

East African Community Regional Force and Southern African Development Community Mission in Northern Mozambique in enhancing Security in the Regions

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Abstract

The study sought to analyse the contributions of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) and the Southern African Development Community Mission (SAMIM) to security in the Great Lakes and Southern Africa regions, respectively. The neoliberalism theory underpinned the study. This study adopted a comparative case study design embedded within a mixed-methods research approach. A comparative case study design was applied to enable an in-depth, contextually grounded analysis of multiple PSOs across Africa, highlighting both convergences and divergences in performance. The target population for the study included military personnel directly and indirectly involved with the EACRF and SAMIM missions, non-military personnel (such as civilian police), local government officials, community leaders and representatives in the countries of operations of the two missions, subject matter experts, scholars and representatives from international and national NGOs. Through purposive sampling, a sample of 85 participants was obtained using the Cochran Formula. Content analysis was used to analyse secondary data, while quantitative data was examined using descriptive statistics. The conclusions of the study were that both EACRF and SAMIM contributed significantly to peace and security in the region, but their overall contribution was limited because of systemic issues. For instance, EACRF did not make considerable progress in the achievement of its objectives largely due to logistical challenges and political differences, its short lifespan notwithstanding. On the other hand, SAMIM achieved greater security gains due to its longer presence. Both missions exhibited quantifiable but contentious roles in the security of the region, with the views of the stakeholders strongly divided. EACRF, with its community-centric approach, enhanced local reconciliation, conflict resolution and the strengthening of governance. However, it faced considerable scepticism from the public. In contrast, the multidimensional approach of SAMIM that integrates the efforts in the area of economic opportunities, counterinsurgency and governance reform has had a more balanced, yet more nuanced impact profile. Although the progress of regional cooperation is still relatively modest, both missions suggest that the greater success in the long run will probably be pegged

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on additional integration of economic development initiatives to work on the root causes of disparities and maintain stability.

Keywords: *East African Community Regional Force, Southern African Development Community Mission, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Peace Support Operations*

Introduction

The evolution of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) has proceeded in tandem with the change in conflict dynamics and the practical realignments by the actors engaged in peacekeeping. From 1948, peacekeeping entailed monitoring the ceasefire and deploying troops (exemplified by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) Williams (2024). In the Cold War era, peacekeeping was characterised by neutrality and avoiding getting involved in other states' affairs. Once the Cold War was over, PSOs took on more roles, managing internal conflicts by using military, civilian and humanitarian responses. One such mission demonstrates this change: The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992, which offered peacekeeping, supported governance and election observation and supported the country. The missions showed that paying attention to the basic causes of conflict was vital for secure and lasting peace.

The Middle East has been the centre of international peace operations with its multifaceted and extended conflicts. Other than Iraq and Afghanistan, the UN missions, such as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), have served to keep the peace by securing ceasefires and ensuring that conflicts do not escalate (Cordesman, 2022). These operations have elicited discussions over the challenges of PSOs operating in places where they are expected to be impartial and effective, yet are faced with myriad problems that impede success. The PSO experiences in the Middle East confirm the fact that the mandate of a PSO should include political, social and economic components to address the root causes of conflict.

Arguably, the American military engagements in the Middle East have been one of the most important contributions of Washington to the maintenance of world peace. Despite many concerns raised by the 2003 Iraq invasion, the US and allies strived to restore peace and reconstruct the administration. However, the mission had a hard time concentrating on military outcomes and assisting the country in its development. The fight against Al-Qaeda and the assistance extended to the Iraqi government in rebuilding the country also contributed to the war taking longer than projected. Such experiences highlighted the drawbacks of unilateralism in conducting peace operations and the importance of the international community and well-established mandates (Tchie, 2023).

The role of the United States of America (USA) in Afghanistan, which was a part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), underscored the role of the multinational approach in ensuring peace and stability (Naimpoor, 2020). The presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan as part of ISAF's contingent boosted the counterinsurgency efforts while at the same time enabling the infusion of investments into infrastructure and humanitarian services, which highlights the multidimensional aspect of modern PSOs. Likewise, NATO and the European Union (EU) have over time played a significant role in the creation of PSOs in Europe, especially in the areas of post-conflict stabilization and support of governance. In 1999, the intervention of NATO in the country, during its Kosovo Force (KFOR), proved that it could organize the mobilization of military and logistical forces to enforce peace (Shimir, 2021). The EU, however, has concentrated on civilian-based peace operations, including the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), with its focus on governance, rule of law and institution-building. Such initiatives indicate the strategic concern of Europe in promoting stability in the immediate surroundings and its capacity to supplement military actions with developmental undertakings.

Africa has also increasingly played host to PSOs, demonstrating their necessity and the imperative of local strategies to ensure PSO effectiveness in maintaining peace and security. In Africa, West Africa has been at the forefront in peacekeeping, as exemplified in its involvement in the Liberian Civil War (1989-1997) and in the war in Sierra Leone during the early 2000s. In Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States

Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) played a role in restoring peace and overseeing the disarmament of the country, but in Sierra Leone, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) forces played a vital role in cutting off the attacks of the RUF and restoring the Government. Though these missions demonstrated that sub-regional organizations could help to resolve minor conflicts in the region, they also indicated that such missions consumed considerable resources and needed to be better coordinated (Benson, 2021; Vushemasimba, 2022).

Introduced in 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has made an enormous impact in inhibiting Al-Shabaab advances and assisting the Somali Government to maintain territorial sovereignty and stability. The mission has encountered logistical challenges, especially in insufficient funds and Troop Contributing Country pledge fulfilment (Shikwambane, 2022). Despite these challenges, AMISOM (now ATMIS-AU Transition Mission in Somalia) has proven that African-led initiatives can bring about regional security and that this example is currently motivating other initiatives in Africa (Fisher, 2019). The mission in Somalia offers lessons to the current missions in complex areas because of the achievements and failures of the mission.

Regional integration is critical in solving security challenges in Africa since it has institutional frameworks for Collaboration. The spillovers of conflicts in Africa, like those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique, in the form of refugee flow, arms trafficking and insurgents' mobility, cannot be contained by individual states. Regional integration has led to institutions of collective planning, burden-sharing and coordinated interventions in the form of the deployments of the EAC Regional Force (EACRF) in eastern DRC and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). It is through such integration that collective security is enhanced, whereby an attack or destabilization of one member is seen as a threat to the whole bloc, leading to increased deterrence and resilience to transnational threats (Buzan & Waeber, 2003; Williams, 2018).

The principle of Africa-led solutions gives priority to the agency of African states and institutions in their effort to overcome security challenges on the continent. African-led operations, as opposed to externally imposed ones, frequently possess a better understanding of a conflict's political, cultural, and geographical dimensions. This knowledge of the context contributes to greater local acceptance and involvement of peace processes. Both EACRF and SAMIM are indicative of this larger vision of the African Union (AU) as reflected in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which aims at lessening reliance on the outside world and enhancing domestic capacities for effective response to conflicts (De Coning, Gelot and Karlsrud, 2016). Although issues of resource limitations, political fragmentation and ineffective operational capacities continue to be a challenge, Africa-based solutions have been the primary focus in ensuring that the intervention is regionally responsive, besides ensuring that it is sustainable. These operations connect the idea of regional integration, collective security and African ownership to emphasize the transforming architecture of peace support in Africa and its applicability in long-term regional stability (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

EACRF and SAMIM are two different regional strategies of peace support operations in Africa, characterized by dissimilarity of mandate formulation, operational tactics and political support. On one hand, EACRF, which was deployed in the eastern DRC in 2022, was mainly ordered to stabilize conflict areas and provide political dialogue between the Congolese Government and armed groups. Its strategy has been described as embracing minimal offensive operations, a concentration on buffering and containment of armed forces and the use of negotiated withdrawals instead of confrontation. This indicates the political differences between the EAC member states as well as the wavering consent of the DRC that limited the operational aggressiveness of the force (RFI, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023). The EACRF, therefore, treated insecurity as a political-security issue that needed to be addressed through dialogue and de-escalation, yet critics believe that its low-profile stance enabled armed factions such as the M23 to have a presence in vital regions.

In contrast, SAMIM, which was deployed in Cabo Delgado in July 2021, was more militarized in terms of countering the insurgents' threats from the Islamist militants, who were affiliated with ISIS-Mozambique (*Ahlu-Sunna wa Jama'a*). The operations of SAMIM were centered on direct fighting, recapture of territory and insurgent logistics and creation of safe havens. With the incredible support of the Mozambican

Government and the bilateral assistance of Rwanda, SAMIM engaged in joint offensive operations resulting in the re-taking of a number of towns and vital infrastructure. In comparison to EACRF, SAMIM had the advantage of more cohesion among the members of SADC and a mandate that focused on military superiority, as opposed to dialogue. Nevertheless, there are issues with consolidating gains and instead, insurgents have shifted to rural regions and made occasional attacks (Vines, 2022; Morier-Genoud, 2023). Whereas EACRF focused on political facilitation and containment with minimal combat, SAMIM focused on direct counterinsurgency by projection of force and territory. These differing strategies represent the difference in the responses of the African region: EAC interventions are more likely to be influenced by intra-regional politics and weak host-state consent while SADC interventions are more united, militarized and aligned with host-state interests. The two cases, however, highlight the dilemma between political mediation and military enforcement as a means of dealing with the threat of insecurity in the region in Africa.

EACRF held strategic importance to the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region as it offered a platform on which collective security is engaged in the volatile eastern DRC. This was the first joint operation of such magnitude by the EAC, which showed the desire of the bloc to become more than an economic integrator but a comprehensive security provider. EACRF played a significant role in containing conflict spillovers to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, which had experienced cross-border insurgencies and refugee migrations in the past due to the eastern Congo. In addition, the deployment highlighted the region's desire towards independence from extra-continental forces in conflict management, which is in line with the principle of African solutions to African problems of the AU (Muchie et al, 2016). Nevertheless, the low level of cohesion in the mission and the lack of operational capabilities demonstrated the weakness of the security integration of EAC as a long-term credible guarantor of regional security.

SAMIM was of strategic significance to Mozambique and the SADC region as a whole, as it dealt with an insurgency in Cabo Delgado that would have caused political and economic instability in the southern part of Africa. The war threatened the multi-billion-dollar liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects that are central to the future of the Mozambique economy, as well as the region and stabilization was a key objective of the SADC states. Tactically, SAMIM showed that the region was ready to act in unison in defence of the sovereignty of its member-states and to defend critical economic assets against the transnational terrorist threats. It also indicated the ability of SADC to supplement bilateral interventions, as in the case of parallel deployment in Rwanda, thus enhancing resilience in the region. In addition to counterterrorism, SAMIM was significant in strengthening the position of SADC as a capable security actor that can project force and protect mutual interests in the southern part of Africa (Vines, 2022).

In conclusion, both missions were of strategic significance to their areas: EACRF was a symbol of East Africa to have collective security and conflict containment in the Great Lakes and SAMIM was a secure economic lifeline to South Africa and strengthened SADC counterterrorism credentials. Their experiences bring out the potential and the shortcomings of Africa-led regional security interventions.

Theoretical Basis

This paper employed Neoliberalism to cast EACRF and SAMIM as institutional frameworks on collective security in which member states have been cooperating to tackle cross-border insecurity threats. Neoliberalism is a political and economic ideology developed in the late 20th century by Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Robert Nozick, who emphasized the importance of markets, minimal state intervention and liberal institutions. This international relations theory was refined into Neoliberal Institutionalism by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, who maintained that cooperation between states is feasible and required under the criteria of multifaceted interdependence (Keohane, 1984; Keohane & Nye, 1977). Neoliberalism goes beyond analyzing economic factors into the international politics sphere, where institutions and regimes are regarded as important in coordinating collective action issues like security. The theory informs the discussion of how the regional integration, institutional imperatives and cooperative structures are supposed to promote regional security, even though mistrust and rivalry of interests remain. It has offered a perspective through which regional security practices have been judged to either reflect a neoliberal fantasy of the possibility of achieving peace through cooperation or on how institutional deficiencies restrict effectiveness.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a comparative case study design that was integrated into a mixed-method research approach. The comparative case study design was suitable as it allows a profound, context-driven study of several PSOs in Africa, showing certain overlaps in their performance and notable differences. In particular, the paper has considered two recent regional missions: EACRF in the DRC and the SAMIM in Mozambique. Such a design was also reasonable because it would enable cross-case comparison and therefore generate subtle information regarding the effects of operational, socio-political and institutional forces on PSO effectiveness.

The mixed methods approach used both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address the shortcomings of the single method designs. Quantitative data present quantifiable measures of the mission performance, and qualitative data sheds light on the contextual, political and operational aspects. This triangulation method enhanced the validity and enabled the study to identify the outcomes as well as the processes behind the PSO effectiveness.

Study Area

The case study was conducted on the EACRF and SAMIM. In 2022, the EACRF was deployed to stabilize the violent eastern part of the DRC, where armed groups like the M23 insurgents had led violence. The mission was made up of the troops of the EAC member states, whose mission was to assist the DRC government in restoring peace, keeping civilians safe and helping in dialogues among the warring parties. It was, however, criticized for its ineffectiveness, its struggle to legitimate itself especially when accused of being unable to counter armed groups, which prompted its withdrawal in 2023. On the other hand, SAMIM was initiated in 2021 in the northern province of Cabo Delgado to assist in combating the Islamist insurgency, which disrupted the stability and natural gas projects. Drawing forces from several SADC member states, SAMIM focused on counterterrorism operations, capacity building of Mozambican forces and restoration of state authority. Unlike EACRF, SAMIM has achieved some notable successes in regaining territory and weakening insurgents' strongholds, though challenges remain in ensuring long-term stability and addressing underlying socioeconomic grievances.

Target Population

The target population for the study included military personnel directly and indirectly involved with the EACRF and SAMIM missions, non-military personnel (such as civilian police), local government officials, community leaders and representatives in the countries of operations of the two missions, subject matter experts, scholars and representatives from international and national NGOs. The reason for choosing the above target population is that these groups possessed not only first-hand experience with EACRF and SAMIM but also had expert knowledge and information on the subject matter under investigation by this study. Their involvement with the two missions and their experience with the missions' outcomes and impacts was invaluable in informing the findings of this study. The population could not be provided due to security reasons, and thus, the study resorted to the use of the theory of sounding for saturation. Data was collected to a point where the researcher could not obtain new information, and thus, that counted as the sample size.

Sampling Techniques

Saturation determined the sample size for this study. The total sample size of 85 participants was strategically chosen to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives across five distinct groups: 30 senior military personnel and peacekeepers, 15 local government officials, 15 community leaders, 10 subject matter experts and academics and 15 representatives from NGOs. This division offered the adequacy of nonnumeric data, which assists in thoroughly investigating the operation, impacts and obstacles of the specified programs and keeping in mind the necessity to conduct a meticulous study and the real-life directions of research.

Table 1

Sample Size Distribution

Target Group	Number	SAMIM	EACRF
Military personnel and peacekeepers	30	15	15
Local government officials	15	8	7
Community leaders	15	7	8
Subject matter experts and academics	10	5	5
NGO representatives	15	8	7
Total	85	43	42

Source: Field Data (2025)

The sample used was from selected participants arrived at based on purposive sampling of the target population. This method is usually applied in situations where the sample is picked depending on the experience, level of expertise, or knowledge of the topic under investigation. It is a process of purposely picking up individuals or units that have the best chances of providing valuable and informative information towards the research objectives. As an example, in this research, military personnel were sampled on the basis of experience or knowledge of either EACRF or SAMIM or their engagement in the two missions by making their contributions through direct engagement, planning processes, support activities, or functions. Such a purposive sampling method not only enhanced the depth and validity of the gathered data, but it also ensured that the above-mentioned areas were adequately explored by incorporating resourceful, insightful and highly relevant stakeholders to the EACRF and SAMIM.

Data Collection Instruments

Primary data was collected using a semi-structured interview guide and a questionnaire. Furthermore, secondary data were collected using a desktop review. These tools combined guaranteed the gathering of high-quality and wide-ranging data to be able to respond to the research objectives.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was the chosen method for the systematic examination of qualitative data from the policy documents referring to the case studies, mission reports, and interviews conducted, which, in turn, enabled the detection of the same recurring themes as well as the same contextual dynamics existing in each case. In the case of quantitative data, the descriptive statistics were the means employed for the summarization of the key numerical indicators, like troop levels, budgets, and conflict events, and for making direct cross-case comparison easier. The integrated approach allowed the qualitative insights to be the interpreters of the quantitative trends, thus reinforcing the triangulation of the findings within the mixed-methods framework.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that the participants were aware of the research and its aims. This was done by means of appropriate introductory letters. The subjects were not forced to take part in the research. The respondents were requested to give their consent before their participation in the study. The respondents gave their consent to participate in the study upon a clear explanation of the reason for conducting the study and data collection. Data collection did not involve the respondents who did not express their willingness to take part in the study. The researcher also facilitated confidentiality and anonymity regarding the identity of the respondents. This

was done by requesting the participants not to record their names. All the information was anonymised and kept in encrypted electronic files.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Information

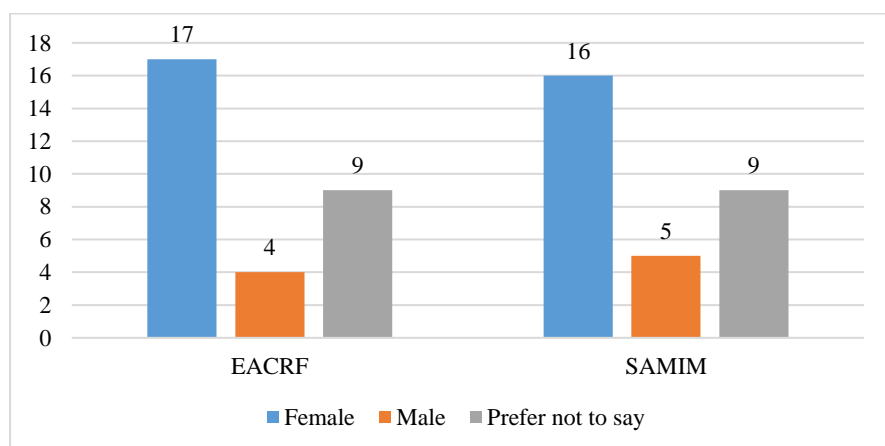
This section documents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Knowing the attributes like the gender, age, position to play in the mission, the number of years they have been involved and the level of their education will help in interpreting their responses. The said variables were important in examining the perception and experience of various stakeholder groups in the impact of the Peace Support Operations (PSOs) by EACRF and SAMIM.

Gender of Respondents

This subsection highlights the gender distribution of the respondents. The study established that from EACRF, 17 participants were women, four men and nine did not disclose their gender, while from SAMIM, 16 participants were women, five men and nine did not disclose their gender. In general, 55% (47) of the participants in the study were female, 15% (13) were male, while 30% (25) did not prefer to indicate their gender.

Figure 1

Gender of Respondents



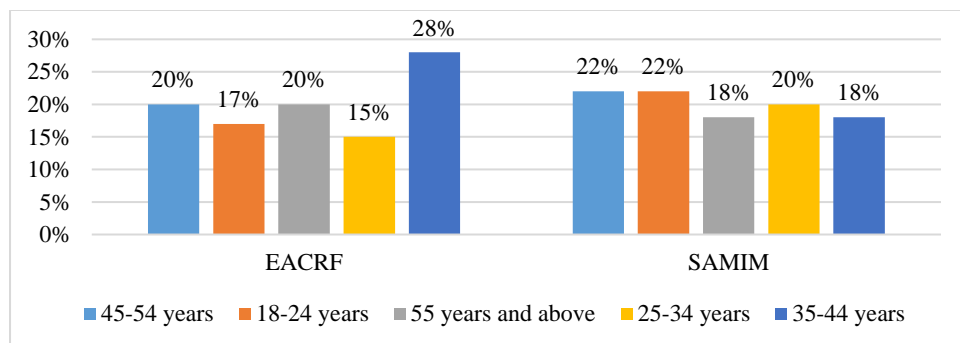
Source: Field Data (2025)

Further, as shown in Figure 1, while the gender fairness could not be determined by the study due to non-response by some of the participants, the representation and participation of females in the two PSOs were evident and ought to be encouraged.

Age of Respondents

This subsection outlines the age distribution of the participants involved in the study. Figure 2 reveals how age is distributed among the respondents in the two PSOs. From EACRF, it was established that 28% of the participants were aged between 35 and 44 years, 20% were aged 55 years and above, 20% were aged between 45 and 54 years, 17% were aged between 18 and 25 years, while 15% were aged between 25 and 34 years.

Figure 2

Demographic Age Profile

Source: Field Data, (2025)

On the other hand, from SAMIM, 22% of the participants were aged between 18 and 25 years, 22% were aged between 45 and 54 years, 20% were aged between 25 and 34 years, 18% were aged between 35 and 44 years, while 18% were 55 years and above. The findings thus suggest that the two PSOs had most personnel aged between 35 and 44 years (46%), an indirect indication that with this age group, the personnel have had quite immense experience in the military and Peace Support Operations and are able to contribute effectively.

Role in the Mission

This subsection identifies the different roles held by respondents within the Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

Table 2

Mission Roles

Role	EACRF	SAMIM	Grand Total
Civilian Staff	10.00%	11.67%	21.67%
Community Member	6.67%	11.67%	18.33%
Local Government Official	16.67%	11.67%	28.33%
Military Personnel	8.33%	11.67%	20.00%
Peacekeeper (Other Role)	8.33%	3.33%	11.67%
Grand Total			100.00%

(Source: Researcher, 2025)

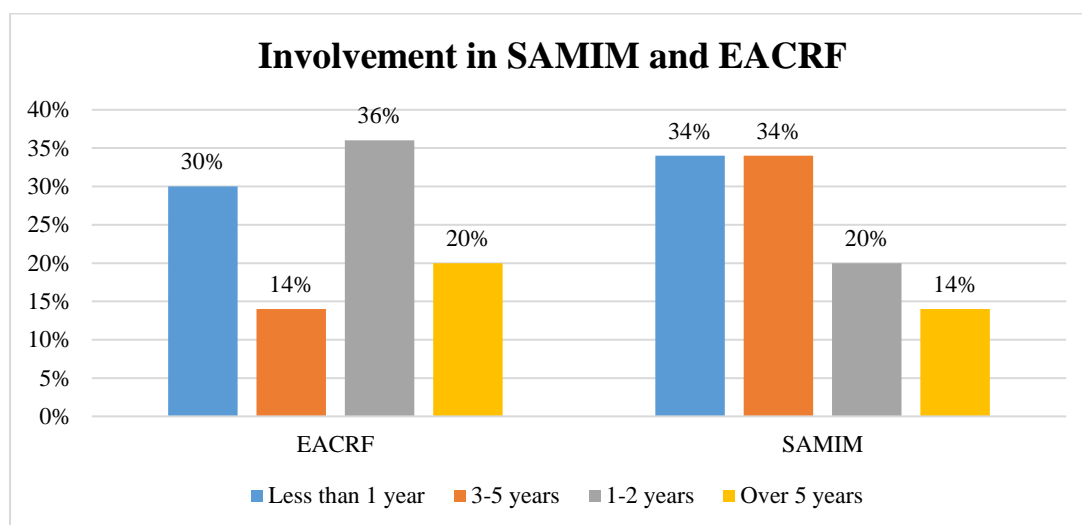
Table 2 illustrates the roles played by the participants in the two missions. The study established that most of the participants were local government officials who constituted 28.33%. From EACRF, findings showed that civilian staff were 10%, community members 6.67%, local government officials 16.67%, military personnel 8.33% while other peacekeepers were 8.33%. From SAMIM, the findings showed that civilian staff were 11.67%, community members 11.67%, local government officials 11.67%, military personnel 11.67% while other peacekeepers were 3.33%. The data collected and the resulting findings from the study reflect a diverse mix of viewpoints and experiences, thus contributing to rich and objective conclusions and recommendations for SAMIM and EACRF missions.

Involvement in the SAMIM Mission

This subsection focuses on the duration of respondents' involvement in the SAMIM mission. Figure 3 illustrates the amount of time the participants have been engaged with or had experience with the SAMIM and EACRF missions. From EACRF, 36% had been engaged for a period of between 1 and 2 years, 30% for a period of less than 1 year, 20% for a period of over 5 years, 14% for a period of between 3 and 5 years. From SAMIM, 34% had been engaged for a period of between 3 and 5 years, 34% for a period of less than 1 year, 20% for a period of between 1 and 2 years and 14% for a period of over 5 years.

Figure 3

Involvement in SAMIM and EACRF missions



Source: Field Data, (2025)

While EACRF has a slightly higher percentage in the 1–2 years' category and more in the over 5 years' bracket, SAMIM stands out in the mid-range of experience. If we group the longer-term engagements (those with at least 3 years of experience), the differences become clearer. This indicates that a greater proportion of SAMIM respondents have been engaged for three or more years, implying that overall, personnel in the SAMIM group tend to have more years of experience than those in the EACRF group.

Education Level

This subsection outlines the educational background of the respondents. As illustrated in Table 3, 8.33% participants from EACRF had attained a Bachelor's degree, 3.33% had attained a diploma/certificate level, 16.67% had attained a master's degree and above, while 5% had attained a primary level. On the other hand, from SAMIM, 10% had attained a Bachelor's degree, 8.33% had attained a diploma/certificate level, 13.33% had attained a master's degree and above, while 10% had attained a primary level.

Table 3

Participants' Educational Background

	EACRF	SAMIM	Grand Total
Bachelor's Degree	8.33%	10.00%	18.33%
Diploma/Certificate	3.33%	8.33%	11.67%
Master's Degree and above	16.67%	13.33%	30.00%
Primary	5.00%	10.00%	15.00%
Secondary	16.67%	8.33%	25.00%
Grand Total			100.00%

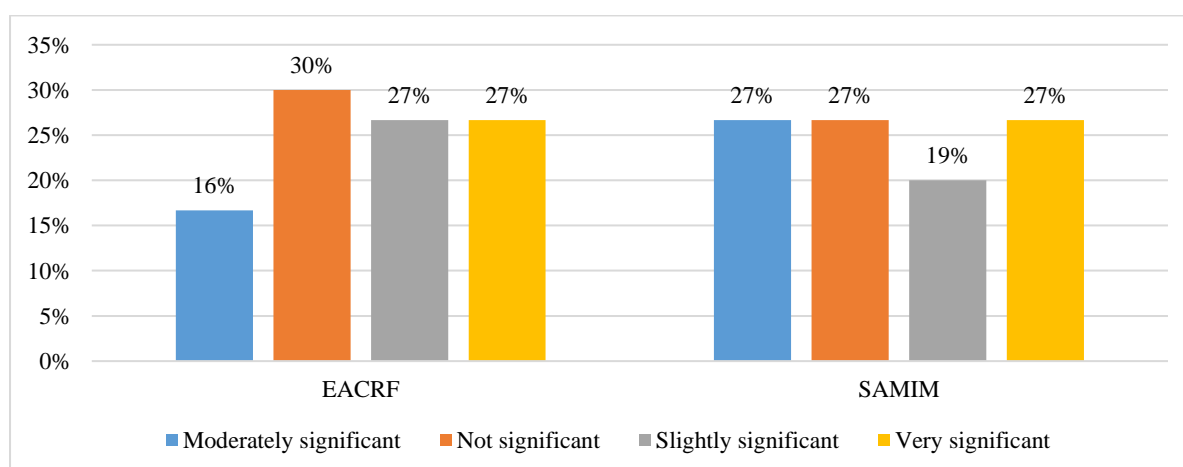
Source: Field Data, (2025)

The findings reveal that the majority of the participants from both EACRF and SAMIM are well educated, making it easier for them to give knowledgeable, informed and objective views on PSOs. EACRF has a slightly higher concentration of advanced degrees, while SAMIM shows greater representation at primary and diploma/certificate levels. SAMIM's broader distribution of qualifications might reflect different recruitment strategies or varying eligibility criteria. The differences in education levels may also hint at institutional capacity-building approaches within each mission.

EACRF and SAMIM Overall Contribution to Regional Security in Southern Africa

The study established that within EACRF, 30% of the participants noted that EACRF's contribution to regional security was not significant, 27% noted that the contribution was slightly significant, 27% noted that the contribution was very significant. In comparison, 16% noted that the contribution was moderately significant.

Figure 4

EACRF and SAMIM's Contribution to Regional Security

Source: Field Data, (2025)

On the other hand, within SAMIM, 27% of the participants noted that SAMIM's contribution to regional security was very significant, 27% noted that the contribution was moderately significant, and 27% of the

participants noted that the contribution was not significant. In comparison, 19% of the participants noted that the contribution was slightly significant.

There is no explicit agreement regarding which side of the spectrum would contribute significantly to the work and which should not, and a good number of the participants view the contribution on these ends as not significant to very significant. This polarization implies that the range of assessments of the effects of the missions by various stakeholders is quite different. EACRF distribution indicates that, though many respondents are not convinced of the operational effect, an almost equal number of respondents are convinced that there is a strong positive effect, which leaves no moderate to balanced perceptions. Unlike EACRF, the ratings of SAMIM demonstrate a more balanced distribution of the extremities, and an intermediate position is relatively moderate (moderate category), but the distinction is still somewhat subtle. The research indicates that the stakeholder perception towards EACRF and SAMIM contributions is very polarized. In the case of EACRF, lean is sceptical, with 30% of its contribution being deemed null, and SAMIM is evenly distributed, with significant contribution figures also recognizing moderate to very significant contribution.

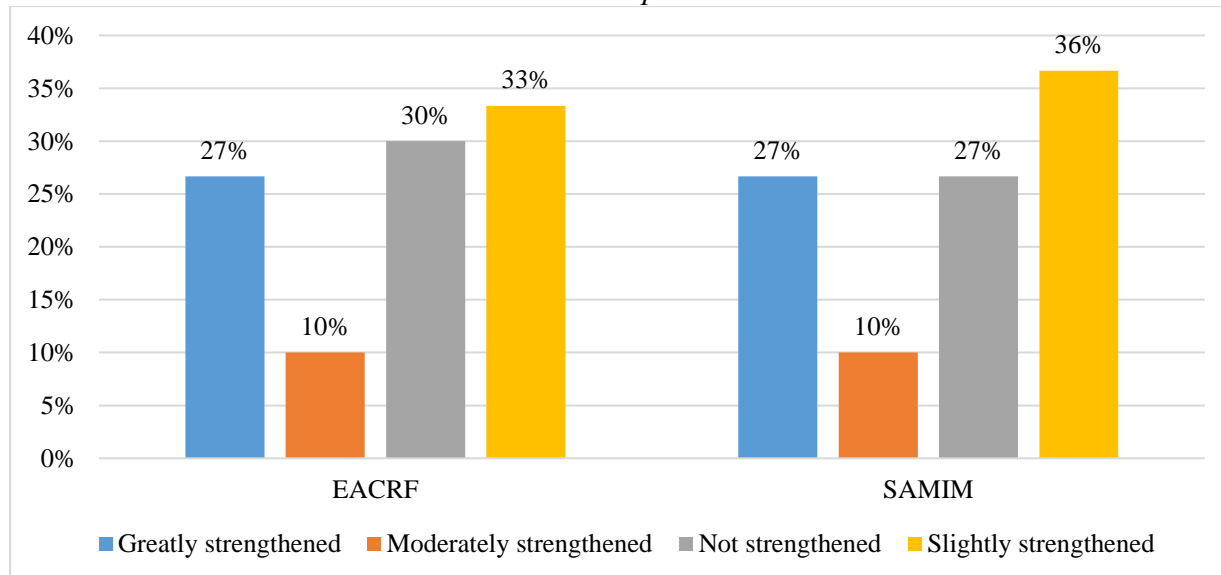
The results align with Harris (2019), who discovered that regional peace efforts pay off; however, they face such problems as resource unavailability, conflict between countries and operational challenges, which result in a challenging process of ensuring stability in the region.

SAMIM and EACRF's Contribution to Strengthening Cooperation among Member States

This section explores the role of SAMIM and EACRF in enhancing cooperation among member states.

Figure 5

SAMIM and EACRF's Role in Member State Cooperation



Source: Field Data, (2025)

The study established that 33% of the participants noted that through EACRF, cooperation among member states had been slightly strengthened, 30% noted that cooperation had not been strengthened, 27% noted that cooperation had significantly been strengthened, while 10% noted that cooperation had been moderately strengthened. On the other hand, 36% of the participants noted that through SAMIM, cooperation among member states had been slightly strengthened, 27% noted that cooperation had not been strengthened, 27% noted that cooperation had significantly been strengthened. In comparison, 10% noted that cooperation had been moderately strengthened. This is in line with Goldstein (2020), who believes that peacekeeping operations foster collaboration but face challenges in sustaining a collaborative relationship.

Nevertheless, the interviewees affirmed that missions enhance collaboration despite the challenges, as Fisher and Oludemi (2022) also did in their study on military cooperation as a strategy to establish strategic alliances. Key informant KSI0009 pointed out that SAMIM assisted in uniting SADC states in combating a severe menace of insurgencies. Countries that joined started to have faith in one another when it comes to executing military operations collectively. This belief was resonated by key informants KSI0004 who pointed out that national interests supersede regional ambitions. She averred that “the missions also brought about certain positive impacts on cooperation, only that it tended to be temporary”.

The distribution of opinions on how both of them have influenced the collaboration in the region is very similar to that produced by both SAMIM and EACRF. The numbers of greatly strengthened and moderately strengthened are not different in both situations and a steady minority considers the outcomes of cooperation to be either substantially positive or moderate. SAMIM depicts a slightly higher percentage (36% vs. 33%) of respondents feeling that cooperation has been slightly enhanced. Also, SAMIM reported having fewer respondents who reported that cooperation had not been strengthened (27% vs. 30%). These discrepancies, however minor, indicate that SAMIM could be more advantageous in terms of promoting regional collaboration.

A good percentage of the participants in the two missions consider the cooperation amongst the member states as either having realised moderate improvement or not at all. This even-handed opinion supports the notion that although some positive effect is present, there is still considerably more to be achieved in terms of enhancing the cooperation. The result shows that the perceived effect on the cooperation between the member states is small and comparable between EACRF and SAMIM. Although the matter of more participants perceiving the impact as more reinforced is slightly positive in favour of SAMIM, both missions are characterized by divided opinion, with almost equal proportions of positive and neutral/no impact perception. This implies that the attempt to strengthen the regional collaboration can be reinforced or modified in order to produce a more homogeneous positive result.

SAMIM and EACRF Efforts at Addressing the Conflict

The study findings revealed that EACRF contributed to addressing the root causes of conflict by supporting community reconciliation initiatives (53.33%), addressing governance gaps in the region (20%), strengthening counterinsurgency efforts (16.67%) and enhancing economic development programs (10%). SAMIM, on the other hand, helped to alleviate the underlying causes of the conflict by facilitating community reconciliation efforts (40%), fixing governance lapses in the region (30%), supporting counterinsurgency efforts (20%) and economic development programs (10%). The overall conclusion of the research is that both SAMIM and EACRF were quite effective in facilitating the community reconciliation efforts.

Table 4

Contributions of SAMIM and EACRF in solving the Underlying Causes of Conflict

	EACRF	SAMIM
Addressing governance gaps in the region	20.00%	30.00%
Enhancing economic development programs	10.00%	10.00%
Strengthening counterinsurgency efforts	16.67%	20.00%
Supporting community reconciliation initiatives	53.33%	40.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Researcher, (2025)

SAMIM and EACRF have helped to improve the economic development programmes. Though this aspect is not significantly added by both missions, it still is a significant element in the direction of bridging the economic inequalities that are considered to play a pivotal role in long-term stability. This is in line with Cordesman (2022), who emphasized that reconstruction in the aftermath of the conflict depends largely on economic development. According to key informant KSI00010, it turned out to be important: Economic development projects were essential to the stability, because they tackled the fundamental causes of instability, the poverty and absence of opportunity. Long-term peace could not exist without economic progress. It was also observed that the two missions strengthened the counterinsurgency operations and the military operations, though important in providing short-term security and destruction of insurgency, cannot address the underlying complaints (Cordesman, 2022). In this way, community reconciliation and governance should also be prioritized and the importance of reconciliation in sustainable peace, as Chrisman (2019) suggests, should be considered. Key informant KSI00010 added that “although the activities of SAMIM were necessary in the process of demoralizing the insurgent groups, it is the responsibility of maintaining the peace process by political decisions and community reconstruction.”

EACRF was less concerned with community reconciliation and this implied a plan of establishing social confidence and restoring community bonds. By comparison, SAMIM follows a more balanced policy, giving the reform of governance and strengthening security relative importance, in addition to the community initiatives. The two missions also give less attention to the economic development programmes, implying that though economic growth is recognised to contribute to conflict resolution, it is not considered the key handle in so-called root solutions in such situations. Such observations indicate that these two missions have a similar goal of approaching the conflict in a multidimensional way, but a different priority on the tactical level- this may be indicative of varying operational settings or strategic goals.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that both EACRF and SAMIM have achieved significant results, including fewer cases of insurgency, humanitarian aid and enhanced local cooperation; however, the net effect was hampered by structural issues. The limited deployment of EACRF was especially curtailed by logistical challenges and political disputes, which only led to a limited level of benefits, compared to the longer presence of SAMIM, which resulted in more concrete security benefits. However, the two missions were not spared from the problems of coordination, limitation of resources and political interference that eventually limited their capability to establish sustainable stabilization of the region.

The paper observes that the two missions present quantifiable, although debatable contributions to the security of the region and that assessing the viewpoints of the stakeholders is divided. EACRF, with its communal approach, is known to facilitate local reconciliation, conflict resolution and governance fortification, but suffers significant criticism, whereas SAMIM, with its multidimensional approach, a union of economic opportunity, counterinsurgency and governance reforms, has a more balanced but subtle impact profile. Regardless of the minor improvements in the cooperation with the region, both missions state that the most successful results will be achieved in the long term with the additional integration of the economic development practices to eliminate the causes of the existing disparities and maintain stability.

Recommendations

The EAC and SADC should develop regional joint operations and intelligence-sharing frameworks in order to transcend coordination failures and political disjuncture. EACRF had a severe coordination and communication problem with local forces and between regional actors and SAMIM had the same issue, which undermines operational performance. The joint intelligence-sharing and operational command mechanism would make sure that there is a timely response to threats by the insurgents, minimize redundancy in their work and enhance trust among the countries involved in contributing troops. This could lead to quicker threat

neutralization, less movement of insurgents through permeable borders and a general rise in credibility of the mission and stability in the region.

The United Nations Security Council, together with the leadership of SAMIM and EACRF, must strive to have a holistic review of its mandate to include an explicit built-in counterinsurgency action and a long-term community stabilization (governance, economic recovery, reconciliation). The current requirements are more focused on the military goals and do not adequately cover the structural factors of insecurity, including bad governance, marginalization and economic opportunity deprivation. New missions would not resort to the short-term tactical wins that fade away after troops pull out by reforming the missions to balance military efforts with governance reform and community-building efforts. The long-term effect would be the enhanced legitimacy of local governance, minimised insurgent recruitment and more sustainable peace.

Establish a long-term regional financing structure and logistic system in order to cover resource gaps and minimize donor reliance. The two missions have been affected by poor funding, unreliable contributions by the donors and a lack of logistics, which has restricted their ability to continue operation. This would enable missions to be more predictable and autonomous by institutionalizing a regional fund (with the work of member states and through the establishment of a common logistics pool) and developing a common logistics pool. The overall effect would be greater continuation of operations, faster response time to deployments and less susceptibility to external political interfering forces, which would eventually result in more resilient peace support operations.

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