Building a regional society in southern Africa:

The institutional governance dimension

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The Southern African Development Community (SADC),[1] the subregion's premier co-ordinating and integrating body, has reached the ten-year milestone. It has no doubt been an eventful decade for the SADC; yet its achievements and performance have been uneven at best. While, contrary to popular belief, some SADC leaders have shown a real commitment to regional integration, the organisation itself has been poor at implementing decisions, and closing the gap between formulating and adopting norms and values and realising them in practice. Indeed, the SADC has failed to meet most of its policy objectives in terms of actual outcomes.

A decade after its inception, SADC leaders decided, and wisely so, that there was a need not only to take stock of the organisation's performance, but also to review its policies and put in place new plans and programmes where necessary. As a result, SADC leaders mandated the institution to develop a Common Agenda and Strategic Priorities in order to help it face the next decade with confidence.

SADC leaders and officials consequently agreed to develop a Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), aimed at providing member states, SADC institutions, and key stakeholders with a comprehensive plan for operationalising (or effectively implementing) the Common Agenda and Strategic Priorities over the next decade, with firm mandates, and within definite time frames.[2] Put differently, SADC leaders embarked on a massive overhaul of SADC activities. This comprehensive review has sought to address a number of crucial issues: policy-making, co-ordination, and implementation; the establishment of norms, values and institutions; and the appropriation of power.

SADC leaders then mandated a review committee to evolve a Regional Indicative Strategic Framework (RISF), and to affirm three sets of objectives:[3]

1. economic measures focusing on the alleviation of poverty, industrial development, trade, macroeconomic policies, investment, and infrastructure;
2. political priorities, including a concern for democratic governance, and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution; and
3. social goals, focusing on gender issues, human resources, HIV/AIDS, and social welfare.

Other priority areas include the development of science and technology, research and development; effective disaster preparedness and management mechanisms; and the consolidation of international co-operation with other regional and subregional entities.

This paper is concerned with the second priority area, namely the political cluster and its focus on democratic governance, conflict resolution, and peace and security. It will specifically focus on the SADC's efforts to transform it into a robust political and security community, and grapple with the subregional body's institutional, governance, and implementation challenges.

The perspective of the paper

This paper probes the SADC's transformation efforts as this subregional organisation attempts to become an effective regional political and security community based on shared norms, values, procedures, and institutions. It asserts that policy and project co-ordination and the preoccupations of the SADC's predecessor, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)[4], are not sufficient to make the region more democratic, peaceful, and secure. It suggests that effective norms, values, procedures, and institutions are crucial if this objective is to be achieved. In particular, effective implementation is vital if subregional institutions are to become robust and capable entities.

The paper argues that, notwithstanding the creation of the SADC 'community', and its security organ, the Organ for Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation (OPDSC), the regional organisation has serious capacity problems. These deficits include poor co-ordination, constant pressure for trade-offs between the priorities of states which often pull in different directions, a constant battle to raise funds and account for such funds, thereby distracting the SADC from more strategic work, weak human resources capacities, and the like. This capacity shortfall has detracted from the region's ability to maintain peace and security, and promote democratic governance and democratisation. In short, the SADC is struggling to become a true community.

This paper will deviate from the traditional analyses of southern Africa, which make many protestations about how the SADC should end wars, promote peace and security, and defend democratic governance and democratisation without focusing on the crucial issue of its institutional governance and mechanisms for peace, security, governance, and democracy. Traditional analyses of southern Africa tend to focus on the nature of conflicts in the region, the security landscape, and proposed remedies such as preventive diplomacy, mediation, and intervention. Yet very few analyses bother to probe whether the SADC has the institutional capabilities and political mandates to undertake such ambitious tasks, and whether the political and security mechanisms in place are adequate or workable. It is almost taken for granted that the SADC is capable of promoting peace, security, governance, and democracy.

The paper will argue that, as soon as the SADC had adopted its grandiose goals in 1992 in search of a regional community, it became clear that the transformation from a co-ordinating council to a regional society was indeed a complex undertaking. As early as 1993 it became apparent that a change of name from SADCC with two 'Cs' to SADC with one 'C', and a change of objectives, would not guarantee effective implementation, or in itself create an effective subregional society capable of promoting economic prosperity, political solidarity, and peace and security, while at the same time inculcating norms of democracy and democratic governance. The paper will further argue that there is an imposing gap between the making and adoption of norms, values and institutions in SADC on the one hand, and their im

plementation on the other. Indeed, Africa is experiencing a major implementation crisis in respect of all its subregional institutions, as well as the African Union (AU).

This paper also contends that, while the SADC, other subregional organisations, and the AU are good at making impressive policies and adopting impressive-sounding norms and standards, continental and regional multilateral institutions are poor at ensuring that the outcomes and practice of such initiatives match their creation. It further argues that, while these norms in respect of democracy, governance, peace, and security win great acclaim, efforts to realise them in practice fall far short of meeting the challenge of creating effective regional communities. It is argued that, unless this gap between democratic governance, peace, and security norms and their effective implementation is closed, the chances of meeting southern Africa's peace and security challenges will remain slim.

This paper assesses the major political and security challenges faced by the southern African subregion, and the role of its main multilateral organisation, the SADC, in managing these challenges. It suggests practical ways of strengthening the OPDSC, and possible regional approaches to addressing southern Africa's traditional military threats as well as more recent ones such as HIV/AIDS and the land question – problems that have affected southern Africa more than any other subregion in the world.

Finally, the paper addresses the SADC's relationship with recent continental initiatives in norms and value-setting, namely the AU and its development project, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

From the SADCC to the SADC: searching for a regional community

Regional integration is not only about the quest for prosperity, important though this goal is. It is also about building a community or society among states that share a subcontinental proximity and political geography. Communities and societies are based on common institutions, procedures, interests, customs, norms, and values. Therefore, politics and institutions matter greatly in regional integration schemes – but there has been a tendency to underestimate the importance of both. And when an appreciation is shown for these elements, one is often stressed above the other.

This is also true in the case of southern Africa's past attempts to establish a regional co-ordination entity, and, later, build a subregional community. The SADC has come a long way since the formation in 1980 of its predecessor, the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), as a defensive alliance against apartheid South Africa.[5]

Learning from the past

What lessons should the SADC learn from its predecessor? The SADCC seemed better at co-ordination than at political integration and institution-building. The SADC

should appreciate that both these dimensions are important. The SADCC was formed with four principal objectives in mind[6]:

- to reduce member states' economic dependence, particularly, but not solely, on apartheid South Africa;
- to implement programmes and projects with national and regional impact;
- to mobilise the resources of member states in the quest for collective self-reliance; and
- to secure international understanding and support.

To be sure, the SADCC's founding fathers demonstrated the tangible benefits of collaboration, and cultivating a climate of confidence and trust among member states.[7] But a co-ordination conference is not a community or society, and should not be confused with one; co-ordination *per se* does not a regional community make. In order to create effective regional societies, there is need to go beyond the simple harmonisation of programmes and policies. The decision in 1992 to transform the SADCC from a co-ordinating conference into the SADC was a bold and strategically necessary one.

It is the 'C' in SADC – the idea of 'community' – that is important here; and this should be unpacked and given substance. The concept of 'community' or 'society' in world affairs should be seen as a means of establishing values and norms that bind states together in an otherwise anarchical world. As Hedley Bull argued as early as 1977, 'a society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions'.[8]

The idea of 'community' in the southern African context should now be unpacked. By the early 1990s the political terrain in the region had changed fundamentally, and the SADCC had to grapple with the fact that, in order to become an effective regional body, new and appropriate vehicles were needed to tackle political and security challenges faced by the region. With the Cold War over by the early 1990s, and South Africa, long a source of conflict and instability in the region, embarking on a transition from white minority rule to an inclusive constitutional democracy, a new subregional structure and architecture was needed. The hope was that an organised 'community', as opposed to a 'co-ordinating conference', would be better able to deal with the subregion's deep-seated political, economic, and military challenges.[9] SADCC leaders had come to appreciate that, although the co-ordination conference format had served them well, and demonstrated the virtues of co-operating in the development arena, there was a need to give the organisation more *gravitas* and greater legal status if they were to be faithful to the challenges that lay ahead. A formal subcontinental community or society was the best way to respond to such future challenges.

In search of a new common agenda

It was because of this need for a more organised political and security community that regional states signed a declaration and treaty in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1992 which established the SADC, and spelled out objectives in the form of a common agenda, including:[10]

- development and economic growth;
- the alleviation of poverty;
- the enhancement of the standard and quality of life of the people of southern Africa, and support for the socially disadvantaged through regional integration;
- the evolution of common political values, systems, and institutions;
- the promotion and defence of peace and security, self-sustaining development on the basis of collective self-reliance, and the interdependence of member states;
- complementarity between national and regional strategies and programmes and the promotion and maximum productive employment of the region's resources;
- sustainable use of the region's natural resources, and the effective protection of the environment; and
- strengthening and consolidating the long-standing historical, social, and cultural affinities and links among the people of the region.

These are noble objectives. They speak to the interface between development, peace, security and governance. The SADC's leaders had clearly come to appreciate the importance of goals, values, and institutions if it was to become an effective subcontinental society. Yet, as late as 1996, the SADC still lacked mechanisms for achieving its staged goals of maintaining peace and security, and promoting democratisation and democratic governance.[11] This impelled it, in June 1996, to establish the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS), to fill the void left by the defunct frontline states.[12] The OPDS was also conceived as a special forum for political, defence, and security co-operation with a focus on conflict management.[13]

However, it again emerged that the SADC had put the cart before the horse. SADC leaders had created a new institution, but overlooked the important element of empowering it with protocols, values, norms, and customs: the stuff that regional community-building is made off. It was only in the late 1990s that the SADC prepared a protocol that would govern and guide the work of the OPDS. The protocol was finalised in 2001, and established the OPDSC. The protocol commits SADC member states to collective security; collective defence; governance, democracy and human rights; the development of common foreign policy approaches in international fora; and building joint capacities in areas such as peacekeeping, disaster management, and the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance.

Yet, even today, the protocol's own operationalisation is fraught with difficulties and challenges. There is a major gap between the adoption of norms and values in respect of democracy, governance, peace and security, and their effective implementation.

The regional politico-security complex

It is beyond dispute that southern Africa desperately needs a strong subregional institution in order to deal with its broad array of political and security challenges. It cannot simply rely on summitry and relations between heads of state and government and their ministers to resolve conflicts and promote democratic governance and democratisation. But, as Walter Tapfumaneyi has argued, ' … southern Africa is going through a very turbulent time when its mechanisms for dealing with problems are in a state of flux'.[14]

So what are some of the acute politico-security challenges faced by the region? The SADC region has been beset with many challenges, and by the mid-1990s, appeared politically divided. Some of the most urgent issues were violent conflicts, and other instances of political and social instability.[15] Wars and instability were rife, as shown by the inter/intra-state war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a virtual *coup d' etat* in Lesotho, a stubborn civil war in Angola, a clash between democratisation and social justice in Zimbabwe over the land question, a revision of Namibia's decade-old constitution in order to give president Sam Nujoma a third presidential term, with Malawi's president Muluzi seeking to do the same in search for a third presidential term, and highly contested elections in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The DRC can still not boast any record of democratic governance, and institutionalising such a polity will be a complex undertaking. In Malawi poverty, HIV/AIDS and underdevelopment continue to coincide, posing significant threats to already struggling democratisation project.

Angola needs massive post-conflict reconstruction. Unless this is achieved, it will grapple for decades to come with the effects of a 27-year civil war that could easily reignite. Zimbabwe's economy appears to be in free-fall, and its GDP could contract by 10 per cent in 2002.[16] There is a severe shortage of foreign exchange reserves in Zimbabwe, coupled with capital flight and a brain drain, especially to South Africa. Zimbabwe will need massive post-conflict peace-building in the aftermath of the current crisis. Even in countries that have made significant strides in democratic governance, such as Botswana, Mauritius, and South Africa, poverty and inequality seem to be increasing.

Over the past five years or so, political tensions in many countries have gone hand-in-hand with more repressive governance, clearly suggesting that the promotion of democratic governance and democratisation might be decisive in resolving conflict in Africa.[17] Thus, on the democracy front, most states in the region are caught between semi-authoritarianism and democracy, as evidenced by the number of disputed elections, including those in Zambia in 2001 and in Zimbabwe in 2002.

Even in cases of democratic breakthroughs, such as the 2002 elections in Lesotho, democracy remains highly fragile and threatened. In Swaziland, the polity is threatened by an increasingly hostile and intolerant monarchy, and revolt is becoming a likely scenario. Apart from these trends, the region also faces the double-edged sword of weak states that are simultaneously undemocratic and have poor governance records.

It is therefore asserted that southern Africa's security involves not just developing a security architecture capable of managing issues such as the fragile peace, but also the need for post-conflict rehabilitation in Angola; preventing the on-again/off-again peace process in the DRC from reverting to all-out war; searching for democratisation in Zimbabwe while trying to address the imperatives of social injustice, notably the land crisis in that country; and consolidating the democratic breakthroughs in Lesotho. It is not only Zimbabwe that is affected by the land question. There are already signs that Namibia, and certainly South Africa, has to prepare for fall-out over the land question, which could not only threaten the peace and stability in these countries, but also erode some of the democratic gains made in recent years.

HIV/AIDS, the land question in almost all former white settler societies, and a devastating food crisis have emerged as major threats to human security in the region.[18] It is estimated that some 22 per cent of southern Africa's population are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. The HIV/AIDS epidemic should also be treated as a major governance issue in the African context.[19] As such, it should be stressed that the pandemic has already had a massive impact on poverty and inequality in affected countries. Further consequences are the impoverishment of families, a loss of human capital and drop in productivity, increased health care costs, a decline in savings and in spending on education, and increased expenditure on caring for children orphaned by the disease.[20]

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is evidence that the SADC needs political and security structures that go beyond simply managing old-style state-centric security challenges. Instead, the challenge is also that of addressing issues of trade, democratic governance, land reform, growing poverty and inequality, and of course, HIV/AIDS. With such staggering figures, it is hardly surprising that the SADC, as early as 1999, set up a task force to bring about 'a SADC society with reduced HIV/AIDS'. SADC leaders also adopted a SADC HIV/AIDS framework for the period 2000-4, with the goal of 'decreasing the number of HIV/AIDS affected individuals and families in the SADC region so that HIV/AIDS is no longer a threat to public health and to the socioeconomic development of member states'.[21]

It is further estimated that no less than 48 per cent of southern Africans live below the poverty datum line. Thus, apart from the other human security complexities, the region finds itself in the grip of a crippling food crisis. Said to be the worst since 1992, it is affecting Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It is further estimated that some 13 million people in the region will need food assistance up to April 2003.

From reform to transformation

As noted earlier, by the end of the 1990s it had become clear that there was a serious disjuncture between the goals of peace and security that the SADC had set for itself on the one hand, and its actual promotion of peace, security, appropriate governance, and democracy on the other. At the beginning of the new millennium, there was widespread recognition of the need to 'transform' the SADC. Indeed, its leaders identified '… a number of problems that inhibit the efficient and effective performance of the current structure'.[22] These included:

- the inadequate provision of resources and staffing by member states, which has led to an inequitable distribution of responsibilities and obligations;
- different management and administrative procedures and rules, and varying standards, qualifications, and performance criteria for staff involved in managing the regional programme;
- a rapid increase in sectors and therefore a plethora of priorities and activities dependent on limited resources, which has led to a proliferation of meetings and an increase in associated costs;
- the inability of the secretariat to execute its mandate as outlined in the treaty, especially that of undertaking strategic planning and management; and
- the lack of an institutional framework in which ministers responsible for foreign affairs in the SADC region can discuss and adopt common positions on matters pertaining to the organisation in various international fora.

As a result, SADC heads of state and government ordered a review and transformation plan for the organisation. On 8 August 2001 the SADC summit in Maputo, Mozambique, directed the SADC council of ministers 'to undertake a review of the operations of SADC institutions, including the OPDSC, with a view to making SADC a more effective and efficient vehicle for community-building'.[23]

A review committee – comprising Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe – was established. The terms of reference for this process were agreed at a council of ministers meeting in Mbabane, Swaziland in February 2000, resulting in a progress report presented to the summit held in Windhoek, Namibia, in August 2001. The final report was approved at an extraordinary summit on 9 March 2001. In April 2001 the review committee issued its report on the restructuring of SADC institutions. It focused on the following areas:

- the objectives and common agenda of the SADC;
- strategic priorities;
- institutional reforms;
- management systems;
- resource mobilisation;
- the admission of new members;
- the implementation of reforms; and
- cost estimates for the new SADC structure.

A new institutional framework?

It became clear that, besides being under the tutelage of foreign donors, the SADC was hampered by weak institutions. It had to get out of this dual vice grip. The review committee therefore correctly identified numerous problems and constraints surrounding the current subregional institutional structure:[24]

- the SADCC's transformation into the SADC had not been accompanied by the required institutional reforms;
- resource provision and management systems had not been adequately addressed;
- the delegation of authority and the decision-making capacity of various agencies responsible for implementing the SADC agenda had not been adequately addressed;
- there was a lack of synergy between the objectives and strategies of the SADC treaty on the one hand and the SADC programme of action (SPA) and institutional framework on the other;
- the SADC has a limited capacity to mobilise the subregion's own resources for programme implementation; and
- the SPA was overly dependent on external sources of finance, to the tune of more than 80 percent, which compromised its sustainability.[25]

On this last point, Thalita Bertellsman-Scott has noted that 'The EU is the world's largest contributor to development aid, and has invested billions in donor aid in the development of southern Africa over the last several decades'.[26] However, 'although the EU remains southern Africa's largest donor, and continues to spend large sums on development aid, there is a growing concern among EU member states that this money is being wasted and that aid has not achieved its aims. This has resulted in the EU tying stricter conditions to its aid, and disbursing funds only in a limited number of project areas.'[27] In the past, SADC was said to be 'donor-driven' and to be suffering from a 'cargo cult'.

Given this context, it is not surprising that the review process recommended a new political and security institutional architecture for the SADC. The process itself was driven by the desire to place the SADC in fast-track transformation mode. It was also a reaction to the challenges thrown up by an expanding membership, which has presented the integration process with new challenges. As such, the review committee recommended the following institutional framework:

- *The summit,* consisting of heads of state or government of all member states. This is the ultimate policy-making institution of the SADC, and is responsible for the overall policy direction and control functions of the organisation. The summit usually meets once a year, but the report recommended that it should meet twice a year.
- *The troika,* consisting of the chair, incoming chair, and outgoing chair of the SADC. Introduced in 1999, this instrument has improved the functioning of the

SADC, enabling it to take decisions more expeditiously, and provide better policy direction.

- *The Organ for Politics, Defence, and Security Co-Operation* (OPDSC): the extraordinary summit adopted the report of the ministerial committee on foreign affairs, defence, and security which met in November 2000 in Harare, Zimbabwe, and decided on the following pertaining to the organ: 'that the Organ will also operate on a troika basis for a period of one year, and will report to the chairperson of the SADC. The Organ shall be co-ordinated at the level of the summit, and shall be regulated by the Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation; the chairperson of the organ shall not simultaneously hold the chair of the summit.'

- *The council of ministers,* consisting of ministers of each member state, usually of foreign affairs and economic planning and finance. The council is responsible for overseeing the functions and development of the SADC, and ensuring that policies are properly implemented. The report recommended that the council should meet four times a year to ensure speedy decision-making.

- *The integrated committee of ministers* (ICM) is 'constituted by at least two ministers from each Member State and responsible to Council' for overseeing the core areas of integration: trade, industry, finance and investment; infrastructure and services; food, agriculture and natural resources (FANR); social and human development and special programmes, and implementation of the RISDP process.

- *SADC national committees* comprising key stakeholders, notably the government, private sector, and civil society in member states, and mandated to 'provide inputs at the national level in the formulation of regional policies, strategies, and the SADC Plan of Action (SPA), as well as co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of these programmes at the national level'.

- *A standing committee of senior officials,* consisting of one permanent secretary or an official of equivalent rank from a SADC national contact point in each member state.

- *The secretariat,* it was recommended, had to be strengthened 'in terms of both its mandate and the provision of adequate resources' to enable it to plan and manage the SADC programme, implement summit and council decisions, organise and manage SADC meetings, undertake financial and general administration, represent and promote the SADC, and promote the harmonisation of policies and strategies of member states (through a structure including an office of the executive secretary, a strategic planning, gender development, and policy harmonisation department, and directorates in four core areas).

Jagged development, human security, and project fatigue

The review process had to confront yet another problem: diversity and uneven development within the community. SADC states differ substantially in terms of popu

lation size, natural resource endowment, economic growth rates, per capita income, debt burden levels, infrastructure development, and levels of industrialisation. The region is also characterised by 'hegemonic' economic relations in favour of South Africa. Even though the SADCC has been renamed, the business of realigning the institutions of the anti-apartheid SADCC with the requirements of SADC community-building is still unfinished.

The review committee also found that, while member states unanimously endorsed the continued relevance of the SADC's objectives, they increasingly stressed that more had to be done to alleviate poverty, and fight HIV/AIDS. Both these goals needed to be included in the 'Objectives, Priorities, and Common Agenda'. Furthermore, it declared that the common agenda was 'not clearly articulated and effectively operationalised'. Perhaps this is testimony of the SADC's tendency to adopt ambitious, overexuberant, and unimplementable policies.

With respect to advancing SADC strategic priorities, the report noted that there were about 470 SADC project proposals with 'strong national characters' which should therefore have been 'implemented under the national programmes of Member States', while only 20 percent of this portfolio would actually meet the criteria for priority subregional projects.[28] This, of course, raises the whole question of the tensions between national and regional policy considerations, and how to reconcile such differing priorities.

The review committee also raised the issue of disjointed development strategies. It found that 'project proposals' (for the donor community) and evaluation procedures used within sectors were not guided by 'a comprehensive developmental strategy'. This had resulted in a situation where 'most projects and activities are not in line with the strategic goals of SADC, and do not adequately give due consideration to issues of sustainability'.[29]

Towards policy harmonisation

The SADC has faced serious challenges on a series of fronts, requiring drastic measures. To address this situation, a five-year Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) process has been devised, emphasising the following priority areas:

- the development of measures to alleviate and ultimately eradicate poverty;
- agricultural development and the sustainable utilisation of natural resources;
- development of a common market through a step-by-step approach while restructuring and integrating the economies of member states;
- consolidating democratic governance;
- harmonising sound macroeconomic policies, and maintaining an environment conducive to both local and foreign investment;
- developing deliberate policies for industrialisation;
- mainstreaming gender in the process of community-building;

- developing, utilising and managing human resources;
- establishing a sustainable and effective mechanism for conflict prevention, management, and resolution;
- developing science and technology, and research and development;
- developing effective disaster preparedness and management mechanisms;
- combating HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases;
- introducing developing programmes for improving the quality of health and social welfare; and
- consolidating international co-operation with other groupings.[30]

The review committee reached unanimity on 'the urgent need for transforming [these] institutions, taking into account the issue of ownership, the need for stakeholder participation, financial sustainability and cost-effectiveness, [and a] balance between efficiency and effectiveness'.[31]

Implications for civil society

The SADC reform and restructuring processes clearly hold major implications for civil society organisations (cso's) in SADC countries.[32] If properly implemented, this regional integration processes carries possibilities for deepening integration that would see civil society in the region, notably NGOs, play an important role in consolidating democracy and governance, and maintaining peace and security. There are also the possibilities if this scenario would obtain, for sco organisations to engage the regional organisation more actively.

However, this upbeat scenario presupposes that the SADC would go beyond a purely intergovernmental heads-of-state or council-of-ministers dominated process. The chances of this happening are by no means guaranteed. Indeed, the SADC does currently encourage the participation of different stakeholder constituencies at the national and subregional levels in support of its objectives and common agenda, through either accreditation, memorandums of understanding, or memorandums of association. There is also the emerging SADC-NGO Coalition that has been set up. Yet it is not clear whether that commitment on paper will be translated into meaningful civil society empowerment in practice. One only has to glance at the historical record to gauge something of a dualism: on the one hand the SADC boasts about its commitment to empowering civil society actors, yet in practice such actors often complain that they are being deliberately marginalised in SADC processes.

But even if one were to give SADC the benefit of the doubt, and say that the transformation processes under way might result in the empowerment of NGOs and other CSOs, there would most certainly be problems at the national and local levels. The more dictatorial and repressive a regime is on the home front, the more difficult it is for civil society to organise and operate. This also suggests that, instead of civil society playing a crucial regional role by engaging the SADC, many actors would be distracted by national priorities.

All of this shows that NGOs and CSOs in southern Africa will need to be proactive and engage not only the SADC but also play a democratisation role within countries instead of just complaining about their perceived or real marginalisation. They will need to start using whatever political space is available in their own countries to push the envelope of democratisation in the region. CSOs in Zimbabwe are a case in point: despite the adverse political climate, they continue to lead demands for a more democratic polity. Moreover, CSOs may well find that the best way to engage an organ that represents the interests of the subregion is to emulate its scope, so that they can speak with one voice on issues affecting civil society across southern Africa. In short, civil society needs to organise itself more efficiently on a subregional basis so as to better enable it to engage the SADC on subregional issues.

Doing so will allow domestic issues to be handled by individual cso organisations, while the regional body could engage with the SADC and ensure that the interests of civil society are articulated and perused at that level. A unified effort will also ensure the more efficient use of scarce civil society resources, and provide opportunities for sharing skills and personnel. Moreover, it will make it more difficult for individual CSOs to be targeted in their countries of origin for speaking out against their governments. However, civil society must ensure that it acknowledges the organisational and implementation challenges confronting the SADC in organising itself at the regional level.

Operationalising the OPDSC

Again, the region desperately needs appropriate political, diplomatic, and security mechanisms to deal with its political and security challenges. The SADC has a long way to go in this regard, and should not only finalise the modalities of the OPDSC, but also empower those institutions with the necessary human and financial resources as well as the required political *gravitas* and decision-making powers.[33] The OPDSC should be operationalised – but this is not an easy task. While the review committee argues that good progress has been made in this direction – for example, some old political differences and impasses appear to have been overcome – it also concedes that the organ does not easily translate into implementation and clear politics.[34] One of the problems is that the Protocol for Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation, which governs the OPDSC, has not been effectively translated into tangible politics; indeed, by November 2002 it had only been ratified by five member states. Also, the OPDSC still lacks working policies, financial resources, and operational capacity. It is conceivable that the operationalisation of the OPDSC will reflect NEPAD and its governance, peace, and security principles and mandates.

Under the auspices of the OPDSC, a strategic indicative plan for an Interstate Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC) has been put in place. This instrument will focus on preventive diplomacy, conflict management, and early warning practices, and could become an important part of the SADC. According to plans being

developed, the ISPDC will have two substructures. One will focus on politics and governance; it will address issues such as 'good governance', human rights, the rule of law, and corruption. The second will focus on diplomacy, and address issues such as early warning, the prevention of violent conflicts, and conflict management. This second substructure will also focus on co-ordinating SADC positions on global and multilateral issues.

Under the auspices of the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC), a SADC mutual defence pact has been drafted, but has not yet been implemented. If we regard the ISDSC as the direct successor to the frontline states, it actually has a 20-year history. It also has a good track record of co-operation since 1994. However, there has been a recent setback: the SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare is on the verge of closing down because Denmark, the principal funder, has decided to withdraw all funds in reaction to developments in Zimbabwe.

There is a need for urgency in setting up structures, strengthening institutions, and empowering the SADC and its premier security mechanism, the OPDSC, and its substructures, the ISPDC and the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC), to enable them to start meeting their mandates of promoting peace, security, democratic governance, and democratisation. These institutions will need human and financial resources, and their relationship to the SADC proper must be urgently clarified.

The SADC, the AU, and NEPAD

As if SADC's transformation woes were not complicated enough, its reform process has also coincided with the politics and transitional dynamics surrounding the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)[35]. Actors such as South Africa threw a spanner in the works by arguing that the SADC – and other subregional organisations – should be restructured in line with priorities spelled out by the AU and NEPAD.

The expectation is that subregional organisations should all establish a dialogue on restructuring themselves in collaboration with the AU and NEPAD. To crown it all, NEPAD has become a highly contested project, while the AU is going through its own implementation crisis. Yet the expectation has been that the SADC and other subregional organisations should build transnational linkages between themselves and the AU and NEPAD.

It should also be borne in mind that South African foreign policy-makers have been able to prioritise the SADC's alignment with the AU and NEPAD because they have the skilled and committed officials needed to embark on such a scheme. Smaller southern African countries lack the institutional and human resource capacities to respond in this way. Also, South Africa has led the initiative to create NEPAD, and transform the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the AU. Thus, given that South Africa is such a key player in both the NEPAD project, as well as

being the first government to chair the AU, the relationship between subregional organisations and the AU and NEPAD are important to Pretoria.

Two other NEPAD members, Mozambique and Botswana, have supported South Africa's proposal that SADC should be restructured in line with NEPAD and AU priorities. These three countries have pushed for a scenario in which the SADC RISDP would be developed within the NEPAD framework. The target date for completing the RISDP was July 2002, but this has not been met. The RISDP is being formulated as two five-year plans by an expert group of the SADC secretariat in Gaborone. Once drafted, it will be presented to the integrated committee of ministers for review. It will then be submitted to SADC heads of state and government and the AU, for alignment with the AU and NEPAD.

The idea is further that the SADC OPDSC and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) would also be aligned with NEPAD and the AU. This would also inform the future functioning of the OPDSC'S two main institutions, namely the Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC), and the longer-standing Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC).[36]

So what are the priorities of the AU and NEPAD? Let us focus on the governance and peace and security aspects of these two initiatives.

Under the new approach to governance and security adopted by these institutions, particularly the AU, there will be four reasons for intervening in the internal affairs of African states. These are genocide, gross violations of human rights, unconstitutional changes of government, and instabilities that threaten broader regional stability. The AU'S Peace and Security Council will concern itself with:

- preventive diplomacy and early warning;
- peacekeeping, security and stability on the continent;
- conflict management and resolution; and
- post-conflict management, including disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR).

Both the ISDSC and the ISPDC have already outlined objectives in line with these areas. However, both still need to develop policies and strategies in the area of post-conflict management and reconstruction.

NEPAD has strongly stressed the need to build the capabilities of African institutions to play an 'early warning' role, as well as enhancing their capacities in four key areas, namely:[37]

- the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts;
- peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace enforcement;
- post-conflict reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction; and
- combating the illicit proliferation of small arms, light weapons, and land mines.

It is clear that there are some synergies between NEPAD and the AU's priorities in the areas of peace and security.[38] The challenge remains to harmonise the priority areas of these two initiatives with those of subregional organisations.

Another AU and NEPAD initiative which the SADC will have to focus on and seek to influence is the African peer review mechanism (APRM).[39] Both the OPDSC's two substructures, the ISDSC and ISPDC, are well placed to adapt the APRM to SADC conditions and dynamics.

Given that the purpose of the APRM is to promote democratic policies, standards, and practices,[40] the OPDSC in particular should familiarise itself with this crucial mechanism. The AU and NEPAD hope that the APRM will promote political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, and accelerated subregional and continental economic integration via the sharing of experiences and the reinforcement of best practice, including the identification of deficiencies in institutional capacity.

The principles of the APRM state that every review carried out under its authority must be technically competent, credible, and free of political manipulation. Again, the ISPDC's own capacities would have to be strengthened if it is to play a meaningful role in helping to define and clarify an evolving peer review architecture.

AU and NEPAD leaders have determined that participation in the APRM should be open to all member states of the AU. However, one way of enhancing the mechanism would be to devolve it down to the regional level. Thus the SADC should play a role in the peer review process, and its political and diplomatic structures in particular should play a key role. This means, *inter alia*, that all SADC members should agree to submit themselves to periodic peer reviews, to facilitate such reviews, and to be guided by agreed standards of political, economic, and corporate governance. The SADC protocol on politics, defence, and security co-operation spells out SADC norms on political governance that could contribute to the evolving framework of African governance norms and standards.

Plan B: focusing on the national level

The SADC may continue to experience difficulties in turning itself into a well-functioning set of institutions capable of realising its objectives. In that case, it may well have to use other avenues for making peace, enhancing security, and promoting governance and democracy. One such avenue would be the emerging SADC national committee structures.[41] The creation of national stakeholder committees, proposed during the SADC summit in Blantyre, Malawi, in 1997, is now a key part of the subregional organisation's transformation scheme. The idea is that SADC national contact points will be managed by the foreign ministries of all member countries.[42]

National committees are also supposed to serve as intellectual hubs and strategic points for policy formulation and analysis. This is also true of programmes and projects in the core areas related to the OPDSC, namely politics and security. This would also involve the relevant government departments in these areas, such as departments of safety and security, as well as CSOs.

The idea is that these national committees will 'fill the temporary vacuum which is expected with the phasing-out of sector co-ordinating units (SCUs) from member states to the secretariat'.[43] This holds the prospect of greater public participation in regional affairs, a key determinant of democratic governance. Even if broad civil society participation cannot be achieved, more organised and elite non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – admittedly a less ideal form of civil society participation – could be involved. Even if this lesser goal is achieved, problems will persist. The point is that standards of democracy and governance are uneven among SADC member states, and that NGOs are not equally well organised in the various countries. For example, while South Africa boasts a plethora of organised and diverse NGOs, which tend to dominate regional debates, even a democratic country such as Botswana has a small and weak NGO network. Again, almost throughout the region, NGO-government relations tend to be characterised by mutual suspicion. Also, NGOs tend to see themselves as either an extension of government or in opposition to government, but not as a complement to government, which would be desirable.

NGOs often regard themselves as being in opposition to government due to the dictatorial and authoritarian nature of their governments, or due to the repressive and undemocratic polities in which they have to operate.

Conclusion

Politically, institutionally, and in terms of peace and security, SADC the institution and southern Africa the region are in flux. The region is faced with simultaneous multiple challenges: it has to contain political instability, conflict and war, and address human security challenges such as HIV/AIDS, the land question, inequality, and poverty. SADC is faced with the challenges of strengthening its institutions and closing the fissures between the norms, values, and principles of democratic governance, democratisation, peace and security on the one hand, and their effective institutionalisation on the other.

Mozambique, Botswana, and South Africa – all key NEPAD actors – have given notice that strengthening regional integration and bolstering the capacities of subregional institutions will remain key tenets of their regional strategies. They will also seek to promote regional security and good governance in the context of operationalising NEPAD and the AU. They are likely to do that by pushing for Africa's subregional organisations, including SADC, to be restructured along the lines of NEPAD and the AU. In this regard, the SADC is expected to develop workable policies and programmes, and hopefully also enforcement capabilities.

This paper has argued that the SADC is good at identifying norms, formulating policies, and agreeing on protocols, but less good at gaining the political mandates and building the capacity it needs to ensure that member states abide by those norms, and implement those policies. Its heads of state and government, who really wield all the influence and power in SADC, have been accused of lacking the politi

cal will to make the organisation more effective. The key challenge for both SADC and the OPDSC in the fields of democratisation, governance, peace, and security are therefore implementation and enforcement. There are several OPDSC and SADC structures that could be bolstered to give concrete and purposive meaning to these dimensions.

Both the ISDSC and ISPDC are cases in point. These initiatives lack strong or clear structures. They furthermore lack the necessary institutional backing, such as permanent secretariats, to allow them to fulfil their important functions.

The ISDSC is one of the SADC's most active structures. If properly strengthened and operationalised, it could serve as a useful interface for any number of international efforts aimed at promoting subregional stability in such areas as combating cross-border crime and addressing refugee problems and humanitarian crises, as well as promoting preventive diplomacy, mediation, and conflict resolution. But while the ISDSC's many subcommittees meet regularly, their decisions are rarely implemented. A firmer structure, attached to the SADC secretariat in Gaborone, could go a long way towards alleviating these problems.

In theory, these sub-organs are supposed to be clearly and closely linked to the OPDSC; if this is done, it will help to give meaning to the operationalisation of the OPDSC.

The SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC), which forms a part of the ISDSC and is managed by the Zimbabwean Defence Force, has played an important role. But its relationship with ISDSC has not been properly clarified, and recent developments in Zimbabwe have complicated matters. Given Zimbabwe's dominant role in this area, South Africa has also been reluctant to associate itself too closely with the centre. But negative political developments in Zimbabwe have dealt a severe blow to the centre, and donors, including Scandinavian donors who have long considered themselves 'friends in solidarity' with Zimbabwe, have adopted a hands-off policy. This is due to their serious fall-outs with the Mugabe government over democratic governance and land reform policies in Zimbabwe.

On another front, the politics of personalities and status remain one of the SADC's major problems. The governing architecture of SADC is excessively dependent on the relations among heads of state and government ministers. Unlike ECOWAS, for example, the SADC secretariat essentially plays the role of a super-administrative structure that services programmes and contracts, and manages projects. It lacks political mandates, clout, and *gravitas*. ECOWAS and its executive secretary are empowered with political mandates, can intervene in conflict situations, and can mediate, facilitate, and engage in preventive diplomacy. Both the SADC and its OPDSC rely too heavily on heads of state and government and ministers to carry out such interventions. If the SADC is to become effective, states will have to relinquish some of their sovereignty in order to empower SADC politically.

Problems have also been experienced in putting in place a SADC mutual defence pact. There are two opposed groupings on this. On the one hand, Angola and Zimbabwe favour a pact that would oblige SADC states to intervene in internal conflicts

in member states – which would open up a political Pandora's box. On the other, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, and others believe the pact should only deal with external threats to the region. Indeed, the Zimbabwe-Angola position could wind up being abused, should desperate and beleaguered dictators expect their friends to come to their rescue. But the latter group has recently been successful in advancing its position, and it has been agreed that the pact should be confined to dealing with external threats. This is essentially a compromise pact, and reaffirms the principle of collective defence in the event of armed attacks on member states.

One of the positive aspects of the OPDSC is that it has built, and still builds, confidence and trust among member states in a region often characterised by differences and sometimes even divisions. The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Committee (SARPCCO) is one instrument that has led to a great deal of co-operation in regional crime prevention strategies. But again, while levels of formal interaction and co-operation have increased dramatically over the past decade, the challenge is to implement these strategies effectively. Thus we need to repeat the central theme of this paper: the gap between theory and practice, between the making of norms and values and their effective implementation needs to be closed.

The bottom line remains that the SADC needs to further refine the protocol on politics, defence, and security co-operation in strategic areas such as democracy, governance, and human rights; security sector reforms; peace operations; and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Inter alia, it should spell out norms and values for governance more clearly, and consider the challenges in implementation in this regard more seriously, and act accordingly.

In short, the SADC lacks political *gravitas*, institutional capacity, and mandates to play effective governance enhancing and peace and security promotion roles. Even its premier political and security structure, the OPDSC, is beset by institutional and competency challenges, and is not even certain where it will be located physically. The secretariat in Gaborone, which is tipped to host OPDSC, needs capacity-building and human resource development. The SADC also continues to suffer from a 'cargo cult' in that it remains heavily dependent on external resources. So desperate is this situation that secretariat staff tend to spend most of their time and energy on servicing donor relations and obligations. In order to break this dependency syndrome, South Africa and other democratic states in the region should appreciate that subregional integration depends on the strengthening of the SADC secretariat, other SADC structures, and for political and peace and security integration, the OPDSC. It is therefore vital that the restructuring process currently under way in the SADC does not become a transition without end.

Endnotes

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3 Ibid.

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5 Dorina Bekoe, Peacemaking in Southern Africa: The Role and Potential of the Southern African Development Community, Report of the International Peace Academy and Centre for Africa's International Relations Task Force, Johannesburg, March 2002.

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9 Mwesiga Baregu and Christopher Landsberg (eds.), From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Architecture, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2002, p 2.

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12 Cedric de Coning, Breaking the SADC Organ Impasse: Report of a Seminar on the Operationalisation of the SADC Organ, ACCORD, Occasional Paper, number 6, 1999.

13 Ibid.

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16   For an assessment of the Zimbabwe quagmire, see Ruth Hall and Aida Mengistu, Democracy and Land Reform in Zimbabwe, IPA Workshop Report, 25 February 2002, New York.

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18   See Jacqui Ala, 'AIDS as a Security Threat', in Baregu and Landsberg, From Cape to Congo.

19   This is a point made by Alex de Waal from Justice Africa; this point was strongly articulated during a seminar at the Centre for Policy Studies, 20 October 2002.

20   Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and the African Development Bank, African Economic Outlook, 2001/2002, op. cit.

21   See SADC, SADC HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and Programme of Action 2000-2004, Managing the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in the Southern African Development Community, Gaborone, August 2000, p. 2.

22   See SADC Secretariat, Report on the Review of Operations of SADC Institutions, April 2001

23   Ibid, p 1. This report is accompanied by two companion reports: Explanatory Note on the Report of the Review of the Operations of SADC Institutions and Implementation Plan for the Restructuring Exercise, both April 200, SADC Review Committee, Gaborone, 27 April 2001.

24   Ibid.

25   Ibid, pp 3–4.

26   Talitha Bertellsman-Scott, 'The European Union', in Baregu and Landsberg, From Cape to Congo, p 306.

27   Ibid.

28   SADC Secretariat, Report on the Review of Operations of SADC Institutions, p 8.

29   Ibid, p 8.

30   Ibid, pp 9–10.

31   Ibid, p 11.

32   Patrick Molutsi, 'Civil society in Southern Africa, in Mwesiga Baregu and Christopher Landsberg, From Cape to Congo, op. cit.; also see United nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Civil Society Participation in Development and Governance in Africa: Revisiting Process and Practice, Development Management Division, Addis Ababa, October 2001.

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34   J Isaksen and N Tjonneland, Assessing the Restructuring of SADC – Positions, Policies and Progress, Chr Michelsen Institute, Report R 2001, p 6.

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42   Ibid.

43   Isaksen and Tjonneland, Assessing the Restructuring of SADC, p 17.