

# THE PLACE AND ROLE OF IMPERIALISM IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CONSAS AND SADCC

by

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## Introduction

Southern Africa has been a theatre of political and military conflict since the 1960's. The primary source of this conflict has been and continues to be imperialist domination of the peoples and economies of the region. This domination is, unlike elsewhere in Africa, particularly acute because it embodies the most intense contradictions of imperialist system, namely racial and national oppression which are specific to the region. This paper is an attempt to explore the place and role of Western imperialist states and international capital as represented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the conflict between the Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS) and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). The SADCC initiative has been viewed as contradictory to that of South Africa (i.e. CONSAS) and therefore likely to set South Africa on a confrontational course with the SADCC states (Green, 1981; Tostensen, 1982; Tostensen and Leys, 1983; Hanlon, 1986; Johnson and Martin, 1986). This is so because whilst SADCC seeks to reduce dependence on, but not only South Africa CONSAS on the other hand seeks to deepen that dependence by a variety of means - including military force (SADCC, 1980; Tsie, 1989). It is therefore imperative to analyse the strategies and calculations of imperialism in this conflict and assess their impact on the SADCC initiative - actual or potential. The paper will focus primarily on SADCC's goal of self-reliant industrialisation because it is only through such a strategy that the SADCC contries can achieve structural transformation of their economies

and reduce imperialist domination of these economies.

### **SADCC, the West and International Capital**

The mere fact that SADCC has since 1980 stressed the importance of international support for the implementation of its programme of action suggests that it is bound to be a site of contradictions and struggles between it and the external forces some of which participated in its creation (Goodison, 1987). There is therefore no guarantee that the latter would agree with every aspect of the SADCC programme of action.

As President Khama remarked:

the tactics of the opposition will vary. Perhaps the most dangerous will be that of false friends who will whisper in Southern African ears that the road chosen is too difficult, that fellow Southern African states are not trustworthy, that the struggle is not worth the effort (Nsekela, 1981:xiv)

Khama was careful not to suggest that all of SADCC's "friends" will oppose or distort its programme. Some may fully support its programme of action in its entirety, others may support specific projects and distort others while some may oppose or subvert the entire programme. This is so because Western states are not a monolithic force with identical interests and objectives in SADCC affairs; they have their own contradictions and rivalries. Therefore whatever form of support SADCC receives from its various "friends" will always be conditioned by what each one of them perceives to be in its long term interests in the region. Having said that, it is important to assess whether international support for SADCC has been forthcoming and if so, in what sectors, in what form and from where. By 1987 SADCC had generated 493 projects costing a total of slightly over

US\$6401 million of which nearly US\$5522 million or 86% was to come from foreign sources (SADCC Annual Report, 1987:13). But only US\$2166 million (approximately) had been secured or 39% whilst another US\$323 million or 8% was under negotiation. More than 75% of all aid disbursed and/or under negotiation was from Western Governments with the remainder accounted for by multilateral aid agencies and non-Western governments (SADCC Annual Report, 1987; Saasa, 1988). This dependence on Western financial support has been questioned by, among others, Mandaza (1987). He says:

SADCC sees no contradiction in its policy of seeking economic assistance from the US and Western capitalist countries as a means of reducing dependence on South Africa. This in spite of the fact that many of these countries are themselves directly or indirectly supporting South Africa (Mandaza, 1987:210)

Undeniably there is a contradiction in this relationship. The problem is the way in which Mandaza poses his argument. Instead of analyzing SADCC itself, he merely dismisses it as mere opposition to South Africa (Mandaza, 1987:211). This poses a severe problem for him because if SADCC is merely a neo-colonial grouping, how then can it see a contradiction in its relationship with the West? However, SADCC does see that contradiction at least at the level of rhetoric, which Mandaza also implicitly accepts. For instance its Executive Secretary, Dr. Simba Makoni stated that: America cannot be friends with Savimbi and friends with SADCC and Angola at the same time. (Mandaza, 1987:210)

Clearly SADCC would like to insist that the US must choose which side it supports while in practice it may want to support both. Furthermore, these ambiguities in US policy in Southern Africa could open possibilities for

SADCC to score important diplomatic victories against South Africa and her proxies. For example in 1987 the US Ambassador to Mozambique condemned the MNR for committing untold atrocities against the civilian population of that country.

The Mandaza statement does however, raise several important problems about the relationship between SADCC and the West. But he does not explain whether that contradiction is so severe as to ultimately defeat SADCC's original objectives, nor does he give us a clue as to what is realistically possible for SADCC at this moment. The first issue can only be settled by objective analysis of SADCC's objectives because that contradiction could mortally wound SADCC if and when all its Western supporters are supporting South Africa to the same extent. Yet this is not so as Mandaza implicitly recognises. For example the Nordic bloc is generally anti-South Africa as shown by the Nordic-SADCC Initiative, Sweden's withdrawal from the Hunyani Pulp Mill Project, Nordic support for SATCC and indeed the relatively large volume of Nordic aid to SADCC (Haarlov, 1988, 217). This in contrast to US policy where Zimbabwe officials were offered (by USAID-BT) substantial aid increases.... if they would push for SADCC dialogue with South Africa (Thompson, 1987:32)

In addition a USAID official in 1986 unequivocally stated that:

it is important that trade links between the SADCC states and the emerging black business community (section 10 black petty bourgeoisie and its Homeland counterpart - BT) in South Africa be strengthened whenever possible (Thompson, 1987:32)

Although by 1986 the US had significantly moved away from its "confrontational" attitude in which SADCC was seen as "the region's own folly" (Crocker, 1980) its current policy toward SADCC is clearly one of

integrating SADCC and subverting it into CONSAS as shown by the above quotations. We will later see how its Trojan Horses, the IMF and the World Bank, are attempting to effect this integration. In contrast again, the EC has not in general been hostile to SADCC even though it too like the US, has always been concerned about the ultimate issue in Southern Africa, the dismantling of apartheid (Goodison, 1987:69), and what this would portend for the economic interests of its various member states - themselves subject to intense rivalries. Its primary concern since 1980 appears to have been how to integrate the whole of the SADCC region into the Lome Convention. This is evident from the statement by Claude Cheysson - former EC Development Commission - that although the EEC was (and is - BT) happy to cooperate with regional projects involving Mozambique and Angola, it would not be possible for the European Development Fund to provide large amounts of money inside those countries until they had acceded to the Lome Convention. (Goodison, 1987:127-128)

SADCC strongly objected to this and other similar divide and rule tactics and quite correctly, because its main alternative transport system could not take-off unless its supporters funded transport and communications projects in Angola and Mozambique. But the EEC dragged its feet with some of its members (West Germany) insisting that Mozambique must sign the so-called Berlin clause that precluded relations with East Germany. Fortunately - and perhaps by no accident - the Nordic bloc stepped in to provide technical and financial support for SATCC.

After refusing to give SADCC any financial muscle to "disengage" from SATS the EEC turned a blind eye to the destruction of the railways and ports of Angola and Mozambique - to the dismay of both SADCC and the Nordic bloc. Indeed, SADCC has calculated the costs of South African destabilisation to be roughly US\$30 billion between 1980-1986 i.e. 120% of the region's GPD in 1985 and 500% of total funds required for the SADCC

programme in 1987. (SADCC, 1987:8). With hindsight, Goodison's suggestion that South African destabilisation of Angola and Mozambique advanced the EC's hidden agenda for SADCC carries weight (Goodison, 1987). This is so because after the Nkomati Accord and the accession of Angola and Mozambique to the Lome Convention, EC aid to SATCC improved significantly. (The Guardian - 5 August 1988). But this does not necessarily mean that the EC as a whole now embraces SADCC's dream of "economic liberation". Long before this slight change of heart, Britain, which is by far the most influential in EC policy formulation toward Southern Africa, stated emphatically that it (the EC) will "support SADCC's objectives as they relate to practical forms of cooperations, but not to reducing dependency on South Africa" (emphasis mine) (Goodison, 1987:127-128).

SADCC was also advised not to advocate sanctions against South Africa (Goodison, 1987:147). Further evidence of EC reluctance to give SADCC a muscle to "disengage" is shown by the fact that both Britain and France only provide non-lethal military aid to Mozambique while West Germany is assisting South Africa to build advanced submarines (The Independent 25th March, 1988). These would certainly enhance Pretoria's naval attacks on Angola and Mozambican ports, and possibly even Tanzania, thus destroying SADCC's alternative transport system. Whether or not West Germany's military connivance with Pretoria in this specific instance has been occasioned by the frustrations of West German designs for SATCC by Mozambique is an open question - but one must suspect so (Goodison, 1987). But the fact is that lethal military aid (e.g Stinger Missiles which were given to Mojahedin in Afghanistan and UNITA) is out of the question because the EC, the US, West Germany and Japan have vested interests in South Africa (Cohen and El-Khawas, 1976; Crocker, 1980; Lotta, 1985; Jourdan, 1988). To enhance these (collective) interests the EC has pledged aid for Lesotho's Highland Water Scheme a CONSAS project which would

provide cheap electricity and water for South African and Western multinationals operating in South Africa (Goodison, 1988). Given these realities Mandaza's observation that:

there is a possibility that for the US and other Western capitalist countries, the SADCC has become a soft option, a face-saving commitment, a dubious counterbalance to their continuing involvement with South Africa (Mandaza, 1987:216).

This cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. It raises the question of whether SADCC can successfully negotiate the terms of the new dependence it has opted for to the forefront of analysis. To answer this question concretely let us examine Western support for SADCC's sector of industry and trade and see whether it is as forthcoming as in transport and communications. This investigation could give us a clue as to whether the core of the SADCC initiative, self-reliant industrialisation, is receiving the support it deserves from the West.

### **Western Financial Support for SADCC: Myth or Reality?**

Writing in 1985, Friedland showed that the six major OECD states - the US, Britain, West Germany, Japan, France and Canada - had not provided any aid to SADCC's industrialisation programme (Friedland, 1985:291-292). Characteristically, their excuse has been that private capital is the best vehicle for this sector. This suggests that they are not keen on SADCC's industrialisation programme. We will substantiate this point later. By contrast, the Nordic bloc has made the largest contribution to SADCC's sector of industry and trade. Admittedly, the bulk of this is accounted for by Swedish aid to Tanzania's Mufundi pulp mill project (Haarlov, 1988:62 and 109). What is even more disturbing is that OECD aid, which is concentrated in transport and communications is tied to source by at least

55% of the global average of 47% (Saasa, 1988). Yet Nordic aid, whether in transport or industry and trade, is not as innocent as the Nordic-SADCC Initiative would have us believe. First, the Nordic countries want to secure a foothold in the SADCC region because they need its mineral raw materials for their own capital goods industries. For instance, Sweden (supposedly a neutral country) is a major arms producer - principally for Third World markets. Second, the Nordic countries basically live on selling technology. They seek to sell (and not always to transfer) it to the SADCC countries outright or through joint ventures, management contracts etc within the framework of their mini-NIEO with SADCC. Given the fact that the EC has also had such a mini-NIEO with most of the SADCC states since 1975 there is little reason to believe that the Nordic-SADCC Initiative will be significantly better than Lome I-III especially in the field of industrialisation (Mahler, 1984; Eusner, 1986). In fact, both the EC and Nordic bloc have been reluctant to support SADCC's core industries, the Mufundi project aside (SADCC Annual Report, 1987). This suggests that both are ready to support small-scale projects - artisan implements, textiles etc - which do not and cannot directly compete with their market for capital goods exports to the SADCC region. A clear example of this trend is given by Goodison when he says:

during the UK financed electrification of part of the Zimbabwe railway network Zimbabwe industrialists complained that a large portion of inputs could have been procured locally. (Goodison, 1988:13).

Considering Zimbabwe's industrial superiority in the SADCC region most transport and industrial projects are likely to be turnkey projects with few linkages with the rest of national economies or the regional economy at large. The EC and the Nordic bloc may thus be basically seen as seeking to assist SADCC in its struggle for diversified dependence as long as this falls within the framework of the existing international division of labour in which the SADCC region would mainly export primary commodities



and import manufactured goods. This is precisely why the EC and the Nordic bloc praise SADCC ( and not PTA) as a unique example of regional cooperation, for it does not challenge the imperialist system. In particular, its organisational structure allows a multiplicity of donors to influence its direction through feasibility studies and aid for specific projects. The emphasis hitherto on transport and communications has been extremely suitable for this kind of imperialist domination. But this does not mean that diversified dependence is meaningless for SADCC. After all diversified dependence is its bottom line as stated in the Lusaka Declaration. Therefore complaints about "SADCC's wholesale dependence on the West" and that this is likely to lead to the replacement of one set of dependence (on South Africa) for another (on the West) are actually besides the point no matter how genuine they are; more so that dependence on the West is not wholly new in the SADCC region and does not preclude the emergence of a domestic bourgeoisie as evidenced by Botswana's experience in the beef industry. More crucially, Tostensen (1982) and Amin et. al. (1987) miss the point that for SADCC the choice is between one sided dependence on South Africa and diversified dependence on the West. Once this objective reality is recognised, the issue of delinking from the centre becomes superfluous, especially in so far as the class forces that could bring it about are not concretely analyzed by these writers.

### **IMF Conditionality and the SADCC Initiative**

Having established that the EC and the US seek to integrate the SADCC region into CONSAS in spite of the opposite direction favoured by the Nordic bloc it is now opportune to investigate how international finance capital (IMF and the World Bank) has intervened in this terrain of conflicting interests and relations. This is a pertinent issue because these two Washington institutions generally represent the most powerful imperialist states (US, UK etc). Along with the rest of Africa, the SADCC region

is in a deep crisis of severe foreign exchange shortages, mounting foreign debt burden and declining industrial capacity (Ravenhill, 1986; Havnevik, 1987; SADCC Annual Reports, 1985-87). This economic crisis has forced the most affected SADCC states (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) to approach the IMF and the World Bank for Standby Loans and Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs). Characteristically, the IMF has imposed, depending on the severity of the crisis, its usual dose of state expenditure cuts, wage freezes, currency devaluations and economic liberalisation as pre-conditions for loans. Of course, the IMF denies that it imposes these conditions but only seeks to find "people with the right ideas" (we now know how) within these countries so that they can, with its assistance, enable their respective countries to pay their huge debts (Helleiner, 1987; Goodison, 1987; Bhudou, 1988).

Of course currency devaluations help to provide cheap raw material exports to imperialist countries which cushions them against the full brunt of the current recession. However, an even more relevant point is made by Loxley thus:

the overriding objective (of a positive balance of payments - BT) is nothing less than a wholesale revamping of the regime of accumulation in the debtor countries altering in a fundamental way the strategy and modus operandi of economic institutions, the distribution of income and the balance of class power (Loxley, 1987:49)

These trends have several important implications for SADCC. First, the affected SADCC countries are advised to buy whatever they need from the cheapest source. For most of them this would be South Africa which the IMF classifies as a European country (Financial Mail; 14 July, 1988). The

second is that agriculture is given top priority via price incentives for peasant producers (especially for the so-called "emergent farmers"- Thompson, 1987) while industry is exposed to the full brunt of foreign (South Africa) competition. Third, state intervention is reduced to the bare minimum in favour of market forces. Fourth, military spending is also to be reduced, which in the context of South African destabilisation, is extremely disheartening to say the least. But SADCC does not so much oppose IMF conditionality as to accommodate it in halting the declining productive capacity of the regional economy and then reversing it in order to achieve "Structural Transformation" and not simply "Structural Adjustment". But IMF conditionality is as onerous that several SADCC states (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) have been compelled to suspend (even if temporarily) their Standby Agreements with IMF partly because the loans provided are not even sufficient for adjustment purposes as the Zambian case demonstrates (Loxley, 1987). Moreover, SALs and IMF conditionality threaten the legitimacy basis of these regimes (e.g. the 1987 food riots in the Zambian copperbelt), in part because reduction of state expenditure makes it difficult for some of these states (e.g. Zimbabwe) to meet their legitimate security commitments; in short to counter South African destabilisation. In addition, both the IMF and the World Bank appear to be bent on political control of these states because even when the affected country is doing well in terms of repayments, the loans are still withdrawn on dubious grounds. A case in point is the World Bank's Export Promotion Revolving Funds (EPRFS) to Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector. This facility was withdrawn because Zimbabwe refused to liberalise the economy and reduce military spending.

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that the IMF and the World Bank seek to impose free-market policies on the SADCC region contrary to SADCC's basic goal of planned and coordinated production. Whether these measures would reinforce the traditional global division of labour

referred to above is of course contingent upon many factors - foremost among these being the dearth of foreign direct investment in the regions' manufacturing, itself an outcome of South Africa destabilisation, the long distances to overseas markets and Northern Protectionism (UNIDO, 1985; Stoneman, 1988). Considering the severity of these problems in the SADCC region, one can safely conclude that IMF conditionality would reinforce rather than change the status of the SADCC region in the current international division of labour. The US is fully behind IMF conditionality as is the EC in the last analysis though it (The EC) seems to be fairly flexible as evidenced by its Sectoral Import Programmes (SIPS) to several SADCC states. But the basic thrust is the same. The US has consistently favoured privatisation in its aid to SADCC (often given on a bilateral basis) while the EC is also increasingly tying its aid to SADCC to IMF conditionality (Financial Times, 11 May, 1988). For example, Britain which is one of the most influential in EC policy toward Southern Africa "froze disbursements of 30 million in Programme Aid to Zambia in the face of a suspension of the programme previously agreed with the IMF" (Goodison, 1988:17).

An additional point that can be discerned from IMF conditionality in the SADCC region is that it would (if successful) entrench capitalism in the region so much that when apartheid collapses from democratic socialist struggles the new regime would find itself encircled by a buffer of committed states, not to mention the already entrenched domestic capitalist forces (Anglo American, Sanlam etc) that it would have to deal with. The role for the IMF, US and Britain can also be discussed at an ideological level. It promotes an orthodoxy that "too much socialism and too little capitalism" (which to them includes the idea of collective self-reliance) is the cause of the current economic crisis in several SADCC states. More generally, in the conflict between CONSAS and SADCC, Crocker's statement that the Reagan Administration has no intention of destabilising South Africa in order to curry favour elsewhere, (Crocker 1984:210).

reinforces our argument that the West just like Pretoria basically supports CONSAS as a means of countering alleged Soviet influence in the region. The problem arises when South Africa resorts to destabilisation in order to impose CONSAS in the region because destabilisation actually hampers the creation and revamping of the new relationship that SADCC seeks to establish between itself and the West especially with the Nordic bloc. But the US and Britain see destabilisation as little more than an irritant except when it is directed at a major regional ally like Botswana. To that extent, there is a contradiction between broad Western interests in the region and South Africa destabilisation. Therefore the role of imperialism in this conflict is not as straightforward as some assume (Mkandawire, 1985; Amin et al 1987). There are rifts and disagreements between external forces themselves regarding how best to incorporate SADCC into the imperialist system. These rifts arise from the relative strengths of imperialist forces in the region as well as their different ideological orientations and positions - i.e. virulent anti-socialism and orthodox monetarism of the US and Britain compared with social democratic and reformist policies of the Nordic bloc. Hence the latter has been steadfastly anti-CONSAS and its twin track strategy of destabilisation, while the former (the US, Britain and West Germany) have all but in name embraced "Total Strategy". Yet the totality of SADCC's relations with the West makes it almost impossible for SADCC to realise its goal of integrated industrialisation, especially if one takes IMF conditionality into account. However, it is one thing for the West to be against SADCC's industrialisation strategy and quite another for it to be against the whole SADCC concept. In fact, the West (except the US) generally supports the idea of diversification of dependence provided it gets sufficient leeway to shape the terms of that new dependence. SADCC's organisational structure is fairly suitable for this kind of imperialist domination as we have shown. To the extent that SADCC is also keen on diversified dependence there is no serious contradiction between it and the

West as Mandaza (1987) assumes. But what must be emphasised is that SADCC is a site of struggles between various Western imperialist states and South Africa all of whom are keen to influence it in such a way that their fundamental interests remain intact.

## Conclusion

This paper set out to briefly analyse the role of imperialism in the conflict between CONSAS and SADCC in order to assess the viability of SADCC especially its attempt at integrated industrialisation. By placing the interests and strategies of Western states, IMF conditionality and World Bank Structural Adjustment Loans (SAL's) within the framework of SADCC's industrialisation strategy, we have been able to show that their overall impact is likely (if not so already) to undermine SADCC's goal of creating an integrated, self-reliant regional industrial structure. In fact these external forces (Western states, IMF and the World Bank) render the whole project of coordinated and equitable industrial development susceptible to external manipulation by South Africa and further integration into the world economy via that country. To that extent the SADCC strategy as a whole is unworkable because it is premised on the belief that autonomous development within a capitalist setting is possible.

What makes it even more impractical is the fact that the very external forces upon which SADCC depends for the realisation of its integrated industrialisation strategy are against that strategy. Instead, they seek to revamp the old international division of labour so that their respective "national capital" (MNC's) can have access to the region's raw materials while their economies continue to supply the region with manufactured goods especially capital goods and intermediate goods. Moreover, IMF Conditionality and the World Bank's SAL's were shown to be virulently anti-

SADCC region and the world economy is not necessarily static. Some form of regional industrialisation involving light consumer goods (textiles, footwear, etc) as well as some intermediate goods (pulp and paper, building materials, etc) is clearly possible thereby paving the way for the rise of a domestic bourgeoisie albeit a weak one. But even this form of industrialisation will depend upon whether MNC's see SADCC or its member states a possible "NIC's". To date, this does not appear to be so. Therefore, the search for diversified dependence will have to accommodate Western interests in the region and in so doing acknowledge that collective self-reliance will have to occur within the framework of further integration into the global economy. Given these realities, it is almost impossible for SADCC to achieve "autonomous development" vis-a-vis South Africa through its industrialisation strategy especially when viewed within the context of South Africa destabilisation - itself an aspect of CONSAS.

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