SOUTH AFRICA AND REGIONAL STABILITY 
IN THE MBeki ERA: THE NEXUS BETWEEN 
PERSONALITY AND GEO-POLITICAL 
AND ECONOMIC CONCERNS IN FOREIGN 
POLICY MAKING

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Introduction

Since joining the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1994, South Africa has been involved in a number of regional peace and security issues. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, for instance, South Africa played a leading role in the management of the crisis in Lesotho and Zimbabwe respectively, and has since been in the vanguard of international efforts to resolve the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The question this raises, however, and which this paper seeks to interrogate, is whether South Africa’s role in SADC peace and security is given because of its economic and military leverage in the sub-region or whether it was due to the personalities of its political leaders? Another question is whether South Africa’s role in the sub-region particularly between 1999 and 2008 was due to the particular situations it had to respond to? Also, have particular situations within South Africa aided or undermined its leadership role in the sub-region? The paper interrogates these questions using the Thabo Mbeki presidency (1999-2008). In specific terms, the paper highlights and examines the nature of South Africa’s role in SADC peace and security during Mbeki’s presidency, using as case studies the crises in Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo and the operation of the SADC, and examines whether the

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role was effective in maintaining South Africa’s interest and regional stability.

**Mbeki’s administration and SADC peace and security**

Thabo Mbeki was elected president of South Africa in 1999, and remained in power till 2008, during which period he assumed the chairmanship of SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government in 1999 and 2008 and deputy chair in 2007. During this period, South Africa’s international relations was shaped and influenced by Mbeki’s African renaissance vision, which centred on Africa’s ‘political and socio-economic renewal, and its reintegration into the global economy on its own self-determined terms.’ (Landsberg 2010) To achieve this, Mbeki emphasised the link between growth, governance, democracy, peace and security, and cooperation at regional, sub-regional as well as international levels.

As a result, his administration’s foreign relations officially centred on promoting democracy and good governance, accelerating growth and development, combating international and cross-border crimes, building the South African economy, and building a better Africa and a better world (DFA 2003). In line with this, Africa, and the developing countries, constituted the core of South Africa’s foreign policy thrust during the Mbeki era. This however represented a continuation and an extension of the Mandela era’s international relations, which ‘stressed the importance of human rights, democratisation, and respect for international law,’ and ‘bridge-building between the developed north and developing south.’ (Landsberg 2004).

Given his African renaissance vision, and headship of South Africa and of the SADC at different times and in different capacities, Mbeki was able to influence and initiate policies that impacted on peace and security challenges of the sub-region. Among the peace and security issues that South Africa under Mbeki tackled in the sub-region were the crisis over the status and operationalisation of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) vis-à-vis the SADC Summit; the conflicts in the DRC, Angola and Burundi; and political crisis in Zimbabwe. In tackling these situations the Mbeki presidency adopted different approaches, some of which are discussed below alongside their implications for sub-regional peace, security and stability.

**Crisis over OPDS**

The crisis over OPDS was the first major test of the leadership ability and quality of Thabo Mbeki beyond the confines of South Africa. Though it
started before Mbeki assumed the chairmanship of SADC Summit in 1999, his headship of the organisation made efforts to address it. In the first place, the Mbeki leadership continued with the lobbying strategy of the Mandela government (1994-1998) to convince other SADC members to consider the restructuring of the OPDS. It also initiated the restructuring of the entire SADC system alongside the OPDS. At the 1999 Summit of Heads of State and Government, under the chairmanship of Mbeki, the summit proposed a review of ‘all operations of SADC institutions.’ (SADC 1999) The review was intended to ‘increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its policies and programmes to implement a more coherent and better coordinated strategy to eliminate poverty in the region.’(DFA 2003) Achieving this objective was predicated on the centralisation of the operations of SADC institutions, as opposed to the sectoral and decentralised approach that operated in the past.

Part of the review, relating to the status and operationalisation of the OPDS, was completed in 2001, resulting in renaming OPDS as OPDSC (Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation) and its integration under the SADC Summit through article 3(1) of the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (OPDSC). (SADC 2001). As a result, OPDSC became an organ of SADC. Also, article 4 of the Protocol on OPDSC placed the organ under a Troika arrangement (Organ Troika), comprising the chairperson of the Organ, the incoming/deputy chairperson and the outgoing chairperson. Members were elected on a yearly basis by, and accountable to, the SADC Summit. (SADC 2001). This totally removed the OPDSC from the control of its chairperson, contrary to the case under the OPDS in which the composition of the body was not specified and its chairmanship was never rotated, as stipulated to be on an annual and a Troika basis. Given the restructuring, Mbeki was appointed the deputy chair and chair of the Organ Troika in 2003 and 2004 respectively, which enabled him to further participate in other efforts to foster sub-regional peace.

The restructuring of the OPDS was significant in many ways. First, it demonstrated the considerable influence that post-apartheid South Africa had assumed in SADC, because the restructuring was orchestrated and initiated by South Africa’s opposition to the independent status of the OPDS. Second, it points to the diplomatic astuteness of the South African political leadership, first under Mandela and later Mbeki, and their team of diplomats. Third, the review contributed to the emergence of robust sub-regional security architecture, evidenced by the creation of OPDSC and its ancillary structures, namely the Organ Troika, the Inter-State Politics and Diplomacy Committee (ISPDC), the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) and the Organ Ministerial Committee. These structures complement other SADC security struc-
tures such as the sub-regional standby brigade (SADCBRIG), a peacekeeping brigade established in 2007, to create SADC security architecture.

The signing of the SADC Mutual Defence Pact in 2003 by states, including South Africa and Zimbabwe and the formulation of the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) in 2004, which operationalised the OPD-SC, were the heights of the sub-regional security cooperation that followed the review of SADC. This also signified a détente in South Africa-Zimbabwe power tussle, which had brought about the OPDS crisis, as military relations between the two countries improved, culminating in the signing of the Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security in 2005 and an agreement that allowed Zimbabwean pilots to train South African pilots (Kagwanja and Rupiya 2008). The friendly relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe improved the perception of South Africa by SADC states, and enabled the Mbeki administration to later participate in SADC mediation in the crisis in Zimbabwe. On the whole, the review process contributed to the strengthening of SADC, because it also led to setting of clear roles and functions for its institutions.

Peace-building in DRC and Zimbabwe

Another area where Mbeki’s leadership of South Africa facilitated the country’s contribution to peace and security in SADC was in peace-building. Peace-building, described as a series of activities intended to help countries recover from violent conflict, and as ‘nothing less than an enormous social engineering aimed at creating the domestic conditions for durable peace within countries just emerging from civil wars,’ (Boutros-Ghali 1992) was South Africa’s tool of international relations during Mbeki’s presidency. This was due to a number of reasons (Paris 2004).

These include the recurring cases of violent conflicts and political instability in Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe during the period. Also, there was a general dislike for military intervention in the region, as demonstrated by public reactions to South Africa’s intervention in Lesotho in 1998, and Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia’s intervention in the DRC in the same year (Vale 2003). Similarly, South Africa’s military and economic leverage as well as the geo-strategic and economic importance of the region made it imperative for the country to ensure the region’s peace and stability, without alienating other regional powers by being misconstrued as a hegemon. The fact that South Africa is the military and economic powerhouse of the region makes it more likely for it to be interested in the region’s stability, both for its own socio-political and
economic wellbeing and good public image.

However, the person and ideological disposition of Mbeki contributed to South Africa’s embrace and use of peace-building as a tool of international relations. For, example, long before becoming the president of South Africa, he had demonstrated a firm belief in and commitment to pacific settlement of conflicts. This conviction was apparent in his commitment in the 1980s/early 1990s to a negotiated end to white minority rule in South Africa. Mbeki played a major role in bringing about a shift from violent confrontation to peaceful negotiations between ANC and the apartheid regimes (Mbeki 1998). To Peter Vale, ‘Thabo Mbeki brought about a sophisticated and polished face to a liberation movement which had been demonised by the Cold War propaganda…’

Mbeki’s conviction of the futility of all forms of domination, including military intervention and imposition of solutions on parties in conflict, was connected to his belief in African solutions to African problems; a belief that was part of his African renaissance vision. This conviction about African renaissance and the futility of violence and domination underpinned Mbeki’s peace-building initiatives (the Mbeki peace-building model).

Both peacemaking, in the form of promotion of democracy, good governance, mediation and negotiation, and peacekeeping constitute the central elements of the Mbeki government’s peace-building approach. This approach, like peace-building approach generally, was a form of preventive diplomacy, defined as diplomatic actions taken ‘to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.’ (Boutros-Ghali 2012) For the Mbeki approach however, the initiative for peace-building in Africa must come from within Africa, although such initiative and its execution could be in conjunction with non-African actors. This constitutes the strength and uniqueness of the Mbeki approach, because it emphasises the issue of ownership and responsibility that Africans have to bear in order to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, and earn respect internationally. The importance of, and commitment to, this approach underlined his government’s establishment of the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF) in 2000, increasing deployment of South African forces on peacekeeping missions, as well as efforts to strengthen and promote multilateral diplomacy. The ARF was established through the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund Act 2000 to,

‘enhance cooperation between the Republic and other countries, in particular African countries, through the promotion of democracy, good gov-
ernance, the prevention and resolution of conflict, socio-economic development and integration, humanitarian assistance and human resource development.(RSA 2004)

The ARF’s focus on promotion of democracy and good governance was underpinned by the assumption of the democratic peace thesis that, ‘democracies tend to be peaceful in both their domestic affairs and their relations with other states.’(Paris 2004) Guided by this assumption and the African renaissance vision, the Mbeki government, working with other SADC members, made efforts towards the building of stable democracies in the region through provision of material and financial support for the holding of elections and participation in election observer missions.

Through this, South Africa effectively became a donor country and was able to influence African politics in direct ways (Landsberg 2004). This view was true as ARF enabled South Africa to contribute to and shape the socio-economic and political wellbeing, and peace and security agenda, of many SADC states and non-member states. Between 2000 and 2008, for instance, a number of countries benefited from loans and other financial facilities of ARF. These include Liberia, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) or Western Sahara, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Burundi, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea. The ARF’s loans and grants to these beneficiaries were, in some instances, intended for post-conflict reconstruction programmes including holding of elections, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants. Within SADC region, some of the beneficiaries of ARF’s assistance include Lesotho in 2000 and 2001 Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006, and Zimbabwe in 2008 (ARF 2008).

In 2008, the sum of R10 million (about $634,854) was granted under the ARF towards the funding of South African participation in SADC Election Observer Mission to Zimbabwe, during the conduct of its local, parliamentary and presidential elections in March 2008 (ARF 2008). Also, in 2006, South Africa granted the sum of R278 million (about $18,220,315) under the ARF towards the conduct of elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (ARF 2007). This was intended to bring about a legitimate, democratically elected government in the country and an end to the conflict in the Great Lake region. South Africa’s contribution to the elections in DRC was in three areas: procurement and printing of ballot papers, transportation of ballot papers to 14 election hubs, and deployment of election experts and South Africa’s observer mission (ARF 2007). Similar financial assistance was rendered to the DRC in years before and after 2006 elections. But despite South Africa’s huge financial investment, peace and stability has remained elusive in some of the beneficiaries, including the DRC, where the complexity and the interplay of
local and international interests in the issues involved in the conflict have wrecked all efforts at peace.

Similarly, as part of the peace-building approach to conflict prevention, management and resolution, the Mbeki government encouraged multilateral diplomacy by emphasising and encouraging closer relationship between SADC and other international organisations, particularly the AU, UN, and EU. The significance of multilateral cooperation to conflict management, as well as to SADC’s socio-economic development, was highlighted during his leadership of the SADC Summit in 1999. At the summit, Mbeki stressed the importance of regional and continental cooperation and alluded to the ‘interdependencies of SADC member states and the African continent as a whole.’ (SADC 1999) This underpinned subsequent efforts by the Mbeki administration to integrate AU and NEPAD programmes into South Africa and into SADC. In South Africa, a series of workshops and meetings were organised by the Mbeki government among stakeholders to popularise AU and NEPAD programmes (DFA 2003). Beyond the national level, Mbeki’s chairmanship of SADC in 1999, and of the AU in 2002/2003, encouraged regional economic communities (RECs), including SADC, to become the engines driving the implementation of AU and NEPAD ideas. The Mbeki effort to build closer AU-RECs relationship was attested to by SADC’s hosting of AU summit in two consecutive years; first in Durban in 2002 and followed by Maputo, Mozambique in 2003.

In the area of peace and security, integration of RECs into AU was furthered through the Protocol that established the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, adopted in 2002 during Mbeki’s AU chairmanship. Article 16 of the Protocol recognised RECs as part of the continent’s security framework, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The successful launching in 2007 of SADCBRIGS, the SADC regional peacekeeping brigade, as a component of the continental standby force, was one of the high-points of the closer AU-SADC relationship that Mbeki advocated. This notwithstanding, there was no formalised relationship between SADC’s OPDSC and AU’s PSC throughout Mbeki’s nine year rule, and even up to 2010. This hampered multilateral efforts at conflict resolution on a number of occasions, including during the political crisis in Madagascar in 2008/2009, where both SADC and AU failed to cooperate on the best solution to the problem (AU 2010).

Furthermore, Mbeki’s peace-building approach espoused the use of negotiation, mediation and peacekeeping over and above military intervention in conflict management. The use of mediation and negotiation by the Mbeki government focused on bringing disputants to the roundtable, for
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them to deliberate and arrive at mutually acceptable political solutions in the form of peace agreements. Through this, the Mbeki government contributed to the negotiation of peace agreements, albeit fragile ones, in Cote d’Ivoire, Comoros, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Landsberg 2010). This approach was complemented with peacekeeping operations that were aimed at reducing and preventing civilian casualties in conflict situations through, ‘monitoring and assisting with the implementation of agreements reached between belligerent parties’ South Africa during the Mbeki presidency employed these strategies (negotiation, mediation and peacekeeping) at sub-regional, regional and global levels.

The use of the strategies by South Africa under Mbeki, stemmed partly from Mbeki’s personal conviction of the futility of all forms of domination, including military intervention and imposition of solutions to parties in conflict. It also stemmed from the 1999 white paper on South African participation in international peace missions, which allows the country to provide civilian, military and police services for peace missions (DFA 1999). This explains why South Africa participated in numerous peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts under the auspices of the AU, UN and SADC, a further pointer to its commitment to multilateral diplomacy. South Africa contributed troops to peacekeeping operations in countries such as Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Cote d’Ivoire (Chikane 2012).

Test cases of Mbeki’s peace-building approach

South Africa’s involvement in the international efforts to resolve the crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe best illustrate the nature and effectiveness or otherwise of Mbeki’s government peace-building approach.

Democratic Republic of Congo: a case study

A major test for Mbeki’s peace-building initiative was the DRC, where civil war broke out in 1997 between forces loyal to President Mobutu sese Seko and rebel forces. After botched attempts by the Mandela administration to broker a truce, the rebel forces, led by Laurent Kabila overpowered the government forces and took over the reins of government in May 1997, and changed the name of the country from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). But despite this, the civil war continued, because of the

2 See for example, Ajulu, ‘South Africa and the Great Lake: a complex diplomacy’; Kagwanja
complicity of internal and external factors. These included the involvement of Rwanda and Uganda in the war and the emergence of a number of splinter rebel forces that challenged the Laurent Kabila-led government of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo Zaire (ADLF). Among these forces were the Rwandan-backed rebels, the RCD-Goma, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) and a number of unarmed opposition groups.

As a result of the grave situation in the DRC, and especially the threats it posed to the peace, security and stability of the sub-region, attempts to resolve the conflict featured prominently on SADC Summits and OPDSC’s agendas, as well as on the agenda of the Mbeki-led South African government. For Mbeki and his government, the best solution to the escalating conflict in the DRC was only through an inclusive government, which would arise out of collective deliberations involving the key actors. Based on this, all through the Mbeki presidency (1999-2008), and his chairmanship of the SADC Summit in 1999 and 2008 and membership of the Organ Troika from 2003 to 2004, negotiations were encouraged among actors and factions in the conflict. In 1999 South Africa showed willingness to contribute troops for international peacekeeping in the DRC. By 2003, it had contributed more than 1000 troops at the cost of R819.6 million (about $5,199,458) (Landsberg 2004). This was followed by a series of quiet negotiations, brokered by Mbeki and his team and occasionally alongside some key actors in the SADC.

Most of the negotiations were held in South Africa, including at Sun City, Johannesburg in January 2002, Durban in July 2002, and Cape Town in April 2003. The negotiations and mediation yielded positive results, including the Lusaka peace agreement of July 1999, which was brokered by South African-backed Zambian government (Ajulu 2008). The agreement, among other things, called for the formation of a joint military commission comprising of foreign, Congolese and UN observers, and paved the way for the deployment of UN Observer Mission in the Congo (MONUC), which South Africa contributed troops to (Ajulu 2008). This was followed by another peace deal brokered by South Africa between the DRC President, Joseph Kabila, who came to power after the assassination of his father Laurent Kabila, and the leader of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba in January 2002 (Landsberg, 2004). Also, international mediation and negotiations involving South Africa led to the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between Presidents Joseph Kabila of DRC and Paul Kagame of Rwanda in July 2002 (Landsberg, 2004).

and Rupiya, ‘Praetorian solidarity’

3 Ibid
By the 2002 peace deals, the parties agreed to the ‘withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the DRC, the disbanding of the ex-FAR (Rwandan National Army) forces and the Interahamwe (Hutu militia)’ (Landsberg, 2004). The signing of the Memorandum of Agreement was preceded and facilitated by South Africa’s active participation in an Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), which focused on an inclusive political arrangement and the formation of a government of national unity in the country (Ajulu 2008). The quest for an inclusive political arrangement was achieved with the formation of a transitional government that included all the warring parties. This paved the way for subsequent conduct of elections, which was won by the incumbent, Joseph Kabila.

But all this notwithstanding, the civil war continued and remained largely unresolved all through the Mbeki presidency of South Africa and headship of the SADC Summits and membership of the Organ Troika. Hostilities between Kabila’s forces and rebels continued and escalated even after the elections. This was partly because Kabila’s electoral victory was widely disputed by the opposition, creating tensions between them and government forces, leading to violence, which further dented and eroded the government’s political legitimacy that was needed to stabilise the country. This situation was also caused by the exclusive nature of the Kabila government, a government that was a product of winner-take-all presidential elections (Ajulu 2008). This heightened other issues which impacted on the country’s peace and stability. These included government’s lack of capacity to govern the whole country; absence of an apolitical and competent security forces; the predatory attitude of Congolese politicians and issues of citizenship and the debate around ‘true’ Congolese nationality (Ajulu 2008). What this points to is that Mbeki’s best efforts and peacebuilding strategies were not able to address the multiplicity of factors surrounding the hostilities between Kabila’s government and rebels.

The Zimbabwean case

The socio-economic and political crises that gripped Zimbabwe between 1998 and 2003 necessitated the involvement of South Africa. The crises ranged from ‘acute shortages of foreign exchange; high levels of inflation; ballooning unemployment and poverty levels’ to ‘sporadic acts of violence, land invasions dubbed by the Mugabe government as “fast track” land restitution, the eviction of farm worker’. The declining economic condition of Zimbabwe at the time stemmed partly from the government land reform programme, characterised by violence and human rights violations, which un-
derpinned ‘the loss of revenue, foreign direct investment and donor support’ (Lindsberg 2004).

The height of the crises was the presidential elections of 2002 and 2008, which were riddled with vote-buying and vote-rigging, making the results highly disputed. As a result, loyalists of the Mugabe-led Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) and the opposition Morgan Tsvangirai’s Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) engaged in violent confrontations, in which there were various forms of human rights abuses. The violence, and government’s role in it, attracted condemnations from a section of the international community, particularly Western powers. But, as opposed to open condemnation and criticisms of the Mugabe administration, the Mbeki-led South African government employed a policy of quiet diplomacy, ‘a non-confrontational diplomacy aimed at nudging parties along the route of negotiated solutions, rather than imposing solutions from the outside.’ (Landsberg 2010) Consequently, Mbeki’s quiet diplomacy was geared towards persuading the Mugabe government into a negotiated settlement with the oppositions in and outside of the country.

This underlined Mbeki’s facilitation of communication over the land issue between Mugabe’s government and the UN at the Millennium summit in 2000, and between Zimbabwe and key member states of the donor community such as the European Union (EU), the US, and Britain (Landsberg 2004). Aside from South Africa’s participation as election observers in the presidential elections in 2002 and 2008, and parliamentary elections in 2005, Mbeki was a member of SADC constituted task force on developments in Zimbabwe in 2001 and later SADC appointed mediator after the general elections in 2008. While as a mediator, Mbeki was meant to resolve the political impasse that followed the 2008 elections, the 2001 SADC task force, of which he was a member, sought to find solutions to Zimbabwe’s economic and political problems, particularly the crisis surrounding the land reform (SADC 2008). Mbeki’s mediation led to political dialogues between Zanu-PF and MDC, resulting in the formation of a government of national unity which brought about relative political stability in the country.

It is important to note that South Africa’s choice of negotiation and political solution to the crises in Zimbabwe, instead of strong actions or punitive measures as the US, Britain and other Western powers had advocated, reflected Mbeki’s belief in pacific settlement of conflicts, a cornerstone of his peace-building approach (Landsberg 2004). However, the choice of quiet diplomacy has also been predicated on a number of factors, including the historical ties between the ANC and Zanu-PF (Kagwanja e Rupiva 2009). Others are Zimbabwe’s economic and geo-strategic importance to South Africa,
including being its eleventh largest trading partner; the politics of solidarity among southern African states and South Africa’s limited leverage over Zimbabwe (Landsberg 2004). Nevertheless, South Africa’s approach, which failed to show understanding with civil society’s opposition to Mugabe’s retention of power raised serious concerns about the genuineness of its efforts to promote and entrench democratic values in the SADC.

Conclusion

This paper has critically engaged the question of peace and security in the SADC with specific emphasis on the role of the Mbeki presidency in South Africa in the sub-region. From the preceding analysis, it has been made clear that the SADC was faced with a number of security threats to its peace, security and stability between 1999 and 2008. South Africa responded to the security challenges using different approaches. The South African responses were however dictated by three factors.

The first was the person of President Thabo Mbeki, whose leadership of South Africa and policies towards the SADC reflected in non-violence, multilateral diplomacy, peacebuilding, and respect for historical ties with countries with revolutionary antecedence. These qualities were a function of his ideological, social and leadership orientations, shaped by his family and educational background and revolutionary experiences in the ANC during the struggle to end apartheid rule. The second was the domestic realities in South Africa particularly that the South African public was totally against military intervention in addressing security issues in neighbouring countries. The third was the strategic geo-political and economic interests of South Africa. These three factors combined together to influence and determine the foreign policy choices and actions of the Mbeki-led South African government towards the SADC. This underlined South Africa’s use of negotiation, mediation, peacekeeping and promotion of elections through financial support and participation in election monitoring as foreign policy tools of engagement with SADC member states.

Though the three factors contributed to South Africa’s foreign policy decisions on SADC, it was the leadership offered by Thabo Mbeki, as president of South Africa and at some points the head of the SADC, which was inextricably fused to his person that determined the choice of the instruments and the extent to which they impacted on the situations they were deployed to address. For instance, South Africa’s preference for pacific settlement of disputes in the SADC between 1999 and 2008 was the continuation of Mbeki’s apparent commitment in the 1980s/early 1990s to a negotiated end to white minority rule
in South Africa.

Also, South Africa’s peacemaking efforts in the SADC reflected Mbeki’s leadership from behind approach, which was his strategy against being misconstrued as pushing South African agenda over and above collective regional interest. This however compromised South Africa’s ability to promote durable peace in the sub-region. In DRC and Zimbabwe, for instance, the Mbeki government played behind-the-scenes roles in the process of negotiating and mediating peace. This led to fragile peace in both countries, as exemplified by continued hostilities in the DRC and the weak nature of the government of national unity in Zimbabwe. This was in spite of South Africa’s economic and military leverage in the sub-region, by which it could have taken a tougher and more robust approach to the situations in the two countries.

REFERENCES


**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the role that South Africa during Mbeki’s presidency played in peace and security issues of Southern African Development Community (SADC). The paper infers that South Africa under Mbeki adopted a peace-building approach, comprising mediation, negotiation, peacekeeping, promotion of democracy and election monitoring, in addressing peace and security challenges in the SADC. It however argues that it was the person of Mbeki, shaped by his leadership and revolutionary experiences in the African National Congress (ANC) during apartheid era, alongside South Africa’s economic strength that underlined and shaped its approach and contributions to SADC peace and security.

**KEYWORDS**

South Africa; Thabo Mbeki; Regional Stability.

Received on November 23, 2016.
Accepted on December 23, 2016.