

MILITARY AND SECURITY EDUCATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT NETWORK

*Gavin Cawthra (Previously Wits School of
Governance)²⁸⁵*

Abstract

This article first summarises approaches to military and security education at tertiary levels for officers and senior security officials, identifying some institutional and conceptual issues, before moving on to a fairly detailed case study of the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM). In its institutional form, from 2000 to 2010, SADSEM was a unique experiment in building a regional network of universities providing training and education in security studies, promoting regional security co-operation and integration and working closely with security forces and governments in the Southern African region. Although it mostly worked in English, it also carried out education and research in French and Portuguese, established an institutional base in ten Southern African Development Community (SADC) nations and delivered programmes in all the then 15 of them. Its activities included providing training and education for defence and security management, civil-military relations, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, policy support and the building of scholarly capacity through regional co-operation. Today SADSEM activities are restricted mainly to an annual security review conference, but its real legacy is in the institutions and capacities it built within several Southern African countries, although not all survive. SADSEM kept a low profile because of extreme sensitivities in Southern Africa around security issues, and this is the first attempt to examine its experience in the context of higher-level security education and training.

A note on methodology

Much of this article consists of a somewhat phenomenological reflection based on the author's forty years in security studies, security education, policy support and capacity building in Africa. Where necessary or possible it is supported by documentary references. The SADSEM files are not publicly available but can be accessed via the author.

Introduction

Around the world militaries increasingly expose their officers to university environments and give them the chance to gain higher degrees, as do intelligence

agencies and to a much lesser extent police services. Partly this is to make them better practitioners, partly to help with retention, since they will have a recognised qualification – usually funded by the state - after they leave, which often is at a relatively early age. Many jobs into which military and security officers might go (especially in international organisations) now require a master's degree to progress beyond a certain level. In any event modern military and security operations require much more than training in traditional martial skills.

Military and police officers are also increasingly involved in international peacekeeping²⁸⁶ (especially cases mandated by the UN), which is especially political and complex. The skills and knowledge required at the higher levels require an understanding of international relations, the global security system, politics, social analysis, ethnography, management, conflict resolution and much else. All UN and regional peacekeeping operations require both political and military expertise, interaction between civilians and the military and hence an understanding by military officers and senior security officials of international, regional and local governance issues, at the very least.

Peace missions may be a special case, but more broadly in modern democracies, military leaders need to understand wider issues, especially policy, finances and budgets, civil-military relations, international relations and management. These issues will be dealt with in more detail later.

It may be argued that the skills listed above are only relevant in times of peace or in non-operational contexts. But security forces are usually, perhaps always, deployed in response to problems – and problem-solving requires high intellectual capabilities. Moreover, war is arguably one of the most complex of human endeavours, and one of the most unpredictable. Staff planning and strategy cannot be a substitute for thinking oneself out of the 'fog of war' (to use Clausewitz's famous phrase). Flexibility and nimbleness of thought are equally as necessary at senior military level as traditional qualities of bravery (and ruthlessness), discipline, loyalty and logistical competence.

Education of course does not necessarily translate into military success. The US has one of the most educated officer corps in the world – 82.8 per cent of officers had at least a bachelor's degree in 2010²⁸⁷ – but the US military's record in recent wars is not very convincing. What is probably more important is not education itself, but the type of education given, which should lead to a critical-thinking capability and an understanding of the social and political context in which any conflict is taking place.

Approaches to security education²⁸⁸

There are a number of models for the education of senior officers and security officials around the world. This research focuses on education and makes a distinction between education and training. Some professions, such as medicine and engineering, do not necessarily recognise this difference, and indeed the dividing line between the two is not always clear. It is said that 'training is for certainty whilst education is for uncertainty'.²⁸⁹ In the early 1990s, when sex education was being introduced into

South African schools, a senior officer from the old South African Defence Force perhaps but it best, when he told me that he didn't mind his kids undergoing sex education but he would most certainly object to sex training!

At higher levels of education, whatever organisational models are used, it is generally the case throughout the world that recognised civilian experts, drawn from the academy or civil society, are used alongside qualified military personnel to deliver certain subjects or topics. This is mainly because the competencies involved require a mastery of conceptual and methodological approaches, complementing operational competencies. Also, uniformed personnel do not – and probably should not – make full-time careers in the academy.

Higher education for military officers often takes place at staff colleges, but as Last et al have pointed out in this journal many if not most of these are not 'university-like' which requires that they offer bachelor's and master's-level degrees, backed by research and publications.²⁹⁰ Globally, only about 20 per cent of military colleges fit into this category, and only seven per cent of police colleges. Police training is usually just that, training not education (in countries with a gendarmerie they tend to occupy a middle ground between military education and police training). It is unclear why the police lag so far behind the military in this regard, when intuitively one would assume that because police are more integrated with civilian life they would be better placed to pursue higher education.²⁹¹

Another option for educating officers in the security services is to offer graduate or post-graduate degrees awarded by universities (which may be delivered through military colleges or at university campuses). Existing degrees in management or policy or international relations, for example, can be used or adapted to military and security service requirements. This option is increasingly common, at least in countries where the requisites are available within existing national or local (and sometimes private) university curricula.

Universities have a mandate to issue degrees, which are usually legitimate if not always credible. Many national or local universities may have the essential administrative and academic capability to award their own degrees appropriate for an officer corps, sometimes in cooperation with a military academy. This is the case in Sudan and Rwanda. In many other cases, military academies or similar institutions issue degrees, as in India and Pakistan, using both civilian and military lecturers (Mukerjee 2017). In the dying days of Robert Mugabe's presidency, Zimbabwe's parliament went further, approving the establishment of a 'military university' (to be named after the president). But the resources for this were completely lacking (personal correspondence with Centre for Defence Studies).

In Europe and the US, dozens of non-military universities offer degrees in security studies, military studies or related issues, many of which are targeted in part at senior security practitioners. No doubt the universities have their own institutional and financial interests in this market – and in most of the world tertiary institutions are increasingly market-oriented.

There is another important factor that has enabled civilian tertiary institutions to deal with security issues. Approaches to security have been broadened since the end of the Cold War and military officers have to engage with a wide range of issues related to the widening of concepts of security (social, economic, political, environmental). While it is not primarily their job, they also have to understand the discourse around human security which underpins the security policies of many states these days (in which the referent level and the priority for security is not the state but people). These of course are issues traditionally more the provenance of civilian than military experts.

A somewhat older discipline, that of peace studies (for example as offered at Bradford University and the UN University of Peace in Hiroshima) has also gradually become more elided with security studies.

Strategic studies, once defined rather narrowly as ‘the use of force within and between states’ (Buzan 1983:3) and somewhat fixated (understandably during the Cold War) on nuclear warfare has developed an expanded mandate (including ‘terrorism studies’, now a field in its own right with literally hundreds of books having been written since 9/11).

All these disciplines are increasingly interrelated and overlap. This has led if not to confusion, at least to diffusion within the academy. It is entirely possible to study the same security-related issues for degrees with widely diverging nomenclature (ranging from war studies to peace studies).

A internet search will throw up options for masters qualifications such as a ‘masters in international security studies’ (universities in Italy and the Czech republic), ‘defence, security and crisis management’ (France) ‘diplomacy and international security’ (Lebanon), ‘strategic and arms control studies’ (Russia), ‘military studies’ and ‘defence and security management (South Africa) and so on. Further, these qualifications fall under a range of different faculties and schools – law, management, politics, international relations, economics, social studies to name just a few.

Some of the degrees are co-accredited by two or more universities and programmes are shared. Another option - used in Ethiopia, for example - is to “buy in” (usually with donor money) a complete master’s degree, from a university in a ‘donor country’, which offers what is regarded as a suitable curriculum. In principle, the idea in many countries seems to be to build indigenous academic expertise, so that in time courses can be run by a local university issuing its own qualifications. This has happened in Indonesia and remains an aspiration in Lebanon (Chuter 2016).

Add to this the large number of military academies, which usually fall directly under ministries of defence or the armed forces, and it clear that the opportunities of higher education in fields directly relevant for senior officers and senior police and intelligence forces are extremely wide. Usually such academies pitch at colonel or brigadier level at an inter-service level and are aimed at educating aspirant generals. At a lower level (usually major) many, if most, countries have institutions typically called war colleges or command and staff colleges. These tend towards training at the

operational level but may also have some strategic foci and ‘are the first place we find curricula routinely requiring critical thought, reading, research and problem solving beyond tactical military situations’.²⁹²

Africa

South Africa by far leads the way in terms of tertiary-level security education. Many of the options discussed above have been implemented for some time: a war college, a defence college and a military academy run by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and in the case of the military academy, accreditation and research and teaching support from the University of Stellenbosch, leading to a Bachelor of Military Science (BMil). Security related degrees are also available at other state-established universities, notably the University of Pretoria (strategic studies).

Elsewhere in Africa, the only countries with anything approaching this academic wealth are Kenya and Nigeria.²⁹³ The South African Military Academy in Saldanha Bay, the Nigerian one in Kaduna and the Kenyan one in Nakuru all offer degrees accredited by universities in their respective countries and teach in English with a combination of uniformed and civilian lecturers.

In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, staff colleges and military academies are increasingly supplemented by peacekeeping training centres, which, although they do not usually offer degrees do include, at least on their flagship programmes, the kind of self-directed learning characterised by reading, critical thinking and sometimes research. The key institutions in Africa are the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare (which is somewhat moribund), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, the Peacekeeping Training Centre in Pretoria and the International Peace Support Training Centre in Nairobi. All of these teach in English.

Regional and international co-operation

On the most senior national officer education courses, at military academies and universities, learning places are made available for participants from other countries – sometimes only for allies or regional partners or countries perceived to be ‘neutral’ or non-threatening, sometimes more widely. In universities, these are often made open to any applicants, whatever their institutional or national affiliations; in defence colleges or other state-controlled institutions it is usually by invitation only.

Although there is some inter-service co-operation between universities and academies in different countries, this is normally on the basis of a functional division of labour and specialisation. What is less usual, in fact surprisingly lacking, is the construction of a consciously regional approach to converge or harmonise the education of senior security practitioners from various countries in a given inter-state region or trans-national security regime.²⁹⁴

Of course, major powers often offer their education and training programmes to allies (the US in Latin America, France in its former colonies, NATO in Eastern and Central Europe to note the most prominent recent examples) but this is not the same as building a regional capacity in which resources are shared and indigenised.

The most important global security co-operation regime (primarily of course a mutual defence arrangement) is NATO, but even here there is little coordination at higher education levels, except on bilateral bases. At least one proposal has been made to set up a NATO combined approach to professional military education, involving military academies in the various NATO member states and universities, with the aim of fostering 'an elite of officer-scholars' (Wilton Park 2013:1). This would entail the systematic linking of education, training and research, but it would need to take into account 'national cultural, political and ethical barriers' and would include distance education and massively open online courses (MOOC). This proposal seems to be aspirational and will in any case take some time to implement even if the modalities can be agreed, not least because NATO countries have cut expenditure on military education by 30 per cent in the five years following the economic crisis of 2008.²⁹⁵

The case of the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM)²⁹⁶

In the context of this background, this paper now turns to the case study of the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network, a security educational initiative that eventually linked all the then 15 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), mainly through national universities. This appears to a fairly unique case although it has not attracted much, if any, academic attention in that it worked mostly behind the scenes given the sensitivities of Southern African governments around security issues, particularly if foreign donors are involved. SADSEM was based on universities but worked closely with national security structures, focused on indigenous knowledge, developed common regional curricula, operated in three former colonial languages, and was linked to the SADC regional security co-operation and integration project. It did not reach its full potential. In the words of Andre du Pisani 'SADSEM was a visionary and all-too-rare epistemic network that did not quite flower into an epistemic community'.²⁹⁷

International influences

In 1993, when the SADSEM project had its genesis, South Africa - indeed the whole Southern African region - was on the cusp of profound change. This affected defence policy and the armed forces as much as anything else. The almost simultaneous end of apartheid and the end of the Cold War necessitated and resulted in a security sector transformation or reform (SSR) process, a reconfiguration of military and security education, civil control of the military and a strengthening of regional security collaboration. It also required a that a new approach - a new paradigm - was developed to replace the militaristic 'total strategy' of the apartheid regime and to lay the basis for collaborative regional security. This was found in the 'widened security' of Barry Buzan and in the human security of the UN Development Programme.²⁹⁸

Although it was home grown, the South African transformation experience was affected by international influences – ‘widened security’ and human security in particular. Somewhat later this was supplemented by the raft of issues which the UK in particular promoted as Security Sector Reform (SSR), amounting in effect to ‘good governance’ for the security sector. The SSR concept was promoted vigorously through educational, policy and research agendas, initially in Eastern and Central Europe and later in Africa. SSR had political objectives and was strongly underpinned by ideological assumptions, but at the time it was mostly accepted not only as a normative agenda, but also as a universal and rational one.

There was a high level of co-operation between the European post-Cold War and Southern African post-apartheid initiatives. Although there were major differences in approach, ideology and ways of working, the fact that most of Southern Africa inherited, for better or worse, British-style institutions and approaches to the management of security made exchanges of views with UK scholars and practitioners fairly easy. (The ministries of defence in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa are modelled on those of the UK). There were extensive intellectual exchanges between Southern African and UK scholars in the early 1990s, and these continue. Furthermore, the South African military education system was increasingly evolving along the lines of that in the UK (albeit with a different content). A British advisory team still remains at South Africa’s peacekeeping training centre.

From the outset, SADSEM was primarily funded by the Danish government, and this also provided for intellectual exchanges between Danish and Southern African scholars and practitioners. SADSEM scholars and practitioners paid a number of visits to the UK and Denmark to study security management institutions there and security education approaches. SADSEM also made early contact with scholars working on security elsewhere in Africa, which became an important influence.

Above all, SADSEM sought to develop an indigenous capacity for security scholarship and practice, first in South Africa, then in the Southern African region and to some extent elsewhere in the continent. I will trace how this evolved (usually organically), before turning to a consideration of SADSEM’s programmes, projects and achievements and then considering its limitations and limited legacies.

Origins and institutional architecture

SADSEM had its origins in the South African transformation process. Specifically a need was identified to train and educate a cadre of both civilians and military officers to staff a new ministry of defence and to ensure civil control and oversight of the military.

An ANC-aligned group exploring post-apartheid security policy, the Military Research Group, raised funds from the Danish government for this purpose and training programme was set up at a new public management school, the School of Public and Development Management, modelled as a miniature version of the Kennedy School at Harvard.

In practice this programme became an important locus for developing a new ethos for the new national defence force and oiled the cogs of integration between seven disparate armed formations that came to constitute the South African National Defence force (SANDF).

The programme initially focused on civil-military-relations but also promoted new conceptual approaches to security and explored regional security options, carrying out amongst other things a comparative international survey of regional security arrangements such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, ASEAN, ECOWAS and the Gulf Co-operation Council.

It was realised that civil control of the military was also a challenge in other Southern African countries that were transitioning from war to peace, from one party to multiparty systems or from nominally command economies to market driven ones. Further, it was thought that the conceptual frameworks developed by the programme could contribute to the evolution of co-operative security in the region.

From the outset, the organisers were determined that work in Southern Africa should be carried out on the basis of institutional partnerships between universities, and that this needed to be done incrementally and be linked to capacity building. The reality was that as result of state centric securitisation in the region, outside of South Africa and Zimbabwe and possibly Namibia, academics and civil society had been almost completely excluded from dealing with security issues ... and many security practitioners had an anti-intellectual bent.

It was thus necessary to build capacity with the academy by re-tooling established academics to enable them to engage with security issues, as well as building a new generation of security scholars and empowering security officers to deal with academic issues. This is dealt with later.

To ensure effective communication with governments and the relevance of the programme, an advisory structure was set up, consisting of representatives of all the SADC governments, military officers, national security advisors, ministers, secretaries for defence and the like. It would be unfair to say that SADSMM did not take this structure seriously, after all it was essential to its functions, but in reality it offered little in terms of ideas but much in bureaucracy.

How was the network set up? Not easily. Snowballing helped. Identification of partners was a complex process, involving individuals and institutions. Individuals were usually identified as those who had sufficient academic and political credibility and had engaged, however peripherally, with security issues. But they had to have the ability to take their institutions with them. These transformative individuals came from various academic traditions: political studies, governance, public administration, history. The historians proved to be most insightful. (The author is convinced that history and geopolitics is the key to understanding security rather than the disciplines of political studies and international relations, but that is another matter.)

Over the years this interaction between individual academics, their institutions and the national security services, resulted in the network.²⁹⁹ A kind of ‘variable geometry’ developed, in that there was no uniformity between the partners, some of which were university departments, some semi-NGOs³⁰⁰, some programmes, going by different names ranging from strategic studies, through peace studies to defence studies. The partners met at quarterly steering committee meetings hosted by partners in-country on a rotational basis and chaired by the hosting partner. This ensured common ownership and worked well – all decisions were taken by consensus after the usual lobbying and not once was a vote required. Funds were allocated on an equitable basis and all partners presented narrative and audited financial reports to the Steering Committee. The whole structure and its programmes were supported by a small permanent secretariat at the Centre for Defence Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, which also acted as the nodal point for interaction with donors and the receipt and distribution of funds.

SADSEM was determined that the network would not be one of individuals but of institutions. Further, it had to be linked to governments, regional structures such as SADC and the African Union. As time went on SADSEM assisted in the construction of the African Security Sector Network (ASSN), which was intended to be a ‘network of networks’ in that similar structures to SADSEM would be set up through Africa, or at least in West and East Africa, and the Horn. This is another story since it became very difficult to realise, but it was part of ‘master plan’ (if one can swallow such a concept) between the SADSEM leaders and those from West, East and the Horn. Relations with the African Union were mainly ad-hoc and pursued through policy conferences, workshops and personal consultancies.

Training

One of the key activities of SADSEM was what might be considered as ‘in-service’ training. Short executive courses, usually of five day’s duration, were delivered in-country, usually entirely for nationals from the country concerned, which aided in free exchanges. Lecturers, however, were drawn from throughout the SADSEM network since there was seldom capacity in any given country to cover all the topics required.

These executive programmes were of various types (which evolved over time and according to demand): Defence and Security Management, Managing Multi-National Peace Missions, Parliamentary Oversight of Defence (for parliamentarians as well as military and police officers), Civil-Military Relations and Security Sector Governance (which was essentially about Security Sector Reform but the term ‘reform’ was disliked by some countries who associated it with a Western agenda).

Whatever the type of course, attendees were always a mix of uniformed personnel (armed forces, police and prisons), government officials (including intelligence officers and parliamentarians), academics and civil society leaders. This was a deliberate effort to break down the ‘silos’ of security and develop a national discourse on security. In evaluations, participants usually remarked that the composition of the participants was just as important as the content, as in many countries such interactions had never occurred.

Curricula were developed by the network as a whole at regular workshops with inputs from academics and practitioners alike. Programmes were fairly standardised but with provision made for national issues and some flexibility: core modules were mixed with optional modules chosen by the organisers according to national requirements.

Of course, quite extensive preparation was required, usually done by the host partner using a set of 'Standard Operating Procedures' developed by the network and involving the identification of participants, lining up the facilitators, making arrangements for funding and payments (keeping per diems to an absolute minimum!), finding a university, government or private venue etc. Funding for courses was set at a standard rate as long as 30 participants were enrolled but quite often these funds were supplemented (often in kind) by relevant government departments, and attendance at some courses reached over 70.

Decisions as to which courses would be run, where and when were taken by the Steering Committee by consensus. As time went on, a tendency developed to run programmes outside of the national capitals, to reach provincial officials, to 'take people away from their offices' and also to save costs.

Programmes were held in all 15 SADC countries but not evenly so: more courses were held in Zimbabwe, the DRC and Namibia for example and only a few in the Indian Ocean Islands (in part this was because of the size of the constituencies). Over the duration of the project over 100 executive courses were delivered with around 4 000 people trained, approximately half of whom were uniformed, a quarter from government a quarter from civil society.

Participants on the Executive Courses were not assessed and only certificates of attendance were issued. However, once a year, always in Johannesburg for cost reasons, a month-long certificate programme was held on one of the five 'types' (Peace Missions, Security Sector Governance etc). These were more intensive courses and usually involved simulation exercises, field visits, training in research, the use of libraries and the internet and so on. Students were assessed through exams, essays and group work.³⁰¹ Lectures were almost always in English but Portuguese and French interpretation was provided as well some material in those languages. International lecturers from SADSEM partners abroad were also used. The certificate was a flagship programme (and a rather expensive exercise given that only 50 students – usually from all of the SADC member states – could be accommodated).

There is a well-known debate in educational circles about the value of short courses. Generally the academic jury finds that such programmes add little value. Whilst they might contribute to individual advancement, they make little contribution to organisational progression. But it may be that in certain contexts, for example in countries emerging from repression or conflict, a certain 'switching on the light' or even epiphany might happen on such courses, particularly if they act not so much as information-giving exercises as information-sharing and confidence and trust-building ones.

This is reflected in the evaluations of the SADSEM executive courses, and especially the month-long certificate courses. With regard to the latter 96 per cent of participants felt that the programme had benefited them as an individual, 99 per cent thought that it ‘had enhanced my understanding and knowledge of defence and security management’, but most importantly 87 per cent agreed that the course had ‘helped improve the performance of my organisation’

In any case, by 2009 SADSEM had moved on from short-course delivery (although some of these continued) towards developing institutionalised post-graduate degree programmes in security. These will now be examined.

Education

From its inception, SADSEM had a vision of developing post-graduate degrees in security to be delivered across Southern Africa to contribute to the stabilisation of civil-military relations and the evolution of collaborative or even common security, on the basis of shared norms and epistemes.

The dream was to set up a common ‘masters degree in security’ that would be offered at several Southern African universities. In the flush of post-cold war regional integration, similar projects had been launched in Southern Africa in the fields of policy and political economy, for example (SAPES for example). All had failed, despite lavish donor support. The reasons for failure were manifold, but included the enormous costs of delivering conjoint programmes between universities, national sensibilities, personal ambitions, and the intractable bureaucratic problems in harmonising the accreditation criteria of disparate national universities.

So SADSEM settled on a long-term project to morph the short courses into a variety of security-related degrees at the universities which potentially had the capacity to deliver such programmes. This would constitute a cognate universe of post-graduate qualifications but not a centralised one. First off the blocks was the University of Zimbabwe, that had developed a post-graduate diploma and masters (and PhD) in war studies, modelled during the post-independence honeymoon with the UK on the programmes at King’s College, University of London. This predated SADSEM and was sustainable, producing compelling research and credible graduates.

In South Africa, there were (and still are) well-established, intellectually sound, degrees accredited by Stellenbosch University, in part through the Military Academy at Saldanha, as well as very sound offerings at the University of Pretoria. SADSEM should have made more to build on these, but there was some historic enmity between many of the other Southern African Universities and the Afrikaans universities, who were seen as promoters of South Africa’s destabilisation campaign against neighbouring countries. Despite well-intentioned efforts on both sides, this crack took a long time to seal.

The first real effort to amalgamate the intellectual products of the SADSEM short programmes into post-graduate degrees took place at the then Graduate School of Public and Development Management (now the School of Governance) at the University of the Witwatersrand. This was in part achieved by merging existing degrees in governance with the security ‘modules’ developed by SADSEM. After all, it was argued, in so far as possible defence and security should be governed in the same way as any other department of state – although the exceptions (secrecy and command-and-control for example) are important.

Thereafter, the Universities of Namibia, Mzuzu, Botswana, and Kinshasa³⁰² started to proffer post-graduate degrees in security studies (with different nomenclatures) based in large part on the curricula developed by SADSEM. No effort was made to harmonise curricula, although there were workshops (funded by the UK) to discuss common problems and also address issues of teaching and learning methodology, particularly in relation to hierarchical organisations.

The presumption is that these post-graduate initiatives will be sustainable, in large part because of the argument offered at the beginning of this article, that it is necessary for any modern officer corps (and their civilian equivalents) to be qualified and enabled to cope with twenty-first century security challenges. More prosaically, degrees are funded not usually by fickle donors, but by motivated students themselves (or by their employees, although if they fail they often have to pay back).

Research

In part to indigenise its curriculum and develop local cases studies, as well as to contribute to policy development (and help to advance the careers of SADSEM academics in line with the ‘publish or perish’ ethos of the academy) SADSEM initiated a international research projects. These took the form of multi-country consultations to develop agendas and research questions, to carry out field research and case studies and to calibrate the results. Several multi-country seminars and conferences on relevant issues were also arranged, as well as bi-lateral exchanges between countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Denmark. Topics were wide-ranging, often driven by policy challenges – terrorism, Indian Ocean security, conflict management for example. But some were broader and longer term, for example on civil-military relations in Africa, or security and development in the continent. In addition, academics and (quite often practitioners) attached to SADSEM carried out their own individual research. The resulting output of these activities was several books, book chapters, conferences papers and the like – well over 200 academic products (for an almost complete list, at least until 2008, see CMI).³⁰³

Scholarships and internships

As part of the process of ‘re-tooling’ academics to deal with security issues, the academic capacities of uniformed and civilian senior officials in government, and to produce a ‘new generation’ of security experts in the region, SADSEM administered

– through its Steering Committee – a limited scholarship programme and was also able to access international scholarships. Efforts were made in particular to enrol very senior officials in study programmes (these were not usually successful as candidates tended to be recalled by their governments) but through-put for younger scholars was more successful. Potential students were also sent on short-course diploma or certificate programmes. In all cases, scholarships were not tenable overseas (in part due to costs but also for political reasons) but were redeemable at Southern African institutions.

While the results were at best mixed (and the resources available very limited), nevertheless something of a ‘new generation’ of researchers evolved, and many recipients of such scholarships went on to lecture on SADSEM programmes.

Policy development

Foreign donors are understandably keen to argue that their interventions lead to policy change, but this is almost impossible to prove. Even a well-thought-out policy document with apparent buy-in by policy actors will not necessarily lead to any behavioural change. SADSEM did play a fairly prominent role in crafting national and multi-governmental policies on security in Southern Africa – national white papers on defence, policing, intelligence, border protection and the like. It also contributed to SADC wide policies on defence and security-cooperation, maritime security, parliamentary co-operation, conflict resolution and so on, always in co-operation with governments and sometimes with other organisations. Individual members also played quite important roles in some of the conflict resolution issues (Lesotho, Madagascar, DRC). But it would be impossible to claim that these interventions led to either positive or negative outcomes. At best, it can be conjectured that the network’s insistence on building sound civil-military relations and in bringing together civilians and military personnel in confidence-building exercises may have dampened enthusiasm for military coups in South Africa (successful ones of which have been absent in Southern Africa except in the pathological case of Lesotho and the ‘coup-that-was-not-a-coup’ in Harare in 2017).

Relations with SADC’s formal inter-governmental structures were also always rather fraught. Of all the sub-regional security co-operation organisations in Africa SADC is perhaps the most averse to non-state (or non-member state) interventions. Perhaps this is because the memory of colonialism is so recent and that sovereignty in so many countries was very hard-earned as a result of the violent struggles against settler colonialism. More than once it was put to me by senior officers from Angola or Zimbabwe that the imperialists aimed to win back through politics what they had lost on the battlefield. On the whole SADC refused to accept donor funding for security programmes or for its security structure, the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. This made it very difficult for SADSEM to officially partner with SADC on the basis of joint programmes.

This problem was perhaps best (although somewhat obliquely) diagnosed in the major evaluation of SADSEM carried out by the Norwegian-based Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) in 2009:

- A first observation is that the level of donor-funding allocated to or through SADC and the Organ directorate in Gaborone remains very small. It is mainly provided by
- Germany which provides funding for technical advisors in the Secretariat ...
- The reasons for the small amount of funding going through SADC has mainly to do with SADC's refusal to accept such funding in this area [security] as well as limited ability to absorb such support ...
- A second observation is that donors generally have much more funding available for SADC and intergovernmental organisations, but they are currently unable to disperse it.
- A third observation is that it may be more difficult to ensure aid effectiveness in external funding to the peace and security sector compared to other thematic areas.³⁰⁴

Although diplomatically coded, the picture is clear and this inevitably placed a limit on SADSEM (as a largely donor-funded body) from fully evolving its relationship with SADC, despite the existence of formal memoranda of understanding and the like. A closer relationship was developed between SADSEM and the SADC Parliamentary Forum, but the latter was a toothless body which the SADC heads of state ignored.

Assessment

As can be seen from this account, SADSEM was quite a unique experiment in constructing a security training, educational and research regime build on universities but working with governments and security establishments. It was overtly normative but sought always to develop indigenous capacities and to take account of local conditions and possibilities.

In the end it did not achieve full maturity (in part for reasons expounded in the section above and when (rather generous) donor funding started to evaporate after the global financial crisis of 2008, the network was much reduced. Large parts of it survived, however, mainly because it had been built through institutions not individuals, and had achieved sustainability through academic programmes. In at least five of original core ten member countries, institutions and programmes remained active at the time of writing and the network still carried out a limited number of activities across the whole region (including the research and production of an *Annual Southern African Security Review* linked to a regional conference).

Du Pisani has argued that high levels of trust were built in a most difficult field and that SADSEM succeeded 'to the degree that it was able to marshal meaningful political, normative, intellectual and institutional capacities'. It further demonstrated

something that some might disagree with, ‘that the best form of scholarship is networked and based on collaborative works’.³⁰⁵

There was a window of opportunity in South Africa that allowed this – transitions from war to peace, from authoritarianism to democracy and from command to market economies, as well as an existing security complex based on a hegemonic power coming to peace with itself– an environment that may be difficult to find again.

Key informants over the years (the views here are of course the author’s alone)

Coelho, J-P. (Professor, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique)

Du Pisani, A. (Professor, University of Namibia)

Fisher, L. (Former Chief of Defence, Botswana)

Luhango, J. (Senior Lecturer, Mzuzu University, Malawi)

Macaringue, P. (Former Chief of Defence, High Commissioner to South Africa, Mozambique)

Molomo, M. (Professor, University of Botswana)

Phiri, B. (Professor, University of Zambia)

Van Nieuwkerk, A. (Professor, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)

Endnotes

²⁸⁵ Professor Gavin Cawthra researched this article while he was Chair in Defence and Security Management at the Wits School of Government, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He now works as an independent consultant. gavincawthra548@gmail.com

²⁸⁶ Peacekeeping terminology varies, but the term (alternatively ‘peace missions’) includes a wide range of activities including military stabilisation and post-conflict peacebuilding. All such operations are multinational and usually involve military, policing and civilian activities, whether mandated by the UN or carried out by ‘coalitions of the willing’.

²⁸⁷ *3 Huffington Post* 11/09/2012

²⁸⁸ I am grateful to David Chuter for his insights into these issues and in particular for a seminar on this topic that he delivered at the Wits School of Governance in 2016.

²⁸⁹ Wilton Park. ‘Connected Forces, Educated Minds: Transformation and Professional Education’ Conference 13-15 May 2013.

²⁹⁰ Last, D., Melifeonwu, D., Osemwegie, L. ‘Security Education in Africa: Patterns and Prospects’, *Scientia Militaria* 43(1), pp 17-44.

- ²⁹¹ A possible answer lies in the relative privileging of the military over the police in the security hierarchy in most societies, but this will need further exploration. It should also be noted that in most countries the air force tends to be better educated than the navy, and the navy than the army. This may be due to the relative levels of sophisticated technology used in the various arms of service.
- ²⁹² *Op Cit* p 23.
- ²⁹³ *Op Cit*.
- ²⁹⁴ The term ‘region’ is used in different ways, but here it refers to interstate organisations set up for multidimensional or security regions in line with Chapter VIII of the UN charter. These may operate on a continental level like the African Union or a ‘sub-regional’ level like the Southern African Development Community.
- ²⁹⁵ Wilton Park. *Op Cit*. p 2.
- ²⁹⁶ Much of the material in this section is drawn from reports to donors, evaluations, minutes of SADSEM meeting and interviews with SADSEM personnel, as well as the author’s personal experience (he was the founder of the network and co-ordinated it until the end of 2008). Referencing has therefore been kept to a minimum.
- ²⁹⁷ Du Pisani, A. ‘SADSEM: History of the Network and its Role in the Current Setting’, *Annual Regional Security Dialogue*. Maputo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (unpublished). 2017.
- ²⁹⁸ Buzan, B. *People, States and Fear*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1981.
- ²⁹⁹ At its peak, the network consisted of *Centro de Estudos Estrategicos de Angola*, the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Botswana, the *Chaire UNESCO* (Chair in Peace Security and Good Governance) the University of Kinshasa in the DRC, the Centre for Security Studies at Mzuzu University in Malawi, the Centre for African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Namibia, the Centre for Defence and Security Management at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, the Centre for Foreign Relations in Tanzania, the Department of History at the University of Zambia and the Centre for Defence Studies at the University of Zimbabwe.
- ³⁰⁰ ‘Semi’ in the sense that they were not entirely autonomous of governments and were partly funded by them.
- ³⁰¹ It is not clear what this signifies, but in assessments the contingents from Mauritius and Zimbabwe were invariably amongst the top 5 or 10 students, and those from South Africa and Namibia in the bottom 5 or 10. The highest-marked student was always from Mauritius or Zimbabwe, except once when the top student was from the Seychelles. As the Mozambican and Angolan students wrote and were assessed in Portuguese or French, and therefore had to be assessed by a different set of lecturers, it is difficult to include them in this comparison.

- ³⁰² Kinshasa was perhaps the last place one would expect to find academically sound, conceptually dense, non-partisan, up-to-date examples of security studies. The author spent more than a day with post-graduate students (all dressed in shirt-and-tie and all male) reviewing at least a dozen masters proposals or semi-complete theses which exhibited all of the above attributes, as well as a profound understanding of Congolese particularities.
- ³⁰³ Christian Michelsen Institute. *Promoting Defence Management and Security Sector Reform in Southern Africa: An Assessment of SADSEM's Achievements, Impacts and Future Challenges*. Bergen: CMI 2009.
- ³⁰⁴ Christian Michelsen Institute. *Op Cit*. pp 56-57.
- ³⁰⁵ Du Pisani. *Op Cit*. p 12.