

Hawks, Doves or Penguins?

A critical review of the SADC military intervention in the DRC



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The consequence of this (DRC) conflict will linger for many years, especially for those states that have been heavily involved. The principal winners have been, as usual, greedy individuals; the major losers are the ordinary people of the countries involved (...).¹

Introduction

The military intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1998 by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe was widely discussed, and views differed as to the correctness of the action. The fact that only some members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and not all had participated spiced up the debate even more. There were claims of an intense rivalry in the sub-regional grouping and views that the survival of the grouping was critically threatened. Although most of these debates were to be found within the print and electronic media, and took place amongst researchers and academics, the manner of the debate was such that the existence of a rift as a result of the intervention came to be accepted as fact. But was it? The aim of this paper is to examine the decisions taken by some of the major actors in SADC in respect of the conflict in the DRC, following the distress call by Laurent Kabila's government. The paper seeks to analyse the implications of the decisions (or the lack of decisions) relating to sub-regional cohesion, both then and in the future. The future itself may be unclear in the sense that the conflict in the DRC has not only continued beyond the military intervention of some SADC states but has raised the possibility of sub-regional involvement in a similar manner as the survival of the current regime in the DRC becomes increasingly uncertain.

The paper includes in its coverage of the various policy positions in the military intervention, the implications of these positions for selected players in

the region as well as for the regional structure itself. The selected players include Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe as the group of states that formed the 'SADC Allies' and sent troops to the DRC in response to the request by the DRC government; South Africa as a sub-regional powerhouse which did not send troops to the troubled central African state; Tanzania as an SADC state sharing the longest border with the DRC but apparently preferring to remain neutral in the entire affair; and Zambia, another state sharing a fairly long border with the DRC and opting to take on a mediatory role.

The existence of a rift as a result of the intervention came to be accepted as fact. But was it?

The frequent reference to SADC states that volunteered their military force to the DRC government as 'hawkish'² invites the application of metaphors in the analysis of the conflict in the DRC. The 'hawks' are traditionally regarded as those actors who tend to be aggressive and prefer a military to a non-military solution. The 'hawks' will also tend to be self-centred. In contrast to this position, the 'doves' would favour a more peaceful approach to conflict, opting rather for diplomatic initiatives and other non-military means to solving conflicts. Unlike either the 'hawks' or

'doves', the 'penguin' category can be described as a more complex position that meets neither the characteristics of the 'hawks' nor the 'doves' in their entirety. With all the appearance of a bird, the penguin does not fly but instead is only able to swim around and dive into the water for some undefined prey, which may not necessarily be fish. In respect of conflict situations, the 'penguins' may not opt for any particular position but, instead, avoid the problems while seeming to be determined to solve them. This is meant to ensure their own self-survival, given the prevalence in the oceans of bigger predators, which would otherwise consume them.

The paper identifies the various positions of the major players on the conflict in the DRC and subsequently categorises them using the metaphors of hawks, doves and penguins, in a critical evaluation of the role of the

'SADC Allies', South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, and SADC, and their effects on the medium- to long-term stability of the sub-region.

The paper encapsulates the stated positions of these actors in the conflict in the DRC from three dimensions, these being statements by government leaders, government's own actions, and the views of non-governmental actors. The paper makes an assumption that the higher the profile of the leaders, the greater the likelihood that their views represent their government's position on the matter. As regards the actual action by the government, as the saying goes – 'action speaks louder than words'! However, to contextualise the analysis, it is prudent to reflect on some of the historical background.

Historical background

The conflict in the DRC may be traced to the period of the colonisation of the country and, later, to failed international efforts to bring peace to the severely troubled country. This paper attempts to capture a small but significant period in the traumatic history of this country because of its ramifications for the region in general and for the Southern African Development Community in particular.

Participation in inter-state relations, particularly in a period of conflict, is a crucial issue of foreign policy whose formulation places an enormous burden on the policy makers. Therefore, when the DRC requested military assistance from SADC (which it had only recently joined as a member) to contain an invasion of its territory by some of its former compatriots, seemingly supported by the Rwandan and Ugandan governments,³ the decision taken by the governments of the sub-region was promptly arrived at despite the complexity of the situation and the obviously relatively poor state of the economies in the sub-region. These are described by Gilbert Khadiagala as "constrained by weak state structures, economic despair, and social dislocation"⁴ and whose conduct, according to Khadiagala, conforms to the desire by the states to become "effective participants and claimants in the international arena".⁵

The conflict in the DRC has resulted in the deaths of more than 3 million people and has left 1.7 million either reduced to the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees in neighbouring states and beyond.⁶ The grave nature of the situation in the DRC could not have been reflected more clearly than by the South African *Mail&Guardian*, which argued that "the mortality figure, high as it is, does not even begin to describe the displacement, the destruction of infrastructure, the loss of livelihood and the memories of systematic rape and torture that haunt countless more survivors in Congo".⁷ With the DRC a member of SADC,⁸ the conflict in the country has become of great concern to the regional grouping, particularly

because of the negative effects the conflict would have on the region as a whole and the intra-regional differences that subsequently evolved. The value of SADC in resolving the conflict in the DRC was stressed by Francis Kornegay and Chris Landsberg with their observation that:

*The bottom line is that some way must be found of institutionalizing conflict prevention, management and resolution within SADC in order to bring stability to what was once touted as Africa's shining example of democracy and prosperity.*⁹

It is in this context that the move by some members of SADC to send troops to the DRC in 1998 to stop the government from being overrun by rebel forces supported by Ugandan and Rwandese forces may be viewed. However, the fact that other states in the sub-region did not participate in this support mission revealed a divisive tension within the sub-region, probably only comparable in significance to the liberation wars in the sub-region when the apartheid regime in South Africa was considered to be the single most critical issue upon which the regimes in the sub-region based their foreign policy positions.

If there is one thing after the fight against apartheid that has brought the Southern African region into focus, it is the conflict in the DRC. Kornegay and Landsberg (1999) are correct when they argue that the DRC conflict has brought into the open divisions within SADC community of states. An examination of the historical background to the current conflict in the DRC, albeit limited, would enhance the understanding of the contemporary period.

Conflict in the DRC stretches back to the period when the country was known as the Congo and ruled by Belgium. The country was subjected to a violent reign by King Leopold II of Belgium, who treated the territory as his own private property from 1885 to 1908, until the Belgium state took over as the colonial power.¹⁰ The size of Western Europe, the DRC is a huge country with many natural resources which, according to Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia's former President), could have made it a super power but for the "conflict with its people having one of the lowest standards of living in the region".¹¹

The conflict in the Congo took a particularly vicious turn in the early years of independence, with the assassination of the country's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, in 1960, and the death of the United Nations Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld in an aircraft "accident" in Zambia en route to the Congo on a UN mission to bring peace to the region in 1961. During the ensuing chaotic and corrupt rule of General Mobutu Sese Seko, who forcibly took power from Lumumba and renamed the country Zaire, a period of uneasy calm followed.¹² The Western powers, in particular the USA, regarded Mobutu as an important ally during the Cold War

period and thus supported his largely dictatorial regime.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the Mobutu dictatorship was less tolerated and a concerted movement to oust him increased in momentum, leading to the fall of the regime to Laurent Kabila's forces in 1997. These included a large number of members of the Tutsi ethnic group and they were supported by the Ugandan and Rwandan military. SADC was conspicuous in its failure to support the Zairean government in the face of this apparent aggression against it.¹³ This was despite the long history of association with the Southern African region, an important economic link for the region in the north, and political participation through the Mulungushi Club and the Frontline States.¹⁴

However, it is notable that the SADC regional grouping refused to accept Zaire into the organisation and yet later accepted Laurent Kabila's 'Democratic Republic of the Congo', which was democratic in name alone. This factor evidently creates some important implications for the region.

Kabila One and Kabila Two

The conflict in the DRC in the context of SADC may be identified at two levels, namely that of 'Kabila One' and 'Kabila Two'. The 'Kabila One' period looks at the time the late President Laurent Kabila requested SADC's intervention in the conflict, up until his assassination at the hands of one of his own officers. The 'Kabila Two' period covers the period of General Joseph Kabila, the son of the deceased. To help in the preparations for the analysis, a brief outline of the conflict and of some peace initiatives being undertaken in the DRC will be useful.

Since independence from Belgium, external actors have been behind a number of intra-state conflicts that have occurred in the DRC. The recent conflict in the DRC, "mounted on all fronts", began on 2 August 1998 and has brought about untold misery to the people in that country and beyond.¹⁵ Thousands of people have been killed, injured, internally displaced or forced to leave the country altogether, to become mere statistics in the records of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. The World Refugee Survey (2000) put the figure of those newly displaced by the war at 400000. The involvement of a number of countries in the conflict, a situation that led to the conflict being referred to as "Africa's First World War", leaves one wondering whether the conflict is yet to claim other victims. While the involvement of a number of states in the region is largely symptomatic of the reference of the conflict in the DRC as a 'Africa's First World War'¹⁶ its description as "Africa's

Scramble for Africa" may also be fairly accurate in view of the variety of interests cultivated by several states in SADC and beyond.¹⁷

The unprecedented levels of conflict in the Central African state have attracted the interest of a variety of people, among them academics, politicians and journalists. However, commentary has tended to be insufficiently objective, with a bias towards the 'undemocratic' nature of the DRC government, and the "irresponsible, hawkish and self-centeredness" of SADC leadership that opted to render military assistance to the beleaguered government.¹⁸

It has even been implied that the United Nations, and not SADC, was a more appropriate organ to resolve the conflict – without ignoring the former's failures in bringing about sustainable peace since the time the DRC became a sovereign state in the 1960s. Some 'experts' have even argued that the war in the DRC cannot be won and, for this reason, ought to be entirely avoided by all other states. Whether this is possible, particularly for states in the same region as the DRC, is subject to debate (Naidoo, 1999: 155).

The major position upon which all the others were premised was taken by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe when they implemented the decision to intervene militarily in the DRC.

However, there has been a flurry of diplomatic efforts – several 'track one' efforts comprising "regional and continental summits, 'shuttle' missions by Western envoys and intercontinental bilateral meetings" and complemented by 'track two' efforts by "some non-governmental organisations in South Africa" (Naidoo, 1999: 155), including more recent efforts following the death of Laurent Kabila.¹⁹ The conflict has indeed "produced more peace initiatives, summit meetings, and opportunities for statesmen to appear statesmanlike than any other conflict in Africa".²⁰ It is against this background

that some member states of SADC had to make their decisions regarding participation or non-participation in the conflict in a military manner. The major position upon which all the others were premised was taken by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe when they implemented the decision to intervene militarily in the DRC.

Policy Positions

The 'SADC Alliance'

*A prolonged struggle in our region that **destabilises the principle of the region and principles of democracy**...that destabilization must be resisted. What is a **threat to your neighbour is a threat to you**...how long were we in Mozambique? More than seven years, but at the end of the day we got peace and now we can comfortably live in **good neighbourliness**.²¹*

The primary decision in respect of the SADC states on the war in the DRC has been over providing military support to the DRC regime. It has been argued by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe that the DRC was being invaded by the two Great Lakes states, Uganda and Rwanda. For this reason, he urged a regional response to the aggression on a sovereign state.²² For its part, the SADC alliance signed a Mutual Defence Pact (MDP) as a way of harmonising their military aid to the DRC regime.²³ It is further argued that it is not only the members of the MDP that have been affected by the decision to participate in the conflict, but also SADC, being the regional institution with a mandate to resolve conflicts in the region.²⁴

The justification of the choice by Zimbabwe to send troops to the DRC is premised on the distress calls from the DRC regime sent through the Angolan and Namibian presidents to Mugabe, as the Chair of the SADC Organ. He has therefore argued that his government "responded to a call for assistance by the DRC government following the invasion by Uganda and Rwanda".²⁵ The 'SADC allies' argued that their intervention had been based on the SADC Treaty, Article 4, read in conjunction with the objectives of the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS),²⁶ in response to hostile action by foreign states that required a defensive response by SADC. However, there is a view that the involvement in the conflicts of the three SADC states was motivated by their desire to protect their political and economic interests in the embattled country. Zimbabwe is reported to have invested in excess of US \$200 million in the country, which also has huge debts with Zimbabwean state arms corporations and, together with Angola and Namibia, Zimbabwe are part owners of a commercial bank in the country.²⁷

It was nevertheless clear as to what motivated the military intervention: adherence to the principles of SADC, which espoused state sovereignty, solidarity, peace and security; human rights, democracy and the rule of law; and mutual benefit and peaceful settlement of disputes.²⁸ The group also argued that genuine peace in an environment was only possible when that peace was spread to the entire sub-region, a situation that called for a collaborative arrangement. Time was regarded as inconsequential as long as peace and security were achieved in the end.²⁹ Regional cohesion was therefore regarded as a critical consideration.

From the onset, the 'SADC' military alliance that took the bold decision to provide the DRC with the military assistance required for its survival would, by definition, be regarded as 'hawks'. It may seem that the decision by the 'SADC Allies' to provide military support to the Kabila government showed a preference for a military solution rather than a desire to attempt to contain the problem. In this respect, some literature on the DRC conflict has tended to frown upon this decision, describing it as "ill advised";

particularly since it is generally held that these states would not be able to sustain their involvement. Jackson Mwalulu, who argues as follows, further stresses this:

(A)ll the parties to the conflict, particularly at the regional level, are feeling the pain of engagement (economic costs, international condemnation and domestic political costs). Having invested so heavily in the war, they are ready to continue pursuing a decisive victory. Never mind that victory, leave alone a decisive one, has so far proved elusive.³⁰

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who has been especially targeted for criticism, was accused of having "waded into the conflict" in "an unpopular foreign war" which would have been better resolved by the United Nations.³¹ The absence of an in-depth analysis of the reasons behind the intervention and the personal manner with which the matter has been taken would seem to suggest an under-estimation of the resolve of the 'SADC allies' to live up to the letter of the principles of SADC. Presidents Mugabe and Nujoma succinctly put this as follows:

The Zimbabweans responded to a call for assistance by the DRC government following the invasion by Uganda and Rwanda... I think our decision was a gallant one and our response so far has been just as gallant. We have prevented the aggressors from achieving their goal.³²

As the Commander-in-Chief, I took the necessary action to come to the aid of an aggressed neighbour and fellow member of SADC... Ours was a response to an urgent appeal by the Congo to the SADC organ on Politics, Defence and Security... I did so conscious of the inherent dangers and problems including the death of our troops. It is an honourable act of enlightened self-interests.³³

Some political commentators suggested that the decision to send military forces into the DRC was designed to personally benefit some of these actors.³⁴ Some legislators in the Zimbabwe parliament also questioned the wisdom of wasting money when the country was "going through very difficult economic times".³⁵ A Namibian opposition leader put his rejection rather strongly, as follows:

It is inexplicable that Namibia, as a democratic country, could involve itself in a conflict to keep in power someone who is at present nothing less than a dictator who took over power by means of an armed rebellion (Katutire Kaura, 1998).³⁶

Although the argument about keeping in power the late Laurent Kabila, whose own entry into power may have been suspect or known to have been undemocratic, could have received some sympathetic hearing, its legal standing shrivelled from the moment that SADC accepted the DRC regime into the regional

community – a move which gave it legitimacy.³⁷ Therefore, even the economic arguments presented about the links between the DRC regime and members of the ‘SADC Allies’ - such as that relating to ‘Operation Sovereign Legitimacy’ (OSLEG) over the mining and selling of diamonds as well as the exploitation of coffee, timber and agricultural products in the country as a way of defraying some war costs for the Zimbabweans - could be viewed as bilateral activities, unless there is some justification of taking any other view.³⁸

If sceptics were not persuaded that adherence to sub-regional and pan-African principles were a satisfactory explanation for the military intervention by the ‘SADC Allies’, the economic considerations advanced above were found more appealing, as was the view that the desire by President Mugabe to out-manoeuvre South Africa, and President Nelson Mandela in particular, in the leadership of SADC was a critical factor for the intervention. Closely associated to this factor was the nature and characteristics of the infamous SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security, which posed administrative and operational challenges for the sub-region’s collaborative regional security arrangement. The view by some academics and public media has been that the Zimbabwean president believed that South Africa in general, and President Nelson Mandela in particular, had wanted to usurp his regional influence since 1994 (when South Africa joined the community of Southern African states).³⁹ While the claims about President Mugabe’s aspirations remained largely in the realms of myth, this did not stop widespread and rather hostile media coverage and academic commentaries that have portrayed the leaders of the three SADC countries with troops in the DRC as, at worst, “proud and greedy” and, at best, as participants in a gross “political miscalculation”.⁴⁰

The decision by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe to respond to the request for military help of the DRC government was, as would be expected, not without some negative implications for the interveners, with some of the severest criticism being reserved for Zimbabwe. With the increase in defence expenditures for the SADC trio, the global financial institutions were not expected to be sympathetic. In the case of Zimbabwe, the daily allowance for about 11000 troops amounted to around US\$50 million per year, and \$365497 per week for the 2000 troops for Namibia, as well as other direct costs emanating from the loss of military hardware and its replacement and other indirect costs such as compensation for the dead and wounded. This all put enormous pressure on the countries’ economies.⁴¹ Logically, for Zimbabwe, this included a reduction of resources available for development programmes, which then

led to a rise in domestic agitation, and a reduction of both domestic and international political support. It could well contribute to the loss of political power by the regime in the future.

It is therefore a fair question to ask whether the leadership of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe had applied their minds adequately when they decided to assist a fellow member of the community? However, in view of the dire security situation at the time of the request for military intervention by the DRC regime, would a more peaceful approach have been appropriate? The ‘doves’ would probably argue that the decision to intervene militarily only served to fuel, rather than solve, the problem. This view is supported by the continuing instability in the country. However, neither can it be determined that leaving the regime to collapse would have ensured a more stable future. The fact that the DRC was close to defeat at the hands of the rebels at the time the ‘SADC allies’ intervened is considered irrelevant. The popular (and certainly the most vocal) view has been that the DRC government should instead enter into a dialogue with the rebel forces, and that the foreign military forces should leave the country.⁴² However,

this logic is like insisting that the person whose house is on fire should observe fire prevention measures. Although such advice may be considered wise if the house is actually not on fire, when engulfed with fire, the more sympathetic and practical move would seem to be to put out the fire or at least assist in doing so! President Mugabe put it rather bluntly as follows:

None is compelled within SADC to go into a campaign of assisting a country beset by conflict. What is of greater significance is the extent to which the Southern African community can tolerate and survive a major disagreement that reaches to the heart of its principles.

*None is compelled within SADC to go into a campaign of assisting a country beset by conflict. Those who want to keep out, fine. Let them keep out, but let them be silent about those who want to help.*⁴³

This statement suggests the existence of some officials who were opposed to the intervention. Logic would indicate that the reference was to a member or members of SADC that did not participate in the military intervention. This therefore indicates, at worst, the existence of a serious rift in the sub-regional grouping or, at best, a disagreement among states as would be expected in any such grouping. What is of greater significance is the extent to which the Southern African community can tolerate and survive a major disagreement that reaches to the heart of its principles.

Just as the Southern African states were tied to supporting the liberation movements, in the same way, SADC through its Treaty and Article 5 resolved to “promote and defend peace and security”.⁴⁴ Membership of a regional organisation must surely count for something when one’s state’s survival is at stake. It may also be argued that since SADC accepted

the DRC as a member of the regional body, it is a legitimate member of SADC and deserves its optimum support. It follows from this that the action by the 'SADC allies' was thus not only the neighbourly thing to do, but was also in conformity with the letter of the SADC Treaty, the OAU's Harare Declaration, and the spirit of "African solutions to African problems". The argument that the resolution of the DRC conflict should be left to the United Nations is not only an attempt to escape the region's own responsibility, but also ignores the blemished history of the United Nations, in general, and in the Congo in particular, as shown by the long history of conflict outlined in the early part of this paper.

It therefore seems erroneous to regard Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe as 'hawks' in view of the nature of their involvement in the DRC and their continuous involvement in the search for peace.⁴⁵ The correctness of making reference to the plundering of a state's resources in respect of the DRC government's decision to put at the disposal of the 'SADC allies' some of its natural resources in an effort to raise funds for the war effort is debatable but not unprecedented. It may also be argued that the Kabila Two regime, as the Kabila One before it, has no domestic constituency to talk about and that at the regional level, it is more accountable to its benefactors – Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, in that order.⁴⁶ The invitation of Zimbabwean companies to invest in the DRC by the Kabila Two regime does little to calm Western businesses and their partners in the region. This position was further stressed by President Joseph Kabila's comments on the withdrawal of the SADC allied troops that such a move could only be undertaken when "the objectives that brought them to the Congo have been fulfilled".⁴⁷

Pressure, however, mounted on the 'SADC allies', particularly Zimbabwe, which was specially targeted by some Western states who withheld "major aid to Zimbabwe because they were not satisfied at how much the operation (in DRC) was costing".⁴⁸ In addition, the USA's Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000 further linked general governance issues to the conflict in the DRC. The bill observed that the issues, which were seemingly 'internal' to Zimbabwe, were nevertheless "exacerbated by its military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo".⁴⁹ Evidently, the decision by the 'SADC allies' to intervene in the DRC has led to enforced democratisation or, to quote President Mugabe, "bigots glibly us(ing) the language of democracy to duck colonial responsibility".⁵⁰ It was, however, President Joachim Chissano who reflected the SADC view on the matter, in the process showing the extent of the unity within the sub-region:

*We cannot in SADC condone these views (of the USA Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000). We are the democrats and we want democracy to work according to the will of the people in each of our countries.*⁵¹

Clearly, the action by the 'SADC allies' raised issues that have ramifications for the future of SADC. The action undertaken by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe raises issues of principle, especially regarding collaborative security and motive for the military intervention. The action also brings a foreign dimension to the matter of regional intervention, with a dual agenda approach to the democracy issue. The question of whether the trio acted with the mandate of SADC, or whether they took a unilateral decision, is an issue that has dogged the debate on this intervention. The statement by President Mandela that the trio ought to be congratulated for timely intervention further raised some questions. Was the 'SADC allies' action mandated by SADC after all, which would mean that there was hardly any evidence of the existence of a rift between the states in the sub-region? Is it possible that it was a case of a regional grouping that was able to set aside its differences and act as a cohesive entity? Or was it a display of leadership on the part of South Africa, the sub-regional hegemon, which was prominent in its absence from the military intervention?

South Africa a 'Gentle' Giant?

*Pretoria needs to assert its hegemony tactically...- (it) must lead SADC and the new African Union in providing direction for the resolution of regional conflicts.*⁵²

The statements made by government leaders, government actions (or non-actions as the case appears to have been with South Africa) as well as the views of non-governmental institutions have also been important in determining the manner in which the country has featured in the DRC conflict. Therefore, when President Nelson Mandela noted that the SADC "unanimously supported the military intervention by its member states in the DRC", this should have put to rest the general view that there had been a major political rift between South Africa and its 'supporters', and the 'SADC Allies'. Some even went to the extent of concluding that the conflict in the DRC "may have tolled the death-knell of diplomatic unity within the Southern African Development Community and has considerably darkened the future chances of this promising regional cooperation organization".⁵³ Before delving into the implications of this pessimistic reading of the events that took place in the sub-region, it is necessary to take the views of yet another high-profile member of the South African government. Patrick Lekota, the country's Minister of Defence, referring to another related matter – the development of a regional defence pact – argued that such a pact "provides guidelines to protect legitimate governments in the region from foreign armed aggression". But he did not envisage South Africa behaving like "a bull in a China shop rushing in as the old South Africa Defence Force did".⁵⁴ What can be deduced from this statement in relation to the military

intervention in the DRC? President Mandela's statement clearly showed that South Africa was in agreement with the general SADC position over the military intervention, even if such doubts may have existed at a time and in a manner that could not have been interpreted as the official government position.

It may be deduced, not without a measure of accuracy, that South Africa's superior economic and industrial as well as military capacity is the *sine qua non* for Africa's development, and for the SADC region it is the basis for peace and security. With the largest population, biggest economy (at least fifty times the size of Zimbabwe's) and largest as well as most developed military force in the region, South Africa's involvement in regional issues is virtually assumed.⁵⁵ It is for this reason that its position on the conflict in the DRC is particularly significant. Therefore, when South Africa failed to respond militarily to the SOS appeal from the Kabila One regime, concern about the future of the regional grouping was fuelled, since South Africa is a dominant member of the grouping. Its position on regional matters in general is pertinent because it is most likely an accurate measure of its position on the DRC.

South Africa's involvement in regional assignments can be seen in a variety of statements emanating from both official and non-official sources. It has been argued that South Africa's foreign policy projections are a product of a desire to play a "low profile" role and as requested by the UN, OAU (now AU) or SADC.⁵⁶ In the case of SADC, the foreign policy projections would, according to Patrick Lekota, be framed in the context of a regional defence pact that would provide guidelines for protection against foreign armed aggression without South Africa rushing in in the way the old South African Defence Force did.⁵⁷ It is clearly this fear of history that has affected South Africa's decision on the DRC the most. This is despite the comments by the minister, which seem to suggest that the failure by South Africa to be a part of the SADC allies is because the regime in the DRC is illegitimate. The minister's statement that the "principle that we (South Africa) must stabilise the region immediately surrounding us can not be in doubt",⁵⁸ appears to have a rider – "insofar as that area in the region is legitimate". This rather paternalistic view of South Africa's role in the region is particularly surprising as far as the DRC is concerned, because the state was party to the recommendation that led to the acceptance of the DRC into SADC in the first place.

Therefore, South Africa's refusal to be a part of the 'SADC allies' that responded to the distress call from the Kabila One regime in its hour of need, preferring

instead to support dialogue between the belligerents, has had a significant effect on intra-regional relationships and consequently on the future and nature of SADC and regional security. Further complicating the study of South Africa's position on the DRC is the *volte-face* by President Nelson Mandela, having earlier openly criticised President Robert Mugabe, then Chair of the OPDS,⁵⁹ following the decision to intervene militarily in the DRC. A few months later, President Mandela commended the SADC allies on their intervention!

South Africa has been heavily involved in efforts to make peace talks a success and has since contributed troops to the peacekeeping mission of MONUC.⁶⁰ South Africa has also indicated a willingness to assist in the reconstruction of the DRC by providing "support ranging from repairing infrastructure to rehabilitating the Central Bank". Whether this is a case of too little too late is a matter that needs further evaluation, given the DRC's open arms approach to Zimbabwean and Namibian business, virtually giving them *carte blanche* on some businesses in the mineral-rich country.⁶¹

The principle that South Africa must stabilise the region cannot be in doubt as long as that area is legitimate.

At the less official level, South Africa's position on the conflict in the DRC is also complex. For instance, to read and listen to the media reports and views emanating from the country's public and private sectors, one would think that the society being represented in these reports and views does not want what its government wants. While the government is talking about an African renaissance, the vocal sectors were at one stage articulating the need for more resources for the domestic constituency that necessarily required the limitation of government's involvement in foreign adventures. However, this call for an

inward-looking approach is selective since, at another stage, there was a media blitz by the South African so-called 'white minority leaders' over the need for intervention in Zimbabwe, where other white minorities were fighting a land battle. At another stage, the preference to participate at an international level (i.e. the United Nations) while paying lip service to the desire to be engaged at regional level has been expressed, a situation likely to invite subtle hostility which may reduce the level of regional cooperation and, consequently, undermine the regional integration project. The general feeling within SADC, especially in Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, may have been that South Africa was rather removed from the region – a region that not only sweated but also bled for it prior to 1994. Why, it may be asked, must South Africa see the region from the point of view beyond SADC when its immediate neighbours are in dire need, as was the case when the DRC government requested urgent military assistance when it was only hours from collapse? South Africa's approach to the

DRC issue at one level may be viewed as 'dove-ish' while, at another, this approach is difficult to make out and, in this way, conforms to the 'penguin' characterisation.

At the international level, South Africa is performing according to the expectations of the international community and therefore has its support. It is of course a moot point that the international community regards the United Nations as an appropriate organ to deal with issues of conflict. The community also feels free to ignore it in preference of other selected organs such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in its attempts to remove regimes it considers undemocratic. In this regard, the 'unrepresentative' government in the DRC must be left to fall even if its predecessor, aligned to the USA and the West, was allowed (indeed, enabled) to exist for decades. The comparisons or contrasts are plentiful. It is in this regard that the South African perspective is packaged. However, the difficulty with the package is that it requires working through the OPDS which, until recently, was chaired by President Robert Mugabe. Although the SADC Organ has to some extent been restructured (a major concern of the South African position), this is unlikely to shift the 'SADC allies' position over the DRC, especially since Zimbabwe has the dominant presence in the DRC and in the OPDS. Zimbabwe's military spokesman, Mbonisi Gatsheni, commenting on the withdrawal of the estimated 12-000 troops in the DRC, had stressed that "when and how (they would) leave the DRC" would be determined by how the internal dialogue proceeded.⁶²

The dynamics within and between states in SADC inevitably affect the way it functions. As these dynamics heighten, so does the future of homogeneity in the regional structure become questionable. The conflict in the DRC in 1998 "tested the sturdiness of SADC's new security institutions and exposed the limits of forging a regional foreign policy".⁶³ Khadiagala holds the view that notwithstanding the peace process that ensued through the Lusaka peace talks led by Zambia's President Frederick Chiluba, the "escalation of war widened splits within SADC [thereby] exposing the fragility of institutions for collective security".⁶⁴ The extent to which the decisions by the states discussed above relate to the nature of the cohesion of the sub-regional grouping is a matter that needs to be determined.

A Case of Neutrality?

*Neutrality does not necessarily imply impartiality.*⁶⁵

Tanzania and Zambia provide a rather unique position on the issue of military intervention in the DRC and invoke the principle of neutrality. Prior to

elaborating on the issue of neutrality in respect of the military intervention in the DRC, it is important to initially examine the two states' circumstances, which may assist in deciding whether in fact their response to the crisis in the Central African state was, more or less, predetermined.

Tanzania and Zambia have long borders with the DRC, which in the main are porous and therefore allow for the uncontrolled movement of people who would include both refugees and combatants from the embattled country, or even bandits and opportunists taking advantage of the instability in the region.⁶⁶ Both countries have therefore undergone severe economic and environmental hardships as a result of the thousands of refugees who have crossed the common border in search of a more stable and safe existence.

Gerry Cleaver and Simon Massey have suggested an explanation, which falls short of a theory, that seeks to explain Tanzania's and Zambia's similarity of policy position. This is premised on the countries' geographical proximity to the DRC. They postulate that, while the interveners from SADC "have borders surprisingly far distant from the DRC",⁶⁷ both Tanzania and Zambia share a physical border with the DRC. However, the difficulty with this explanation is that Angola, another intervening state, also shares a border with the beleaguered country. A more viable point to have made might instead have had reference to the uncontrolled movement of refugees.

The similarity of Tanzania's and Zambia's policy position was, however, the fact that both countries did not contribute troops to the 'SADC Allies'. An important observation has to be made that while Tanzania "kept out of the war itself", Zambia merely "refrained from any serious involvement",⁶⁸ thereby suggesting that there were degrees of neutrality.

The issue of neutrality is nevertheless not as cut and dried as merely indicating one's refusal to take sides in a conflict *per se*, but one that must take cognisance of international interpretation and - even more important - regional understanding of what such a policy position entails. In respect of an African conflict, a prerequisite ought to be the "upholding of the principle of the OAU (AU) on the territorial integrity of member states (and) opposition to military methods in changing African governments".⁶⁹

In the case of Tanzania, Mwesiga Baregu argues that its declared neutrality in the conflict was questionable. The argument, which was seriously impeded because of a failure to articulate the government's official position, regards Tanzania's position as seriously weakened by two major issues, namely "too much free and unhampered access to past President Nyerere and through him to President Mkapa"⁷⁰ and the country's failure to "delink the question of the invasion of the DRC by Rwanda and

Uganda from the question of internal rebellion".⁷¹ Assuming the correctness of Baregu's assertions, the conclusion he makes that Tanzania was effectively in contravention of the OAU's and, consequently, the AU's established principle of sovereignty and the inviolability of borders is a correct deduction.⁷² Tanzania being a co-member of SADC along with DRC, should have to denounced Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda in the strongest terms possible even if that did not necessarily translate into joining the military expedition led by Zimbabwe. However, the argument that it would not have been in Tanzania's national interest not to take cognisance of the fact that it has the longest border with the DRC and the problems posed by refugees are also deterministic. It is possible that Tanzania was balancing the country's national interest with the wider one of the sub-region, which could have left room for a mediatory role in respect of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The pessimism in this respect is premised on the assumption that a country that is so intrinsically involved with the DRC could not have been impartial in the matter.

Logic demands that Tanzania's neutrality, described by Baregu as "at best... naiveté", has potentially serious future ramifications such as a loss of trust as a dependable member of the community by other members of the community.⁷³ Unless removal of Tanzanian troops from the DRC at a time when they would have joined the rest of the intervention force was strategic on the part of SADC, the action would have potentially confirmed the lack of trust by some (if not all) members of the sub-region. The geographical position of the Tanzania and its historical involvement with the sub-regional grouping make it imperative that the country continues to play a significant role in the mainstream politics of the sub-region.

Zambia's position over the military intervention has generally been regarded as one of neutrality because of the role it assumed after the intervention. Although it was clear that the state did not contribute troops for the intervention, it is nevertheless unclear what grouping the state was in at the decision-making time for the intervention. The entire academic and research body as well as the mass media would seem to be unclear about the constituency of the sub-regional grouping on the basis of the decision to respond militarily to the DRC call for assistance.

The claim that Zambia had earlier indicated its support for the military intervention, along with the 'SADC allies',⁷⁴ would seem to have been collaborated by President Kagame in regard of the country's conduct in the conflict itself.⁷⁵ The Rwandan leader regarded Zambia as "enemy

ground, given that President Frederick Chiluba, aside from serving as a safe corridor for Zimbabwean troops and arms into the DRC, provided sanctuary to the Interahamwe *genocidaires*".⁷⁶ While the Zambia's geographical imperatives more than likely determined its function as a supply line for 'SADC allies', it is highly unlikely that it would knowingly have provided refuge to the Interahamwe *genocidaires*. The ability of Zambia to perform the role of 'referee' was further weakened by the Angolan government's distrust of former President Chiluba, whom they have accused of "supplying UNITA with arms and transit routes for smuggling diamonds".⁷⁷

Despite these suspicions, Zambia's official position in the DRC conflict was that of a mediator – a position placed upon it by the SADC Summit, ostensibly as a bridge to the two opposing views in which Zimbabwe favoured the military option while South Africa preferred negotiations between those involved in the conflict.⁷⁸ Zambia's position was to avoid "taint(ing) the (peace) process with pre-conceived position(s)" and in this regard, to be "assisted by the regional organization whenever possible".⁷⁹

Although Zambia did not contribute troops to the military intervention, there was definitely political will to support the intervention. The question then is whether the country's position can be described as neutral. Like Tanzania, Zambia may have been too close to the issues to be impartial.

It has therefore to be deduced that although Zambia did not contribute troops to the military intervention, there was definitely political will to support the intervention. The question then is whether the country's position can be described as neutral. Like Tanzania, Zambia may have been too close to the issues to be impartial.

The implications for the country's role as peacemaker have not just been felt at the international level but also at both the regional and domestic level.

At the regional level, President Chiluba obtained the reputation of a shrewd politician who was able to survive despite being distrusted by both sides in the DRC conflict. This skill gained him new respect by the region's elder statesmen, like Presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Jose dos Santos of Angola, and the envy of his counterparts in Malawi, Tanzania and Botswana. In addition, the achievements away from the home front may just be what President Chiluba required to rip through the barrage of criticism over his non-performance and undemocratic attempts (once again) to change the constitution for him to serve a third term.

If Zambia's and Tanzania's positions in the DRC conflict were critical because of their mediatory role in efforts to bring an end to the conflict, the SADC's input in the matter not only reflected whether the states in the sub-region were, indeed, a community but also whether having the DRC as a member of the sub-regional grouping was a blessing or a curse.

SADC and the DRC, a Blessing or a Curse?

*In the case of Central Africa, the African regional grouping most oriented to facilitating peace is SADC. It is a potentially broadly acceptable mediator and facilitator, which knows Central Africa well.*⁸⁰

SADC has since the Kabila One regime adopted a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, the Summit in Mauritius congratulated Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe for acting well on behalf of SADC – a seemingly militaristic approach. Secondly, by tasking the President of Zambia with spearheading peace initiatives, it meant that the organisation was also pursuing a negotiated path – the preferred strategy by South Africa. It therefore seemed like the two approaches are designed to accommodate, on the one hand, the position of the SADC allies and on the other hand, that of South Africa.

The survival of the regional grouping as far as the armed forces' Chief of Staffs of the region was concerned was through a concerted effort by all the armed forces of the region. At an OPDS meeting in Luanda in September 1998, Zambia's Army Commander, General Solomon Mumba, declared that any threat to a member of SADC could justify intervention by its allies: "If such intervention took place in some countries, he saw no reason why it should not occur in others".⁸¹

This was clearly in line with the thinking of President Mugabe who, when defending Zimbabwe's position in the conflict, drew parallels with the European approach to the Balkan problem: "If it was right for European countries to get involved in Bosnia and to think of getting involved in Kosovo, why should it not be right for us?"⁸² However, it is evident that SADC required consensus for the regional body to function effectively – a situation which, according to Kabemba, a South African-based public policy analyst of DRC descent, needs the co-operation of both the South African and Zimbabwean leadership: "Mbeki...needs Mugabe on his side to ensure there is consensus within SADC on how to resolve intractable problems in the region".⁸³ The pessimism expressed in the subtitle is premised on two factors – one directly related to the conflict in the DRC and a consequence of intra-regional dynamics and the other on exogenous factors. They emanated largely from global dynamics premised on the dominant liberal discourse, which, while advocating for ways of co-operation within states and between states in a pluralistic polity, was based on governments of "free individuals defending law and property".⁸⁴

Regarding the intra-regional dynamics, the differences between Zimbabwean and South African leadership over the structure and operation of the OPDS would seem to have brought into the open the differences in

regional approaches to issues of regional security in general and the DRC in particular. The seemingly differing approaches of the two states – the former being 'hawkish' while the latter being somewhat inclined towards a 'dove' or a 'penguin' – appeared to have resulted in the regional organisation being virtually frozen in its activities.⁸⁵ However, taken in the contest of the official stand by SADC reflected in its Mauritius summit and in President Mandela's statement in Durban, the major rifts between the states in the sub-region – particularly between South Africa and Zimbabwe – were most probably more mythical than real. Consequently, so too the presumed connection between the differences over the structural and operational differences in respect of the SADC Organ and the matter of the military intervention in the DRC.

From the viewpoint of the SADC leadership, the situation appears to have been worsened by such exogenous factors as the US-sponsored Zimbabwe Democracy Act of 2000. This Act made clear the intention of US politicians to make their mark on events in Zimbabwe and the region and, given the enthusiasm with which the self-appointed global policeman undertakes its missions, Zimbabwe and SADC may yet experience some political turbulence should the demands placed upon Zimbabwe by both the USA and Britain not be met.⁸⁶ A clear 'hawkish' strategy, the Zimbabwe Bill is a vote of 'no confidence' in the ability of the regional structure to deal with issues of security and governance within the community. Given the fact SADC depends to a significant extent on donor funds, its ability to withstand the pressure by the USA and its allies is questionable, despite courageous statements by its then Chairman and President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, that the organisation would not "condone detractors trying to humiliate those who brought freedom and independence to their countries".⁸⁷ Multinational corporations with previous and current ties to the DRC also expect to benefit from the mineral-rich country.⁸⁸ They are unlikely to let minors like the Zimbabwean and Namibian governments and companies take preference over them. The situation becomes even more delicate when it is considered that there was also significant participation in the conflict by mercenaries playing for high stakes. A case in point was the participation of private military contractors (PMCs) closely associated with the US Department of Defence.⁸⁹ The PMCs are obviously hoping to benefit from what could be a lucrative defence contract, not to mention a re-establishment of US interest, which had been firm during the Mobutu Sese Seko days.

The adoption of a Declaration of Fundamental Principles by the Congolese Parties on 20 August 2001 and the inter-Congolese Dialogue which opened in August 2001 in Gaborone, Botswana, together with the Lusaka peace process meetings, which developed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement,

was also an indication of the urgency with which SADC approached the conflict in the DRC. In addition, the establishment of regional committees such as an *ad hoc* committee on security and a task force comprising the SADC troika of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, together with Zimbabwe, to help resolve the political and security problems in Zimbabwe, is an indication of a regional structure that is optimistic about the future, notwithstanding the continuing reports by the opposition Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) of repression by the Zimbabwe government and the 'lack of dialogue' between it and the government⁸⁸⁰.

Moreover, the vigorous South African-led push towards a regional protocol on defence and security upon which a regional Southern African pact was to be constructed, the signing of the SADC Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation Protocol at the 2001 SADC Summit in Malawi⁹¹ and the subsequent adoption of the SADC Mutual Defence Pact at the Dar es Salaam summit in August 2003 are indicative of the presence of sub-regional cohesion despite whatever differences may have existed over the military intervention in the DRC. This gives some hope for the creation of a homogeneous approach to issues of conflict.

The survival of SADC independence is, however, likely to depend on South Africa, a state with the industrial, commercial and financial capacity and a liberal political system respected by the Western states. However, the challenges facing SADC make any speculation about its future a daunting undertaking. Khadiagala argues that the intervention in the DRC conflict exhibited that "weak regimes confronted by multiple domestic challenges are most likely to seek solace in debilitating foreign policy adventures irrespective of countervailing pressures from their domestic and international environments".⁹² In his view, the argument that the three allies were defending DRC's territorial sovereignty was questionable. However, what this paper finds questionable is Khadiagala's failure to explicitly stipulate the questionable nature of the trio's decision beyond the unverified claim that "Mugabe interpreted the rebel insurgency in the DRC as a threat to his regional authority"⁹³ and the claim that Zimbabwe's president did not consult sufficiently. Ultimately the criticism against the trio's intervention is premised on rumours, innuendo, and uninformed criticism of political players with unclear objectives. To argue that the three SADC states were merely motivated by their desire to side step the problems in their own states ignores the objective realities that prevailed at the time. It is nevertheless a logical conclusion to stipulate that the creation of the new defence pact in April 1999 was a motivation

for sub-regional cohesion in matters of defence and security. The "Congo effect" that Khadiagala writes about has certainly more than motivated the "thinking about the kinds of institutions for collective security"⁹⁴ with concerted efforts being made for a more effective SADC Organ. To therefore argue that SADC "is incapable of meeting problems of internal implosion and civil wars"⁹⁵ is evidently inaccurate, as is the argument that "its role in building values and norms has been equally problematic".⁹⁶ Although the history of the sub-region has not been without difficulties, its evolution from the Frontline States grouping to the Southern African Development Coordinating Committee (SADCC) and then to SADC and its component, the SADC Organ, shows a transition that reveals a steady build-up of values and norms.

In the final analysis, it has to be acknowledged that SADC has to continue to be engaged in the DRC conflict, not only because of geographical considerations and the fact that the DRC is in fact a member state, but also because history has shown that, more than any other sub-regional grouping, SADC remains an influential player.

With the worsening situation in the DRC, the United Nations will have no choice but to engage more intensely with SADC as a major partner in the search for sustained peace in the region. SADC has in this regard shown its tenacity to resolve its own difficulties and remain focused on the bigger picture – sub-regional security.

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Conclusion

It is evident that the conflict in the DRC has had very serious implications for the 'SADC allies' (Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe), Tanzania, Zambia and South Africa, which go beyond the confines of state boundaries. However, compartmentalising states as 'hawks', 'doves' or 'penguins' ignores the complex realities of the situation. It is evident that to strictly categorise the countries is a futile exercise because, while they may exhibit one trait at one time, they show an inclination towards another at a later stage or - rather more accurately - an inclination towards a combination of traits. For instance, although the 'SADC allies' had troops in the DRC fighting on the side of the DRC regime, calling them 'hawkish' is not only hasty but also technically inaccurate because their participation in the conflict was at the invitation of the DRC government. It is inconsequential whether the government in the DRC had been democratically given a mandate to rule, because it is a recognised member of SADC. As members of SADC, the allies had been participating in peace talks designed to bring about an end to the conflict in the DRC.

This paper has also shown that a number of conclusions arrived at by researchers and the media appear to be more mythical than real, as they were generally not corroborated by either actions on the ground, or official pronouncements by the governments involved, or SADC as an institution. In this regard, the especially harsh treatment meted out to Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe over the intervention was unjustified. The harsh treatment only served to fuel animosity rather than solve the fundamental problems, and in the end led SADC to close ranks – a development which had the unfortunate consequence of the organisation appearing to be more interested in regime than human security.

It has been argued that SADC remains an important partner in the search for peace in the DRC and that its future engagement, even in terms of yet another military intervention by the SADC but this time under the auspices of the UN, cannot be ruled out. With the development of a Mutual Defence Pact, the sub-region has shown its maturity in recognising the value of collaborative security and will therefore provide the UN with a valuable partner in the search for sustainable peace and security in the DRC.

Notes and References

- 1 Gerry Cleaver and Simon Massey, 2001. 'DRC: Africa's Scramble for Africa', in Oliver Furley and Roy May (eds.), *African Interventionist States*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, p. 208.
- 2 See reports on the conflict on the DRC identifying Zimbabwe, among the states involved in the conflict as well as Roy Bennet's report, 'ZANU PF Strategy Born of Fear' in which the hardliners (or hawks) have been associated with the strong African nationalists who see land as their last means of holding onto power (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200108170201.html>).
- 3 See Rene Lemarchand, 2001. 'Foreign Policy Making in the Great Lakes Region', in Gilbert M. Khadiagala & Terrence Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies: Power and Process*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, p. 101.
- 4 Gilbert M. Khadiagala, 2001. 'Foreign Policy Decision-making in Southern Africa's Fading Frontline', in Gilbert M Khadiagala & Terrence Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies: Power and Process*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, p. 131.
- 5 Gilbert M. Khadiagala, 2001. 'Foreign Policy Making in Africa', in Gilbert M. Khadiagala & Terrence Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies: Power and Process*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, p. 1.
- 6 See Interview of DRC Minister of Social Affairs Ingele Ifoto, IRIN, March 1 2004; Franklin Okot, 'Great Lakes: Beyond double standard', *New African*, September 2001. See also 'SA's war Vultures', *Mail & Guardian*, 16-22 January 2004, p. 4. The paper refers in part to a situation where the conflict appears to have come to an end. Whilst this is generally true in the sense that President Joseph Kabila is firmly in power, there are nevertheless large geographical areas in the country which remain effectively in the hands of other belligerents and genuine peace is yet to be achieved.
- 7 'SA's war Vultures', op. cit.
- 8 See also Gibert Khadiagala, 2001. 'Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Southern Africa's Fading Frontline', in Gilbert M. Khadiagala and Terence Lyons (eds.), *African Foreign Policies: Powers and Process*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, pp131-158. Khadigala argues that having joined SADC in 1997, the DRC had "invariably saddled" the region with "all the baggage and insecurities of the Great Lakes region".
- 9 Francis Kornegay and Chris Landsberg, 1999. 'From dilemma to détente: Pretoria's policy options on the DRC and Great Lakes', Center for Policy Studies Policy Brief, 11 April.
- 10 See also Baffour Ankomah, 1999. 'The butcher of Congo', *New African*, October, no. 387, pp 14-18.
- 11 President Kaunda delivered a keynote speech to a seminar on Peace and Security in Southern Africa at the Centre for Southern African Studies at the University of the Western Cape on 24 March 2000.
- 12 See Graeme Owens, 2000. 'Mobutu, was he half man, half animal?', *New African*, October, no. 389, p. 43.
- 13 The rebellion against the Mobutu government began in October 1996 from the eastern part of the country and gained momentum in the early part of 1997, eventually leading to the flight of the former strong man into exile in early May 1997 following the refusal by the United States government (Mobutu's backers for most of his reign) to assist. Laurent Kabila entered the capital city of Kinshasa in May 1997 with the support of the Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian military. See Osei Boateng, 2000. 'The Poison designed to produce an African disease', *New African*, November, no. 390, pp. 22-27.
- 14 The twin role of the alliance was forming a support group for the liberation of the Southern African region and co-ordination of economic policies as well as the search for external economic support for the states in the region in the face of aggressive policies by apartheid South Africa which constrained their international trade due to the historical structural dependency on South Africa.
- 15 Sagaren Naidoo, 1999. 'Rebels without a Pause: Diplomacy in the DRC conflict', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 2.
- 16 The suggestion that the DRC was "Africa's First World War" was because of the number of states involved in the conflict. Virtually all of the DRC geographical neighbours, the SADC and foreign powers external to the continent but with major strategic interest in the country participated in the conflict in the DRC in one form or another.
- 17 See Cleaver and Massey, op. cit., pp.193-208.
- 18 *Cape Times*, 24 January 2001, p 4: Professor Masipula Sithole, a Zimbabwean academic, blames President Robert Mugabe's "ego and his associate's growing business interests in the DRC's lucrative diamond industry" which he argues had "mired the country in a costly and unwinnable war". Brian Raftopoulos, a political analyst and researcher at the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, supports this viewpoint, describing Zimbabwe's involvement in the DRC conflict as "one big disaster, a case of pride, greed and political miscalculation".
- 19 Following the assassination of Laurent Kabila, Major-General Joseph Kabila was 'voted' in as the country's interim Head of State.
- 20 Nicholas Long, 2000. 'UN gets tough over DRC: The latest resolution has threatened sanctions against the protagonists', *News Africa*, 17 July.
- 21 President Robert Mugabe quoted in Lewis Machipisa, 'DR CONGO: Green light given to SADC Troops to Flush out Rebels', http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/oct98/17_48_074.html.
- 22 There was a view that the intervention by the SADC was motivated by its desire to improve the DRC's "image with external funders and to exert some leverage towards less bad governance". For details see Renald Herbold Adedeji (ed.), *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace and Good Governance*, Zed Books and African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), London & New York.
- 23 The Mutual Defence Pact between Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe was formed in 1998 as a reaction to the military assistance requested by the DRC. It has however been left open for other members of SDAC to

- join as and when they wish to. It is evidently a reaction to frustration over the inability of SADC's Organ for Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) to be operational, a factor blamed squarely on South Africa.
- 24 The 1997 Harare Declaration by which the Organisation of African Unity leaders agreed to intervene to protect recognised governments. See also the SADC Treaty.
 - 25 'Zimbabwe: Mugabe defends DRC intervention', 2 December 1999, <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN/>.
 - 26 SADC Treaty Article 4 (c) gives "achievement of solidarity, peace and security in the region" as an objective, while objective (a) of the SADC Organ states in part that people and development of the region shall be protected against "inter-state conflict and external aggression" (SADC Communiqué, 28 June 1996).
 - 27 Nana Rosine Ngangoue, 'Politics-Africa: DRC Conflict Spreads Northward', *World News*, http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/oct98/20_31_079.html.
 - 28 See SADC Treaty, Article 4 (a) to (e).
 - 29 Machipisa, 1998, op. cit.
 - 30 *Africa Today*, March 2001, p. 17.
 - 31 See *Cape Times*, 24 January 2001; *Saturday Argus*, 8 January 1999.
 - 32 A response by President Robert Mugabe during a question and answer session at a Southern Africa trade and investment conference in Maputo 1 December 1999; <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN/>.
 - 33 See Tabby Moyo and Lewis Machipisa, 'DR Congo: Demands to Withdraw Troops Anger Zimbabwe And Namibia', *World News*, http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/sept98/17_25_088.html.
 - 34 <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>, Maputo, 1 December, 1999.
 - 35 http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/sept98/17_25_088.html.
 - 36 Ibid.
 - 37 See Reginald Herbold Green, 1999. 'Obstacles to Comprehension and Barriers to the Mastery of Conflict', in Adebayo Adedeji (ed.) *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace and Good Governance*, Zed Books and African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), London & New York. Green puts forward the argument that the SADC made a fundamental error in admitting the DRC into its organisation because of an "economic burden of massive dimension".
 - 38 *Cape Times*, 24 January 2001; *Saturday Argus*, 8 January 1999. See also Nana Rosine Ngangoue, 'Politics-Africa: DRC Conflict Spreads Northward', *World News*, http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/oct98/20_31_079.html.
 - 39 Howard Barrel, 1999. <http://www.sn.apc.org/wmail/issues/990716/news1.htm>.
 - 40 *Saturday Argus*, 8 January 1999.
 - 41 Dede Amanor-Wilks, 'Zimbabwe's costly war' and Kaleni Hiyalwa, 'Namibia feels the strain of war', *New Africa*, 31 July 2000, pp. 13-15.
 - 42 The 'SADC' allied forces were in agreement over the departure of all foreign forces but see this as referring to the non-SADC ones. However, to Rwanda and Uganda as well as the proponents of internal dialogue, this means all military forces, including those of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe.
 - 43 President Mugabe quoted in Zimbabwe State Media, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/>.
 - 44 See also Amanor-Wilks, op. cit., p. 14.
 - 45 Naidoo, 1999, p. 155.
 - 46 See also Jackson Mwalulu, 'His own man', *Africa Today*, March 2001, p. 17.
 - 47 'Zimbabwe-DRC: Kabila non-committal on withdrawal of allies', IRIN, 27 March 2001.
 - 48 'Zimbabwe: The DRC intervention in official figures', IRIN, 27 October 1999.
 - 49 <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>.
 - 50 'Zimbabwe's Mugabe Lashes Out at US', 11 August 2001, <http://www.africapolitical.com/>.
 - 51 'Zimbabwe: SADC concerned over threatened US sanctions', IRIN. It may also be noted that in 1999, Kyungu Wa Kumwanza, the DRC ambassador in Kenya, is reported to have accused Western countries and the United Nations of deliberately destabilising the SADC allies to stop them from assisting the DRC: "We notice that our allies are being destabilized...Who invited the trade unionists against the Zimbabwe government? Who are behind the war in Angola? Who provide(s) UNITA with heavy arms and tanks to fight?...All these maneuvers are aimed to prevent our allies from continuing to assist us" (http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/jan99/12_23_033.html).
 - 52 Kuseni Dlamini, 'Assessing South Africa's Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution', *South African Year Book of International Affairs 2001/02*, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, pp. 63 & 70.
 - 53 'Democratic Republic of Congo War', <http://www.synpse.net/>.
 - 54 'Southern Africa: South Africa calls for regional defence pact', IRIN, 2 September 1999.
 - 55 David Welsh, 2000. 'Why South Africa is different: The case for Considered Optimism', *Optimum*, July, p 14.
 - 56 'South Africa/DRC: Small peacekeeping role', IRIN, 9 July 1999.
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About this paper

The military intervention by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) following a Funder by the DRC regime led to much 'confusion' as the debate raged as to whether the intervention was sanctioned by SADC or whether in fact it represented the action of militaristic states with their own agendas. The debate also appeared to indicate that, as a result of this intervention, cohesion in the sub-regional grouping had been seriously compromised, with Zimbabwe leading one faction while South Africa led another. This paper re-examines these debates with a view to determining the extent to which the intervention has affected sub-regional cohesion. To this end, the paper argues that, in the main, the major rifts that have generally been described were more mythical than a reflection of reality. While disagreements over approaches towards the conflict existed, the sub-region managed to resolve them in a manner that displayed a level of maturity rarely credited to SADC. The paper also argues that, despite the end of the intervention, challenges over possible future interventions by the sub-region loom as the situation in the DRC worsens in the sense of a lack of agreement by the various stake holders in the country on the establishment of a government acceptable to everyone and the United Nations is confronted with severe difficulties which may require a more concerted effort from the sub-regional group to stabilise the situation. Also covered in the paper is the challenge posed by the continued pressure from the international community, especially the United States of America and Britain, which has emerged as a 'fall-out' of the intervention.

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