CHAPTER 3

JOINING HANDS: REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Regional Cooperation: What Future for SADC?

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RECENT TRENDS seem to suggest a shift away from strengthening of regional cooperation in southern Africa. But such regionalism has been hitherto a declared priority on development agendas. Hampering factors currently include political differences such as the controversy over Zimbabwe. This escalated into a sharp division of views among the member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It is hardly an exaggeration to state that the inability to agree on a common approach has an almost paralysing effect. The following analysis is, however, concentrated on socio-economic factors of concern, which divide the region further instead of bringing it closer together.

Strategic Shift Towards NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seems to emerge increasingly as a type of mega-NGO to channel aid-funds into developmental projects, which at best claim, but in reality fail, to be driven by a desire towards enhanced regional collaboration. The programmes and policies funded under NEPAD are implemented mainly by countries and not by regional bodies. Hence NEPAD in effect undermines rather than strengthens an agency such as SADC (or any other regional institution).

This is a trend despite the fact that NEPAD attributes substantial relevance to regional bodies when identifying ways and means to achieve the defined socio-economic goals. NEPAD claims that its agenda is 'based on national and regional priorities and development plans', which ought to be prepared 'through participatory processes involving the people'. So far, however, no

visible signs would indicate that the collective (multilateral) efforts aim at a united regional approach in SADC's relations with the outside world.

Nor does NEPAD so far translate its noble aims into practical steps for implementation. The blue print emphasises sub-regional and regional approaches even under a separate sub-heading. It stresses 'the need for African countries to pool their resources and enhance regional development and economic integration … to improve international competitiveness'. But the crux of the matter lies there: the emphasis on international competitiveness comes at the expenses of strengthening the local economy and the local people. Instead, integration in Africa should as a priority meet the socio-economic and environmental needs of its citizenries and not seek to turn even more into an export platform.

NEPAD claims further to enhance the provision of essential regional goods as well as the promotion of intra-African trade and investments, with another focus on 'rationalising the institutional framework for economic integration'. But again, such an approach neglects the local/internal in favour of the global/external orientation. The implementation of NEPAD will hence most likely have an adverse effect and assist in an increased outward orientation of a regional bloc at the expenses of internal consolidation. It is interesting to note in this context, that notwithstanding the decisive role of South Africa within NEPAD, SADC has so far hardly acknowledged and certainly not embraced the initiative.

Divisive Free Trade Agreements

The Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and South Africa (EU-SA FTA) negotiated since the mid-1990s, had a similarly divisive effect on the southern African region by entering into a preferential trade relation with one country and thereby enhancing differences within the region resulting from existing conflicts of interest among the national economies.

South Africa herself, the monetary zone, the South African Customs Union (SACU) and SADC are already not in harmony at any time and less so given the effects of the FTA on regional economic matters. Hence the EU intervention adds more friction. The new economic partnership agreements (EPAs) negotiated between the countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands (ACP states) on the one hand and the EU on the other not only seek to replace the previous Cotonou Agreement by means of sub-regional separate negotiations but also aim towards compatibility between EU-ACP trade relations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They are hence dependent upon the settlement of the Doha Development Agenda's controversial and yet unresolved issues.

Interestingly enough, the draft European Constitution makes no reference to cooperation with ACP states. It is only fair to assume that the EU enlargement

shifts interest even further away from the neighbouring continent towards more collaboration closer to Brussels. In addition, the negotiations by the EU aim at separate accords with each region, and no country may negotiate in more than one bloc. As such, SADC is reduced to seven member countries (half of the 14 SADC states) under the EPA negotiations.

It is not far fetched to see that there is an inbuilt conflict between regionalism as it exists and the negotiation of new multilateral processes. Countries might differ over the advantages between benefits from the continued protection of regional arrangements or the creation of individual preferential access within other trade agreements. But if regionalism is considered as a problem or obstacle towards further global harmonisation under the WTO, it stands little chances of being a viable point of departure for strengthening in particular the least developed countries (LDCs) in the South within the global trade arrangements.

Instead, the predictable outcome of the current negotiations under the WTO related agreements will be a shrinking of 'development space'. To avoid such inegalitarian pseudo-partnerships, a shift in balance from the drive to homogenise trading commitments to other states towards granting states reasonable scope to choose appropriate levels of national protection is required. A development strategy would therefore have to operate in a zone where both internal as well as external integration reinforce rather than undermine each other. Instead, issues of internal integration (including issues of regional integration) have largely dropped off the development agenda as the gospel of the free trade paradigm dominates the discourse.

EU and US as partners?

The same limiting effects can be expected from the free trade agreement between SACU and the USA. The SACU-US FTA seems to promise nothing different from the US-American African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which tends to separate and divide instead of bringing African economies and interests closer. The benefits from AGOA differ among African countries according to their resources.

Ironically, in those countries which have been allocated LDC status under AGOA (receiving additional preferential treatment), external capital (from mainly East Asian countries) has managed to exploit the opportunities so created to supply the US market with cheap textiles from these countries under preferential tax regimes. The by and large unqualified and underpaid workforce in the local sweatshops is reaping negligible benefits from the super exploitation. Neither does the treasury in these states benefit, as initial investments and running costs for operations are substantially subsidised with public revenue instead of providing tax income from the profits generated.

Such recent trends point towards less rather than more regional cooperation and integration. The political and security interests might lead to increased

support from the G8 (the group of eight most industrialised countries of the Northern hemisphere) and the strengthening of initiatives towards closer regional collaboration in reducing armed conflicts and securing more stability. Such stability continues, however, to be perceived as regime security, in contrast to a concept of human security. The latter would give primacy to human rights in favour of the citizens and not preference to the governments in power.

Even if there would be achievements in this direction, the multidimensionality and heterogeneity of a region like southern Africa is likely to persist and may eventually increase. This does not prevent external support from providing further positive regional interdependence. But this requires more than merely opening up to the global economy. More so, it would have to revisit matters of regional economic collaboration and seek the involvement of the majority of the African population in these countries. The current initiatives by the EU and the US under the WTO offer little to no promise that they will contribute to such a desirable tendency, either in SADC or elsewhere.

SADC's Regional Security Arrangements

Laurie Nathan
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IN 1992 THE SOUTHERN African Development Community (SADC) was established as a regional organisation with a mandate to promote economic integration, poverty alleviation, peace, security and the evolution of common political values and institutions.

There were great expectations that the demise of apartheid and the Cold War would usher in a period of sustained stability and development at national and regional levels. Yet over the following decade the SADC region remained wracked by a high level of conflict that included civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola, as well as violence and state repression in other countries.

SADC was largely ineffectual in these situations, distinguished less by its peacemaking efforts than by its fractious internal quarrels. The formation of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security – a common security forum whose stipulated functions include the prevention and resolution of conflict – was itself bedevilled by acrimonious disputes among member states over a ten-year period. In this commentary I address three questions: what accounts for the difficulty in establishing the organ? What are the reasons for SADC's poor record of peacemaking? And why was the analysis and prognosis of many academics and activists so flawed in the early 1990s?

Many analysts attribute the difficulty in establishing the organ to disagreements over its status and structure or to competition and animosity between South Africa and Zimbabwe. These diagnoses are superficial and incomplete.

Three more substantial problems have prevented SADC from creating an effective security forum. First and most importantly, there is an absence of common values among member states. There are two key lines of division: between democratic and authoritarian tendencies in the domestic policies of states, and between pacific and militarist orientations in their foreign policies.

As in the case of Europe, a viable regional organisation with a political and security mandate can institutionalise the common values of its members, develop common policies and contribute to peace and stability. However, the viability of such organisations depends in the first instance on the existence of common values.

In the absence of sufficient normative congruence, states are unable to resolve or transcend their major disputes, achieve cohesion and act with common purpose in crisis situations. In the realm of political governance, there are many de jure democracies whose executives are intolerant of dissent, hardly accountable to parliament and insufficiently committed to respect for human rights and the rule of law.

According to Jonathan Moyo prior to becoming Zimbabwe's Minister of Information:

> the assertion that the majority of African governments are now democratic … has no empirical basis. It is true that multi-party elections are now common in Africa but this truth does not describe a fundamental development. The change is strategic, not substantive … Just look at Zambia and Malawi since the fall of Kenneth Kaunda and the late Kamuzu Banda. Zimbabwe is following suit with reckless abandon.

In 1993 SADC's framework and strategy document, prepared by the SADC Secretariat, called for the forging of common political values based on democratic norms, the creation of a 'non-militaristic security order' and the establishment of mechanisms for conflict avoidance, management and resolution.

The document highlighted the need to address non-military sources of conflict and threats to human security, such as underdevelopment and abuse of human rights. The proposed strategies and mechanisms included a forum for mediation and arbitration; the ratification by states of key principles of international law; a non-aggression treaty and non-offensive defence doctrines; democratic civil-military relations; and reductions in military force levels and spending.

Many states did not support this anti-militarist agenda, however. Progress towards establishing a security forum was delayed over the next seven years by antagonistic and recriminatory debates around the organ's status and structure as manifestations of underlying political and strategic differences among member states.

The second reason for the difficulty in operationalising the organ lies in the reluctance of SADC states to surrender a measure of sovereignty to a security body that encompasses binding rules and decision-making in the sphere of high politics and the possibility of interference in domestic affairs. This reluctance derives from the political weakness of states and the absence of common values, mutual trust and a shared vision of the security body.

Third, southern Africa is characterised by small economies, underdevelopment and weak administrative capacity, which undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of all of SADC's multilateral forums and programmes. Ten years after its formation, SADC estimated that only 20 per cent of its 470 projects met the criteria for properly integrated regional projects, the rest being essentially national projects.

In addition to its inability to prevent violent conflict, SADC does not have a record of successful peacemaking. In many intra-state conflicts it has refrained from critical comment and diplomatic engagement, treating violence and crises in governance as purely domestic affairs.

In the case of state repression and abrogation of the rule of law in Zimbabwe, on the other hand, SADC has repeatedly expressed solidarity with the government.

There are several reasons for these responses. First, SADC states are keen to avoid adversarial relations that might jeopardise regional trade and functional cooperation. Second, governments that are not fully democratic are naturally unwilling to speak out against neighbouring countries that engage in undemocratic practices. Third, southern African states are determined to maintain a posture of unity and solidarity.

Forged in the heat of the struggles against colonialism and apartheid, this posture militates against public criticism of each other. The imperative of solidarity is greatest when foreign powers raise concerns that are perceived or can be portrayed as reflecting a 'neo-colonial' agenda. Solidarity of this kind enhances regime security at the expense of human security, masks rather than transcends the substantive disputes between states, and does not constitute a foundation for a common security forum.

Fourth, SADC's poor record of peacemaking is due to the impasse around the organ. The absence of an agreed set of norms, strategies and procedures for addressing high-intensity conflict has contributed to collective inertia, divergent and parochial approaches by individual states, ill-conceived interventions of doubtful legality, and a confused mixture of peacemaking and peace enforcement.

Most of these problems were evident in SADC's response to the crises in Lesotho and the DRC in 1998. The dispute between member states around the DRC crisis crippled the organ and gave rise to the notion of 'two SADCs', with two camps pursuing contradictory pacific and militarist strategies.

In the early and mid-1990s a number of academics and activists were involved in efforts to establish a common security forum and were optimistic about its prospects. What mistakes did we make? The reasons behind them might offer insights into future activities and policy recommendations.

First, we based our models of common security on the European experience without analysing adequately the nature of our own region and of its states in particular. We were strong on ideas and norms but weak on analysis. Second, we relied too much on the compelling need for a common security body and paid too little attention to the requirements for its success. Third, we overestimated the durability of the political bonds forged during the liberation struggles and underestimated the significance of the political differences between states.

Many analysts continue to make this mistake, arguing that the organ breakdown can be overcome by states forging a political consensus on human security, democracy and respect for human rights. If states do not support these norms and values at the national level, however, they will not support them at the regional level. Regional policy on security is a product of national policies on security.

Fourth, we were preoccupied (as many analysts still are) with the architecture of security arrangements when the critical issues in fact lie elsewhere:

structure follows strategy; strategy follows objectives; objectives are shaped as much by values as by interests; and the organ breakdown has occurred at the level of foundational values.

In general, we overstated what was possible at the regional level and understated what was required at the national level. Where democracy and human security do not exist, they are most likely to be attained through broad-based popular struggles.