The efficacy of regional organizations on maintaining peace and security in the region. The case of SADC

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Abstract

There is a divergence of thoughts regarding regional organizations among scholars. Some indicate that regional organizations bodies are strategies that resolve regional issues; however, other critical scholars argue that some regional organizations are ineffective. The recurring political and security challenge that other member states face causes the deviation of thought among scholars regarding the efficacy of regional organizations. This conceptual paper assesses the effectiveness of SADC in its peacemaking mission. This study is qualitative research and bases on the extensive literature review of articles and academic journals. Furthermore, this research employs interviews with academics, officials, and political analysts to collect data. The study uses thematic content analysis to analyze the gathered data. The study results indicate some relative success of SADC in maintaining peace and security in Southern Africa, such as in Zimbabwe and Lesotho. However, the region is still facing some conflicts and political challenges, as evidenced in Mozambique. Thus, the paper concluded that despite the SADC's success in maintaining relative peace, the region is still faced with terrorism and other political conflicts. Therefore, the study suggests that SADC effectively resolve the political challenges in the region. Its interventions should have a sense of urgency, identify the root causes of the conflicts, and engage all relevant stakeholders in the mediation process.

Keywords: Regional Organizations, SADC, Peace and Security

INTRODUCTION

Regional organizations are both subjective and multi-dimensional concepts. The concept relates to a variety of interpretations, definitions, and theories by numerous scholars. Kayizzi-Mugerwa et al. (2014) view regional organizations as an enabler of regional economic and political development. However, Wulf & Debiel (2010) argues that several challenges prohibit some regional organizations from solving regional crises. Mcarthur & Werker (2016) reveals that regional organizations are multinational organizations with an international membership that include geopolitical bodies outside of a single country. Joseph, (2016) mentions that regional organizations focus on economic, cultural, and environmental factors that adhere to regional contiguity. The post–World War II results in the growth of regional organizations that arose to optimize mutual benefits. Regional organizations come in a variety of sizes and forms and are for a variety of reasons. Usually, these organizations form within member states proximity and affinity (ibid). Herz & Relations (2014) demonstrates that the main reason for the emergency of regional integration is to promote human rights, democracy and protect member countries' territorial integrity. The other rationale of regional integration is to secure international alliances through trade and economic cooperation and achieve rapid growth. Brookling (2016) also indicates that some regional organizations focus on political issues such as peace and security, while others promote free trade and collaboration on specific scientific problems. Wunderlich (2020) establishes that regional bodies serve many purposes, such as resolving regional issues and expressing common interests. The other regional organizations are the European Union (EU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Despite several achievements of regional organizations in maintaining peace and security, some scholars argue that numerous problems prohibit results. Mercy (2015) argues that even though regional organizations such as EAC managed to achieve the unification of East Africa, the region still faces conflicts. Mashimbye (2017) argues that although SADC successfully handles political disputes such as Zimbabwe and Madagascar, the region still faces some recurring political and economic challenges. Jobbins (2017) point that governance deficits in Southern Africa prohibit SADC efforts. The immediate

security and peace threat in Southern Africa is that most leaders are reluctant to implement democratic principles (van Nieuwkerk, 2012). This study aims to assess the effectiveness of regional organizations in handling conflicts in the SADC region.

Background

In Europe, regional integration becomes popular to create a common market in the critical fields of the iron, coal, and steel industry. The 1951 European Coal and Steel Community morphed into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, eliminating the trade barriers between member states. The EEC aims to create ever-stronger ties among European nation and to secure peace and broader integration. Noteworthy, this led to the establishment of the EU in 1992 (Pirozzi, (2010). John (2020) confirms that the EU has become actively engaged as an external mediator and implements several bilateral agreements to preserve peace in the region. For instance, the EU meditates in the Northern Kosovo crises through the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue (Bergmann & Niemann, 2013). Nevertheless, Martti (2017) argues that the EU did not mediate in the Ukraine conflict in 2014, leading to its failure to resolve the challenge.

ASEAN is a regional organization formed in Asia in 1967 (Sumari et al., 2014). ASEAN has successfully implemented several Charters and Blueprints for regional development. Husain (2019) indicates that ASEAN has indirectly intervened in the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict leading to relative success. Nonetheless, Soomro et al. (2019) argue that ASEAN fails to address some security problems among its members, such as The South China Sea (SCS) conflicts. In addition, the tensions between Thailand and Cambodia about the Preah Vihear Temple 2008 -2013 have been difficult for ASEAN (ibid). Southern African Coordinating Conference (SADCC) formulates in 1980 to advances the cause of national political liberation in Southern Africa and reduce dependency on apartheid-era South Africa (SADC, 2012). The main aim of SADCC was to coordinate each country's unique characteristics and resources effectively. On top of that, SADCC intends to increase growth and regional integration. The need to boost growth results from an increasingly complex, changing, regional and international environment (ibid). SADCC in 1992 transforms into SADC by a SADC Treaty. SADC Secretariat (2020) reveals that the SADC Treaty allows member states to deal with external and internal

challenges effectively. The SADC member states include Angola, Botswana, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Zambia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.

Desmidt (2017) confirms that since its inception in 1992, SADC and its member states develop a mature peace and security system for resolving regional issues. Examples of the peace and security system include a regional training centre, an early warning centre, a panel of the wise, and a regional standby force. SADC also adopts numerous protocols and guidelines that promote the economic and political integration of its 16 member states. The primary aim of the guidelines is to reduce and mitigate conflicts, advance democratization, and create a sustainable social and economic order in Southern Africa.

Germany Cooperation (2004) notes that the SADC guidelines intend to foster a stable political climate within states based on resilient, legal, and accountable institutions and structures. Most member states have been relatively peaceful and durable over the last two decades, and SADC is one of Africa's most stable areas. Despite some countries' internal fragmentation, the SADC region enjoys relative democratic political processes and political stability.

Although Southern Africa is one of the world's most peaceful and prosperous continent, it is not resistant to traditional and modern security threats. Likoti (2020) argues that SADC faces substantial social inequity, high levels of corruption and crime. Resultantly, unequal access to capital, increased abject poverty, the exclusion of youth, women, and minorities. In some cases, inequality has sparked crises and conflicts that threaten regional growth. GermanyCooperation, (2004) observes that the absence of resilient and transparent structures exacerbates most disputes in the region. Aeby (2018) illustrates that SADC fails to respond effectively to intrastate crises as the region continues to face armed insurgency, governance problems, and a lack of socio-economic growth. Moreover, the most acute source of instability is governance deficiencies and a lack of development. (Desmidt 2017) reveals that a lack of shared political principles by SADC member states contributes to a lack of SADC's results.

Methodology

The research takes a qualitative approach, with the majority of the data coming from secondary sources. Academic journals and several internet sources, and newspaper articles are among the document analysis sources. Bowen (2009) confirms that document analysis helps researchers to compile, organize, and synthesize data. The researcher also conducts interviews with scholars, political analysts, and government leaders to shed more light on the role of SADC. Furthermore, interviews aid understanding of regional organizations and permit a thorough analysis of SADC's efficacy in conflict resolution among member states. The researcher compares the gathered data to identify similar patterns and uses a thematic approach to analyse the data (Gumbu, 2021).

SADC intervention in Lesotho

Lesotho faces political instability in recent years, resulting in political unrest and tension in 1974, 1986, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2007 and a coup d'état in 2014. Kadima (1999) explains that the crisis in Lesotho occurs due to an exclusionist and dysfunctional electoral system. Throughout Lesotho's history of Conflict, SADC has facilitated interventions to pursue peace and political stability in partnership with neighbouring states, mainly South Africa and Botswana (Vhumbunu, 2015). Furthermore, several SADC countries contribute troops to the UN-mandated Force Intervention Brigade in Lesotho (Aeby, 2018). Molomo (1998) elaborates that the SADC member states, such as Botswana and South Africa in 1998, have intervened militarily to restore law and order. ECDPM (2017) clarifies that Botswana and South Africa collaborates in Lesotho through joint military intervention.

Vhumbunu (2015) also highlights that the interventions by the SADC have been concise, with a strong sense of urgency. The SADC mediation process has many accomplishments in Lesotho, such as the safe return of exiled ex-prime minister Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, the reopening of the Lesotho Parliament, and consensus on the conduct of an early election. Additionally, SADC immediately deploys an observer team on Politics Defense and Security to Lesotho. However, Deleglise (2021) argues that SADC's handling of political turbulence in Lesotho between 2014 and 2017 reproduced instability. As a result, Lesotho became one of the SADC states with the highest number of

government turnovers in the region. Similarly, Motsamai (2018) argues that the SADC mandate in Lesotho achieves short-term results.

SADC intervention in Zimbabwe

Since pre-colonial times, Zimbabwe embroils in a series of long-term conflicts. Guzura (2017) indicates that from the 1990s onwards, Zimbabwe faces a series of crises, and the most prominent was the internal power struggle between the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The dispute centres on the validity of electoral processes and the integrity of electoral results. Mhandara & Pooe (2013) establishes that SADC mediates between the two parties in 2008 as the dispute escalates. SADC tasks South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki to negotiate Zimbabwe's political and violent unrest (Gallina, 2021). SADC's mandate was to promote a power-sharing agreement, adopt the transition plan, and agree on a path map to credible elections. Motsamai (2018) underlines that these goals mean that democratization was the SADC's top priority. The mediation efforts result in forming a Government of National Unity (GNU) Zimbabwe, and this was a better solution rather than not having a government at all (ibid).

Despite SADC's admirable commitment to fostering the establishment of democratic institutions and procedures, as well as facilitating the observance of fundamental human rights, stability, and security, Sibanda (2014) argues that the resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis by SADC demonstrates has been marked by secrecy, delays, and purported agreement. In addition, Sibanda notes that SADC either lacks the necessary power and authority to keep member states responsible and is inadequate to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis causing it to be seen as a poor regional organization. Throughout the Zimbabwe crisis, SADC has consistently expressed its support for the ZANU-PF government while publicly ignoring human rights abuses, the rule of law violations, and political repression. Cawthra (2010) demonstrates that SADC still allowed the Mugabe regime to behave with impunity, blaming external actors, especially sanctions.

Furthermore, as Zimbabwe's economy and political situation continue to deteriorate, SADC responds by quiet diplomacy. The economic challenges and disputes in the ruling party escalated, leading to Zimbabwe's coup d'état that forces President Mugabe's resignation

(Aeby, 2018). However, by endorsing the de facto coup, SADC demonstrates its powerlessness and signal that the SADC would tolerate unconstitutional government changes and military meddling in Zimbabwe (ibid). The SADC's mediation efforts lacked neutrality and impartiality, critical elements in any mediation (Guzura, 2017). The tensions among SADC member states, such as Botswana's calls for sanctions against Zimbabwe, other SADC members, including South Africa, supports Zimbabwe (ECDPM, 2017), also hampers SADC intensions.

SADC intervention in Mozambique

Mozambique faces a brutal civil war (1977-1992) between Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) that results in the death of nearly one million people and the displacement of five million. Mozambique experiences 20 years of peace and stability of the post-conflict period. However, several socio-economic and political crises hit the country, contributing to political conflicts (Tazi et al. 2020). Sikuka (2020) also reveals that extremism and terrorism by the Ansar al-Sunna insurgency threaten the province of Cabo Delgado and might spread to neighbouring countries if not appropriately handled. At least 28 attacks that killed more than 400 people and displacing almost 100,000 have resulted since the beginning of the insurgency in 2017. Naidu (2021) confirms that SADC has expressed concern about the insurgency in Cabo Delgado, citing the increased risk of regional spillover and destabilization, which could have far-reaching humanitarian and security implications as the insurgent grows in strength, and this increases the pressure on SADC to respond regionally in humanitarian aid, and military intervention.

However, Mozambique initially denies the severity of the conflict for nearly two years and has only recently acknowledged that it might need assistance. However, (Sikuka 2020) argues that Mozambique has formally requested SADC's aid in combating the country's northern insecurity. SADC has formally deliberate on the violent terrorist attacks in Mozambique and decides to intervene (VOA, 2021). Morier-Genoud, (2020) suggest that some SADC member states are willing to assist Mozambique, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa. Likewise, SADC is intervening in Mozambique on legal, moral, and security grounds. In terms of scope of assistance, SADC can provide military troops, technical training, intelligence gathering and sharing,

military equipment, and maritime security cooperation – especially in South Africa, given its military might in terms of technological development, combat service support, and maritime security cooperation. Vhumbunu (2015) demonstrates that SADC also has the diplomatic authority to facilitate or mediate talks between the government of Mozambique and designated insurgent interlocutors. However, Santos (2020) argues that the SADC seeking diplomatic solutions or conflict resolution steps will be extremely difficult.

Challenges
Various factors pose significant obstacles to SADC's mission of conflict resolution in Southern Africa. Some of the considerable hindrances are multiple memberships, lack of resources, deep camaraderie, national interests, governance deficits, among others.

National interests
Several studies indicated that national interests prohibit regional political integration in SADC (Galadima & Ogbonnaya, 2018). Frequently, SADC member states follow policies that benefit them to the detriment of other members. The ruling elite's interests have always triumphed over the interests of the region's masses. Not only is nationalism likely to trigger more hostility than cooperation between and among the sub region's countries and peoples, but it also contributes to incompatible policies that are difficult to harmonize. Nationalism restricts development and effective conflict resolution as it is a divisive rather than unifying philosophy (ibid). Chigudu (2019) notes that Member states intentionally keep the SADC secretariat powerless to cripple the formation of an interventionist bureaucracy fit for disturbing their security issues.

Furthermore, SADC states cannot give up authority in exchange for a security regime that includes binding rules and the prospect of interference in domestic affairs. Gumbu (2021) states that some member states are reluctant to surrender sovereignty to a regional body and focus on their national interests. Kapinga (2015) shares that the lack of political will and enthusiasm among some SADC member states initiates from states' lack of shared ideals, shared regime vision, confidence and political vulnerabilities (Maeresera & Zengeni, 2020). Desmidt (2017) argues that SADC is fragile because

some member states do not trust one another but concentrate on their national interests.

Lack of resources

Vincent, Itai & Constance (2014) highlight that a lack of adequate funds and resources hampers SADC's efforts. SADC requires financial resources for organizing mediation logistics and administration in the region (Cawthra, 2010). It mainly depends on two sources of funding, International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) and member states contributions (Otobo,2017). Parsloe (2004) argues that SADC heavily relies on donor support, and donors contribute almost 79 per cent of the SADC budget. SADC & EU (2017) points that the most significant SADC donor is the EU. Tjønneland (2006) also documents that the United States, the African Development Bank, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, the World Bank, Germany, Denmark, and other countries donates to SADC. Otobo (2017) stresses that the various United Nations (UN) departments, such as the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, also contributes to SADC.

Nevertheless, Denny (2019) argues that SADC is too dependent on donor support and poses challenges when the donor support reduces. Likewise, inadequate human, financial and technical resources are challenging across all SADC organs (ibid). Therefore, a lack of funds will delay the mediation missions and attain the overall SADC mission.

Governance Deficits

Chigudu, (2019) claims that the major challenge among SADC member states is governance issues. Van Nieuwkerk (2012) states that regarding the region's severe democratic deficits, SADC has yet to function as a regional security actor. The governance crisis encompasses electoral impasse, authoritarian rule, abuse of state power, and unaccountable governments (ibid). Aeby (2019) contends that the government deficits will stop the growth of Southern African in the long term.

Neglect of root problem

The failure to address the underlying problem challenges SADC's conflict resolution mission. Motsamai (2018) claims that SADC focuses on curbing immediate violence, neglecting the fundamental governance problems. Mhango (2014) establishes that the SADC peacemaking

initiatives focus directly on stopping acute violence rather than resolving the underlying systemic causes of conflict. Mhango further argues that there is no guarantee for stability. Ancas (2011) affirms that the neglect of the root problem outdoes the SADC's mediation.

Neglect of Civil Society Participation

The other hindrance to SADC's conflict resolution strategy is that it sometimes ignores the strategic role of civil society in regional integration and development. Civil society not only promotes human rights, which are under threat in some SADC countries, but it also serves as an essential watchdog for governments (Maeresera & Zengeni, 2020). Traditionally, SADC mediation pursues "track one" diplomacy, which excludes development partners and the private sector participation in the peacemaking process(ibid). Hence, militate against the sub-regional body's conflict resolution and peace-building capacity. Phungula (2020) argues that SADC does not have a guiding model for its conflict transformation efforts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study discusses different perspectives among scholars regarding regional organizations. It realizes that regional organization such as SADC has made some tremendous achievements in maintaining regional peace and security. The study's outcome shows that SADC has successfully mediated in Zimbabwe, leading to the formation of a GNU. In Lesotho, SADC also manages to restore stability after a series of political violence. However, the study results also show that several challenges, such as national interest and a lack of resources, cripple SADC mediation efforts. Therefore, the paper concluded that although SADC successfully maintains regional peace and security, the region is still facing some recurring political conflicts and terrorism, as seen in Mozambique.

The paper suggests that SADC must address security in a modern instead of conventional context. For instance, the actual security problem in Southern Africa is human security rather than military security. SADC should adopt a transparent and standardized policy structure that will permit the sub-regional security system to operate in Southern African people's best interest. Furthermore, the sub-regional security system should be free from political intervention

by ruling elites. SADC should continue to promote a transition from conflict management to conflict resolution. All key actors in the conflict should be involved in the negotiation, such as the government, civil society, and other critical stakeholders. The SADC interventions must also be concise with a sense of urgency and coordination.

Moreover, SADC's mediation mechanism should also encourage an inclusive process that resolves the root causes of conflicts. The SADC mediator has to facilitate a thorough root cause study, and this will permit different stakeholders to recognize the actual cause of the war. In this regard, political leaders of member states should also be continuously willing to concentrate on the real problems rather than their self-interest.

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