Strategic culture of the Southern African Development Community: Militarised pathways to security?

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Abstract

Parading elements of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Brigade took pride of place at the opening of the 2007 SADC Summit in Lusaka, Zambia. This SADC Brigade is tied in closely to both the security architecture of the African Standby Force (ASF) of the African Union (AU) and the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. In the recent past (1998), military interventions by SADC members into Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) caused the SADC to become known for its military (ad)ventures rather than for amicable progress towards a security community committed to development. In part, internal war in the DR Congo and other war-legacies such as those in Angola still taint the strategic landscape of the SADC. In addition, very sophisticated ships and aircraft are being delivered to South Africa while political militancy plays a prominent role in the 2008 Zimbabwean crisis. Are these events indicative of a militarised SADC strategic culture as opposed to the declared pacifist preferences to resolve conflicts?

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Introduction

In a debate that reflects more disagreement than consensus, Neumann and Heikka (2005:5-23) argue that state behaviour and strategic culture stand in close proximity. In this regard Snyder (1977) used strategic culture initially to explain different approaches, attitudes and preferences by the United States (US) and the former Soviet Union for possessing and if needed, for employing nuclear weapons. The close nexus between state behaviour and strategic culture also features prominently in the earlier literature on strategic culture by Gray (1999), Johnston (1995), Howlett and Glenn (2005), and Klein (1991). Although first-wave literature strongly focused upon the state-strategic culture nexus, the saliency of regional security and regional arrangements increased as the Cold War faded. In effect, the state-centric focus obscured the growing interplay between strategic culture and regional arrangements to prevent conflict in the international system or to contribute to the resolution of such conflict. At the turn of the 20th century the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and the Asia-Pacific region drew increased scholarly attention (Cornish & Edwards 2001; Haacke & Williams 2007a; Haacke & Williams 2007b; Booth & Trood 1999).1 Decision-makers also seem to judge the regional level of security all the more significant (Haacke & Williams 2007b:2) as the use of coercive power in its most threatening form - military power - (Adler & Barnett 1998:428) remains a lingering option that tends to unfold regionally first.

Regional security arrangements typically deal with external threats, but internal instabilities may be a motivating factor as well (Adler & Barnett 1998:425). As an emergent regional security community, members of the SADC have little to fear from external military threats.² In effect, SADC appears to follow a normative preference for moving from enmity towards amity to prevent a possible intraregional war. Preferably the SADC migration from enmity to amity should

¹ The work by Haacke and Williams culminated in the paper they presented to the Standing Group on International Relations of the European Consortium for Political Research Conference in Turin, 13-15 September 2007 (Haacke & Williams 2007c).

² SADC comprises the following countries: Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

progress at the declaratory as well as operational levels with the ultimate aim of promoting human security.

In this article, the author pursues the matter of an SADC strategic culture and seeks to demarcate indicators of militarisation. The first section of the article briefly attends to regional security and security communities, security culture as well as strategic culture and militarism. The second section explores strategic culture at the regional level and some contours of an evolving SADC strategic culture are demarcated. The third section comprises an attempt to isolate certain indicators of militarisation in certain SADC countries. Both regional, as well as country-specific indicators of possible militarisation are explored. In conclusion, a brief summary and concluding remarks on militarisation within the SADC are offered.

Regional security, security culture and strategic culture

Security theorists, such as Buzan (1991), Buzan, Weaver and De Wilde (1998) but also Lake and Morgan (1997), underline the growing importance of the regional level of security. Regional entities harness the potential and the contributions of members through cooperative, collective or common security arrangements. The EU, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Southeast Asia and the AU are some examples of regional organisations that now harvest the inherent potential of regionalism towards more security for member countries. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Central Asia, with Russia and China as its most prominent members, also draws increasing attention from analysts (De Haas 2007). Furthermore and in spite of some apprehension, the United Nations (UN) continues to view regional organisations as gateways for promoting security and settling conflicts in their respective communities (United Nations 1992).

Security features at the heart of regional communities and, in the words of Adler and Barnett (1998:4), 'who is inside and who is outside, matters most'. Snyder (1999:102-103) alludes to the different cooperative and collective arrangements for states, and inadvertently the role of military force remains part of the picture in the light of its contributions to prevent or terminate armed conflict. Adler

and Barnett (1998:30), however, point out the difficulty for a community of states to assume shared norms, values and symbols and a subsequent common pacifist disposition to shape their security – a feature not uncommon to the SADC, as explained below (Nathan 2006:605-622). Ultimately, however, the eradication of the use of military coercion becomes the desired norm for security communities.

In order to protect their interests, countries turn to those in their immediate vicinity and agree on arrangements to lower threats and vulnerabilities. Over time, member states begin to share core values that stem from common institutions, mutual identity and loyalty (Adler & Barnett 1998:69-70). The wellbeing of a security community turns upon protecting the national good and eventually also the collective good of the community – a duality that members do not always heed (Adler & Barnett 1998:13, 36). Member states moreover often ignore pacifist pathways to protect national or communal interests. While the EU requires a robust strategic culture to intervene externally when so desired, analysts also raise questions about the conventional military profile of the SCO (Cornish & Edwards 2005:801; De Haas 2007:10-11).

Strategic culture results from the central tenets and operational assumptions of a security culture. In effect, security culture acts as the guiding intelligence for strategic culture and serves to '... establish durable security preferences by formulating concepts of the roles, legitimacy and efficacy of particular approaches to protecting values' (Haacke & Williams 2007a:17). At regional level, certain basic assumptions need to be shared between members: the importance of security referents, dimensions of security, views of the general politico-security environment and the purpose of the regional arrangement. Security culture thus sets the scene for the operation of strategic culture.

Strategic culture also informs parties about government preferences for using their armed forces to pursue state policy. If this preference becomes too pervasive, militarisation could well set in. Some theorists define militarisation quite widely as a range of social and political phenomena on the more practical and material use of the armed forces and their presence as being more pervasive than discreet. Employed against real and perceived enemies, internally and externally, armed forces feature prominently in the defence and pursuit of interests, but do not always constitute a pervasive and explicit value system as found under Praetorianism. Under Praetorianism, the civilian and military authorities almost become collapsed with the military emerging as the de facto ruler (Frankel 1984:71, 131; Wiseman 1988:230-231). Different shades of militarisation are thus possible. One popular view is to equate militarisation with defence spending, but this only serves to indicate one pattern, and one difficult to calculate accurately, and to immerse in a much wider social activity (Frankel 1984:73-74). As opposed to stark boundaries delimiting the use of armed force, militarisation threatens the boundaries that contain and direct the use of armed coercion. Creeping elements of militarisation thus point political and military elites towards accepting the use of armed force to resolve certain matters, particularly if these elites share a common politico-strategic history (Wiseman 1988:233).

The growing role of regional agents of security inadvertently also amplifies the trans-national character of strategic culture (Neumann & Heikka 2005:18). Gray (2007:6), however, warns that communities do not all share and conform to common views on strategic matters. National political goals still direct or guide armed forces (Neumann & Heikka 2005:16) and contain ideas on and preferences for armed coercion. In this vein some governments employ their armed forces as a primary policy instrument; others prefer to keep armed coercion as a very last policy option while some prefer not to resort to armed coercion at all.

The definition and demarcation of strategic culture by theorists remain difficult and are recognised as such in most literature on the topic. One way for theorists to attend to conceptual difficulties is by contrasting security and strategic culture. Haacke and Williams (2007a:17-18) confine strategic culture to preferences on the use of force and describe it as being one component of a broader security culture that considers the use or non-use of military force to protect values. Booth and Trood (1999:11) define strategy as the military dimension of policy and strategic culture as the military dimension of political culture, and seek to keep concepts from merely collapsing into security and political culture. Several views on security and strategic culture thus coexist.

The debate on strategic culture unfolds as three waves of theory. The first wave depicts strategic culture as '... historical experiences, national character, and geography, and they consistently lead to certain types of behaviour. The second wave makes '... a clear distinction between strategic culture and behaviour, as well as between declaratory and secret doctrine'. Third-wave theorists view strategic culture as '... an entity that appears in the form of a limited, *ranked* set of grand strategic preferences over actions that are consistent across the objects of analysis and persistent across time' (Neumann & Heikka 2005:7-8). Although there is this admittedly difficult debate devoid of consensus, the pathway followed in this article accepts the wider definitions of Haacke and Williams and that of Johnston, but heeds the qualification by Vale (1994:5-6) that '... the forces which underpin strategic culture, are far stronger than those which shape what we call "policies". Policies, according to Vale (1994:5) have a much briefer durability and life span, and they shift as governments change. Strategic culture, however, may only shift when fundamental politico-strategic shifts occur.

Preferences of different players mould and fix strategic culture over time (Gray 2007:7). Regional players thus 'inherit' regional strategic culture that brings into focus different strategic preferences from individuals, groups, and member states. While individuals and groups facilitate strategic culture at the national level, it is more difficult at the regional level. Regionally shared experiences and beliefs often diverge, while claims of sovereignty regularly disrupt the desired common culture. Regional communities do not all behave in a similar fashion and often display preferences for engaging in a particular behaviour (Gray 2007:6, 9). The fact remains that once established and maintained, core tenets of strategic culture shift incrementally and very rarely in some fundamental fashion.

Strategic need drives a particular strategic culture and over time parties adopt a culture that satisfies that need (Gray 2007:11). This however, is not a conscious choice, but rather one that is buffeted and moulded by time and events. Assuming that a community has only one strategic culture is perhaps somewhat optimistic. Having more than one 'way of war' or having different ideas on dealing with strategic issues that require politico-strategic measures (Gray 2007:14-15; Vale 1994:6) is not impossible. It is thus quite probable for two or more strategic cultures to compete within one regional community and to depict a greater or

lesser preference for military coercion. Certain constraints also mediate strategic culture as organisational factors, and preferences disrupt the preferred strategic culture and policy-strategy connectivity and make a compromise option more viable (Gray 2007:16; Gray 1999:144).

Changes to strategic culture are possible, but they need to be qualified. As noted earlier, strategic culture changes slowly in response to those challenges that question its fundamental tenets and operational preferences. For example, should regime and state security feature prominently, while shifting to a culture that emphasises human security is bound to be very slow? Once a regional culture on the use or non-use of force is established, such a culture is bound to be more robust and durable than that of a state, as several communal linkages hold it in place (Haacke & Williams 2007a:22). Nonetheless, changes are effected over time, but result from deep seismic events and extensive communications. Norm entrepreneurs, such as new political incumbents, also play an important role to shift or maintain existing norms, ideas and preferences that sustain a particular culture (Kenkel 2003:12). These shifts, furthermore, flow across international boundaries to influence and change preferences of other actors in the system as well (Haacke & Williams 2007a:23). How much change and how rapidly, remains a polemic question, but analysts generally accept that change is possible, but slow in the making.

Preferably, the strategic culture of a collective entity should be cooperative and not necessarily common and all-embracing (Neumann & Heikka 2005:19). Sweeney (2007:7), for example, observes that expectations of similar strategic cultures amongst a collection of states (even for the EU) are unduly optimistic as several catalysts mould and form strategic culture at the national and regional levels. Regarding the EU, some hold the notion that a common (monolithic) strategic culture for the organisation is idealistic (Lianos 2006), with a more cooperative-styled strategic culture perhaps being more practical. Strategic culture is thus also the outcome of what member states bring to the regional agenda. In the case of ASEAN, several strategic cultures coexist, and in spite of progress, the organisation displays no common culture for using force (Booth & Trood 1999:354).

A coherent or even common security culture does not emanate from merely forming a regional arrangement (Haacke & Williams 2007a:19), and this reality is most probably valid for strategic culture as well. Strong and weak states within a regional arrangement are also important mediators of the resultant culture. If weak states dominate the regional arrangement, a preference for state and regime security is bound to profit as weak bureaucracies and institutions increase perceptions of threats to sovereignty as well as external threats. As member states bring their peculiar security and strategic cultures along, they either interlock and predispose collective bodies towards particular policies, decisions and actions, or 'disrupt' the desired cultural consensus. Subsequently decisions and activities to deal with threats and vulnerabilities along common pacifist lines become compromised.

A security community intent upon a pacifist orientation to lower and eventually abandon the possibility of members settling differences by going to war requires a disposition of its members to heed the pacifist pathway. Regional entities do not automatically discard the use of force, and the possibility of military coercion to pursue or protect the national or communal good heightens the role of strategic culture. However, the use of force as a central tenet in a regional security culture often gives rise to controversy. This controversy constitutes a rivalry between two paradigms and there is bound to be a victory for one or the other, or the coexistence of proponents and opponents of using force (Haacke & Williams 2007c:14). In the SADC, as discussed below, undue competition can be traced as member states attempt to build a common pacifist approach amidst strong preferences to retain the military option.

Strategic culture and militarisation in the SADC

In a 1994 study on Southern Africa, Vale (1994:6-7) links future peace in the region to understanding the strategic cultures of the respective countries. These cultures hold real implications for regional relations because of their aversion to change and pledges for change rarely translating into quick and visible shifts (Vale 1994:18). One salient matter is thus whether Southern African governments have truly shifted their political cultures from that of liberation

movements and an inclination to co-employ politics and military coercion to a culture of fully-fledged political parties and governments. In a subsequent study on strategic culture and Southern Africa, Carim (1995:54) views strategic culture as a fresh and new pathway to research peace and security in the region. Regionally, however, strategic culture is important as it shapes shared norms and expectations towards regional arrangements (Carim 1995:61).

Amongst the questions posed during 1994 and 1995, those about a militarist inclination in society and the sources that serve as its origins feature prominently. One lingering matter for the region identified by Vale, as well as Carim, is the use of military force to pursue objectives. Carim (1995:63) points out the role of apartheid legacies in the Southern African region and that of a culture to use armed coercion to enforce or defend. In retrospect, and following the demise of apartheid, several other legacies with a military connectivity lingered in the region. Continuous warfare in Angola and the DR Congo left military catalysts that still fester in the Southern African region. Surplus arms sustained a conflictprone culture in countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Angola who all allocated noticeable proportions of their public expenditure to defence (Carim 1995:64). Demobilisation in Southern Africa is a major, but slow undertaking (Porto et al 2007:ix), and continues to sustain a pool of trained, but unemployed military personnel. Add the South African armaments industry (Vale 1994:23-24; South Africa: Hardware developments 2005:16265) seeking out markets in the region and one finds a mix of factors that are bound to promote elements of militarism that are unlikely to fade quickly.

The official demise of apartheid by the mid-1990s did not effect an immediate termination of a strategic culture that privileged the military option to deal with regional differences. The strategic culture of apartheid extends beyond its official demise, and this ties in with the view that strategic culture shifts very slowly. In South Africa, the 1994 watershed coincided with a fundamental shift in political culture and new incumbents, but perhaps not necessarily a shift in strategic culture as well. Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and the

DR Congo are perhaps not spared a similar fate³ on account of being weak states on the one hand, and having earlier liberation cultures that are difficult to shed on the other. Vale (1994:25) argues that strategic culture (or perhaps elements thereof) can also be passed on, even if a previous culture is denied, found unwanted or vilified. Defence forces of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and currently in Angola, Mozambique and the DR Congo as well, became nationbuilding institutions composed of forces that 'passed on' their own military cultures. Moller (2003:11-14), for example, confirms the earlier military (including colonial) origins of the authorities in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, with the DR Congo still struggling along a military pathway towards de facto political survival.

In contrast to lingering military catalysts in the region, the SADC portrays a normative preference to become a security community through pacifist ways and means. In effect, one finds that SADC member states are attempting to follow a post-modern approach where common interests are set above national state interests (Sweeney 2007:5). For the SADC, a pacifist approach and non-militarism thus feature as a preferred norm for members. Violating this norm by acting in a manner that tends to lean towards unilateral, coercive and military-styled solutions is bound to elicit some response from those actors intent upon upholding the norm (Geldenhuys 2006:3). In the SADC, such a division is visible and discussed further in the following section.

The SADC mandate extends into the security and political domains, and fragile security hastened the creation of the SADC regional security forum. The preferred move from a coercive culture to a more democratic and pacifist one did not manifest as a once-off migration into a mature security community (Nathan 2006:608). Article 5 of the SADC Treaty provides for the promotion of defence, peace and security and thus presents an entry point for elements of militarism. Article 4, however, stipulates the peaceful settlement of disputes that in turn reaffirms a pacifist approach to conflict.⁴ Nonetheless, not one SADC country

³ Disarming the mind after a peace was concluded is an important step towards removing the idea that war and conflict is a normal way of life (Porto et al 2007: viii).

⁴ See Declaration and Treaty of SADC, Article 5, Objectives.

comprehensively shut down its armed forces as part of its national strategy or declined to participate in regional military cooperation. Institutionally, each SADC member has a military establishment with regular forces destined for national and regional contingencies – a policy option still observable on the SADC strategic landscape.

The absence of common values towards a pacifist approach offsets the stated intention of an anti-militaristic SADC security policy (Nathan 2006:606-608). The earlier pacifist and militarist divide on the role and status of the SADC Organ only accentuated the fragility of the preferred pacifist approach. Nathan (2006:609) argues that some states did not take kindly to the declared antimilitarist drive to inculcate a more pacifist SADC culture. The deliberations to resolve the impasse around control of the Organ became an increasingly closed process that excluded those (South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Mauritius) who probably could have driven home the anti-militaristic drive. Up to 2001 the Organ remained in the hands of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, who became known for their preference for military coercion – a preference demonstrated by their military intervention in a fellow SADC country - the DR Congo. The militarist hold on the Organ by the Zimbabwe-Angolan-Namibian troika clearly shows the recent divide regarding the more militarist and pacifist members of SADC (Nathan 2006:610). In effect, the militarist group in the SADC held a preference for a collective defence arrangement while the pacifists led by South Africa preferred a common security regime.

Since 1994 an elaborate SADC security architecture took shape to deal with security through defence, policing and intelligence (Nathan 2006:611). The fact of the matter remains that the military option continued as an operational response, in spite of a declaratory preference that accentuated a pacifist policy route. Regional military arrangements remained part of the response hierarchy and also the sector where most progress (both declaratory as well as operationally) becomes visible. The Mutual Defence Pact (2003), the SADC Brigade (2007)

and the post-2000 prominence of South African armed forces in AU missions demonstrate most visibly the progress in the defence and security sectors.⁵

Historically, Southern Africa is perhaps also a product of the dictum 'War made the state and the state made war' (Tilly 1975:42). After independence and more particularly since 1994, most SADC countries found that external threats calling for national defence seemed remote (Moller 2003:17).6 Independence, however, did not automatically translate into legitimacy, stability and strong institutions (Moller 2003:15) and the leeway to embrace the pacifist approach. Preferences for military solutions by certain SADC countries still disrupt the normative strive for a more pacifist regional strategic culture. In line with the weak state theory (Jackson 2001:69; Nathan 2006:618), the majority of SADC countries remain threatened by vulnerabilities stemming from unconsolidated democracies, institutional weakness and threats from within. The constitutional crisis in Swaziland, internal and external threats against the DR Congo, the legacy of war in Angola and institutional fragility in Zimbabwe only serve to highlight countryspecific weaknesses. Furthermore, economic weakness in Mozambique, threats of a coup in Lesotho and corruption in the Zambian presidency also point to weak state features in SADC countries (Nathan 2006:611). The aforementioned weaknesses as well as the limited range of policy instruments in weak states promote the inclination to resolve such vulnerabilities and subsequent threats through military coercion.

In spite of a visible lack of external military threats, AU and SADC security arrangements created new roles and functions for SADC militaries (Moller 2003:20). Immersion in peacekeeping operations became a prominent activity for the armed forces of South Africa. In addition to the external missions, internal demands required of military forces to play a range of other roles: counter-

⁵ The preparation of a military structure for SADC is also driven by a responsibility to put in place a regional brigade for the African Standby Force of the African Union. (See Article 13 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union).

⁶ More generally stated, African national security is primarily defended by military and security forces to oppose external threats and to ensure the controversial matter of regime security. See Solomon 2004:130.

insurgency and constabulary duties mixed with privatised security and military companies while some SADC armies played an almost predatory role as in the DR Congo (Moller 2003:20). In addition, military-styled internal threats still linger, as post-war conflicts in the east of the DR Congo, the Cabinda question in Angola and the Caprivi region in Namibia represent threats to sovereignty that could well draw a military response (Ngubane 2004:52-54).

Defence demobilisation in Southern Africa did not unfold in a most efficient manner so as to lower the military profile of the region. Attempts to rationalise armed forces released large numbers of soldiers back into society, but not necessarily through a well-managed demobilisation process (Moller 2003:36; Porto et al 2007:ix). In effect, large numbers of military-minded individuals roam a region awash with arms and ample opportunities to return to militarystyled movements and institutions such as national military forces, newly established private security and private military companies, militias and militant youth movements. A gun culture evolved in much of the region and placed a reciprocal securitising burden upon governments to protect their communities and themselves through force if necessary (Porto et al 2007:16). How much money they spend on this priority, however, remains somewhat opaque.

As stated briefly earlier, defence expenditure is often viewed as an important indicator of militarisation (Frankel 1984:71). In the SADC, national defence expenditures present little evidence from which to infer militarisation. Except for Zimbabwe, none of the more prominent SADC countries such as Angola, South Africa and Botswana portrays disproportionate defence spending levels (Howe 2005:99). Figures from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2007) indicate that moderate defence spending does not serve as a strong indicator of militarisation in the SADC. The data from SIPRI, however, are qualified as figures are inaccurate due to estimates and other voids in official figures that undermine their credibility. Zimbabwe's figures, for example, are distorted by economic collapse while figures of the DR Congo are estimates, although both portray prominent militarised-styled activities in the region. South Africa is spending large sums of money on new defence acquisitions, but it remains uncertain as to whether this stems from the defence budget. Ultimately,

defence spending by member states serves as a vague indicator of militarisation in the SADC region.

Whether all members of SADC are committed to a culture of peacefully resolving conflicts that extends beyond a mere declaration of intent, is not beyond doubt. Leadership solidarity and the weakness of the Mutual Defence Pact (MDP) to act against transgressors combined with an unwillingness to take a hard stance against aggressors offer a forgiving environment for those members considering a more militarist pathway. Member states are more concerned with their own interests, which strain collective decision making regarding high-politics and cause more divisions than congruence.⁷ Divisions about 'who is in and who is out' offer leeway for state behaviour and opportunities for militarism.⁸ In the section below, several examples of state behaviour in the SADC are presented that are reminiscent of a culture which readily turns to the military option to resolve conflict and which pursues national rather than regional security and interests.

Zimbabwe illustrates perhaps most visibly the encroachment of elements of militarism as the press recently identified militarisation as the most fundamental problem in Zimbabwean politics (Mangcu 2007). Zimbabwe gained independence through a liberation war, the legacy of which is kept alive in the Zimbabwean mind. After independence, the new political incumbents almost immediately turned to the military instrument to deal with perceived threats from it own population (Matabeles in particular) – a campaign lasting several years and discontinued by 1987.⁹ About a decade later (1998), Zimbabwe participated in the controversial episode to deploy armed forces to the DR Congo for alleged personal and business reasons that still remain shady and divisive. In the wake of the DR Congo debacle there followed the militant role of 'War

⁷ See concluding remarks by Ngubane and Solomon (2003), and also Nathan 2006: 617.

⁸ SADC members demonstrated a surprising propensity for military coercion during 1998. Ignoring the required authority of the Summit, these interventions demonstrate a hidden militarist preference amongst some members that is not often noticed. The militaristic notion is reinforced by the solidarity principle that often prevented proper sanctioning of such behaviour and thus offering further leeway for growth (Nathan 2006: 611-613).

⁹ See Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) & Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) 1999; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003:24-25.

Veterans' in Zimbabwe, the introduction of a militant national youth service and the actions of the military during the 2001 election (Moller 2003:28-29; McIntyre 2007:21). The 2002 stance of the Zimbabwean Army Chief on the nonallegiance of the army to a leader not suiting their liberation criteria, further accentuated a lingering liberation culture and the 'behind the scenes' role of the Zimbabwean military (Nyaira & Nyamutata 2002). By 2008 the role of the Zimbabwean security chiefs became so pervasive that the Zimbabwean president could barely survive without the active intervention of the security forces and ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front) militants to ensure his reign (Peta 2008:1).

By the middle of 2007, the Zimbabwean leader continued to praise the Zimbabwean defence establishment (AllAfrica 2007). His emphasis upon the interface between the defence force and the Zimbabwean society to uphold certain faltering institutions serves as a further indicator of the Zimbabwean military not being an apolitical and silent partner. This dangerous nexus features amidst allegations of the military chiefs benefiting from the chaos and therefore not inclined to restore order (Mangcu 2007). Rumours of a failed 2007 coup attempt further add to the political interference of the Zimbabwean military, although still officially denied (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007a:17129). Reported by several agencies, the attempted coup nonetheless underlines the stark possibility of military interference in Zimbabwean affairs of state – an interference that became glaringly exposed during the 2008 presidential re-election. In effect, the Zimbabwean defence force and police service penetrate domestic politics and society amidst a regional image of solidarity with the leadership, the regime and its militant undertones.

In South Africa, a number of factors temper the idea of a major shift in strategic culture. First, the lingering presence of former SADF members within the military decision-making structures ties in with the argument of Vale that dramatic shifts do not take place overnight (Vale 1994:38). The stark reality is that the different politico-military factions and parties brought their strategic cultures to the integration process. The merging of different armed forces represents a mixture of politicised soldiers and even former coup plotters from the former Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) forces that stood

close to their earlier political masters (Williams 2006:45, 47). Secondly, a major and very expensive, albeit controversial, upgrading and acquisition programme is underway for the South African military. Thirdly, South Africa is the leading nation in both the AU as well as SADC as far as providing military contingents is concerned (Lekota 2007). The 2007 Defence Update is particularly focused upon making the peacekeeping role more salient, or at least not a mere spillover of primary capabilities. This policy shift that narrows the primary-secondary divide creates conceptual space to keep the South African armed forces a salient policy instrument for the region.

The incumbent South African military and political leadership are quite closely connected. Most members of the governing party are also former members of the military wing of the African National Congress, Umkontho weSizwe (MK). These former MK members now dominate affairs of state both politically as well as strategically. As for the upcoming 2009 elections, MK veterans are actively mobilising in support of the Zuma faction – a matter viewed closely by intelligence circles. Mobilisation by a dissatisfied group with military skills and experience holds some danger for the infighting in the ranks of the governing party – a matter further accentuated by a perception that the position of the South African president is closely connected to the support of his security chiefs (Sole & Majova 2007:4; Carte Blanche 2007).¹⁰

The South African Defence Minister is also on record for stating that within the AU, the SADC will increasingly take on the main role of dealing with conflicts on the continent. Speaking at the arrival of the third submarine for the South African Navy, he alluded to the contribution of the new frigates and submarines to provide security for the SADC (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007b:17094). In contrast to speaking out against the US AFRICOM (US Africa Command) idea, the minister alluded to Africa and the SADC in particular to shoulder more of the security burden. Simultaneously, a South African naval task force that comprised newly arrived vessels engaged in naval exercises with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and American naval contingents off the

¹⁰ The 2008 ousting of President Mbeki in favour of an interim arrangement without any response by the security chiefs tends to ameliorate this view.

South African coast. In this regard it is no secret that South Africa is perhaps the lead nation in bringing the SADC Brigade closer to operational readiness and in the process is also strengthening South African military readiness in general (Hartley 2007).

At times, South Africa also bordered on breaking the multilateral imperative and quest for pacifist solutions, as demonstrated through its 1998 involvement in Lesotho, and to a lesser extent in Burundi (Habib & Selinyane 2006:6). In addition, DENEL (a South African armaments corporation) shifted its focus to equipment for regional peacekeeping functions and to support the SADC Brigade (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2005a:16265). Both from the media, as well as through official acknowledgements, South African military commitments to the African continent are already overstretched. Nonetheless, the South African leadership displays a strange determination to support diplomatic initiatives with even more expensive military commitments (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2005b:16337).

Recent military incursions into the DR Congo by Zambian forces, as well as Angolan military contingents draw the attention to this unsettled and volatile SADC member. The aforementioned incursions point to the difficulty for the DR Congo to secure its fragile sovereignty. Both incursions potentially threaten, or are directed at protecting rich deposits of diamonds and copper and thus create a rationale for Congolese armed forces to defend Congolese national integrity and values (Africa Research Bulletin 2007c:17069). Inherently, this state of affairs holds the threat of an intra-regional military clash. Simultaneously a rogue Congolese general is further upsetting the peacebuilding in the DR Congo, with the national leadership now intent upon a military solution to settle the matter of rogue elements once and for all. However, this latter event is merely a window upon the military profile of current events that dominate the strategic landscape of the DR Congo. Congolese forces are still arrayed against rebels and militias and even shady criminal elements within the national military establishment with the softer MONUC peacekeepers caught up between the fighting factions (Africa Research Bulletin 2007e:17160).

Although the war in the DR Congo was officially declared over during 2003, military insecurities persisted with political opposition alternating between politics proper and armed politics (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2005c:16265). The EU special envoy Ajello, notes that Congolese officers are '... more active in the corridors of the presidential palace than on the battlefield ...' and thus ensure a strong military input into political decision making. The military presence is overbearing and officers exploit the bloated military and faltering demobilisation and reconstruction process that in turn calls for quicker and deeper army reforms (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007f:17024-17025). It appears that the swell of military personnel in the DR Congo permeates many walks of life – including the political sphere.

The DR Congo contends with insecurity in a hard military way and thus brings this culture to the SADC. The military nature of threats within the DR Congo could also 'compel' responses with a strong military backing if it is to succeed (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2005d:16349). A further practice that adds to militarisation is that of Congolese politicians not always favouring the collapse or defeat of rebel groups, for they use them as personal military when needed (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007g:17123). Set alongside child soldier armies, both phenomena further contribute to militarisation of the Congolese society. One estimate sets the number of child soldiers in the DR Congo as high as 30 000. This contributes to a military mindset among the younger generation (McIntyre 2007:21; *Africa Research Bulletin* 2007d:16978). The Congolese military policy instrument thus features prominently amidst the militarisation of politics by official and rogue-styled actors, with many of the guilty parties now serving in government positions.

In Angola, the closeness of the military to government is displayed by the fact that Angolan armed forces, both as liberation as well as a national defence establishment, served as prominent extensions of the governing party. In effect, since independence in 1975, the Angolan armed forces featured as the most salient Angolan policy instrument (Malaquias 2000). In the aftermath of independence in the mid-seventies and up to 2002, Angola maintained large armed forces to offset UNITA and to satisfy the need for forces in the DR Congo (Moller 2003:33). Demilitarisation in Angola is particularly complex

as progress first required a military victory over UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), but it was a victory that unfortunately also pushed militarisation to new heights (Porto et al 2007:ix). The ISS Monograph, *From Soldiers to Citizens*, for example, offers a glimpse into the enormity of the demilitarisation process in Angola and the deeply embedded notion of war in the psyche of society.¹¹

Recent claims by an Angolan diplomat regarding efficiency of the Angolan armed forces to deal with conflicts on the continent caused some concern as well. Angolan armed forces also continue to play a role in the north of the country where the DR Congo-Angolan border region remains volatile. Diamond fields, the matter of Cabinda and the simmering of ideas about independence or greater autonomy sustain the need for a military presence. Following in the wake of the 1998 Angolan intervention in the DR Congo, it appears that the employment of the Angolan armed forces remains prominent (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007h:17035-17036). A further disturbing factor is that the US vision of AFRICOM views Angola as a pillar to influence events in Central-Southern Africa and towards the Bay of Guinea with its lucrative off-shore oil resources. This view includes a military domain where Angola is to be 'empowered' to play a leading role (*Africa Research Bulletin* 2007i:17097). In essence, both the political as well as societal sectors of Angola find themselves strongly influenced by or even dependent upon militarised practices and influences.

Even a small country like Lesotho is not devoid of elements of militarisation of its politics (Molise-Ramakoae 2003:171-172). The 1998 SADC military response to events in Lesotho resulted from the lingering threat of a possible coup against the Lesotho government. Lesotho still reflects the dangers of an unhealthy closeness between political and military leadership, with elements of the Lesotho military allegedly continuing to act against opponents of the political incumbents (Neethling 2007:497). Accusations surfaced recently of an attempted coup by army mutineers and the political opposition pointed out that the governing party is invoking military force to deal with political opponents.

¹¹ Demobilised UNITA soldiers, for example, showed a particular propensity to hold non-civilian identities (Porto et al 2007: 114-115).

Elements of the Lesotho armed forces seem quite involved in politics while the politicians are not innocent in this politico-military collapse (Neethling 2007; *Africa Research Bulletin* 2007j:17163-17167). The militarisation of Lesotho's politics is once again rearing its head.

Concluding remarks

For regional security arrangements to mature, they require strong elements of consensus and cooperation by member states. One important stimulant for the migration towards maturity is the lowering of the military threat amongst member states and for these states to embrace a pacifist approach to resolve differences and possible conflicts amongst themselves. In the quest towards a common and preferably pacifist approach to resolving conflicts, member states bring their own peculiar strategic cultures to the regional security agenda. If deeply influenced by a propensity to depend upon or turn to their military establishments, this is the culture that they bring to the regional agenda.

Within the SADC, the movement from enmity to amity is visible in the strong and persistent commitment of SADC leaders to cooperate and resolve differences in ways other than going to war. In a declaratory sense (verbal, as well as written), consensus, commitment and solidarity towards building an SADC security community and eschewing war, feature prominently and display a sense of regional and national maturity. If viewed as ideas, preferences, concepts and commitments, the profile of the declaratory domain reflects a pacifist and cooperative image within the SADC realm. However, second-generation theory on strategic culture holds that the declaratory domain often differs from what eventually transpires at the operational level.

Operationally, statements, preferences, ideas and actions that stem from strategic culture are difficult to shed. Firstly, a culture of preferring and using the military instrument fades slowly. Several remnants of military practices, both psychological as well as material, depict the SADC strategic landscape. Secondly, actions often differ from statements and declarations. In the SADC, the void between official policy and operational responses is apparent as preferences for and reliance upon the military instrument still feature in some leading member states:

- In Zimbabwe, a close connection between government and the armed forces can be traced from independence to the 2008 crisis. Militarisation in Zimbabwe is perhaps best illustrated by the stance of the defence chiefs on maintaining a militarised liberation culture in the political culture of Zimbabwe, thus also showing the tenacity of previous culture.
- South Africa portrays a legacy of close cooperation and affinity between the political and military establishments and one not altogether shunned by the ruling elite. A growing military involvement in Africa amidst modernisation programmes serves to accentuate the military instrument, while shifting the primary and secondary roles into closer proximity serves as a further indicator of an emergent South African strategic culture.
- The leadership of the DR Congo is more dependent upon national and international military forces than upon its own political legitimacy. It remains questionable whether the Congolese political establishment is bound to govern its national territory without resort to military coercion in the near future. Both the government and the opposition bring nothing else but a militarised strategic culture to the regional security agenda.
- In Angola, a history of one of the longest wars on the African continent has left its imprint. Large sections of society are infused with demobilised soldiers, including child soldiers, amidst a government-military closeness brought about by almost half a century of consecutive liberation and civil wars. According to strategic culture theory (third generation in particular), such legacies linger for long periods and Angola is bound to display a strategic culture that privileges the military option for some time to come.

• The tiny kingdom of Lesotho shows a continuing culture of not being able to sever the unhealthy politico-military nexus. The armed forces of Lesotho remain a quasi-political actor rather than being a professional military for foreign policy purposes. As such not only is the militarisation of politics perpetuated, but a culture that privileges the military option is carried into the regional culture.

A preferred strategic culture for SADC is well expressed and reflects a consistency in the declaratory make-up of the regional leadership that is not often disrupted. However, the operational domains of the declaratory preferences, ideas and images of SADC paint a different picture that diverges from the desired pacifist strategic culture. Domestic events and measures as well as interstate dynamics contain military features that in part flow from earlier pre-independence experiences. Also visible is a post-independence inclination by certain member states to regularly turn to the military instrument to resolve differences or pursue interests. Although militarisation of strategic culture seems pervasive, it is also possible to portray emergent SADC strategic culture as consonant with the theory that two strategic cultures can coexist within one actor: Firstly, it is illustrative of second-generation theory in that declaratory and operational commitments tend to differ in the pursuit of national hegemony. Secondly, and perhaps more accurately, the SADC illustrates the often claimed long periods that underpin shifts in strategic culture. The strong verbal and declaratory commitments by SADC leaders are perhaps a first step to bring the militarised operational responses into line with the declared and desired strategic culture of amity and a pacifist approach to dealing with conflict.

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