

Zimbabwe's International Borders. A Study in National and Regional Development in Southern Africa Edited by Solomon M. Nkiwane. University of Zimbabwe Publications, Harare, 1997, 107 pages, ISBN 0-908307-53-5, Price Z\$75-00.

In this book the authors reflect on the relations between Zimbabwe and its neighbours by looking at the border policies of the nations that border with Zimbabwe namely, South Africa and Mozambique. Nkiwane explores in detail the Kazungula-Capriivi strip where the borders of Namibia, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe converge. Perhaps the greatest strength of this work is that it places the borders within the context of a larger process of national and regional development. Furthermore this is a time when the whole outlook on border policies world-wide is changing because of liberalisation and greater economic interdependence.

There is an abundance of literature on regional co-operation and integration in Southern Africa but what distinguishes this book from the rest is that it looks at the border posts and the policies that are implemented. The first chapter is devoted to the definition of borders within international relations theory. Borders are an important symbol of state sovereignty. Whilst borders have caused wars in different parts of the world, the Southern African region has not witnessed such serious conflicts. The only conflict that has reached the international court of justice for arbitration has been that between Botswana and Namibia over the Sidudu strip.

The sanctity and the inviolability of these borders is clearly stated in article 3 (3) of the Organisation of African Unity, which calls on member states "to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for its inalienable right to an independent existence". This makes all territorial claims unlawful. Although the authors seem to be lamenting over the artificiality of these colonial borders and call for the rationalisation of the border policies in view of future conflicts, Zimbabwe and its neighbours seem to have accepted the permanence of these borders and the likelihood of a border conflict that will threaten peace in the region seems to be far off.

Zimbabwe being landlocked has maintained good neighbourly relations. Consequently the attainment of majority rule in South Africa in 1994 has transformed the Southern African political and economic relations and cross border activities and trade links have expanded. The authors in the book call for an open border policy to facilitate development and co-operation in the region but they do not clearly define what the open border policy is. Although the free movement of peoples in the region will be welcome, an open border policy should evolve slowly as there are a number of problems that will arise because of a complete liberalisation of border policies, eg. a brain drain towards South Africa.

At the moment the border areas continue to deal with the problems of poaching, border jumping, and smuggling. Even though the Southern African countries have signed the SADC treaty which calls for the establishment of an economic community of states, no significant steps have been taken towards the attainment of this goal. This is because most of the states in the region would want to protect some vital sectors of their economies from external competition. At the moment the direction and volume of trade flow in the region is dominated by South Africa. And an open border policy would benefit countries which are roughly at the same levels of development. It is the diversification and development of industrial capabilities that will influence trade policies and concurrently liberalised border policies which will facilitate inter-state co-operation and development in Southern Africa.

Unfortunately, the book's strength is undermined by the fact that it leaves out the analysis of the Zimbabwe/Zambia and the Zimbabwe/Botswana borders. The inclusion of these two countries would have completed the study of regional development in Southern Africa. The title promises us that it is going to talk about Zimbabwe's international borders and only talks about the border relations of Mozambique and South Africa and the Caprivi strip. In addition, an analysis of the countries' levels of economic development would have been appropriate, because a country's economy is an important determinant of its foreign policy. A country's level of economic development also plays an important role on issues of commercial interests which also determines its border policies as well as issues of co-operation and development.

Despite these problems the book is a welcome contribution to the ongoing debates on economic development and regional integration in Southern Africa. Its detailed account of the border areas and the problems inherent in these areas will make a worthwhile contribution to graduate and undergraduate courses on African International Relations, International Law and the politics of Southern Africa.

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