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## POLICY BRIEF

ANGOLA

BOTSWANA

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

LESOTHO

MADAGASCAR

MALAWI

MAURITIUS

MOZAMBIQUE

NAMIBIA



SEYCHELLES

SOUTH AFRICA

SWAZILAND

TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

ZIMBABWE



CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

## GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTHERN AFRICA

**Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa**

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## Introduction

This policy brief by the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, considers the key governance and security challenges facing Southern Africa, with a focus on the 15-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) sub-region's progress towards democracy, and its peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts – particularly in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Madagascar.

Inspired by the concept of conflict resolution developed by the first African United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Egypt's Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, this policy brief argues that appropriate early action can help to prevent the escalation of disputes into open conflict, and in the case of fragile, war-affected countries, a relapse into renewed violence. In his report, Boutros-Ghali put forward a comprehensive view of conflict resolution, envisaging it as a continuum of preventive diplomacy; peacemaking; peacekeeping; and post-conflict peacebuilding. Not only must the root causes of conflicts be tackled through addressing governance challenges, but effective peacemaking and peacekeeping mechanisms must also be developed, as well as a comprehensive strategy for post-conflict peacebuilding.

### 1. Governance Challenges in Southern Africa

Democracy and “good governance” are critical for effective peacebuilding and fostering economic development in Southern Africa. Credible multi-party elections, in particular, provide the main legal channel for the orderly transfer of power between competing political groupings, as well as enabling SADC's 257 million citizens to participate in political processes. Over the past two decades, the Southern African sub-region has experienced a wave of political change, moving from protracted civil war and colonial or authoritarian rule towards peace and more democratic modes of governance, although the nature and pace of democratisation has varied widely across SADC's 15 member states. Between 1992 and 2012, more than 60 national and presidential elections have been held in Southern Africa, with only Swaziland's absolutist monarchy running counter to the sub-regional trend towards participatory democracy. Civil society has grown increasingly vocal, and a critical media has emerged in many parts of the sub-region. Democratic institutions, such as parliaments, electoral bodies, and judiciaries, too, have become more assertive in challenging domestic abuses of power. Since its establishment in 1992, SADC has sought to enshrine human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as commonly held political values, and the consolidation of democratic, legitimate, and effective governance has become an integral component of the organisation's commitment to security and region-building in Southern Africa. This is reflected in the SADC Treaty of 1992 (revised in 2001); the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation of 2001; the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (SIPO) of 2004 (revised in 2012); and the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections of 2004.

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SADC LEADERS MEET FOR TALKS IN MASERU, LESOTHO, IN AUGUST 2006.

Photo - Pieter Bauermeister/Bloomberg via Getty Images

However, electoral processes have not always been free and fair, fuelling insecurity and not only harming societies in the countries concerned, but also undermining sub-regional stability. In several Southern African countries, such as the DRC and Zimbabwe, elections have become a source of tension and conflict. While SADC has played a key role in establishing guidelines, norms, and standards, and thereby providing a platform for the improvement and consolidation of transparent and participatory governance, the organisation has been less successful at translating declaratory commitments into practice. The 2004 SADC Principles and Guidelines have often not been observed by individual member states, and have been occasionally disregarded by the organisation itself, as in the cases of elections in Zimbabwe and the DRC in 2005 and 2011 respectively. Elections are often poorly managed, occasionally violent, and sometimes subject to rigging, irregularities, and weak independent oversight. In addition, the propensity of ruling parties to centralise control of campaigning and monopolise national media has often hindered the ability of opposition parties to participate freely and fully in electoral processes. Although most countries have formally constituted electoral management bodies, these have suffered from significant capacity, competence, and credibility deficits in cases such as Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia.

In view of SADC's institutional, operational, and resource constraints, civil society organisations can play an important role in implementing the organisation's governance agenda and ensuring that democratic principles are entrenched across all levels of society. Only a few of SADC's more than 40 protocols have been implemented effectively so far. Southern Africa features a strong civil society network, which has frequently demonstrated its expertise on issues relating to democracy, "good governance", and the protection of human rights, as well as conflict resolution. However, SADC's policy instruments lack clarity on the modalities for engaging civil society in the bloc's activities. From the viewpoint of grassroots organisations in particular, SADC's workings are opaque, and interaction with it has been the preserve of a few select bodies. Furthermore, at the national level, there is a measure of hostility from governments in a number of SADC countries towards civil society organisations, especially groups supported by foreign funding.

South Africa – the largest economy on the continent and the sub-regional hegemon – has been a key player in responding to crises, and has led conflict mediation efforts in the sub-region



FORMER SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA CELEBRATES HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY WITH THEN SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT, THABO MBEKI, RIGHT, AND THEN AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC) PRESIDENT, JACOB ZUMA, IN AUGUST 2008.

Photo - Gallo Images / Foto24 / Leon Botha

## 2. South Africa's Peace and Security Role in Southern Africa

Southern African governments have been reluctant to cede any significant power to the Botswana-based SADC Secretariat, which lacks autonomous operational capacity and instead relies primarily on the political will, resources, and actions of its member states for the implementation of its objectives and activities. Under the auspices of SADC, and in its bilateral relationships, South Africa – the largest economy on the continent and the sub-regional hegemon, which accounts for 80 percent of SADC's economy – has been a key player in responding to crises, and has led conflict mediation efforts in the sub-region, including in the DRC, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar. In 2002, then South African president, Thabo Mbeki, brokered the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the DRC and a power-sharing agreement, which included despatching 1,400

South African troops to the 20,000-strong UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC). In 2008, Mbeki helped produce a Global Political Agreement (GPA) in Zimbabwe, providing for a government of national unity that subsequently increased political and economic stability in the country. His successor, Jacob Zuma, continued to lead SADC's efforts to implement this agreement. Zuma also engaged in seeking a resolution to the constitutional crisis in Madagascar in 2010, and South Africa has adopted an active role on the issue, particularly after it assumed the Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (OPDSC) in 2011. From May 2013, South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi deployed a 3,000-strong force in the eastern DRC. Given the inter-governmental rather than supranational nature of SADC, the dynamics between Southern Africa's leading states have largely shaped the nature of the sub-regional body's peacemaking interventions.

South Africa faces similar socio-economic challenges to those experienced by its neighbours, and its peacemaking efforts have been informed by the experience of negotiating its own democratic transition. Under President Zuma, the country's most important strategic relationship in Southern Africa has been with oil-producing Angola, which has replaced Zimbabwe as the sub-region's second largest economy and is South Africa's largest trading partner in the sub-region. Angola has not been shy about projecting its military power abroad, boasting a strong, battle-hardened army that has intervened successfully in the DRC and Congo-Brazzaville. The diplomatic thaw between the two sub-regional powers, with Tshwane (Pretoria) recognising the need to make Luanda a collaborator rather than a competitor, marks an important shift in Southern Africa's post-apartheid security dynamics, which was reflected in South Africa's strong diplomatic support for the Angolan position during the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011. In turn, Angola strongly supported South Africa's successful campaign to make its candidate, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the Chair of the African Union (AU) Commission in 2012. If this bilateral relationship can be institutionalised, the resulting strategic partnership could potentially revive SADC, and provide a powerful diplomatic ally for South Africa in its broader relationships in Southern Africa and the wider continent. Another important strategic relationship in Southern Africa is that between Tshwane and Maputo. Mozambique was South Africa's largest export market in Africa and its second largest trading partner in the sub-region in 2012, while South Africa is Mozambique's largest investor. The two countries have continued to support each other's regional peacemaking initiatives. In particular, Mozambique supported the tougher line adopted by SADC's South African-led mediation efforts in Zimbabwe, while Tshwane offered important logistical and political backing to the bloc's peacemaking initiative in Madagascar led by former Mozambican president, Joaquim Chissano.

From May 2013, South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi deployed a 3,000-strong force in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo



UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING TROOPS PATROL THE STREETS OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO'S CAPITAL, KINSHASA, IN ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIERS DURING NATIONAL ELECTIONS ON 30 JULY 2006.

Photo - Reuters/Finbarr O'Reilly

Notwithstanding South Africa's close ties with Mozambique and its new prioritisation of its relationship with Luanda, Tshwane has also remained intimately engaged both politically and economically with Zimbabwe. South Africa spearheaded SADC's mediation efforts in its immediate neighbour which led to the signing of the Global Political Agreement in 2008. However, slow progress on the implementation of the GPA subsequently hardened SADC's

position towards Robert Mugabe's regime, and challenged the relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe, with Mugabe seeking to undermine the credibility of the South African mediation team, and his allies arguing unsuccessfully for Zuma's removal as SADC Facilitator. In August 2013, after Mugabe won a presidential poll held a month earlier, the issue of Zimbabwe was removed from SADC's agenda. Although Tshwane led the facilitation of the GPA, its efforts were conducted under a SADC umbrella, and successive summits supported the direction taken by the South African mediation team. In this respect, Tshwane has sought diplomatic influence in the sub-region through a multilateral approach, based on the understanding that the adoption of a legitimate leadership role within SADC depends greatly on its capacity to facilitate equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation, rather than an assumption of its economic – and hence political – dominance.

### 3. SADC's Peace and Security Role

SADC's decision-making is centralised at its annual Summits of Heads of State, to which the institution's Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation is also accountable. However, decisions at SADC summits are made on a consensual basis, thus representing the views of the lowest common denominator. Given the concomitant weakness of the SADC Secretariat, this also creates a power vacuum between the Community's annual summits. In addition, the predominance of the heads of state within SADC has reinforced positions based on national sovereignty over those that may stem from a collective authority. The principle of solidarity that guided Southern Africa's national liberation struggles has placed a premium on the autonomy of states and their freedom from external meddling. Furthermore, historical loyalties forged between national liberation movements, which have become ruling parties in countries across the sub-region, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Angola, and Mozambique, can often lead to disagreements between these states being resolved informally on the sidelines of SADC meetings rather than in the sub-regional body's open sessions, thus reducing the transparency and accountability of decision-making processes.

SADC's region-building is linked to peace and security across Southern Africa and cannot succeed without it. Countries in the sub-region that have experienced armed conflicts and political crises over the past four decades include Angola, the DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. In 2001, the organisation restructured its security organ through the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation in an attempt to provide its member states with an improved institutional framework to coordinate their foreign, defence, and security policies as well as to promote joint conflict prevention and peacemaking initiatives. Although the Organ is accountable to the bloc's governing Summit of Heads of State, it operates under its own executive Troika of heads of state and has its own structures and mechanisms for decision-making. Consequently, there have been persistent problems in the relationship between the Organ and the SADC Secretariat, including those related to staffing capacity.

Although Tshwane led the facilitation of the Global Political Agreement in Zimbabwe, its efforts were conducted under a SADC umbrella



VOTERS IN ZIMBABWE'S CAPITAL, HARARE, MAKE THEIR MARK DURING A NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM IN MARCH 2013.

Photo - Gallo Images / Sunday Times / Simphiwe Nkwali

In 2004, SADC sought to consolidate its peace and security agenda by adopting a Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ, which was revised in 2012. The revised SIPO covers a range of objectives and activities in the political, defence, state security, public security, and police sectors, though it has been criticised as vague and ineffectual, not unlike its predecessor. In order to strengthen Southern Africa's peacekeeping capacity, SADC has also undertaken to establish a SADC Brigade (SADCBRIG), as one of the five sub-regional brigades of an African Standby Force (ASF) being coordinated by the African Union. However, many details about the effective functioning of SADCBRIG remain unclear. Moreover, the ASF is still a long way from being able to undertake any of its ambitious goals, and the deadline for its operationalisation has been moved from 2010 to 2015.

One of the key constraints on the consolidation of peace and security in Southern Africa has been the failure to undertake effective and sustained post-conflict peacebuilding in countries such as the DRC, Angola, and Mozambique. Peacebuilding in war-affected countries aims to promote not only political peace, but also social peace, and the redressing of economic inequalities that could lead to further conflicts. Both Zimbabwe and the DRC underline the enormous challenges of reconstructing and rebuilding fragile states, where peace and stability remain under threat in the absence of sufficient financial support and political will. SADC clearly lacks the requisite resources and technical expertise to undertake comprehensive peacebuilding on its own, and will have to devise effective, locally-driven strategies with key international actors to ensure that the root causes of conflicts are tackled timeously and that fragile countries do not slide back into conflict in the future as a result of ineffective peacebuilding and state-building.

Many details about the functioning of the SADC Brigade remain unclear and the African Standby Force is a long way from being able to undertake its ambitious goals



PEACEKEEPERS OF THE SADC BRIGADE (SADCBRIG) PARADE AT THE FORCE'S LAUNCH IN LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, IN AUGUST 2007.

Photo - Reuters/Mackson Wasamunu

## Policy Recommendations

The following ten key policy recommendations emerge from this report:

1. More robust implementation of the 2004 SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections is needed. Southern African countries should move from rhetoric to action and properly empower parliaments; ensure the independence of judiciaries; safeguard the autonomy of oversight institutions; and encourage free and independent media;
2. SADC member states must undertake public sector reform to ensure the effective delivery of basic social services to their citizens through, *inter alia*, the improved management of public finances; institutional capacity-building, particularly within national civil services; and, programmes to address corruption;
3. Individual countries, as well as SADC as a whole, need to create space for effective participation by civil society to promote democratic

governance across the sub-region. Key structures, such as the National Committees that support the sub-regional bloc, must be strengthened and provided with more resources to enhance their role, functions, and visibility to non-state stakeholders. Greater efforts are also required to improve the channels of engagement of civil society actors with the SADC Secretariat. In this respect, SADC could benefit from sharing “best practices” with sub-regional organisations in other parts of Africa such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);

“ A more institution-  
alised approach could  
enhance SADC’s  
capacity to support  
complex and long-  
running peace talks ”



THE SADC HEADQUARTERS IN GABORONE,  
BOTSWANA.

Photo - Wikimedia Commons / Iulus Ascanius

4. Non-governmental organisations in Southern Africa have financial and functional weaknesses that need to be urgently addressed. Efforts at collaboration have been constrained by in-fighting, competition, and disunity, and civil society therefore needs to organise itself more effectively, networking across borders and building a culture of cooperation, in order to engage more robustly with SADC;
5. Better coordinated, more collaborative efforts are required for a multi-dimensional and less *ad hoc* approach to peace and security in the SADC sub-region. A group of SADC elders – not including incumbent leaders who have other national priorities – could be established to oversee the implementation of the organisation’s peace accords;
6. While South Africa has greater technical, military and financial resources than other SADC members, it has serious domestic socio-economic issues, and its political legitimacy is still questioned by some member states, making it imperative for Tshwane to act collectively rather than unilaterally in sub-regional peacemaking efforts;
7. A more institutionalised approach, including the establishment of a properly funded early warning and mediation unit within the SADC Secretariat and the provision of training to enhance democratic control over armed forces, could enhance the capacity of the organisation to support complex and long-running peace talks, while reducing its current dependence on the political will and capacity of its more powerful member states;
8. The role of the SADC Executive Secretary in policy development and implementation requires urgent strengthening;
9. SADC should spearhead participatory processes to articulate security priorities for the sub-region. Key policy instruments, such as the 2001 Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, the 2003 Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the 2003 Mutual Defence Pact, and the 2012 SIPO, need to be linked more closely in an integrated plan of action and further developed into coherent implementation and monitoring programmes; and
10. SADC, alongside other African sub-regional organisations, must ensure that the UN assumes its proper peacekeeping and peacebuilding responsibilities on the continent, supporting and then taking over regional peacekeeping missions to ensure sufficient legitimacy and resources and adequately funding post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives.