SIPO II: TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

Anthoni van Nieuwkerk
Graduate School of Public and Development Management
University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

This review essay offers an assessment of the 'harmonised' (elsewhere called 'revised') Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (SIPO) of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).[1] Informally known as SIPO II, it succeeds the original Strategic Indicative Plan, adopted in 2004 for a five-year period. Following a lengthy review process, SIPO II was approved by the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Windhoek, Namibia, in August 2010. It was finally publicly launched in November 2012, but as of mid-2103, implementation appears to be lagging.

Although Southern Africa has had many years' experience of fighting colonialism and apartheid, formal inter-state cooperation in the area of peace and security is a relatively new phenomenon. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), established in 1980, turned into SADC in 1994. In 1996, the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government established the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (OPDSC).

In 2001, Heads of State and Government signed the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, which provided an institutional framework for cooperation by member states in these areas. In 2002, the SADC Summit mandated the OPDSC to prepare a Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) which would provide guidelines for implementing the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation over the next five years.

The achievements under the SIPO include the establishment of the SADC Mutual Defence Pact, launch of the SADC Standby Force (SSF), integration of the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organisation (SARPCCO) into the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC), establishment of the Regional Early

Warning Centre as well as the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) and a mediation unit (SADC 2010).

However, SIPO I was also poorly implemented in numerous respects. In particular, the production of a business plan for addressing its 130-plus objectives never materialised, and no serious effort was made to develop strategies for operationalising the Organ. Critically, the relationship between the SADC Secretariat and the member states is key to SADC's effective functioning, and needs to be driven by visionary leadership. The SSF, although technically committed to the AU's grand strategy of having standby forces ready for deployment (by 2015 — a new deadline), remains resource-poor and depends on political guidance at Summit level. It is unclear whether there is any real political will to use this instrument in a robust fashion beyond fact-finding and mediation by retired presidents. Despite prescriptions to this effect in the Protocol, SADC's security architecture does not necessarily harmonise with that of the AU, giving rise to a range of tensions, not least of which the question of agenda-setting (who determines action, when, and how?) and deployment authorisation (which body decides to deploy whom, at what level, and with what mandate and accountability?).[2] — A number of policy questions can be identified:

1. Which Themes, Norms and Principles Guide SIPO II?

SIPO II is not meant to be a binding policy document or legal framework for decision-makers — the SADC Treaty and the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation play that role (Oost-huizen 2006). As SADC officials and security sector officers often note, it should rather be understood as a guide to collective behaviour. Both SIPO I, and SIPO II state that they are guided by the "objectives and common agenda" of SADC, as elaborated in Article 5 of its amended Treaty.[3]

In brief, SADC regards good political and economic govern-ance as the two key 'enablers' of regional integration.[4] Article 5 of the Treaty requires member states to "promote common political values, systems and other shared values which are transmitted through institu-tions that are democratic, legitimate, and effective". The big question

for most political analysts is to what extent SADC and its member states are able to claim a shared understanding of and commitment to democratic principles and practices. And does SADC really speak for the people of the region on matters relating to democracy?

Matlosa (2008: 43) holds the view that, "…while generally transitions have taken place in a majority of states in the SADC region, democracy and governance remain in a state of flux". Indeed, between 2008 and 2013 new crises of governance arose in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Madagascar. To some extent, the section on politics and democracy in SIPO II addresses some of these problems. It seeks to strengthen recent innovations such as the SADC Electoral Advisory Council, and standardising electoral management throughout the region.

However, as long as SADC remains a predominantly state-driven project, its attempts at promoting democracy will be limited. Progress on this front will require SADC to live up to its obligation under Chapter Seven of its Treaty, namely to "fully involve the people of the region" in its activities. Instead, the SADC Secretariat, the Organ, and most member states pay lip-service to this people-friendly vision, utilising instead a limited range of prominent NGOs and consultants to design, implement, and evaluate its projects.

Several analysts have argued for a new participatory paradigm in regional integration processes through deliberative policy-making involving not only the political and civil society elites, but ordinary people themselves through community-based organisations (Matlosa and Lotshwao 2010). Not only is SADC found wanting on this score, but so too are civil society elites — many of whom appear content with the *status quo.*

2.   Who and What Shaped SIPO II?

It is difficult to pinpoint a single actor, which has driven the development of SIPO II. It may be fair to say that SIPO II was developed by SADC officials as a response to political pressure emanating from a combination of sources. SIPO II was produced well after SIPO I reached the end of its five-year life (it was supposed to be implemented from 2004 to 2008). The donor community and civil society have been persistent in their critique of the perceived lack of implementation of SIPO I. The establishment of a mutually agreed mech-

anism for regulating donor support for SIPO objectives was delayed for many years, frustrating donors (as well as non-governmental organisations [NGOs] working in the field of democracy and security). On the other hand, many SADC insiders defend its track record in terms of implementing SIPO, and argue that undue pressure on SADC to reform SIPO should be understood as political attempts to dictate its agenda.

Our comparison of SIPO I and II suggests that the organisation has chosen to review and update the plan based on its own internal logic, with little assistance from outside. Several research, training, and policy institutions, amongst them (ACCORD, the CCR, EISA, the ISS, and SADSEM) have sought to engage with the SADC Organ, its directorate, and individual member states on issues surrounding the SIPO agenda, and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ, formerly GTZ) has continued to provide the Organ Directorate with valuable technical support. However, the extent to which any of this may have influenced SIPO II is hard to determine.

In November 2012, SIPO II was publicly launched and the event was characterised by open and constructive engagement between SADC peace and security officials and officers and a range of stakeholders. This paved the way for new thinking around the management and implementation of SIPO II. However, considering the constraints upon the SADC Directorate dealing with the regional peace and security agenda, it is clear that any meaningful formal implementation of SIPO II activities will have to be undertaken in collaboration with key stakeholders including the donor community, the private sector, relevant research, training and policy institutions, and community-based organisations. The institutionalisation of working relationships among these potential partners should receive priority attention.

3. Does SIPO II accurately reflect current foreign policy and security policy thinking in the region?

SIPO II is practically silent on this issue. The question of how and to what extent SADC is able to develop and project commonly agreed foreign policy positions has received some analytical attention in

recent years (Harvey 2010). The findings suggest that collective foreign policy-making in Africa is a slow process of learning, accommodation, and compromise because of the persistence of national sovereignty and the diversity of interests and experiences in managing complex external environments. SADC has the advantage of having fashioned a practice of building foreign policy coordination around some core issues at the height of the apartheid and decolonisation era that seems to hold some promise for the future. However while there has been some convergence around certain principles within SADC, the process remains superficial.

In order to meet the challenges of a globalising, turbulent and unequal world, SADC needs to pay much more attention to the operationalisation of its Organ protocol requirement to develop common foreign policy approaches to the issues of mutual concern, and advance such policy collectively in international *fora*.

SIPO II does not provide any guidance on this score, so the impetus will have to emerge elsewhere: in our view, this is part of the leadership challenge facing SADC and its member states. We do not restrict 'leadership' to elected politicians or state managers only; we also have intellectual, cultural, entrepreneurial, spiritual, sport and artistic leaders in mind — a wide repertoire of thinkers and practitioners with whom Southern Africans are familiar. The question then is to what extent SADC can be persuaded to adopt a less state-driven and regime-centred approach to regional integration.

4.　Conclusions

This discussion of SADC's SIPO has been situated in current patterns of interstate political and security cooperation in Southern Africa. In particular, it asks whether SADC could be regarded as a coherent and capable political and security actor — and whether the OPDSC and SIPO strengthen SADC's role as such an actor.

If we assume that democratic governance provides the foundation for such behaviour, the region has much to do. To state, as SIPO II does, that "... the region experiences peace [and] a deepening of democratic practices" (SADC 2010: 23) is to tell only half the story. The other half relates to ongoing governance crises in Zimbabwe, the DRC and Madagascar; and persistent tensions in Swaziland and, until recently, Lesotho. The SADC Organ appears preoccupied

with these 'matters' (it avoids crisis management language), yet seems unable to resolve many of them. Crises typically drag on for years, or are resolved by other means. These events demonstrate the complex nature of transitions to democracy, and the reality of democratic reversals. We would therefore suggest that SADC has not yet been able to fully transform SADC as a security complex with conflict-generating interstate and intrastate relations, or assumed the role of an effective regional security actor.

What about the argument that the presence of a regional power will enable the region and its institutions to behave with more confidence as a security actor — able and willing to take steps to resolve interstate and intrastate conflicts, and exercise power and influence beyond its borders? South Africa's post-apartheid relationship with the region is an intriguing one. It has the power to dominate, and in fact does so, particularly in the economic domain. But politically it seems to be a reluctant hegemon, or ambivalent partner. It maintains an ambitious foreign affairs posture, aiming to be a global player, if not a continental leader, and a force in shaping South-South relations. Some believe that in the course of this process (driven with gusto by Mbeki but much more tentatively by Zuma) it has tended to neglect its relationship with its neighbours — if true, a potentially tragic oversight.

Recent indications are that the South African government intends to reclaim lost terrain. A white paper on foreign policy, released in May 2011 (but not yet finalised), reaffirms Africa as central to its international relations.[5] However encouraging this is, South Africa is not SADC. Its role is vital, but SADC cannot subsume its policies under those of South Africa. As the white paper demonstrates, South Africa's foreign policy positions are increasingly determined by its national interests: for example, it regards the putative Tri-partite Free Trade Area (T-FTA) between SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) (the T-FTA) as a key priority. Together with its fellow members of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), namely Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho, it has a special relationship with the European Union (EU) (via the trade and development cooperation agreement). It also maintains relations with selected European countries (via so-called strategic partnerships), and prioritises relations with emerging powers, bilaterally but also via the Brazil-Russia-India-

China-South Africa (BRICS) and India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) alliances. Moreover, it aims to become a permanent member of a restructured United Nations (UN) Security Council. To what extent are these key priorities for other SADC members?

Despite SADC's sophisticated security architecture, then, the behaviour of its members suggests that they are not yet willing or able to share democratic political values and norms, or harmonise national decision-making structures and practices in order to enhance SADC's ability or authority to make, implement, and enforce rules. Underlying this reality is SADC's difficulties in proceeding with regional economic integration — a project bedeviled by the region's unequal power relations, and the tendency by outsiders to select trade partners on a bilateral basis with little regard for local efforts to establish a regional free trade area leading to a customs union and common monetary area. All in all, then, SADC is a stable (but not very efficient) institution, used by members to behave in a disaggregated manner, driven by the overriding demands of national interest and sovereignty. The potential of SIPO II should be understood against this reality. Despite this bleak assessment, debates between SADC officials and a range of non-state actors at the SIPO II launch in Arusha in November 2012 demonstrate that much can still be done to move SADC's peace and security agenda closer to the citizens of the region.

Endnotes

1. This chapter draws on the author's earlier work on the SADC peace and security architecture (Van Nieuwkerk 2012).
2. Article 7 of the Memorandum of Understanding Amongst the Southern African Development Community Member States on the Establishment of a Southern African Development Community Standby Brigade of August 2007 stipulates that "SADCBRIG shall only be deployed on the authority of the SADC Summit", and "may be deployed on a SADC, AU or UN mandate".
3. See SADC, Article 5: Objectives, Consolidated Text of the Treaty of the Southern African Development community, as amended. (Available at: http://www.sadc.int/english/key-documents/declaration-and-treaty-of-sadc/ #article5.)
4. See Chapter 1: The SADC Framework for Integration, SADC: Years of Progress (1980-2010). (Available at: http://www.sadc.int/index/browse/ page/107).
5. South African Government, Building a Better World: the Diplomacy of

Ubuntu, White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy. (Available at http:// www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=149749.)

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