

**The Role of South Africa in the Security Structures of
Southern Africa**

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April 2003
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Paper Commissioned by the
Dept International Relations & Trade
Office of the South African State President
Funded by the Swedish International Development Agency
(SIDA)

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1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 was the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa (SA). The latter event opened many possibilities; the most significant of which was the advent of majority rule in 1994. Being the most economically advanced country, the liberation of SA would have far-reaching consequences in the region, including in the security area.

The primary purpose of the Paper is to explore the role democratic South Africa has played in the main security regime of the region, particularly the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation (OPDSC). Another objective of the Paper is to highlight problems and difficulties SA has encountered in helping to find solutions to regional conflicts. Our analysis will end by making policy recommendations aimed at finding solutions and realizing the key objectives of the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ (SIPO).

To crystallize the focus of this discussion, we have opted for the following work plan. The Paper shall begin by briefly highlighting distinctive differences between the foreign policy objectives of apartheid and democratic South Africa respectively. At the same time the impact of factors that brought pressure to bear on the outcome and shape of the final political settlement shall be explained, though in brief. These variables include the consequences of the following:

- end of Cold War
- rise of globalization
- establishment of the African Union (AU)
- the adoption of New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) program and others.

By describing and explaining the aforesaid the Paper shall tease out (1) a new and holistic conception of security and (2) set out parameters and other areas of concern which may prove troublesome in future.

In aligning itself with the positive developments portended by factors mentioned above SA contributed in no small measure towards fostering a new value system of peace in the region and beyond. This does not deny the fact that SA engagement has not been without difficulties. Indeed there have been many. Policy recommendations will then be made by which SA could deepen and strengthen the positive role it has played up to now.

1.1. On Research Method

This report is based largely on official primary sources hence usage of government Internet documents. Interviews were also held with officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the SADC Desk in particular. Professionals at specialized research institutions like the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Nepad Interim Secretariat and universities were contacted, interviewed and opinion sought in the compilation of the research. However the author should be held wholly responsible for the content of the Paper.

The views expressed here were influenced mainly by the strictures imposed by the terms of reference, time constraints and the nature of the research, primarily access to official information. During one of the interviews, the researcher was informed that certain information could not be disclosed for either (1) national security reasons or (2) for factors that have to do with protocol. As far as the latter is concerned one was candidly informed that certain information could only be released only after a certain calendar date, i.e. August 2003.

On reading the report one will note that a descriptive-historical approach was utilized. As far as possible the researcher's analysis attempted to be nonjudgmental and value-free. Given that SA's involvement in the security architecture of the region is fairly a new phenomenon, few elaborate theoretical constructs could be found to assist the analysis. Hence a rather less theoretically rigorous analysis of the subject at hand. Nonetheless the author is of the view that proportions "i.e. theories in making" utilized in section 6.2 of the research capture the essence of South Africa's diplomatic endeavors in resolving conflicts in the region.

Another point to note is that the Paper is not just about security in the narrow, traditional sense. Neither is about the constituent elements of the OPDSC. Taking cue from official policy documents, its conception of security is non-traditional and broad. In essence the Paper is a bird's eye view of SA involvement in the security architecture of Southern Africa.

2. Apartheid Foreign Policy

Although successive apartheid governments have terrorized the region, the PW Botha regime epitomized the threat more overtly than any other did. Ironically this happened when the regime was instituting "reforms". Botha's foreign policy was inspired by a praetorian impulse embedded in his Total Strategy. In line with the strategy he courted western governments and assiduously cast SA as a friend and bulwark against communism in Southern Africa. In trying to win hearts and minds he changed SA boundaries, initiated bilateral security agreements and other economic measures that would create a favorable military and political landscape. But when the strategy failed Botha embarked on a devastating military campaign, which left thousands without shelter and livelihood. Military aggression, economic blackmail and wanton destruction of life and property became the defining characteristics of apartheid foreign policy.

As it turned out the policy not only failed to win hearts and minds, but it intensified international solidarity against racism in other ways.

For instance in 1980 SA neighbors came together and established a regional economic organ, known as the Southern African Development Community Committee (SADCC). This event was but a mirror of similar developments on the continent and other parts of the world.

By the 1980s liberation movements, namely the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), had established an extensive network of bilateral and multilateral diplomatic ties in many countries. Their agitation had, by now, succeeded in isolating SA politically, culturally and economically. Increasingly these movements were projecting themselves as alternative governments, with an inclusive rather than exclusive value system.

For its part the ANC propagated a foreign policy premised not on domination but sovereign equality of all states in the region. More importantly peaceful co-existence and greater regional cooperation would complement the policy. A liberated SA, ANC vowed, would honor and uphold international disarmament treaties.

Other significant international events changed the tactical and strategic focus of liberation movements. The Soviet Union, the main benefactor of these organizations ceased to exist. Without that country's generous material support, achieving a decisive military victory would be impossible.

Whereas relations with the United States were somewhat lukewarm, there was however enough goodwill on the ground to warrant hope. In fact it was evident that cooperation with the US

would be inevitable if a new SA were to better the life of all its citizens. After all the USA would emerge as the sole economic superpower after the demise of the Soviet Union.

In Africa President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda mooted the idea of a continental security regime. Though this did not take root immediately the process had been set in motion¹. It was in 1999 that the idea resurfaced in the form of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA). Adoption of the CSSDCA Declaration coincided with attempts to transform and make the Organization for African Unity (OAU) more responsive to a globalizing international political economy. As we know, the OAU formally ceased to exist in 2002 and was replaced by the African Union (AU). The latter has enthusiastically embraced Nepad as one of its programs.

The factors and developments alluded to above, including Africa's own material circumstances, helped to crystallize a new conception of security. Whereas traditional notions saw security in military terms, in the post-Cold war era, that changed fundamentally. In actualizing their commitment to the new security ethos, African leaders mandated the Secretary General, at the OAU 36th extraordinary Summit in Sirte, 1999, to elaborate on policies that would advance the objectives of the program. Furthermore he was requested to establish an administrative unit within the Secretariat to coordinate all CSSDCA activities.

Following the adoption of the CSSDCA Solemn Declaration, Nepad came into being. It is structured into four components that focus on the interrelationship between peace, security, stability and cooperation in Africa. Whilst the strategic focus of the CSSDCA is to ensure good governance in the political and economic realm, Nepad on the other hand serves the socio-economic development

¹ In fact the 1991 OAU Summit adopted the Kampala Document which spelled out the four calabashes, namely security, stability, development and cooperation.

blueprint of the AU

(<http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/background/cssdca.htm>).

Nepad's initial implementation committee was divided into five task teams, with SA being allocated the peace, security, democracy and political governance portfolio². In view of these initiatives, what then comprises security?

3. Security defined

Traditional conceptions of security were parochial and often aligned with the state and military. Accordingly peace was synonymous with the absence of war or of military threats. Such a conception was, according to Gambari (2001: 15), misleading in the sense that (1) the needs of the people were overlooked. Secondly it focused primarily on war and war machines rather than on non-military threats to security. By focusing on the physical security of the state, it neglected the problem of the social insecurity of the citizens. Lastly since it was outward rather than inward looking, it paid scant attention to problems like disease, poverty, environment degradation and bad governance.

The CSSDCA has defined the concept more succinctly than any other has. In the Kampala Declaration security is seen to embrace “all aspects of society including economic, political and social dimensions of individual, family and community, local and national life” Thus the security of a nation should be construed in terms of the “security of the individual citizen with access to basic necessities of life while fully participating in the affairs of his/her society in freedom and enjoying all fundamental human rights” (http://www.au2002.gov.za/docs/key_oau/cssdca.htm).

² Nigeria was allocated the economic, corporate governance and banking/financial services, Egypt the marketing and agricultural sector, Algeria the Human Resource Development sector and Senegal the infrastructure development sectors (Cilliers 2003: 9).

For African leaders, security should be the first requirement because of its dialectical and organic link with the material circumstances of the people. On this point Nepad was explicit. In the base document, security is seen as a critical element for attaining sustainable development. Needless to say this conception of security is reflective of the norms and values of the new South Africa, particularly its new foreign policy perspectives.

4. New South Africa and the Southern African Region

After 1994 SA developed an entirely new policy framework to handle relations with her neighbors. To start with SA attached great importance to the region. Accordingly it saw Southern Africa as “a pillar” upon which her foreign policy rests.

This view is informed by both subjective and objective factors. While the former refers to the murderous destabilization campaign of the 1980s, the latter rests on geostrategic and demographic considerations.

The SA Foreign Policy seeks to promote the following;

- human rights and democracy
 - justice, rule of law and international peace, and
 - Multilateral peaceful resolution of conflict
- (<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/policy/foreign.html>).

At the same time the policy recognizes that SA’s development depends to a great extent upon regional and international economic cooperation. It stands to reason that the country should always strive to promote the interests of the region and continent as these are intertwined with her own. President Thabo Mbeki’s ideology of African Renaissance captures these sentiments succinctly.

4.1. African Renaissance

In his analysis of African Renaissance (AR), Kiguwa made some telling observations. For him AR connotes “renewal” and “reawakening”. Most importantly renaissance comes into being when there has been a major break in people’s historical and social development, brought about by human or other non-human factors (1999: 65-66). Since such a break led to mental inactivity, distortion of history and civilization, renaissance will help instill pride, enthuse and reinvigorate the hitherto subjugated people. As AR seeks to reclaim the spirit of African humanity or *ubuntu* it should be construed as a tool for development (Kiguwa 1999: 69). In the words of the former Foreign Affairs Director-General, Siphon Pityana (2001: 37) the essence of South Africa’s foreign policy is to create an environment where sustainable development can take place”.

Given that SA has by far the most developed regional economy, the country could be tempted to take advantage of others. However in terms of the new perspective, this can never be the case. The reconstruction of post-apartheid Southern Africa should neither be imposed nor alienated. Instead it should be organic, bottom-up and people-centered. In this enterprise SA should, according to the ANC, “explicitly renounce all hegemonic ambitions” and assist to create a new form of “economic interaction based on the principle of mutual benefit and interdependence” (<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/policy/foreign.html>).

AR and Nepad are not mutually exclusive but reinforce one another.

SA regional security prerogatives should be seen in the context of these policy prescriptions. In this vein the 1994 Foreign Policy document posited that “enduring security” could *only* be achieved through *and by* “national and regional efforts that promote democracy, respect for human rights, sustainable development,

social justice and environmental protection”. Thus peaceful methods should be sought to resolve and settle conflicts. In addition SA should always seek consensus and common ground in multilateral fora and be cognizant of UN and AU Charter prescriptions in as far as conflict resolution is concerned. What has happened since South Africa was readmitted to the community of free nations? Has it lived up to these ideals? Before we examine her role in the region, let us briefly appraise her disarmament record in the area of weapons of mass destruction (wmd).

SA acceded to and ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992. Afterwards the country facilitated the drafting and eventual adoption of the 1996 Pelindaba Treaty. In keeping with the wishes of these Treaties Africa is now a nuclear weapons free zone. It is playing a lead role in assisting other African countries to develop a civilian (i.e. non-offensive) nuclear capacity. SA acceded and ratified important international conventions and treaties, among which were those banning the use of both chemical and biological weapons³. Though still in progress, her active participation in talks over a Verification Protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention has won praise (<http://www.dfa.gov.za/for-relations/multilateral/treaties/btwc.htm>)⁴.

In March 2003 President Mbeki sent a Team of Experts to help Iraq destroy her weapons of mass destruction. Apart from the WMD regulatory regimes, SA endorsed other Protocols and Declarations specific to the region. For example a Protocol on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking and another on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials. In 1999 SA ratified the Antipersonnel Landmine Declaration. Let us now turn to the OPDSC.

³ For thorough discussion see Matheba G. 2003 Weapons of Mass Destruction: People and Environment. Vista University. Another interesting Paper is by Gould C. 2003. The US/Iraq conflict and its effects on the disarmament regimes. Both Papers are yet to be published

⁴ See Rissanen J. “A Biological Weapons Convention Protocol” in Track Two vol.3 no. 3 December 2001

5. The OPDSC in Perspective

As already mentioned SA became a member of the SADC in 1994. No sooner had she joined than a process was set in motion to establish a security arm/organ of that body. A June 1996 Gaborone Summit released a communiqué, which not only formally established the Organ but also spelled out its composition and mandate. The most remarkable feature of this infantile institution was that it was empowered to operate independently and take other decisions without consulting the Chairperson of SADC (Matheba 1999)⁵. Problems arising from this discrepancy surfaced almost immediately. In the face of serious security breaches, the Organ became impotent. Regional leaders were thus forced to take stock and find other ways of making the Organ operational.

The process commenced earnestly in September 1997 after the suspension of the Organ. A review of all SADC operations and structures was instituted at the same time. Not long afterwards proposals governing the role, functions and structure of the new Organ were tabled. A Protocol incorporating most of them was subsequently adopted in Malawi on 14 August 2002.

5. 1. OPDSC Protocol

The Protocol has brought a number of changes to the new security dispensation. Whereas the old Organ was founded on the strength of a Summit Communiqué, now there is a legal document. Perhaps the name change- from OPDS to OPDSC- will presage greater cooperation than was the case previously.

Of these changes, the most significant centers on the chair of the Organ and SADC, respectively. According to the Protocol they

⁵ See other scholarly works – Tsie, B. “Regional Security in Southern Africa: Whither the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security?” <http://www.igd.org.za/pub/g-dialogue/africa/sadc.html> and Van Nieuwkerk A. “Subregional Collaborative Security” in *SA Journal of International Affairs*. Vol. 8 no. 2 Winter 2001

cannot be held by the same person, duration is rotational and strictly annual. The Chair of the Organ is responsible to the Summit; decisions are taken in consultation with the Troika and Chair of the regional body – SADC⁶. Practically this means that the OPDSC has “lost its erstwhile independence” (Solomon and Ngubane 2002: 3).

The Council of Ministers has been expanded and consists of ministers responsible for foreign affairs, defense, public and state security of respective member countries. Perhaps cognizant of the size of the Council, the Protocol established two more specialized bodies. One comprising of Foreign Ministers, the Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC) and another the Inter-State Defense and Security Committee (ISDSC). The latter consists of ministers responsible for defense, for public security (police) and state security (intelligence). Under Article 7 (7) of the Protocol ISDSC will retain the Defense, State Security and Public Security Sub-Committee of the old Organ, including its other subordinate structures.

5. 2. Jurisdiction of the OPDSC

In order to fully appreciate the powers of the Organ, we need to appraise ourselves of its overall objectives. They fall into two categories: general and specific. While the general objective is to promote peace and security, the specific ones are numerous. They include the promotion of political co-operation (peacemaking), co-ordination of security activities (peacekeeping) and enforcement of peace agreements (peace-enforcement). Prevention of cross-border crime and natural disaster management is another specific objective. Though a military organ in the narrow sense, its

⁶ It should be noted that the Troika of the Summit is not the same as that of the Organ. This has been done deliberately in order to “allow optimum participation by all member states” in the activities of both organizations (www.sadc.int=restructuring_anne)

conception and approach to security, is comprehensive and in line with our analysis.

Under Article 11 (2) the Organ can intercede in any “significant” inter-state or intra-state conflict.

Significant inter-state conflict refers to any (and all) of the following:

- conflict over territorial boundaries or natural resources
- conflict in which an act of aggression or military force has been threatened, and
- conflict which threatens peace and security in the Region or in the territory of a State which is not a party to the conflict.

On the other hand **significant intra-state conflict** includes:

- large-scale violence between sections of the population or between the state and sections of the population. Genocide, ethnic cleansing and gross violation of human rights are examples of this.
- military coup or other threats to the legitimate authority of a State
- a condition of civil war or insurgency, and
- conflict which threatens peace and security in the region.

Another important point to note is that the Organ, in consultation with the UN and AU, may offer to mediate conflicts occurring outside the Region. While retaining the right to self-defense, the Protocol enjoins the Organ to settle all conflicts by peaceful means. War should be a means of last resort. As already indicated, the refurbishment of the Organ coincided with the restructuring of the SADC itself. With some indulgence, one can boast that the genesis of the process was in SA.

On becoming leader of the country, President Mbeki introduced an integrated system of governance, the cluster system. This led to the establishment of several Department Clusters. Among them a cluster on International Relations, Peace and Security (IRPS) (Pityana 2002).

Following the August 1999 Maputo Summit directive, the SADC was restructured and the “sector approach” discontinued. A centralized one, complemented by an enlarged Secretariat has replaced it. The Integrated Ministerial Committee has devised a five-year Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan that will “provide a strategic direction to the Organization and ... operationalise the SADC Common Agenda”(www.sadc.int). The aim of this endeavor is to create an organization able to coordinate, harmonize and implement all policies expeditiously.

The Extraordinary Summit that took place in Windhoek, Namibia on 9 March 2001 subsequently endorsed recommendations creating a restructured SADC. Like all SADC structures the OPDSC is expected to devise its own Strategic Plan. We hope that the recommendations of this study will be incorporated in that Plan.

On joining the community of free nations, SA was expected to play a positive role in fostering peace and goodwill. Increasingly pressure was exerted on the country to participate in various peace missions (Neethling 2002). Needless to say this was also in keeping with the key priorities of a restructured SADC. SA authorities were thus left with no choice. Subsequently they enacted comprehensive policy guidelines to deal with the new demands. In the following section we will appraise, though briefly, legislative guidelines that govern SA participation in Peace Missions. The relevant policy directives in question are the White Paper on SA Participation in Peace Missions and on Defense (Nyanda 2002).

6. SA Participation in Peace Missions

While peace missions are a secondary function of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF), its approach to these operations is however, governed by the same norms and values underwriting the Constitution of the Republic. In the light of this approach security “is no longer viewed as a predominantly military and police problem. *It* (sic) is an all encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety, participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and basic necessities of life, and inhabit an environment not detrimental to their health and well-being” (www.mil.za/Articles&Papers/Papers/WhitePaperonDef/White.html).

Given that South Africa was isolated for so long, it went without saying that the SANDF would lack international peace mission⁷ experience. To make up for this and effectively meet new challenges, the SANDF has since participated in numerous operations to gain critical exposure. For instance it provided assistance in the form of air transport to UN missions in Angola and Mozambique (UNAVEM and UNUMOZ respectively). Engineers from the SANDF have assisted the Angolan government train de-mining teams. Malawi and Mozambique have also obtained assistance in the form of humanitarian relief (www.mil.za/Articles&papers/Articles/Peacekeeping.htm).

Other UN Peace Missions include those for Ethiopia/Eritrea (UNMEE), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) and the

⁷ Peace mission connotes a series of broad political and diplomatic activities encompassing more than just military activities. Included here are activities like “preventive diplomacy” “peacemaking” and “peace building”. Over the years civilians and police officers have become critical to the overall success of the mission.

OAU Liaison Mission for Ethiopia/Eritrea (OLMEE) (www.dfa.gov.za/events/peace.htm). In these missions SANDF personnel performed such varied technical tasks as air cargo handling, air crash rescue and fire fighting.

SANDF has undertaken other joint “goodwill” military exercises with SADC members. These include Exercise Morning Star (1996) Blue Hungwe (1997), that took place in Zimbabwe and Exercise Blue Crane (1999). These were conducted to test the ability of troops to work together on a wide range of peacekeeping activities. Other exercises were held jointly with far-flung countries like France. Troops from Reunion and Madagascar participated in both instances, duped Exercise Geranium and Tulip, respectively (www.mil.za/Articles&Papers/Articles/Peacekeeping.htm).

Though the SANDF could not create special peace mission structures, select personnel were however dispatched to peacekeeping academies abroad and in the region. The aim, according to the White Paper, is to establish a pool of expertise among career officers and soldiers. Manuals and other study materials have also been produced and will be updated in line with peacekeeping trends.

6.1. Mandate for Peace Missions

In terms of international norms and practice, Peace Missions are the prerogative of the UN. However Chapter VII of the Charter provides for regional bodies to initiate them in their respective regions. Be that as it may, it is essential that the host country should consent to a mission.

While recognizing the pre-eminence of the UN, the AU Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution enjoins African countries to share the burden with the world body. In fulfilling its mandate the AU has employed various preventive

measures. Where these have proven ineffectual troops, were deployed⁸.

In the region we have the OPDSC under whose mandate missions could be undertaken. SADC troops have been mobilized on several occasions though with mixed results (Matheba 1999). Naturally SA national interests guide and determine the level of participation on Peace Missions. The latter should however be undertaken only on the express authority of the national legislature (i.e. parliament) and the Executive. Furthermore the policy enjoins the government to ensure that there is always “sufficient popular support for peace missions

(www.mil.za/Articles&Papers/Papers/WhitePaperonDef/white.htm). Does that imply that SA troops could be withdrawn from any mission even before the job at hand is incomplete?

Other prescriptions are that each Mission should have the following;

- a clear mandate, mission and objectives
- sufficient human and capital resources and
- a realistic entry and exit criteria

(www.mil.za/Articles&Papers/Articles/Peacekeeping.htm)

With hindsight one can conclude that this is rather idealistic. Several scholars have noted that SA Peace missions hardly meet these prescriptions⁹.

Conflict in the region has also forced South Africa to undertake various preventive diplomacy (peacemaking) missions. Only the

⁸ In West Africa, Ecomog has been very active. For a comparative study of this subject, see Van Nieuwkerk A. in African Security Review vol. 10 no. 20. 2001 and Adebajo, A. 2002. Building Peace in West Africa. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers

⁹ See Nkosi T. 2001. Some Reflections on SA's intervention in Burundi. Rankhumise P. 2003. In Pursuit of sustainable peace in Burundi: SA intervention. and van Eck, J. “Burundi peace process fatally flawed” in Sunday Times 20 July 2003 and Solomon H. 2003. SA and the elusive peace in the Congo.

most optimistic would say that the outcome of these endeavors have been successful.

6. 2. SA Preventive Diplomacy

Preventive diplomacy in this Paper refers to peace making and peace building measures SA undertook to quell various conflicts in the region. Three distinctive strategies were followed, namely

- active peacekeeping
- quiet diplomacy, and
- constructive engagement.

6. 2. 1. Active Peacekeeping

Acting in concert with other SADC member states, SA intervened in the 1994 Lesotho political crisis. This intervention helped reverse a constitutional coup led by King Letsie III and the Basotho National Party. When civil disorder erupted for the second time, Botswana and SA were requested to deploy troops to quell temperatures. SA troops entered the country on 22 September 1998. Flying a SADC flag, the SANDF stayed there for some time. In May 2002 fresh elections were held under an inclusive electoral system, a Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP)¹⁰. Lesotho now enjoys a measure of political stability.

6. 2. 2. Quiet Diplomacy

SA has not been very successful in asfar as this conflict resolution strategy is concerned. The economic and political crises in Zimbabwe have exposed the limits of this approach. Formally a food exporting country, Zimbabwe is now a basket case. Not only

¹⁰ For analysis of Lesotho elections see Southall, R. 2002. Lesotho Elections 2002. 2002 elections puts Lesotho on Track for Democracy. See also Landsberg C. 2002. The 2002 Lesotho Elections: for challenges of a developing democracy (www.eisa.org.za/WEP/lesotho.htm)

were the presidential elections rigged, it is alleged that human rights abuses are on the rise (*The Citizen* 15 April 2003). As a result senior leaders of the Mugabe regime cannot travel to Europe and the USA. The Commonwealth has also slapped them with travel and other restrictions. There have been calls from members of the official Opposition as well as civil society organs for active outside intervention (for example the advertisement in the *Mail & Guardian* 11-16 April 2003). SA's policy of quiet diplomacy has been slammed. Increasingly it is interpreted as quiet support for an abusive government.

6. 2. 3. Constructive Engagement

Of all the conflicts, the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been the most complicated and protracted¹¹. Even though a Peace Pact among the warring factions was signed at Sun City, in South Africa, on 02 April 2003, a peaceful outcome is not assured. The same can be said about Burundi and to a lesser extent Angola.

SA engagement in the DRC began in 1996 when President Mandela tried to convince President Sese Seko Mobutu to form a government of national unity to accommodate Laurent Kabila, leader of rebel forces. Mandela only succeeded in sparing Kinshasa devastating military defeat. A triumphant Kabila entered the capital on 16 May 1997. Mobutu fled into exile but died of cancer shortly afterwards. In power Kabila proved to be as corrupt as his predecessor was. When he failed to guarantee Rwanda and Uganda security on the northern and eastern borders of his country, they instigated another rebellion against him. Capitalizing on his other political weaknesses, the rebellion soon developed into a full-

¹¹ The conflict in the DRC is, according to a US Refugee Agency, the deadliest in history. More than 3,3 million lives have been lost since the war began in 1998 (Sunday Times 13 April 2003). The conflict also accounts for the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons on the African continent (van Boeijen 2002 Refugees and internally displaced persons in the Great Lakes Region. www.ai.org.za/monographs.paper102002.html)

blown war engulfing the entire Great Lakes region. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola entered the fray on a “OPDS mandate”. Unbeknown to the then Chairperson of the SADC, President Mandela, the three countries signed a Defense Treaty with Kabila on 18 August 1998. Less than a month later, Mugabe signed a deal that gave him exclusive mining rights in the DRC (Cilliers and Malan 2001: 21-24).

For her part Pretoria has hosted several Inter-Congolese Dialogue Peace Summits which commenced in 1999. Other SADC member states took part as well as Rwanda and Uganda, who are not members of the organization. Eventually a final Peace Accord was signed at Sun City.

A transitional government will be inaugurated under the aegis of the Sun City Peace Accord. Among others it will be tasked with preparing for general elections in two years time¹². On the downside violence has erupted in the northeastern part of the DRC. Large-scale tribal massacres are reportedly taking place (Mail & Guardian 11 –16 April 2003).

Burundi is not a member of the SADC, neither is it a Southern African country. That has not however prevented SA from engaging the warring parties there. SA got involved in the peace process after the death of the original chief negotiator, the late Julius Nyerere. President Mandela took over the mantle and persuaded the warring factions to establish a Transitional National Government based on the (28 August) 2001 Arusha Peace Accord¹³.

¹² In terms of the agreement, President Joseph Kabila will remain President. However four (4) Vice Presidents will assist him. These will be drawn from the government, the rebel groups- the NLC and RCD-Goma and the Unarmed Political Opposition.

¹³ An inclusive TNG will serve for three years. The incumbent Tutsi President, Pierre Buyoya will serve half the term and his Hutu Vice President, Domitien Ndayizeye, will serve the remaining half. Buyoya's term expires on 30 April 2003.

The settlement was remarkable in that no cease-fire agreement was in place. SA has dispatched a peacekeeping force to that country. In 2001 Mandela handed the mantle over to Jacob Zuma, SA Vice President, to tie up outstanding issues. Unfortunately Zuma is still very much involved and there is no indication that his work will be over soon. Sporadic violence takes place from time to time. The crisis in Burundi is compounded by events in the DRC and the security concerns of her neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda.

For all his political acumen, Mandela failed to convince the Angolan adversaries to settle their political differences. In fact even a UN brokered peace accord could not dissuade Jonas Savimbi from embarking on a self-destructive war. Fortunately this caught up with him when he met his untimely death in 2002. Since then relations between Unita and the MPLA government have thawed considerably. The guns of war have fallen silent for the first time in several decades. Angola seems to be poised for peace. It has also offered to withdraw from the DRC.

SA engagement in the conflicts alluded to above has not been without problems. As van Nieuwkerk has observed, it appears as if SA is “more influential in determining regional economic, trade and investment issues than political and military ones” (2001: 86). Her role in the security architecture of the region has, one way or another, raised tension and other problems. However this cannot negate and dilute considerable contributions the country has made in finding solutions to numerous conflicts infesting the region. SA should rather accept that her role is constrained by various factors some of which are not of her doing. Her contribution can therefore be only a limited one. It is to these problems that we now turn.

7. Problems and Tensions

The greatest source of these difficulties stems, in my opinion, from the nature of the country’s political economy and comparative

wealth. That the wealth could be utilized for the benefit of the region and continent, is immaterial (Makoa 2001)¹⁴.

Another problem source is SA foreign policy ambiguity and ambivalence. For van Nieuwkerk (1999) and Schoeman (1999) this can be attributed to the ruling party's pre- and post-1994 policies and experiences. Like Kornegay (1998), they postulated that "an anti-hegemony syndrome" characterizes the post-apartheid foreign policy.

The impotence of the original OPDSC arose not just from Robert Mugabe's determination to upstage Mandela, he took advantage of SA ambiguity and anti-hegemony stance. Unfortunately this ambivalence has manifested itself in other ways.

South Africa's reluctance to more than condemn the systemic human rights violations taking place in Zimbabwe is a case in point. Given her strong trading links with that country SA was expected to "do something" more than just quiet diplomacy. Preferring a multilateral approach as opposed to a unilateral one, the Mbeki government has deferred while abuses have persisted. SA moral standing, especially its vaunted principle of respect for human rights thus sounds hollow. Afro-Pessimists frequently lambaste African leaders for looking the other way when their counterparts are abusing their own people. This observation now applies to SA, a champion of democracy.

At home the government has come under pressure, too. Much of the criticism has fallen on the leader of the country. South Africans would prefer their leader to spend more time at home to alleviate them of the wretched circumstances in which many live. Among the biggest is the AIDS/HIV pandemic. To most observers the

¹⁴ SA has ratified the SADC Trade Protocol in order to offset some of the negative consequences of her trade relations with the region. For a thorough discussion of the Trade Protocol see Matheba G. 2000. *The Dynamics of Regional Integration in Southern Africa*. ([www. aaps.co.zw/Publications/AIJP](http://www.aaps.co.zw/Publications/AIJP))

pandemic is accountable for the majority of natural deaths in recent times. Let us now turn to an analysis of the management challenges facing SADC/OPDSC. At the same time some recommendations shall be made.

8. SADC/ OPDSC and Future Challenges

Two types of challenges have been identified, natural disaster and institutional management.

8.1. Natural Disaster Management

Article 2 (1) of the Protocol enjoins the OPDSC to enhance the SADC capacity in natural disaster management and also in “co-ordination of international humanitarian assistance”. From this and the Organ’s own conception of security, it is clear that the management of natural disasters should be a priority. Right now the sub-region is in the grips of unrelenting drought. Food insecurity is the norm. What has the OPDSC done to relieve people of the threat? Other common natural disasters are regular floods and desertification. Although there is an early warning system, Mozambique and other SADC member-states was neither forewarned about the drought nor of the devastation wrought by floods three years ago. Obviously the Organ should henceforth double its efforts and collaborate with the AU to strengthen the Early Warning System. Policy implementers should also be warned about the repercussions of not heeding expert advice about the looming natural disasters.

AIDS/HIV is taking its toll on the people of the region. Botswana and SA have the largest concentration of HIV people in the world. Yet these are countries that hold the best promise as far as economic growth is concerned. National productivity and prosperity cannot be assured when the most productive are

decimated and their life span is shortened by a preventable pandemic.

While the clearing of land mines is in essence a national issue, the OPDSC should investigate how regional expertise and resources could be employed more cost effectively. Such efforts will help avail more cultivable land. This way the severe impact of food insecurity could be mitigated.

As part of its post-war reconstruction effort, SA together with neighbors should institute program relief to the millions of refugees and other displaced people in the Great Lakes region. Given its limited experience and resource constraints, the OPDSC should explore ways and means of bringing the international community on board. This will be in line with both the CSSDCA Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) and OPDSC own Protocol. Let us consider the institutional challenges.

8. 2 Institutional Management Challenges

In essence here we are concerned with constitutional and other management issues. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, there have been momentous developments on the continent that necessitated the establishment of new institutions. Similarly the African Union has brought with it new organs, some of which are not yet operational. The most important of them is the Peace and Security Council (PSC).

So far only thirty-four AU member states have signed the PSC Protocol (Cilliers 2003). Like the OPDSC, PSC is charged with the responsibility of promoting peace, security and stability on the African continent. Given the nature of their mandates, both institutions can benefit by streamlining and synchronizing their operations. Already this is provided for in Article 16 of the PSC Protocol. As far as the OPDSC is concerned what needs to happen

is to amend Article 15 so as to reflect the principles and objectives, as well as interests, of the AU and PSC.

At the launch in Durban, June 2002, AU adopted among others, a draft Mou on the CSSDCA. Since then the Mou has been redrafted, now it serves as a base document for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Apart from concern with refugees, establishing mutually beneficial relations with likeminded organizations, member countries should be urged to ratify the Mou. The primary purpose of the APRM is to “foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic integration, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional growth” (Communiqué of the Sixth HSGIC¹⁵ Summit 09 March 2003). Is OPDSC not founded on these principles? SADC leaders should be urged to abide by and integrate APRM tenets in national institutions without delay.

The restructuring of the SADC has also thrown up unique challenges. While there is virtue in assigning SADC Secretariat power and duty to service the OPDSC, this can only be effective when there is commensurate expertise and material resources. Thus to build the capacity of the Organ, a set of clear modalities should be developed in the first place. In this vein the Organ could take leaf out of the SANDF White Paper, especially the guidelines pertaining to Peacekeeping operations (see section 6 above). Secondly the scuttling of the “sector approach” should not lead to the bureaucratization of the SADC. As we know centralization could lead to red tape and administrative inefficiency. The Organ should be vigilant lest it becomes a victim.

¹⁵ Head of State and Government Implementation Committee. Initially HSGIC consisted of 15 countries. Membership has been expanded to 20. It is charged with implementing Nepad and reports to the AU Summit. It meets once every four- (4) months. AU Chair and Commission Chairperson are ex officio members. President Mbeki is a member of the HSGIC. The SA based Nepad Interim Secretariat serves as a Steering Committee of the HSGIC.

A way has to be found not only for members to uphold OPDSC principles. Its decisions must be implemented and respected by all. This can happen if there is consensus and political will from member states. In other words, members should be prepared to forgo their self-interests in order to achieve collective (regional) ones. National sovereignty cannot remain sacrosanct. A way has to be found to make it accommodate the regional “general will”.

OPDSC, like its mother body, should try, as far as possible to meet its Treaty obligations from its own resources. Dependence on donor funding even for basic services does not reflect well on the organization. The Organ has to be visible and accessible. As the Paper has pointed out, there is no shortage of high profile problems on the continent and region.

By popularizing its activities, the Organ will simultaneously debunk the myth that it is essentially a “Boys Club”, more concerned with the interests of governments than of ordinary citizens (Solomon and Ngubane 2002). OPDSC could create a structure like the AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), comprising civil society organs. In essence ECOSOCC is charged with advising the AU on all matters affecting civil society. When conflicts erupt, civil society organs could be invited to make submissions in the manner outlined in Article 8 of the PSC Protocol. By receiving inputs from all disputants, the organ would then be less partisan thus better prepared to find lasting solutions to conflict (van Schalkwyk 2002).

9. Conclusion

The Paper has described how apartheid SA destabilized her neighbors. Liberation movements, the ANC in particular, were by contrast, determined to reverse apartheid policies, practices and legacies. It embraced a policy of non-hegemonic multilateralism.

To some extent the philosophy of African Renaissance captured the essence of the new foreign policy. On the strength of this policy SA became an active and important player in brokering peace and resolving conflicts, in the region and beyond. SA was instrumental in fostering a new value system and ethos as far as regional institutions were concerned. However this development brought difficulties which now cast doubt on the country's commitment to human rights. Increasingly her policy of multilateralism has come into question. Broader regional challenges have been elucidated in the latter part of the analysis. Policy recommendations were made to address challenges emanating from the country's re-admittance into the community of free nations.

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