Is Quiet Diplomacy in Consonance with Meaningful Peacemaking in SADC? Lessons from Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Peace is one of the most contested research agendas in security studies. In recent times, proactive efforts towards peace have been epitomized by a peacemaking agenda that has been seen to be regional and home-grown in its approach. The experience in Africa indicates that the continent has been progressively advancing conflict resolution approaches which have been generally characterised by the logic of solidarity and respect of sovereignty. But at the heart of this daunting task lies the question of leadership and interests, which keep haunting comprehensive peace efforts of the continent. Southern Africa has been looking to South Africa as a pacesetter in SADC's peace agenda yet its efforts towards peacemaking seem to be encapsulated within a rather naive approach of quiet diplomacy. Hence, this paper argues that by accommodating the quiet diplomacy approach in the resolution of regional conflicts, SADC may be jeopardising its own commitment to peace and security, making it subject to capture by powerful interests. And the tendency to tolerate impunity on the basis of gradual reforms further shows the weakness of the approach as a credible peacemaking strategy. This paper draws lessons from the mediation efforts of South Africa in the Zimbabwe crisis.

Introduction

The post-Cold War context of African peacemaking has been characterized by a conviction that the continent needs more locally relevant approaches to peace. The 'African solutions to African problems' slogan frequently resonates with regional as well as continental peace and security frameworks whose rationale is that African leaders must take their destinies into their own hands by creating for themselves peace and human solidarity (Graham 2006). The hope is to have a peacemaking agenda that would deal with the underlying causes of conflict without recourse to threats on the mandate of incumbent African governments. In the southern African region, the question of Zimbabwe has proved to be an important test case for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in its peacemaking efforts, considering the fact that the crisis erupted at such a time when Zimbabwe was chairing the SADC Organ for Defence and Security Cooperation, and was apparently at the helm of the resolution of conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1998. And with simultaneous developments at home jeopardising political stability, the credibility of Zimbabwe as chair of the Organ came under

international scrutiny and criticism, further undermining the integrity of the region's conflict resolution.

The background of the situation in Zimbabwe dates back to the late 1990s when the country began experiencing a conundrum of political and economic problems that have been centred on the unresolved question of land. The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1998 further contributed to the shake-up in the country's political space as it raised prospects for a more democratic government that would guarantee equality and justice in the distribution of the country's resources. Hence, to safeguard its interests, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) used the issue of land as a tool for garnering support, but also as a weapon for disciplining any form of dissent. This led to state repression which necessitated the intervention of the international community through smart sanctions on the Mugabe regime on the pretext that the he tolerated a rampage by war veterans on white-owned farms[1]. What followed was a combination of downward economic spirals and a poor governance record causing the once regional economic pillar to plummet. Realizing the threat that the situation in Zimbabwe posed to the region as a whole, SADC made efforts to resolve the deepening gulf between the two main political camps, the ZANU-PF and the MDC.

The Zimbabwe crisis[2] has elicited much scholarly debate from various perspectives attempting to explain the cause, extent and consequence of the problem. One key aspect of these debates has been problematization of the quiet diplomacy approach adopted by South Africa. This debate ranges from the question of morals to that of ideology. On the one hand, some scholars have argued that by employing quiet diplomacy in engaging with Zimbabwe, South Africa has demonstrated hegemonic naivety in failing to bring Mugabe under control, hence falling short of displaying effective regional leadership (Sachikonye 2005; Adekeye and Landsberg 2003; Alden and Schoeman 2003). On the other hand, other scholars argue that through the exercise of quiet diplomacy, South Africa is demonstrating to the world how a regional hegemon can exert its preponderance in a contextual manner by insulating its territory (and interests) from external influence while at the same time conforming to the popular legacies of solidarity in the region (Soko and Balchin 2009; Prys 2008; Phimister 2004). Yet others have approached the debate from a pragmatic point of view, arguing that quiet diplomacy is a necessary evil for a South Africa that does not want to see an escalation of conflict in Zimbabwe (Lipton 2009; McKinley 2006; Graham 2006; Adelmann 2004). In other words, South Africa is ready to cope with an unstable neighbour as opposed to a failed neighbour.

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1 It must be noted that the white farmers in Zimbabwe contributed significantly to the success of the economy. See Masunungure and Badza (2010), Muzondidya (2010) and Moyo and Matondi (2003).

2 There is debate within extant literature as to whether the Zimbabwe question really constituted a *crisis* (see Mlambo and Raftapolous, 2010; Chobli, 2008; Sachikonye, 2005). I, therefore, use the word rather loosely to mean a situation in which a regime faces such an internal instability that it may challenge its legitimacy both domestically as well as internationally.

However, this paper's point of departure is that while the quiet diplomatic approach of South Africa in Zimbabwe is well acknowledged, little attention has been paid to the potentials and limitations of the approach as a peacemaking strategy within SADC. Hence, by drawing on the experience of South Africa's involvement in Zimbabwe, the paper endeavours to ascertain whether quiet diplomacy can contribute to our understanding of mediation and peacemaking efforts within the SADC framework of peace and security. The rationale is that, in the wake of home-grown approaches to peacemaking in the region, it is imperative that we assess their relevance towards the broader goal of achieving lasting peace.

Understanding Quiet Diplomacy in Southern Africa

The concept of quiet diplomacy has been advanced by South Africa in the Zimbabwe crisis and it is within this context that the concept will be unpacked. Quiet diplomacy refers to a combination of soft diplomatic approaches, mostly behind-the-scenes engagements, aimed at facilitating pacific settlement. In the case of Zimbabwe, these included bilateral meetings between heads of state and senior officials, South Africa's shielding of Zimbabwe from public criticism in international organizations, endorsement of questionable election results, persistent negotiations dubbed 'constructive engagement', and provision of economic packages with an aim of motivating change within Zimbabwe by Zimbabweans (Prys 2008; Graham 2006). The argument is that the absence of the public increases the chances of finding a diplomatic solution. Thus quiet diplomacy defies Woodrow Wilson's doctrine that "diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view" (Wilson 1918). In other quarters, this strategy has been dubbed the 'softly-softly' (Aldermann 2004) approach, reflecting the patriarchical manner in which South Africa treats Zimbabwe in its 'constructive' engagement. This process is marked by a patient toleration of Zimbabwe's deviance with the hope that through continuous open dialogue, President Mugabe will be made more amenable to negotiations.

Theoretically, the concept of quiet diplomacy reflects traits of preventive diplomacy, which is traditionally anchored in multilateralism. Preventive diplomacy refers to *concerted* action designed to resolve, manage, or contain disputes before they become violent (Stedman 1995). It requires that a third party serve as a mediator to resolve conflict between two or more parties. And according to Orth (1997), such concerted effort demands that first, the disputing parties must consent to resolve their differences through negotiation. And once an agreement is reached, the parties must abide by it and implement it. He further observes that the best outcome of a successful preventive diplomacy process is a negotiated settlement which both parties are prepared to implement (Orth 1997). This is in sharp contrast with megaphone diplomacy, whereby negotiations between countries or parties are held through press releases and announcements in order to force the other party into adopting a desired position. Thus quiet diplomacy epitomizes a contextual adaptation of preventive diplomatic efforts specifically customized to southern Africa. It subsists in the respect of state sovereignty and the legacies of the region's politics of liberation that have contributed to a culture of tolerance among statesmen. This molds a sense of solidarity which perpetuates the imperatives of fraternity and comradeship,

"underpinned by the unspoken rule that African governments do not openly criticize sovereign governments, even when they abuse the rights of their citizens" (Kagwanja 2009: 29). And the following quotation from Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem further indicates that this tendency is deep-seated in the philosophy of southern Africa's regionalism such that actions that significantly depart from norms of solidarity are treated with strong anti-imperialist reservations;

> Why can't these Westerners understand that the more they shout about Mugabe the stronger such leaders become and the more difficult it is for an African leader to condemn him openly for fear of being seen as a Western puppet? (Abdul-Raheem 2005)

For an in depth appreciation of quiet diplomacy, it is also vital that we situate the concept within SADC's peacemaking agenda. To begin with, the United Nations (UN) recognises the significant role of regional organizations in peacemaking (UN 1995: para. 4). In fact, Article 52 of the UN charter encourages pacific settlements of local disputes by regional organs. Regional bodies are thus acknowledged as hubs of conflict resolution on the strength that they foster interaction among states, facilitate collective action and encourage adherence to common norms and standards on governance and conflict resolution (UN 1998: para. 41). This is the case especially where national conflict has a destabilizing potential beyond the nation. In the case of SADC, its mandate for peacemaking rests with the Organ for Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. The experience of peacemaking in the region indicates that due to lack of consensus among members, SADC has circumstantially found itself between two contested approaches to conflict resolution; with one focusing on military intervention and the other emphasizing diplomatic methods (Nathan 2010; Adelmann 2004). The product of this contest has been SADC's case-by-case approach to conflict resolution where methods and strategies applied by mediators have been customized to specific conflicts and lacking in uniformity.

In fact, the manner in which quiet diplomacy has been tolerated within SADC only reveals the deficiencies of the values and the principles used to govern mediation. The argument is made with respect to the fact that, despite laying the broader framework and institutions within which disputes are to be resolved, SADC is silent on how to mediate. The competence for mediation is taken for granted and the terms on which mediation must be executed are not clear. This renders the approach informal and often dependent on personalities rather than institutions. The lack of a guiding framework means that mediation remains improvised and overly subject to power politics (Ancas 2011). This creates a blank slate which some regional members have exploited through more personalised diplomatic approaches to dispute settlement. This justifies the gap that has been filled by South Africa's quiet diplomacy in the Zimbabwe crisis. What is evident in most accounts of South Africa's mediation in Zimbabwe is that quiet diplomacy was not benchmarked against SADC principles and norms of peacemaking despite being mandated by the organization to 'lead' the mediation efforts. This only attests to the gaps that exist in SADC's peacemaking framework.

The experience of post-Cold War peacemaking in southern Africa further suggests that when South Africa became democratic in 1994, most African countries feared that it would assume the role of a 'big brother' on the continent due to its growing optimism about potential leadership in Africa as displayed by its foreign policy and desire for greater democratization. However, after failing in such a role in Nigeria in 1995, and aware of the danger of acting like an appendage of the West, and of deep seated reservations that fellow African countries had with regard to its quickly evolving foreign policy predicated on democratization and respect for human rights, South Africa was becoming cautious. Hence, to keep its continental ambitions alive, South Africa attempted a balance between its support for state sovereignty and anti-imperialist ideals, on the one hand, and principles of good governance and human rights on the other (Lipton 2009; Soko and Balchin 2009). This translated into more consensual positions in peacemaking as opposed to reliance on military might. However, the use of quiet diplomacy by South Africa as a tool to achieve its foreign policy objectives came into the limelight with the crisis in Zimbabwe. And despite the fact that there has not been frequent reference to the approach in official documents, the usage of the term by the South African government traces back to 2000, when the government first acknowledged that it was using the approach as a strategy for engaging with Zimbabwe. Through a response to a parliamentary question, the government remarked that it "engages the President of Zimbabwe in silent diplomacy and that any pronouncements of the detail for discussions might be counterproductive" (Prys 2008:13-14). However, the government later argued that it had never used the approach, consequently blaming the media for the misrepresentation.

Quiet Diplomacy and Peacemaking in Southern Africa: An Audit

When the land problem in Zimbabwe began to capture international attention in 1999, South Africa began engaging Robert Mugabe on a 'quiet' diplomatic basis. This was on the conviction that 'quiet diplomacy' would be more effective than the West's 'megaphone diplomacy' in resolving the deteriorating political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. This led to moves to confine the resolution of the problem within the region in keeping with the desire to see Zimbabwe solve its own problems. Consequently, the African Union (AU) and SADC successfully insulated Zimbabwe from dispute settlement efforts from external (Western) parties in spite of the pressure that South Africa was receiving from Britain, USA and Australia (Soko and Balchin 2009; Prys 2008; Phimister 2004). However, it was only in 2007 that SADC gave South Africa the official mandate to take lead of the responsibility for mediation in Zimbabwe. South Africa was viewed as a likely broker of peace on the basis of a number of speculated assumptions. Firstly, South Africa's position on the continent was seen as that of a pacesetter in peace, security and development. Thus by pioneering such initiatives as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), African renaissance, and the AU, South Africa demonstrated its growing influence and potential leadership in strategic matters concerning the continent (Graham 2006; Van Nieuwkerk 2004). Secondly, its position outside the continent served as a representation of its growing influence in the first world. This was evidenced in South Africa's

successful bid for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council and its increasing trade with Europe. Thirdly, South Africa had comparative advantage over the other countries in the region as evidenced by its material preponderance and its proximity to the problem situation. The point is that South Africa has superior political, economic and military capabilities and is considered a vanguard of democracy and human rights in the sub region. But most crucially, it is the neighbour most directly threatened with any escalation of the situation in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, as a mediator to the conflict, South Africa has attracted attention from many scholars who have problematized its soft approach on Zimbabwe, contrasting it with megaphone diplomacy demonstrated by the West. In as far as the outcome of South Africa's quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe is concerned, the Global Partnership Agreement (GPA) that led to the Government of National Unity following the disputed elections of 2008 remains a landmark contribution of the mediation efforts. However, while the GPA has been celebrated as a breakthrough by most international observers, it remains a delicate and "unhappy compromise," a marriage of convenience between the two parties, ZANU-PF and MDC (Mlambo and Raftopolous 2010: 10). The reality is that the agreement is characterised by dissatisfaction and grudges on the part of the opposition that won an election but was denied the reins of power by the ruling party. As a result the agreement has become a theatre of power politics for the ZANU-PF and MDC, whereby the former has kept a tight grip on the coercive instruments of the state, further insisting that the military and the police forces should not in any way be 'reformed'. This has created an environment of pseudo-peace whereby conflict has high latency. Again, the GPA does not explain how the structural causes of the problems leading to the disputed elections of 2008 are going to be addressed so as to prevent any further eruptions. The point is that the agreement remains fragile and rests on its perceived 'convenience' to (and not the goodwill of) the leaders of the two camps, hence posing a threat to peace and stability in the country. In the same vein, the GPA remains silent on how the political situation can evolve to a stable elected government. This argument is made considering the fact that the roadmap to a new election seems to be given rhetorical attention, with little or no follow up to these commitments by either of the parties or the mediator. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the role of other international actors who were undoubtedly instrumental in the negotiations leading to the GPA. Hence it would be fallacious to fully attribute the GPA to the quiet diplomatic efforts of South Africa.

One of the assumptions of quiet diplomacy which has been considered instrumental for the GPA relates to the continuous engagement of the parties in conflict. The point is that direct contact kept open the communication channels between Mugabe and the outside world. It is argued that during his presidency, Mbeki had met with Mugabe on several occasions through which a climate of goodwill was purportedly created (Prys 2008). The hope had been that through the expression of this goodwill, the Zimbabwe government would be drawn to the negotiating table and look at the situation in a more liberal manner. Through constructive engagement, quiet diplomacy promised to broaden the space for conflict resolution and peacemaking through negotiation, mediation, and critical dialogue, rather than military force. However, since quiet diplomacy is not public, it thrives on unclear and unverifiable goals,

leading to informal commitment which does not necessarily bind either party. As such, goals tend to shift over time as interests shift in the process. This is further complicated by the fact that a lack of credible information for the parties often breeds insecurities and suspicion, which leads the parties to pay lip service to milestones that are agreed to. The lack of information breeds speculation regarding what happens behind the scenes and the terms on which negotiations are made. This can be noted in the tendency of Robert Mugabe to renege on most of his commitments since the commencement of the 'constructive engagement'. It is argued that at one point Mugabe had assured Mbeki that he would uphold the rule of law and stop harassment of white farmers but later Mugabe told the press that he had never uttered such sentiments (Graham 2006). Again, there have been instances where official communication between Mbeki and Mugabe had been leaked into the media in Zimbabwe thereby raising mistrust and suspicion regarding the parties as well as the mediator. One such instance concerned a letter to Mugabe in which Mbeki urged his colleague to return to reconciliation talks with the MDC, which was leaked to the state-owned media (Graham 2006). This led to more defiance than cooperation from Mugabe.

Again, the absence of the public in the mediation process raises concerns over the viability of quiet diplomacy as an effective peacemaking strategy. The argument is that the involvement of civil society could have helped legitimize the process of conflict resolution. However, the justification given for the exclusion of the 'public' was the wariness with delays in consultation and negotiation that arise when many stakeholders are involved. But it must be borne in mind that the Zimbabwe crisis had its roots in the fault lines in state and society, a space where power is contested and government decision-making originates. It is argued that on a number of occasions civil society felt that the process was not representative of their interests and as a result they did not take the mediator seriously (Mlambo and Raftopolous 2010). Thus by ignoring such an important policy space, quiet diplomacy circumvented important players who understood the structural basis of the conflict, thereby missing an opportunity to deal with the real problems behind the crisis.

Another limitation of quiet diplomacy as a peacemaking strategy relates to the fact that it conforms to the logic of solidarity, fraternity and sovereignty. The point is that the solidarity politics of juridical statehood takes precedence over the need to ensure freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights, which are the basic tenets of both the South African foreign policy as well as the SADC peace and security framework. It seems that SADC countries have a general "hypersensitivity to western criticism" while at the same time being "oblivious to tyranny in their midst" (Phimister 2004: 290). Reaffirming this logic of (African) solidarity, former South African Foreign Minister, Dlamini Zuma, once remarked that "if your neighbour's house is on fire, you do not slap the child who started it. You help them to put out the fire", as this was the African way to respond (Graham 2006: 120). The challenge, however, is that while such values play a crucial role in preserving the region's unity against external threats, they tend to reflect the weakness of the region, in the sense that member states develop a culture of tolerance and lenience towards violation of regional principles and protocols. The consequence is that this may

bolster regime security at the expense of human security and regional stability, thereby impeding the resolution of conflicts. And as Nathan argues, the principles of solidarity politics "mask rather than transcend the substantive political differences between member states ... when foreign powers put pressure on a SADC state; however they do not apply when SADC states are at loggerheads with each other" (Nathan 2010: 15). This is further demonstrated by the fact that in line with the 'constructive engagement' policy, South Africa, together with other SADC countries, have been speaking strongly against sanctions on Zimbabwe, arguing that sanctions were not consistent with a non-confrontational diplomatic style and because diplomatic support for Zimbabwe was necessary to keep up the South African influence (Masunungure and Badza 2010; Bush and Szeftel 2002). This was the case even in instances where Zimbabwe was in utter violation of human rights. And as observed by Sachikonye (2005), when Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth following unprecedented state repression on the population, South Africa argued, albeit unsuccessfully, for the immediate lifting of Zimbabwe's suspension at the Brisbane Conference in 2002. And at the 2003 Abuja Conference, SADC concertedly denounced the twelve-month extension of Zimbabwe's suspension.

The experience of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe also brings to the fore the question of leadership of, and responsibility for, peacemaking in the region. The exclusivity of the quiet diplomacy approach renders it unfriendly to innovative input from other regional members. SADC has to seriously rethink the 'point man' approach in regional pacific settlements since it precludes other potentially influential parties from participating in the process. This approach tends to insulate mediation even from well-intentioned neighbouring parties. This comes from the backdrop that on many occasions South Africa has denied other members a chance to get involved in the pacific settlement. It is argued that within the overly unilateral mediation efforts in Zimbabwe, there have been voices within the region calling for an expanded mediation team and that at the helm of the voices have been Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania. However, there was strong resistance to this from South Africa, which capitalized on the absence of a normative congruence in the practice of regional politics in order to polarise potential regional players as looming spoilers. In cases where troikas were instituted by SADC to engage with conflicting parties in Zimbabwe, they have mostly been labelled as being comprised of less influential leaders/countries and this has always left South Africa as the dominant party in the process. But despite its insistence on this patriarchical approach, South Africa failed on many occasions to bring Mugabe to the negotiating table. This only demonstrates the perils of gatekeeping tendencies when mediating regional disputes that have extra-regional implications.

Interests are another salient issue that provide a lens for examining quiet diplomacy. This point is made considering that diplomacy essentially seeks to serve specific interests. In the case of the Zimbabwe crisis, there are observations that the use of quiet diplomacy for mediation exposed methodological as well as moral shortfalls in the conduct of peacemaking. In fact, there seems to be a serious disjuncture between expectations and practice in the sense that while mediation puts the interests of the parties above of those of the mediator, quiet diplomacy tends to be marred by competing interests between the parties, on the one hand, and the broker on the

other. Nathan (2010) posits that for peacemaking effectiveness, the parties to the conflict must believe that the mandate of the mediating institution serves their interests in order to increase trust in the mediation process. However, the neutrality of the mediator in the Zimbabwe crisis is held suspect as most accounts of the conflict resolution efforts indicate that the quiet diplomacy approach was overly tilted towards the government. This observation comes from the fact that the unofficial (quiet) 'constructive engagement' had already been taking place between the governments of South Africa and Zimbabwe well in advance of the official mediation (Prys 2008; Graham 2006; Adelmann 2004). And since most discussions were being held behind closed doors, it would be difficult to comprehend how a balanced approach would be achieved in the engagement. This spells the inherent weakness of quiet diplomacy in the sense that the approach is state-centric and as such does not give sufficient attention to other critical stakeholders in the process of peacemaking. This is further reflected in the scepticism expressed by the MDC to the extent that Morgan Tsvangirai, at one point, condemned the approach, labelling Mbeki as a "dishonest broker" and accused South Africa of becoming part of the Zimbabwe problem (McKinley 2006: 95). There was a lack of conviction by the MDC regarding the posture that South Africa took towards ZANU-PF which created the feeling that the MDC was playing second fiddle and was being recognized "grudgingly and late" (Sachikonye 2005).

In the same vein, it can be contended that the competing interests in the conflict resolution process in Zimbabwe may draw immensely from the actors' differing perceptions of the crisis and its impact. In the case of the mediator, there are arguments to the extent that South Africa had vested interests in the crisis because it wanted to secure its border from the influx of Zimbabwean refuges, hence its actions could not be read as those of a neutral intervener who puts the interest of the parties above everything else. It is clear that South Africa was not prepared to put up with a meltdown within its neighbourhood. As a result, Mbeki did everything within his means in order to avoid an increased burden for South Africa caused by an influx of Zimbabwean immigrants and border problems that might have arisen in the aftermath of the 2008 elections (Hager 2007; Graham 2006; Adelmann 2004). However, beneath such perceptions can also be deciphered economic interests. This is reflected in Dale McKinley's critique of Mbeki's earliest attempts at uniting the two parties in which he argues that, "the attempt to forge an elitist political deal ... should be seen as ... confirmation that Mbeki's bottom line remains one of securing the strategic interests of South African capital whilst simultaneously consolidating his government's role as the main African arbiter of both a regional and continental capitalist political economy" (McKinley 2006: 98). This point is further echoed by Soko and Balchin (2009) who, while dismissing a direct relationship between South Africa's foreign policy and private sector interests, acknowledge that South Africa has not hesitated to capitalize on the economic opportunities arising from Zimbabwe's economic and political collapse, especially in the mining and industrial sectors. Thus it can be argued from a realist point of view, that South Africa might have pursued quiet diplomacy in order to serve its own interests.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the quest for African solutions to African problems is proving to be a daunting task in the absence of robust peacemaking. The mediation efforts in the Zimbabwe crisis clearly epitomize the institutional and structural shortfalls prevailing in quiet diplomacy as a mediation tool, and the lack of commitment of the region towards a lasting pacific settlement in the country. While South Africa's fear of megaphone diplomacy may be well justified, the recourse to quiet diplomacy has not contributed to the purpose of achieving meaningful peace either, since the situation in Zimbabwe remains unstable. This state of affairs offers a false semblance of peace where a meltdown remains latent. But again, the use of quiet diplomacy by South Africa in Zimbabwe demonstrates that southern Africa has yet to unshackle itself from the tentacles of juridical statehood and move beyond the veil of sovereignty towards assertive dispute resolution underpinned by the very principles enshrined in the region's charters and protocols. Furthermore, competing interests between the mediator and the parties to the dispute greatly jeopardised the settlement process and created an environment of mistrust. The paper has demonstrated that South Africa did not go far enough to rise above its interests in the situation, and this ultimately affected the posture and outcome of the mediation process. This points to the limits of mediation efforts that are dominated by a single intervening party, considering that this may raise unnecessary concerns over the integrity of the process. Hence for effective peacemaking in the sub-region, there is a need to insulate the process from personal interests and rethink the political culture of solidarity in order to eliminate impunity. It must also be appreciated that responsibility for conflict resolution within a regional setup should not be entrusted to an individual country regardless of its capacity. To ensure depersonalised and credible regional peacemaking, there must be a collective obligation of all the member states and the role of parties must be underlined. Otherwise, peacemaking approaches that focus squarely on stopping immediate violence but fail to deal with the underlying structural causes of conflict will fall short of guaranteeing stability.

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