

# THE FUTURE OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION CONFERENCE (SADCC)

by

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## **Introduction:**

Speculation about the future of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) simply refuse to go away. In essence four probable scenarios give analysts concern. First, there is speculation that SADCC may continue on its path climaxing into something akin to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Secondly, there is speculation in which there is a complementarity of production based on joint companies leading to the region's transformation. Then there is the probability that Azania (a post apartheid South Africa) may so dominate SADCC as to create something akin to a revamped "Constellation of Southern African States". Lastly there is the speculation that Azania would alienate the smaller states in the region to the extent of creating conflictual interests between it and SADCC. What is SADCC's future? How long can it survive? Can SADCC survive a post apartheid South Africa? Can such a survival be in a form enabling SADCC to achieve its goals? This article provides a discussion of these questions by evaluating the four scenarios. Modest suggestions for SADCC's future are then proffered.

## **SADCC's back ground**

SADCC was created by Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe around 1979 and 1980 to negate their historically constituted dependency on the region's economic

power house-South Africa. In a 1980 Lusaka meeting, SADCC members articulated four objectives for themselves: (a) to coordinate the reduction of dependency on metropolitan powers and especially that on the subregional center of South Africa (b) to create and operationalise equitable economic integration among members (c) to master local and foreign resources so as to affect national, interstate and regional policies utilizable in the reduction of dependency and the establishment of genuine cooperation among members and (d) to secure financial and technical resources from private and governmental sources in the international Arena (Nsekela 1981). Among the many analysts who agree that SADCC has achieved much since its inception in 1980 are Green and Thompson,(1986) Stephen Lewis,(1986) Peter Slinn,(1984) Cherkasova and Walter.(1986)

If SADCC can be said to have achieved much, why then has there been such protracted speculation about its future? A compelling reason has to do with the history of attempts at effective sub-regional cooperation in Sub Saharan Africa. This history has been far from being happy. SADCC is itself haunted by the sad memory of the acrimonious Central African Federation which between 1953 and 1963 merged Malawi (then Nyasaland) Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) and Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). SADCC is also haunted by Tanzania's negative experiences in the ill-fated East African Community (which also involved Kenya and Uganda). This community broke up in 1977. Even the Portuguese colonial "Economic Union" involving Mozambique and Angola was said to limit development and hamper national planning while enriching foreign firms and interests (Nsekela 1981: 12-13). Lastly SADCC is troubled by the still existing Southern African Customs Union (SACU) grouping-Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland to South Africa. Lesotho and Swaziland are also linked to South Africa through the Rand Monetary Area (R.M.A). Although SACU has existed from 1910, there have been persistent complaints that only South Africa really profits from it. As Slinn (1984:183) has argued, there

are complex political and economic explanations for the failure of regional economic organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. A possible explanation for this failure may be the overambitious nature of attempts of economic integration in the case of countries with heterogeneous political and economic backgrounds. For the East African Community there simply was not enough political will to rise over the crises emanating from conflicting interests especially between Kenya and Tanzania. None was prepared to hold in abeyance some elements of political sovereignty in order to preserve regional cooperation. Another factor was that economic cooperation was left entirely to spontaneous market forces inspired by liberal free trade principles which allowed the economically stronger countries (Kenya in the East African Community and Zimbabwe in the Central African Federation) to reinforce their relatively advantageous positions and widen existing economic disparities (Cherkasova and Walter 1986:59). Additionally, the creation of supranational bureaucratized institutions such as autonomous joint companies tended to exacerbate conflicts of economic interests within these groupings. So did the imposition, by fiat, of regulatory trading regimes such as a common market.

Slinn has claimed that:

where regional organizations are concerned, it is the late bird which catches the worm — SADCC may symbolize a willingness to learn from the past mistakes and determination to devise a new formula for subregional cooperation which will provide a secure and permanent environment for the achievement of regional developmental goals (Slinn 1984:183-184).

Yes, it is true that SADCC leaders know all too well about the sad experiences of the East African Community and the Central African Federation. They therefore have sought to learn from the mistakes of these

organizations. What has been the substance of this lesson for SADCC members? Elaborating an answer to this question leads us to the first scenario of SADCC's future.

### **An ASEAN Model for SADCC**

Slinn sees the future of SADCC as lying in something comparable to ASEAN:

A precedent may be seen in the development of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), generally accepted as one of the most effective of the regional development communities so far established. Like SADCC, ASEAN began life with a declaration of common principles and objectives, the Bangkok declaration of 1967. Within the framework of this declaration, the following decade saw the slow evolution of bilateral and multilateral agreements in various spheres of functional cooperation, and it was not until 1976 that the association was formalized by a treaty of amity and cooperation, a further Declaration of ASEAN Accord and an agreement establishing an ASEAN secretariat in Djarkata (Slinn 1984:59)<sup>1</sup>.

The present SADCC Model of South Cooperation resembles ASEAN in its principles. For SADCC these principles are designed to avoid the past mistakes of regional organizations in Sub Sahara Africa. They consist in:

- (i) The pursuance of limited but concrete and feasible programmes. One mistake identified with the East African Community and the Central African Federation is that they were too ambitious in that they sought full-blown economic integration: SADCC seeks to avoid this by being modest and cool headed in its objectives. It concentrates on functional and practical projects. To this end it has avoided highly organised suprastructures such as joint firms, in favour of institu-

tional structures which are essential to servicing required operations. SADCC has avoided committing itself to a common market, a common currency or a preferential trade area. It has also avoided restricting members from entering special relationships with other countries.

- (ii) The East African Community and the Central African Federation were blamed for having left cooperation to the workings of freely developing market forces. SADCC has avoided this by applying the principles of national interests and national responsibility. Each nation has identified its interests and sought to coordinate those interests for the region. To this end Angola, the only oil producer in the region coordinates the energy sector; Botswana is in agro research; Lesotho in tourism, soil and wildlife; Mozambique in transport and communications; Swaziland coordinates manpower; Tanzania coordinates industry; Zambia coordinates mining; and Zimbabwe is in food security. Such arrangements are important because they ensure that national development and national interests take priority. Cooperation is geared to the national requirements of member countries and their separate interests. Countries only participate in projects in so far as they anticipate benefits accruing to them. Thus individual member nations afford to be flexible, selective and even informal in the extent to which they choose to get involved in SADCC projects. In this way no member can really complain of loosing out as a result of getting involved in SADCC projects.
- (iii) In line with the above principles, SADCC has not started with supranational bodies but has, instead, adopted a consensus model to ensure that decisions are not taken against any one member state. At the Central level SADCC has a summit conference of Heads of State convening once a year. Below this conference is a Ministerial

Council meeting three times a year. Then there is a committee of officials whose main task is to prepare and discuss agendas for sessions of the ministerial council. The only permanent structure in SADCC is a secretariat responsible for the council of ministers. It is, however, small and is meant to have a liaison and coordinating role. Decisions are therefore left to the consensus Of SADCC Heads of State and are meant to assure the principles of equality, reciprocity and non interference in each others' affairs. Like ASEAN, SADCC hopes bilateral and multilateral links in various functional areas will gradually evolve from these principles to make it an independent and hopefully powerful economic group.

There exists several factors against this model as future for SADCC. Abegunrin has pointed out that:

Despite all the rhetoric characterizing SADCC as a unique, pioneering experiment which is distinctly African, it has resolved the knotty problems associated with integration schemes essentially by running away from them. The much heralded flexibility attributed to SADCC is really an euphemism for leaving each member to pursue national interests (Abegunrin 1985, 375)

SADCC is based on a false premise i.e. what is good for one country in the region is good for the region. If countries want to cooperate and/or integrate, they must be prepared to give up some of their individual interests in order to promote that cooperation. Where national interest takes precedence (as in SADCC) it is very difficult to affect integration and/or cooperation. SADCC therefore risks remaining a perpetual infant i.e. a limited organization with limited strategies so long as it follows its present model. Zehender has argued that one should not overlook the brittle nature of the SADCC model:

The intensity of links stands and falls with the existing political consensus among governing protagonists. In the case of SADCC, this basic consensus is decisively strengthened by the external pressure member countries jointly experience from the exercise by the Republic of South Africa of her military and economic potential..Although this may seem cynical, it is probably true to say that regional coordination between SADCC Countries, function all the more smoothly, the greater the pressure exercised by the Republic of South Africa (Zehender 1985, 385)

Similarly Mufune (1988) has argued that the uniting filament in SADCC is the mutuality of interests converging around a deep abhorrence for apartheid. The transformation of South Africa into Azania would spell grave dangers to the existence of the present SADCC model for it would remove the most unifying negative in SADCC apartheid. Furthermore (and this is the point Slinn overlooks when setting ASEAN as a model for SADCC) member countries are characterized by differing political ideologies. Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique fancy themselves as Marxian Socialists: Zambia and Tanzania claim to be African Socialists, while Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland ascribe to free market Liberalism. These ideological differences make for greater political dissension.

A SADCC which pursues limited objectives and strategies is one amenable to South Africa and its Constellation of Southern African states. Pik Botha, the South Africa foreign minister recognized this when he said:

South Africa should like to see in it (SADCC) an attempt on their part to improve their circumstances, and in that case welcome it. We welcome it if they are

able to obtain capital and assistance from the industrialized world to improve the circumstances of their own countries, for if conditions around us improve, the same will apply in South Africa (Shaw 1983:9).

Leistner (1983) a liberal South Africa academic has provided justification for South Africa's welcome of such a SADCC:

- (i) It is in South Africa's interest to have prosperous and stable neighbours. There is little scope for trade with poor countries whereas the more developed countries are, the more they have to exchange. This is the lesson of the Soviet Union's flourishing trade with Capitalist Countries.
- (ii) To the extent SADCC countries economically progress, they will develop technical and administrative sophistication which will make them more responsible partners in any grouping of states which may emerge.
- (iii) Finally, the present highly unequal levels of economic development would pose substantial problems in closer economic grouping encompassing South Africa and the SADCC states.

South Africa clearly sees in a SADCC along the ASEAN model a formula for affecting its now faltering Constellation of Southern Africa States 2. SADCC can escape this by raising its level of cooperation and integration and in the context of Southern Africa this, however, means actively confronting the question of apartheid and an abandonment of SADCC's present strategies. It is this probability which forms the substance of SADCC's second future scenario.



## SADCC as Joint Controller of the Region's Commanding Heights

The late President of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, an architect of SADCC argued that SADCC was there to develop "a new economic order in Southern Africa and force a united community". (Nsekela 1981:6) SADCC's future was to be beyond a limited organization with limited strategies. Its ultimate aim was an "economic community". These are visions in line with the Lagos Plan of Action's idea of collective self-reliance. Ann Seidman believes in this model as a future for SADCC:

Viewed overtime the possibilities arising from regional integration, despite the exclusion of South Africa would be far greater. If governments cooperated to invest available surplus to build infrastructure and industries throughout the region, both the market and the surplus would expand at a rapid rate.——The region's planners would need to formulate a long term regional development strategy within which each participating nation could implement its own national plans for balanced industrial and agricultural growth.(Seidman 1981:81)

Seidman goes on to suggest that this regional development strategy could identify the possibilities for developing "poles for growth" which could enable SADCC to move from functional coordination to complementarity of production leading to the region's transformation. Among the possibilities Seidman perceives are (a) a regional iron and steel industry on the foundations existing in Zimbabwe. This could provide inputs throughout the region such as factory and bridge construction, simple tools and machines, railroad tracks. (b) The expansion of Zambia's Copper smelting and refinery capacity to process the output of SADCC countries. (c) The construction of a large oil refinery in Angola and its transformation into a petrochemical industry producing for the region. The attainment of these

would require creating new joint state controlled institutions capable of capturing investible surpluses produced in the region and re-investing them according to the desired development strategy. There would also be need for joint state trading companies to effect regional wide wholesale trading activities. For Seidman, what SADCC needs are formal and flexible institutional arrangements ensuring joint control of the commanding heights of the region's economy (Seidman 1981:81).

This scenario is among the most desirable. It could enable SADCC countries to achieve economic development as they detach themselves from South Africa. It counters South Africa's Constellation of Southern African States. Therein lies its first hitch. The crux of the problem is that South Africa has too much interest in the region to allow this to come about without struggle. Carol Thompson (1986) has elaborated on South Africa's interest in the region. She estimates that South Africa's trade with SADCC countries stands at \$1.5 billion with Zimbabwe being its most important trading partner in Africa. Should this scenario be SADCC's future 2 million wage jobs would be lost in South Africa and historical infrastructure linking SADCC's production and marketing activities to South Africa would be no more. SADCC alternative routes would reduce South Africa's economic grip on regional trade thereby reducing its transport revenue by as much as 50%. Similarly Stephen Lewis (1986) has adumbrated on South Africa's dependence on SADCC. He estimates that South Africa runs a \$2000-\$2,500 million per annum surplus on trade in goods and non factor services with SADCC states. Before 1985 its foreign exchange reserves were substantially lower than its annual surplus with Botswana. South Africa's net foreign exchange earnings roughly equal the amounts it needs to pay interest on outstanding debts. Lewis says that South Africa's export growth to the BLS group in SADCC accounted for 23% of its manufacturing growth and 11% of growth in other non mining sectors in the 1970s.

Already South Africa has not been reticent about destabilizing those who threaten these interests. A recent SADCC calculation estimated that the cost to the region of this destabilization over the period 1981-4 was in the range of \$10.1 billion (Thompson 1986:87; Stoneman 1986:157). Thus this scenario would definitely invite South Africa's wrath.

Another telling problem with this scenario is that it is open to failure just like the East African Community and the Central African Federation. There exists among SADCC members a number of latent and manifest economic conflicts which may readily subvert this scenario as a future for SADCC. Mufune has pointed to three such types of conflicts:

- (i) Among SADCC members are countries which maintain a "special status" with South Africa and may in fact be competing for the enhancement of this status. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (the BLS group) together with Malawi (the only African country with diplomatic ties with South Africa) are in such a position. Some actions in the 1980s can best be understood in terms of these countries' need to enhance their position with South Africa. Swaziland's 1982 secret treaty aiming at suppressing the ANC, its 1985 act of establishing a trade section in Pretoria, its proposed land deal aiming at border re-adjustment, its 1983 railine linking Komatipoort (on the South Africa -Mozambique border) to Richards Bay in South Africa falls in line with this status enhancement need. Similarly Botswana's electricity agreements with Escom (South Africa) served to enhance its status with South Africa. Lesotho's coup against Leabua Jonathan, although created by South Africa, enhanced its position in South African eyes. So did its highland water project damming the Mabibanatsao and Sengu valleys to divert water to South Africa's most industrialized area. These efforts at status en-

hancement may cause friction between competing states.

- (ii) There is potential for conflict between countries in closed preferential systems with South Africa (e.g. the BLS and Malawi): those trying to diminish contacts with South Africa (probably Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe); and those with minimal contact with South Africa (notably Angola and Tanzania) . The potential for conflict relate to sanctions. Countries in close preferential systems like BLS which are in SACU are not in a position to impose sanctions, neither is Malawi with its ambassador in Pretoria. Together they run the risk of being branded traitors. Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe are in a little better position yet can not fault the BLS without being seen as hypocritical for they still have a lot of trade with South Africa. Angola and Tanzania may be more legitimately vocal in calling for sanctions against apartheid.
- (iii) There are conflicts among SADCC countries arising out of similarities in economic and especially export structures. Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe may conflict over mining because their mines are run by TNC's with South Africa connections i.e. A.A.C., AMAX (RST) and DeBeers. They compete for favours from these firms. They are open to selective blackmail by South Africa in so far as these TNCs are connected to South Africa. The different levels of manufacturing growth among SADCC countries imply different priorities in economic planning. Those countries which are ahead in manufacturing (e.g. Zimbabwe) face tough competition from South Africa as they search for original markets. Additionally, many countries in SADCC export similar types of products. Conflict may arise as they compete to market their over supplied products and as they seek to attract TNC's producing those commodities. Labour exporters within SADCC face competition with each other and risk being seen as

“soft” on apartheid. The indebtedness of SADCC countries means that they are open to competition for external development resources.

This situation also affords considerable latitude to donor countries to play SADCC countries off one another.

These differences in political and economic outlook make it probable that SADCC countries do not have the will to make this scenario their future.

### **SADCC as Azania's Vassel**

The first two scenarios assume the future of SADCC in the context of an apartheid South Africa. Things are changing and SADCC must have a future even after Azania is born. This is the focus of our next two scenarios.

Christopher Hill (1983) once wrote “To ask whether SADCC's dominant objective is economic development or detachment from South Africa is perhaps to ask the wrong question, because the two are intertwined”. But the two are intertwined only because of the existence of apartheid. The question has to gain currency and relevance once Azania is born.

It is in this context that Barry Buzan and H. O Nazareth have projected SADCC's future in terms of a revamped “Constellation of Southern African States”. According to them;

“In its local environment of Southern Africa, the impact of Azania will be immense. A whole set of currently hostile relations will be transformed into ones that are friendly or at least neutral. Azania will share the Moscow leanings of Angola and Mozambique. But the fact of South Africa's passing will end the destabilization campaigns promoted by Pretoria and so reduce the need for either of them to rely on the Soviet Union for

military assistance. Namibia will probably be independent by the time Azania emerges but along with other small states like Botswana, it will fall naturally into the sphere of influence of the region's only industrial power. Lesotho and Swaziland may well federate with Azania since the removal of apartheid would take away the main barrier to bringing their political status into line with their total economic integration. Azania will be able to take up openly the major role of the regional economic leader that South Africa has covertly established, and because it is open, expand it. A framework for such a role already exists in the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which Azania could hardly fail to dominate" (Buzan and Nazareth 1986:39-40)

This scenario is quite probable given the present political fragility and economic impoverishment of SADCC states. It is even the more probable because the future of outside aid to SADCC would be doubtful in the context of an emerged Azania. Presently SADCC members are firmly convinced that a massive sustained input of foreign aid is an indispensable ingredient for the success of their projects and strategies (Abegunrin 1985:378).

To this end SADCC has obtained \$764 million from the leading western countries, \$159 million from the Nordic countries, \$44 million from international organizations and \$3 million from the socialist countries (Emmerich 1987:1730). SADCC will need greater and greater aid in the future. Paradoxically some biggest aid givers to SADCC are the countries most deeply involved in South Africa economically. For them, "SADCC has become a soft option, a face saving commitment, a dubious counter balance to their continuing involvement with South Africa"(Mandaza

1987:216). Thus it seems that many countries would have little reason to continue aid once Azania emerges. It will be left to Azania to pick up the tab and dominate the stage that is SADCC.

A problem here is that SADCC which survives in this form is hardly worth the candle for it would fail to achieve some of its most cherished goals - the reduction of dependency on metropolitan and submetropolitan powers, and the affectation of equitable economic integration among members. Another problem would be an anticipated opposition to such domination by other SADCC states. There would be a real fear on their part that the economic embrace of a large and powerful neighbour such as Azania would be to their detriment. What SADCC members would do about such a situation forms the substance of SADCC's last future scenario.

### **Azania as SADCC's Repellant**

The passing of South Africa and the emergence of Azania would remove the most substantive issue holding SADCC together i.e. the unifying negative of apartheid. There is, however, the possibility of an aggressive Azania serving as a functional equivalent to apartheid in that the smaller states of SADCC may be repelled. Henry Bienen is one person who sees this scenario as a possible future for SADCC:

“Even if South Africa were to be ruled by blacks we can conjecture that Southern African states would show a degree of ambivalence similar to that which has marked West African attitudes towards Nigeria and that country's dominant role in the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS). Nigeria has treaded lightly for the most part, given the economic and political sensitivities of its economic

partners but it has also used its oil as a weapon against Ghana after the first Rawlings coup. It has rapidly and brutally repatriated hundreds of thousands of Ghanaians, Chadians, and people from Niger and the Cameroon. Its markets are an attraction as are its resources, but its size and weight also make other states nervous. South Africa's economy is in many ways even more dominant vis a vis its neighbours than Nigeria is compared to other West African states. They (SADCC members) would be fearful that formal economic arrangements would build in and institutionalize South Africa's central position. Thus despite the Southern African states' argument that SADCC is not directed against South Africa, SADCC clearly is an attempt to lessen dependence on South Africa and to create economic alternative to the South African giant (Bienan 1984:59)

A problem with this scenario is that not all SADCC states would be equally repelled by a dominant Azania especially in the event it is majority ruled. The ruling blocks in the BLS group would, for instance, have little reason to resist the attraction of bringing their political status in line with their economic integration into such an Azania. This could certainly alienate them from some of the SADCC states thereby undermining SADCC's aim of reducing dependency. Such alienation may even lead to the disintegration of SADCC as we know it.

### **Concluding Remark**

The future always begins and never ends. Analyses on the future of



SADCC are suffused with values and the scenarios are important because they present people with intuitive overviews of the variety of contingencies analysts must debate and deal with. History has been shaped by the will and actions of our predecessors and we ourselves help shape the future through scenarios. What is decided today reduces the alternatives available to the coming generation. In this sense humans choose the future by chasing it and trying to shape it according to their interests.

The question remaining must concern what SADCC can do given the objectives and aspirations of member countries and what the limiting conditions from the environment (especially South Africa) will allow SADCC to do. Such an analysis makes SADCC the focus of attention while trying the four scenarios and their assumptions.

The values standing out in the four scenarios center around the survival of SADCC in a form that ensures equality, independence, and the material progress of member states. The ASEAN model is one which stresses the value of survival and independence between members. It, however, fails to seriously address the issue of independence from South Africa in that it has been unable to deal with the continuing member country integration into South Africa's economy. Neither does it seriously address the issue of material progress in that region. Wide economic issues are not translated and/or addressed as joint problems.

These can only be addressed within the framework of the second scenario. The second scenario is however weak on ensuring the survival of SADCC given the divergent political and economic interests characterizing the different SADCC states and the continuing threat from South Africa. Probably what is needed in the short and medium term future (in the pre Azania era) are flexible arrangements combining the first two scenarios. The emphasis on survival in the first scenario should be

combined with the emphasis on independence from South Africa and on joint economic activity between member states advocated in the second scenario. Joint security arrangements to ensure against destabilization and probably along the lines of SATCC. In the long term (when Azania emerges) the value of equality should be paramount in economic arrangement. Equality and its absence (domination) is the equation tying the third and fourth scenarios. Security would be on the backburner in that the passing of South Africa would end the destabilization promoted by Pretoria. It is for this reason that some have claimed that 'the future of SADCC itself is dependent on what happens in South Africa and not as some SADCC protagonists would like to believe that SADCC will significantly affect the future of that country'. If this is the case, SADCC states have an interest in promoting an Azania which values democracy and equality among peoples in a degree unprecedented in Africa.

## Notes

- 1 This alleged success of ASEAN is slightly overdone. V. Anderyer has pointed to different levels of economic development as an impediment in ASEAN; Carazon Aquino, at the ASEAN meeting of June 1986 in Manila, criticized members for their inability to really consolidate intra regional links in ASEAN's first two decades. See Valeri Anderyev, "ASEAN: A political palette of many colours" (International Affairs, Moscow, 3 March 1988) pp72-80.
- 2 Gedenhuys and Venter, two leading South African academics have

emphasized this point. "A Constellation would essentially be a generator of economic development in Southern Africa. In this regard the association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) provides an interesting parallel: its aims include the acceleration of economic growth and the promotion of economic, and technical cooperation in the various other fields and it operates through an annual ministerial conference and a series of committees". See Deon Gedenhuys and Dennis Venter, *A Constellation of States: Regional Cooperation in Southern Africa (International Affairs Bulletin, Vol 3, December 1979) pp36-72.*

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