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PEACE AND HUMAN SECURITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: RETHINKING SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

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Peace and human security in southern Africa: rethinking Southern African Development Community solutions to Southern African Development Community problems

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Executive Summary

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region currently faces several challenges threatening its peace and security architecture. Most, if not all, of these challenges are interconnected and they include climate change, food shortages, intra-state warfare, health pandemics, governance issues, growing population pressures, and socio-economic inequalities. The afore-mentioned challenges further constitute a major obstacle to the political, socio-economic, technological, environmental and gender development in the region. To this end, this policy paper draws upon reports, statements, other policy and scholarly papers to analyse peace and human security threats bedevilling the SADC region. According to evidence from these sources, this paper argues that SADC lacks the culture and ability to address issues affecting the region's peace and human security. As such, the paper advises that SADC should build a comprehensive peace and security infrastructure that would serve as a platform for collaboration among governments, civil society organisations, the media, and the general public in all member states.

Keywords: inequalities, governance, peace, security, stability

1. Introduction

The Southern African region, in political parlance, refers to states that are members of the Southern African Development Community, SADC (Aeby, 2018, 2019). Currently, SADC is made up of 15 member-states: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa (SA), Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Cawthra, 2008). Each of these states is distinct in terms of size, population, and economic growth rate. To Cawthra (2008), states like Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa are classified as middle-class states, despite the fact that income is unevenly distributed whilst DRC, Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique are among the poorest in the world. Of the 15 member-states, six are landlocked and two are Indian Ocean islands.

SADC states share a common history of colonisation (Joseph, 2021) – variously involving British, French, Portuguese, Belgian, and German imperial powers (Cawthra, 2008). These imperial powers impacted significantly on the nature of politics and governance in southern Africa. According to Albuquerque and Wiklund (2015), Avezov (2015) and Bah (2004), all SADC states experienced periods of European colonialism, resulting in armed liberation struggles with the last (German Southwest Africa) achieving independence on March 21, 1990 as Namibia. Most of them also suffered various forms of racial segregation, oppression and apartheid as a result of that history of settler colonialism (Baregu and Landsberg, 2003).

It should come as no surprise that southern Africa, being the last region on the African continent to gain independence (Albuquerque and Wiklund, 2015) is experiencing a surge in human security concerns (Chingotuane et al., 2021). According to Cawthra (2008), debilitating poverty, marginalisation, and socio-economic inequities within and between SADC member states continue to constitute the core of regional human insecurity. Cawthra (2008) asserts that terror, crime, resource shortages, and weak governance in SADC nations all pose significant challenges to individuals' and governments' security. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the primary challenges to human security in Southern Africa, as well as the appropriate peace and security solutions to the region's conflicts.

2. Human Security Threats in Southern Africa

Terror, governance issues, resource scarcity, poverty, inequality and marginalisation within and across SADC member-states remain the rock layer of human insecurity (Aeby, 2019; Cawthra, 2008; Khadiagala, 2018). Countries like Eswatini (democratic protests), Mozambique (Cabo Delgado insurgency), and SA (unrests, protests and the Phoenix Massacre)

have experienced an increase in conflict (Govender, 2021; Karamaev, 2021; Magome, 2021). Most SADC states are also characterised by massive poverty and inequality as they are dependent on aid, trade and investment flows from the so-called Global North, resulting in a lack of horizontal integration, debt traps and dependence (Cawthra, 2008).

Weaknesses and failures of governance also threaten the security of both citizens and states in southern Africa (Nathan, 2012). Whilst most SADC member-states have embarked on democratic transitions, argues Khadiagala (2018), these efforts have not climaxed in consolidated and matured democracies, especially improvements in human security. To Cawthra (2008), former liberation movements in most SADC states continue to hold power and this makes democratic transitions difficult. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) has appropriated to itself a right to rule. The party has become entrenched in the state (party-state conflation) and thus resists change. Former liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa are also electorally dominant to the extent that it is difficult to envisage opposition political parties coming to power in the short to medium term. Cain (2015), Jager and Zogg (2019) and Safarik (2020) likewise argue that nepotism, informality, corruption and presidentialism are prevalent in Angola, the DRC and Zimbabwe, where elites continue to rule in non-transparent ways. This extends to the security sector, where the practice and operations of security sector governance are opaque and personalised (Hendricks and Musavengana, 2010), with security personnel violating human rights in support of particular political causes or self-interest.

Rapid population growth, swift urbanisation, and the breakdown of family and community structures are worsening unemployment in SADC states (Muggah, 2012; Von Soest and De Juan, 2018), which is extremely high, even in SA, the region's hegemon. Most economies in the region are dominated by the informal sector and subsistence agriculture (Cawthra, 2008). Compounded by low levels of education, this situation makes for limited life chances, and this creates political instability and tensions. Further, artificial and porous borders have resulted in extensive cross-border conflicts (Lyman, 2018). Many SADC states have borders that are artificial and porous, and are not effectively controlled and monitored (Lyman, 2018). This has resulted in the influx of refugees across borders as exemplified by thousands of DRC and Rwandan refugees in Tanzania and about three million Zimbabweans in SA. Some of the immigrants engage in criminal activities, including drug trafficking, armed robbery, smuggling, car hijacking and theft, human trafficking, and counterfeiting (Cawthra, 2008).

Health pandemics and environmental insecurities are also creating peace headaches for SADC leaders and citizens (Desmidt and Neat, 2020; Joseph, 2021). Diseases such as Covid-19, cancer, HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (TB) have worsened human development challenges in the regional bloc (Joseph, 2021). These diseases are exerting additional pressures on states to meet the human security needs of citizens. On environmental insecurities, land is proving to be a thorny issue and a major source of conflict in the region. Land-related conflicts are fueled by post-liberation governments' efforts to redistribute land from whites to the indigenous population in the interests of agrarian reform (Alden and Anseeuw, 2011). These conflicts have been acute in Zimbabwe, but may also arise in Namibia and South Africa. Water is also a particular source of conflict, especially in dry countries like Botswana, Namibia and SA. Further, climate change is threatening food security in southern Africa, putting intense pressure on governments and communities (Joseph, 2021).

The oppression and continued marginalisation of girls and women are still major factors fuelling gender inequalities in southern Africa (Jaji, 2018). Girls and women in SADC member states still bear the brunt of sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and exploitation in home environments and the workplace (Bentley, 2008). These factors are not only threatening peace and security in the region; they are stalling sustainable socio-economic development.

The above-mentioned human security threats in southern Africa are not primarily military; they revolve around poverty, underdevelopment, poor governance and crime. Many of these issues are not only interlinked; they provide a potential flashpoint which could lead to an intensification of conflict. Poverty and marginalisation not only prop up periodic riots and violent protests; they are also a breeding ground for crime, which is a major driver of insecurity and instability in the SADC region, including in wealthier countries like Mauritius and SA.

Regardless of human security threats faced by SADC since its formative years, the regional grouping has managed to deal with some problems through its consultative process with member states (Joseph, 2021). The regional bloc has truncated conflicts in the DRC and Lesotho due to its successful early warning security systems. Nevertheless, to Landsberg (2012) and Ngoma (2003), SADC's competence has been and is still somewhat hindered by its sluggish response to crises, as exemplified previously in the DRC efforts, the Lesotho intervention, and lately in the Cabo Delgado insurgency in Mozambique. This means the regional bloc should up its game and create, consolidate, maintain and elaborate peace and security infrastructures, which ensure optimal outcomes in diplomacy, conflict prevention and

management, peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace-building within the region. These domains are critical to the effective implementation of SADC peace and security processes.

3. Policy Options to Reduce Human Security Threats in Southern Africa

To promote peace and human security in Southern Africa, there is need to build infrastructures for peace in all 15 SADC member states. These infrastructures, posit Dube and Makwerere (2012), should include the setting up of Local Peace Councils (LPCs), which are committees formed at local or national levels to facilitate peace-making and peace-building. The mandate of the local peace councils should take in resolution of political, socio-economic, religious, gender, and environmental disputes in communities. Local peace councils should also be involved in transitional justice programmes such as the promotion of good governance, human rights and sustainable development (Dube and Makwerere, 2012).

Important to note is the fact that a number of SADC states have established peace councils dealing with peace issues. South Africa was the first SADC member state to establish an 'Infrastructure for Peace.' In the two years prior to the country's historic 1994 elections, this peace infrastructure contributed immensely to containing the spiral of violence at that time. Other SADC countries should establish these peace infrastructures and institutionalise peace-building processes at grassroots level to build sustainable peace.

The SADC secretariat should craft pro-peace policies that encompass individuals, the media, think tanks, traditional leaders, researchers and the civil society (voluntary associations, non-governmental organisations and social movements). The contributions of these stakeholders come in many forms such as logistical, moral, technical and financial support. Traditional, print, electronic and social mediascape and civil society organisations should be capacitated to build and enhance intra and inter-committee linkages both horizontally and vertically.

The key structure of SADC is its Secretariat, notes Van Nieuwkerk (2008). However, the key decision-making power rests with member states, not with the Secretariat. To Joseph (2021), the Secretariat is weak and unable to build a community of states. Joseph further argues that the SADC Secretariat is merely the executor of the member states' decisions, whose behaviour is typically influenced by national interest calculus, instead of regional sovereignty considerations or common regional interests. Scholars like Baregu and Landsberg (2003) and Nathan (2012) concur that the main challenges of the SADC Secretariat consist of the non-execution of the set goals and objectives, the non-operationalisation of the adopted strategy, and its inability to meet deadlines. They also attribute these challenges to institutional weakness and the lack of implementation mechanisms. The same scholars further confirm that the SADC

Secretariat lacks technical abilities, which impact actively on well-researched political and economic policy frameworks and the execution of the Regional Strategic Indicative Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 Blueprint, which focuses on ensuring peace and stability within the region. This, for Isaksen and Tjønneland (2001), is the reason the Secretariat needs to strengthen its staff capacity, as well as monitor and evaluate the operationalisation of SADC's policies and protocols. The SADC Secretariat can pick lessens from other geographies such as the European Union (EU) and North America. These regions possess strong institutions, structural efficiency and an acceptable coordination of their member states, which is achieved by operating through security communities.

SADC does not have sufficient financial or military muscle to deal with conflict and human security challenges (Joseph, 2021). The regional bloc still receives external assistance by means of advice, development and diplomatic assistance, training, logistical support and equipment, and military capacity building, which usually comes with foreign interest. SADC governments and organisations should financially support the regional bloc in its peace and security activities. Further, peace and governance experts, together with policy makers in SADC, should lead conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation in the region and interpret policies to citizens so as to enhance a nuanced understanding of peace and human security processes. Ownership over the peace and security agenda in SADC will only be possible with SADC-led operations that are independent of external assistance.

4. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As shown in this policy paper, SADC leaders should band together democratically to address scourges such as contradictory commitments, membership overlap, and split loyalties among members. This will assist the regional grouping in achieving its stated objectives of regional and economic integration, poverty reduction, peace and security, and the growth of shared political institutions and values. Additionally, leaders should create the financial and military strength necessary to address conflict and human security concerns. They should not turn to foreign players for aid, but rather search inside the region for answers to the problems confronting SADC member states. Ownership of the SADC's peace and security agenda will be attainable only via SADC-led operations that are self-sufficient in terms of external support. As a result, this policy document makes the following recommendations to the SADC member states and Secretariat:

1. SADC member states should deepen economic integration and pay attention to the quality of governance as the most effective conflict prevention, peace-keeping, peace-

making and peace-building tools. The regional bloc should take a leaf from its East African Community (EZC) counterpart, which is leading in regional integration and free movement of people as well as capital goods and services in Africa (Hirsch, 2022). Cross-border movements are easiest between Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tanzania. Deeper regional integration enhances development and positive peace.

2. SADC member states should also prioritise basic education from primary to tertiary levels, training opportunities, and job creation to lift citizens, especially the youth from abject poverty. Like the European Union (EU), the regional bloc should set out the framework for member states to exchange best practices and learn from each other, with an aim to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality, improve the quality and efficiency of education and training, and promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

3. SADC member states should create material and moral incentives and encouragement for the involvement of local communities, the media, think tanks, researchers, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the African diaspora in shaping the policies on existing regional peace and security frameworks. They should also work together to craft peace messages, package them in all the languages used in the region and disseminate these messages using traditional, print, electronic and online media. This strategy was used by DRC's *Radio Okapi*, a radio network named after a rare African forest animal, related to the giraffe (Betz, 2004). Significantly, the animal has the same name in all the languages of DRC and is considered to be a symbol of peace. Set up in February 2002, *Radio Okapi* is a joint project of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) and Hirondelle Foundation, a Swiss non-governmental organisation (NGO). With a staff made up of mostly native Congolese journalists and broadcasters, *Radio Okapi* produces news, information and music on MONUC activities. It broadcasts in five major languages in the DRC (French, Lingala, Swahili, Tshiluba and Kikongo), and has the goal of becoming the first media outlet to provide national coverage regardless of political affiliation reaching both government- and rebel-held territory, on FM and shortwave (Betz, 2004). *Radio Okapi's* journalists have reported on the peace-building process, steps forward and backward, successes and failures, and hopes and deceptions (Betz, 2004).

4. Conflict management efforts in Southern Africa should not only be military-centred solutions that focus on short-term responses to conflicts and security challenges, but human security-centred solutions that focus on durable (positive) peace in the region. To achieve this, member states should thrive to promote and protect political, personal, economic, food, health, environmental and community securities in their respective countries.

5. The SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security (the Organ) needs to step up its commitment to peace-building, state building and conflict prevention within the region as the most important, cost-effective and proven means through which to respond to conflicts. The Organ should structurally engage with the civil society in the region and quickly respond to conflicts like the Cabo Delgado insurgent to save people from deaths and other calamities.

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