa (the apartheid regime versus the 'rest'), or the populist discourses prevalent within the rhetoric of the governments of the region (people versus oppressors; colonialists versus dispossessed). The reality of conflict within the SADC region was, however, infinitely more nuanced than these often one-dimensional portrayals suggest. Conflict was more often than not the product of continually shifting class, ideological, institutional and personal factors overlaid by commercial interests (particularly the commercialisation of war) than it was the product of any permanent divide between different fixed social and political interests.

The under-developed state of both the sub-region and the international community's strategic *nous* was vividly demonstrated in the DRC conflict. Neither intelligence agencies (be they African or international), African analysts nor diplomats could have foreseen the major fault lines, which were to emerge during the DRC crisis. A rigorous re-examination of our conceptual assumptions and our current intellectual architecture is required if we are to effectively understand and manage the plethora of existing and potential conflicts within the SADC region in future.

In light of the above, the recent attempts within SADC to forge a common approach to the sub-regional resolution of conflict have focused on structural re-organisation as a means to this end. The creation of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security in 1996 was one such initiative, as are the proposals, which emerged from the SADC Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting held in Swaziland in October 1999. Notwithstanding the honourable intentions behind these different initiatives, they all tend to focus on organisational solutions rather than the attainment of strategic consensus on the management of regional security within SADC. The following section attempts to focus on the processes, which should underpin effective regional security management rather than the structural variants (the latter being, ideally, a product that is derived from the identification of these processes).

The Ratification of the' OPDS and the Institution of the SIPO Process

Prior to the creation of the OPDS in Gaborone in June 1996, security management within SADC was coordinated at three primary levels. The first was the level of the Frontline States themselves; the leaders of the sub-region would meet on an ad hoc basis and, more often than not, in response to particular crises, to better coordinate their collective responses to various security crises. Understandably, during: the 1970s and the 1980s, the focus of their concern concentrated on the ongoing conflicts within Angola, Namibia, Rhodesia, Mozambique and South Africa. For security reasons, no minutes of meetings were kept and decisions were regarded as binding, in a normative sense, on all Heads of State who were members of the FLS.

During the late 1970s, an Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) was created to better coordinate defence activities between those countries constituting the then SADCC. This structure evolved, during the 1990s, to become an institution of some complexity and, arguably, some positive effect. It consisted of three primary subcommittees (defence, policing, and public security - the latter referring primarily to the intelligence domain), which were, in turn, sub-divided into various specialist sub-committees. In the defence domain, for example, some 15 sub-sub committees existed, covering areas of common SADC defence interest ranging from sport and chaplains' affairs on the one hand to maritime and operational issues on the other.

Notwithstanding its efficacy in the arena of ensuring security cooperation and, increasingly, harmonisation of policies and doctrines within the sub-region, the ISDSC possessed no formal status as approved by an appropriate sub-regional protocol. To remedy this situation, the OPDS was launched in Gaborone in 1996, although it was to remain dormant until 2000. On 14 August 2001, SADC members met in Blantyre where they amended Article 5 of the SADC Treaty to provide for the formal ratification of the OPDS, as approved by the Summit that had met in Windhoek on 1 March of the same year. It was from these decisions that SIPO has taken its strategic and institutional direction.

Currently, the SIPO provides for the restructuring of the OPDS into two main 'legs' - one dealing with politics and diplomacy, and one dealing with issues pertaining to defence and security. Currently the OPDS, whose current institutional HQ is in Gaborone but whose chair remains Lesotho, is being restructured as follows:

- A Chair which will rotate on an annual basis between the various SADC members;
- An Executive Secretary who will be either seconded or appointed by SADC members;
- A Department for Political, Defence and Security Affairs with the following sub-directorates:
 - A Directorate for Politics and Diplomacy responsible for Politics and Governance and International Relations and Diplomacy.
 - A Directorate for Defence and Security responsible for Defence, Public Security and State Security.
 - A Strategic Analysis Unit to assist the OPDS in its strategic forecasting capabilities.

In concrete terms, the SIPO proposes the following objectives with attached activities for each of the sectoral areas referred to above:

Political sector objectives include the following:

- i. To safeguard the region from inter and intra-state conflicts;
- ii. To promote political cooperation among member states and the evolution of common political values and institutions;
- iii. To prevent, contain and resolve inter-state and intra-state conflict by peaceful means;

- iv. To develop appropriate policies for social reintegration of ex-soldiers;
- v. To promote the development of democratic institutions and practices by member states and encourage the observance of universal human rights;
- vi. To observe and encourage member states to implement the United Nations Charter, the African Union's constitutive act and other relevant international conventions and treaties on peaceful relations between states;
- vii. To coordinate the participation of member states in international and regional peacekeeping operations; .
- viii. To develop regional capacity and common strategy in the management of disasters and coordination of international assistance;
- ix. To develop common policy approaches on issues of mutual concern and advance such policy collectively in international fora.

Defence sector objectives include the following:

- i. To protect the people and safeguard the development of the region against instability arising from inter- and intra-state conflicts;
- ii. To promote regional coordination and cooperation on matters related to security and defence and establish appropriate mechanisms to this end;
- iii. To consider enforcement action in accordance with international law as a matter of last resort where peaceful means have failed;
- iv. To consider the development of a collective security capacity and conclude a mutual defence pact to respond to external military threats;
- v. To develop the peacekeeping capacity of national defence forces and coordinate the participation of member states in international and regional peacekeeping operations;
- vi. To enhance regional capacity in respect of disaster management and coordination of international humanitarian assistance.

State security sector (intelligence) objectives include:

- i. To promote regional coordination and cooperation on matters related to state security;
- ii. To prevent, contain and resolve inter and intra-state conflict by peaceful means;
- iii. To promote the observance of human rights in security-related issues;
- iv. To develop a collective security capacity for the region;
- v. To promote close cooperation with police and defence forces on cross-border crime- related issues;
- vi. To combat the spread of HIV / AIDS;
- vii. To prevent and combat terrorist activities.

Public security sector objectives include the following:

- i. To protect people in the region from a breakdown in law and order; .
- ii. To ensure that all the relevant SADC objectives are enshrined in relevant police policies, protocols and practices;
- iii. To develop close cooperation between member states' forces within the region;
- iv. To develop police peacekeeping capabilities within the region.

It is clear from the objectives that considerable progress has been made in refining the OPDS in both structural and strategic terms. The key challenge, however, is to translate these objectives into concrete activities on the ground. It will also be imperative to consider a range of additional activities that will further enhance the capacity of the SADC sub-region to manage its diverse common security strategies. Some suggestions in this regard are made below.

Creating Confidence and Building Security

To reach agreement on what it is that constitutes the framework of a human security agenda within SADC and the process via which consensus on appropriate strategies is reached, it is necessary to secure agreement among the different role players as to what constitutes the conceptual content of a human security agenda. The term 'human security' runs the risk of being either defined too generally to possess any significant practical policy utility or too vaguely to prove capable of being pulled down into the sub-regional policy arena. Moreover, political consensus is required on the scope of the SADC human security agenda and the main challenges facing the creation of conditions of sustainable peace within SADC. Consensus is also required on the appropriate strategies through which to realise this human security agenda. SADC already possesses certain draft protocols on these issues (intolerance for coups d'etats, for example). Some further suggestions in this regard could include the following:

- Harmonisation and integration of the developmental policies and activities of SADC with those policies and activities within the security sphere (the peacekeeping initiatives within the ISDSC and the policing activities of SARPCO for example). This will require the adoption of peacebuilding, peacekeeping and security sector transformation sub-strategies that will provide an effective and practical bridge between the development and the security arenas.
- As far as possible, the harmonisation of the foreign policies of all SADC countries within the region - particularly when this has to do with foreign policy engagements within other African and SADC countries. This will, in effect, only really occur at a meta-strategic level. The division of SADC into different national entities will invariably witness a pragmatic tension between national

interests and sub-regional objectives.

- As far as possible, the harmonisation of the defence policies of all SADC countries within the region - particularly when this has to do with defence policy engagements within other African and SADC countries. One process that could be considered in this regard is the institution of a sub-regional defence and security review in which a detailed assessment is made of the nature of the current strategic environment in the SADC sub-region; the types of roles and tasks which SADC should be preparing its security agencies for; the equipment requirements for these particular tasks; the human resource requirements required to respond to these challenges; and the budgetary implications of all of these.
- The institution of appropriate confidence and security building measures within the SADC region. These measures could typically include the following:
 - i. Improving transparency with regard to military forces through information exchanges on policies, national strategies, budgets, force levels, major weapons systems and purchases, and existing and intended bilateral defence agreements with other African countries;
 - ii. Verification of force levels, weapons systems and force dispositions by credible observers approved by SADC;
- Negotiation of agreements in the sphere of non-proliferation, intended weapons procurement and doctrine standardisation;
- Building the capacity of SADC to respond to crises - already this is being done in the peacebuilding arena with the ongoing activities of the ISDSC in this sphere, but more needs to be done in the sphere of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (as the recent floods in Mozambique have vividly demonstrated).

To accomplish the above, a few guidelines are proposed:

- The process of securing consensus on the content and the ends of security will, by its very nature, be an incremental process that will require time and astute management. The impasse within SADC over the proposed resolution of the conflict in Zimbabwe is an indicator of the extent to which sub-regional paralysis can occur when sub-regional organisations are confronted with conflicts in some of the more powerful countries of the region.
- A conceptual and strategic architecture will need to be established within which all these concepts and related sub-concepts relating to the regional security agenda are outlined and fully explicated. This will initially be based on the key strategic concepts outlined

in existing SADC policy documents but should ideally, be reflected in the national policy pronouncements of the different SADC countries.

- The proposed confidence and security building measures should not be seen as antithetical to the national security interests of the country concerned but as complementary. Acceptance of this principle will not occur overnight and will require discussion and the development of trust.
- All countries within SADC and all major role players must be involved in the process of determining a regional security agenda right from the beginning. The inclusion of the DRC into SADC at a later stage demonstrates the extent to which a role player, unfamiliar with the rules and protocols of the organisation, can divide such a body.
- Once agreement has been reached on an appropriate sub regional strategy, the mandates of the respective coordinating and executing authorities within SADC will need to be determined.
- The institutional capacity of the different SADC countries will need to be considered when formulating a proposed strategy. The capacity of SADC states is presently uneven (as seen with the perennial problems surrounding the chairing of the ISDSC, for example) and many states do not have the capacity to implement ambitious and wide-ranging proposals.

Much of this has been accomplished to date and future challenges will centre around the ability of the OPDS to create institutional capability, operationalise its objectives and deepen and expand its strategic cohesion and vision.

Conclusion

In March 2001, SADC heads of state endorsed the ministers' recommendations on the organisational restructuring of SADC that had been made in Swaziland in 1999. Yet no significant progress has been made to date on the implementation of these proposals. Undoubtedly, organisational restructuring will take place, but until such time as agreement has been secured on the processes, which the revised SADC security structures should manage, the role of these mechanisms will invariably be of a short-term nature. This is not to demean the value of short-term interventions and processes. The Inter-State Defence and Security Committee has done much in this arena and its involvement in the convening of sub-regional peacekeeping exercises, development of sub-regional doctrine and initiation of a plethora of contacts across the strategic, functional and doctrinal field in general is to be commended.

An integrated and over-arching strategy capable of providing a unifying strategic framework within which SADC's security processes can operate

is an essential prerequisite to the long-term stability of the SADC sub-region. Once consensus has been reached on the content of a regional security agenda - preferably a human security agenda developed out of the existing SADC policies - then the appropriate organisational mechanisms required for the coordination and management of this strategy will be rendered more effective. This will undoubtedly take more than the forthcoming decade to accomplish.

Notes and References

¹ Originally published in SOLOMON, Hussein (2004) "Towards a Common Defence and Security Policy in the Southern African Development Community" Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa. Reprinted here with permission.

² Statement attributed to Napoleon I at an Imperial séance, June 7, 1814