

Building Regional and International Consensus: Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar and Zimbabwe



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Executive Summary

Multilateral interventions for sustainable peace and security are faced with enormous challenges. The deterioration of the political situations in Burundi and Lesotho in mid-2015 raised questions around the capacity and effectiveness of AU and SADC respectively, as does the continued uncertainty and slow pace of reforms in Zimbabwe and Madagascar. With these critical issues facing the AU and SADC, the year 2015 has been a challenging one in terms of their effort towards peace and security in the African continent. Burundi has been plunged into a violent crisis due to the political dispute around incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza's eligibility to contest the June 2015 election. Despite the use of strong language, the AU proved powerless to influence political developments in the country, and as such Burundi continues to pose uncertainties in terms of democracy, peace and security. On the other hand, SADC has also seen its fair share of political uncertainty. The situations in Madagascar and Zimbabwe remain precarious in spite of SADC's mediation, and the assassination of an army commander and divisions in the security sector prompted SADC to set up a commission of enquiry in Lesotho. All of these countries remain at the center of both SADC and AU's peace and security concerns.

The promotion of peace and security in Africa forms an important aspect of the SA-EU cooperation. In consultation with both South Africa and the EU delegation, prompted by the deteriorating political situations in all of the aforementioned countries, SALO convened this dialogue to build a common understanding around some of the challenges facing multilateral interventions in these countries.

Furthermore, to look at recent developments through interventions conducted by both SADC and AU in these countries under the theme *Building Regional and International Consensus*. The workshop hosted a strong representation from the SA government- country desks from the Department of International Relations (DIRCO) for all of the countries under discussion were represented- as well as the EU, the diplomatic community in SA and other relevant stakeholders. Importantly, the dialogue noted that while both SADC and AU interventions have led to promising political settlements, a common challenge has been weak implementation and lack of enforcement mechanisms, highlighting the issue of national sovereignty in particular, as making it difficult for multilaterals to enforce and implement agreements. It also noted that the AU and regional blocs need to be capacitated to ensure that the early warning system is functional and that pre-emptive interventions can be undertaken, as most interventions that happen are ‘too late and too little’. Therefore there is a need for stronger political commitment from regional peers, to ensure that peace agreements are followed.

Burundi



As a point of introduction, **Ambassador Nhlapo** raised the point that most of the current analysis of Burundi by the media and key international actors is devoid of historical context, with the same narrative used to describe the ethnic violence that happened in Rwanda being applied. While ethnic violence between the Hutu and Tutsi's is part of the reality of the situation in Burundi, as was the defining aspect of the Rwandan genocide, it is not the fundamental problem. The tendency of global media is to deal with more reporting of events as they unfold, devoid of context. Ambassador Nhlapo reminded the

audience that in analyzing the situation in Burundi, people tend to forget that the country has a history that keeps repeating itself. He cautioned against ignoring history at the expense of peace and stability in Burundi, arguing that this has become part of the problem.

The Ambassador argued that central to the political situation in Burundi is a matter which all parties in Burundi have been raising, even around this ‘third term’ issue, and that is the Arusha Agreement. Ambassador Nhlapo pointed out that key questions have to be asked around the importance of this Agreement: *What is it that that Agreement did? Why does Burundi so much want that Agreement to remain in place?* He argued that the Arusha Agreement addressed the core of this problem- the ethnicity problem- successfully, saying:

“it guaranteed participation by all the ethnic groups in the system of governance, by making certain prescriptions – about the composition of parliament, the composition of the state, and including the composition of political parties and their party lists – to make sure that ethnicity and exclusive ethnic identity become things of the past, and it did so because all of them had mentioned that this is a particular problem that they want to overcome. So they all guaranteed, through proportional

representation, a space, because every political party's list has to make sure that every other person in that list takes into consideration the ethnicity aspect – a Hutu, a Tutsi, a Hutu, a Tutsi – so that in the end when there are spoils sixty-forty representation will be there in that parliament, and the issue of ethnicity and exclusive domination by one ethnic group over the instruments of governance and power becomes an issue of the past.”

Therefore, what makes the Arusha Agreement an important part of both Burundi's history and present is that it went a long way towards identifying a number of other issues that Burundians need to deal with in obtaining and maintaining their democratic government.

The ignoring of history has been the key issue that continues to pose challenges to peace and stability in Burundi. With all the things that have happened in the country, there has not been an officially agreed upon history that has come out of that negotiation process to date. This is something that Africa and the global community need to pay attention to, because its absence allows for the ethnic narrative that creates problems. Ambassador Nhlapo observed that, because Burundi did not have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, history constantly repeats itself and people fail to pay attention to that in their analysis and observations. He pointed out to the audience that in Burundi:

“We have that situation that is still hanging: there has been no reconciliation process in Burundi precisely because the path that the people of Burundi had chosen did not suit a particular scheme or design in terms of the relationship between justice and impunity.”

Having analysed the challenges that the ignored history posed towards sustainable democracy, peace and security in Burundi, Ambassador Nhlapo concluded that these key elements are the certain fundamentals and responsibilities that the global community hold towards intervention efforts in Burundi.

In terms of the recent developments, the ambassador said that he would not talk about the 'third term' issue and “why it was correct, and why it was not correct”. For him, the reality is that Burundi had an election, an election that was boycotted by opposition parties – not for the first time. The international community's analysis of the situation was that there was a need for a dialogue before the elections. Ambassador Nhlapo pointed out that in the case of the 2015 election in Burundi, there were political parties that did not have the necessary support and capacity to contest and win an election democratically. He stated that it was counterintuitive of the international community to prescribe the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU), while Burundi's electoral system already made allowance for the inclusivity of all ethnicities:

“That is the easy way out, always wanting a Government of National Unity, to solve what problem? Because that won't strengthen those parties anyway; they will remain weak.”

He urged the global community to move away from the constant calls for GNU on the grounds that it pushes people into an artificial arrangement, which does not address the underlying problems. As someone who has been following the situation in Burundi for many years and interacting with relevant people there- getting to know them very well as individuals and as groups- Ambassador Nhlapo argued that his observation is that we are not just dealing with a simple issue. It is not something spontaneous, and therefore there is a deeper problem that we need to look into and analyse very carefully, to come to the right conclusions if we are to make the correct interventions as the international community.

In conclusion, Ambassador Nhlapo reminded the international community to curb the tendency of taking a simplistic view of Burundi, as with any country, just because it is small and relatively low-key in terms of global dynamics. He pointed out that Burundi ran an election with its own money when the international community said ‘we are not giving you money for that election’. As a lesson, this shows that the international community should be more careful in how they approach small and relatively less powerful countries, because they too have their own dignity. Elections are expensive and Burundi did not only have one, they had several electoral processes. There were problems, yes: political statements were made that they were not necessarily free and fair, because some people were boycotting, however the actual technical processes, and the low levels of violence— things which are normally some of the indicators of democratic elections – seem to have been forgotten by the international community. Therefore, the international community should consider this a lesson, and as a way forward be reminded that our approach towards intervention in the continent should be carefully studied and assessed, and key to this is the protection of the constitution, which is the foundation of democracy, peace and stability.

Lesotho

After Ambassador Nhlapo having already set the tone about the history of conflict both in Africa and specifically in Burundi, **Ms Litlhare Rabele** reiterated the same point on Lesotho. She argued that in the case of Lesotho, there is also a need to understand the history of conflict and violence. Lesotho is the only country in the SADC Region that has had military coups and attempted military coups. It is also characterized by splits within political parties which create intra-party tensions and conflict, which somehow contribute to the current situation that we see in Lesotho. In terms of the latest political crisis



in the country, the assassination of Brigadier Mahao comes in after elections that sought to bring about peace and stability in the Kingdom, as there was a coup attempt prior these elections. While SADC played an important role in mediating and paving the way to elections, the recent developments have led to concerns raised about the fact that SADC responded very late to situation in Lesotho and left very quickly after the elections.

As a country, Lesotho has a history of security challenges: politicisation of the security sector and securitisation of politics, as well as politicisation of the civil service. The economy of Lesotho is based on its civil service, and to be involved informal becomes politics is a way of survival. These are similar issues between Lesotho and Burundi. Those who fall off the political ladder end up feeling frustrated, as their access to resources of the state dries up. The recent crisis saw SADC intervening, and after elections leaving. Nobody seems to know whether SADC was following up on the implementation of the resolutions, especially the resolution regarding security sector reforms which is an essential part in obtaining

sustainable peace and security in Lesotho, if one analyses its history. It is essential that SADC looks at its intervention in 1998 and take lessons from it.

Ms Rabele pointed out that it is very important for SADC and the AU to be clear on their objectives when mediating in a country. Mediation as a process is time-bound, yes, but when is the time to go in, and when is the time to go out? These are some of the issues that are left hanging, and end up raising a lot of concerns, she argued. She went on to put forward that one of the issues that needs to be taken into account by both multilateral organizations (UN, AU and SADC) and the international community is that civil society in Lesotho continues to play a very active role, assisting in the dissemination of information and also creating spaces for dialogue, and that they need to be strengthened; both civil society and the media.

In her conclusory remarks, she articulated that there is a need to strengthen the capacity of civil society and the media. She pointed out that there is no legislation on how to run a coalition government, It is more of a gentlemen's agreement, and going forward one asks, is that sustainable? The manipulation of the Mixed Member Proportions (MMP), which analysts believe led to the coalition governments in Lesotho, has left many voters feeling betrayed, because some of the parties that are in this seven party coalition did not even win a single constituency in the constituency seat system, but somehow they are now part of the Executive running the country. It is also important for Lesotho to establish an independent and well-functioning Human Rights Commission, and to address the issue of truth and reconciliation.

Madagascar



Dr. Martin Rupiya's address focused more on Madagascar, he articulated the fact that the country has also experienced several cycles of military coups and attempted military coups. Following the joint efforts between SADC, the AU and the international community to ensure peace and stability in the country, Madagascar had successful democratic presidential elections in 2014. He warned that following these elections, Madagascar remains tense and requires close observation by SADC, the AU and the international community.

In analyzing the political situation in Madagascar, Dr. Rupiya argued that it is

important to go back to the tussle between Ravalomanana and Didier Ratsiraka in 2002, where we find the role of the military important. The two of them disagreed on the political arrangements; each declared him-self winner of that election and went for a re-run. In June 2002, the military moved away from Didier Ratsiraka and supported Ravalomanana. Didier Ratsiraka then fled to Paris and Ravalomanana then started to run the Government. In the interim period Ravalomanana saw a delayed recognition of his Administration by the French, so he was angry and started to change course, both in terms of political direction and economic interests, as well as breaking from the Francophone region. There is a very strong external interest in Madagascar. When SADC intervenes in Madagascar, not only is it engaging local actors, but there is pressure to also consider French interests. Therefore for SADC and the AU, Madagascar

becomes a very complex country in which many stakeholders have to be involved in peace and security intervention efforts or mediation.

Zimbabwe

Former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki took up role of mediator in Zimbabwe from 2007 to 2008, and during this time he managed to secure the Global Political Agreement [GPA] that was signed in September 2008. President Zuma found himself with a challenge in his hands when taking over from former president Mbeki, because he had to ensure the implementation of the GPA which was not an easy task.

According to the speaker from DIRCO, while SADC mediation did not get ten out of ten and there were always challenges, this notwithstanding, SADC managed to secure a peaceful resolution in Zimbabwe, and one of the successes was that there was a sharing of power, which is normally not easy. On the signing off of the GPA itself there were many contentions, there were promises made and there were regressions, but with time that was secured. The issue of stability in Zimbabwe is something that remains with the sovereign state.

SA-EU Perspectives

Since this workshop was held under the SA-EU dialogue, it is necessary to underscore what came out as EU perspective on one hand and SA perspectives on the other hand in the discussion. The above summaries already capture inputs by SA government representative. The subsection below summarises the inputs by EU ambassador to SA, Ambassador Roeland van de Geer.

EU Perspectives



Ambassador Van De Geer, began by observing a commonality between the countries under discussion, namely the lack of accountability by the Executive to citizens, but also to the international community and to the peer groups. He noted that the President of Burundi is under very severe criticism by the East African Community (EAC), but the same also applies more or less to the other Heads of States. There is a lack of accountability to the international community backed up by weak representation of the people. He said that there is a weak representation because parliaments tend to be weak, civil society is not as developed as we

would all like to see, and the press is also often not ready and capable to speak out. So we see a lack of checks and balances, and we see a lack of public debate.

In the case of Lesotho, he observed that South Africa played a big role, although it was disappointing that the political parties have come to such a difficult situation. There is lack of capacity and a lack of the

application of capacity in Lesotho. In all of these four countries there is a critical mass of well-educated people, who themselves could do a lot, but it is not happening in the countries themselves.

Africa, and also the international community outside Africa, should, where they can, continue to empower regional organizations to take on their mandated roles. The AU should really increase its capacity to deal with conflicts in the regions, it is important that the AU becomes more focused.

Economically, all four countries are in a very, very difficult situation with Burundi being one of the poorest countries in Africa. Politically the damage is huge, because the younger generations in all these countries are very disillusioned and there is a danger that they give up on the normal, if you like, democratic process.

The EU Ambassador concluded that there is need for in-depth, detailed analysis of the situation in the countries concerned. These are countries that have a long history with huge internal differences of opinion. The international community often doesn't have the resources and the in-depth knowledge of how to proceed, and also doesn't have the mechanisms to talk to the people on the ground. This should include underlining of the importance of female mediators.

Conclusion

The workshop raised Lesotho's imminent chair as a concern and as something that will test SADC's seriousness. The role of the military and its relationship with civilian authority came under the spot light. One of the major arguments advanced by the speakers was that security forces must be committed to accepting the political leadership in the execution of their duties. There was consensus about the fact that the challenge with most interventions is that countries in crisis are allowed to move on once there is a modicum of stability without full implementation of agreements, which would have sought to deal with underlining causes of conflict. This therefore does not stem the likelihood of conflict recurring.

From the EU perspective, it was pointed out that there is a need for detailed knowledge of countries before intervention so as to address the existing challenges faced by multilateral organizations. While the SAG delegation from DIRCO echoed South Africa's support of SADC and AU efforts to address issues of peace and security. Furthermore, it pointed out that key to this has been the role played by South African NGO's and that the country strongly supports those initiatives. As an approach to understand issues and political challenges facing countries like these, it was argued that multilateral institutions need to strengthen early warning systems to pre-empt conflicts and strengthen implementation and enforcement mechanisms. Strengthening the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media to play an oversight role hold governments accountable and information dissemination is also important. It was noted that the AU should have been represented in the workshop. SALO had not been successful in getting AU representation, but this will be pursued in the future workshop.

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Dialogue Report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

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The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

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