**Research Article**

# Analysis of the Efficacy of Regional Economic Communities in Relation to Maintenance of Regional Peace and Security: Case Study of Southern African Development Community

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**Abstract:** *Whereas SADC is perceived as the most peaceful region in Africa, this achievement is marred by ongoing armed conflict in the DRC, insurgency in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique's and periodic election related violence and social unrest that characterise some SADC member countries. These security concerns render SADC ineffective with regards to the maintenance of regional peace and security. This qualitative study analysed the efficacy of SADC in relation to the maintenance of regional peace and security. The analysis was based on the Constructive Peace Theory (CPT) and the Sustainable Regional Peace and Security Framework (SRPSF) which was developed by this researcher. Interviews and documentary analysis were used to gather data from 15 participants who were selected using purposive sampling technique. Results show that leadership discord, weak regional institutions, lack of funding and ideological crisis were the key factors that render SADC's bid to maintain regional peace and security ineffective. The study recommended the construction of supranational regional institutions and the establishment of self-reliance funding models to bankroll essential regional peace and security initiatives.*
**Keywords:** Peace and Security, Positive Peace, Negative Peace, Conflict, Regionalism.

# INTRODUCTION

Africa is besieged with violent conflicts stemming from armed groups seeking to seize power from sitting governments as well as violence and civil unrest stemming from electoral contestations and disputed elections results. These numerous factors contribute to unrelenting conflicts that destabilise the vastly natural resource endowed African continent. The problem of violence and armed conflict in Africa remains a security concern despite the commitment by the African Union, through its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), to bring lasting peace and security in the whole continent. This unwanted situation is an injury to the African Union's overstated expectation to 'silence the guns by 2020' to create plausible conditions for sustainable development in a tranquil environment. Unexpectedly, the majority of the regional groupings in Africa have been struggling to maintain peace and security. This study analysed the efficacy of regional economic communities (RECs) in relation to maintenance of regional peace and security with particular focus on Southern African Development Community.

## Background

The biggest obstacles to improving Africa and its people are those related to peace and security. The majority of African RECs remain mired in a destructive cycle of conflict, undermining the continent's efforts to develop and integrate. Peace and security in Africa are key drivers in the continent's political, economic, social, cultural, and technological spheres, among many other facets of state and human security. The pursuit of peace and security is certainly the most urgent of the many challenges facing the African continent. Consequently, the need to maintain peace and security in Africa cannot be overemphasised. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) emphasizes the significance of peace and security at all societal levels, including the regional, continental, and global ones. The UN therefore, anticipates that institutions at the national, regional, and global levels will work to advance peace by reducing all forms of violence.

While each state has the primary responsibility to ensure peace and security to prevent chaos of war and disorder within their borders (Anne-Marie, 2017), there is no doubt that RECs are key players in regional peace and security agenda (Adetula *et al.,* 2020a, Bereketeab & Cyril, 2021; & Chukwuemeka, 2021). Nevertheless, what is disturbing in Africa is that even under the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic, armed conflicts remain unabated. Recent evidence (Laliberté, 2019; Palik, Aas, & Methi, 2020; & ACLED, 2021) indicates that politics in Africa has failed vast populations in this continent. After the successes of liberation struggles wedged

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against colonial oppression, many African countries relapse into civil wars. A conflict map by International Crisis Group (2020) indicates that armed conflicts were existing across the eight African RECs. These conflicts imply that while the desire for peace and security in Africa is strong, there are challenges thwarting RECs from addressing the problem of insecurity in their respective sub-regions.

Peace and security underpin economic development. Hence, it cannot be overstated. According to Draper (2019), the primary role of African RECs is to expedite economic integration first on a regional, and ultimately on a continental basis. This principal function works on an environment of peace and tranquility. Accordingly, it is impossible to overstate the role of RECs in the maintenance of peace and security, particularly under the emerging inimical regional order, marked by intra-conflict that often overlap borders. Suffice to mention that economic integration and development in Africa and its sub-regions cannot be achieved under a theatre of civil wars, conflicts, crises, coups d'états, post-election violence and terrorism among many other factors that undermine peace and security. Having acknowledged this reality, the AU has recognised eight RECs which are tasked with the responsibility of averting, managing and resolving conflicts in order to maintain peace and security in their sub-regions (Adetula *et al.,* 2020; Palik *et al.,* 2020; Olumide, 2018; & Momodu, 2017). The RECs are; Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). In addition to their primary goal of spearheading economic integration in their sub-regions, these RECs are also the building blocks of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). In the past two decades, African RECs have played a major role in the prevention, management and resolution of wars and conflicts in their respective sub-regions. However, numerous member countries in these RECs remain plagued by emerging, enduring or recurring conflicts. Recent evidence (Olonisakin *et al.,* 2021; & Oberg & Petterson, 2020) shows that in 2020, conflict levels decreased in most parts of the world except in Africa where conflict actually increased.

The root causes of Africa's conflict and security challenges are well known. Recent literature (Adeyeye *et al.,* 2021; Denis, 2021; & Johnmary *et al.,* 2021) identify poverty, economic hardship, third-termism, manipulation constitution, human rights violations, marginalization of ethnic minority groups as some of the fundamental causes of conflict in Africa. Conflict in Africa has caused millions of deaths of defenceless non-combatants and disrupted efforts by the continent to bring peace and security (Conflict Barometer, 2020; Palik *et al.,* 2020; Olumide, 2018; & Momodu, 2017). While African RECs have played a major role in the management and resolution of wars and conflicts in the past two decades, more needs to be done if peace and security are to be achieved in all member nations and sub-regions. Thus, the prevalence of violent conflict in Africa justifies the conduct of this study which analysed the role of RECs in the maintenance of regional peace and security. In particular, this study analysed the efficacy of SADC in relation to the role of maintaining regional peace and security. In conducting this study, it was envisaged that if adopted, findings of this study could help SADC to attain not only durable regional peace and security but also positive peace which is an enabler for regional integration and sustainable development.

### Research Question
The SADC has numerous regional mechanism which are aimed to accomplish its envisaged durable peace and security agenda. Despite these noble mechanisms, the efficacy of SADC in respect of its role of maintaining regional peace and security remains questionable. This study posed the question; what is the efficacy of SADC with respect to its role of maintaining regional peace and security?

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The analysis of the efficacy of SADC in relation to its role of maintaining regional peace and security was conducted through the lens of the Social Constructivism Peace Theory (SCPT). This theory was developed by Nicholas Onuf in 1989 to explain the complex network of political milieu which yields either armed conflict or peace and security in particular setting (Onuf, 1989). The SCPT was developed to counter the realist perspective, which postulates that political and military systems determine the prevalence of war or peace (Abreha, 2021), as well as the idea that countries rely on themselves for their security because they perceive other states as potential or actual security threats (Zajecki *et al.,* 2020; & Yeo, 2018). Thus, politics is viewed as providing essential conditions that promote peace and security. On the other hand, if the politics are not right, it also instigates an environment that create violent conflict or armed conflict.

The foundation idea of the SCPT is symbolic interactionism, a concept that emphasises the interpretative and symbolic aspects of social relationships and behaviours. In selecting the SCPT as the guiding theoretical framework, it was considered that the set of ideas was best placed to illuminate the underlying factors that generated the conflict milieu that characterise the majority of the eight RECs that are recognised by the African Union (AU). The SCPT emphasizes the importance of examining the non-material structures that have an impact on how conflict players are motivated to engage in armed conflict and

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other forms of violence. Hence, the SCPT enhanced helped Understanding the objectives, motives, and ultimately the behaviors of conflict participants depend on this. Researchers can gain a deeper knowledge of the dynamics of conflicting interests in society by adopting a constructivist viewpoint, which can lead to discoveries that shed light on the complexity of conflict development and suggest solutions for restoring security and peace in war zones. Following the UNDP's 1994 comprehensive idea of Human Security (HS), the application of SCPT to explain the basis of conflict and its peace and security nemesis became more relevant. According to UNDP (1994), HS is a state in which no harm to the wellbeing of an individual, group, or community exists (UNDP, 1994). This view aligns with the view that while conflict is an inescapable feature of humanity, it can be transformed beyond negative peace which tends to be short-lived, to positive peace which is desirable and durable.

Three fundamental freedoms; the freedom from fear, the freedom from want, and the freedom from indignity, are incorporated within human security framework. These freedoms are the pillars on which the seven dimensions of HS which are economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security, are constructed (Maksum, 2021; & UNDP, 1994). The SCPT and UNDP both share a broad understanding of what constitutes peace and security as well as violence and conflict, at the individual, national, regional and global level. The SCPT, through its concept of symbolic interactionism, illuminates the importance of using inclusive engagement and conflict transformative processes instead of imposing on the disgruntled who are forced to vent their frustrations through violence and wedging a war. What motivates conflict actors to agitate, and their rationale for taking up arms were earnestly considered and incorporated into developed conceptual framework that RECs in general and SADC in particular, could adopt to enhance their effectiveness in the maintenance of regional peace and security in their respective jurisdictions.

## RELATED LITERATURE

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the legitimate structure for preserving peace and security in Africa. Through this structure, the AU anticipated to silence guns in Africa by 2020 but this timeline was missed and conflict has not subsided. According to Conflict Barometer (2020), Africa remains the most conflict-prone continent in the world. Krause (2016) contends that old wars in Africa are not settling. He pointed out that old conflicts were persisting and recurring while new ones were emerging and escalating. Raleigh & Kishi (2020) reported that localised militias accounted for Africa's increasing violent conflicts. The 270 militias which became active between 2019 and 2020 across Africa painted a gloomy picture of the security concern in most regions of Africa. Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic

(CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan are among the nations in Africa with active armed conflicts in 2019 (Sipiri, 2020).

Recent studies (Adetula *et al.,* 2021; Abreha, 2021; Okokhere, 2020; Aeby, 2019; & Nathan, 2016) show that the majority of the conflicts in war prone countries are contagious, resulting in spillover effects to other countries. The grave concern in Africa is that out of all the countries that emerge from conflict, half of them relapsed into violence due to a variety of factors (International Crisis Group, 2020; The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2021). The al-shaabab insurgency in Mozambique, Oromo–Somali clashes, Northern Mali Conflict, Central African Republic skirmishes, the protracted Darfur conflict, Sinai insurgency in Egypt, Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, insurgency in Tunisia, Somali conflict, ethnic violence in South Sudan and Ethiopia-Tigray conflict are some of the ongoing bloody conflicts in Africa (International Crisis Group, 2020; Conflict Barometer , 2020; Ercoşkun & Konuralp, 2020). These bloody conflicts persisted despite the assurance by the UN that mandating RECs to maintain peace and security in their regions is the most effective approach because they have "…a good understanding of the historical background of local conflicts; they are familiar with the actors and issues involved in these conflicts; they can build trust through the frequency of interaction among their member states; and they can develop and uphold appropriate norms on conflict prevention and governance" (United Nations, 2018). This global thinking is at the heart of the creation of eight RECs in Africa, which are the building blocks of APSA and have the mandate to ensure that peace and security prevail in their regions (Onditi, Ben-Nun, Were & Nyaburi-Nyadera, 2021). Nevertheless, recent studies (Nathan, 2016; Chigudu, 2019; & Aeby, 2019) have noted that the prevalence of conflicts in Africa is reminiscent of inherent shortcomings in the design of African institutions which are meant to resolve conflicts.

Commenting on the incessant conflicts in some regions in Africa, Momoh (2016) concluded that African RECs lacked the capacity to bring the desired durable peace and security in the continent. His conclusion confirmed Powell's (2005) findings that African RECs lacked the necessary legitimate frameworks, resources and capacity to successfully intervene in conflicts. However, these findings are contested by other scholars (Swati, 2021; Swati, 2019; & Young, 2016) who contend that the conflicts in Africa stem from the continent's colonial heritage. This construal of African conflicts hinges on the Afrocentric thinking that to study African conflicts without invoking the coloniality factor is nothing but an epistemological gaffe. Even so, these two dogmatic perspectives do not provide a solid picture on why African regions are characterised by unending conflicts. Focusing on SADC in particular, its regional

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peace and security mandate is implicit in its founding treaty of 1996, the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (Sikuka, 2021; Minja, 2012; & Nathan, 2016), which became operational in 2001 after member states resolved their disagreements over its structure and function. The Organ was created through Article 2.2 (e) of SADC's Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security of 2001. It provides for collective responsibility by SADC member countries to prevent, contain and resolve inter and intra-state conflicts. The Organ reports to the SADC Summit of Heads of States, which is the region's highest policy-making body. Other SADC regional mechanisms include an Early Warning System (EWS), a Regional Peacekeeping Centre (RPC), and the SADC Standby Force (SADCSF). The region also has an Election Monitoring and Mediation Capabilities (EMMC), including a Mediation Support Unit (MSU) and a Panel of Elders (PoE) (Mlambo, 2020; & Aeby, 2019). These mechanisms constitute SADC's conflict management and prevention toolbox.

The above-mentioned SADC structures and mechanisms were created to ensure that the region has the capability and flexibility to intervene to stop or restore stability in circumstances where conflict turns violent. In theory, these mechanisms appear comprehensive enough to allow SADC to effectively address conflict in its region. For instance, the role of the EMMC is to enhance SADC's comprehension of the underlying factors and potential triggers of conflict. Scholars (Okon, 2020; Aeby, 2019; & Minja, 2012) have described EMMC as SADC's mediation tool for the prevention, containment and peaceful resolution of conflict in this regional grouping. It is however, intriguing to note that although SADC has numerous regional peace and security measures, insecurity remains a major concern in this region. Armed conflict, political crises, post-election violence and governance flaws are some of the pressing peace and security challenges in the region. Matsinhe & Valoi (2019) claimed that SADC was actually degenerating into a battlefield for extremist insurgency groups, post-election violence and xenophobia inspired violence. Providing a clear picture of the security concern in the SADC region, Sipiri (2020) reported that there were 20 active peace operations in the sub-Saharan Africa in 2019. Past and contemporary literature attribute the prevalence of conflict in the SADC region to a variety of causes. One such explanation is that SADC's incoherent response to conflict is historically embedded. Nathan (2016) argued that the 1998 conflict in DRC proved that SADC lacked cohesion when it comes to implementation of their peace and security mandate in the region. While SADC agreed to intervene militarily in DRC, only three countries, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia managed to deploy troops to restore peace and security in that country. South Africa categorically refused to commit a military contingent despite that as a region, SADC had agreed to apply military power to restore peace and security in DRC (Nathan, 2005). The SADC incoherent became clearer in

September 1998 when then Lesotho Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili wrote to the heads of state of Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe to intervene militarily following a mutiny by some elements of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF). South Africa swiftly intervened militarily on the pretext that it was doing so on behalf of SADC after a legitimate government in Lesotho had invited SADC for military intervention to restore order in that country. The swift intervention in Lesotho by South Africa raised eye brows given that they had refused to intervene in the DRC conflict. However, some scholars (Kali, 2019; Van *et al.,* 2010) concluded that SA's swift intervention in Lesotho was nothing to do with collective regional peace and security but was motivated by their national interest particularly to do with water supplies.

Coe & Nash (2020); & Mlambo (2020) opined that the military power of the SADC is immense, owing to the military assets of Angola, the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe among others. While this power has not been employed jointly and tested in one conflict situation, While the SADC Standby Force is a formidable regional standby force on paper, the enduring conflict in the DRC and the insurgency conflict in Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, cast doubt on the region's ability to contain conflict and bring peace and security in distressed countries. The SADC Standby Force has not been tested beyond the few exercises it conducted including Exercise UMODZI held in 2018 and Exercise AMANI Africa II in 2015. While the SADC Standby Force became fully operational in 2017, according to Sikuka (2021), it does not have a physical presence because SADC is agreed that the Force can only be constituted on a need-to-deploy basis. Evidence (Okon, 2020; & Nathan, 2016) show that when such need arises, SADC has been found wanting. For example, Mlambo and Masuku (2021) wrote that although SADC was agreed in principle to intervene and contain the conflict in Mozambique, member countries were not forthcoming in terms of implementing their agreement by committing troops to contain this particular conflict. Kgosi (2021) attributed this problem to SADC's lack of decisiveness, strategy, and action in responding to conflict in the region. The insurgency in Mozambique escalated, resulting in arbitrary killings, destruction of public infrastructure and massive displacement of civilians (Mashimbye, 2022; & Vhumbunu, 2021). While this was happening, only a few SADC countries (Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) had either deployed or promised to do so while the rest of SADC countries continue to watch the conflict from the terraces. It was apparent that as a region, SADC was not quick to respond to security concerns that flare up in some of its member states. This has prompted this study to analyse the efficacy of SADC in relation to its role of maintaining regional peace and security

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# METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach complemented by an exploratory research design. The study took into account the fact that maintaining peace and security is not just a complex issue but also a hotly debated subject, attracting numerous perspectives depending on how one defines peace and security. A single conflict may generate a variety of interpretations, suggestions, or explanations since each conflict has its own peculiarities. Given these subtleties, it is apparent that a qualitative approach and an exploratory research design were the most suitable for this study for reasons explained in the paragraphs that follow.

First, a qualitative research approach embraces the notion of multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2017; & Maxwell, 2013). Hence, it was found to be the most appropriate for this study which analysed the efficacy of SADC in relation to its role of maintaining regional peace and security based on data which represent the subjective views of the participants. A qualitative research approach enabled this study to achieve its objectives by probing the "what," "why," and "how" of what SADC was doing as well as what it needed to do to turn violent conflict into long-lasting peace and security, and facilitate the attainment of positive peace. This view aligned with recent research findings (Hameed, 2020; & Yin, 2015) that confirmed that qualitative approaches preserve contextual validity and that their findings are more convincing compared to findings generated from numerical data associated with quantitative studies. In addition, the adoption of a qualitative research approach dovetailed with the in-depth interviews that were used to generate rich data from participants the majority of whom were academics and experts in the field of security.

Second, the study adopted an exploratory research design on the basis that the application of traditional security frameworks and mechanisms can longer effectively maintain regional peace and security due to the diversified nature of intra-state conflicts. Given this consideration, an exploratory research design was used, and it offered the required flexibility to explore the conflict landscape in the SADC region with an open mind. Thus, the adopted design enabled this study to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying issues as well as what needed to be done. The goal of this study was to provide an alternative peace and security framework that could be used by RECs to effectively maintain regional peace and security. In this regard, the use of an exploratory research design led to the development of a peace and security framework that could pave way to the attainment of positive peace in regional blocs, particularly SADC. Figure 1 shows a comprehensive framework that SADC could adopt to maintain peace and security in the region by transitioning from conflict to positive peace.
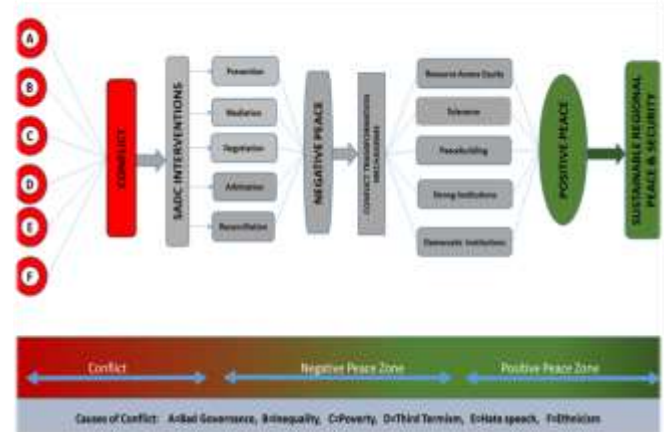


**Figure 1:** Sustainable Regional Peace and Security Framework
**Source:** Author's own imagination (Zishiri, 2022)

As shown on Figure 1 above, maintenance of peace and security is a process that requires sequenced sub-processes that start from a clear understanding of the root causes of each particular conflict. This understanding is required to inform the sequencing of the intervention, starting from those that are aimed at stopping violence through to those interventions that address the root cause of a particular conflict. Put in another way, interventions that stop violence can only achieve negative peace, which in itself is not sustainable. On the other hand, interventions that seek to address root causes of conflict are the ones that transform conflict to sustainable peace and security. In short, negative peace which implies the silencing of guns and end of violence, must be transformed to positive peace through interventions that address the root causes of the conflict. In this regard, I argue that SADC and other regional blocs, could attain positive peace if they adopt the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1. The proposed conceptual framework illuminates the relationship between the underlying causes of conflict in the SADC region and the processes that should be followed through till positive peace is achieved, making it possible for SADC to effectively maintain peace and security in the region. It emphasises the need for SADC not just to silence guns in the region but also to pursue strategies that address the root causes of conflict as a way to attain positive peace. Although this study acknowledge that SADC has managed to maintain relative peace and stability as compared to other regional groupings in Africa, more need to be done to evolve from negative to positive peace.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The regional security architecture of SADC allows for both collective security and collective defence. These security measures are implied in SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security which was established in 1996, and adopted by member's states in 2001. This regional security framework provides for the implementation of regional peace and security initiatives

in the areas of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A host of other mechanisms including the Early Warning System, a Regional Peacekeeping Centre, SADC Standby Force, Election Monitoring and Mediation Capabilities, Mediation Support Unit and Panel of Elders, support SADC's effort to maintain regional peace and security. However, the results of this study show that numerous factors undermine SADC's efficacy in its role of maintaining regional peace and security. The key factors are; leadership discord, weak regional institutions, lack of funding, overemphasis on non-interference and identity crisis. These factors are considered in the following paragraphs.

**Leadership Discord**
In terms of how to respond to conflict situations, there is apparent discord among SADC leaders. The region is always alienated into two distinct leadership groups. One group backs the use of hard power (military intervention) while the other group prefers the use of soft power (diplomacy) to resolve conflict and maintain peace and security in the region. This discord stems from lack of political commitment, one of the vital aspects required to facilitate swift conflict intervention before escalation. The majority of SADC presidents have complete authority in their nations to choose where and how to intervene in conflict situation that arise in any member state. Data overwhelming evidence from data reveals that in their divergent views on the best way to intervene in conflict situations, SADC leaders only commit their countries' intervention if doing so serves their individual interests. SADC leaders do not base their actions on the written regional commitments as provided in the various SADC conflict resolution mechanisms which they are signatories.

The founding treaty of SADC and the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation, make reference to the bloc's mandate to promote regional peace and security as the foundation for economic development of SADC as an integrated region. While commendable progress has been made by SADC in resolving conflicts in the region, the majority of the participants in this study shared the view that to a large extent SADC has consistently failed each time when faced with circumstances that called for swift intervention to maintain peace and security in member countries that lapse into conflict situations. This problem was attributed to SADC's lacklustre response and glaring lack of political will to resolve the conflict in affected countries. This problem squarely rests with leadership discord that prevails in in the SADC region. For example, it was apparent from the analysis of data that the ongoing insurgency in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province undermines peace and stability not only in Mozambique but also in the whole SADC region due to the spill-over effect. This problem has been ongoing since 2017 while SADC leadership continue to dither. This has allowed to the insurgents to gain the initiative and spread their wings.

The lack of decisiveness on the part of SADC leadership in coming up with an effective intervention strategy in Mozambique is not a new phenomenon. In May 2020, the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security held a meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, where the Mozambican conflict was discussed. The fact that the deteriorating situation in the Cabo Delgado was the agenda for this particular meeting, indicates that in principle, SADC leadership acknowledge the need to intervene and restore peace and security in Cabo Delgado. Nevertheless, what is lacking is the commitment to implement whatever intervention strategies they would have agreed. The same problem happened in 1998 when SADC leaders agreed to intervene in DRC yet only three countries ended up deploying troops while the rests developed cold feet for one reason or another. One of the participants was adamant leadership in the SADC region pays lip service to the issues of regional peace and security. He explained that;

> *SADC adopts a case-by-case strategy, relying on certain regional leaders to dominate summit proceedings and make decisions rather than SADC as the collective whole. This has undermined the effectiveness of SADC's role of resolving conflict in the region. Positive peace has remained elusive in SADC the region and it can only be achieved through a leadership with a sincere desire to put the security and peace of its people first (Participant during an interview on 15 June 2022).*

Another common explanation from the participants was that emerging conflicts in SADC are national rather than international. The implication of this observation is that the resolution of these interstate conflicts is within the scope of regional leaders to solve them. Nevertheless, participants pointed out that the effectiveness of SADC's Organ on Politics and Defence depends on the interests of the current chair and his understanding of the crisis in question. This view by this particular participant aligns with Aeby (2019) who noted that the major challenge that faced SADC in ending conflicts in the region is the divergent views of its leaders. The leaders are always divided along two distinct approaches, with one group favoring the use of diplomacy as a strategy while the other group prefers military intervention strategies to resolve conflict. To this end Abey described SADC as an "arrested" community. The way SADC handled the 1998 DRC conflict is frequently highlighted as an example of how SADC leadership are divided in their intervention preferences.

**Weak Regional Institutions**
The responsibility to maintain peace and security in the SADC region lies with the Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Cooperation (OPDSC), which is run on a Troika basis. The OPDSC was founded on the back of the 1992 Declaration and Treaty which

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created SADC, and it is chaired on a rotational basis (SADC Secretariat, 1992). The OPDSC was established in 1996 with the mandate to establish and maintain peace and security as well as the rule of law throughout the SADC region. The core responsibility of the OPDSC is to direct Member States on all matters of peace and security nature in the SADC region (Aeby, 2019).

On paper, the OPDSC provides a solid legal and institutional platform for effective maintenance of peace and security in the SADC region. However, 80 % of participants in this study indicated that the OPDSC has not lived up to its expectations due to numerous reasons. One reason was that the Organ is composed of the current chair, outgoing chair and the incoming chair. It is apparent that the Organ's power of decision making on how to deal with each specific conflict situation in the region is dependent on individual Member States. The risk posed is that SADC's institutional framework could be exploited to serve the interests of the sitting members of the Organ at any given time and space, since this critical institution is not structurally supranational. One of the participants, a security expert opined that;

> The biggest threat to peace and security in SADC stems from inherent institutional deficiencies. Every time SADC is required to respond to a conflict that arises in the region, the Organ is always found wanting and slow in responding to the crisis. Since its formation, the Organ on Politics and Defence has always been making decisions on an ad hoc basis when responding to conflict situations. Ongoing conflicts in Mozambique and DRC are dragging on without a decisive response since insurgency activities were reported way back in 2017. Surprisingly, SADC is reluctant to transform its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security into a powerful supranational institution despite that this organisation has not been efficient in the manner it handles conflicts in the region (A security expert during interviews on 23 June 2022).

The above excerpt provides deep insights into the challenges confronting SADC in its bid to maintain regional peace and security. Recurring conflict in the DRC and insurgency in Mozambique are typify the inadequacy inherent in the SADC's conflict resolution mechanisms. While the influence of external influence in most of the conflicts in the SADC region cannot be dismissed, SADC's own short comings cannot be ignored. While SADC is quick to implicate external forces to the conflicts in Mozambique and DRC, it is evident from the analysis of data that the structures that are meant to spearhead the resolution of these conflicts are not up to the task. Structures such as the Early Warning Structure (EWS), OPDS and the Troika have not been able to respond swiftly to conflict situations when they occur. One of the challenges is that the key SADC institutions that are charged with the responsibility for ensuring conflict is resolved meet on ad hoc basis. They also follow arduous procedures before making concrete decisions on the method and timing of intervening in a given crisis. While on paper the OPDSC appears a solid regional security mechanism, in practice this regional institution has not lived up to its expectations due to numerous reasons. One reason lies in its composition, which comprised the current chair, outgoing chair and the incoming chair. It is apparent that the Organ's power of decision making on how to deal with each specific conflict situation in the region is dependent on individual member states. The risk posed is that SADC's institutional framework can be exploited to serve the interests of the sitting members of the Organ.

Thus, the region's mandate to maintain peace and security in weakened. This glaring weakness is evident in the two cases of the conflict in Mozambique and DRC. It is apparent that weak regional institutions render SADC ineffective in terms of maintaining regional peace and security. Every time SADC is required to respond to a conflict that arises in the region, its numerous peace and security mechanisms have been found wanting and slow to respond, and this negatively impact on its effectiveness in terms of maintaining regional peace and security. This observation aligns with prior studies which found that SADC remains a region of insecurity despite that it was relatively peaceful compared to the other African groupings (Nathan, 2016; & Okon, 2020).

**Lack of Funding**

Lack of financial resources is another key theme that emerged from the data collected from all the 15 participants. The participants pointed out that while SADC emphasise the need to bankroll its peace operations, lack of funding has always been a challenge. One of the participants claimed that the need for financial self-reliance has often been on the agenda of SADC's summits for the past two decades as the region tried to curtail unwarranted external influence in regional security which comes attached with external funding. Nevertheless, this has remained just a talk show because SADC remains dependent on donor funding for its peace and security activities. A participant explained that;

> Over the years, SADC has claimed significant victories in enhancing regional integration and fostering relative peace and security in the region. However, financial challenges have negatively hampered the smooth conduct of SADC's regional peace and security obligation s, particularly in DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mozambique. The SADC Standby Brigade has never deployed mainly because of lack of financial resources and some SADC countries intervened under the auspices of SADC while the burden of the costs was on the individual countries. Thus, to a greater extent funding has undermined SADC's role of maintaining peace

*and security in the region (Participant during an interview on 20 June 2022).*

It is apparent that SADC's regional peace and security mandate is hindered by lack of funding. This view confirms earlier empirical evidence (Aeby, 2019; Kali, 2019; & Nathan, 2016) which shows that SADC relies on external sources to finance its peace and security initiatives. This problem stems from member states' lack of political commitment to financially support agreed deployments in conflict zones in the region. What is apparent is that without financial resources, SADC will remain a toothless bulldog without the latitude to enforce and maintain peace and security in its region. Recent studies have demonstrated that SADC's continued dependence on UN and donor funding for its peace operations is the biggest challenge that undermine its effectiveness and customary slow response to crisis in conflict zones in the region.

A strong financial mechanism enhances the effectiveness of a regional bloc's peace and security mandate. In this regard, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) committed to strengthen its funding capability in order to maintain its effectiveness in the face of challenges posed by emerging contentious security landscape in their region. At the Brussels summit in 2021, NATO leaders decided to boost NATO budget, including NATO common funding as needed, while taking sustainability, affordability, and accountability into consideration. The aim was to maintain the military readiness of the Alliance. During the same summit, NATO Defence Ministers committed to invest a minimum of 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defense spending given that the defense capabilities of each member have an effect on the whole region. This commitment by each member state demonstrates each member state's political willingness to support peace and security in the Alliance. This vital commitment and willingness are lacking in SADC. Hence, the cost of maintaining peace and security in crisis situations in the SADC region is the burden of individual countries who intervenes mainly motivated by the desire to protect their individual rather than regional interests. Thus, lack of funding undermines SADC's effectiveness in maintaining peace and security in the region.

**Ideological Crisis**

The issue of regional ideology remains a crisis that SADC will not solve in the foreseeable future. Regional ideology remains a contentious disjuncture in the SADC region where the influence of former colonial countries is still evident. As a consequence, SADC member states struggle to balance between fully orientating themselves with the desired regional ideology. There is apparent strong desire by each SADC state to orientate itself with the ideals of her former colonial master for the perceived benefits that come with such alignment. As a result, SADC is divided along these lines, and this challenge has adverse effects on the region's effort to uphold regional peace and security. Some SADC nations want to emulate Western democracies while others align themselves along the socialist ideals of the South, especially China. In this smorgasbord, both camps continue to pay lip service to full implementation of the "African solutions to African problems" ideology. It is apparent that without a shared regional ideology, SADC continues to dither on critical issues that require a common understanding. Given the difficulty in preserving regional stability and security, a divided region will inevitably fail when confronted with an emergency that calls for coordinated action. Therefore, it is clear that SADC needs a coordinated strategy in order to effectively carry out its regional peace and security mandate. Although SADC appears to be a one entity in public, in reality this region is fractured along identity lines. When the SADC is confronted with a crisis that necessitated taking decisive action, the divisions within the organization become visible. The fissures within the ranks of SADC manifest themselves when the bloc is faced with a crisis that required concrete decisions. One the participants in this study explained that;

> *The SADC region does not function as a single and cohesive entity. The region is characterised by disagreements every time it seeks to resolve disputes in the region. Members of SADC have contrasting interests that repeatedly clash in almost every conflict that manifest in the region. The case of DRC war of 1998, Lesotho conflict of 1998, a coup d'état in Madagascar in 2009, Zimbabwe crisis of 2008 and ongoing conflict in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province shows, SADC has always shown their divisions which mostly stem from the pursuit of member state's individual interests in the affected countries (Participants during an interview on 26 June 2022).*

Similar sentiments were shared by several other participants who thought that politically, SADC was a relatively young organisation, and that is why it was going through an identity crisis. The participants' thinking was that to expect that SADC has attained a shared regional identity could be too optimistic. Without dismissing this view, it is apparent the different political background peculiar to each SADC state and their tendency to hold on to the values of their former colonial masters, remains one of the factors that undermined the effectiveness of SADC in terms of maintenance of regional peace and security. For example, SADC countries are at different levels of democratisation. As a result, their attitude towards conflict, peace and security is not yet standardized across all SADC member states. Similarly, their democratic processes and procedures, human rights, the rule of law, and political plurality varies from one country to another. However, what is common in most SADC countries is that while the notion of human security is acknowledged in theory, it is not yet

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fully embraced in practice. At the regional level, the concept of human security still rests awkwardly in SADC's peace and security framework and the implementation part is vividly lacking. It is apparent that this ideological problem continues to undermine SADC's effectiveness in maintaining regional peace and security.

In sum, this study has established that when compared to other African RECs, SADC is a relatively peaceful regional grouping, especially with regards to the preservation of national security. However, SADC has struggled to resolve conflicts quickly and effectively in terms of human security. In particular, SADC still has a lot more to accomplish in terms of addressing the root causes of conflict in the region. Evidence has shown that SADC places higher priority on state security at the expense of human security. This explains why SADC frequently chooses to ignore internal disputes and crisis situations affecting some its member states despite that such conflicts negatively impact populations in the affected member states. A variety of factors as discussed in the preceding sections decreases SADC's effectiveness in terms of maintaining regional peace and security. Key factors revolve around the prevailing weak regional institutions, lack of funding, an overemphasis on the principle of not meddling in the internal affairs of member states, ideological differences and a lack of regional cohesion are some of the key barriers that SADC need to resolve first to enhance its effectiveness in the role of maintaining regional peace and security.

**Recommendations**
This study offered the following recommendations;
- SADC leadership should speak with one voice on issues of regional peace and security.
- SADC should build strong supranational structures that respond to conflict situations before they deteriorate.
- SADC should develop and invest in sustainable funding models to finance its essential capabilities for maintaining regional peace and security on a self-reliant basis.
- SADC should develop its own distinct ideology on regional peace and security which serves to bring cohesion in the bloc.
- SADC should abandon its ingrained state-centric view of security and maintain regional peace and security within the framework of the human security perspective.

**Limitations and Future Research**
This study focused on the efficacy of SADC in relation to its mandate to maintain regional peace and security. One of the findings which emerged from the analysis was the apparent lack of regional cohesion among the regional leadership. There is need for future research studies to explore the influence of ideological differences in sustaining the fissures that are apparent

among SADC regional leaders. Research on the applicability of R2P in the SADC region is identified as another area of future research given that the principle of non-interference is held in high esteem in the region.

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