South Africa's regional engagement for peace and security

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Introduction

Since its return to the international fold in 1994, South Africa has not flinched from active engagement, both within its own region and on the global stage. Its peaceful transition to a democratic, all-inclusive state, largely driven by domestic actors, which then grappled to reconcile itself with its divisive past, was an example worthy of applause and emulation elsewhere.

Thus, South Africa entered the post-Cold War international landscape with high expectations from the international community about the role it would play, but also great enthusiasm about the role it could play. At the end of 1993, Nelson Mandela said that "human rights will be the light that guides our foreign policy".[2] At the same time, South Africa's own negotiated transition was seen as a model that other countries could follow in seeking to end their own conflicts.

Over the last 14 years, a tension between pragmatism and principles has been at the core of South Africa's foreign policy. Many argue that South Africa's promotion of human rights and democracy in its external engagement is motivated by its principles. The country can be regarded as increasingly driven by realpolitik considerations, however. Indeed, as the new South Africa has become more experienced in the cut-and-thrust of international politics, its approach to a number of issues has changed to reflect a growing appreciation of the importance of power and the impact that this has on a country's foreign policy. Much of South Africa's foreign policy is still driven by its values, though. This can be seen in the attention it gives to systemic inequality or global apartheid, where the weak are at the mercy of the strong who have created the current international system. Thus, South Africa believes that attempting to counter the global system's skewed nature must be a crucial element of its foreign policy. The country's very active multilateralism can partially be explained by these factors.

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[1] This paper draws largely on a number of reports produced by SAIIA, but more specifically on a forthcoming publication produced by the SAIIA research team on "South Africa in Africa". Special mention in must be made of Kurt Shillinger and Tom Wheeler.

[2] Mandela, N. "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy", in: Foreign Affairs, November/December 1993, vol. 72, nº 5.

South Africa's engagement with other African states

Africa is the most important element in South Africa's post-1994 foreign policy. This is understandable in geographical terms, given South Africa's place on the map. However, there are also other reasons:

> 1. South Africa's responsibility to the continent, born of the support many African countries provided to the national liberation struggle and for which they were subjected to cross-border raids by the apartheid government.

> 2. The particular South African experience of internal negotiation and agreement which could serve as an example for other conflicts in Africa;

> 3. The recognition that its own political and economic success depends in large part on the fortunes of the continent and that its well-developed economy could play a leading role in Africa's economic development.[3]

Thus, prioritising Africa makes sense from both altruistic and hard-nosed domestic and economic perspectives. Under President Thabo Mbeki, the focus on Africa has aimed at promoting the continent's recovery and weight in global forums.

South Africa's continental engagement is both, consciously and unconsciously, coloured by its "gigantism" compared to other economies in the region. South Africa has the largest and most sophisticated economy - its gross domestic product (GDP) of $239 billion is 40 times larger than the average sub-Saharan economy.[4] South Africa's GDP represents 25% of the total African economy and constitutes one-third of sub-Saharan Africa's economy.

Consequently, South Africa has to deal with the contradictions of being the continent's biggest and most sophisticated economy and a country with a continental vision, on the one hand, and a reluctance to project influence or power that could entrench perceptions of it as a hegemony, or a bully boy, on the other. It is for these reasons that South Africa prefers to build multilateral consensus with other partners rather than act on its own.

The country's obvious hegemonic status, premised on its superior economic and military strength, remains a source of discomfort, both for the ruling African National Congress and other large African states, such as Angola and Nigeria, which see themselves as much as rivals as partners of South Africa. As Daniel Flemes notes: "Although Pretoria avoids applying material power and focuses on discursive and institutional foreign policy instruments in Africa, the acceptance of its leadership seems to be limited to the global level. The acceptance of Pretoria's regional leadership is constrained by the historical legacy of apartheid".[5]

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[3] Sidiropoulos, E., Hughes, T. 'Between democratic governance and sovereignty: The challenge of South Africa's Africa policy', in Sidiropoulos E (ed.), Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future: South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2004, pp. 61-62.
[4] Based on calculations derived from UNCTAD, "Asian Foreign Direct Investment in Africa: Towards a New Era of Cooperation among Developing Countries", UN, Geneva, 2007. p.12.
[5] Flemes, D. "Conceptualising Regional Power in International Relations: Lessons from the South African Case," GIGA Working Papers No. 53, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, June 2007, p. 7.

South Africa's engagement with Africa rests on three pillars:

> 1. Strengthening Africa's regional (South African Customs Union, SACU and Southern African Development Community, SADC) and continental (African Union, AU) institutions by enhancing South Africa's proactive participation in these bodies aimed at promoting integration and development;
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> 2. Supporting the implementation of Africa's socio-economic development programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and of the SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the regional expression of Nepad.
>
> 3. Strengthening bilateral relations through effective structures for dialogue and cooperation. This includes support for peace, security, stability and post-conflict reconstruction initiatives and South Africa's participation in the implementation of Africa's peace and security agenda and the management of peace missions.

These initiatives should be viewed against the background of South Africa's role in influencing the parameters of debate in Africa. The country wants dialogue to focus more on good governance and democracy and less on strict non-interference. It is also eager to articulate a vision for the continent through the idea of an "African renaissance". South Africa has worked hard to raise the profile of Africa's developmental and security challenges in the North, especially with the adoption by African states of NEPAD in 2001. It has also played a significant role in engaging with the G8. This engagement. which started in Okinawa in 2000, has now become a permanent feature of the summits.

This Comment will focus on the peace and security pillar of South Africa's continental policy and address two particular issues: the country's contribution to creating and shaping a new regional architecture to deal more effectively with security challenges in Africa; and South Africa's contribution to conflict resolution in some of Africa's "hot spots". Given Africa's resource constraints, this agenda is linked to South Africa's attempts to obtain further support from the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, for conflict resolution on the continent.

The peace and security agenda

Since 1994, South Africa has worked assiduously on helping resolve African conflicts. As Aziz Pahad stated: "The most important contribution South Africa can make in preventive diplomacy is [to employ] the moral authority it has derived from its own process of national reconciliation and democratisation". The approach that South Africa has adopted emphasises negotiated settlement among implacable enemies over military solutions.[6]

Under President Mbeki, South Africa has become more deeply involved in both elements of the continental peace and security agenda. This is not only a reflection of Mbeki's own African and pan-Africanist leanings, but also of South Africa's growing confidence in engaging with the continent, given the legacy of the apartheid regime and the role of the erstwhile South African Defence Force in Southern Africa.

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[6] This has not always been successful. In Angola, for example, the MPLA eschewed South Africa's position to seek a negotiated settlement rather than a military solution, and they succeeded.

First of all, South Africa contributed to the evolution of a more effective continental institutional framework, with a regional peace and security architecture. In the process, it has also helped to redefine the security concept including the sensitive issue of national sovereignty. In addition, South Africa has taken a leading role in negotiating settlements of key conflicts such as the Great Lakes; and has, furthermore, deployed peace-keeping troops under UN or AU mandates in a number of cases.

Broader definitions of security and continental architecture

As Cheryl Hendricks writes, "Human security is the dominant discourse within international, regional and sub-regional organisations tasked with security and development. It has displaced the traditional state security paradigm with its preoccupation with protecting national interests and state borders through the projection of power".[7] Although the concept is not fully entrenched in African discourse, it is prevalent in the continental charters, protocols and other commitments signed by African states in the last decade. This is a substantial sea-change for Africa – even if only at the rhetorical level in some cases – where the overarching preoccupation was with state sovereignty until two decades ago. Consequently, the state's monopoly on violence is no longer the only or even the main security concern. Poverty alleviation, political and economic inclusion and protection of democratic processes are now as much part of the security discourse as military capacity and border protection. There is now as much, if not more, thought going into addressing the "triggers" of instability as there is to responding to conflict itself. This, as Patrick Mazimhaka and Iqbal Jhazbhay argue, in turn raises a fundamental question: "What specific institutions, policies and systems are required to build more effective and sustained development and security from within, and what forms of external engagement will do the most to support better governance to ensure long-term economic stability and security in Africa?".[8]

Reflecting this debate and even anticipating the question posed above, the new post-1999 African security architecture includes adaptations for institutions and the mandates that empower them. These can be briefly outlined as follows:[9]

Continental institutions

The last decade has seen steady progress in developing more effective continental and sub-regional mechanisms for peace and security. This has been enhanced by the increased political will among African states to take this challenge more seriously, which was in turn spurred by the commitment of pivotal states such as South Africa and Nigeria. The body of commitments, declarations and protocols focusing on democratic governance and human rights signed at regional or continental level over the last decade is as substantial as the greater recognition of people-focused security.

One of the turning points in the shift away from an entirely regime-centred security approach was the adoption at the OAU Algiers summit in 1999 of a resolution stating that the organisation would not tolerate any unconstitutional changes in government. In fact, the military coup in Cote d'Ivoire in December that year led to its suspension from the OAU. At his first OAU summit as South Africa's President, President Mbeki called on his fellow leaders to adhere to norms and standards of governance based on "ethics, equity, inclusion, human security, sustainability and development". The subsequent resolution was largely driven by South Africa[10].

[7] Hendricks, C. "Introduction: From State Security to Human Security in Southern Africa", in From State Security to Human Security in Southern Africa,' Hendricks, C. (ed.), ISS Monograph Series No. 122, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 2006, p. 1.

[8] Mazimhaka, P., Jhazbhay, I. "Security, Governance and Development: The Braided Strands of Future Prosperity in Africa", in African Security, Commodities and Development, Bates, R., et al, (eds)., Whitehall Paper 4-06, Royal United Services Institute, London, 2006.

[9] This section is largely drawn from a contribution by Kurt Shillinger to an unpublished SAIIA study on "South Africa in Africa".

[10] Alden, C. and Le Pere, G. "South Africa's Post-apartheid Foreign Policy – From Reconciliation to Revival", Adelphi Paper, 362. London: Oxford University Press and International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2003, p. 65.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), which came into effect at its first summit in Durban in 2002, is the most ambitious continental document that Africa has created since decolonisation. The Act condemns and rejects unconstitutional changes of government and commits members to respecting democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Although Article 4(g) provides for non-interference in the internal affairs of a member state, Article 4(h) provides for the "right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances... namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity".[11]

South Africa, together with Nigeria, Algeria, Mozambique and Senegal, pushed strongly for the inclusion in the Constitutive Act (CA) of the right to intervene in the affairs of members states in grave circumstances. Mbeki stated that the CA gives the AU "legislative powers to act against member states acting against the ethos of good governance and the rule of law."[12] However, the main challenge is to define what actions would constitute such a breach and thus warrant and legitimise intervention under an AU mandate – although "intervention" is not only defined militarily.

The primary peace and security body at the continental level is the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC), formally launched in 2004. South Africa was elected to serve for an initial three-year term as an inaugural member[13]. It is also one of the key financial contributors to many of the PSC's initiatives, including the AU's first peacekeeping operation, the African Mission to Burundi (AMIB)[14]. As a country with substantially more resources than the rest of the continent, South Africa has been meticulous in paying its dues to the AU. Currently, South Africa contributes 8.25% of the AU's annual budget.

Subregional institutions

At the sub-regional level, South Africa joined the SADC in 1994. Two years later, SADC created an organ on Politics, Defence and Security. But from the start this new body was hamstrung by different interpretations of its role and mandate. These difficulties were reflected in the contrast between President Mandela's position that it was subordinate to the Summit, and President Mugabe's conviction that it was independent of the Summit and that he, as chairman, did not need to seek the Summit's approval for actions.

The Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation was adopted in 2001, formalising the Organ and its reports to the SADC Summit. Article 2 defines the objectives of the SADC Organ, including the promotion of political collaboration among states, the search for common foreign policy approaches, and for appropriate mutual security and defence arrangements. The Article also highlights the importance of the "protection of people and development".[15]

Although SADC has battled to put these ideals into practice, it has not played a leading role in resolving some of the difficult political conflicts in the sub-region, most notably in Zimbabwe. The political dynamics of the region and an unwillingness to condemn the actions of fellow leaders has been the main reason for its limited impact. South Africa is unwilling to stick its head above the proverbial parapet in this regard, because of its concerns about being left out in the cold by fellow African leaders[16]. Nonetheless, in Lesotho South Africa played an important role

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[11] Constitutive Act of the African Union, Lome, Togo, 11 July 2000.

[12] Landsberg, C. op.cit., pp.194-195.

[13] The Peace and Security Council is composed of five members (from each of the five sub-regions) serving three-year terms, and

[14] Hammerstad,. A., "South Africa's Security Engagement in the Region – Lessons for IBSA", in Vaz, A.C . (ed.), Intermediate States, Regional Leadership and Security: India, Brazil and South Africa. Brasilia: UnB, 2006, p.266.

[15] Fisher, L,M, and Ngoma, N. "The SADC Organ: Challenges in the New Millennium", ISS Occasional Paper 114, August 2005.

[16] This can be billed the Abacha syndrome. When President Mandela strongly condemned the Nigerian military regime at the Commonwealth summit in 1995, and called for its suspension from the body, he received no support from the continent. This experience has coloured South Africa's behaviour since then.

through the SADC Organ in helping resolve the constitutional crisis and define a new electoral framework after the South African and Botswana intervention under SADC auspices in 1998.

SADC still has some way to go before it can be characterised as a security community, according to Karl Deutsch's definition – where the group of people has become so closely integrated that the members "will not fight each other physically". As Hammerstad notes, the critical element of a security community is a people-centred security. This is still absent in a number of SADC states, although the concept of a security community may be borne out when it comes to the security of the regimes[17].

For the last decade, SADC has been characterised by two poles – one led by Zimbabwe and Angola, which regard security and conflict resolution in more traditional state-centric and military terms; and the other led by South Africa, which considers that sustainable peace can only emerge from negotiations and compromise among all parties involved in the conflict. This dichotomy was most obvious in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the late 1990s, when South Africa was working hard to bring all parties into talks, while Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola sent in troops to support President Laurent Kabila.
Mandate

Africa's new security architecture reflects a fundamental erosion of sovereignty as the central tenet of African diplomacy in favour of proactive engagement and monitoring. The OAU had been created as a vehicle for collective action among African states to end colonialism – including apartheid in South Africa – on the continent. As a community of newly independent states, it adhered to the principle that no state would intervene in the internal affairs of another. Although the new body still embraced the principle of "non-interference by any member state in the internal affairs of another", it also codified "the right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision by the Assembly in respect to grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity" as well as "the right of member states to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security".[18]

Although adopted too late to affect the military adventures of Zimbabwe, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the AU provision for intervention dovetails with the African Peer Review Mechanism at a political level and further legitimates AU or regional conflict management and peacekeeping efforts in countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan. To date, however, it has not resulted in direct, unsolicited interference by one or several states in the internal affairs of another.

Under the direction of the AU, the African Standby Force envisions the deployment of five brigade-sized forces in security hubs across the continent. This initiative is particularly ambitious and, in the short-term, unachievable. South Africa was a key proponent of such a continental military force as an instrument to properly operationalise the PSC.

Furthermore, South Africa has constantly highlighted the need to strengthen the different Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and their links with the AU[19]. At the SADC summit in August 2007, member states announced the launch of the SADC brigades. As early as 2003, South Africa's Minister of Defence, Mosiuoa Lekota, stated in parliament that as the largest economy in the Southern African region, South Africa would have to bear a great deal of responsibility for the SADC standby force.

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[17] Hammerstad, A. (ed.), People, States and Regions: Building a collaborative security regime in Southern Africa. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2005, p. 272.
[18] Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, p. 6, adopted by the 1st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, 9 July 2002, Durban, South Africa. This document may be found on the website www.african-union.org
[19] Landsberg, op.cit.

To date, South Africa has not operated in SADC like Nigeria in ECOWAS, where the deployment of Nigerian resources has ensured a credible and effective operation. South Africa, by contrast, is extremely sensitive to the "power imbalances between it and other members of SADC"[20] and avoids being seen as playing an overtly hegemonic role. However, it is no overstatement to say that without South African leadership, a standby force would not reach its full potential.

Conflict resolution and peace missions[21]

Two primary factors shape South African foreign policy. The first is identity. Flemes observes that "the outstanding feature of foreign policy in the post-apartheid era indeed has been South Africa's identification and engagement with the rest of Africa".[22] This echoes Pretoria's own acknowledgement that, "although South Africa acknowledges its global responsibilities, the prioritisation afforded Africa in South African foreign policy makes Africa the prime focus of future engagements. South Africa has an obvious interest in preserving regional peace and stability in order to promote trade and development and to avoid the spillover effects of conflicts in the neighbourhood".[23]

The second factor is the evolving nature of conflict and security challenges, primarily but not exclusively on the African continent. State collapse, migratory diseases, trafficking of arms, drugs, and people, ethnic violence, interstate warfare, crime and transnational terrorism combine in a conflict matrix far more complex than that of the Cold War. The irony is that Africa is at once more peaceful and democratic and also more fragile and unstable than at any previous point in recent history. Consequently, as the government's 1999 White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions notes, "a radically altered post Cold-War security environment has seen the transformation (or mutation) of classical peacekeeping operations into complex, multidimensional conflict management activities".[24]

South Africa's self-identification as an African state and the vastly transformed nature of local and international conflicts underpin the country's foreign policy philosophy. Welile Nhlapo, former Deputy Director General of Foreign Affairs, explains: "We had to take cognisance of the changing international security environment, the eruption of almost intractably violent conflicts in so-called 'failed states', and the lack of political will to participate in peacekeeping in Africa evinced by the main players of the Security Council. We also had to take note of the sad reality that peacekeeping operations without the consent of the belligerent parties hold little prospect for success in the long term and that peace enforcement by parties unrelated to the conflict seldom entice warring parties to the negotiating table".[25]

This leads us to a third important factor which is specific to South Africa's approach to conflict resolution: the country's own experience in peaceful transformation from apartheid to democracy. As the White Paper states: "South Africa provides the international community with a unique example of how a country, having emerged from a deeply divided past, can negotiate a peaceful transition based on its own conflict-resolution techniques and its own vision of meaningful and enduring development. The South African approach to conflict resolution is thus strongly informed by its own recent history and this national interest and experience in the peaceful resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts compels it to participate in peace missions to alleviate the plight of other peoples who are struggling to resolve similar conflicts".[26]

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[20] See De Coning, C. "A peacekeeping stand-by system for SADC: Implementing the African stand-by force framework in Southern Africa", in Hammerstad, A. (ed.), op. cit., pp.102-103.
[21] Parts of this section are drawn from a contribution by Kurt Shillinger to a forthcoming publication on South Africa in Africa.
[22] Op cit p. 19.
[23] White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions, South African Department of Foreign Affairs, 1999. The full document may be viewed on the website www.dfa.gov.za
[24] Op. cit., p. 4.
[25] Nhlapo, W. "South Africa and Peacekeeping: A Look to the Future," in From Peacekeeping to Complex Emergencies: Peace Support Missions in Africa, Cilliers, J. & Mills, G. (eds), SAIIA, Johannesburg and ISS, Pretoria, 1999, p. 129.
[26] Op. cit., pp. 19-20.

The South African conflict resolution model rests on three pillars: preventive diplomacy, peace building and peace making. The country emphasises the importance of building and strengthening governance, the constituents of which the White Paper identifies as the rule of law, competent and independent judiciaries, effective police services and fair and efficient criminal justice systems, professional civil services, and the subordination of partisan interests to national interests and goals. South Africa stresses the need for "peace missions" over "peace-keeping," the former being more inclusive, and embracing the principle that conflict resolution is first and foremost a political, rather than a military, project.

As John Stremlau observes, the South Africa mediation strategy in the DRC – without question South Africa's most important achievement – did not "allow (President Thabo) Mbeki direct recourse to the threat or use of military force, an essential policy tool in traditional statecraft".[27] Rather, Mbeki built broad international cooperation to secure a political solution supported by a relatively modest military peacekeeping force. Since 1994, South Africa has taken the lead in four significant conflict resolution attempts in Burundi, the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan. The record is mixed, but it is not without notable successes:

Burundi and the DRC: South Africa's tireless efforts have resulted in a restoration of political contestation in both countries and successful elections that have produced – so far – fragile but nonetheless functioning governments. In both instances, South Africa took the lead in bringing the combatants to the negotiating table. Senior office bearers were deployed. In Burundi, Nelson Mandela took over from former Tanzanian President Nyerere, and was in turn succeeded by South Africa's deputy president at the time, Jacob Zuma. In DRC, first President Mandela and then President Mbeki became personally involved, but also brought in senior government ministers. One of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's first tasks as the new foreign minister in the Mbeki administration in 1999 was to visit the DRC. In the run-up to the elections in DRC, South Africa not only had troops deployed as part of MONUC, but also deployed its own Independent Electoral Commission to help with the running of the elections. In Burundi in October 2001 South Africa took the bold step, encouraged by Mandela, who had played a pivotal role in negotiating a transitional constitution, of sending South African troops to protect the returning politicians, as there was no ceasefire. This force was later merged into the AU's African Mission in Burundi (AMIB)[28].

Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan: The efforts in these two countries, so far unsuccessful, highlight two limiting factors. First, Côte d'Ivoire underscores the fundamental precondition necessary to the South African model of transition through negotiation: recognition among all parties involved that contestation by force is no longer a viable option. As long as power equals a monopoly on economic resources, as it currently does in the West African state, the belligerent parties will not share a common interest in reaching peace. So far, no way has been found to remove that obstacle. On another level, South Africa's attempts at mediation there were not fully cognisant of the regional dynamics and rivalries, especially given that it was a francophone state where both the region and France continued to be key players. In the Sudanese region of Darfur, meanwhile, as was indicated in the previous section, African peacekeeping capacity remains highly dependent on foreign support. While this need not be crippling, it requires recognition by African states – as the tortuous road to the joint UN-AU mission in Darfur shows. However, in southern Sudan where the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is holding, South Africa chairs the AU's committee on post-conflict reconstruction and has been very active in training the new civil servants of Southern Sudan's government in public administration, via the University of South Africa.

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[27] Stremlau, J. "South Africa's Greatest Diplomatic Success: the Democratic Republic of Congo's Turn Towards Democracy", in Sidiropoulos, E. (ed.), South African Yearbook of International Affairs, 2006-7. Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2007.
[28] For a detailed discussion of South Africa's engagement in the Burundian peace process see Bentley, K. and Southall, R. An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi. Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005.

The most significant limiting factor in South African conflict responses is, perhaps, its own ambivalence. While the country has provided bold vision and vigorously supported the building of Africa's new diplomatic and security architecture, there remains an element of hesitation which has its roots in South Africa's apartheid legacy. As Flemes notes: "In particular the former frontline states are highly sensitive to any behaviour that reminds them of the apartheid regime's aggressive policies of regional hegemony. Hence a pronounced articulation of Pretoria's claim to regional leadership would imply a high risk of isolation".[29] This may help to explain why South Africa has been more proactive and persistent in building multilateral structures at the AU level and taking a lead in mediating conflicts further north, while showing reluctance to provide the same energetic leadership within its own sub-region.

Troop deployments

The deployment of troops has grown as an element of South Africa's foreign policy armoury. Nonetheless, it is seen as part of a broader conflict resolution approach, based on South Africa's conviction that sustainable peace cannot be brought about through military means alone.

Under Mandela, troop commitments to peace missions were not contemplated as the defence force was undergoing transformation from an apartheid force to one that integrated the various military formations of the liberation movement as well as the armies of the homelands. The White paper on Peace Missions in 1999 signalled a break with this approach as South Africa became more confident in the continent and felt that the region's underlying fears, caused by the apartheid regime's destabilisation campaigns, had been sufficiently laid to rest.

South Africa currently has just under 4,000 troops deployed in peace missions in Africa, under either AU or a UN mandates. South Africa is the largest troop contributor in SADC, the 4th largest in Africa and the 7th in the world[30]. However, its deployment capacity has probably reached its limit. Although South Africa embarked on an ambitious (and controversial) arms procurement package in the late 1990s, the defence budget as a proportion of GDP has declined from the levels it reached in the late 1980s, as have the number of troops. Defence expenditure is currently about 1.6% of GDP, while almost half of all African states spend more than 2% on defence. Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota has emphasised that South Africa should consider increasing its defence spending according to its regional responsibilities and the limits of other partners in the region[31].

Linking regional initiatives with the UN system

Apart from its commitment to Africa's peace and security, South Africa sees its expanded role in international peace missions as a further demonstration of its willingness to be a respectable and responsible stakeholder – a precondition for any country aspiring to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council since January 2007, South Africa has used the platform to address some of the weaknesses in the organisation's links with regional bodies in conflict resolution. In March 2007, South Africa presented a concept paper for debate at the Council on the link between the UN and regional organisations (Chapter 8 of the Charter), especially in the areas of conflict and peace-building. The Secretary-General was mandated with drawing up a report on this issue. The South African proposal emanated from a call made

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[29] Op. cit., p. 20.
[30] De Coning, op.cit., p.103.
[31] Neethling, T. "Military spending, socio-economic challenges and foreign policy demands: Appraising South Africa's predicament", African Security Review, vol. 15, no. 4.

at the AU summit earlier in 2007 for the UN to "examine, within the context of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the possibility of funding, through assessed contributions, peacekeeping operations undertaken by the African Union or under its authority and with the consent of the United Nations".

The issues raised in the concept paper presented to the Security Council by the South African ambassador in March raised questions such as:

> * How far should the Security Council go in recognising the decisions taken by regional groups that are complementary to its work?

> * What is the scope for the Security Council to incorporate the roles of bodies such as the African Union Peace and Security Council in its own decisions?

> * How can the United Nations strengthen its support to regional organisations such as the African Union in the maintenance of international peace and security and what does this mean in practical terms?

> * Is there scope for further and more direct resource support by the United Nations to regional organisations?

> * What other forms of direct partnerships are possible between the United Nations and regional organisations?

> * How have previous Security Council decisions and recommendations in this area been implemented?

> * What have been the challenges and constraints of implementation and how can these be overcome?

The debate on these issues is considered a positive initiative to promote the work of the Security Council and is in line with South Africa's role as mediator in Africa's internal conflicts and facilitator of national peace settlements. It also reflects the sober assessment that the AU and the sub-regional organisations do not have the necessary manpower and operational resources to sustain long-term peace missions, nor can they maintain multidimensional peace operations that take into account both military and developmental considerations. The main task for South Africa is to help redefine security concepts in the area of overlap between regional organisations and the UN, and in the area of collective security when it comes to the nexus between security, development and democracy.

Conclusion

As has been emphasised in this Comment, a successful peace and security agenda in Africa requires both continental leaders and external actors. While Africa has had more than its fair share of external engagement in recent years, South Africa has, together with Nigeria, played an instrumental role in fostering a more constructive engagement with the North on conflict resolution in the continent. South Africa has been an effective promoter of the African renaissance vision at both the G8 and EU levels.

Since sustainable growth cannot be achieved in an environment of conflict, South Africa's emphasis on peace and security on the continent is an important contribution to economic development, especially considering the country's commitment of financial resources, negotiating capacity, and "boots on the ground'" to achieve peace. South Africa's trade and investment linkages with the continent are perceived as a more direct driver of economic growth and development, but an equally important part of South Africa's continental engagement. South Africa has also begun to make a contribution to the continent's developmental agenda through the provision of aid to a number of African states, although it prefers to be framed as a development partner. A study by SAIIA estimates that this aid could amount to up to R3.2 billion in 2007. South Africa is currently discussing the possibility of developing a proper aid strategy for the continent and establishing an agency for these disbursements.

South Africa has established itself as a key player in regional multilateral peace and security frameworks, although it remains very cautious in how it approaches such matters within its immediate region. South Africa will need to balance the sensitive legacy of its history (but also its size) with the need for leadership on a number of fronts. There is bound to be a tension between these two elements. Furthermore, its resource constraints, coupled with its huge domestic socio-economic commitments, may feature more highly in the decisions of a new administration due to be elected in 2009. The country's identity and perspectives have, since 1994, become so intertwined with the continent and its future that any backtracking seems extremely unlikely, however.