The effectiveness of regional peace-making in Southern Africa – Problematising the United Nations-African Union-Southern African Development Community relationship

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Abstract

With ever increasing urgency, the United Nations (UN) has worked to develop the budding security relationship between itself and regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa, especially the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In conflict resolution efforts in Southern Africa, this relationship has sometimes featured competition and tension, with more than one organisation vying for the lead, or in other cases, trying to pass the blame for failures. Since the UN's early peace mission in

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the Congo under Dag Hammarskjöld, achieving peace and stability in Africa has been a monumental task. This article explores whether new regional partnerships can help facilitate this goal in Southern Africa and whether the current principles of cooperation between the UN and regional organisations are sufficient for the task at hand. This article takes lessons from the conflict resolution efforts in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to illustrate recent examples of cooperation and/or competition as they are unfolding in the present, with an emphasis on analysing the institutional relationship between the UN, AU and SADC in Southern Africa. This article concludes that there are still major limitations on the successful regionalisation of conflict management efforts in Southern Africa and that the UN and its partner organisations need to clarify and improve their working relationship to improve their chances of facilitating successful peacemaking.

Introduction

Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) are playing an increasingly important role in peace and security. The RECs were originally established with mainly economic goals in mind, including enhancing economic integration, trade, and development; more recently, they have added peace and security agendas as such matters have become increasingly pressing and unavoidable. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) made this clear link when it concluded that the community could not pursue its economic and social objectives without first consolidating peace, hence requiring the Community's focus on this issue in its first security related protocol in 1978 (ECOWAS 1978). The process of RECs building security instruments is still taking place today. Indeed, these institutions, their governing rules and their relationships are still taking shape (Adetula 2008). It has become clear, however, that there are tensions and inconsistencies in the strategies and working relationships between the UN, the African Union (AU) and regional communities, which are, in certain circumstances, undermining the likelihood of successfully managing conflict resolution efforts and establishing peace.

While security scholars have been more likely to focus on the role of regional organisations in military peacekeeping, these organisations can and do play a role in non-military peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, which remains the subject of fewer academic inquiries and intergovernmental strategies. This article explores the role of regional organisations in the non-military functions of peace and security, including preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, and mediation, considering the role of the UN and AU in cooperating with such efforts at the regional level. While all of the sub-regions of Africa face similar quandaries, each sub-region also has its own peculiar challenges and differences in the level of development and cooperation on peace and security issues. The focus here is on Southern Africa with potentially relevant conclusions being drawn for other regions.

The tension and resultant competition between the UN, AU and regional organisations, and among regional organisations themselves, have limited the potential success of conflict resolution efforts and of establishing lasting peace. This problem is acute in Southern Africa, where the highly political Southern African Development Community (SADC) comes into conflict with the UN and/or the AU. In Zimbabwe, Madagascar and the DRC, this tension and lack of cooperation have been problematic and visible in conflict resolution efforts. Lessons from these cases make this point. In order to better manage peacemaking efforts and help facilitate more lasting peace, international and regional organisations need to clarify and improve upon their working principles and stop disagreements and the lack of coordination from hindering peacemaking.

The regionalisation of peace and security

The UN has promoted the *regionalisation* of peace and security, heralding it as a necessary shift and an effective way to manage certain types of conflict. The organisation envisions a two-tiered conflict management system with regional organisations playing the on-the-ground role and the UN serving a coordinating role from above (Jackson 2000), as outlined in the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 *Agenda for Peace*. Malan (1999) has dubbed this a 'peace pyramid' with the sub-regional organisations

and the OAU/AU acting as the initial respondents to the armed conflict, while the UN contributes more to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction at the top of the pyramid. Since the debacle in Somalia in 1994, Western countries have become more unwilling to directly intervene to end conflicts in Africa; there is therefore, a real and undeniable need for African states to find their own solutions to the continent's conflicts (Adebajo 2008). In 1995 the UN report *Improving preparedness for conflict prevention and peace-keeping in Africa* further argued that 'sub-regional organizations sometimes have a comparative advantage in taking the lead role in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and to assist the UN in containing them'.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was the first regional organisation in Africa to deal with peace and security issues. However, the OAU shied from involvement in disputes within Member States, establishing that the organisation's most fundamental stance was one of non-intervention and the prioritisation of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs (Van Nieuwkerk 2004; Okoth 2008). However, in 1993, at a conference in Cairo, the OAU established a *Mechanism for conflict prevention, management, and resolution* which served as a signal of the continent's renewed interest in peacemaking. In regard to the RECs, the declaration tentatively explained that the OAU was to 'coordinate its activities with the African regional and sub-regional organizations' (Organisation of African Unity 1993: Section 24). Since the OAU established its sub-regional structures in 1972 (Organisation of African Unity 1972), there has been an implied OAU position that the organisation may intervene in regional matters under certain conditions: when regional efforts were exhausted or the sub-regional organisation's credibility was lacking, or where conflict spilled into other regions (Mwanasali 2003). Yet a 1999 study, commissioned by the OAU on the functioning of cooperation between the OAU and sub-regional organisations in the realm of conflict resolution, found that the unclear division of labour and responsibilities and the lack of an institutionalised arrangement for conflict management between the organisations was limiting their effectiveness (cited in Mwanasali 2003).

Moreover, responses by sub-regional organisations in Africa have usually been *ad hoc* because there was a lack of institutionalised structures at the

sub-regional level to deal with conflict management and resolution activities, especially non-military activities (Malan 1999). The OAU took a case-by-case approach in its early peacemaking efforts which became the norm for the continent, relying on political leaders and individual countries to make security decisions instead of a collective supranational body (Imobighe 2003). Furthermore, when the RECs started to engage more directly with peace and security matters in the 1990s, there was no effective continental framework or mechanism to harmonise these efforts or coordinate relations with them and the OAU and the UN. The OAU's failure to reach out to the growing group of sub-regional actors who were becoming active in peace operations allowed the OAU to eventually become irrelevant as an organisation (Abass 2010).

The principle of 'subsidiarity' was supposed to govern this relationship. It implies that regional arrangements or regional institutions should make 'every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes' before referring them to the Security Council, as originally enshrined in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (1945). The norm also preceded the Charter in other emerging international organisations (Møller 2005). Laurie Nathan (2010a), however, holds that there is no consensus on how subsidiarity is to be applied to the task of peacemaking, and no consensus generally on its application within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Neither the AU nor the RECs have specifically defined or clarified how subsidiarity would be implemented in non-military peacemaking efforts. This lack of a definition from the organisations is a significant omission on their part, illustrating that despite support for regionalisation, the governing principles of this relationship remain unclear and insufficiently considered.

Regional organisations can help bring the resources and leverage required to sustain a successful peace process, but must also determine a way to manage the interests and demands that emerge from local and international actors (Khadiagala 2007). Supporters of a regional approach contend that regional actors' familiarity with the region, including the cultural, social and historical factors, can make them more effective on the ground. Geographical proximity should facilitate quicker and less expensive responses. Additionally, sub-regional organisations should also be more committed to seeing out

enduring conflict resolution in their region having such a strong stake in creating peace in their neighbourhood and avoiding the negative effects of conflicts, such as cross-border refugee flows. As Franke (2006) argues, the comparative advantages of the international (UN) and regional level can be combined for the most efficient response to conflicts. However it must be cautioned that peacemaking efforts led by a regional organisation, rather than a simple unilateral or bilateral team, require greater levels of coordination and cooperation to harness these potential advantages.

The regionalisation of peacemaking in Africa will obviously be closely related to the continued evolution and development of the AU, where the RECs have been considered 'building blocks' of the APSA (African Union 2002). Mwanasali (2003:206) contends that the success of the AU will 'depend, to a large extent, on the ways in which [RECs] and regional security arrangements will merge into the AU'. It was planned that these necessary relationships and cooperative structures would be defined in the protocol relating to the establishment of the AU's peace and security body and later legal frameworks.

Principles of the regional organisation relationship in Africa

While the regional conflict management relationship has been revived and revitalised by the transformation of the OAU into the AU in 2002, its early principles were defined in the UN Charter (1945). Chapter VIII of the Charter briefly describes the relationship between the UN and regional organisations. Article 33(1) calls for Member States to attempt to resolve their members' disputes through diplomatic means and/or through regional arrangements. These provisions appear to create a sense of duty on the part of regional organisations to intervene first and organise peacemaking operations in their own regions whenever possible, even though the UN is still primarily responsible for international peace and security.

The establishment of the AU included better defining the relationship with the UN and the RECs. At its inaugural summit in 2002, AU members established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) that would oversee and arrange possible

interventions under 'grave circumstances' such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity (African Union 2002: Art 4(h)). In the PSC Protocol (African Union 2002) the drafters emphasise 'the need to develop formal coordination and cooperation arrangements between these Regional Mechanisms and the African Union'. Article 16 also states that peace, security and stability activities need to be harmonised, coordinated and developed through an effective partnership between the organisations. Further, under Article 16(1)(b), it establishes that 'the modalities of such partnership shall be determined by the comparative advantage of each and the prevailing circumstances'. The principle of comparative advantage recognises the fact, *inter alia*, that some of the sub-regional organisations were actually more advanced or more competent in peace operations than the AU was at the time (Abass 2010).

Further details on the framework for the peace and security relationship between the organisations were also laid out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security which was signed in June 2008 between the AU and eight of the RECs (African Union 2008a). The MoU, a binding legal instrument, obliges the parties to 'institutionalize and strengthen their cooperation and closely coordinate their activities,' signalling the strong commitment to moving beyond informal collaboration and politicking. Under Article VII – Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution – the MoU calls for the parties to cooperate specifically in peacemaking activities to resolve conflicts that have occurred and prevent their recurrence through the means of 'good offices, mediation, conciliation, enquiry and deployment of peace support missions'. This signals that the agreement does not just cover military operations.

The MoU explains that the principles of 'subsidiarity, complementarity and comparative advantage' will guide decisions to optimise peace operations. Under Article IV (ii), however, the MOU also recognises and respects 'the primary responsibility of the Union in the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa'. The Modalities section (Article XX) of the MoU clarifies that:

> Without prejudice to the primary role of the Union in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa, the RECs and, where appropriate, the Coordinating Mechanisms shall be encouraged to anticipate and prevent conflicts within and among their Member States and, where conflicts do occur, to undertake peace-making and peace-building efforts to resolve them, including the deployment of peace support missions.

It is significant to note that there is no clause that requires a REC to obtain explicit approval for a peacemaking or peacebuilding mission before it undertakes one, allowing for possible conflicts over which an organisation has jurisdiction or the lead role, or allowing organisations to pass blame if they choose not to act.

One problem is that both the UN and the AU claim primacy in the handling of peace and security issues. Under the UN, it is the UN Security Council (UNSC) which has the 'primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security'. On the other hand, Article 16 of the PSC Protocol (African Union 2002) states that the Union has the 'primary responsibility' for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. It is still unclear how this clash of principles is interpreted by the AU and even further, under the RECs which are the 'pillars' of the continental peace and security architecture. While all of these organisations are ostensibly working towards the same goals, reconciling their cooperation and working relationship is proving difficult, especially over certain conflict resolution and peacemaking methods.

The language of 'subsidiarity and complementarity' is gaining a foothold in AU thinking, with the AU Commission, the organisation's secretariat, also stating that it will be guided by the operating principles of 'subsidiarity and complementarity with other Organs, Member States and RECs (African Union 2010). Yet this simple statement leaves much open to interpretation. Clearly there is a desire for enhanced partnership and cooperation between the UN and all of the African regional mechanisms, but there is a contradiction, or at least tension, between the 'primary responsibility' of the UNSC, the 'primary responsibility' of the Union, as noted in the PSC Protocol, and the principle

of subsidiarity, emphasised in the MoU and by the Commission. This tension is an obstacle in the establishment of a clear, institutionalised working relationship between these organisations when it comes to cooperation on peacemaking. Rather than clearly institutionalising a decision-making process on who takes the lead in peacemaking and mediation efforts, it is excessively flexible, leaving room for high politics and/or personal and national interests to become crucial factors in initiating peacemaking efforts. Without specifying who has the decision-making power or what the decision-making process will be, decisions may be taken in an *ad hoc* manner, beholden to the power politics of the region or of the regional organisations that are potentially involved.

Challenges in implementing the working relationship

The UN *Report of the high-level panel on threats, challenges and change* (United Nations 2004) recommended that authorisation from the UN Security Council (UNSC) should be sought in all cases for regional peace operations, recognising that in some urgent situations, authorisation may be sought after such operations have commenced (cited in Zwanenburg 2006). However, no such authorisation would be needed for a peacemaking effort that does not entail the use of force since this falls squarely under pacific means in the UN Charter. Therefore, there is no mandate for the UN to oversee or coordinate the response on a typical peacemaking operation. While the AU has sought to establish itself as the coordinating and mandating organisation for the continent, there is similarly no requirement for peacemaking authorisation within its Constitutive Act, and the sub-regional organisations often do act independently.

The UN Secretary-General has noted the cooperation that has taken place between the AU, sub-regional organisations and the UN in 'nearly every mediation effort in Africa' (United Nations 2008). While the Peace and Security Department of the AU is charged with elaborating the mechanisms for effective cooperation and harmonisation of peace and security policies with the sub-regional organisations (African Union n.d.), in reality, this cooperation is not so obvious. In practice, it is atypical if there is first deference to the relevant regional organisation, then to the AU, and then only to the UN, if both of the

lower levels have failed to resolve the local dispute. In most cases, a whole variety of organisations clamour to get involved. With some AU personnel believing that the Union has absolute primacy in all African cases, they show no deference to any other body. Yet each regional organisation is composed of and led by sovereign states which have their own decision-making forums that are not deferential to other bodies and may craft independent policies in response to a conflict in their region (Nathan 2010a). Furthermore, regional organisations such as SADC and ECOWAS, which established their regional security mechanisms before the AU was formed in 2002, feel that they have more experience and expertise in their region than the AU. For this reason, they will not always follow AU recommendations, despite the fact that it is supposed to be the coordinating organisation (Adebajo 2010). This mixed collection of beliefs and practices means that subsidiarity is clearly not being consistently applied, leading to acute tension and competition between the organisations.

The concept of 'comparative advantage' has become dominant in the literature and in the protocols of the UN and the regional organisations, including the *Statement by the President of the Security Council on relations between the UN and regional organizations, particularly the AU* (United Nations 2007). Yet what has proven elusive is the clear definition of each regional organisation's comparative advantages, and the determination and application of these advantages in each unique conflict situation. Possible 'comparative advantages' for regional organisations may include previous experience in peace management in the region, already established mechanisms for conflict management, and proximity, which leads to better understanding of the conflict and/or more legitimacy in the political realm (Bogland, Egnell and Lagerström 2008). Effective third-party mediation is also dependent on 'the mediator's capabilities and leverage ... the linkage between the third party and the conflict and the extent to which the mediators see themselves as stakeholders' (Crocker, Hampson and Aall 1999:32). On the other hand, proximity may also jeopardise the neutrality and acceptability of a regional organisation (Bogland, Egnell and Lagerström 2008). These factors balance

against one another, making a sub-regional organisation more or less well-suited to take a lead peacemaking role.

Comparative advantage infers that some organisations, and thereby some mediators, are better qualified to lead a peacemaking process, depending on the given circumstances. Establishing a general rule that stipulates that the lead mediator should *always* be the AU, the UN or the relevant REC, goes against this common sense notion. Rather, some criterion for being best suited as the lead mediating organisation might include: 'the organization's unity and cohesion in relation to the conflict; its acceptability to the parties; its knowledge of the conflict; the resources at its disposal; and personal relations with party leaders that would be helpful to peacemaking' (Nathan 2009:25). Problematically, there are no clear criteria such as these currently approved and there is no agreed decision-making process to debate these qualifications between the organisations. None of the documents say *who* will be determining which organisation or actor has comparative advantage and how the decision will be made on which organisations, and which mediation team, are the best equipped to lead the effort. Putting such decision-making clauses in the passive tense, without an executing agent, allows for such decisions to go unmade and for no one to be held accountable to carrying out the decision (Nathan 2010a).

The UN (2009b) recognised that while comparative advantage is often mentioned in statements regarding division of labour, these advantages are rarely identified and organisational activities are seldom aligned to any significant degree with presumed or actual comparative advantages. Moreover, an exclusive focus on comparative advantage remains difficult for international organisations as they are driven as much by political interests as by their mission and mandates (United Nations 2009b). Although the level of sharing and collaboration between the UN and African regional organisations has been increasing, this analysis establishes that there is still a large lapse in effective and professional cooperation based on the comparative advantage principle and that the principle is failing to be implemented at least partly due to the continuing politicised nature of African regional organisations.

Moreover, the field of mediation specifically remains, in many ways, unprofessionalised and under-capacitated. While the UN has worked to improve its professional mediation capacity, as noted in the *Report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities* (United Nations 2009a), its partner regional organisations have not made the same strides. No specific institutional rules for mediation have been made or approved within the AU or the RECs. A deficit of trained human capacity for mediation, continuing financial limitations, and the lack of an adequate framework or mechanism at the AU to oversee mediation, often means that 'mediation processes have still taken an improvised or reactive approach, rather than an institutionalised approach' (Govender and Ngandu 2010:11). It is for this reason that the world of international mediation has been characterised as 'idiosyncratic and *ad hoc*, overly determined by power politics, deadlines and organizational tussles' (Nathan 2010c:3). Instead of approaching an impending or active conflict with the best suited mediation team, the best suited institution in the lead, and a clear plan of action for the management of the conflict, other political variables and arbitrary events are often allowed to determine how a conflict will be managed by concerned actors and institutions.

Furthermore, this pressurised and unregulated environment often leads to what has been termed 'competitive peacemaking' or 'crowdedness'. In many current cases in Africa, including Zimbabwe, the DRC and Madagascar, mediators have had to act in parallel with or even against other state, non-state and multilateral actors that are also trying to involve themselves in the peacemaking process. Being unable to clearly and quickly select a lead organisation or individual, would-be mediators attempt to coordinate their efforts. In some cases, they have created a Joint Mediation team (as in Madagascar), but this has been put into practice with limited success (Whitfield 2010). Potential mediators can be played off against one another by the parties, delaying progress and creating new complications in the conflict (United Nations 2009a). At the present, this crowdedness or lack of coordination remains as a substantial and unresolved challenge in African peacemaking.

Sub-regional weaknesses and political obstacles – SADC in peacemaking

Each of the sub-regional organisations has its own unique dynamic that affects its ability to carry out successful peacemaking and to cooperate with the AU and UN on joint efforts. An organisation's effectiveness in peacemaking is dependent on whether the member states truly have the political will to make the organisation effective and whether enough political cohesion exists to create a lasting and sufficiently strong consensus on peace and security in the region. There must be more than just a simple external consensus that peace in the region is worth pursuing. For intra-regional peacemaking to be successful, states must share an internal logic with a normative consensus that allows them to operate with close political cooperation on a set of shared and enforceable norms (Nathan 2010b). Such common values are indispensable to help states overcome their disputes, build trust and act with a common purpose when confronted with a conflict. This section explores the absence of common values and unity in the Southern African region, resulting in less effectiveness of regional conflict resolution efforts.

Many academics and policymakers have provided detailed and compelling critiques of SADC as an organisation. This article focuses on the specific limitations that hinder the partnership it has with the AU and UN in carrying out effective peacemaking. Firstly, SADC solidarity politics, and the liberation legacy's taboo on making censure or disagreement publicly known, bog down the organisation and create serious obstacles to progressive SADC leadership in peacemaking (Hull and Derblom 2009). SADC has established strong protocols on security cooperation and safeguards on democracy and human rights, but continues to operate on the pillars of absolute sovereignty and solidarity (Hammerstad 2005). There is even an understanding that member states have kept the SADC secretariat weak in order to avoid the creation of an interventionist bureaucracy that could interfere in their sensitive security issues (Adebajo 2010). With these limitations on political will and capacity, the AU and UN will certainly continue to encounter tension in their attempted cooperation with SADC.

Divisions among leading states – between those disposed towards military solutions (namely Zimbabwe) and those disposed towards diplomatic efforts (South Africa) – created paralysing tension in the 1990s (Adetula 2008). These divisions were evident in SADC's 1998 intervention in the DRC, where it acted as a 'bipolar' entity, adopting two incompatible strategies led by the two sub-regional powers (Williams 2005). The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security had been, by some accounts, manipulated to justify the aims of Zimbabwe in the DRC and later, to legitimise South Africa's intervention in Lesotho. With continuing distrust of South Africa resulting from the apartheid legacy, South Africa must make clear its desire for *real* cooperation if it wants to counter hegemonic alliances and deepening divisions (Adebajo and Landsberg 2003). This has created a less enthusiastic stance on interventions in SADC and tempered the political willingness of SADC countries to realise their peace and security aims (Adebajo 2008). The distrust created by these interventions has lasted to the present, and will likely continue to manifest itself in declarations of the importance of sovereignty and the traditional norm of non-interference.

While SADC reformed its 'Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation' in 2001 and came out with a new *Strategic Indicative Plan* in 2004 (Southern African Development Community 2004), the organisation may still be considered a tool for achieving the national interests of Member States rather than an organisation endowed with political decision-making powers (Van Nieuwkerk 2006). Moreover, since both the principles of sovereignty and the possibility of intervention coexist within the AU's Constitutive Act, the principles will likely be applied on a case-by-case basis 'depending on political processes and interests' (Bogland, Egnell and Lagerström 2008:34). It is hence likely that in the SADC, the continuing lack of trust and dearth of common values among member states will forestall consensus, delaying any rapid response possibility or positive cooperation with the AU and UN.

SADC's wide membership is also proving problematic. Having included the DRC in 1997, the organisation was tied into a conflict that is more strongly related to conflict dynamics in Central Africa. The two states that invaded the DRC in 1998, Rwanda and Uganda, are not member states of SADC and

hence largely outside its influence. While Mandela apparently thought that SADC could play a positive role in conflict management in the DRC, helping to prevent a regional conflagration of instability (Khadiagala 2009), the organisation proved it was not up to this challenge, partly due to its limited scope of influence in the Central African region. The problems of unclear sub-regions and overlapping membership in multiple regional organisations, therefore, make regional conflict resolution efforts further complicated.

On the one hand, SADC has remained united enough to largely keep the UN and other international players out of the recent conflict in Zimbabwe, where South Africa has taken a lead in peacemaking and tried to prevent much external interference, painting it as a Western anti-Zimbabwean crusade (International Crisis Group 2010c). On the other hand, the UN and AU have been more involved, at different levels, in the conflicts in the SADC Member States of the DRC and Madagascar, attributable to the lower levels of political interest in these conflicts and/or the higher demands of these very involved and long-lasting peace processes that rely upon international resources. In reality, while SADC calls itself a regional organisation and aims toward the building of a functioning security community, norms of cooperation, trust and rule enforcement are not yet consistently followed by Member States. Given the at times dysfunctional nature of the sub-regional organisations in Africa, it is clear that the principle of subsidiarity cannot be consistently relied upon nor can 'comparative advantage' be consistently determined.

Lessons from Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and the DRC

While the conflict in Madagascar is, relatively, the shortest-running and perhaps least historically troubling among conflicts in Southern Africa, the relationship between the UN, AU and SADC in its conflict resolution efforts on the island has been tension-filled and problematic. Confusion and an absolute lack of coherent leadership undermined the mediation process that was initiated after the 2009 coup d'état. At least six mediators from different organisations were quickly sent to Madagascar and it was unclear who would take the lead (Zounmenou 2009). The SADC communiqué issued on 12 July 2009 (Southern African Development Community 2009) included collaboration

with the AU, UN and International Organisation of la Francophonie (IOF), as well as ensuring Malagasy ownership of the process, in the mandate of the SADC mediation effort. This, however, was never really accomplished. Despite the establishment of a 'contact group' that first met 30 April 2009, and the mandate of AU Special Envoy, Ablassé Ouedraogo, to take the lead in overseeing the peacemaking efforts, the mediation of the Joint Mediation Team was dominated by SADC's mediator, Joaquim Chissano (International Crisis Group 2010b). Even the contact group extended uncertainty of leadership, saying that the next mediation would be 'under the auspices of the AU' while also taking place 'under the leadership of former President Joaquim Chissano, assisted by the SADC Mediation Team' (International Contact Group on Madagascar 2009). This lack of clarity undermined the seriousness of the peacemaking process among the parties.

The AU-UN relationship in 2009 was characterised by rivalry, which contributed to ending the UN's mediation mandate in 2010, leaving African figures to take the lead. Relations between the AU and SADC were also tense in the first year of mediations and the AU stepped back to let SADC take the lead in 2010. Rather than clearly leading, however, the next phase was characterised by a lack of unity and cooperation among the international community, including the appearance of political interventions by France, which maintained an active diplomatic role. Chissano's leadership was no longer welcomed by all the parties in 2010 and France urged President Zuma to take a lead, while South Africa was still trying to support SADC leadership (International Crisis Group 2010b). The failure of the last international attempt created the impetus for a more national, home-grown solution. But as the national solution has also failed to formulate a plan of action that is acceptable to all the parties, SADC is left to try its luck again and attempt to organise successful elections that would, once and for all, restore political order and a semblance of democracy (McNeish 2011). It is obvious that this lack of coordination and diplomatic infighting has complicated, rather than facilitated, the peace effort.

Zimbabwe further highlights the difficulties of international cooperation in Southern Africa and the difficulty of utilising the principles of subsidiarity and comparative advantage. Shortly after the June 2008 presidential run-off

elections in Zimbabwe, the AU Assembly Summit took the events under consideration, but shied from condemning ZANU-PF's electoral tampering and political violence (African Union 2008b). The resolution expressed the AU's support for SADC facilitation, and recommended that SADC continue to carry out the mediation process by establishing a local mechanism to speed a negotiated end to the crisis. Certain voices within the AU, however, did call for stronger action in the face of ongoing stalemate. By December 2008, Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga called for an AU ousting of President Mugabe, specifically requesting that the then AU Chair, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, should implement a solution to the Zimbabwean crisis (Okumu 2008). Privately, a diplomatic battle ensued between Kikwete and Mbeki, with Presidents Kikwete, Mwanawasa of Zambia and Khama of Botswana urging an expanded mediation team and a more robust UN role. The efforts were strongly resisted by Mbeki (International Crisis Group 2008).

SADC has deferred to South Africa to take the lead on the Zimbabwe issue. In turn, SADC and South Africa have desired to keep the AU and the UN far from the Zimbabwe crisis, despite the reality that they have not initiated any meaningful interventions themselves. Scepticism has been widespread about the effectiveness of SADC mediation, but the main local actors were able to point to the process to show that they were doing *something* to handle the situation (IDASA 2008). The SADC Heads of State, who ultimately retain political power in the region, maintain that Zimbabwe's sovereignty should preclude any other external intervention, despite their own guidelines against unconstitutional changes of government. SADC members 'closed rank' and were able to maintain this relatively coherent and unified stance throughout the crisis (Nathan 2010a). Opposition candidate Tsvangirai even appealed for AU or UN intervention in April 2008, citing a lack of progress through SADC, but to no avail (Security Council Report 2008). This highlights how international bodies can be sidelined when the principle of subsidiarity is championed by interested regional neighbours.

SADC's military intervention in the DRC in 1998 has already been widely discussed and criticised as an illustration of SADC's lack of unity, dearth of cooperation and ability to be hijacked by national interests (Williams 2005;

Nathan 2002; Van Schalkwyk 2005). Despite criticisms that the subsequent peace process was not sufficiently inclusive, South Africa, the OAU and the UN played a more positive role facilitating in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that followed the 1999 Lusaka Agreement (Khadiagala 2009). While the UNSC exerted pressure on both internal and neighbouring parties (Rwanda and Uganda) and established a UN peacekeeping operation, the dialogue led to the 2002 Pretoria Agreement for a transitional government. However, ethnic-based conflict continued in Eastern DRC and political delay postponed the inauguration of the transitional arrangement until 2003 (Apuuli 2004). Political instability and conflict continued throughout the rule of the transitional regime.

South Africa did play a substantive role in supporting the country's first democratic elections in 2006 and acted as a successful mediator for the AU when President Kabila's challenger contested the results (Khadiagala 2009). The UN force of nearly 20 000 military personnel which remains in the country, has, however, been criticised as ineffective and has often been unable to stop atrocities (Terrie 2009). Yet on a more fundamental level, the real problem is that the national consolidation of democracy is stalled, Eastern Congo is still facing insecurity and instability, while the Congolese government is calling for the withdrawal of the UN, citing concerns over their sovereignty (International Crisis Group 2010a). While the Great Lakes Region has also set up regional initiatives, and SADC has pledged to cooperate with this initiative (2008), SADC is obviously less concerned with maintaining its position in the implementation and consolidation of the peace initiatives South Africa helped broker, leaving that largely in the hands of the UN. While the UN has attempted to harness the possible advantages of working with regional actors, the AU and SADC have largely withdrawn due to the extensive commitments and resources that this conflict management process has required. SADC's early intervention, in any case, certainly tainted its reputation and credibility in dealing with the DRC, preventing it from being a reliable partner for the UN in the region.

Conclusion – Limitations on regional peacemaking solutions in Southern Africa

The examples discussed here add strength to a tentative conclusion that the uncoordinated efforts carried out by SADC, the AU and the UN, may, in certain circumstances, have actually complicated or prolonged certain aspects of the conflicts in the region. While deference to local ownership of a peacemaking process can facilitate some comparative advantages, when local partners and organisations are not united and are unwilling to uphold principles of good governance and consolidating peace, they do not make good partners in this relationship. This, however, does not stop these organisations from claiming their right, in light of the principle of subsidiarity, to involve themselves in regional peacemaking.

The first conclusion that may be drawn is that regional peacemaking efforts are still limited in their success due to the strong devotion to national sovereignty held by Africa's leaders. Anthoni van Nieuwkerk (2004:46) argues that 'redesigned structures will not make any difference to Africa's security if Africa's ruling elites do not develop the political vision and will to effectively promote human security on the continent'. Leaders must move away from a vision that promotes state security and sovereignty, towards one that promotes human rights and freedom from insecurity for all citizens. Although shifts in thinking are taking place, the continuing defence of sovereignty and unity in African politics, especially in Southern Africa, cannot be ignored when considering the (in)effectiveness of regional peacemaking.

Secondly, the lack of consensus on the importance of good governance, and the absence of true commitment to regional solutions on peace and security issues among states in Southern Africa, continues to limit what SADC can contribute to the AU and UN relationship. Especially given the correlation between conflict and democratic transitions and elections in Africa, it is important that regional organisations have a united stance on challenges to these principles. Some consensus on democratisation and good governance is a precondition for any sustainable regional cooperation (Fawcett 1995). Yet sub-regional peacemaking is often aimed at stopping immediate violence, and

Sarah Ancas

does much less to solve the underlying governance problems and ensure long-term stability, as seen in the regional efforts in Madagascar, Zimbabwe and the DRC. Without consensus on upholding these principles, they have been unable to consolidate lasting peace and to act as credible partners in peacemaking.

Finally, this lack of willingness contributes to the fact that responses by regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa are usually *ad hoc* and reactive, rather than proactive. This reflects the lack of institutionalised structures and decision-making processes to deal with non-military conflict management and resolution activities. The unclear and contradicting principles governing the relationship between the UN, AU and RECs worsen this problem, despite attempts to formalise roles under the AU. Whether the UN or AU has the ultimate responsibility and coordinating role in Africa has not been clarified, nor has the scope of the principle of subsidiarity in regional peacemaking.

The UN and its partners must reconsider and strengthen the principles of their relationship and the shared decision-making process for peacemaking in Southern Africa. The process currently allows too much room for personal and national interests to dominate peacemaking processes, rather than ensuring that the best suited strategy and mediation team, as determined by the principle of comparative advantage, is actually put in place. Achieving peace in Southern Africa has been for many years a hard-to-attain goal. While there is a lot of potential for creating effective partnerships that leverage the advantages of the UN together with local partners, they are currently not effectively realised.

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