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Flockless Shepherd – Is South Africa’s Performance in  
African Security Governance Marginal?

Stephen Kingah



European University Institute  
**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**  
Global Governance Programme

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## **Abstract**

The year 2014 is a milestone for South Africa. It marks twenty years of the end of apartheid. The moment is right to reflect on how far the country has come. This article focuses on South Africa's external influence in Africa. Based on the variables of compellence, assurance, prevention and protection, it is argued that the country has been punching well below its weight. Examples are drawn from its actions in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and even Zimbabwe to show that the country is underperforming in the realm of ensuring African security governance. To meet the expectations ascribed to it as an anchor state in Africa the country's leaders will first need to confront the mammoth domestic problems bedeviling South Africa.

## **Keywords**

Security; governance; corruption; leadership



## Summary

South Africa is a young and ambitious democracy. Its youth as a post-apartheid nation often undercuts its elastic aspirations to be Africa's unequivocal leader. It is the sole African nation within the G20. It has made a committed effort to be accepted as one of the BRICS alongside Brazil, Russia, India and China. It is a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as a participant in the IBSA Dialogue Forum including India and Brazil. South Africa is Africa's colossus in many respects and actually aspires to become a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) if such a chance presented itself. This chapter argues that while South Africa has some influence on its immediate neighbors in the realm of security governance, its Africa-wide ambitions are underwhelming when tested against the facts and results. Various examples are alluded to, to show how South Africa's declared ambitions to be a security leader in Africa do not stand up to scrutiny. These include South Africa's involvement in various crises such as the one in the Central African Republic, in Côte d'Ivoire, in Libya and even in its own backyard: Zimbabwe. In each of these alluded examples the limits of South Africa's foreign policy and its capacity to guarantee Africa's security governance have revealed serious limitations. These limitations are cardinally explained by South Africa's own internal challenges.

## 1. Introduction: Regional Power Perceptions of Main Security Risks and Threats in the Region

In 1993 after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela penned an important piece in *Foreign Affairs*. Amongst his aspirations for South Africa (SA) was a clear desire to have a society founded on the principles of human rights and democracy (Mandela, 1993: 87-88). He equally exposed his zeal to see SA as a provider of constructive leadership in the African region as a whole. Under the banner of the African National Congress (ANC) his successors have constantly rehearsed the stated policy of SA's external relations as one that is anchored on multilateralism, South-South cooperation and an unalloyed predilection for Africa. The focus on Africa in SA's external relations is both assumed and attributed. With one of the strongest economies on the continent, a sophisticated demography and rich geography its leaders tend to see the country as a regional beacon of hope. For ideational and historical reasons non-South Africans also tend to ascribe the country with leadership status in Africa with a strong belief that SA's role is essential in any partnership aimed at conflict prevention and democratic development in the continent (Stremlau, 2000: 118). As such SA is exceptional by assumption and ascription. While SA's leaders and foreigners have ascribed strong leadership credentials to the country thereby increasing expectations as to what it can do, the majority of South Africans are actually more concerned about mundane issues pertaining to their wellbeing, welfare and safety.

The stated policy of the ANC and South African leaders has been to engage with African countries and to provide leadership as needed. Even if the South African Constitution does not clearly sanction an activist engagement with other African countries, there has been a strong bent for leaders to indicate to the world that SA counts especially in the realm of security governance in Africa. Why is this so? First ANC leaders have been keen to reverse the dark legacy of apartheid in terms of foreign policy under white minority rule. During the apartheid era there was a deliberate effort to destabilize Frontline States that were considered to be friendly to SA's freedom fighters. On many occasions the regime in Pretoria led raids into other Southern African countries to hunt South African freedom fighters in various countries including Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This history is important because during this dark epoch South African freedom fighters forged strong ties with liberation movements in other countries such as South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia, the Zimbabwean African National Union – Progressive Front (ZANU-PF) and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). With the demise of apartheid ANC leaders were keen to reverse this legacy of destabilization and to foment an image for the country as a bridge

builder and security provider in Africa especially in Southern Africa. This is the emotive or historical reason. Second, there is also a strategic reason. SA has ambitions to be an international player not only in terms of economic aspects but also as a security actor especially within the UN. It is amongst the countries that have called for the reform of the UNSC with the hope that it could be granted a permanent seat on the UNSC in view of its assumed leadership in Africa. Third from its own experience SA is aware that a climate of insecurity is not a good foundation for building a strong society and economy. ANC leaders especially during the period of Thabo Mbeki were fully conscious that SA had to engage with African hotspots. They believed (and this belief is still widely shared in South African political circles, albeit tamed) that the country has to be active in forging strong security architecture for Africa as a basis for economic development. That is why Mbeki was keen on developing notions such as the African Renaissance that he also backed up from a security perspective by sending South African troops to various countries including Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Related to this is the fact that the ruling ANC party has been very keen especially during the Mbeki years to strengthen the continental African institutions. It has been willing to use its leverage to shape African continental institutions such as the African Union's Peace and Security Council as well as the Pan African Parliament.

Regardless that SA is keen to exert influence in Africa it faces important risks, threats and challenges that constrain its ability to credibly make a leadership claim in terms of African security governance. The main security related threats for SA itself include the identity conundrum; high levels of corruption; poor service delivery associated with rising levels of poverty and insecurity engendered by the violence perpetrated partly by unemployed youth. The identity conundrum relates to the deep splits that exist in South Africa today on racial and economic lines. Racial tensions are often aggravated when issues related to land re-distribution are raised (De Wet, 2013). Extremist views backed by conservative Afrikaner groups on the one hand, and the stalwarts of the Economic Freedom Fighters (led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema), on the other pose dangers that could explode if uncontained. There are serious concerns now as killings of whites in some farms are used by some white politicians to justify talk of genocide targeted at the Afrikaners (Verwey and Quayle, 2012: 574).

Corruption in the ranks of the ruling ANC has become a very serious problem with people like Desmond Tutu averring that the leadership of the ANC does not really represent the interest of poor South Africans due to the chilling levels of graft and indifference of ANC leadership to those oppressed (Times Live, 2011). The nature of the venality problem is further elucidated by the fact that successive leaders of the police service that is meant to check excesses have themselves been found guilty of corruption.

Poor service delivery and the dire conditions of those living in the townships and informal settlements is also a cause for concern (EIU, December 2013:4; Matshiqi, 2013: 428). The dissatisfaction as a result of poor service delivery was one of the causes of the attacks that were directed at immigrants in 2008 leading to the deaths of over 60 people. All these problems including poverty and unemployment (at 25 percent in general and 70 percent for those under 25) have helped to aggravate the precarious levels of insecurity in the country (GSA, 2013: paragraphs 38-41; Forde, 2013: 18). Fighting poverty is such a crucial aspect that it is included as one of the main elements of the Government's so-called diplomacy of Ubuntu. In terms of the risks and the threats the Government's White paper on the diplomacy of Ubuntu makes clear that poverty is a prevalent risk and challenge (GSA, 2011: 12). Economic cleavages that were mainly on racial lines in the apartheid years have assumed a novel dimension with marked inequalities *within* racial groups. Verwey and Quayle note that little has changed economically as whites still hold economic power: for instance, black representation at top management level is only 22.2 per cent (Verwey and Quayle, 2012: 568).

In a recent Gallup poll the results of which were released in May 2013 South Africa and Venezuela ranked as the most dangerous places on Earth in terms of personal safety, outflanking countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq (Gallup, 2013). What most polls indicate is that besides provision of

subsistence for their families South Africans are more concerned about their security in a country where it is claimed that one woman is raped every 17 seconds (Gallup, 2013). The violent levels of crime in some areas leave many citizens feeling their government cannot protect them especially in areas with signs marked as non-stop zones. The government does not know how to deal with crime partly because it is a problem that has spread throughout the country (Mandrup, 2010: 12). So many people are now seeking recourse to private security services. The figures are startling because in SA there are 375000 private security officers as oppose to 183.000 police officers (Mandrup, 2010: 14). This says a lot about the levels and feelings of insecurity of private citizens. It is pernicious and dangerous because the situation favors those who can afford security and leaves those who cannot vulnerable in a more dire state of insecurity. It would be hard for SA to play its proper role as a regional leader if it cannot be seen to be dealing with its own numerous domestic challenges (Habib, 2009: 150).

Given the diversity of its threats, interests and history SA can be a cheap target for strictures. It is very easy to criticize the country. Amongst the main contentions of this chapter is that South African leaders especially under the Zuma presidency have not been able to provide the apposite balance needed between pacifying domestic needs and external involvement. There has been a strong proclivity for over-reach in Africa by SA. It is laudable that South African leaders have this predilection for African security governance but it would be hard to make a case for the country's leadership in African security governance, if its own people are wallowing in despondency and insecurity.

## **2. Sources of Power in South Africa**

### ***2.1 Type of capabilities SA has developed over the past two decades***

It is revealing that the South African Constitution of 1996 that has been hailed as one that is very progressive and very accommodating to international law especially in the realm of human rights does not explicitly dedicate any article or section on the conduct of SA's international relations. This is left to political conjecture and engineering. In fact one can argue that while the Constitution is very open from an international law perspective it is insular in terms of sanctioning the scope and nature of SA's foreign policy. This could partly explain why the majority of South Africans tend to worry more about bread and butter issues closer to their homes than salvaging African lands further a field. In a sense this is at the heart of the dilemma facing ANC leaders: maintaining an ambitious foreign policy, while pacifying an anxious and increasingly impatient and youthful population.

When juxtaposed with other African countries, SA's economy is one of the biggest. It surpasses all of those in Southern Africa and accounts for over a third of the value of African economies (Games, 2013: 386). It has extensive investment interests in various African countries and is the clear dominant actor in Southern Africa. In terms of trade SA mainly engages with its immediate neighbours but it also has extensive trade and investment ties with the European Union (EU), the United States (US) and increasingly, with China. In terms of economic development South Africa has actually grown to become a donor and is providing aid through its department for international relations and cooperation (DIRCO). It has actually been urged to become a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). In the spirit of being a donor it is vital to note that SA started the African Renaissance Fund (ARF) under president Mbeki. This Fund has now been replaced by the South African Development and Partnership Agency (SADPA). Through the ARF SA provided development assistance to other African countries including the DRC and Mali (Games, 2013: 390). Also it has been a leading contributor to the African Union even if this has waned in recent years.

From a political perspective, SA is keen to be regarded as a beacon for liberal values such as support for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This has been an important point for the country and its institutions such as the Constitutional Court which is keen to project SA as an avatar for strong progressive liberal values such as human rights. SA was actually one of the main African countries to give its support for and to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Du Plessis, 2009: 441). It has also championed the promotion of human rights in other African countries. This was one of the main points of contention between SA and Nigeria when the Abacha junta decided to execute veteran Ogoni writer and activist Ken Saro Wiwa. It has also developed a strong political capacity for mediation especially within the Southern African region.

There is also an important component of SA's political wherewithal that matters for the country's capacity to be an actor in African regional security governance. This relates to internal political dynamics. The ANC has been the dominant political force in the country since the demise of apartheid. This means that the state security, intelligence and defense architecture is fully led by the ANC (plus its allies) and this has implications for the outlook of the country's foreign policy and how it engages with other countries. The ANC has very close partners, to wit, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), the latter of which is also in the ANC led government. In the past these partners have resisted efforts of an increased activist engagement by SA in other countries. However, within the ANC there have been cleavages in terms of active or more cautious involvement in external experiments including in defense affairs. All this means that the texture of the foreign policy of SA reflects a complex tapestry of interests that mirror the more liberal leaning elements of the ANC and the more radical strands represented by the SACP and COSATU which tend to have very SA-focused insular and provincial approach to many vital issues. In the opposition the main political outfit, the Democratic Alliance (DA) is gaining broader support and controls the Western Cape. The DA has been very critical of SA's approach of backing anti-Western strands of South-South cooperation and has been very caustic in its strictures of the ANC for having a strategy-free foreign policy. The most acute criticisms launched against the ANC from the DA has been in the realm of corruption that has plagued the arms procurement sector and tenders (Times Live, 2013). The problem for the DA is that it is still perceived as being white dominated. Some of the blacks and other ethnic groups that have been disaffected by the politics of the ANC have joined with other more progressive forces to form new political parties such as the Congress of the People (COPE) and Agang led by Mamphela Ramphele, a former managing director of the World Bank. Agang's approach has been to identify and target some of the weaknesses of the ANC including the levels of widespread corruption that has affected the external perception of the country (Times Live, 2013).

## ***2.2 Indicators of the sources of power***

In the realm of sources of power one can conceptualise this to include, visionary leadership; strong institutions; committed citizenry including active involvement of non-state actors. Respecting visionary leadership under the Mandela government there was a clear projection on the part of the leader to maintain a foothold in Africa. This approach was taken further under the Mbeki presidency and Mbeki actually took SA's Africa focus to a new level. He constantly sought to put Africa on the international agenda in various forums including the G-groups and the UN. He also contributed in a major way alongside Presidents Obasanjo and Wade in developing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Mbeki is equally credited with the vision of an African Renaissance that sought to reinvent Africa from ideational and economic perspectives. These approaches were all translated in a forceful support for the African Union. Under Zuma big ideas on Africa have receded. The country has instead made a calculated decision to instead deepen its cooperation ties with the BRICs.

With regard to institutions South Africa is an active democracy in Africa and is duly classified as such in all the main rankings of democracy from Polity IV to Freedom House and the Economist

Intelligence Unit. The principle of separation of powers is well regarded but the major challenge is that Parliament and the executive are fully in the hands of the ANC. There is a strong perception that the ANC has used its majority in Parliament in certain instances to undermine the independence of a well-regarded judiciary and importantly an independent and proactive press (Spies, 2011: 333).

Then there is an important component of foreign policy making which includes the role of the people through representations in the form of non-state actors. The challenge in the people component of SA's foreign policy has been to link the country's foreign policy and the interests of the masses. Some analysts have made the point that under the Mbeki presidency there was disconnect (or patent dearth in explaining connections) between the active involvement of SA in external affairs in Africa and domestic needs and challenges in the country (Spies, 2010: 300; Sidiropoulos, 2008: 111). Certain parts of public opinion (led by the Inkatha Freedom Party's Buthelezi) regarded the over-reach and engagement on African issues and promotion of regional integration as a direct challenge on the interests of South Africans through the lost jobs regarded as going to foreigners coming to SA through initiatives facilitated by SADC (Landau, 2010: 220). Under Jacob Zuma there was an initial attempt to pull back from the over reach and to focus more on domestic matters. But with the change of time it is unclear that Zuma has actually diverged from the approach of external engagement. What has changed is the nature of foreign engagement. He is actually keen to use SA's leadership role in Africa to bolster its international credentials within the fold of emerging markets.

### **3. Security Governance Policies**

In terms of the four main dimensions of security governance as developed by Kirchner and Dominguez (2011:18) is SA's engagement respecting African security governance a manifestation of burden sharing, free riding or competition? Africa has not benefitted from the kind of security cover and guarantee that the US has been able to provide for Europe, Japan and South Korea since the end of the Second World War (Mills and Herbst, 2012: 160-161). This has meant that in many respects the vacuum has had to be filled by regional players and other external actors including Nigeria, the UK and France for West and Central Africa; and SA in the Great Lakes and in Southern Africa (Smis and Kingah, 2010).

Security governance can be approached at varied levels: SA in intra SADC issues and in intra-AU (or beyond SADC) aspects; and SA on more globally related issues eg efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime. Other broader dimensions of security can also be factored here including climate change, pandemics and migration that are huge and relevant issues for Africa and especially for the Southern African region. But attention is placed only on the regional aspects: that is the intra-SADC and intra-African actions. Based on an analysis of these various levels as collated against the dimensions of compellence, assurance, prevention and protection an argument can be made as to whether SA has been simply a spokesperson or a more proactive leader for SADC and for Africa as a whole.

Intra-SADC relations refer to the actions that are conducted within or across SADC countries. Within SADC there is also the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). In both entities South Africa is the pre-dominant actor in many respects. Intra-SADC actions can either be concentrated within a SADC state or can have implications in more than one SADC state. Intra-African actions are those that are not confined solely to SADC states within Africa and cover any member state of the African Union. For the most part these actions in which SA has been involved are nested or approved within the peace and security architecture of the African Union. SA has been a strong advocate for the AU. It is noteworthy that SA is one of the five African states that contribute the largest share of the dues paid for the African Union's budget. The others are Nigeria, Libya (until the ousting of Gaddafi), Egypt and Algeria. In recent years the willingness of SA to continue in this respect has come under strain given that SA did not pay its AU dues for 2012 to the chagrin of AU lovers (Redi, 2013). On both the intra-SADC and intra-African dimensions a salient consideration is that of followership. Even

within SADC, there is no guarantee that SA is always respected and followed by its smaller neighbours on issues of security governance. Patent corroboration in this respect has been the autonomous positions that were adopted by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe in the DRC.

### ***3.1 Compellence: Display of military force to manage regional conflicts***

There have been clear gyrations in the approach of SA to the use of hard power in handling regional conflicts. Under President Mandela there was a strong commitment made by SA to exercise leadership through efforts in mediation. This was most patent in his approach to the conflict in the DRC. In any event Mandela's approach to foreign interventions was deliberately cautious even if he was very outspoken in situations of excesses as obtained in Nigeria. Under Mbeki there was a marked shift as the country became ever more assertive. Mbeki was keen to use the African Renaissance project as a means to resell Africa to the world as a place of peace and business. That is why he would partner with President Obasanjo of Nigeria to push for the responsibility of states to intervene in other countries where there were crass cases of human rights violations by tyrants (Landsberg, 2010: 440). Mbeki's pro-interventionist style was criticized within the ANC as some stalwarts opted for a more cautious approach (Tieku, 2008). President Zuma initially heeded calls for less foreign adventures but he has not been able to resist the temptation of external forays as the debacle in CAR indicates. In any event, his focus on Africa as such as a priority as compared to the Mbeki years has diminished (Spies, 2010: 295).

#### **3.1.1 Intra-SADC initiatives**

Within SADC South Africa used its troops in 1998 to restore the Mosisili government that had been challenged by disloyal forces in Lesotho. Operation Boleas in Lesotho started on 22 September and ended on 19 October 1998. SA's troops stayed in the country until May 1999 (Manby, 2000: 392). Many casualties were chronicled. There was also a lot of looting and acts thought to have gone counter to what SA had mapped as conditions of foreign interventions outlined in a 1999 government white paper (the conditions included: international mandate, domestic mandate, means, exit strategy and the importance of nesting actions in regional cooperation). Complaints were later made that the soldiers sent were not well trained and that the order for intervention was too sudden (Manby, 2000: 394). The intervention completely undermined the principles and criteria set in the 1999 white paper. In this case South Africa did not free ride but purported that it was engaged in burden sharing within SADC. Although it was a controversial move it was presented as a SADC mission. But this approach has been criticized by Malan who asserts that SA and some other SADC states (in the case of Lesotho) took SADC as pretext for backyard peacekeeping: when one or more members act on behalf of SADC it only provokes uncertainties (Malan, 1998). For peace-oriented measures to work effectively, they need to enjoy consensus and be preceded by a UN Security Council Resolution (Malan, 1998). But not all have criticized the Lesotho action. Contrary to Malan, Scholvin argues that SA's offensive and unilateralist move in Lesotho to save the Mosisili government paid off in 1998 (Scholvin, 2012: 15). SA learnt its lesson from this: such aggressive foreign policy would be resisted that is why it turned to silent diplomacy in Zimbabwe.

Another example of actions in compellence in which SA was involved was in the Democratic Republic of Congo when SA sent forces to Eastern Congo in a burden sharing effort that was led by the French and EU forces in the 2003 joint effort dubbed Operation Artemis. Paradoxically the country abstained in a 1996 effort pushed by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe within the so-called SADC initiative to back the regime of Laurent Kabila when he was regionally propped to oust Mobutu and later again backed to stave off rebel incursions supported by Rwanda and Uganda. So actions in compellence within SADC in which SA is involved have been mainly anchored on burden sharing that is strongly partial rather than fully SADC-based.

### 3.1.2 Intra-African measures (Beyond SADC)

In March 2013 South Africans were stunned and angry to learn that 13 members of the country's elite Defense Forces had been killed in the Central African Republic. The surprise emanated from the fact that many found it difficult to make any logical, historical or geographical connection between their country and the remote enclave of CAR. Some had never even heard of CAR nor did they know where to locate it on a map. They were angry because their government had not been transparent enough to inform the population that there was such an operation underway and that it could be dangerous. In short the population exhibited impatience and intolerance with the failure of the Zuma Government to amply explain to them what strategic interest was at play for the government to be risking blood and treasure to back an estranged François Bozize. The mission exposed lack of clarity in terms of the purpose, command and control as well as logistics. The challenges experienced by the SANDF in CAR constituted a humiliation for South Africa as the mission was aborted in failure. Some analysts characterized the episode as an unprecedented domestic and international disaster for President Zuma (Dawes, 2013). Leaders of the countries in Central Africa led by Idriss Deby of Chad insisted that SA withdraw its troops. Within SA there were also calls from opposition members like David Maynier of the Democratic Alliance who accused the ANC Government of lying over the true mission in the CAR (Underhill and Mataboge, 2013). But the Zuma Government was quick with a rejoinder. South African minister for defense found it proper to explain to Parliament the nature and circumstances that led to the presence of SANDF in CAR. She noted that SA and CAR had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Defense Cooperation in 2007. This MoU was renewed in December 2012 at a time when efforts were made by the Bozize Government and Seleka rebels to establish a government of national unity. The SANDF were in CAR to ensure the success of such a government. The minister added that the intervention to stabilize the situation in CAR was also called for by the AU Peace and Security Council and reiterated the fact that it was not a unilateral move by SA. The 200 SANDF troops sent were dispatched to protect SA's trainers and assets that were already in CAR (Mapisa-Nqakula, 2013: 1-2). She would later add in no uncertain terms that: "Our foreign policy objectives are based on the need to build a better Africa and a better world and recognize that the future development of our own country is intrinsically linked, first and foremost, to that of the Continent. There is no possibility of developmental and economic success for a South Africa that is surrounded in a pool of instability, war and hunger around the continent" (Mapisa-Nqakula, 2013: 3).

South Africa has also been involved in compellence in Africa in other countries. It attempted to do this in the dispute in Côte d'Ivoire that pitted Laurent Gbagbo against Alasane Ouattara. Basically as the situation in the country aggravated in 2011 South Africa dispatched the *SAS Drakensberg* (frigate) to the coast of West Africa. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, SA acted without consultation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the AU. The West African regional triton, Nigeria, felt sidelined in a region it knows well. The problem was that in January 2011 many in Africa backed Ouattara and SA sent the frigate off the Ivorian coast, a move that tantamount to an act regarded, at the time, by many in West Africa and beyond as support for Gbagbo (Spies, 2011: 339). This was a strategy meant to push back the rebels that were bent on ousting Gbagbo from power. SA's attempt was rebuffed by the West African region and France. In a sense the efforts of SA failed in Côte d'Ivoire and its forays into West Africa were pitched as a counter to the French who have been the traditional power brokers in West Africa.

Efforts by SA were more successful in the case of Burundi whereby forces were sent within the AU framework to stabilize the situation as patent problems persisted in pacifying various rebel groups in that country. SA contributed troops to this mission alongside Ethiopia and Mozambique (Murithi, 2008: 75).

Its efforts in Libya were more mixed because it adopted an ambiguous stance on a decision by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to use military force. SA voted for UNSC Resolution 1973 of 2011 that authorized the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya but following adverse

reactions from the ANC of NATO's actions in regime change SA's UN Permanent Representative Baso Sangqu criticised the intervention of NATO in January 2012.

Its voting patterns in the UNSC on Côte d'Ivoire and then Libya can be interpreted as its attempts to protect autocrats who violate human rights (Paterson and Saunders, 2011: 10-11). In these different instances SA engaged in important experiments in burden sharing. One of the major problems facing SA in the area of compellence has been the lack of resources for this robust military component of foreign policy. In their assessment of the South African Defense Review of 2013, Meyer, Gibbs and Keketsi conclude that "the persistent disconnect between the defence mandate, South Africa's growing defence commitments and the defence allocation has eroded South Africa's defence capabilities to the point where the Defence Force is unable to fully fulfil its constitutional responsibility to defend and protect SA and its people, and is hard pressed even to maintain its current modest level of domestic and international commitments. The current balance of expenditure between personnel, operating and capital is both severely disjointed and institutionally crippling" (Meyer, Gibbs and Keketsi, 2013: 3). Within the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) there have been reports of a shortage of operational funding, absence of airlift capacity, shaky intelligence gathering capability and an acute problem of an aging military force (Mills, 2013).

### ***3.2 Assurance: Post-conflict re-construction, peace building and promotion of democracy and integration***

In the area of assurance SA has sought to be more vocal. But it has been criticized in its inaction in instances such as obtained in Darfur. Many human rights advocates have been dismayed by the approach Pretoria took to be mild on the Government of Sudan over Darfur: especially its approaches adopted within the Human Rights Council (Nathan, 2010: 56). In this realm of assurance one can again make a distinction between intra-SADC actions on the one hand, and those efforts the effects of which are felt beyond SADC African countries, on the other.

#### **3.2.1 Intra-SADC initiatives**

On post conflict re-construction and peace building SA has been active in the DRC. It has joined the EU in supporting the development of the police forces in the DRC. The DRC is a veritable challenge for SADC and for SA. SA pushed for the inclusion of the country in SADC and this is a decision that some within SADC still regret (Qobo, 2009: 62-63). On the economic development front, there are some South African companies involved in the development of transport and telecommunications infrastructure that are active in the DRC. The results on all these have been mitigated given the scale of the challenges in a country that is still at war especially in the Eastern parts. In the arena of international development cooperation and financial assistance SA has been a crucial funder of the members of SACU through the common customs revenue pool that has been created within the customs union. Countries such as Lesotho and Swaziland have turned to SA for help on many occasions. This was the case in the recent appeal by Swaziland for a 2 billion rand loan that was extended to the recluse kingdom by the South African Reserve Bank (Spies, 2011: 329). In terms of democracy promotion and integration SA has been keen to portray the image of its leadership as lead mediator in Zimbabwe. But even in this area there has been a strong counter position from countries such as Botswana. While Botswana has consistently taken a hard stance against Mugabe's ZANU-PF it is widely regarded that the ANC through the tenures of Mbeki and now Zuma have been very soft on the Mugabe Government. But these assessments are rather lazy and do not fully take into account the emotive bonds that bind the ANC and the ZANU-PF as liberation movements.

### 3.2.2 Intra-African measures (Beyond SADC)

SA has been involved in post-conflict reconstruction in various African countries beyond Southern Africa. This has been the case in Burundi where it has worked within the context of the AU. The country was also active alongside troops from Nigeria, Uganda and Burundi to help in the joint AU/UN mission to Darfur to help in the post-conflict reconstruction and pacification of that region. But the level of success of these missions is debatable. In any event SA has expanded its efforts in terms of providing assurances to certain African countries by providing development aid through its external relations directorate. In the field of democracy promotion efforts have been made by SA to back pro democratic institutions at the continental level, hosting the Pan African Parliament. A good example that SA is not really followed by other African countries on matters pertaining to assurance is that when Cape Town lost the 2004 Olympic Games bid to Athens (even though it had been sold and marketed as an African bid) African delegates failed to vote for SA during the very first round of the voting. This is chilling because the bid was sold especially by President Mbeki as part of the African Renaissance project (Vale and Maseko, 1998: 284).

### ***3.3 Prevention: Elimination of root causes of conflict, arms control, and nuclear non-proliferation of arms***

#### 3.3.1 Intra-SADC initiatives

Preventive efforts at the intra-SADC level have been very marked in the area of police cooperation and non-proliferation. In the realm of police cooperation this is developed and advanced between the SADC police forces where by efforts are made to combat transnational crimes. On mediation SA has been very active in various countries within SADC to ensure that conflicts are prevented. This has been the case in its push in Zimbabwe as well as in the DRC where Pretoria played a key role in the implementation of the Lusaka Peace Accords signed in 1999 and the Sun City deal reached in 2001 on power sharing in the DRC. In both cases, the efforts have yielded mediocre results due to the fragile nature of the countries in question.

Mediation is also crucial. Failure of South African mediation of conflicts such as those in Zimbabwe have serious implications in terms of the numbers of Zimbabweans entering SA and the social and security tensions engendered. The South African Police Service (SAPS) estimates that the number of illegal immigrants in SA is between 3 and 6 million (Mandrup, 2010: 9-10).

#### 3.3.1 Intra-African measures (Beyond SADC)

Important intra-African steps have been backed by South Africa to address the root causes of conflict. A good example is the Kimberley Process that aims at certifying diamonds that are otherwise used to fuel conflicts especially within the Great Lakes Region and in West Africa. SA was also active in the adoption of the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Lipton, 2009: 334). But it should be noted that its efforts in terms of prevention are often diluted because of its two face approaches used in some countries like Sudan where it avers publicly to be working for peace, while covertly supplying arms to the warring factions (Lipton, 2009: 335).

In the realm of democracy promotion in Côte d'Ivoire SA made a committed effort through the mediation efforts of President Mbeki to have a negotiated peace settlement in the stalemate that had resulted in the country's presidential elections that pitted Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. The level of success in this effort was mitigated mindful that SA was perceived as being in favour of Gbagbo. In the area of disarmament including non-proliferation SA has been a leading nation in nuclear non-proliferation and actually gave up its nuclear program forfeiting its aspirations to become a nuclear power. This realm of disarmament is actually one of the areas regarded as a niche for which SA's diplomacy could be of real added value (Spies, 2010a: 87).

Its mediation push in the case of Libya was less successful and amounted to an exhibition of diplomatic inconsistency. On the one hand it made efforts to join forces within the African Union to mediate a peaceful outcome in the crisis that pitted Gaddafi and the rebels. Before Zuma could make any negotiation in-roads, NATO forces had started to enforce the no-fly zone that SA actually backed within the UN Security Council. In this case again SA was competing within Africa for a leading role but was outpaced by NATO.

### ***3.4 Protection: Terrorism, organized crime and pandemics***

#### **3.4.1 Intra-SADC initiatives**

Within SADC SA has pushed for many initiatives to address aspects of protection including trans-boundary cooperation of police forces in addressing crimes such as drug trafficking. SADC has a protocol on illicit drug trafficking (signed in 1996 in Maseru) that aims at reducing demand for drugs in the region and also at discouraging the use of the region as a conduit through which contraband substances are transported or distributed. Broader issues relating to terrorism do not directly affect SADC countries as they do in West Africa and increasingly in East Africa. But it is arguable that the Southern African region is not entirely immune from the scourge of terrorism.

On pandemics South Africa has had a more mixed story to tell. The country suffers acutely from the aids pandemic. Initially leadership in SA did not provide a realistic vision of how to address the problem which President Mbeki for one considered an issue of poverty. Under President Zuma the approach has shifted and the health minister has adopted a more aggressive posture on the matter. Within SADC SA was the country that coordinated aspects of health before the 2001 institutional reforms that led to a centralization of the services of the organization. At the time SA was in a position to be a strong leader on the issue of addressing pandemics. However the approach of the government within its own borders sent very mixed signals to neighbouring countries affected by aids and that looked up to SA for leadership on the issue.

#### **3.4.2 Intra-African measures (Beyond SADC)**

At the continental level SA has limits in terms of what it can do in the various regions. Respecting the challenge of terrorism that is a serious problem in Nigeria, Somalia and now in Kenya, there is still a patent gap at the regional level in terms of a collective response to the problem. This could be attributed to the fact that the nature of the challenge of terrorism varies from one country to the next. Another issue where there is a vacuum in terms of response at the continental level is that of organized crime including piracy and trafficking in illegal drugs. Piracy has become a growing challenge for the Horn as well as for the Gulf of Guinea. These are issues that SA cannot be able to address because its leadership would be contested if it desired to engage with Nigeria or Kenya to address the problem. In a sense this shows that on such crucial issues SA has limits to its margin of action due to the fact that other anchor states such as Nigeria and Kenya would resist direction from SA on addressing such matters. Another big security problem is that of organized crime as SA has become a transshipment hub for illicit drugs (Mandrup, 2010: 15). Given that part of the problem is linked to West African organized groups operating in SA, it would make more sense for SA to work closely with Nigeria on how to address this problem. These groups are at times led by individuals with strong connections in Latin American countries like Colombia and Peru (Shaw, 2002: 313).

## **4. Assessment: Burden sharing, free riding or competition?**

SA like Nigeria in West Africa matters (Huntington, 1999: 36). The analysis above shows that on all the four pointers when collated against the elements or dimensions/levels of engagement, there is more

evidence that in all the examples discussed, SA has exhibited traits of being more of a burden sharer rather than a free rider. There have also been instances of competition especially on compellence. What is clear is that SA cannot simply lord on African countries to follow its edicts. Many African countries do not see SA as their chosen voice in those international exclusive groups and forums where SA makes claims as the representative of Africa (Bohler-Muller, 2013: 370). Competing states such as Nigeria and Angola tend to look at today's SA as a pawn of Western imperialism and smaller states tend to look at it as a hegemon (Lipton, 2009: 333). In any event SA is an object of envy for many African states (Qobo, 2009: 51).

What can be deduced from the preceding part is that what SA does in Africa in terms of compellence is marginal. This could be attributed to the problem of perception and what is expected of SA from outside actors. In a way this expectation has been nurtured and propped by some elements of the South African society. Political leaders especially under the Mbeki presidency were keen that SA should not only be a normative beacon in Africa but that it should also speak at the table of global high politics. Under Zuma this is increasingly manifested by a predilection for involvement in club diplomacy (Spies, 2010: 288). In a sense there is the view that to be a more credible partner SA also has to show that its wherewithal goes well beyond advocacy for multilateral institutions and norms and that it can also exercise military leadership in Africa. The only problem with this approach is that followers are not always going to band waggon and importantly there tends to be very little buy in by South Africans for external military adventurism because they do not see any links between these external adventures and their mammoth daily challenges. This is tenable for SA's involvement in both within and beyond SADC. It has been an active player in building the African Peace and Security Architecture but the recent forfeiture of its contributions to the continental body is likely to have a negative fallout on the AU's security outreach efforts.

In terms of the other aspects of security governance including assurance, prevention and protection, SA has played an important role in shaping the agenda especially within the African Union. Within SADC this is less so mindful that it is directly challenged in its efforts by countries such as Angola that has become more assertive given its new found promise as a major oil exporter in Africa. In terms of the overall strategy there is no evidence yet that SA free rides. There is evidence of burden sharing in protection and prevention with external or non-African actors. In terms of compellence there has been a strong bent toward competition with countries such as Zimbabwe (Qobo, 2009: 56) for intra-SADC causes and with the likes of France for intra-African initiatives.

## **5. Conclusion**

After 20 years of experimenting with democracy there is much to celebrate in SA. The political freedom secured for the majority of the population has been vital. However it appears that the gains in freedom are still to be translated into true and effective external political and security leverage. This leads one to ask: is SA a rudderless or marginal leader in African security governance? One of the main problems that Pretoria is saddled with is the enormous weight of the expectations that rest on SA (Sidiropoulos, 2008: 108). There is a strong temptation to state that given the humiliation SA experienced in CAR and to a limited extent in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire that it has become a spineless leader that only seeks to use its history and reputation (as a gateway to Africa) to get a foothold within exclusive clubs such as the political BRICs. This cynical but pragmatic interpretation would mean that SA is a calculating hegemon with a loud bark but febrile bite. But a closer and more nuanced look at the other aspects of security governance suggests a more measured rendition. Even if it has recorded mitigated results on compellence SA has had an impact on Africa's security governance especially in the realm of protection where it has shared the burden of security governance both with African and non-African partners.

From the foregoing one can conclude that SA's leadership in African security governance has been important in few examples. However the overall picture and consequences at the continental level of

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SA's actions have been marginal. This assessment is largely explained by the fact that the country is grappling with critical domestic challenges that only contribute to obviate SA's influence in Africa's security governance. For it to make true claim to leadership in Africa's security governance, it needs followers. It is hitherto unclear whether it can boast of untainted and faithful acolytes.

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