The effectiveness of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in maintaining regional security in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lesotho: 1996 – 2020

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A mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Security Studies (MSS)

Department of Political Sciences

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University of Pretoria

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November 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA FACULTY OF HUMANITIES DECLARATION STATEMENT:

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Degree/ Qualification: Master of Arts in Security Studies

Title of Mini-Dissertation: The effectiveness of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in maintaining regional security in the Republic of Congo and Lesotho: 1996 – 2020.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Almighty God for the strength, wisdom and understanding that he has given me throughout this journey.

The biggest thank you goes to my supervisor, Mr Mike Stiles for your never-ending patience, guidance and support. You are the reason why this dissertation has been successfully completed.

A huge thank you to my parents, Teacher and Tinyiko Maluleke. Thank you for being my pillars of support and always praying for me. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made to ensure that I am able to follow my dreams.

To my son, Vunyingi, thank you for always reminding me to find joy even in the toughest moments.

I must also express my profound gratitude to my brother Pufftich Maluleke. You are my greatest source of inspiration.

Thank you to my partner, Tshepang Molefe. For your constant motivation, unwavering support and the jokes that made the stress more bearable.

Lastly, my friends and colleagues for their encouragement throughout the process.

Abstract

This study critically evaluates the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in promoting regional security and political stability through its interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Lesotho. It assesses the operations of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation using frameworks such as regional security complexes, collective security, security communities, and security from 1996 to 2020.

The study examines the Organ's military and diplomatic interventions during the First and Second Congo Wars, analysing how the national interests of member states, SADC's internal contradictions, and commitment (or not) to its protocols influenced the outcomes. A particular focus is placed on the 1998 SADC military intervention, followed by the political and diplomatic dialogue that ensued. This includes the negotiation processes, SADC's ineffective decision-making mechanisms, and issues related to state fragility demonstrated by the DRC's limited control over its territory and weakened armed forces.

Additionally, the analysis covers Lesotho, identifying patterns of recurring political crises that have required SADC interventions, including Operation Boleas in 1998 and subsequent peacebuilding efforts. The study underscores the complex balance between respecting state sovereignty and advocating for regional interventions to stabilise fragile democracies. These cases reveal significant shortcomings and gaps in SADC's ability to operationalise its principles, including slow response times, national interests dominating over regional interests, and minimal engagement with civil society and human security issues.

Ultimately, while SADC has played a significant role in advancing regional peace and stability, its long-term effectiveness will depend on strengthening institutional decision-making processes, fostering greater cohesion among member states, and prioritising a comprehensive human security approach for lasting peace. Addressing its limitations will enable SADC to fulfill its mission of preventing conflicts, promoting good governance, and ensuring sustainable development in Southern Africa.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC	All Basotho Convention
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo
AU	African Union
BCP	Basotho Congress Party
BDF	Botswana Defence Force
BNP	Basotho National Party
CCL	Christian Council of Lesotho
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EU	European Union
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises
FAZ	Forces Armées Zaïroises
FDLR	Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda
FIB	Force Intervention Brigade
FLS	Frontline States
FPTP	First-past-the-post
ICD	Inter Congolese Dialogue
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IEC	Independenct Electoral Commission
ISDSC	Inter-State Defence and Security Committee
JMC	Joint Monitoring Commission
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
LMPS	Lesotho Mount Police Service
LNDSP	Lesotho National Dialogue and Stabilisation Project
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWP	Lesotho Worker' Party
MDP	Mutual Defence Pact
MFP	Marematlou Freedom Party
MLC	Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo

MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSND	Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue
NDF	Namibian Defence Force
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NRA	National Reforms Authority
OAU	Organisation of the African Union
OPDS	Organ on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation
PACMT	Political Agreement on Consensual Management of the Transition in the DRC
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RSC	Regional Security Complex
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SANDF	South Africa National Defence Force
SAPMIL	SADC Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho
SAPS	South African Police Services
SIPO	Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ
SOMILES	SADC Observer Mission in Lesotho
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITA	Union for the Total Independence of Angola

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

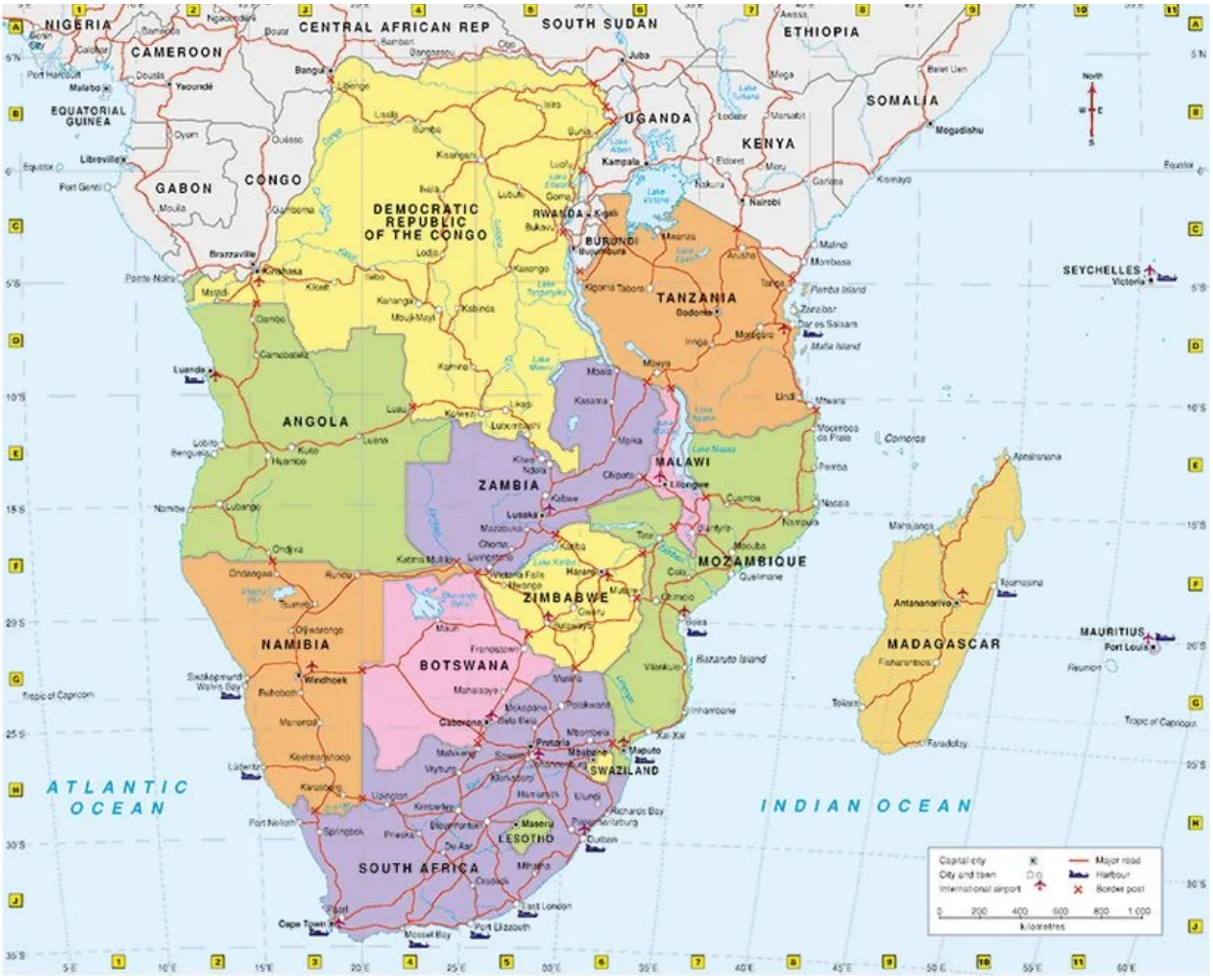
The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was established in 1980 in response to the need to reduce economic dependence on then-apartheid South Africa, particularly in the transportation and communication sectors. Member states of SADCC viewed their reliance on Apartheid South Africa as a significant barrier to their own development due to the extensive reach of its economic power and military capacity. The objective of SADCC was to reshape economic ties among member states and alter the unequal economic relationship with South Africa (Schoeman, 2002:3).

The Frontline States (FLS), Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia, founded SADCC as a defensive measure and a political response to South Africa's regional policies. These countries shared a common history of colonial experiences, struggles for liberation, geographical proximity, and social connections, compounded by the detrimental effects of apartheid and racism. The threat posed by Apartheid South Africa to the SADCC states highlighted the requirement for a regional approach to security as the proximity of these states to South Africa placed them inextricably within the Southern African security complex, while the concept of collective security also presented an option for enhanced self-defence.

Changes in the regional strategic landscape and political climate, such as Namibia's independence and South Africa's transition to democracy, shifted the focus from mere solidarity to deeper regional integration that of a security community. In 1992, SADCC was formally established as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) through the signing of the Declaration and Treaty. This transition aimed to facilitate regional economic integration, growth, and institutional reform, as outlined in Article 5 of the SADC Treaty (SADC, 1998:6). This development highlighted a growing emphasis on regional economic communities and the need to respond to global trends by leveraging the region's resources, potential, and capabilities.

By 2000, SADC had a total of 15 member states namely; Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Political Map of SADC



Source: https://oxford.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/9780190436674.jpg

The establishment of SADC also highlighted the requirement for regional security to underpin the envisaged regional integration and economic development. While the Southern African security complex remained largely unchanged (apart from the addition of the DRC), greater focus was placed within SADC on the need for collective security and the development of a security community. These concepts will frame the discussion of SADC's promotion of peace and security in the region.

To promote and defend peace and security, SADC established the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (OPDS)[1] in 1996, which later formally operated under the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation[2] signed in 2001. This framework empowered the Organ to

[1] For the purpose of this study, Organ on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation is referred to as the Organ.
[2] The Protocol on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation is referred to as the Protocol.

address threats to regional peace, security, and stability. Coordinated by a rotating chair from member states, the Organ met frequently to discuss relevant issues and reported to the Summit of Heads of State and Government. Supported by a dedicated directorate within the SADC Secretariat, the Organ played a critical role in democratic governance, including oversight of electoral processes and mediations, ensuring the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. The Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) served as an institutional framework to achieve the Organ's goals, focusing on four sectors: Political, Defence, State Security, and Public Security. Together with SADC's Mutual Defence Pact of 2003, SIPO guided the implementation of the Protocol (SADC 2010).

The purpose of this study is to analyse the effectiveness of SADC, examining the Organ's mandate, structures, actions and functioning in dealing with security crises in Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 1996 to 2020. Additionally, the study assesses the challenges faced by the Organ in promoting peace and security in Southern Africa, by focusing on the Organ's effectiveness in strengthening the region's capacity to manage and resolve conflicts while promoting peace.

The study examines the diverse security challenges that the Organ is mandated to address by juxtaposing the complex, multi-dimensional conflict in the DRC with the largely domestically driven instability in Lesotho. The DRC conflict is characterised by both internal and external dimensions, involving weak state authority, armed groups, and significant regional and international interventions. In contrast, Lesotho's security crises have been predominantly internal, marked by political instability, governance disputes, and periodic military interference with limited external involvement. By comparing these cases, the study underscores the broad spectrum of security threats within the SADC region, demonstrating that the Organ must navigate both localised, internally-driven instability and protracted conflicts with transnational dimensions to uphold regional stability effectively.

Furthermore, it enriches discourse on regional security complexes, demonstrating how SADC's approach aligns with collective security principles while revealing gaps in decision-making, intervention effectiveness, and institutional coordination. This analysis contributes to policy discussions on strengthening regional peace and security mechanisms in Southern Africa.

1.2. Literature Review

This literature review presents an overview of the relevant theoretical frameworks concerning security in a broader context. It then shifts focus to regional security, specifically discussing security complexes,

security communities, and collective security. Following this, literature is examined regarding the establishment, institutional development, and functioning of the Organ. Finally, relevant literature on key events and developments in Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is reviewed.

The first part of this section explored the key concepts pertinent to the study's background to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Security is a crucial area of focus for this study. Theoretically, the study employed concepts such as security, collective security, and security community to assess the effectiveness of the OPDS.

Traditionally, security was defined as the safeguarding of the state against external military threats, emphasising a state-centric approach. However, with the end of the Cold War, scholars broadened this definition to include protection against transnational crime, human rights violations, and domestic instability. Arnold Wolfers (1952:484) delineated security as the absence of threats to acquired values and the acquisition of new values. Security was also understood as the pursuit of freedom from anything that caused anxiety specifically, that which was threatening, harmful, fearful, and dangerous for both states and populations (Buzan 1991a:432). Other scholars, such as Dalby (1992) and Baldwin (1997), argued that security encompassed various definitions, some of which extended beyond conventional interpretations, necessitating a nuanced understanding tailored to the realities of individual states. Recognising the rise of non-military and internal threats, Snyder (2012:49) presented a broader perspective on security. He raised fundamental questions about the objects of security, the methods of securing them, and the nature of security studies, laying a foundation for a more comprehensive definition of security.

Shifting away from traditional paradigms, a broader perspective emerged through the human security approach. This approach emphasised the protection of individuals, aiming to safeguard people from both conventional threats (such as military aggression) and non-traditional threats (including poverty and disease) (Buzan 1991b:4-6). It advocated for people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific, and preventive measures to enhance the protection and empowerment of all individuals (UN 1994:22-23; Commission on Human Security 2003:6). By prioritising individuals, the human security approach offered a framework for understanding how SADC addressed regional instability in a holistic and preventive manner, thereby fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in Southern Africa.

Security however, cannot be achieved alone, hence the relevance of regional cooperation such as security community. Deutsch (1957: 123-124) defined a security community as a state of affairs in which

shared norms and institutional frameworks played a pivotal role in nurturing a sense of communal security, ultimately making the possibility of war between member states inconceivable. He (1957:124) divides security community into two: amalgamation and the pluralistic community. Adler and Barnett (1998:38) expanded on Deutsch's concept, arguing that the dynamics of security politics were significantly influenced by the desire to establish and maintain community ties. They identified three stages of security community development: nascent (characterised by the initial search for coordination and interaction among members), ascendant (marked by the emergence of shared ideas and mutual trust among member states), and mature (where members developed a collective identity).

Booth (1987: 174) asserted that achieving national security alone was challenging due to inherent uncertainties. In both interstate and intrastate conflicts, collective security became crucial. This entailed a binding agreement among states, even if they were not ideologically aligned, to refrain from using force to resolve disputes and to collectively respond to violations of this agreement (Snyder 1999; Aleksovski et al. 2014).

Buzan and Waever (2003: 44) complemented Deutsch's work by emphasising the significance of regional dynamics in shaping global security. They argued that the international system was heterogeneous, consisting of regions with unique security dynamics. Their insights into regional security provided essential context for understanding security communities and complexes in various regional contexts. They defined security complexes as clusters of states whose security concerns were closely interconnected, making it impossible to separate their national security issues.

Utilising the theoretical foundations of security, collective security, and security communities aided in constructing a framework to analyse the Organ regarding its challenges and determining its effectiveness. In examining the historical context and background of the SADC, various bodies of literature laid the groundwork for this study.

The leadership structure of the early SADC Organ was marred by ambiguity and institutional overlap. President Mugabe, as the first chairman of the Organ, operated independently of the Summit, chaired by President Mandela. This parallel leadership structure resulted in two centres of authority within SADC, each hosting separate summits, reinforcing perceptions of institutional fragmentation and competing political agendas—what Williams (2000: 97) refers to as the "two SADCs." While Mugabe asserted that the Organ did not need to report to the Summit, this position exacerbated governance challenges, particularly regarding transparency and accountability.

Ambiguities from this leadership structure contributed to challenges in earlier SADC interventions, allowing member states to conduct contentious actions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Lesotho without consensus. This highlighted the need for a more formal structure (de Conning 1999; Molomo 1999; Oosthuizen 2006 :35; Mutisi, 2016; Nathan 2006: 612), however these existing studies fail to critically interrogate whether this institutional confusion was an unintended consequence of poorly defined mandates or a deliberate political strategy by key leaders to consolidate regional influence.

This structural vagueness had tangible consequences for regional security interventions. Without clear guidelines on decision-making authority, member states pursued military actions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Lesotho with minimal regional consensus. The notion that these early interventions merely "highlighted the need for a more formal structure" (de Conning 1999; Molomo 1999) overlooks the deeper implications of how elite interests shaped SADC's security governance. The extent to which the interventions were driven by national strategic interests rather than collective security remains an underexplored dimension in the literature.

The 2001 adoption of the Protocol established the Troika system, introducing a one-year rotating chairmanship to enhance peace objectives and address these governance deficiencies (SADC, 2001: 5-6). Van Schalkwyk (2002: 65) suggested this change addressed prior concerns hindering the Organ's effectiveness. Yet there is little empirical analysis on whether these institutional adjustments translated into meaningful improvements in decision-making coherence. Additionally, the assumption that institutional restructuring alone resolved the Organ's earlier dysfunctions ignores the persistent issue of political will among SADC leaders, particularly in enforcing collective decisions.

Similarly, while the 2003 Mutual Defence Pact and the 2004 Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO I) were intended to operationalize SADC's security mechanisms, their implementation was fraught with delays. Van Nieuwkerk (2013) acknowledges that ratification issues hindered their full operationalization, but there is limited discussion on whether this was due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, reluctance among member states, or competing regional interests. The literature largely presents these frameworks as institutional advancements without critically evaluating their efficacy in preventing unilateral military actions by powerful member states.

The Organ's interventions in the DRC and Lesotho further expose the limits of SADC's security governance. The Congo War (1996-2003) saw extensive external involvement, with Rwanda and Uganda

backing Laurent Kabila's rebellion against Mobutu Sese Seko (Human Rights Watch, 2000a). However, much of the scholarship frames the conflict primarily through the lens of regional power struggles, without adequately interrogating the Organ's failure to mediate effectively before full-scale war erupted. The claim that the Organ was inactive at the outset due to Zimbabwe-South Africa tensions (Nathan, 2006) suggests a deeper structural weakness—SADC's inability to impose collective security obligations on its most influential members. The exclusion of South Africa from military deliberations in 1998, when Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia unilaterally decided to intervene in the DRC, further underscores this institutional fragility.

SADC's role in peace processes such as the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the 2002 Sun City Agreement (Dashwood 2002; UN 2002; Nathan 2006; Neethling, 2006) is often cited as evidence of its peacebuilding capacity. However, this perspective underplays the extent to which external actors; particularly the United Nations and major Western powers, shaped these agreements. The establishment of MONUC (later MONUSCO) in 1999, alongside the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in 2013, illustrates the reliance on external security mechanisms to stabilize the DRC (UN, 2013). This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of SADC's regional security architecture in handling protracted conflicts without international reinforcement.

Conversely, the intervention in Lesotho following the disputed 1998 elections further exposes contradictions in SADC's approach to sovereignty and intervention. While Prime Minister Mosisili formally requested military assistance, South Africa's rapid deployment despite its earlier reluctance to intervene in the DRC suggests that strategic interests played a role. Some scholars argue that South Africa's intervention was driven by concerns over the Lesotho Highlands Water Project rather than regional stability (de Coning, 2000; Williams, 2019). This highlights a broader issue within SADC: interventions often appear to be shaped by the geopolitical priorities of dominant states rather than a principled commitment to collective security.

Even after the adoption of the 2001 Protocol, the Organ's capacity to enforce regional security norms remained limited. The 2014 coup attempt and 2015 political assassinations in Lesotho led to the deployment of the SADC Preventive Mission in Lesotho (SAPMIL) (African Union, 2018). However, SAPMIL's constrained mandate and short deployment period illustrate the ongoing challenges of translating institutional frameworks into effective long-term stabilization mechanisms. Ultimately, SADC's early security governance was characterised by institutional ambiguity, elite-driven decision-making, and inconsistent application of intervention principles. The suggestion that the 2001 Protocol resolved these

challenges overlooks the deeper issue of member states' reluctance to subordinate national interests to regional security commitments. As Van Aardt (1996) notes, the Organ's undefined responsibilities prior to 2001 led to ad hoc and often divisive interventions, a pattern that has persisted despite formal institutional reforms.

Existing literature on SADC's interventions in the DRC and Lesotho often lacked a thorough analysis of their long-term impacts and sustainability. For instance, Coning's paper on "Lesotho Intervention: Implications for SADC," critiques the 1998 intervention in Lesotho, focusing on immediate operational challenges and decision-making processes, but offers limited evaluation of the intervention's enduring effects on Lesotho's political stability. Similarly, the article "Appraising the efficacy of SADC in resolving the 2014 Lesotho conflict" assesses SADC's role in addressing the 2014 crisis, highlighting initial successes and ongoing challenges, yet it does not delve deeply into the long-term sustainability of the peace efforts. Most studies focused on immediate outcomes while neglecting lasting effects and changes in governance. It remains unclear whether SADC's efforts resulted in sustainable peacebuilding or improved governance.

1.3. Research Problem

Despite the pivotal role of SADC in regional peace and security, there remains a lack of comprehensive evaluation regarding its interventions in Lesotho and the DRC. Existing literature often focuses on broader regional security trends but fails to assess the long-term effectiveness of interventions in managing and resolving conflicts. Bridging this gap requires long-term studies that analyse sustained effects and broader implications for regional peace and development. Understanding how the Organ has functioned in these different security environments is crucial for refining SADC's conflict resolution mechanisms, strengthening regional stability, and enhancing multilateral responses to security threats.

To address the existing gap, this study conducted a comprehensive examination of the strategies employed by SADC in Lesotho and the DRC as case studies. It identified and analysed the challenges and limitations encountered, examined the role of external actors, and assessed the long-term implications for peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and regional stability. The focus of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Organ in addressing security threats within the region. It investigated the challenges faced by the Organ in its efforts to promote peace and security while assessing how effective it had been in building and strengthening the capacity of SADC member states to manage and resolve conflicts.

The DRC and Lesotho were significant focal points for this study due to their strategic geopolitical positions, histories of conflict and instability, and their importance for regional peace, security, and economic development. The timeline from 1996 to 2020 provided important historical context, allowing for the evaluation of political, social, and economic dynamics in both countries over more than two decades. This period included key events, political transitions (such as elections and changes in leadership), and their consequences. Academically, this study contributes to the discourse on regional security governance, collective security, and intervention effectiveness in Southern Africa. Practically, it offers insights into policy improvements for SADC's peacebuilding initiatives, ensuring that future interventions are better equipped to address the root causes of instability and foster sustainable peace in the region.

The main research question this study aimed to answer was: To what extent has the Organ been effective in addressing security issues and instability in the DRC and Lesotho between 1996 and 2020? In addressing this research question, the following sub-questions were explored:

- What role did the Organ play in SADC's involvement in the DRC peace process and the subsequent support for maintaining peace and security in the DRC from 1996 to 2020?
- What role did the Organ play in SADC's engagement to resolve the various security crises in Lesotho and provide support for maintaining peace and security in Lesotho during the same period?

1.4. Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to critically assess the effectiveness of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (OPDS) in addressing security challenges and promoting regional stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Lesotho between 1996 and 2020. The study seeks to evaluate the Organ's institutional structures, intervention strategies, and decision-making processes to determine its role in managing and resolving conflicts within the SADC region.

Objectives:

- To examine the historical development and institutional framework of SADC, with a particular focus on the establishment and evolution of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation.

- To analyse the role of the Organ in SADC's interventions in the DRC and Lesotho, assessing its involvement in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and post-conflict stability between 1996 and 2020.
- To identify the challenges and limitations encountered by the Organ in promoting peace and security, including issues related to decision-making, coordination, and external influences.
- To evaluate the long-term implications of SADC's security interventions on regional stability and governance, providing insights into the effectiveness of the Organ in strengthening SADC member states' capacity for conflict management and resolution.
- To contribute to the broader academic discourse on regional security governance and collective security by contextualizing SADC's interventions within theoretical frameworks of regional security complexes and multilateral conflict resolution.

1.5. Research Methodology

This study employed a literature-based approach, focusing on qualitative analysis. It gathered archival and document-based data related to the formation and background of SADC. The literature review incorporated descriptive, explanatory, interpretative, and analytical methods to explore SADC's institutions, structure, and capability to address security challenges. The goal of this qualitative study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and enhance the reliability of the findings. The literature-based qualitative methodology employed in this study represents the most appropriate approach for addressing the research problem, as it facilitates a rigorous and comprehensive examination of SADC's institutional structures, policy frameworks, and interventions in the DRC and Lesotho. Given the study's focus on assessing the long-term effectiveness of the Organ in addressing regional security challenges, qualitative analysis of archival and document-based data enables a systematic and contextually grounded investigation into the mechanisms and decision-making processes of SADC. This methodological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the Organ's intervention strategies and their broader implications for regional peace and stability.

The literature-based study primarily relied on library research and various documents, including conference reports, theoretical works, official documents, and academic studies. It utilised both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was sourced from government speeches, documents, policy frameworks, and the official SADC website. Secondary sources included journal articles, media reports, and books. The collected data was analysed to identify patterns that aided in understanding the operations of the Organ. The reliance on both primary and secondary sources ensures the validity and

reliability of the study's findings while enabling a critical assessment of the Organ's role in managing security crises.

Furthermore, given the inherent challenges associated with conducting fieldwork in conflict-affected regions, a literature-based approach offers a practical and methodologically robust alternative, providing access to a broad range of perspectives and historical accounts necessary for a nuanced analysis of SADC's role in conflict resolution and regional stability.

1.6. Research Structure

Chapter one introduces the study, identifies the research theme, and provides a literature overview. It also defines the research problem and the research question, while explaining the research methodology, study objectives, and the structure of the research.

Chapter two focuses on clarifying key concepts and constructing an analytical framework that guided the study. Within this context, the research positions itself within the theory of Security Studies, which was used to examine the role of SADC as a regional organisation concerning peace and security matters. The chapter also analyses SADC in general and the Organ in particular, clarifying their roles and responsibilities in relation to the organisation's structures and policy framework.

Chapter three examines the role of the Organ in the DRC peace process and its subsequent support for maintaining peace and security in the country from 1996 to 2020.

Chapter four explores the Organ's engagement in resolving various political and security crises in Lesotho and its support for maintaining peace and security in Lesotho from 1996 to 2020.
Chapter five provides a summary, evaluation, and findings based on the data presented throughout the study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS AND CLARIFICATION OF SADC STRUCTURES AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter's aims to construct a theoretical framework for assessing the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation from 1996 to 2020. It examines and investigates security in its broader sense, recognising its contested nature and the many theoretical approaches that have influenced its understanding. The chapter begins by defining security and its relationship with instability and conflict, highlighting how these dynamics have evolved in response to changing global contexts.

The chapter transitions into a discussion of national security, examining how traditional state-centric approaches have been complemented and, at times, challenged by alternative perspectives, including realism, liberalism, and the human security approach. These theoretical lenses provide insights into the interplay between state interests, individual well-being, and global security challenges. The chapter then studies how conflict is resolved through peacekeeping, diplomacy and military means. The effectiveness of such tools is evaluated towards addressing security challenges, particularly in the SADC region. This theoretical background lays the foundation for the analysis of the approach by the Organ to address security problems and establish stability.

Finally, SADC structures and key policy documents are examined to serve as a guide for the evaluation of the functioning and decision-making of SADC in general, and the Organ in particular, related to developments in the DRC and Lesotho.

2.2. Theoretical Dimensions

This section looks to analyse the complexities of regional stability and conflict resolution within Southern Africa. Central to this analysis is the concept of security, encompassing both traditional notions of national security—focused on state sovereignty and territorial integrity—and broader human security concerns that prioritise individual well-being and societal resilience. The study employs three security approaches: realism, which emphasises power dynamics and state-centric strategies; liberalism, which highlights cooperative frameworks and institutional engagement; and the human security approach, which shifts the focus to protecting individuals from threats such as poverty, disease, and violence. Additionally, the mechanisms of conflict resolution; peacekeeping, diplomacy, and military intervention serve as critical tools for assessing the effectiveness of regional responses to crises. By synthesizing these theoretical

perspectives and conflict resolution strategies, the study aims to offer a comprehensive evaluation of security dynamics and intervention outcomes in the region.

2.2.1. Security

The concept of security is integral to understanding world politics but remains deeply contested and context-dependent (Buzan 1991a:29; Williams 2008:2). Its definition has evolved over time, shaped by historical events, cultural contexts, and varying scholarly interpretations. Security, as Arnold Wolfers (1952:484) observes, can be understood objectively as the absence of threats to acquired values, or subjectively as the absence of fear that these values will be attacked.

Nye (1987:372) and Nye & Lynn-Jones (1988) further frame security as the protection of a referent object—often the state—through military and technical means, particularly during conflicts, a definition that will be utilised throughout the study. Buzan (1991a:42) builds on this by asserting that security cannot exist without a referent object, which serves as the focal point for identifying threats. Traditionally, this referent object has been the state, reflecting the view that safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity ensures the security of its inhabitants.

Security is intrinsically linked to instability and conflict. Conflict arises when two or more parties contest limited resources or divergent goals (Wallensteen 2007:13; Heywood 2002:421). It encompasses a range of disputes, from ideological and territorial conflicts to struggles over scarce resources (Effendi, 2010:84). Conflicts can occur between states (interstate conflict) or within states (intrastate conflict), the latter often involving government forces and non-state actors.

Instability, characterised by political, economic, or social turmoil, exacerbates the likelihood of conflict. Mearsheimer (1990) stated that the end of the Cold War meant a reversion to old-fashioned power politics, and instability driven by nationalism and ethnic conflict. A grasp on the complexity of instability, conflict and security is all the more important when developing strategies to prevent violence and promote sustainable peace.

These interrelated concepts form the basis of the analytical framework, assessing how instability fuels conflict and how security mechanisms, rooted in state-centric protection are employed to mitigate threats and maintain order.

2.2.2. National Security

National security remains a cornerstone of traditional security studies. Defined as the protection of a state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and population, it reflects a realist perspective where the state is both the primary actor and the referent object of security (Buzan 1991b:423; Walt 1991:212). This approach emphasises military preparedness and the deterrence of external threats (Booth 1991:318). Nevertheless, criticisms of this state-centric paradigm have underlined its shortcomings in dealing with domestic weaknesses and trans-national issues. For example, Baldwin (1997:8) has argued that there is a need "for a conception of security based on security for whom and by what values". This opens the door to alternative approaches that incorporate broader societal concerns, such as economic stability, environmental protection, and human rights.

2.2.3. Security Approaches

Various conceptual frameworks and practical strategies designed to address and mitigate threats that jeopardise stability, order, and safety. These frameworks can be applied at different levels, including the individual level, which focuses on the human dimension, the national level pertaining to specific countries, the regional level, which involves coalitions or groups of neighbouring countries, and the global level that encompasses cross-border security concerns.

- Realism

Realism, as one of the oldest theoretical approaches to security, emphasises the anarchic nature of the international system, where states prioritise their survival through power accumulation (Walt, 1998:31; Glaser 2013:16). Realists view states as rational, unitary actors engaged in a perpetual struggle for power and security in a competitive environment.

A dominant framework for understanding international relations during the Cold War was realism. As a result of the geopolitical realities of the time, it focused on deterrence and military strength. However, the narrow focus on state security has faced increasing criticism for its inability to address non-traditional threats such as poverty, pandemics, and environmental degradation and neglecting non-state actors and transnational threats, prompting the development of alternative perspectives . In reaction to the limits of state-centric approaches, more expansive views of security have come to dominate much of contemporary politics, with the human security paradigm focused on individuals and communities at its centre.

Realism is central to this study as it explains the geopolitical motivations behind SADC's interventions in the DRC and Lesotho. In an anarchic regional system, where national interests and power dynamics shape decision-making, realism provides a framework for analysing SADC's security responses based on power calculations. It also helps examine member states' motivations for either supporting or resisting interventions in regional crises. Furthermore, realism offers insight into the effectiveness of collective security efforts, particularly in the context of competing state interests and internal divisions within SADC. By applying this perspective, the study evaluates whether the SADC Organ operated as a genuine mechanism for collective security or whether its actions were primarily driven by state-centric power struggles and national interests.

- Liberalism

Liberalism emerged as a response to realism's limitations, advocating for the potential of cooperation and institutional frameworks to mitigate conflict. While recognising the centrality of states, liberalism also acknowledges the role of intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other actors in shaping international relations (Viotti & Kauppi 1999:7).

By focusing on diplomacy, economic interdependence, and the rule of law, liberalism provides a much more hopeful perspective of security emphasising cooperation and potential mutual gain. In the face of international challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and economic inequality, its salience is increased.

Liberalism provides an alternative perspective by emphasising cooperation, diplomacy, and institutional frameworks as key mechanisms for multilateral conflict resolution. In the context of SADC, liberalism helps explain the organisation's role in promoting dialogue, conflict mediation, and security cooperation. It also highlights the establishment of formal mechanisms such as the Mutual Defence Pact (2003), and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO), which aim to enhance regional security governance. Additionally, liberalism considers the involvement of external actors, including the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), in reinforcing peace and stability through multilateral frameworks. By incorporating this perspective, the study evaluates whether SADC's security mechanisms effectively facilitated regional integration and cooperation or whether structural weaknesses undermined its ability to manage crises.

- Human Security

Human security gained prominence in the post-Cold War era, with the United Nations championing its adoption through initiatives such as the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) New Dimensions of Human Security report. By addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as inequality and underdevelopment, human security provides a holistic framework for achieving sustainable peace and stability.

Human security moves the attention away from states and suggests protecting individuals against threats of poverty, disease, or political repression (Buzan 1991a:4-6; Buzan 1991b:49; UNDP 1994:23). This perspective highlights that security of humans, societies and nations is inseparable, and the survival of individuals is essential to achieve national and international security.

The UNDP's report emphasised that human security is universal, its components interdependent, and focuses on preventive rather than reactive measures, placing intrinsic importance on people (UNDP, 1994: 22-24). Security in this regard should encompasses security from fear, violence, ignorance, poverty, and cultural deprivation (Newman and Van Ginkel 2000). According to Newman (2010:78), for security policies and analysis to be both legitimate and effective within a human security framework, the individual must be the referent object.

The concept of human security is essential for analysing SADC's interventions, particularly in the DRC, where state failure, armed groups, and human rights violations created long-term security challenges. In Lesotho, governance crises and internal instability required solutions beyond military intervention. Human security provides a framework for assessing the effectiveness of SADC's responses in addressing root causes of insecurity, such as governance failures, political instability, and economic underdevelopment. It also examines SADC's role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, including efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and promote sustainable stability. Furthermore, human security highlights the shift from a state-centric to a people-centered approach, particularly in evaluating the Organ's capacity to prevent conflicts and protect vulnerable populations. By incorporating this perspective, the study critically evaluates whether SADC's interventions relied primarily on military solutions or embraced a more holistic approach to peace and stability.

2.2.4. Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution mechanisms are organised procedures, tools, and strategies utilized to address, manage, and settle disagreements among individuals, groups, or nations. The purpose of these

mechanisms is to convert conflicts into peaceful resolutions, encourage reconciliation, and avert future occurrences.

- Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping plays a pivotal role in transitioning societies from conflict to peace. Defined as multilateral interventions to control or resolve armed conflicts, peacekeeping operations have evolved from traditional roles of monitoring ceasefires to multidimensional efforts encompassing election oversight, institution-building, and disarmament (UN 2018; Bellamy & Williams, 2013).

Peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles: consent of parties; impartiality; minimum of force. The United Nations (UN) is the primary peacekeeping body, but there's no formal UN Charter basis for peacekeeping. As of 2020, there are 11 UN peacekeeping operations deployed, with 4 in Africa and there have been a total of 71 deployed since 1948 (UN 2024).

Understanding this definition is crucial in analysing SADC's peacekeeping efforts in conflict zones, particularly in the DRC, and the evolution of its peacekeeping operations. It helps assess the transition from traditional peacekeeping to multidimensional interventions, evaluating whether SADC's operations have shifted toward more comprehensive roles such as election oversight, institution-building, and disarmament. It provides a basis for examining SADC's adherence to the principles of peacekeeping—consent of parties, impartiality, and the minimum use of force—and its operational effectiveness in conflict zones.

- Diplomacy and Political Dialogue

As a non-military method of resolving conflicts, diplomacy and political dialogue offer negotiation, mediation, and arbitration as means to address grievances and prevent escalation (Zartman, 2001). Incentives and sanctions can also be effective, although their effectiveness can vary depending on the context (Cortright & Lopez, 2002). Analysing how SADC uses negotiation, mediation, and arbitration to manage regional security issues, especially in addressing political tensions within member states or in conflict zones like Zimbabwe and the DRC becomes crucial in understanding the decision making process by SADC Organ.

- Military Intervention

Military intervention, while controversial, is sometimes deemed necessary to prevent atrocities or address transnational threats. It is defined as to the use of military force by one or more states within another

sovereign state in order to change its course or outcome of a conflict. In contrast to this the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine highlights the possibility of the 'positive' use of force and underscores the international community's obligation to act when states fail to or are unable to protect their populations (UN 2005). However, despite noble intentions, such interventions often face criticism for undermining sovereignty and causing unintended harm (Evans & Sahnoun, 2001; Finnemore, 2003; Kuperman, 2013).

This concept provides an important lens for evaluating SADC's military interventions, especially in the DRC, and its decision-making process regarding the use of force. The ethical and practical challenges of military intervention can be explored, such as the balance between protecting civilians and respecting state sovereignty. This perspective would inform the study on the limitations and consequences of SADC's military actions, as well as the debate surrounding the legitimacy and effectiveness of such interventions.

2.3. Forms of Regional Security Cooperation

Following the end of the Cold War, regional systems have become imperative for understanding security dynamics. Not all security experts agree whether the focus should be on national or international security. Some believe that concentrating on states and their interactions overlooks important changes in global politics, especially after the Cold War. These experts argue that instead of just focusing on states, more attention should be paid to 'societal security' as the world is experiencing both integration and fragmentation. As such this section discusses the different types of security cooperation, namely, security complex, collective security and security community to provide a better understanding of international security

2.3.1. Security Complex

A security complex is defined by Buzan (1983:106), as "a group of states whose security concerns are so closely linked that their national securities cannot be reasonably considered apart from one another". He and Waever (1998: 201; 2003: 44) later redefine the concept to reflect a state-centric and military political focus while also including the possibility of different actors of security. This redefinition does not change the main properties of the concept.

Buzan and Wæver (2003: 47-48) argue that the concept cannot be applied to any group of countries however for a geographic area to qualify as a Regional Security Complex (RSC), adjacent or geographically proximate states must have a certain level of security interdependence. They argue they

are also socially constructed to some extent through the interactions, fears, alliances, and diplomatic relations between states. Such security interdependence must be sufficiently strong to establish them as a clearly linked set and distinguish them from neighbouring security regions. They argue that RSC are distinguished by degrees of relative security connectedness and indifferences from each other. RSC are not about people's perceptions of regions but about the practical security relationships and concerns in those regions, hence members can only belong to one RSC at a time, meaning the memberships are mutually exclusive.

RSCs' structure and character are defined by two types of relations. One, power relations and two, the patterns of amity and enmity. Where there is an unequal balance of power, interactions are premised either on fear or friendship (Bailes and Courtney 2006: 199). Where the interactions are based on amity or enmity, there is an emergence of common security interests and cooperation between strong and weak states within a geographical region (Buzan and Waever 2003: 49).

Several scholars have highlighted the limitations of the RSC framework. Troitskiy (2015) points out that the framework often fails to address how these security regions originate and evolve over time. Additionally, Walsh (2021) argues that the dynamics of amity and enmity within RSCs have changed due to factors beyond the material and normative conditions typically considered by the concept. These observations raise important questions that could enhance the RSC framework by encouraging a broader focus beyond just state-centric perspectives. He further argues that RSC did not consider the role played by influential individual leaders in understanding regional security in certain regions such as Africa.

2.3.2. Collective Security

Cooperation among states is crucial for achieving peace and security. Acting independently is often insufficient to address threats and further national interests. A collaborative approach to enhancing security is collective security, in which states work together. Booth (1987: 261) argues that when credible defensive alliances are lacking, the international system becomes vulnerable to the actions of aggressive forces. He further contends that because achieving national security is often challenging because of the uncertainty involved, states often work together towards improving their security (Booth 1987: 303). Solomon and Cilliers (1997: 192) argue that collective security relies on the interdependence of nation-states. Many issues cross national borders, making it impossible for governments to protect their citizens alone.

Snyder (1999: 107) and Aleksovski et al. (2014: 274) refer to collective security as a formal commitment by states to a joint security system that reflects their combined security interests over a long period. One of the key components of collective security systems is a legally binding agreement governed by a legitimate international organisation, such as the United Nations (UN), in which states agree not to use force to resolve disputes and to act collectively against violators (Snyder 1999: 107; Jordaan 2017: 163).

Alliances, while a form of collective security require clarification. An alliance is defined as a formal agreement or partnership between two or more states to cooperate on specific issues, typically for mutual defence, security, or political objectives. Alliances are often created in response to perceived threats, with member states committing to support each other in the event of an attack or other security challenges (Walt 1987; Snyder 1997). Unlike alliances, collective security is not concerned with external threats that would require to form defence. But is rather concerned with internal peace and cooperation (Breytenbach, 1994: 27). Breytenbach further argues that peace keeping may also be considered an integral part of collective security.

2.3.3. Security Community

At the international level, community does exist where states tend to act more peacefully towards each other if they belong to a global or regional community. Karl Deutsch refers to this as the concept of security communities. According to Deutsch (1957), when states become closely integrated and form part of a community, they are less likely to go into war and therefore resolve differences peacefully. He claimed that those states that dwell in a security community had created not simply a stable order but, in fact, a stable peace. Security communities are, therefore, defined as groups that have become integrated, where integration is defined as developing a sense of community that is accompanied by both formal and informal institutions and practices strong enough to guarantee peaceful change for a long period of time among members of a group (Deutsch et al 1957: 33)

This concept was expanded further by Adler and Barnett (1998: 167) when they argued that security communities are based on the notion that all conflict can be resolved through non-violent means and relations maintain expectations of peaceful change. They further operationalised the concept by developing a three-tiered analysis of cooperation efforts and three stages of the development of security communities, namely nascent, ascendant and mature. Tier one consists of precipitating conditions that are necessary to induce closer cooperation such as changes in technology, economics and environment as well as development in external threats (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 37-38). Tier two includes factors that

are conducive to the development of mutual trust and collective identity and is characterised by closer and more frequent interactions that have started to transform the environment in which participating states and their citizens are embedded (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 38). The third tier consists of necessary conditions for the dependable expectations of peaceful change namely mutual trust and collective identity (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 38).

They further provide a framework for the study of security communities built on Deutsch's insights, which provide a critical benchmark for the development of a security community. During the nascent phase (phase 1), states are not seeking a formal security community instead they are focused on how their can increase mutual security, ways to reduce interaction costs and promote further exchanges and interactions through diplomatic means that are both on bilateral and multilateral level. This is triggered by a mutual security threat and does not necessarily require shared identity or knowledge but, rather, joint interests that require collective action (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 50).

The ascendant phase (phase 2) considers stronger connections between states beyond the fear of a common security threat. States during this stage have less fear of one another and have fostered better military cooperation and interactions which encourage the development of new institutions and organisations. Unlike the nascent phase, states now have common goals, shared thinking and a deepened sense of mutual trust (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 53).

In the mature phase (phase 3), the shared identity and deeply established norms make war between the states highly unlikely. Making decisions is more consensual; worst case scenario assumptions do not include those within the community and norms of the state are most likely to reflect of those within the same community (Adler and Barnet, 1998: 55-56).

Schoeman (2002:7) argues that security communities are social constructs that are built through conscious human endeavour and in the sense represent imagined communities however, cognisance needs to be taken of the fact that the three phases of security communities (as articulated by Adler and Barnett) reflect an evolutionary pattern of development.

2.4. Relevance of Theory to Study

The theoretical frameworks and concepts presented above establish the foundation of an analytical framework that will be utilised to assess SADC's initiatives in the DRC and Lesotho in the following

chapters. Although each framework may possess unique limitations, their combined use provides a thorough perspective for scrutinising the decision-making processes of the Organ.

The viewpoints of the RSC, collective security, and security community will be used to explore the factors that impact the Organ's decision-making. This analysis will involve examining key policy documents as well as the development of regional security cooperation within SADC since its formation. These frameworks will aid in contextualising how regional dynamics and institutional structures influence the Organ's responses to security issues.

The notion of security and its various approaches, human security, realism, and liberalism, will be employed to further assess the Organ's decisions, concentrating on whether these choices were aimed at the welfare and security of the region's populace (human security) or favoured the interests of ruling elites. This differentiation is essential for evaluating the inclusivity and effectiveness of SADC's interventions in both Lesotho and the DRC. Key areas of focus will include how well interventions addressed human security aspects like civilian protection and socio-economic grievances, as well as how state-centric interests were reconciled with wider societal needs. This analysis will help determine if the Organ's decision-making is influenced by a human-centered perspective or driven by conflicting national interests and internal power struggles.

Moreover, the study will analyse the Organ's achievements and shortcomings in addressing regional security challenges, using the DRC and Lesotho as comparative examples. The security community perspective will be crucial in evaluating whether interventions sought to tackle the underlying causes of conflict or were limited by competing national agendas and power dynamics. This analysis will also investigate whether these interventions succeeded in fostering sustainable peace.

Chapters three and four will apply the theoretical aspects discussed to evaluate significant SADC-led interventions and SADC role in non-led interventions. These chapters will assess whether the Organ has accomplished its goals and identify its principal successes and failures. This evaluation will pave the way for chapter five, which will explore the Organ's shortcomings in achieving regional stability and offer insights on how the Organ can enhance its effectiveness.

2.5. Southern African Development Community Structure and Policy Framework

SADC operates through a set of institutional structures and policy frameworks designed to promote peace, security, and regional integration. Central to its governance is the Summit of Heads of State and Government and the Organ. The guiding documents of SADC include the SADC Treaty, the Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation and the Mutual Defence Pact. Additionally, the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ provide strategic guidance on development and security objectives. These structures and policy instruments are critical for evaluating SADC's intervention in the DRC and Lesotho case studies, as they represent the foundational frameworks that guide the Organ's decision-making, conflict resolution, and security operations. By assessing these cases, the effectiveness and limitations of SADC's institutional and policy mechanisms in addressing regional challenges can be critically analysed.

2.5.1. Structures

Summit

The Summit consists of all SADC Member States Heads of State and/or Government. Decisions are made by consensus. It is SADC's supreme policy-making institution and has the final authority in providing overall policy direction and controlling functions of the Community. The Summit is also a legislative body. The Summit has the power to take binding decisions. The Summit is held in one of the Member States and generally once or twice a year either in August or September. It appoints the Executive Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Secretariat, and also admits new members into SADC (SADC 1998:8-9).

In addition to the formal summit meetings, Special Summit meetings are also convened to deal with matters of urgency and whenever required. The Summit is a key institution needing to approve policy outputs before adoption into law (SADC 1998:9).

The Summit made the unanimous decision to institutionalise the secretariat practice of having a Troika comprising Chair, incoming Chair and outgoing Chair of the SADC since this arrangement was first established by Summit held in Maputo, Mozambique on 28 August 1999. Article 9(1)7 The Troika applies, not only with respect to the Summit alone, but also to the Organ, the Council, the integrated Committee of Ministers and standing Committee of Official. Other members can be added to the Troika when

required. It has also allowed the organisation to respond rapidly to crises, implement decisions, and provide policy guidance for SADC institutions between Summits (SADC 1998).

Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (Organ)

The establishment of the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security (the Organ) in 1996 was a significant step forward towards managing regional security and peace. The Organ shifted SADC's focus from traditional narrow military focus to a collective and human-focused security (Breytenbach 2000:87). The objectives of the Organ were: to promote peace and security within the region; the safeguarding citizens over state protection; and promote cooperation and common political value systems (SADC 2010) The Organ operates independently of other SADC structures to ensure flexible, timely, and effective responses and comprises two main components, namely, the directorate and the Troika[3], which report to the SADC summit (SADC 2001:3-5).

The establishment of the Organ marked a crucial step in developing SADC into a security community. Nathan (2012) notes that in the first five years of the Organ's existence there was a lack of a protocol that would give it a legal basis and instead the Organ operated as a competitor to the SADC summit. This posed challenges for the Organ, including where two forums dealing with the same regional security issues ran concurrently in what Williams (2000:97) termed the "two SADCs".

As a result, De Conning (1999), Williams (2000) and Matlosa (2020) all agree that the Organ faced challenges and failed to address and respond to multiple conflicts because of the ambiguity in this dual leadership system. This situation also highlighted some challenges within the Organ, such as the reluctance of members states to exercise regional leadership in conflict management and preventative diplomacy (Malan and Cilliers 1997). The authors argue that the reluctance was owing to the inability of member states to allow transparency and democracy in their own countries.

In its early stages, the Organ was faced with a lack of integrated systems and processes to deal with issues concerning human rights and democracy which was influenced by the fact that member states did not share the same political values or a collective identity which the SADC Treaty endorses.

3 Organ Troika is constituted on the same basis as the Summit Troika. The two Troikas are mutually exclusive

2.5.2. Key Documents related to Structures

SADC Treaty

In 1992, SADCC was transformed into the Southern African Development Community through the signing of the Declaration and Treaty. SADC's main objectives shifted from economic dependence to addressing socio-economic and security issues threatening member states. The SADC Treaty (1993:6) emphasised "deeper economic integration, common economic, political, social values and strengthened regional solidarity" (SADC 1998:4-5). The focus was on achieving a "shared future within a regional community" (SADC 1998:5).

The Treaty's signing strengthened SADC's development towards a security community by laying the foundation for common values and mutual trust. The rules guide interactions, fostering mutual trust and cooperation, essential for developing a security community. Norms "help to coordinate values among states" (Acharya 2001:24), furthering SADC's pursuit of security community status by promoting behaviours and values that enable meaningful interactions and a sense of belonging.

The Treaty also regulates conditions for enforcing sanctions against any SADC member state (SADC 1998:21). This aspect prevents member states from violating SADC principles, such as committing violence or infringing on sovereignty. According to Deutsch's framework, mutual responsiveness in a security community relies on members predicting each other's behaviour (Deutsch 1957:129). By prohibiting violations of regional principles, the Treaty sets an expectation for adherence, fostering predictable behaviours and strengthening the "we-feeling" essential to a security community.

The Treaty commits member states to cooperate in industries such as trade, agriculture, peace and security, infrastructure, natural resources, science and technology, information, and culture (SADC 1998: 16). These areas for cooperation reflect the needs and changes in SADC member states, aligning with the initial conditions in Adler and Barnett's framework (2001) necessary for engagement and coordination. Thus, the Treaty's commitment to cooperation positioned SADC at the first tier of security community development, stimulating engagement and policy coordination.

To meet the objectives of the Treaty, SADC implemented various new mechanisms and policies, detailed in the following sections of this chapter.

Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security (Protocol)

The Organ faced obstacles to its decision-making and relationships between member states. Operating without a legal framework meant that the Organ lacked clear authority and structure, leading to a competitive dynamic with the SADC Summit. Ambiguity hindered the Organ's ability to address and respond effectively to conflicts, exacerbating the region's security challenges, which also revealed a reluctance among member states to exercise leadership in conflict resolution and preventative diplomacy, a reluctance rooted in internal governance issues (Malan & Cilliers 1997).

The challenges faced by the Organ necessitated the adoption of the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security cooperation (the Protocol) in 2001, which serves as an institutional framework for decision-making. The Protocol outlines the Organ as a subordinate to the summit and is headed by a Troika. The objectives as outlined in the Protocol included: Strengthening the peacekeeping forces of all member states; to co-ordinate relations between the police forces of all member states; to address the issue of border control; to foster a community approach to domestic security; to foster the evolution of common political; and values, to diffuse and resolve all intra and inter-state conflict (SADC 2001; SADC 2010).

According to Hammerstad (2003) and Hendricks and Musavengana (2010:16), the formalisation of the Organ through the Protocol improved some of the challenges faced in the infancy of the Organ as well as the governance of the security sector. However, Hendricks and Musavengana (2010:16), argue that there is still a lack of transparency regarding public engagement when it comes to the decision-making process.

The Organ's prioritisation of peace and security reflects the region's desire to enhance collaboration for mutual security interests. Adler and Barnett (1998: 50) describe the nascent phase of security community development as states exploring ways to coordinate for mutual security. Thus, the Protocol's strategic objectives outline how SADC states can cooperate on security, exhibiting early characteristics of a security community, with solidarity and cooperation as driving principles.

Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP)

The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) was initiated in 1999 and adopted in 2004 to guide the objectives of the SADC Treaty over a 15-year period (SADC 2021: 6). It provides a framework for regional integration in Southern Africa, focusing on several key priorities (2021: 55).

The RISDP has been revised twice, in 2014 and 2020. The 2015-2020 revision noted limited progress in intra-regional trade and emphasised the need to prioritise industrialization. The updated priorities include: industrial development and market integration; infrastructure to support integration; peace and security cooperation; and special regional programs.

The RISDP reaffirms the SADC Treaty's aims and addresses regional development and socio-economic challenges while optimising natural resources. Its goals promote mutual security and economic benefits, fostering trust and collaboration among SADC member states (SADC 2004).

Mutual Defence Pact

The Mutual Defence Pact (MDP), formalised in 2003, put the Organ's objectives into action, creating a collective security arrangement for "mutual cooperation in defence and security matters" (SADC 2003: 2). Article 6 detailed the conditions for a collective response and defined a military attack on the region. Ngoma (2004) identified instability in Angola and the DRC as the main motivations for the development of the MDP. Angola's 27-year civil war and the DRC's security challenges, stemming from armed groups formed after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, posed serious regional threats. These conflicts risked spilling over into neighbouring countries, affecting all member states. Thus, a collective security arrangement became necessary. Additionally, the region's diverse power dynamics and military capabilities strained some SADC member states' sovereignty. The MDP aimed to prevent these states from infringing on each other's sovereignty in pursuit of national interests.

The MDP aimed to legitimise treating an attack on one member as an attack on the entire region, triggering immediate joint action. Article 6 of the MDP allows for member states to take collective action and use military force against an attacker as mandated by the Summit on the recommendation of the Organ (SADC 2003:3). It committed all SADC members to two primary obligations: participating collectively against threats to any member state and refraining from military attacks within SADC (2003:3). This pact emphasised non-aggression, except in self-defence, crucial for achieving security integration in SADC by discouraging hostile activities and fostering regional community. The MDP formalised non-aggression as a regional norm, enhancing mutual responsiveness, as all SADC states could anticipate unified adherence to non-aggression principles necessary for mutual security. Despite these efforts, the MDP encountered challenges that hindered its implementation and objectives.

Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO I and SIPO II)

In 2002, the Organ, mandated by the Summit, established a Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) to guide its operations alongside the Protocol (SADC, 2004). SIPO I was formally established in 2004 to support RISDP. Van Nieuwkerk (2012) identified three main objectives: organising daily operations of the Organ, creating a framework for strategic actions, and aligning SADC's peace and security agenda with that of the AU.

SIPO focused on four key sectors: politics, defence, state security, and public security (SADC 2004:14). In the political sector, challenges included underdevelopment, corruption, and intrastate conflict (SADC 2004:17). The defence sector faced threats from terrorism and external aggression (SADC 2004:24-25), while state security dealt with issues related to national sovereignty and economic interests (SADC 2004:31). Public security was challenged by transnational crime, requiring better information sharing and improved immigration procedures (SADC 2004:37).

Originally planned for five years, SIPO guided the Organ until 2012, when it was replaced by SIPO II (SADC 2010; Aeby 2012:36). To ensure its relevance, SADC's ministerial committee agreed to review SIPO every five years, addressing shortcomings and enhancing effectiveness. Evaluations occurred in 2007, 2009, and 2010 (SADC 2010:20). Criticism of SIPO I's vague strategies and external pressures necessitated the development of SIPO II (Aeby, 2012:34; Van Nieuwkerk 2012:20).

SIPO I and II reflected SADC's progress in building a security community by prioritising cooperation. By addressing various regional and national issues, SIPO aimed to mitigate domestic instability and advance SADC towards a cohesive security community.

2.6. Conclusion

The focus on security and the different approaches to security, as well as the conflict resolution mechanisms creates a comprehensive foundation for critically assessing the effectiveness of the SADC Organ in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by member states. This chapter delved into the intricate interplay between traditional security, which often emphasises state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and human security, which focuses on the well-being and dignity of individuals. Through this examination, the analysis underscores the complexities involved in reconciling the principles of safeguarding national interests with the necessity of promoting individual safety and development.

Incorporating the perspectives of realism, which highlights the importance of power dynamics, and liberalism, which advocates for cooperation and collective security, alongside the human security approach, provides a nuanced and multifaceted analysis of SADC's strategic initiatives. This framework helps to elucidate how SADC navigates the tension between asserting state power and fostering cooperative governance that prioritises the needs of the population.

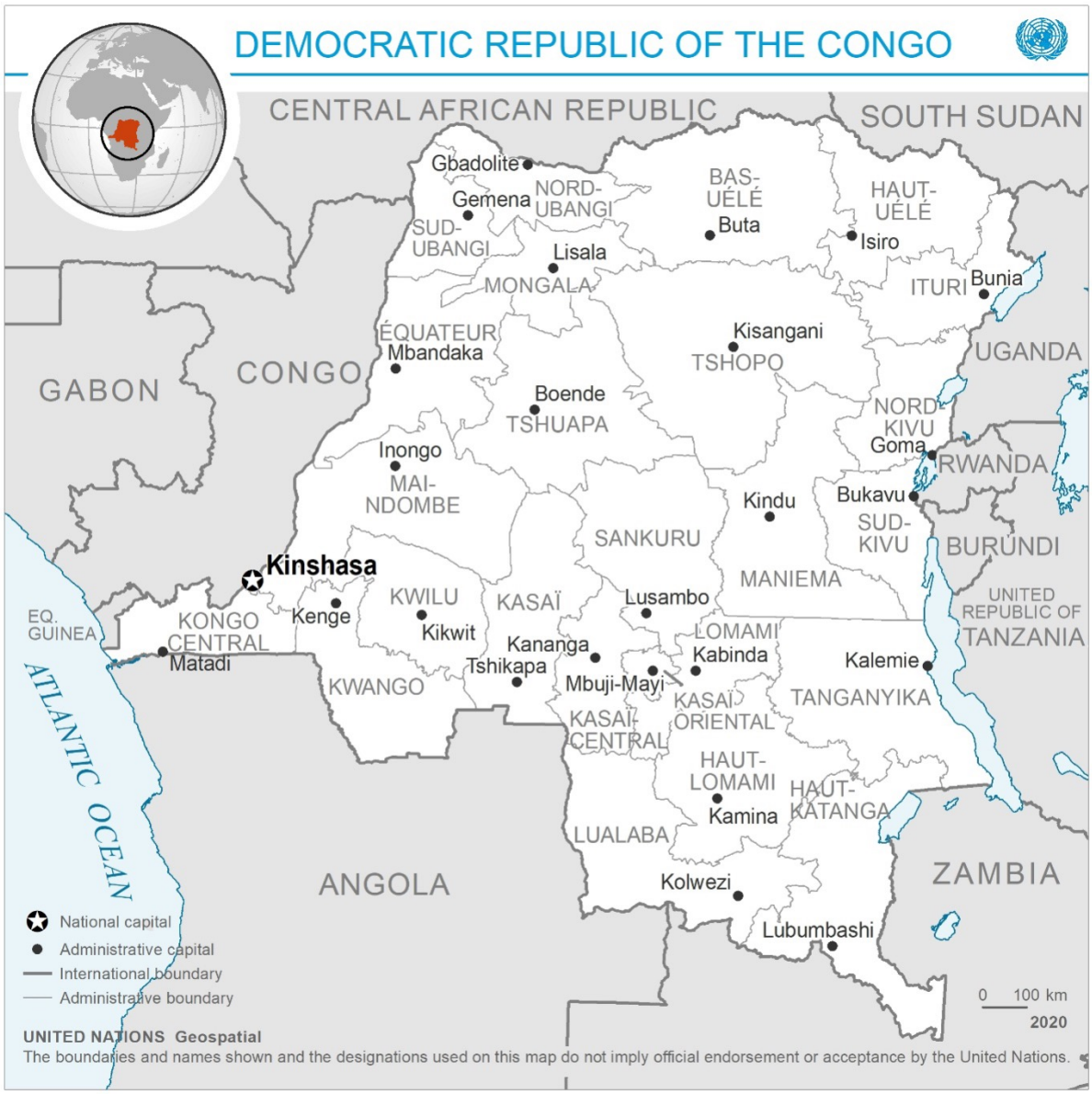
Furthermore, the Organ's institutional structures, including key frameworks such as the Protocol, the MDP, and SIPO, establish important benchmarks for evaluating the consistency and coherence of its operational and policy initiatives. These guiding documents outline the Organ's mandate and objectives, offering a roadmap for its engagement in the region.

CHAPTER 3: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE SADC ORGAN IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) CONFLICT: 1996 TO 2020

3.1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaïre, is the largest country in South and Central Africa as illustrated in Figure 2 and is one of the richest in mineral resources on the continent. It has been independent from Belgium since 1960 and a member of SADC since 1998.

Figure 2: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/democratic-republic-congo-3

The DRC has been embroiled in a prolonged and complex conflict involving various ethnic groups, intricate political struggles, and multiple armed insurgencies. This ongoing conflict has resulted in significant disruption within the country and has had major negative spillover effects in the Central-East Africa region. The instability in the DRC has created a precarious regional security environment, necessitating coordinated intervention and support.

SADC has taken a leading role in conflict resolution in the DRC, implementing political and diplomatic initiatives, including the deployment of military forces. This chapter examines the contributions of the Organ in responding to the conflict, with a particular focus on regional cooperation, international responses, and diplomatic efforts. It assesses the effectiveness of the Organ in promoting regional stability and addressing complex security challenges within the Southern African context by analysing SADC interventions in the DRC.

3.2. Brief History

King Leopold II of Belgium ruled the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908[4], during which time his regime was marked by the brutal exploitation of resources such as rubber and ivory through forced labour, leading to many deaths (Shirambere 2022). His control relied on military force and severe punishments to ensure compliance among the local population. International pressure ultimately resulted in the cession of the Congo Free State to the Belgian government in 1908, as reports began to unveil the atrocities committed during his rule (Hochschild 1999:325).

Upon Leopold's death and the transfer of the Congo to Belgian state control in 1908, the colony became known as the Belgian Congo. Though governance transferred to Belgium, many of the discriminatory practices established under Leopold's reign—such as forced labour, racial segregation, and economic exploitation—persisted. Despite minor institutional changes, the system remained deeply paternalistic, denying civil liberties to the Congolese and maintaining a strict segregation of Europeans from Africans until independence in 1960 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002: 63-64).

Eventually Congo gained independence on 30 June 1960 but did not establish effective state authority over its vast territory. Instead, the Congo was now left with a weak central government controlling critical areas in the mineral-rich Katanga province. The armed forces were not properly organised or equipped

[4] The Congo Free State was a private colonial project that only formally became a Belgian colony in 1908.

and primarily oriented toward internal control and upholding the regime rather than defending the state's territorial integrity. This internal focus contributed to the instability that followed independence.

Patrice Lumumba[5] who became the first PM after independence, sought to reduce Western influence but faced significant opposition from Belgian and the US as well as domestic instability. He was assassinated in 1961 leaving a leadership vacuum that plunging the nation into widespread violence and warring factions. Regional secessionist movements, Moise Tshombe's attempt to control Katanga and coups d'état, plunged the Congo into a crisis, that saw domestic instability and foreign interventions to restore order (Kisangani 2003:55).

The Congo crisis ended in 1965 when Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko[6] seized power, establishing a centralised dictatorship. Initially Western-backed as a Cold War ally, Mobutu's regime became known for kleptocracy and repression. His relationship with the West soured in the early 1990s and, by 1997, he was overthrown by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, which sparked further instability due to ongoing internal and external conflicts (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002: 145). Since then, the DRC has continued to struggle with weak governance and continuous conflict.

3.3. First Congo War: 1996-1997

The First Congo War, which began in 1996 and ended in 1997, marked a pivotal moment in the history of the DRC. The war not only led to significant changes in the DRC's political landscape but also set the stage for subsequent conflicts, highlighting the intricate interplay of local grievances and regional power dynamics.

3.3.1. Contributing Factors

The most significant contributing factor to the first Congo war was the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan Civil War and Genocide. Following the genocide, Rwandan Hutu refugees, including former members of

5 Lumumba was a passionate advocate for African self-determination and founded the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) in 1958 to promote independence and national unity. He is remembered as a symbol of anti-imperialism and African liberation.
6 Mobutu Sese Seko was a Congolese military officer and became chief of staff of the Congolese Army under Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. That same year, he staged a coup with Western backing, leading to Lumumba's removal and assassination.

the Interahamwe[7] militias and the ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises (ex-FAR)[8], fled to eastern Zaïre (Kisangani 2003:54). These groups reorganised within refugee camps and launched raids into Rwanda from the North and South Kivu regions (Kisangani 2003:57). Zaïre's government under Mobutu Sese Seko provided tacit support to these groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda[9] (FDLR) which sought to destabilise Rwanda. In addition to threatening Rwanda's security, these militias exacerbated tensions in eastern Zaïre, intensifying ethnic conflicts between local Tutsis (the Banyamulenge)[10] and Hutus (Prunier 2009:51). These issues further destabilised the region, creating the conditions for war.

3.3.2. Key Actors

The First Congo War, a complex geopolitical conflict, involved multiple key players characterised by intricate motivations and strategic objectives. Notably, Rwanda, under President Paul Kagame, engaged in direct military intervention. This intervention was primarily driven by security concerns, as members of the ex-FAR/Interahamwe militia had sought refuge in eastern DRC (Prunier 2009:51). The support provided by the Zaïrian regime to these groups posed an existential threat to Rwanda, prompting a decisive response aimed at ensuring national security. In addition to security imperatives, Rwanda's ambitions were also economically motivated, as the country sought to exploit the mineral wealth of the eastern DRC (Prunier 2009:55).

Uganda, led by President Yoweri Museveni, similarly possessed strategic interests in the conflict. The Ugandan government aimed to stabilise its western border and extend its influence over the resource-rich eastern Zaïre. To this end, Uganda provided backing to the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC) and deployed its armed forces to engage locally, primarily to counteract Sudanese influence and the actions of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (Clark 2001:275). Together, the interventions by Rwanda and Uganda exemplify the principles of classical realism, which posits that states operate in an anarchic international system primarily to secure power and address perceived security threats.

7 The Interahamwe is a Hutu paramilitary group formed in 1990 and considered to be the main perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. The militants were eventually driven out of Rwanda after Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front victory.
8 The Ex-Far was the national army of Rwanda which carried out the killing of Tutsis until 1994 when the government collapsed in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide
9 The FDLR is a militia formed from the Armée de libération du Rwanda (AliR), ex-FAR), the Interahamwe militia, and the victorious Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).
10 The Banyamulenge are a minority ethnic group in South Kivu and mostly seen as affiliated to the Tutsi. They are viewed as foreigners and were denied citizenship in the 1980s with the Congolese seeking to expel them back to Rwanda and Burundi.

Sudan's involvement added yet another dimension to the conflict, as it sought to counter Uganda's influence and mitigate any destabilisation of its own territory. The LRA, an insurgent group with Ugandan roots, received support from Sudan, further complicating the geopolitical landscape (Turner 2007:62). Meanwhile, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL), led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, emerged with the intention of deposing Mobutu Sese Seko and establishing a new democratic government in Zaïre (Weiss 2000:3; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002 :104).

While France and the United States did not engage directly in military operations, both countries maintained ties with Mobutu's regime for significant periods. France supported Mobutu for decades, perceiving him as a counterbalance to Anglophone influence in the region. However, by the 1990s, the United States began to distance itself due to Mobutu's deteriorating human rights record and rampant corruption, ultimately providing tacit support for regime change. The diminishing Western support significantly weakened Mobutu's rule, thereby enhancing the capabilities and influence of the AFDL in their quest for power (Reno 1998: 145).

The conflict involved a complex web of belligerents, both domestic and international, with various actors pursuing different interests. The involvement of these diverse actors made the Congo conflict a deeply internationalised war, driven by both regional power struggles and external interventions. Mobuto had as many allies as he did adversaries as illustrated in figure 3. The opposition to Mobutu stemmed from his role in harbouring genocidaires, his weakening of the DRC state, and the increasing influence of Rwanda and Uganda, which sought to shape the region's future without the influence of Mobutu's rule. While the support for Mobutu was largely motivated by regional alliances, his utility as an anti-Soviet bulwark in Africa and Western ally had diminished significantly since the end of the Cold War.

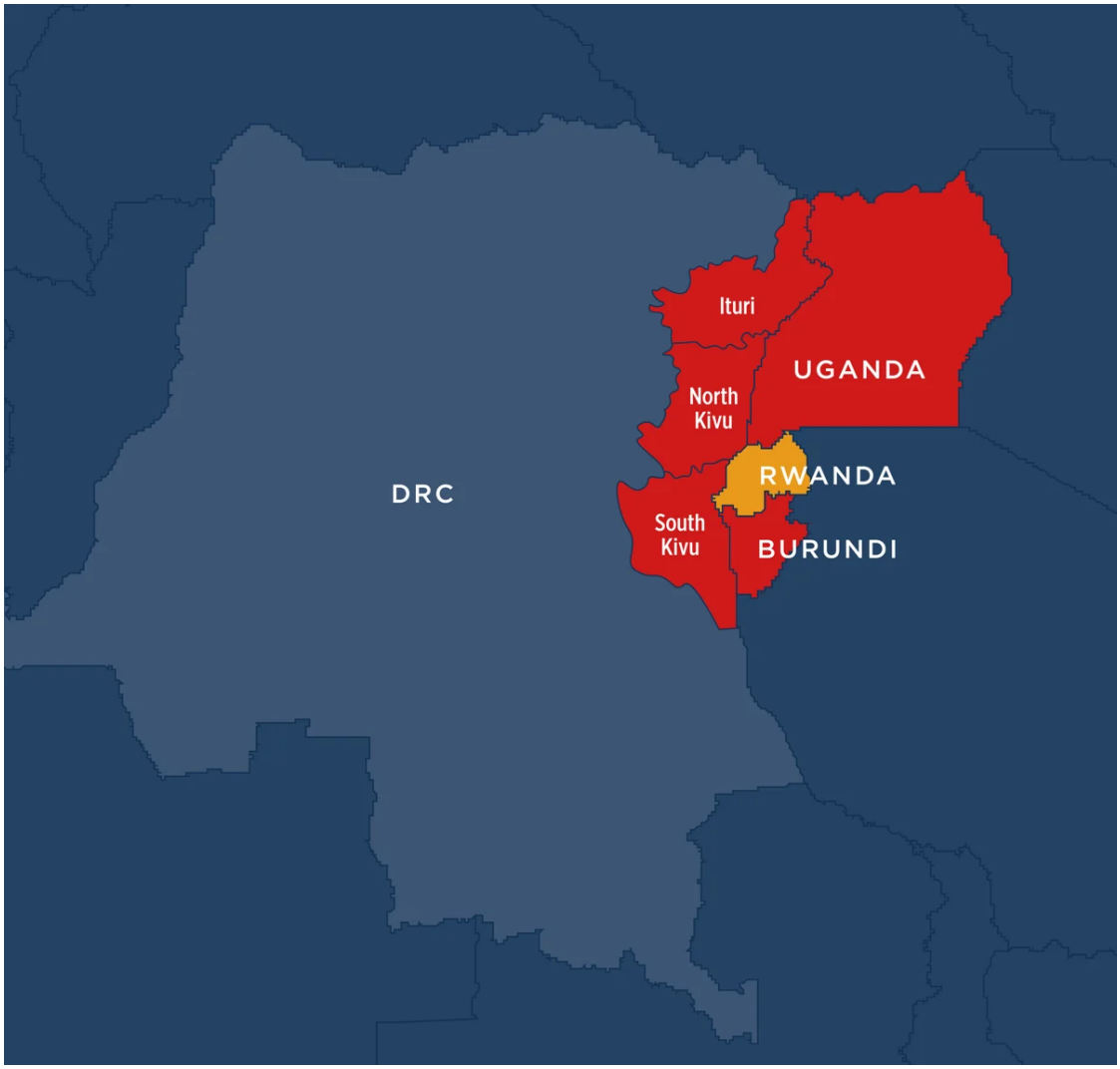
Figure 3: Alignment of forces in the First Congo War

Mobutu Network	Anti Mobutu Network
LRA	AFDL
ADF	Burundi
Ex-Far/Interahamwe	Rwanda
UNITA rebel forces	Eritrea
France	Uganda
Sudan	Ethiopia
FAZ	

3.3.3. Conduct of the Conflict

The First Congo War was driven by a military campaign led by Rwanda and Uganda, supporting Laurent Kabila's AFDL rebels. With significant logistic support, troops, and intelligence from Rwanda, the AFDL quickly advanced against the poorly trained Zaïrean Armed Forces (Forces Armées Zaïroises or FAZ). Utilising guerrilla tactics and with the support of local alliances, the AFDL advanced rapidly, capturing key towns and mining regions rich in resources such as gold and coltan to fund their efforts (Clark 2001:275; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:197; Turner 2007:58-59). The conflict remains concentrated in the Eastern region of the DRC, namely North Kivu; South Kivu and Ituri as seen in Figure 4, sharing proximity and borders with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

Figure 4: Map of DRC with conflict zones



Source: https://tinyurl.com/2rem2eak

The AFDL's propaganda efforts undermined Mobutu's regime, leading to low morale among FAZ troops, many of whom defected as Kabila's forces approached Kinshasa. Despite having a numerically large force, the FAZ's lack of proper organisation and combat efficiency prevented the mounting of any effective resistance (Clark 2002:53; Reno 1998:152).

Rwandan troops, familiar with guerrilla warfare, provided the AFDL with crucial military structure and support. However, allegations of human rights violations surfaced, particularly regarding Rwandan attacks on Hutu refugee camps. By May 1997, Kabila's forces reached Kinshasa's outskirts with little resistance (Clapham 1999:114; Prunier 2009:85-87).

3.3.4. The Role of SADC in the Conflict

SADC had a minimal formal involvement in the First Congo War, primarily because Zaïre was not a member of the organisation at the onset of the conflict. Consequently, SADC was neither obliged to intervene nor in a position to implement any collective military or diplomatic actions.

Despite the absence of any formal obligations to become involved, the war had significant regional implications for both Central and Southern Africa. Member states of SADC adopted divergent stances on the conflict, influenced by their individual national interests, security concerns, and political orientations. At that time, the SADC Organ, tasked with security coordination, was still nascent. Its institutional frameworks were in development, with no legal framework resulting in a lack of consensus among member states regarding intervention strategies (Reyntjens 2009:142; Nathan 2012:47).

Even had SADC sought to intervene, the early stage of the organisation’s evolution in developing collective security and defence mechanisms would have hampered any immediate response, particularly since the conflict lay outside its geographic mandate. Originally, SADC had focused on advancing economic cooperation and regional integration during the mid-1990s, rather than military interventions against non-member states. This strategic orientation further constrained its ability to take a proactive role in the conflict in Zaïre (Reyntjens 2009:142; Nathan 2012:47).

3.3.5. Outcome of the Conflict

The AFDL successfully overthrew Mobutu Sese Seko, whose health and waning power prompted his flight from Zaïre. Subsequently, Laurent-Désiré Kabila declared himself president and renamed the country to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Turner 2007:43). The rapid fall of Kinshasa underscored

not only the speed of the military campaign but also the diminishing support for Mobutu, both domestically and internationally (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002: 110). While Kabila's ascent was celebrated as a pivotal victory against dictatorship, it ushered in a new array of political and security challenges.

Despite Mobutu's ousting, the underlying issues of ethnic tensions, political fragmentation, and competing external interests that precipitated the conflict remained unresolved, necessitating urgent intervention. Almost immediately, Kabila's regime grappled with the complexities of ethnic fragmentation, the imperative of state reconstruction, and the activities of various armed groups in eastern DRC, many of which had ties to Mobutu loyalists or were motivated by local grievances (Prunier 2009:60).

The war resulted in mass displacement, significant casualties, and an extensive humanitarian crisis (Human Rights Watch 1999). However, the cessation of hostilities did not address the entrenched problems, particularly in the eastern regions, where foreign militias and domestic rebel factions continued their operations. This ongoing instability in the DRC contributed to broader regional instability (Prunier 2009:315).

The lack of inclusive political structures, ineffective demobilisation and reintegration programs for combatants, and insufficient international support for the reconstruction of state institutions hindered long-term stability. Though Kabila initially embarked on an ambitious national reconciliation initiative, his administration soon gravitated towards authoritarian measures, alienating numerous political factions and ethnic groups. This ineffective governance, coupled with deteriorating relations with Rwanda and Uganda, resulted in a fragile peace that proved unsustainable (Turner 2007:52).

The deterioration of relations between the Congolese government and both Rwanda and Uganda emerged from conflicting interests over political oversight and the role of foreign actors within the DRC. Notably, the Congolese government, alongside Rwandan and Ugandan forces, had been instrumental in facilitating Kabila's rise to power, yet he subsequently sought to cultivate new alliances with Zimbabwe and Angola.

3.3.6. Conclusion

The First Congo War exposed the interaction of domestic state vulnerability and external regional forces leading to the removal of Mobutu Sese Seko and the arrival of Laurent-Désiré Kabila whose regime would not make it half a decade. Although Kabila's AFDL, with strong support from Rwanda and Uganda, made

rapid military gains the war did not eventually secure continued stability for the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although Kabila's government was victorious, the failure to consolidate power and remedy root causes of conflict set in motion another cycle of unrest.

During the First Congo War, SADC was unable to play a unifying role as member states went into competition based on their interests thereby revealing that when it came to crisis management in the region, SADC appeared ill-equipped. This only highlights the wider limits of regional security cooperation and the overpowering of national agendas over multilateral mechanisms in relation to complex security problems. In the end, while Mobutu was defenestrated by the end of the conflict, it also unleashed a new political reality that reflects shattered national cohesion and destabilisation of the region ultimately leading up to the Second Congo War and ongoing regional instability in Central Africa.

3.4. Second Congo War (1998-2003)

The Second Congo War, also known as the Great African War, started in 1998 and became one of the deadliest conflicts in modern African history. This multi-faceted war involved multiple African nations, various armed groups, and regional alliances, transforming the DRC into a battleground for political influence, resources, and security interests. The war not only devastated the DRC but also reshaped regional dynamics in Central and Southern Africa, drawing attention to the complexities of state sovereignty, regional security, and international intervention.

3.4.1. Contributing Factors

The Second Congo War (1998-2003) was catalysed by factors mirroring those of its predecessor. Laurent Kabila's regime struggled to stabilise the economy, achieve political legitimacy, and resolve underlying ethnic tensions, resulting in pervasive internal instability (Weiss 2000:7). The initial hopes for a stable government that would transcend Mobutu Sese Seko's corrupt legacy rapidly diminished under Kabila's administration. By 1998, the Congolese government was unable to address the entrenched socioeconomic disparities and political-ethnic conflicts, which precipitated a renewed cycle of violence (Reyntjens 2009:207).

Dissatisfaction with Kabila's governance was compounded by strategic interests from regional powers. The Kabila administration's inability to neutralise the Interahamwe and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) operating in eastern Congo posed significant security threats to both Rwanda and Uganda.

Kabila's decision to expel military advisors from these countries was perceived as a betrayal, prompting them to reassess his government's capacity to safeguard their interests (Cark 2001:275).
This power vacuum, coupled with ongoing instability, further emboldened local militant factions. The interplay of these dynamics, alongside the competing agendas of various regional actors, ultimately triggered the Second Congo War.

3.4.2. Key Actors

The escalation of conflict during the Second Congo War involved multiple countries and various rebel groups, transforming it into a complex struggle shaped by diverse national, regional, and economic interests.

Rwanda and Uganda, feeling betrayed by President Kabila and alarmed by the power vacuum in eastern DRC, re-entered the conflict in 1998. They threw their weight behind a new rebel coalition known as the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD)[11]. Their involvement was driven by the same interests that initially spurred their first engagement (Weiss 2000:10; ICG 1998:18-25; ICG 2000a:29).

Chad, on the other hand, provided support to anti-government forces in the DRC, particularly the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC[12]), in a bid to weaken the Congolese government and extend its influence in the region. The MLC opposed Kabila's government, aiming to overthrow it and establish a new political order. Similar to the MLC, the RCD was a rebel group focused on destabilising Kabila's government with the same goal of creating a new political landscape.

Angola's involvement was largely motivated by security concerns linked to the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels, who had historically taken refuge in the DRC during Mobutu's rule. To secure military advantages, Angola sought to prevent contact between UNITA and DRC insurgents, while also facilitating access to target UNITA bases within the DRC. The actions of Angola reflected a realist approach aimed at securing its strategic interests by focusing on containing UNITA, rather than genuinely pursuing regional stability (ICG 2001a:2; ICG 2001a:8), showcasing the realist notion that states operate based on strategic calculations to bolster their safety and stability amid international competition.

[11] RCD was formed by the Banyamulenge
[12] With tensions growing between Rwanda and Uganda, Uganda formed the Gbadolite-based Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC). Led by Jean–Pierre Bemba the movement rose from relative insecurity within the DRC to form a rival to the RCD

Zimbabwe's involvement was driven by economic interests, particularly access to DRC's mining concessions. According to Maringira (2019), Mugabe leveraged the war as a distraction from pressing internal issues, such as economic downturns and political unrest. He viewed the conflict as a chance to strengthen his political power and influence in the region, leading to strong allegations that some elite members profited from Zimbabwe's engagement in the war.

Namibia's motivation revolved around securing resources, including water from the Congo River. According to Taylor and Williams (2001:276), Namibia's $25 million trade agreement with Kabila played a significant role in its decision to participate in the conflict, benefiting key figures in the Nujoma regime. Orogun (2002: 36) contended that Namibia's involvement was more about political and economic convenience than altruism. Given that much of Namibia is arid, accessing the Congo River was crucial for ensuring vital resources. Thus, their intervention aimed at securing economic benefits.

The official version of Namibia's motive was provided by President Nujoma (Orogun 2002: 36-37) as follows:

> Our troops are there to safeguard Namibia's future security. We should not behave like children and delude ourselves into thinking that the peace and stability that we are enjoying today will remain forever. As the Commander-in Chief, I took the necessary action to come to the aid of an aggressed neighbour and fellow member of SADC. 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. The very worst was in store for us.

Alternative viewpoints, such as those from Prunier (2009:65), suggest that Namibia's involvement stemmed from pressure from regional allies to show loyalty to a leader who embodied anti-imperialist and Pan-African ideals. The International Crisis Group (1999:10) also noted that warm ties between President Sam Nujoma and Kabila influenced Namibia's decision to engage in the conflict.

3.4.3. SADC Response

In September 1997, the DRC officially became a member of SADC (SADC 2022). At that juncture, SADC's security infrastructure, particularly its Organ, was still nascent and ill-equipped to manage large-scale conflicts.

As anti-Kabila forces advanced towards Kinshasa, President Kabila sought assistance from SADC. In response, President Robert Mugabe, then chair of the Organ, convened a crucial meeting in Victoria Falls on August 7-8, 1998, attended by leaders from Namibia, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, the DRC, and Zimbabwe. This assembly resulted in the establishment of a verification committee composed of foreign ministers tasked with assessing the conflict and suggesting viable peace strategies (Moyane 2000; Meyns 2002).

A subsequent meeting of the SADC Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) took place on August 18, 1998, to evaluate the findings of the verification committee. The ISDSC concluded that Uganda and Rwanda had violated the DRC's sovereignty and recommended military assistance to the DRC. However, both South Africa and Botswana opposed this intervention, deeming it illegitimate. Conversely, Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe justified their actions under Article 51 of the UN Charter, advocating for collective self-defence[13] (Punungwe 1999; Meyns 2002).

SADC's response illuminated significant internal divisions, particularly between President Nelson Mandela, who championed multilateralism, democratic values, and human rights, and President Mugabe, who prioritised state sovereignty and security, reflecting a Pan-Africanist ideology (Baregu 1999; Khadiagala 2009; Nathan 2012: 18; Cawthra 2010: 40). While both leaders recognized Kabila as the legitimate ruler of the DRC, their approaches to conflict resolution markedly diverged.

Mugabe's advocacy for a military solution stood in stark contrast to Mandela's push for a diplomatic resolution, exposing deeper ideological rifts regarding national sovereignty, regional intervention, and security policy (SADC 1998; Meyns 2002). The Organ faced challenges in presenting a unified front, highlighting deficiencies within SADC's security framework. Structural inefficiencies, such as unclear intervention protocols, exacerbated tensions between the SADC Summit and the then semi-autonomous Organ. Operating independently from Mandela's leadership, the Organ's ad hoc meetings and lack of a coordinated decision-making process limited SADC's capacity to manage crises effectively and consistently (Ngoma 2004: 14; Nathan 2006). This fragmentation contributed to inconsistent policy applications where Mugabe's preference for military intervention conflicted with Mandela's diplomatic approach (Adebajo and Landsberg 2003).

[13] South African President Nelson Mandela previously sent a letter to Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and other leaders, stating that while he would respect a majority decision, South Africa would step down as SADC chair if the Organ operated as a separate entity (see Cilliers, 1999:28-29).

The rivalry between Mandela and Mugabe was further complicated by their positions as leaders of the two most influential countries in Southern Africa. Whereas Mugabe pursued a more radical, anti-imperialist agenda, Mandela favoured economic strength and modernisation. This ideological divergence frequently obstructed SADC's ability to respond coherently to regional crises (Ngoma 2004: 6; Kapinga 2015).

This era of “two SADCs” exemplifies the complexities of formulating an integrated regional security policy within an organisation characterised by diverse political philosophies and strategic priorities. The absence of a legal framework for the Organ at the time affected the effective functioning of the Organ and underscored the limitations of regionalism in addressing multifaceted security challenges. This division highlighted the lack of institutional frameworks, mandates, and a cohesive vision upon which SADC could depend to manage regional threats. Nonetheless, on 3 September 1998, at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, Mandela stated that there was full SADC consensus in support of the intervention likely serving as a symbolic gesture of regional unity intended to ameliorate tensions with Mugabe (Ngoma 2004:11).

3.5. The 1998 Military Response

The primary purpose of the 1998 military intervention by SADC in the DRC was to prevent the advancing rebel forces from capturing the capital, Kinshasa, and overthrowing the government. As the rebellion, led by a coalition of Congolese opposition groups and supported by Rwanda and Uganda, gained momentum in the eastern and central parts of the country, the possibility of the insurgents reaching Kinshasa became increasingly real. This posed a direct threat to the survival of the Congolese government and, by extension, to the broader political and strategic interests of the region. The intervention was thus seen as an urgent measure to stem the rebel advance and secure the Congolese government, which was crucial to the regional balance of power. If the rebels succeeded in capturing Kinshasa, it would not only shift control of the DRC but could lead to the fragmentation of the country and further instability in the region (ICG 2000; Weiss 2000).

Additionally, the intervention aimed to provide critical military support to the DRC government, bolstering its ability to defend itself against the foreign-backed rebel forces. Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia, the primary contributors to the SADC intervention, sent troops to reinforce Kabila's military and help repel the advancing rebels. This military support was crucial in stabilising the government’s control over key areas, including Kinshasa, and prevented the rebels from overrunning the capital. By doing so, the intervention

preserved Kabila's rule and maintained a semblance of state cohesion in the face of a foreign-supported insurgency. The securing of Kinshasa was not only vital for the political legitimacy of the Kabila government but also for the strategic interests of SADC member states, which had stakes in the stability and economic prospects of the DRC. (ICG 2000; Weiss 2000). This intervention became known by SADC as Operation Sovereign Legitimacy.

3.5.1. Intervention Outcome

Namibia contributed approximately 300 troops and supplied 20 tons of military equipment in support of the DRC, with the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) also tasked with providing security for President Kabila. In addition to securing Kinshasa and its airport, the NDF played a crucial role in safeguarding the strategic western corridor leading to the Atlantic Ocean. This effectively impeded rebel forces operating in western DRC, compelling their retreat across the Congo River into Congo-Brazzaville (Cornwell & Potgieter, 1998; Lumb, 1999; Orogun, 2002:30). The intervention, conducted in concert with other allied forces, resulted in a military stalemate that likely mitigated conflict-related casualties.

Zimbabwe's engagement was more substantial, deploying approximately 2 800 soldiers and allocating around $6 billion in unplanned expenditures over 18 months to assist the DRC government. This financial commitment, which was separate from investments in new military equipment, indicated a significant economic stake by Zimbabwe in the conflict's outcome (Coleman, 2007:121).

Meanwhile, approximately 2 500 Angolan troops entered the DRC from the Cabinda enclave. Together with the Zimbabwean and Namibian forces, they successfully recaptured Kinshasa, which stabilised the Congolese government and tactically pushed back rebel advances in key territories (Coleman, 2007:121).

In contrast, South Africa and other SADC member states declined to deploy military forces, opting instead for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. This stance led to concerns regarding South Africa's impartiality, particularly in light of its prior arms sales to Rwanda in 1992, 1996, and 1997, which was aimed at bolstering its defence budget (Cornwell & Potgieter, 1998; Lumb, 1999; Human Rights Watch 2000b; Orogun, 2002:35).

Operation Sovereign Legitimacy yielded benefits that extended beyond immediate military outcomes. It averted the destabilising scenario of a rapid regime collapse, which could have exacerbated instability

throughout Central Africa. By halting the rebel offensive, it prevented a broader regional conflict that was already affecting neighbouring countries through refugee flows, arms smuggling, and illegal resource trafficking. Maintaining control over regional insecurity was essential to safeguarding the stability of neighbouring states such as Uganda, Rwanda, and Angola (ICG, 2001b).

Furthermore, the military intervention reinforced the Congolese government's position as the legitimate authority among regional allies. The SADC played a pivotal role in stabilizing the DRC government, facilitating the groundwork for more substantive peace processes to commence. According to Khadiagala (2009) the intervention set a precedent for SADC's collective defence, as it was the first time SADC member states took direct military action to stabilise a member nation in conflict.

Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia justified their intervention as essential for upholding regional security, supporting a legitimate government, and countering foreign influences that could destabilise the DRC. They argued that a successful rebellion in the DRC could have led to instability in Southern Africa, disrupted regional security, and encouraged insurgent forces threatening their own countries. For instance, Angola was concerned that UNITA rebels, who had found refuge in the DRC, would gain strength and potentially destabilize Angola if the rebellion succeeded. Zimbabwe viewed its intervention as a demonstration of regional security policy and a part of its role within SADC's security framework (SADC 1998; Baregu 1999; Turner 2007:59). The three countries argued that they acted within a collective security rationale by helping a fellow member state defend its sovereignty against foreign-backed insurgents (Malan 1998; Nathan 2012). This rationale coincided with Cawthra's (2010:40) interpretation that the SADC Organ's mandate allows for intervention when a member state faces an existential threat.

Despite these arguments, the SADC operation faced substantial criticism. Botswana, Mozambique, and South Africa vocally opposed the action and publicly contested Zimbabwe's claim that it had been approved by a unanimous SADC decision. South Africa maintained that the intervention violated SADC principles of non-aggression and regional integration, stressing that the decision had not been reached by consensus (Ngoma 2004:15; Coleman 2007:125).

Critics also argued that the intervention reflected the realist national interests of the member states rather than the collective, idealist goals of SADC or the United Nations. Concerns over foreign troops undermining Congolese sovereignty emerged, as some rebel groups and international observers accused SADC forces of supporting the Kabila regime instead of addressing the root causes of the

conflict (ICG 2000a; Ngoma 2004:6). Nathan (2009:106) pointed out that SADC member states were hesitant to develop binding security protocols, fearing such agreements would undermine their sovereignty and complicate SADC's coherent approach. Nathan (2009:98) argued that the organisation's initial framework did not consider how to accommodate member states' diverse interests, capabilities, and perspectives on security which led to an ambiguity of policy.

The involvement of Rwanda and Uganda added further complexity, as they perceived SADC's intervention as a threat to their strategic interests in the region, challenging the legitimacy of SADC's actions. This intervention also heightened regional rivalries, with international actors like the United States, France, and Belgium pursuing conflicting agendas, thereby entrenching divisions within SADC (Baregu 1999; ICG 2000b).

The intervention raised critical questions about SADC's principles, particularly its commitment to non-interference as outlined in the SADC Treaty. Malan (1998) argued that SADC's military support for Kabila violated this principle, while Ngoma (2004:15) emphasised the significant internal political dimensions of the DRC's conflict. As a result, the intervention was perceived as compromising Congolese sovereignty and undermining SADC's professed ideals of non-interference and regional cooperation.

3.5.2. Analysis of the SADC Deployment and Organ Decision-Making

SADC's security framework includes principles of collective security, where member states are expected to work together to address threats affecting any of them. Collective security theory suggests that an attack against one member threatens all, warranting a coordinated response. If the states intervened in this spirit there is justification for adopting a military intervention.

The Organ's role is to also promote regional peace and stability. Within a security complex regional, stability is closely interconnected, with security dynamics in one state impacting neighbouring countries as such a successful coup d'état against the Congolese government would have disrupted the regional balance, potentially enabling insurgent groups to thrive and expand, thereby posing a threat to not only Rwanda and Uganda but also to Angola. The intervention was a means to prevent a broader destabilisation of the region.

Article 6 of the SADC Treaty outlines the member states' commitment to collaborate in times of crisis to preserve peace (SADC 1998a: 7). In contrast, Article 11 empowers the Organ to address conflicts in

member states (SADC 1998a: 11). With this in mind the intervention to support the Congolese government aligned with SADC's principles of collective security and defence. This Treaty commits member states to act in solidarity to uphold peace and security within the region. Again, Article 4.b of the SADC Treaty commits members to 'act in accordance with the ... principles ... [of] solidarity, peace and security' (SADC 1998a: 5). The DRC is a SADC member and thus had a right to expect SADC assistance in a time of crisis. The Organ could also have seen its legitimacy questioned had it failed to act when a member faced destabilising external support for rebels.

- Decision Making

The intervention was purportedly conducted under the authority of the SADC Organ, yet it neglected several essential steps in the decision-making process. Zimbabwe claimed SADC approved the intervention during the Harare meeting on 18 August 1998 (Malan 1998). However, this meeting lacked the necessary legitimacy to confer a SADC mandate for intervention; it fell short of constituting a proper ISDSC meeting, with only nine of SADC's fourteen member states represented, and only four of these by their Defence Ministers (Nathan 2006). Which according to Article 18 of the SADC Treaty (SADC 1998a: 15), a two-thirds quorum of member states is required for any formal session. Additionally, the ISDSC can only make recommendations to the heads of state of SADC and cannot act on their behalf.

The decision-making process lacked a legal foundation as only a SADC Summit had the authority to authorise a SADC operation. Remarkably, the first SADC Summit addressing this issue did not convene until on 13-14 September 1998 (SADC 2006: 88 – 96), nearly a month after Operation Sovereign Legitimacy began. Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe bypassed these formal structures and proceeded with the intervention without a broad agreement from other member states. This weakened the legitimacy of the intervention and indicates that the intervention served national interests of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe and not the collective good.

This disunity also reflects a troubling lack of trust among member states, a critical component for any effective security community. The absence of a common agenda among SADC member states clearly indicates that, while theoretical frameworks for cooperative security may resonate with the principles of international relations, the reality remains that national interests often take precedence over the possibility of collective action. This disparity in objectives among member states starkly illustrates how the pursuit of national interests can undermine the foundations of collective security.

Ultimately, the individual interventions driven by realist motivations compromised a cohesive regional security response and exposed the limitations of SADC's collective security model. The fragmentation of efforts diminished the impact of the military response in the DRC underscoring the urgent need for a more unified approach to regional stability and cooperation.

- Policy

Under international law, any intervention requires an adherence to the principles of the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security. Chapter VII of the UN states that any military intervention by a state or group of states must be authorised by the UNSC unless it is an act of self-defence under Article 51 (UN 1945). SADC intervention did not adhere to the requirements of the UN Charter, which questions the legality of the intervention under international law. This also undermines SADC as a regional security actor and erodes trust in SADC's ability to act impartially and in line with international norms. Allowing to conclude that SADC could not under these circumstances intervene in the DRC.

This revealed a vital policy deficiency in SADC's policy framework regarding the role of the Organ and no clear military policy protocols regarding the actual process of mounting an intervention. The absence of a such policy contributed to the perception that the intervention represented actions driven by individual national interests rather than collective policy.

The absence of a SADC military command structure demonstrated that Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe acted as independent entities instead of as part of a combined military operation representing a united regional security community. At the time, SADC was operating without a legal framework or a SADC military command structure to guide its actions (SADC 2007: 5). The position of the Organ in the SADC decision-making hierarchy viz a viz the Summit and the lack of guidance in conducting operations of this nature led to the formalisation of the Protocol in 2001. The principles of the protocol which are grounded in collective security, regional stability and respect for sovereignty would have guided SADC's approach. Article 11 of the Protocol outlines the need for a centralised command and coordination structure for military interventions that shall fall under the oversight of the Organ (SADC 2001:11).

Given that SADC was still in its nascent phase of a security community, it could not project or develop a regional security identity (or strategy) creating ambiguity in the interpretation of existing policies such as the Treaty. This ambiguity in policy and practice left SADC less able to operate as a collective security entity, instead creating room for national interests to continue dominating the narrative and behaviour on the regional level.

- Issue of Sovereignty of Member States

The SADC Treaty is built on a crucial foundation: respect for the sovereignty of its member states and a clear prohibition against interference in each other's internal affairs (SADC 1998: 5). This principle of non-interference is essential for fostering trust among SADC members, particularly in a region grappling with historical disputes and internal conflicts. However, the interventions by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe in the DRC blurred the critical line between upholding sovereignty and meddling in domestic issues.

These states provided active military support to one faction in a deeply rooted internal conflict, which shifted their role from neutral custodians of sovereignty to active participants in the turmoil. This intervention appeared to prioritise national interests over the principles enshrined in the Treaty, illustrating a stark contradiction: while they claimed to protect sovereignty, they effectively undermined the collective framework that calls for coordinated and legitimate action.

These dynamics clearly illustrate a troubling erosion of SADC's credibility as a regional organisation tasked with addressing insecurity. By neglecting the guiding principles of the Treaty, the Organ appears inconsistent and incapable of enforcing its own norms. Additionally, the lack of unity among SADC members is evident in the absence of collective support for the intervention, as differing opinions on conflict resolution surface. This intervention sets a dangerous precedent, normalising actions taken by member states under the pretence of regional security, an alarming pattern that resurfaces during the Lesotho political crisis.

3.6. Dialogue: Political and Diplomatic Initiatives

Conflict termination refers to terminating conflict in all parties when one party ceases to use force and instead adopts a settlement strategy based on concessions and conciliation (Mitchell 1981:165). Governments may turn to try to negotiate with adversaries through peace talks. The pursuit of sustainable peace and successful peacebuilding in societies with deep communal divisions relies on well-crafted proposals that enable conflicting parties to reach acceptable agreements (Osler Hampson 2001:387).

The DRC provides for an interesting discussion of the steps initiated in attempts to restore sustainable peace, stability and security. Initiatives to end and conflict in the DRC, started. The discussions led by SADC commenced shortly after the onset of the conflict; however, they encountered significant obstacles early on due to internal divisions within SADC itself.

3.6.1. Key Actors

South Africa played a significant role in facilitating the peace processes as it prioritised diplomatic negotiations over military intervention (Accord 2016). Under the leadership of Mandela and Mbeki it emphasised peaceful resolution methods and called for dialogue between the DRC government, rebel groups, and neighbouring countries.

The OAU actively sought to mediate the conflict through diplomatic channels and worked to convene peace talks and promote African-led solutions A significant aspect of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 was the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC), which, in collaboration with the United Nations and the OAU, sought to establish a framework for dialogue, a ceasefire, and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC (UN 2000d).

The UN advocated for a diplomatic approach and deployed diplomatic missions to broker peace in the region. Following the Lusaka Agreement, the UN established the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in 1999 to monitor and support the ceasefire and peace process. The UN's involvement focused on stabilisation and humanitarian support, as well as facilitating political dialogue between the parties involved (UN 2000d).

Zambia, under the leadership of President Frederick Chiluba, played a pivotal diplomatic role in organizing and hosting peace negotiations aimed at resolving the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As the Chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mediation team, President Chiluba was instrumental in brokering the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999, which laid the foundation for subsequent peace and reconciliation efforts in the DRC (UN 1999).

The EU supported diplomatic and political efforts by providing funding for peacebuilding initiatives, dialogue facilitation, and humanitarian aid. The EU encouraged diplomatic engagement to stabilise the region and was supportive of the Lusaka Agreement and the later peace processes. In 1996, the EU appointed a Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region, underscoring its commitment to diplomatic engagement in the area (Hoebek 2007: 48). Furthermore, the EU adopted a Common Position to support the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and various peace accords, aligning its efforts with United Nations and African Union initiatives to promote peace and stability in the DRC.

The U.S. government took a largely diplomatic approach to the DRC conflict, advocating for peace negotiations and supporting international peace efforts. It used diplomatic channels to exert pressure on regional actors and provided financial support for the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC), endorsing multilateral and African-led efforts to restore stability (US 2023).

3.6.2. Ceasefire and the Lusaka Agreement

In September 1998, President Chiluba was mandated to take on the role of lead mediator during the annual SADC summit. Progress was made during n a meeting in Windhoek on 18 January 1999, where Rwanda, Uganda, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and the RCD committed to a ceasefire, though Kabila's absence left the agreement incomplete at that stage. In April 1999, Kabila and Museveni signed a ceasefire accord in Libya which was rejected by the ~~but~~ other parties (Roessler & Prendergast 2006:244). The Lusaka Agreement embodied key principles of collective action, aiming to end hostilities, withdraw foreign troops, and disarm armed groups with support from SADC, the OAU, and a UN-backed ceasefire. Zambia's neutral mediation and SADC's facilitation were vital in this process (UN 1999b:1).

This agreement illustrated a liberal approach to conflict resolution, focusing on diplomacy and negotiation. It engaged regional and international actors, reached local communities, and prioritised fundamental political issues, aligning with SADC's mission of promoting stability through cooperation and dialogue.

The Lusaka Agreement was facilitated by President Quett Ketumile Masire of Botswana, who was appointed by the OAU in December 1999 (UN 2000a). To oversee the ceasefire, the Joint Military Commission (JMC) was established as the primary verification body in the implementation process. Though the JMC was expected to operate with the support of UN peacekeepers, it retained primary responsibility for peacekeeping operations in collaboration with the OAU until such a force was deployed. Intriguingly, the concept of using belligerent parties themselves as peacekeepers emerged, stemming from a South African proposal to establish a peacekeeping contingent drawn from the warring factions.

Despite the withdrawal plan mandating that all forces retreat to within 15 kilometres of the confrontation line and the creation of a 30-kilometre disengagement zone, SADC member states that had engaged in hostilities continued their presence in the DRC. Notably, Namibia was the only state to fully comply with the plans, withdrawing its troops by the end of August 2001, while Angola and Zimbabwe chose to maintain their military presence to exert influence over the region (UN 2000b:75; Cilliers & Malan 2001:46).

SADC's role was to create a diplomatic space conducive to negotiation among all actors involved, including armed factions, rather than perpetuating conflict. However, achieving effective multilateralism has been complicated by the absence of a shared agenda among external powers and regional entities. This divergence underscores the limitations of liberal diplomatic approaches within a complex security environment, where realpolitik considerations often take precedence over cooperative initiatives.

3.6.3. Inter-Congolese Dialogue

Article 19 of the Lusaka Agreement called for an "open national dialogue" among the DRC government, armed and unarmed opposition groups, and civil society to promote political order and reconciliation, facilitated by a neutral party (UN 1999:7). The Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) emerged from this agreement to foster national dialogue and establish a democratic government.

The ICD sought to address violence, poverty, and displacement, uniting various Congolese perspectives to tackle human rights abuses and economic challenges (Naidoo 2002; Human Rights Watch 2010). Its dual mission was to negotiate an end to the war and revive democracy, disrupted under the Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila regime.

The ICD commenced with the May 2001 Declaration of Principles, which underscored the importance of inclusivity among opposition groups and civil society, while adopting a consensus-driven approach to decision-making. Preliminary discussions were held in Gaborone from 20-24 August 2001, facilitated by former President Masire, and showed some initial progress. However, disputes and resistance from the government significantly stalled the process in Addis Ababa, where government delegates disrupted the talks to delay further negotiations (ICG 2001a:16).

In a subsequent meeting in Abuja, an agreement was reached regarding the composition of delegations for the ICD, although power-sharing conflicts continued to be a concern. The government's insistence on retaining the presidency sparked tension, leading to a temporary withdrawal by the MLC. After renewed hostilities, the DRC declared a ceasefire in January 2002 to prevent further disruption of the peace talks, which resumed in February 2002 (SAPA-AFP 2002; Swart and Solomon 2004:23).

Between February and April, negotiations took place in Sun City, South Africa, facilitated by President Thabo Mbeki. By April, a partial agreement was reached between the MLC and Kabila, while the RCD opposed Kabila's leadership. This dynamic created a triangular relationship that pitted Kabila against

both the RCD and the MLC. Ultimately, this led to the Political Agreement on Consensual Management of the Transition in the DRC (PACMT), which formalised a power-sharing arrangement between Kabila and Bemba to bolster their control over the transitional authority (AU 2002;ICG 2002a:5-7; Naidoo 2002:16).

South Africa's diplomatic involvement was pivotal, with Mbeki effectively leveraging his influence within the AU and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to advocate for compromises. On 30 July 2002, a peace agreement was signed between Rwanda and the DRC, which stipulated the withdrawal of Rwandan troops. Another agreement followed in September 2002, calling for the exit of Ugandan troops from the DRC. Despite these initiatives, neither agreement sufficiently addressed the issue of rebel disarmament, highlighting significant enforcement limitations (Rogier 2004:31).

SADC did not have the potential to enforce the provisions of the dialogue which only perpetuated insecurity in eastern DRC, ultimately undermining initiatives towards sustainable peace. There was a lack of funding from SADC for longer-term reintegration work which highlighted a potential gap in design from a human security orientation, as discerned from the ICD. SADC struggled to make tangible improvements in human security due to its limited financial and logistical support for peace-building, economic development, and security sector reforms (Rogier 2004: 32).

3.6.4. MONUC

Chapter 8 of the Lusaka agreement laid out an extensive and ambitious mandate for an operation designed to carry out peacekeeping tasks, such as monitoring the ceasefire; investigating violations; overseeing the disengagement, redeployment, and withdrawal of foreign forces; and conduct peace enforcement operations. The force was authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, allowing peacekeepers to employ coercive measures as necessary (UN 1999a:15; ICG:70).

The deployment consisted of 90 military liaison officers and 500 military observers and a full-scale peacekeeping mission (UN 1999a:45). The UN security council approved the initial phase of this operation on 6 August 1999 under Resolution 1258. However, by January 2000, only 28 of the 90 military officers had been deployed across eight regions within the DRC. On 30 November 1999, the Security Council authorised the deployment of 500 military observers, marking the formal entry of the Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo (MONUC). Subsequently, the

Security Council sanctioned the necessary expansion through Resolution 1291 on 24 February 2000 (UN 1999b; UN 2000c:7).

South Africa played a vital role in advocating for MONUC's deployment, with President Mbeki championing a stronger UN peacekeeping presence. Between 2002 and 2009, under Operation MISTRAL[14], South Africa contributed 48 members of the SANDF military policy agency; 6 air-cargo handling teams of 8 members each; 2 airfield crash rescue and firefighting teams of 7 members each; an aero medical team comprising 6 members; a command and support unit of 20 members; an engineer company, a headquarters support unit; a level 2 Medical facility; and the supplying of Well Drill and Ferry Units. SADC did not take an active role or real regional collective actions regarding MONUC (Swart and Solomon 2004:37; Koko 2007:43; SANDF n.d).

3.7. SADC Role in the DRC: 2006 – 2013

Between 2006 and 2013, SADC played a vital role in supporting the DRC's post-war reconstruction and democratic processes. A key achievement was the 2006 multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections, which were the first since the Second Congo War (Accord 2016). SADC, along with other international actors, provided essential electoral and logistical support, despite insecurity in some areas. The elections faced allegations of fraud and violence, particularly during the run-off between incumbent Kabila and challenger Bemba. Nevertheless, they represented a significant step towards democracy.

Following the elections, SADC focused on stabilising the new government. By 2010, the UN's MONUC had met its initial goals, but security issues remained, prompting a transition to United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) under Resolution 1925, which emphasised civilian protection and peacebuilding (UN 2013).

The 2011 presidential elections were marred by increased political unrest and international criticism over their legitimacy. Despite these challenges, SADC's commitment to the DRC's peace process and political stability remained crucial, even though the elections did not fully resolve the country's internal divisions.

3.8. SADC Role in MONUSCO (FIB): 2013-2020

Faced with the growing threat posed by the M23 and other armed groups, the SADC Summit at its meeting held in Maputo, Mozambique on 17-18 August 2012 decided to assist the Government of the

[14] A SANDF deployment to the DRC that supports MONUSCO under the UN department of Peacekeeping Operations.

DRC to disarm all negative forces in the eastern DRC, in particular the M23 rebels. To give effect to this decision SADC agreed to deploy forces to form a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) that would operate as part of MONUSCO, but with a robust mandate that authorised offensive action against rebel forces. Along with South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania met the requirements/criteria to contribute troops to this UN operation (Human Rights Watch 2006; UN 2010; UN 2013; SADC 2014).

The SADC decision to deploy forces was in response to the so-called Goma debacle of 2012[15]. This deployment was a clear message of SADC's will to be more proactive in ensuring regional security and stability in the DRC. Between 2013 and 2014 thirteen African countries who played critical roles in the DRC conflict signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to end the recurring cycles of conflict and violence that has plunged the DRC as part of the continuation of MONUSCO's work (UN 2013:3).

3.8.1. Challenges and Achievements

The FIB achieved notable successes early in its operations, with the defeat of the M23 in December 2013 marking a significant victory that liberated areas around Goma. This marked the first instance of a UN peacekeeping force successfully neutralising an armed group, setting a new precedent in peace enforcement (UN 2013; PMG 2018).

The FIB's offensive against M23 prepared critical regions in eastern DRC for stability, improving civilian protection and reducing crime in areas previously held by armed groups. Furthermore, SADC's involvement bolstered its reputation as a regional security institution ready to take decisive action for peace in Central and Southern Africa (ISS 2020).

While FIB operations weakened M23, they struggled against FDLR due to the group's widespread presence and guerrilla tactics, which made it challenging to conduct effective military operations. Additionally, the DRC government's inconsistent support for joint operations against FDLR further complicated FIB efforts (UNSC 2014; Vogel 2014).

[15] The Goma debacle of 2012 refers to the crisis that centered around the city of Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu where the M23 launched a large-scale military offensive against the DRC government forces (FARDC), seizing control of key towns, including the strategic city of Goma. The fall of Goma was a major blow to the DRC government, exposing the fragility of the national army and the limited control the state had over its eastern regions, particularly the resource-rich areas where various armed groups operated.

The level of cooperation from the DRC also played a role in making the FIB effective. While the Congolese government backed the FIB mandate to neutralise M23, its commitment to joint operations, especially against the FDLR, wavered. Sources in Kinshasa also linked elements of the DRC's military with informal relations with the FDLR, as they viewed them as a buffer against Rwandan influence. This made the FIB's operations more difficult because of the need for Congolese military cooperation on intelligence, logistical and even combat operations. Able to carry out reprisals temporarily, the FIB faced political and operational constraints in working effectively with an often under-equipped Congolese military forces burdened by its internal problems (Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2004; Stearns et al., 2013).

Ultimately, the FIB's challenges in addressing the FDLR highlight the intricate regional dynamics and the DRC's complex security landscape. While the FIB demonstrated the potential of an international brigade to counter specific threats like M23, its mixed success with the FDLR suggests that a purely military approach may not suffice without robust local support and regional cooperation.

SADC played a multifaceted and nuanced role in regional security that reflected both strategic engagement and a degree of bias. One significant development in this context was SADC’s decision to contribute troops to the FIB in the DRC. This marked a notable shift from traditional peacekeeping operations, which typically focus on maintaining peace and security without engaging in targeted active combat. Instead, the FIB was provided with an offensive mandate aimed at neutralising armed groups in the region. The fact that SADC was prepared to commit troops to execute the more robust mandate illustrated a strong commitment to enhancing regional stability, despite the relative risk to the forces of the involved member states.

3.9. Conclusion

The First Congo War showcased a multifaceted conflict driven by internal fragilities within the DRC and external regional influences that led to the fall of Mobutu and the ascent of Kabila. Although Kabila's AFDL, bolstered by Rwanda and Uganda, achieved swift military victories, the war failed to deliver enduring stability to the DRC. The inability to establish coherent governance and effectively tackle the underlying issues of ethnic strife, military disarray, and poor governance perpetuated a new wave of unrest. Kabila's ineffective leadership resulted in his government's collapse in under five years, underscoring the challenges of external military intervention in fostering sustainable peace. SADC’s role was limited in the first war as the DRC was not yet a member of the organisation.

However, SADC intended proved ineffectual in serving as a unifying force during the second Congo War. Instead of collaborating, member states pursued divergent national interests, thereby exposing significant weaknesses in regional security cooperation within SADC. The realities of the second Congo War demonstrated that national priorities often thwart collaborative conflict resolution efforts. SADC's inability to forge a cohesive security response amidst regional turmoil not only exacerbated fragmentation but also heightened vulnerability across member states.

The principles of collective security outlined in the SADC Treaty called for mutual support during crises. However, the military intervention to back Kabila's government fell short of this framework. Though the objective was to avert broader regional destabilisation—especially regarding the security situations in Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, and Zimbabwe—the intervention's decision-making process was deeply flawed. Initiated by a select coalition of Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, the lack of legitimacy from a SADC summit or wider consensus significantly tainted the intervention's credibility. The absence of a two-thirds quorum and the failure to adhere to treaty protocols raised essential questions about the intervention's fidelity to SADC's collective security principles.

Furthermore, the lack of a coherent policy framework for military interventions within SADC led to actions primarily motivated by individual nation-states rather than collective needs. The absence of a unified military command structure aggravated operational inefficiencies, further complicating the intervention's effectiveness. Although SADC later attempted to rectify these deficiencies with the 2001 Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, the non-compliance with its tenets during the second Congo war underscored profound challenges in cultivating a robust and cohesive regional security identity. The conflict highlighted that national interests often overshadow multilateral cooperation, ultimately diminishing SADC's stature as a trustworthy security entity.

SADC's involvement raised serious questions about the dichotomy between its stated commitment to respect national sovereignty and the actual interventions by its member states in the DRC. While the SADC Treaty emphasises non-interference in member states' internal matters, the military backing from Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe blurred this vital line. These nations prioritised their strategic interests, particularly concerning mineral resources and broader geopolitical dynamics over principles of neutrality and sovereignty. This transformation from guardians of sovereignty to active participants in internal conflicts cast doubt on the legitimacy of SADC's interventions and its capacity to act impartially.

In terms of policy effectiveness, SADC's inability to delineate a clear mandate for intervention under international law, specifically the UN Charter, also severely impacted its credibility as a regional security actor. The intervention occurred without UN Security Council authorization, lacking the legal justification necessary for military action. This violation of international norms not only undermined SADC's legitimacy but also revealed critical shortcomings in its policy framework for addressing regional crises. The absence of defined military protocols, a central command structure, and an established intervention framework exposed SADC's security architecture as nascent and disorganised, leaving it susceptible to fragmentation and the sway of national ambitions.

Ultimately, SADC's role in the second Congo War illuminates the significance of collective security in a regional framework while simultaneously exposing the inherent limitations of such initiatives in practice. The intervention intended to preserve regional stability ultimately fell short due to its lack of cohesion, legitimacy, and strategic coherence.

The failure to secure a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the conflict highlights the urgent need for a more coordinated and structured approach to regional security. In summary, the Congo conflict has illuminated the fragile state of SADC's collective security framework, exposing its susceptibility to the diverse interests of its member states. Although founded on principles of solidarity, peace, and stability, SADC's inability to harmonise national goals with multilateral objectives has significantly weakened its effectiveness in resolving the DRC conflict. The lessons from the conflict clearly indicate that SADC must prioritise strengthening its decision-making processes, develop a cohesive security strategy, and enhance trust and cooperation among its member states. For SADC to effectively tackle future regional crises, these structural and policy reforms are not just necessary; they are imperative. Without such changes, SADC will struggle to navigate the complex security challenges that confront the Southern African region.

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE SADC ORGAN IN LESOTHO'S POLITICAL CRISIS: 1996 TO 2020

4.1. Introduction

Lesotho is a small mountainous country with a population of approximately 2 million. It is landlocked within South Africa as illustrated in figure 5, with the status of a country within another country. However, despite its small population and geographical size, Lesotho has experienced decades of gripped by political turmoil. Instability and conflict have threatened the lives of citizens and the country's economic development.

Figure 5: Map of Lesotho

Source: https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/lesotho-0

SADC has been continued to confronted by various political and military crises in Lesotho which have included electoral disputes, military interference, and weak coalition governments that have required interventions.

This chapter aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the SADC Organ in responding to instability in Lesotho by examining major interventions from 1998 to 2020. Focus will be placed on the 1998 election crisis; the political crisis between 2007 and 2012; and the political crisis between 2014 to 2020. The crises will be discussed separately to highlight the development of the role and functioning of the Organ over time.

4.2. Brief History

Lesotho, formerly Basutoland, resisted colonial settlers and opposed incorporation into South Africa. King Moshoeshoe settled the Basotho in the fertile Mohokare River valley, which attracted enemies such as the Boers and the British. In 1868, the British annexed Basutoland and transferred it to the Cape Colony in 1871, sparking conflicts such as the Gun War (1880–1884). By 1884, Basutoland became a British protectorate to escape Boer aggression (Thabane 2023).

Efforts to integrate Basutoland into South Africa failed, it and remained a British protectorate. By the 1870s, Basutoland's economy depended on exporting grain and cattle to South Africa, with many Basotho working as migrant labourers in South African mines. Close ties persisted, but apartheid policies later strained the relationship, especially with the installation of border posts in 1963 (Gill 1993).

Lesotho gained independence on 4 October 1966, with Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of the Basotho National Party (BNP) taking power. After the 1970 elections, which showed the BNP losing to the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), Jonathan nullified the results, declared a state of emergency, and suspended Parliament (Matlosa 1998a: 367). A 1986 military coup d'état transferred power to King Moshoeshoe II, though tensions led to his exile in 1990 and the installation of King Letsie III.

In 1993, a new constitution stripped the king of executive powers, and the BCP won in multiparty elections, leading to internal unrest. By 1994, King Letsie III briefly ousted the government in a coup, but regional mediation restored stability. Political instability persisted, culminating in the formation of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) (Matlosa 1998a: 369).

4.3. 1998 Political Crisis

The 1998 political crisis in Lesotho stemmed from disputed election results, widespread political instability, and governance challenges.

4.3.1 Development of the Crisis

After the May 1998 elections, opposition parties accused the ruling LCD of rigging the results, leading to protests and allegations of corruption. The crisis escalated when opposition forces mobilised, sparking violent unrest and creating a security vacuum. This political turmoil destabilised the country and prompted SADC to intervene militarily under collective regional security. The intervention, led by South Africa and Botswana, sought to restore order but faced criticism for heavy-handed tactics and limited consultation with all stakeholders, exposing divisions within SADC's approach to conflict resolution.

The 1998 political crisis in Lesotho stemmed from the contested results of the May elections, where the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won 79 out of 80 seats in the National Assembly. Opposition parties, including the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), disputed the results, alleging electoral fraud and demanding investigations, leading to a political impasse. Despite over 700 local and international observers affirming that the election met international standards, the opposition remained unconvinced (; Roger 1999: 670-671).

Key changes from previous elections included a reduced voting age and an increased number of constituencies. The LCD's victory was largely attributed to Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle's personal popularity (The Economist 1998; Matlosa 1998b:8). Protests and strikes organised by the opposition escalated the unrest, threatening national stability and prompting the SADC to mediate.
The LCD worked to solidify its power and discredit opposition claims amid a politically unstable environment, while the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) became politicised, with factions aligning with either the LCD or opposition parties (Likota 1998; Molomo).

As Lesotho's instability risked spilling over into the region, especially South Africa, SADC sought to prevent a protracted conflict. Lesotho's proximity to South Africa meant that any instability directly affected its economy and border security. SADC's response was influenced by its mandate to ensure regional peace (Matlosa 1998b:8-11; Likota 1998).

South African and international media reports amplified claims that the election had been rigged. Tensions rose as opposition supporters gathered outside the royal palace, demanding the king intervene in the political crisis and dissolve the government. However, under Lesotho's constitution, the king lacked the authority to dismiss the government (Molomo 1999: 137).

On 11 August 1998, opposition protests persisted despite their permit to hold protests having expired on 4 August 1998. Concerned about the escalating unrest, the chief of the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) ordered roadblocks to prevent protestors from reaching the capital. However, opposition groups continued mobilising, even providing food to youths in front of the palace. Major General Makhula Mosakeng, commander of the LDF, ordered the use of tear gas to disperse the crowd, deepening the crisis as soldiers began turning on each other, revealing divisions within the military (Southall & Fox 1999: 675).

As civil unrest gripped Maseru, armed opposition supporters took control of the capital, preventing civil servants from working while also hijacking vehicles and shutting down Radio Lesotho. Junior officers in the LDF arrested Major General Mosakeng, pressuring him to detain 28 senior officers to create a non-partisan military. The divisions within the LDF were now apparent. There were grave fears that conflict could arise between factions within the LDF. Furthermore, there were concerns that the continued protest by the opposition parties could exacerbated these tensions (Southall & Fox 1999: 675-677). Makoa (1999: 75), supported by Molomo (1999: 138), argued that these protests eventually forced SADC mediation of the crisis.

4.3.2 Initial SADC Response

As a SADC member, Lesotho likely expected that the organisation would respond to its political crisis, given the organisation's mandate to promote peace, stability, and good governance in the region. This expectation would have aligned with SADC's commitment to uphold democratic processes and prevent conflict. However, the validity of these expectations can be questioned based on SADC's actual response to this crisis.

In the face of potential civil war and a breakdown of governance, the SADC intervened, initially through mediation efforts. The SADC Commission of Inquiry, or 1998 Langa Commission in Lesotho, was established in response to allegations of electoral fraud and disputes arising from the results of the May 1998 general election.

Its primary purpose was to investigate claims of irregularities in the electoral process and address concerns about the legitimacy of the election results. The commission was part of efforts to de-escalate tensions and restore trust in the democratic process during a politically volatile period (Southall 1999:55). As an external and independent body, the commission aimed to lend credibility to the investigation, addressing domestic and international concerns about governance and democracy in Lesotho. By clarifying the integrity of the elections, the Langa Commission aimed to resolve disputes that had escalated into protests and unrest, culminating in calls for external intervention. The findings of the commission were intended to inform reforms in Lesotho's electoral processes to prevent future disputes and ensure fair and transparent elections (Neethling 1999; De Coning 2000b; Southall 1999:55-56).

The South African government mandated that the then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, to mediate in the crisis. On 10 August 1998,he led a South African delegation that included the Minister of Defence Joe Modise and Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo, to Lesotho to talk to the leaders of the government and the opposition parties. It was during the meeting between the South African delegation and the Lesotho parties that an agreement was reached to launch an SADC Election Auditing Initiative, leading to the establishment of the Langa Commission to investigate the legitimacy of the election results and the veracity of the claims by the opposition parties. ((PMG 1998; Likoti 2007: 251).

Following the mediation agreement, Deputy President Mbeki established a Commission of Enquiry led by the South African High Court Judge, Justice Pius Langa. The commission cromprised of representatives from Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, but no representatives from Lesotho. The Langa Commission started work on 14 August 1998 with the mandate to investigate claims by the opposition parties that the election was rigged (PMG 1998; Lambrechts 1999: 8-9).

The findings of the Langa Commission created more anxiety and confusion in Lesotho. Despite its credible process and transparency, the report was not appropriately handled. Instead of Mbeki presenting the Langa Commission's report in Lesotho, the findings were presented before the Heads of SADC Summit meeting in Mauritius on 13 –14 September 1998. The findings were summarised as follows:

> we are unable to state that the invalidity of the elections has been conclusively established. We point out, however, that some of the apparent irregularities and discrepancies are of sufficiently serious concern. We cannot, however, postulate that the result does not reflect the will of Lesotho electorate (US 1999)

The report did not confirm nor disapprove of the allegations that the election was rigged. Both the opposition and the ruling parties found ground to support their respective positions as the Langa report did not take sides with any of the parties (Molomo 1999: 137; U.S. Department of State 2001; Likoti 2007:252).

Southall and Fox (1999: 679) argue that the report was so critical of the LCD that Mbeki referred it back to the Troika of heads of state. Although Prime Minister Mosisili reportedly reviewed the report before its finalisation, SADC denied opposition parties access, fuelling speculation and rumours about its contents. The limited release of the report in Lesotho further fuelled rumours that the report was being falsified in favour of the LCD government. The delays in releasing the report fuelled tension and anxiety in the country and contributed to a volatile environment that culminated in a mutiny within the LDF (Southall & Fox 1999:670; Motsamai & Petlane 2015).

The tension further escalated into a full-blown political crisis, with the opposition and dissident elements of the LDF interrupting government functioning, barricading significant government buildings, and suspending parliament. The Lesotho government lost control of LDF and LMPS.

4.3.3. SADC Military Intervention

When the presentation of the Langa report was postponed, causing it to be withheld from the relevant Basotho parties in favour of the SADC Summit, the then Prime Minister (PM) of Lesotho, Mr Phakalitha Mosisili, reached out to SADC, requesting assistance as the conflict escalated (Williams, 2018).

The primary aim of the intervention was to stabilise the political environment and create conditions that would allow for genuine negotiations to achieve a lasting political solution. Additionally, it sought to address the breakdown of law and order. Intelligence reports had also indicated the possibility of a coup d'état, driven by factions within the LDF aligned with opposition parties. Thus, the intervention was deemed essential for protecting a legitimately elected government at risk of being overthrown by rebel soldiers and other destabilizing forces.

Moreover, South Africa's involvement had an economic dimension, as protecting critical assets, such as the Water Highlands Scheme in Katse and Muela, was a significant factor in its decision to intervene. De Coning (2000a:46-47) notes that the intervention in Lesotho faced challenges due to the lack of a clear mandate, particularly in its early stages. Although the primary objective was to restore law and order and

prevent a coup d'etat, the absence of well-articulated and widely understood goals led to confusion and resistance. Opposition parties in Lesotho framed the intervention as South Africa's support for the ruling LCD, especially in light of allegations of election fraud. This perception galvanised the opposition to the intervention into a patriotic cause, intensifying resistance and contributing to further instability (Matlosa 1998b:11).

Without a clear and broadly communicated mandate, the mission was viewed as biased and self-serving, undermining its domestic and international legitimacy. According to PMG (1998), the intervention's goals such as disarming mutinous factions within the RLDF and restoring democratic governance were not effectively communicated. A transparent and formal mandate could have clarified the mission's purpose, reduced opposition, and strengthened SADC's credibility.

Botswana and South Africa responded positively to the call for intervention in Lesotho. On 22 September 1998, South Africa deployed approximately 600 troops from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), a contingent later strengthened to over 3000. Botswana contributed around 200 soldiers from the Botswana Defence Force (BDF). However, despite being involved in the initial discussions, Zimbabwe and Mozambique opted not to send troops (de Coning, 2000a:48). This limited participation diminished the perception of the mission as a unified SADC initiative, reinforcing the notion that it was predominantly driven by South Africa and raising concerns about its neutrality and regional legitimacy.

Upon their arrival in Lesotho, SANDF and BDF forces faced resistance from dissident factions within the LDF and armed civilians. Although the intervention played a crucial role in stabilising Prime Minister Mosisili's position, it also led to significant violence, destruction, and loss of life, particularly in Maseru. In urban areas, where government buildings and commercial infrastructure were severely damaged. This resulted in widespread looting took place (Matlosa, 1999; Likoti, 2007:255; Williams, 2019:30-37).

The unrest in Maseru, characterised by looting, civilians being prohibited from going to work, and the arrest and displacement of high-ranking military officers, led the Organ to conclude that a coup attempt was underway. Within the first 36 hours of the operation, there were 48 casualties, including eight South African soldiers, along with extensive damage to the capital city of Maseru. This chaotic beginning undermined the operation's credibility. It contributed to perceptions that the intervention was poorly planned and executed (de Coning, 1998:43; Nkosi, 1998:4).

The intervention forces prioritised the security of critical installations, such as the Katse Dam, to prevent sabotage and ensure the uninterrupted water flow to South Africa. The operation lasted seven months, costing millions and involving 1 600 and 3 500 South African troops and 400 soldiers from Botswana. The Lesotho government paid South Africa R240 million to maintain its military presence, which constituted 10 per cent of Lesotho's 1998/99 budget—far exceeding its annual defence budget (Makoa, 1999:78).

Neethling (1999) and de Coning (2000a:45) note that the decision to authorise the intervention lacked transparency. Key questions remain unanswered regarding who made the decision, when and where it was made, and what specifically was decided. There is no formal documentation confirming that SADC collectively approved the intervention. Some reports suggest that the decision was made during a meeting of defence ministers in Gaborone on 15 September 1998, attended only by South Africa and Botswana. However, there has yet to be an official record of this meeting (Neethling, 1999). Furthermore, the intervention did not receive prior approval from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as required under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and it failed to secure endorsement from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Cilliers, 1998:11; de Coning, 2000a:43).

Despite the devastation, the intervention effectively quelled the immediate unrest, preventing the overthrow of the government and restoring stability. On 2 October 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all parties involved in the conflict. This agreement included provisions for elections to be held within 15 to 18 months, the revision of the electoral system, and measures to promote greater inclusivity in the country’s political processes. Additionally, it led to establishing an interim political authority tasked with preparing the country for the 2002 elections (Pherudi, 2000:135-136).

A dedicated training team, consisting of members from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), remained in Lesotho after the intervention. This team carried out Operation Maluti, which aimed to retrain and restructure the LDF as part of a security sector reform programme while also providing advisory support to the LDF (Pherudi, 2000:136).

4.3.4. The Role of the SADC Organ

While ostensibly conducted under the auspices of SADC, the 1998 intervention in Lesotho highlights significant weaknesses in the SADC Organ's functionality. Far from being a coordinated regional response, the intervention exposed the SADC Organ’s inability to operate as an effective decision-making

body with member states. Issues such as the authorisation of the mission, the ambiguity of the mandate and the limited participation of member states require closer scrutiny.

- Authorisation of Mission

Despite acting under the auspices of SADC during the 1998 military intervention in Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana did so without formal authorisation from the SADC Organ. While South African authorities tried to consult relevant SADC members behind the scenes, these attempts did not establish the mission's legitimacy. The absence of a transparent authorisation process undermined the credibility of military interventions and eroded trust in SADC's ability to act as a legitimate regional security actor.

Authorising military missions is essential for ensuring legitimacy, accountability, and regional stability in a security community. Such communities are characterised by a shared sense of trust among member states and a commitment to resolving conflicts peacefully. However, military interventions require formal authorisation to uphold these principles and maintain collective cohesion.

An adequately authorised mission should involve comprehensive consultations within the Organ, where member states can collectively assess threats and determine the necessity of a unified response. Typically, this decision must be formally approved at a summit and coordinated with the African Union (AU) and the UN Security Council under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

This situation highlighted significant weaknesses in SADC's decision-making framework. The lack of clear, documented, and transparent procedures for authorising interventions exposed the organisation to criticism and fostered perceptions of unilateralism rather than collective action. The Organ's institutional infancy further complicated these shortcomings, as it lacked the legal framework to regulate its function and clarify its institutional relationship to the SADC Summit.

The 1998 intervention in Lesotho illustrates the tension between unilateral actions by individual member states and the collective decision-making ethos of a security community. Ideally, military interventions should be authorised through established regional protocols and decision-making structures, such as summits, ministerial meetings, or defence councils. This approach ensures that all member states are consulted, their concerns are addressed, and the intervention is viewed as a legitimate, collective effort rather than an action driven by the interests of a few.

The Lesotho intervention further highlighted the risks of acting without explicit authorisation. Based on consultations with some SADC members but lacking formal approval from the SADC Summit or the Organ, South Africa and Botswana's decision to intervene weakened the intervention's legitimacy. It also exposed internal divisions within SADC and raised questions about whether the mission adhered to international norms, including the need for authorisation from the UNSC under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Failure to obtain explicit authorisation can erode member states' trust, undermine the regional body's credibility, and fuel perceptions of dominance by more powerful states. In contrast, a transparent and inclusive authorisation process reinforces the collective identity of a security community and ensures that interventions align with shared principles and objectives.

- Ambiguity in the Mission's Mandate

The 1998 military intervention in Lesotho illustrates the critical consequences of operating without a clear mandate, significantly undermining its effectiveness and leading to mixed outcomes. Initially framed as a peacekeeping or stabilising mission, the intervention lacked precise objectives—whether to restore order, support the government, or resolve political grievances was never clearly defined. This lack of clarity created confusion within Lesotho and the international community, hampering the mission's credibility. With no clearly articulated mandate, there were no explicit rules of engagement or operational instructions for the forces deployed in Lesotho. This ambiguity fuelled escalating tensions and confusion throughout the operation, ultimately resulting in the tragic loss of life and increased instability.

Moreover, the failure to establish a clear exit strategy was a significant oversight. Without a defined timeline or criteria for withdrawal, military forces remained in Lesotho without a clear endpoint. What began as a mission to restore order became a prolonged presence that did not address the deeper political issues, further complicating the fragile situation.

In a regional security context, where interconnected dynamics can lead to the spillover of security issues, the lack of a coherent strategy also posed a potential threat to South Africa. A poorly planned withdrawal could have left Lesotho without the vital political and security frameworks required to maintain peace, risking destabilisation and the possibility of conflict spreading across borders. Such instability could have directly impacted South Africa, especially if armed groups in Lesotho sought refuge across the border. Ultimately, the intervention prioritised military stabilisation at the expense of addressing the profound political, economic, and electoral issues that fuelled Lesotho's instability. Lacking a clear mandate to

confront these underlying problems, the mission failed to deliver a lasting solution to the political crisis, leaving Lesotho in a precarious and unresolved state. The lessons learned from this intervention highlight the imperative for clarity and coherence in future missions to ensure effective outcomes and lasting peace.

- Limited Participation from Member States

The limited involvement in the 1998 Lesotho intervention undermined the perception of the mission as a unified SADC initiative. It reinforced the view that it was primarily a South Africa and Botswana operation. The selective participation in the mission raised significant concerns about its neutrality and jeopardised its regional legitimacy. With only South Africa and Botswana contributing forces and Zimbabwe and Mozambique failing to deploy troops despite being part of the oversight committee, the intervention became perceived as primarily serving South Africa's national interests rather than a genuinely collective regional effort. The hesitance of other states to commit troops may stem from logistical challenges, political reservations, or conflicting interests, all of which reveal the deeper regional dynamics preventing unified action.

A more inclusive coalition involving a more comprehensive array of SADC member states would have substantially mitigated these criticisms and strengthened the mission's legitimacy. The limited participation underscored serious gaps in SADC's ability to mobilise collective action, highlighting an urgent need for robust frameworks that ensure consistent and inclusive involvement in future interventions. This realisation prompted the adoption of the Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, which emphasises the necessity of collective action in tackling regional crises. Under this envisioned collective security framework, member states are unequivocally committed to collaboratively responding to threats against any single member. All members must engage in the decision-making and operations to affirm the legitimacy of interventions as a shared regional undertaking.

In conclusion, the 1998 intervention in Lesotho starkly illustrated the SADC Organ's immaturity and institutional incoherence. The decision-making process was primarily controlled by a handful of powerful states, relegating the Organ to a passive role rather than making it an active player in regional security. The lack of transparent procedures, a clearly defined mandate, and inclusive participation undermined the mission's legitimacy and exposed the Organ's shortcomings as an effective collective security mechanism. Strengthening the Organ's decision-making framework and committing to regional and international principles are critical for enhancing SADC's credibility in future interventions. These

experiences ultimately informed the establishment of the Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, paving the way for more effective regional collaboration.

4.3.5. Conclusion

The 1998 military intervention in Lesotho was a direct response to escalating political instability marked by widespread protests, violent clashes, and the opposition parties' refusal to accept the legitimacy of the ruling LCD election victory. This crisis threatened not only the internal stability of Lesotho but also posed risks to regional security, particularly for South Africa, which had strategic interests closely tied to Lesotho's stability.

In this context, SADC intervened, led by South Africa and supported by Botswana, with the aim of restoring order, safeguarding the democratic process, and preventing the conflict from spreading beyond Lesotho's borders. However, the intervention exposed deeper issues within SADC's framework, including a lack of consensus among member states and a failure to follow established decision-making processes adequately, which undermined the legitimacy and effectiveness of the intervention.

The establishment of the Langa Commission emphasised broader concerns regarding governance, political exclusion, and electoral integrity that had initially sparked the conflict. The Commission’s recommendations called for reforms in Lesotho’s political structures to address these underlying issues, including electoral reforms and the depoliticization of the military. While SADC's intervention was crucial in halting the immediate escalation of the crisis, its inability to fully address the root causes of Lesotho's political dysfunction highlighted the limitations of regional interventions that do not account for the complex interplay of national interests, weak institutions, and political rivalries.

Thus, the 1998 intervention serves as both a testament to SADC's commitment to regional stability and a cautionary tale about the challenges of multilateral peacekeeping efforts amid deep political divisions.

4.4. 2007 – 2012 Political Crisis

A electoral conflicts, governance issues, and political unrest continued to characterise the political turmoil in Lesotho during this period.

4.4.1. Development of the Crisis

After the 1998 elections, the LCD won 79 out of 80 seats in parliament exhibiting major flaws in the electoral system. The first-past-the-post (FPTP) system marginalised minor parties and ethnic communities, which deepened political alienation and exclusion. This again weakened confidence in democratic institutions and paved way for cyclical instability (ECF n.d).

The main concern emerged from the general elections in February 2007, which took place using the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system[16]. The governing party, the LCD, headed by Prime Minister Mosisili, achieved a considerable majority. However, opposition groups, particularly the ABC and the LWP, accused the LCD of manipulating the MMP framework. These opposition parties argued that the distribution of proportional representation seats did not accurately reflect the actual vote counts, leading to claims of electoral fraud. The parties' dissatisfaction with the electoral system, especially regarding the inequitable allocation of parliamentary seats, sparked widespread protests and demonstrations (Likota 2008:58; Matlosa 2008:36-37; Kapa & Shale 2014:101).

Additional factors that contributed to the crisis included the absence of efficient methods for resolving electoral disputes, the Independent Electoral Commission's (IEC) failure to address complaints, and a breakdown in communication among political leaders. The lack of a transparent system to settle these matters fostered an atmosphere of distrust and political violence, which diminished public confidence in the electoral system. Tensions increased due to political fragmentation and the perceived marginalisation of opposition parties from crucial political decisions, further widening the political rift (Likota 2008: Matlosa 2008:37).

Following the election, protests and demonstrations erupted, with supporters of the opposition calling for electoral reforms and justice. The political violence and the looming threat of instability led to an environment of insecurity, further undermining public trust in the democratic processes.

4.4.2. SADC Response

SADC and the SADC Parliamentary Forum deployed observer missions during the elections. The SADC observer mission recommended that there should be legal protection for the MMP model because 'left

[16] MMP is a system in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems–one is a list PR system and (usually) one plurality/majority system–where the list PR system compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system. In contrast to the 'first past the post' system which had been used previously and contributed to the dissatisfaction.

unprotected, the model will soon be assassinated and sacrificed at the altar of personal ambitions' (SADC 2007c: 13. The SADCPF observer mission argued that 'in view of the concerns raised by stakeholders that political inclusiveness, which is one of the main benefits of the MMP system, was threatened by pre-election alliances, the mission recommends the enactment of legislation and/or adoption of guidelines to govern alliances. This should enhance the benefits of the MMP electoral system and promote interparty collaboration and fair contest' (SADCPF 2007: 8).

On 18 and 21 March 2007, the executive secretary of SADC held consultative meetings with representatives of ABC, ACP, BNP, MFP and LWP in Maseru over the contentious issue of the allocation of the PR seats. Opposition parties agreed to suspend protests to open room for peaceful negotiations (SADC 2007: 2).

On 28-29 March an Extra-Ordinary SADC Summit was convened in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to deliberate on the political crises. The summit resolved 'to send a SADC delegation at Ministerial level to go and assess the situation as requested by the political parties' (SADC 2007a: 2). Subsequently, a ministerial Troika of the Organ was dispatched to Lesotho on a fact-finding mission from 11-14 April. Upon completion of its mission the Troika prepared a detailed report of its findings and recommendations. In sum, the problems it identified included: manipulation or distortion of the MMP electoral model; unfair allocation of parliamentary seats; and legality of the party alliances (SADC 2007a: 2-4).

The Troika's report was tabled at the ministerial meeting of the Organ convened in Dar es Salaam in May and the findings and recommendations of the mission were adopted. SADC proposed that the government engage in formal dialogue with opposition parties; SADC would facilitate the dialogue; the process of internal dialogue should start immediately to pre-empt the possibility of tension; and SADC and Lesotho would formally ask the UNDP and Germany and the USA for financial and technical assistance (SADC 2007b: 5-6). Former Botswana President Sir Ketumile Masire was appointed to mediate the political dispute. The internal dialogue began on 16-17 June while the externally mediated dialogue took place from 25 to 30 June (SADC 2007b: 5-6; SADC 2007c: 8; SADC 2009:2).

The mediation process faced numerous challenges, including accusations of partiality from Mosisili and a lack of political will from the government. This resulted in Masire's resignation in 2009, signalling the limits of SADC's mediation capacity. SADC's response, however, did not end with his departure (Lesotho Times 2009; Matlosa 2010:206- 208).

Following Masire's resignation, SADC sent a ministerial Troika delegation to continue mediation efforts, collaborating with civil society groups such as the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL), which had initiated its own mediation. While these efforts laid the groundwork for addressing Lesotho's electoral crisis, political tensions persisted, and the country struggled to implement meaningful reforms (SADC 2009: 2-3; Letsie 2015:80). Deleglise (2020) argued that these initiatives failed to resolve the underlying causes of instability.

The turning point in the CCL-led mediation occurred in March 2011, when the government and opposition parties agreed to reforms aimed at strengthening the MMP electoral system ahead of the 2012 general election (Accord 2015). SADC, in a communiqué issued before the 2012 elections, declared the CCL mediation process a success. Much of the groundwork for this success was due to the UN's discreet but substantial involvement, which had been instrumental in building the capacity of the CCL and supporting the mediation process behind the scenes (SADC 2012; Malebang 2014:218-219; Letsie 2015:80).
However, the dialogue did not lead to long-term institutional reforms as structural weaknesses that contributed to the earlier crisis persisted. According to Matlosa (2020:5) among these were the lack of clear separation between the military and political spheres, which remained heavily intertwined, and a political culture marked by zero-sum competition and shifting political alliances. This instability was, in part, a continuation of unresolved political disputes from the earlier crisis and demonstrated the limitations of SADC's mediation, which had not adequately addressed the root causes of Lesotho's recurrent instability (Matlosa 2020:4-5 ; Deleglise 2020).

4.5. 2014 – 2020 Political Crisis

The conflict and instability experienced during this period had its genesis in the 2012 National Assembly elections, when then-Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili's Democratic Congress (DC) failed to attain the required outright majority, resulting in a three-party coalition government of Thomas Thabane's All Basotho Convention (ABC), Deputy Prime Minister Mothetjoa Metsing's LCD and the BNP. The deputy prime minister alleged that Prime Minister Thabane was making crucial government decisions without consulting his two coalition partners, thus affecting the functioning of the coalition government. Unsuccessful attempts at mediation by the Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) led to the withdrawal of Metsing from the coalition and entering an alliance with Mosisili's DC.

4.5.1. Development of the Crisis

The political crisis in Lesotho in 2014 resulted from escalating public dissatisfaction with the government and conflict within the security forces. The troubles began when Prime Minister Thabane suspended parliament on June 19, 2014, to pre-empt a looming vote of no confidence. This action intensified political fractures and increased mistrust between the ruling and opposition parties (Ngwawi 2014)
The situation worsened when, on 29 August 2014, Thabane dismissed the LDF commander, Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli, and replaced him with Brigadier Maaparankoe Maha. This decision led to a confrontation between elements within the LDF and LMPS, resulting in violent clashes in Maseru on August 30, 2014. One police officer lost his life during the violence, and there were allegations of an attempted coup d' état, which Thabane attributed to his deputy, Mothetjoa Metsing (Taylor 2014).

The LDF denied any coup attempt, but the crisis continued to develop with significant political ramifications. Thabane sought refuge in South Africa, citing threats to his safety, and accused Metsing of conspiring in the coup plot. The South African government condemned what it perceived as an unconstitutional change of government, further complicating the situation. Thabane requested military intervention from SADC.

By early September 2014, the situation in Lesotho had escalated, with rising tensions among the government, opposition, and military factions. Although Thabane sought military intervention, SADC chose not to intervene militarily. Instead, the South African government sent a contingent of the South African Police Service (SAPS) to Maseru to enhance public security in the capital and to provide personal security for Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and other government officials. On September 3, 2014, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane returned to Lesotho from South Africa.

Instability related to the LDF resurfaced on 25 June 2015, when Lieutenant General Maaparankoe Mahao, the former commander of the LDF was killed by LDF members near Maseru. His murder caused significant public outrage and once again raised questions about the role of the military in Lesotho's politics. The killing was widely condemned, including by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who expressed concern over the situation. The death of Lieutenant General Mahao, coupled with the unresolved military and political tensions, highlighted the challenges Lesotho faced in maintaining peace and stability (SADC 2015a; Amnesty International 2016).

The pattern of instability characterised by the unhealthy relationship between politicians and the security forces persisted. In August 2017, former defence minister Tseliso Mokhosi was arrested in connection with the murder of Mokalekale Khetheng, a police officer who had gone missing in 2016. Mokhosi was released on bail the following day, which fuelled further tension. Later that month, both former deputy prime minister Mothetjoa Metsing and former defence minister Mokhosi fled to South Africa, highlighting ongoing fears of political persecution and instability.

In March 2017, a no-confidence vote against PM Mosisili led to the dissolution of the National Assembly and the announcement of new elections. During this period, SADC continued to monitor developments closely and encouraged a peaceful and democratic process. As parliamentary elections were held in June 2017. SADC supported the monitoring of the elections by international observers, including the AU, the CON, and EISA, to ensure transparency and legitimacy (SADC 2017).

The SADC's diplomatic involvement was critical in supporting the electoral process, but the political volatility continued. The SADC facilitated the mediation of the electoral dispute by deploying a team of observers and offering diplomatic support to ensure the peaceful transition of power (Matlosa 2020). However, the elections were overshadowed by ongoing violence and political infighting, including the murder of PM Thomas Thabane's estranged wife, Lipolelo Thabane on 14 June 2017 and the flight of key political figures such as Mokhosi and Metsing .

The political and military crisis in Lesotho took a violent turn again on 5 September 2017, Lieutenant General Khoantle Motšomotšo, the commander of the LDF and two military guards were killed by soldiers at a military barracks in Maseru. This event highlighted the deep divisions within the military and the country's fragile security environment.

On 11 May 2020, the coalition government headed by Prime Minister Thomas Thabane collapsed after the coalition partners withdrew their support for the government. On May 19, 2020, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane resigned, and former finance minister Moeketsi Majoro of the ABC was sworn in as the prime minister on May 20, 2020.

4.5.2. SADC Response

The persistent political instability in Lesotho, coupled closely to the involvement of the security forces in the political environment forced SADC to remain engaged in Lesotho in the period under discussion.

SADC took significant diplomatic action in addressing the crisis. A Double Trioka Summit was held on 17-18 August 2014 in Victoria Falls, declining a military intervention and reiterated a call for political solutions in line with domestic laws (SADC 2014a: 7). On 15 September 2014, the SADC Troika Summit appointed then Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa to mediate negotiations between the parties and established the SADC Observer Mission in Lesotho (SOMILES), which consisted of approximately 200 police officers and military personnel from six SADC member-states (South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zimbabwe) (AU 2015; DIRCO 2015; SADC 2015).

Ramaphosa led negotiations between the parties and managed to broker a series of agreements aimed at restoring political stability. On 2 October 2014, the political parties in Lesotho signed the Maseru Facilitation Declaration, committing to the reconvening of parliament and agreeing to hold fresh elections in February 2015. This was followed by the Maseru Security Accord on 23 October 2014, which required key military and police figures, including Kamoli and Mahao, to go on special leave and refrain from exercising authority over the military and police forces. These steps were critical in de-escalating the political crisis (AU 2015; DIRCO 2015; SADC 2015).

The National Assembly was reconvened on 17 October 2014 after continued negotiations, Thabane agreed to dissolve the National Assembly on 5 December 2014, clearing the way for elections. The parties also signed the Electoral Pledge on 11 December 2014, which formalised the commitment to holding elections.

In the parliamentary elections held on 28 February 2015, the Democratic Congress (DC) won the most seats (47 out of 120), followed closely by the ABC which secured 46 seats. The LCD won 12 seats. The SADC and the AU sent observers to monitor the elections, while the Commonwealth also dispatched its own observers. The SADC's observer mission, known as SOMILES, was disbanded on March 30, 2015, after the peaceful completion of the elections (IEC Lesotho 2015a; IEC Lesotho 2015b:9; The Commonwealth 2015: SADC 2015).

In response to Mahao's death, SADC took immediate steps to address the violence by establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate the circumstances of his death. In July 2015 SADC Summit established a ten-member commission of inquiry, headed by Mpaphi Passevil Phumaphi of Botswana. The commission was tasked with investigating the killing. The findings of the commission were published in a report on 5 November 2015 confirming that Mahao's killing had been a result of internal divisions

within the military and recommended various reforms to prevent further violence (SADC 2015b; Lesotho Times 2016).

Despite this investigation, political tensions in Lesotho remained high, and these were further exacerbated by the arrest of key political figures and violence, including the shooting of journalist Lloyd Mutungamiri by members of the LDF on 9 July 2016 (Motsamai & Petlane 2015).

In response to the mounting security challenges on 15 September 2017 during the Double Troika Summit SADC authorised the deployment of a contingent to facilitate a secure, stable, and peaceful environment in Lesotho (SADC 2017). The SADC Preventive Mission in the Kingdom of Lesotho (SAPMIL), consisting of 269 personnel, was deployed during November 2017 and included 217 military personnel, 15 intelligence officers, 24 police officers, and 13 civilian experts from Angola, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The mission's mandate was to help create the conditions for peace and stability, a crucial intervention as the country faced deep political divisions and military unrest (SADC 2017).

The mission was also authorised by the AU Peace and Security Council, reflecting regional and continental concern over Lesotho's situation. The SADC Summit in Luanda, Angola, extended the mandate of SAPMIL for an additional six months in April 2018. SAPMIL's presence in Lesotho lasted until November 2018, with its eventual withdrawal following significant political progress (AU 2018; SADC 2017). Throughout 2018, SADC engaged in multiple diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. President Ramaphosa of South Africa appointed Dikgang Moseneke as South Africa's special envoy to Lesotho in June 2018, signalling increased regional focus on stabilising the country.

The Lesotho National Dialogue and Stabilization Project (LNDSP) was launched on 25 June 2018, aiming to foster consensus building and facilitate national reforms. The first major step in this process was the signing of a SADC-facilitated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 16 October 2018, between the ruling coalition and opposition parties. This MOU paved the way for the Multi-Stakeholder National Dialogue (MSND) process (AU 2018; UN 2018).

SADC played a key role in fostering dialogue between the Lesotho government and opposition parties. In addition to the deployment of SAPMIL, SADC facilitated several rounds of negotiations and reforms. The signing of the MOU in October 2018 and the subsequent MSND marked a significant phase in Lesotho's national dialogue, although challenges remained. The Organ demonstrated its commitment by

engaging in preventive diplomacy, particularly through mediation efforts led by South Africa's Ramaphosa and by encouraging political reforms in Lesotho. This approach aligns with the Protocol's stated objectives, showcasing the Organ's capacity for conflict management.

However, the Organ's response exposed significant operational limitations. Rather than deploying a fully regional force, as anticipated under the Protocol, the intervention heavily relied on South African support. This highlights the Organ's limited operational readiness and high dependence on dominant member states such as South Africa. This overreliance reflects a broader issue of insufficient trust among SADC member states, undermining regional cohesion and pointing to the underdevelopment of SADC as a security community.

A key characteristic of a security community is the development of mutual trust and institutional mechanisms that assure member states of peaceful conflict resolution without resorting to force. While SADC demonstrates some features of a security community, such as its diplomatic engagement and institutional frameworks, it lacks the deep integration and trust-based collaboration necessary to fully embody this concept. The recurrence of crises in Lesotho, despite repeated SADC interventions, underscores this shortfall. Such instability indicates that SADC's efforts have not succeeded in building sustained confidence in intra-regional security guarantees.

Simultaneously, power asymmetry within SADC was evident during the crisis, with South Africa playing a dominant role. This dynamic is characteristic of a security complex, where regional power relationships and interdependence drive responses to security issues. Lesotho's instability posed direct risks to South Africa and the region at large, compelling South Africa to take a proactive stance. This reflects the interconnected nature of security within the region, where instability in one state has broader regional implications. However, the ad hoc nature of SADC's response, coupled with its reliance on South African leadership, lacks the coherence and institutionalised action expected of a tightly integrated security complex.

SADC's decision not to intervene militarily as it did in 1998 shows a nuanced understanding of its policy framework such as the MDP. The MDP is designed for collective responses to external aggression or severe instability threatening the region. Since the Lesotho crisis was primarily a domestic political issue, invoking the MDP would have been inappropriate. This decision reflects SADC's recognition of the need to avoid repeating contentious interventions, such as the 1998 military action in Lesotho, which faced criticism for overstepping its mandate and exacerbating tensions.

One of the notable achievements of the SADC initiatives in Lesotho was its adherence to the Protocol. A key feature of this Protocol is the Organ's mandate to prevent the escalation of conflict through mediation and diplomatic engagement. SADC fulfilled this mandate effectively with the deployment of SAPMIL, which underscored the Organ's commitment to upholding regional stability through preventive diplomacy. The deployment of SAPMIL was consistent with the Protocol's provisions for regional peacekeeping. Rather than focusing on outright military intervention, SAPMIL emphasised creating a secure environment conducive to political and structural reforms. This approach demonstrated a balanced commitment to stabilisation and governance reform, reflecting elements of a security community, particularly in its reliance on dialogue and regional mechanisms.

Moreover, the Organ demonstrated its capacity to respond to immediate security challenges under the Protocol. And While the MDP allows for collective responses to severe threats, it was not invoked, reflecting SADC's preference for diplomatic and stabilisation measures rather than overtly militarised approaches.

The AU's endorsement of SAPMIL also demonstrated alignment with broader continental principles of collective security, showcasing cooperation between SADC and the AU in addressing regional instability Despite its achievements, SAPMIL faced significant challenges, particularly in enforcing structural reforms. SADC struggled to establish consistent follow-up mechanisms, which weakened the long-term impact of its interventions. Although it initiated important processes, such as the MSND and the establishment of the National Reforms Authority (NRA), the lack of robust mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation of these reforms undermined their effectiveness.

At the same time, while SAPMIL's deployment represented a pragmatic response to maintain stability, it was reactive rather than genuinely preventive. The mission's limited scope—comprising only 269 personnel—and its relatively short mandate highlighted a containment strategy rather than the establishment of a robust, coordinated regional security framework.

Similar to the 2014 deployment of SOMILES, South Africa played a dominant role, reaffirming the asymmetric power dynamics within the region. SADC's continued dependence on external stabilisation measures and the lack of deep trust among member states limited its alignment with the full characteristics of a security community.

In conclusion, SADC's response to the 2017 Lesotho crisis showcased its adherence to the Protocol and its capacity to deploy regional peacekeeping initiatives such as SAPMIL. However, the mission's reactive nature, reliance on South Africa, and challenges in enforcing long-term reforms highlighted ongoing weaknesses in the region's security mechanisms. Future effectiveness will require strengthening enforcement mechanisms, fostering deeper regional solidarity, and addressing the root causes of instability to build a more resilient security community. The establishment of SAPMIL in 2017 demonstrated the organisation's focus on peacekeeping and conflict prevention through a combination of military and civilian efforts. Key milestones included the 2018 MoU between the government and opposition, which aimed to foster dialogue and national agreement.

However, SADC faced several challenges. Its narrow focus, dependence on external support—particularly from South Africa—and the limited duration of its mandate reflected a reactive approach. Although initiatives like the National Reform Agenda showed progress, the lack of strong enforcement mechanisms slowed reform implementation, allowing political instability to persist. Furthermore, SADC has not been able to adequately address the root causes of Lesotho's issues, such as the unhealthy relationship between the security forces (particularly the LDF) and politicians, as well as persistent internal political divisions. To prevent future crises, SADC must enhance enforcement capabilities and promote regional unity, shifting from reactive measures to proactive solutions.

4.6. Conclusion

The evolution of SADC interventions in Lesotho, spanning from the 1998 military intervention to the political crises of 2020, illustrates both the organisation's capacity to foster regional stability and the significant limitations to the implementation of its frameworks and policies. While the initial 1998 intervention was pivotal in curtailing escalating violence, it also highlighted SADC's shortcomings in tackling the structural issues fuelling Lesotho's political instability. Although SADC played a vital role in introducing critical electoral reforms, including the MMP system and the establishment of the IEC, these initiatives served as only partial solutions. The lack of deeper systemic reforms, such as the depoliticisation of the military and the management of political factionalism, severely restricted the long-term impact of SADC's engagement.

Furthermore, SADC's actions during the 2007 political crisis, characterised by electoral disputes and widespread unrest, showcased the ongoing hurdles the organization faced. Even with the appointment of Masire as mediator and the introduction of reforms aimed at enhancing electoral integrity, SADC's

initiatives were stymied by slow reform progress and resistance from entrenched political elites. The persistent encroachment of the military in the political sphere, along with entrenched factionalism in Lesotho, rendered these efforts inadequate in addressing the root causes of unrest. This pattern of short-term stabilisation without lasting resolution emphasises SADC's difficulty in serving as an impartial and transformative mediator, as its actions often lacked the necessary follow-through to foster sustainable peace.

The period from 2017 to 2020 further illustrated SADC's commitment to fostering regional stability, exemplified by the deployment of SAPMIL and the facilitation of the NRA. While these efforts indicated progress in mitigating political tensions and encouraging dialogue, significant challenges remained. SAPMIL's limited mandate and reliance on South Africa's leadership, coupled with insufficient enforcement mechanisms, resulted in only partial successes. The slow pace of reform implementation and the persistent political turmoil underscored the difficulties of achieving sustained peace and democratic consolidation in a fragile political landscape.

Despite these obstacles, SADC's ongoing involvement in Lesotho signifies its potential role in regional governance and conflict resolution. For SADC to enhance its effectiveness in future interventions, it must adopt a comprehensive and proactive strategy toward conflict prevention. This includes strengthening enforcement mechanisms, promoting deeper regional solidarity, and addressing the fundamental causes of instability—such as political exclusion, military-political entanglement, and factionalism. Additionally, overcoming the power disparities inherent in its interventions, particularly the predominant role of states like South Africa, is essential. A more balanced and cohesive regional strategy, supported by trust-building initiatives, could empower SADC to fulfil its mandate and promote greater political stability not just in Lesotho but throughout the Southern African region.

In essence, SADC's interventions in Lesotho reveal a blend of diplomatic and military strategies aimed at achieving short-term stabilisation. However, the pattern of recurring political crises and the sluggish pace of reform implementation highlight the inherent limitations of such interventions without deeper institutional and political changes. The success of SADC's regional governance and conflict resolution efforts hinges on its ability to enhance collaboration among member states, build trust, and ensure that interventions are proactive rather than merely reactive in addressing the fundamental causes of instability. By adopting a holistic approach, SADC can solidify its position as a crucial player in promoting peace, democracy, and security in Southern Africa.

Ultimately, SADC's experience in Lesotho serves as both a cautionary tale and a valuable learning opportunity. The challenges it faced, such as slow reforms, deep political fractures, and external dependencies, require sustained and comprehensive actions aimed at addressing structural issues, fostering inclusive governance, and building a cooperative climate among regional actors. As SADC continues to refine its role in regional security, the lessons drawn from Lesotho will be instrumental in informing more effective interventions in the future, ensuring that peacebuilding endeavours evolve from temporary solutions to enduring pathways towards political stability and prosperity.

CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION AND FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This study aimed to assess the role and impact of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation in promoting and maintaining regional security. A key research question framed this evaluation: To what extent has the Organ been effective in addressing security issues and instability in the DRC and Lesotho between 1996 and 2020? In addressing this research question, the following sub-questions were explored? This overarching question produced two important subsidiary questions that guided the analysis of SADC interventions.

Firstly, the study examined the role that the Organ played in SADC's involvement in the DRC peace process and its subsequent contributions to peace and security efforts in the country over this timeframe. By examining specific interventions and peacekeeping efforts in the DRC, the study aimed to determine whether the Organ successfully supported the cessation of hostilities and contributed to lasting security in the region.

Secondly, the study explored the role of the Organ in SADC's efforts to address and resolve recurring security crises in Lesotho, focusing on the Organ's involvement in interventions and other support mechanisms to stabilise the country. This analysis examined how the Organ facilitated SADC's engagement in Lesotho's political and security landscape and determined whether these efforts contributed to sustainable peace and security between 1996 and 2020.

Through this dual-focus lens, the response provided a broad evaluation of how effective the Organ had been in peace-making and peacebuilding in addressing security needs and supporting stability within the SADC region by examining its successes, shortcomings, and even failures over this period through a more detailed examination.

5.2. Relevance and Overview of the Study

The significance of this research lay in the ongoing instability within Southern Africa, which persisted despite repeated interventions by SADC over the years. This enduring instability highlighted the need for SADC to critically assess its past interventions to enhance its approach to tackling these security challenges. The study identified critical obstacles the SADC Organ faced that limited its effectiveness in resolving regional security issues. Furthermore, the relevance of this study was underscored by the fact

that there had been limited recent research on the Organ's effectiveness in the past, necessitating an updated examination of its role and impact.

To do this, the study was structured as follows:
Chapter 1 established the foundation of the research, outlining the research theme, aims, objectives, and rationale. It detailed the primary research questions and the methodology employed while presenting a literature review of significant works related to SADC and its theoretical positioning within security frameworks. This chapter provided the context for the study and laid out the academic basis for exploring SADC's role in regional security.

Chapter 2 delved into different forms of regional security cooperation, including security complexes, collective security, and security communities, to clarify the characteristics influencing SADC's decision-making. This chapter examined theoretical contributions from scholars such as Deutsch (1957), Adler and Barnett (1998), Acharya (2001), Bellamy (2004), and Nathan (2006) on the study of security, security communities, security complexes, and collective security. Each framework provided insights into essential conditions, phases of development, the influence of norms and institutions, and the role of domestic stability within regional security cooperation. These theoretical explorations helped to develop an analytical framework used in subsequent chapters to analyse SADC's approach to regional security.

Chapter 3 provided a historical overview of the DRC and analysed SADC's involvement in the DRC conflicts during the First (1996-1997) and Second Congo War (1998-2003). It examined the SADC Organ's interventions, assessing their effectiveness in promoting regional stability, with a focus on the 1998 military intervention and the 1999 Lusaka Agreement, which highlighted gaps in coordination. The chapter explored SADC's regional, collective, and human security dimensions, addressing the national interests and internal divisions of member states that influenced decision-making. Through a review of the Organ's protocols and decision-making structures, it clarified how these factors shaped SADC's security outcomes in the DRC.

Chapter 4 focused on SADC's engagement in Lesotho, analysing its response to the country's recurring security and political crises. This chapter assessed the effectiveness of the Organ in promoting stability in Lesotho, evaluating how the Organ's protocols, decision-making structures, and security mechanisms influenced the outcomes of its interventions. It also considered the successes and limitations of SADC's actions in fostering political stability and the impact of member states' interests on the execution and results of these interventions. Furthermore, the chapter explored how SADC's collective security and

human security principles were applied in the Lesotho context, examining the alignment of these efforts with broader regional stability objectives. The successes in Lesotho illustrated the progress made by the Organ in advancing collective security. At the same time, the challenges underscored the persistent issues that hindered the Organ's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

This study comprehensively analysed the Organ's effectiveness in addressing regional security challenges in Southern Africa, using the DRC and Lesotho case studies. It highlighted the need for SADC to refine its approaches to enhance regional stability and security. It offered a timely update to existing research on the Organ's role and effectiveness in regional peacebuilding efforts.

The study achieved its objectives by identifying the challenges and limitations encountered by the Organ in promoting peace and security, including issues related to decision-making, coordination, and external influences. The relevance of this study was underscored by the fact that there had been limited recent research on the Organ's effectiveness in the past, necessitating an updated examination of its role and impact. By evaluating the long-term implications of SADC's security interventions on regional stability and governance, the study provided insights into the effectiveness of the Organ in strengthening SADC member states' capacity for conflict management and resolution. Moreover, it contributed to the broader academic discourse on regional security governance and collective security by contextualizing SADC's interventions within theoretical frameworks of regional security complexes and multilateral conflict resolution

5.3. Key Findings

The regional security challenges confronting SADC continue to threaten the peace and stability of Southern Africa. These challenges create conflict and instability within member states, undermining the broader region's security. As the primary mechanism for coordinating security responses, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping efforts, the effectiveness of the SADC Organ is critical for addressing these threats. Many SADC member states face complex issues, including political instability, civil conflict, transnational crime, and weak governance, making the Organ essential in fostering stability through collective security principles and collaborative efforts.

The analysis presented in this study highlights several successes in SADC's interventions in the DRC and Lesotho. First, SADC demonstrated a capacity for rapid response in both cases. In Lesotho, SADC's swift deployment helped prevent a descent into civil war and restored stability, setting a precedent for

timely interventions in political crises. Similarly, in the DRC, SADC's intervention prevented a coup against President Kabila's government, underscoring the Organ's role in protecting regional stability.

These interventions underscored regional solidarity in addressing complex, multifaceted conflicts. In the DRC, member states—particularly Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia—provided military support to counter rebel movements backed by Rwanda and Uganda. In Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana similarly provided military to restore law and order at the request of the Lesotho government. This show of unity highlighted SADC's commitment to upholding regional security and supporting legitimate governments under threat.

SADC played an active role in facilitating peace processes and negotiations. In the DRC, its involvement led to the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, a critical step toward reducing hostilities and establishing a framework for peace, ultimately paving the way for a United Nations peacekeeping mission (MONUC, later MONUSCO) and a transitional government. Similarly, in Lesotho, SADC's mediation efforts helped address the root political tensions underlying recurring instability. Through sustained dialogue, SADC promoted constitutional reforms and fostered an environment conducive to long-term stability.

In both the DRC and Lesotho, SADC's interventions demonstrated a solid commitment to regional stability and showcased its ability to coordinate multi-state responses and mediation. While SADC's military and diplomatic efforts in the DRC opened avenues for international peacekeeping and long-term peace processes, its engagement in Lesotho helped contain crises, encourage political reforms, and advance dialogue among political leaders.

However, as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 of this study, four significant challenges persist that limit SADC's ability to achieve lasting peace and stability. These challenges highlight areas where the Organ must evolve to enhance its impact on regional security.

Firstly, the interventions were hampered by a lack of consensus and unity among member states. In this case, SADC was deeply divided, with countries like South Africa, Botswana, and Mozambique opposing military intervention and favouring diplomatic solutions in the DRC. The lack of consensus weakened the collective security response, as the intervention was driven by a few member states pursuing their national interests rather than a unified SADC strategy. This internal division weakened the Organ's credibility and exposed fault lines that compromised SADC's broader regional security goals.

Secondly, the need for precise, multilateral decision-making reduces the perceived legitimacy of the actions and limits their effectiveness in building a cohesive regional response. Adherence to SADC's protocols and legal frameworks is a crucial benchmark. The Organ and Treaty outlines a transparent decision-making process for military interventions, requiring formal approval from the SADC Summit. However, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia bypassed this process, intervening without Summit authorisation as well as South Africa and Botswana in the Lesotho case. The lack of legal framework undermined the legitimacy of the intervention, raising doubts about the Organ's ability to enforce its rules and significantly diminished its effectiveness as a regional security mechanism. As a result, while the SADC Organ managed to prevent an immediate crisis, its intervention could have been more effective regarding long-term regional cohesion, adherence to its protocols, or achieving sustainable peace in the DRC.

Thirdly, interventions were primarily influenced by the national interests of the intervening states, which overshadowed the collective security goals of SADC. Zimbabwe's involvement was driven by economic interests, Angola's by concerns about UNITA rebels, and Namibia's by geopolitical and commercial motives. South Africa's involvement in Lesotho was driven by economic and strategic interests, particularly with the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which supplies crucial water resources to South Africa. Realist tenets drive the Organ's decision-making. These realist motivations undermined the spirit of collective security and shifted the intervention away from genuine regional stability efforts.

The interventions in Lesotho and the DRC demonstrate strengths and weaknesses in SADC's collective security capacity. While "Operation Boleas" in Lesotho effectively prevented a coup and reinstated democratic governance, it also exposed issues such as lack of transparency and uneven member participation, highlighting limitations within SADC's realist-oriented framework. "Operation Sovereign Legitimacy" in the DRC.

These interventions and peacekeeping efforts in the DRC reflect SADC's commitment to regional stability. These actions underscore the Organ's ability to address immediate threats, though transparency issues and uneven member participation sometimes undermine these efforts.

While the Organ has responded to pressing security concerns, its effectiveness in creating lasting stability is mixed. The analysis suggests that regional security improvements have been incremental rather than transformative. SADC is still in the early stages of fostering a robust security community based on trust and cooperation. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing the transparency and inclusivity of

SADC's interventions. Establishing clear, unified protocols could increase the legitimacy of Organ actions and support broader member involvement, as this would help prevent perceptions of unilateral dominance by more powerful member states like South Africa.

The Organ's evolving approach, which now includes responses to traditional and non-traditional security threats, indicates that regional organisations must adapt to complex, interconnected challenges. Effective response mechanisms within SADC could serve as a model for other regional bodies seeking to balance state-centric and human security goals.
This study provides a framework to evaluate how regional organisations manage instability, contributing to the discourse on the applicability of realist frameworks in regional security dynamics. The research suggests that balancing state-focused stability measures with broader human security initiatives enhances an organisation's adaptability and relevance.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the intervention in the DRC conflict was only partially effective. It succeeded in preventing the collapse of Kabila's regime but failed to achieve a cohesive, protocol-driven, and collective regional security response. The intervention was marred by internal divisions, the pursuit of national interests, and disregard for SADC's legal frameworks, which undermined its effectiveness in securing long-term peace and stability in the region. The short-term success also did not translate into long-term effectiveness. The intervention did not address the root causes of the conflict, such as the involvement of Rwanda and Uganda in supporting rebel forces or the internal governance issues plaguing the DRC. This limited the intervention's overall impact on long-term peace and stability in the region, as the underlying sources of conflict remained unresolved.

Rather than stabilising the region, SADC's military involvement inadvertently exacerbated the conflict. It fuelled territorial rivalries and complex regional tensions, making the situation even more challenging to manage the lack of a clear strategy for neutralising external interference and managing regional dynamics exposed SADC's weaknesses. Additionally, the intervention needed an exit strategy and needed to establish a comprehensive plan for post-conflict reconstruction or governance reforms. It needed to foster a peacebuilding or reconciliation framework to ensure lasting political stability, leaving the DRC's governance crisis unresolved. The situation deteriorated further, and it would take years before the international community intervened effectively despite SADC troops being deployed on the ground.

The intervention in the DRC was a testimony to SADC's shortcomings as a viable regional security player. After Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia intervened in the DRC, SADC could not even manage to impose sanctions in retaliation. No real accountability or follow-through can be expected from this organisation. This failure created a dangerous precedent wherein member states can act as they please under the SADC banner without consequence, thus weakening the regional collective security framework. In sum, though a swift and concerted intervention on the part of SADC would have been ideal, it did not adhere to the same norms mentioned above— betraying its institutional deficiencies, internal divides, and incapacity for enforcement. These SADC actions did not bring long-term peace or regional safety. Instead, the self-interested motives of member states compromised the nature of the intervention. This tragic inability to resolve the conflict and establish lasting peace in the DRC amplifies SADC's deficiencies as a regional security actor at such a time. It offers a stark reminder of the difficulties various regional organisations can have with managing intricate and multi-state conflicts when their decision-making processes remain weak, dysfunctional or downright manipulated

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