

SA-EU Dialogue on Peace and Security: Building Regional and International Consensus Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar and Zimbabwe



Introduction

This policy brief is based on a workshop held on the 6th of August under the SA-EU Dialogue Facility which focused on the political situations in Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar and Zimbabwe and the role of multilateral interventions, particularly by SADC and the AU. These countries have been a focus of the SA-EU peace and security cooperation. The workshop also touched on important concerns that underpin SA-EU cooperation on peace and security issues, which include cross-cutting issues such as: human rights, accountable governance and Africa Union (AU) - European Union partnership.

The workshop was attended by a number of European diplomats as well as South African policymakers, most importantly respective desk officers for the four countries from the SA Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) who were among the speakers. Other speakers included Ambassador Nhlapo, Dr Martin Rupiya, EU Ambassador to SA Ambassador Roeland van de Geer and Ms Lithare Rabele (SALO's Gender Peace and Security Officer) all of who have an excellent historical and contemporary grasp of the conflicts and peace processes in the four countries. A separate "Policy Dialogue Report" of the event provides a more detailed summary of inputs by each speaker.

Analysis of Key Issues

An informed understanding of the historical processes that have had a bearing on the events in Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar and Zimbabwe is crucial to the effectiveness of any intervention by regional bodies and multilateral institutions seeking to address the challenges faced. Of particular historical significance is the role of the military and the lack of civilian and political oversight over the military.

Unless effort is made to ensure that this is done, respective interventions will be inadequate and uninformed, thereby further complicating matters. The speakers emphasised that an awareness of historical conditions and processes should also be instilled in mediators, diplomats, researchers and country experts in terms of their respective interventions and approaches to the four countries. Ambassador Nhalpo made reference to Burundi as an example, noting, “..we ignore history at the expense of peace and stability in that country”. A common aspect that is consistent throughout the four countries in terms of their respective historical contexts is the highly influential role of the military in terms of political processes, especially when it comes to potential political transitions and shifts in political power. Ms Rabele (SALO’s Gender, Peace and Security Officer) noted that Lesotho faced security challenges due to the “politicisation of the security sector and securitisation of politics, as well as politicisation of the civil service”. It could be gleaned from the workshop dialogue that the military in all four countries has historically been a central player in terms of key political events. The influence of the military has not waned in contemporary times, making this a highly volatile issue.

The lack of fulfilment and implementation of peace agreements has resulted in fragile peace in all the four countries.

The speakers noted that all four countries have peace agreements facilitated by regional bodies, with the backing of the international community; yet these agreements have not been thoroughly implemented, thereby resulting in some key clauses which have a direct bearing on peace and security being partially implemented or outrightly disregarded. An example of this is the Arusha Agreement in Burundi which called for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, however to date this has not materialised. Ms Lindi Mminele, noted that in relation to Zimbabwe, key aspects of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) such as security sector reform (SSR) were never implemented. These two examples speak to wider challenges that include Lesotho and Madagascar as well. Political agreements in all of the four countries emphasised the importance of national reconciliation and the need for the reform of state institutions such as the military, so as to address the issues of partisanship and factionalism which had precipitated conflicts and undermined the legitimacy of the state- none of these were ever fully implemented.

The dire economic conditions and limited opportunities have had a destabilising effect on all of the countries discussed.

Limited opportunities, economies in dire straights and weak private sectors create the conditions for increased political stakes and a highly contested political space. The state itself through political manipulation (largely through an over-bloated and politicised public sector) becomes a means of livelihood and prosperity. Ambassador Roeland put it thus, “[t]here is just a public sector that dominates right through society and everybody fights to be there, and if they lose elections, they lose everything and that is why they go to war”. Ms Rabele weighed in citing Lesotho, “[t]he economy of Lesotho is based on its civil service, and to be in politics is a way of survival”. Therefore without

economic recovery and development, the crises in the four countries are likely to deepen thereby fermenting potential conflict.

Lack of accountability between the respective governments in the four countries and their citizens, peers and external bodies and institutions.

This has made the oversight role of regional bodies and other institutions with regards to ensuring the implementation of peace agreements difficult and at times redundant. The result of this is that questions about the influence and effectiveness of regional bodies have been raised, as well as the issue of the delicate balance between intervention and the respect for state sovereignty.

Peace Processes have tended to be top-down- state and political party driven with minimal involvement of citizens in the decision making process

The involvement of ordinary citizens and civil society in the peace processes and decision making in relation to the four countries has been very minimal, if facilitated at all. In cases where it has been attempted, Zimbabwe for example, people driven processes have been torpedoed by political parties. In essence there seems to be a top down manner of decision making and participation dominated largely by state elites. Closely tied to this is the need for greater gender sensitivity with regards to mediation, decision making and participation in peace and governance processes. Women continue to be marginalised and overlooked in terms of direct participation and representation.

Recommendations

Strengthened SA-EU cooperation around peace and security concerns with respect to the four countries is needed.

It was noted that it is important for South Africa and the European Union to continue their mediation efforts in the Great Lakes Region, including Burundi, so as to ensure that an 'open line' is maintained between governments in that region (including Burundi) and the international community. SA-EU cooperation is a key aspect of building international consensus around these countries. In this respect, the role of the South African and European Union Special Envoys was highly commended, and it was noted that their work and cooperation should be strengthened and enhanced.

Support should be given to South Africa's mediation interventions in all four countries.

South Africa's important role with regards to promoting peace and stability in Burundi, Lesotho, Madagascar and Zimbabwe was acknowledged. SA-EU cooperation has focused on Burundi, Madagascar and Zimbabwe in terms of peace and security cooperation, therefore the EU could maintain and enhance its support to South African peace initiatives with respect to the aforementioned countries and possibly including Lesotho.

The EU's relationship with the African Union could be enhanced and reinforced so as to allow for more assistance and strategic support to regional bodies and key actors such as South Africa in terms of their interventions in the four countries.

There is a need to create mechanisms that ensure greater accountability from country governments in relation to the adherence of peace agreements.

Such mechanisms will strengthen domestic institutions that emphasise accountability and transparency. They will also align domestic compliance to regional, continental and international standards so that there is a framework through which to approach respective country governments when they veer away from peace agreements. This may involve reinforcing already existing mechanisms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

There is need for greater civil society participation and involvement in mediation efforts and peace negotiations.

This is noted by the consistent critiques of how the peace processes in the four countries have largely been top down, with a disproportionate emphasis on state elites or rather government incumbents and their opposition counterparts, at the expense of ordinary citizens. Civil society organisations and groupings can help address this issue by aiding in the mobilisation of ordinary citizens as well as providing information with regards to the processes that will be taking place.

There must be an appreciation that in order to attain sustainable peace and stability in all four countries, economic development must go hand and hand with peacemaking efforts. Therefore the reconstruction aspect of peace building has to be emphasised and supported.

The issues of national reconciliation and SSR are integral to securing peace and stability in all four countries.

The military is a key stakeholder in terms of the future trajectories of all four countries, therefore it is imperative that they are engaged and that it is explained to them that the unity, harmony and safety of the country depends to a great extent on their conduct. Trust needs to be built between citizens and the military in each of the four countries. There is an adverse disconnect between the two due to partisanship and deep vested interests. Essentially there can be no genuine national reconciliation and healing without the military's support and goodwill.

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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. SALO believes that sustainable conflict resolution requires dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders in order to shift the positions and therefore the actions of key decision-makers



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