

Interrogating South Africa's Regional and Multilateral Drive in the Context of the SADC

SPHEPHELO ZUBANE

University of Zululand

zubanesphephelo@yahoo.com

VICTOR H. MLAMBO

University of Zululand

halavico@yahoo.com

MUZI SHOBA

Nelson Mandela University

muzisipho8@gmail.com

Abstract

Since the advent of multiparty politics in South Africa (SA) in 1994, much of the literature has dwelled on how apartheid forcibly separated people and entrenched elements of racism. However, this paper argues that from 1994 until today, South Africa has involved itself in various multilateral forums (AU, the SADC, COMESA, and NEPAD) within an African context. This paper analyses South Africa's multilateral relations via the SADC. A qualitative research approach was utilised, and the study relied on secondary sources. The study adopted regional integration theory to elucidate South Africa's participation in regional international organisations within the context of the SADC. It unpacks both the political and economic intrigues and the development of a robust South African multilateral drive through the prism of the SADC. Notwithstanding its associated criticisms, this paper finds that South Africa has made a significant contribution towards ensuring that the workings of the SADC remain mutually beneficial to both parties.

Keywords: South Africa, Multilateralism, SADC, Economic Integration



Introduction

South Africa gained its freedom in 1994, almost 30 years after many other African countries had done so (Wasserann 2017). South Africa had been under apartheid rule that discriminated against the African majority while favouring the white minority (Ellis 2019). Because of the apartheid system, South Africa was isolated and prevented from cooperating with many other countries, both in the continent and the world (Shoba 2018). Therefore, the end of apartheid in 1994 ushered in a new political dispensation of democracy in South Africa that made it possible for the country to cooperate with the international community (Chiyemura 2014). This is exemplified within the context of Africa by South Africa's participation in regional and multilateral forums such as the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Zubane 2017a). The primary intention of South Africa's involvement in regional and multilateral institutions has always been its desire to accelerate growth and development (Zubane 2017b).

The foregoing statement is in line with the functionalist school that suggests countries form alliances or regional groupings to alleviate poverty and accelerate growth. The SADC comprises sixteen countries with the common objective of fostering regional integration (Louw-Vaudran 2019a). The sixteen countries are Angola, Botswana, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (SADC 2020). Mashayekhi et al (2011: 2) posited that "achieving development and economic growth, alleviating poverty, promoting employment, enhancing the standard and quality of life, and supporting disadvantaged groups through regional integration" remains the apex priority of the SADC. The SADC believes regional integration not only helps in augmenting growth and development but also helps to strengthen peace and security and this spills over to civil society and industry (Chingono and Nakana 2009). A remarkable example of how South Africa sought to ensure integration not only in the region but also within its shores is the formation of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) in 1994 (Maseng 2014). Nkonjera and Roberts (2020: 140) postulated that South Africa "dominates the Southern African region and is by far the largest economy accounting for almost half of SADC GDP". Hence, South Africa, given its economic and political weight both within the continent and the world holds the key for the SADC's success (Louw-Vaudran 2019b).

However, the literature reveals that South Africa's dominance within the SADC presents the country with a twofold challenge. On the one hand, associated with this dual challenge is that South Africa has an unfair advantage and undue policy influence in the region. On the other hand, South Africa is sometimes accused of not asserting its leadership in the region. Accordingly, this paper aims to interrogate the literature on South Africa's activism in regional international organisations (RIOs) within the context of the SADC. In so doing,



the paper show the extent to which South Africa has contributed to regional integration in Southern Africa, notwithstanding challenges associated with integration. This paper sought to discuss in depth the nature of economic integration that South Africa shares with the SADC region. The first part of the paper gives an overview of economic integration, by understanding the rationale underlying, and unveiling the economic interaction of South Africa with the SADC. Furthermore, the paper looks at the pros and the cons that underpin the involvement of South Africa within the SADC. The paper further conceptualises the philosophical background and ideology that resulted in the formation of the SADC. The second section dwells on the involvement and the prospects of South Africa in the SADC, intending to understand the economic interaction between SA and the SADC as a regional unit.

Methodology

This paper is based on data drawn from the first author's Master's research conducted on South Africa's post- 1994 multilateral drive in selected RIOs. A qualitative research approach was adopted and a systematic historical analysis was undertaken of South Africa's multilateral drive in the SADC. Relevant documents such as SADC declarations and communiqués, South African government gazettes, United Nations (UN) bulletins, and AU policy documents were extensively analysed to further engage the topic under study. The method was meant to enable in-depth scrutiny of the relevant literature to scrutinize the nature of South Africa's approach towards its regional and multilateral arrangements using the case of the SADC. This was supplemented by a literature review based on key journal articles and books. The next section presents the theoretical framework used in this paper.

Theoretical Review

This paper adopts the regional integration theory to examine South Africa's participation in regional international organisations within the context of the SADC. This theory explains the formation and development of regional international organisations by countries. The importance of regional integration in Africa has been elevated in the past decade (Nkonjero and Roberts 2020a). This is exemplified by the creation of the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA) between the SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the East African Community (EAC) which came into effect in 2015 and by the formation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), embraced by most African countries, in 2018. Despite these two important agreements, intra-African trade remains very low at around about 12% to 15% of Africa's total trade (Nkonjera and Roberts 2020b). Hence, there is a view that African integration efforts are more about the signing of agreements and treaties than implementation (Jiboku 2015). Regional integration entails political integration, economic integration and physical integration. Political integration has to do with political unification while economic integration has everything to do with the creation of free trade pacts. Whereas physical



integration, a less talked about component of integration theory, has to do with infrastructural developmental projects. For this paper, the focus is largely on economic integration. A common definition of regional integration postulates that it is a delegating of some national functions to a new centre (Haas 1958; cited in Feng and Genna 2003). Integration in this context, therefore, is where states undertake collective action to attain a certain common goal (Feng and Genna 2003). Such a goal could be either a political unification, as in the case of the European Union (EU), or trade advancement, as in the case of (the then) North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). Heinonen (2006) opines that regional integration is a process in which states ally to initiate and promote cooperation through common institutions and rules. Ebye (2010: 277) describes regional integration as “a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increases the interactions between their components and creates new forms of organisation, coexisting with traditional forms of state-led organisations at the national level”. Likewise, Hass (1971: 22) posited that regional integration is where states “voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with their allies to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflicts among themselves”.

Laursen (2003) observes that theories of (regional) integration were mainly developed to explain European integration. The author notes that regional integration began in Europe in the early 1950s when the initial regional international organisation (RIO) was established. In context, Schimmelfennig (2018) posits that regional integration as a concept seeks to illuminate the establishment and development of RIOs. He argues that an RIO has four essential components. Firstly, he rightly suggests that RIOs are formed by countries, hence countries become members. Secondly, RIOs are organisations, these organisations must have existing headquarters and personnel; they often host meetings/summits of their member states and are empowered to take decisions and to act on them. Thirdly, RIOs entail more than just being two-member states.

Accordingly, the establishment and development of the SADC is a remarkable example of RIO formation in Southern Africa. The integration of Southern Africa is the primary reason for the SADC’s existence. The SADC communiqué (1992) asserts that sustainable development, economic growth, and poverty alleviation are key goals. The communiqué contended that “complementarity between national and regional strategies and programmes is key to achieving the regional integration objectives that the SADC (Nagar and Malebang 2016: 11). For the SADC to attain this overarching common goal, it needs to harmonise, coordinate and most importantly, integrate its policies, and adopt common national legislation (Heinonen 2006). Integration, as the highest form of economic cooperation, is a key element of regional integration and could lead to the success of the SADC. As functionalist theorists believe, “forming regional groupings and creating alliances will help a country improve its economic state and provide a platform for growth and development” (Shoba 2017: 18a). In addition, Shoba (2017: 18b) assumed that the formation of RIOs “is usually regarded as the simplest and most effective way to protect a



state's interest socially, economically and politically". Literature on theories of regional integration notes that RIOs entails both negative and positive impacts on member states (Tau 2000). The positive side of RIOs has been that political unification and free trade pacts may improve the welfare of member states (Maydo 2008).

Kebret and Geda (2008, cited in Shoba 2017: 18c) maintain that the downsides of RIO's may include "problems of variation in initial conditions, compensation issues, lack of real political commitment, overlapping membership, lack of policy harmonisation and poor private sector participation". Afesorghor and Bergeijk (2011) contended that overlapping membership and lack of political commitment within the SADC remain the critical challenges for the organisation. It is also imperative that the SADC harmonise and coordinate its policies to create synergies and foster cooperation within the organisation. As Sønnesyn (2014) observes, integration may occur when the policies followed by one state are regarded by its partners as facilitating the realisation of their own goals, as the consequence of policy harmonisation and coordination. Consequently, it is imperative for decision-makers "in charge of the integration and foreign policy programs to make sure they formulate policies that support the regional integration project" (Shoba 2017: 19d). Overall, considering the effects of globalisation, the SADC should strengthen its cooperation to shield its member states from threats of globalisation.

The Rationale Behind the Formation of the SADC

Economic integration is not a new concept; it has historically been visible in America, Europe and Africa. Globally, economic integration has always been used as a means of political and economic advancement. This conviction is underpinned by the belief that integration results in the strengthening of member states' political and economic status amongst other states in the world thus enhancing their bargaining power on international issues. This has been observable in the EU, where integration has contributed to economic development and fostered the exchange of ideas and mutual understanding across borders. Likewise, in the SADC, its establishment has been underpinned by three pillars, namely integration, cooperation and co-ordination (Mapuva and Muyengwa-Mapuva, 2014: 24).

Mapuva and Muyengwa-Mapuva (2014) reveal that there are economic challenges that are wide-ranging in international relations such as inequality, money laundering, poverty and global trade imbalances. These economic issues pose considerable challenges to nation-states, but it is difficult for individual states to deal with them single-handedly, hence the need for regional integration. From the above, it is clear that economic integration has become increasingly recognised as an essential tool in facilitating economic & political development. This argument is supported by Chingono and Nakana (2009), who view economic integration as a vital tool in poverty alleviation and as a tool for improving living standards. Economic integration carries the potential to promote economic growth



and reduce poverty through increased exports of domestic goods. Consequently, it is in this context that several regional groupings have arisen across the globe. These include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Chingono and Nakana 2009).

South Africa in the SADC

After joining the SADC, the South African government regarded this organisation as the most important tool for its foreign policy within the region and beyond. Reinforcing this, the first foreign policy document adopted by the first democratic government was the August 1996 framework for cooperation and collaboration within the region. In terms of this framework, SA's vision for the SADC is the highest possible degree of economic cooperation, mutual assistance where necessary, and joint planning of regional development initiatives (DIRCO 2004). Since joining, SA has taken a leading role in making the region more collaborative and economically integrated. This has been evidenced through numerous initiatives, such as the establishment of a free trade area in the region (the agreement took effect in 2008), the development of basic infrastructure such as the regional transport and communications systems, the development of human resources and crafting of the necessary strategies to strengthen multilateral relations i.e., the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, Agenda 2063, inter alia. One can therefore say South Africa's inclusion in the SADC had a positive impact on the workings of the regional body. Saurombe (2010) explained that the economic position of SA in the region was one of the most developed and advanced economies in the SADC. SA's position in the global space is that of a leader in the continent, thus ensuring representation abroad. The inclusion of South Africa in any regional integration is crucial for the growth of that region, especially with its economic prowess and influence in the AU. The influence of SA in the AU has never sat well with other members who feel the country might steer development towards the SADC region and divert attention from the development of other African states in the continent. The SADC region currently enjoys the status of being the biggest region in Africa. This gives the SADC a leading role amongst its regional neighbours in the continent.

The country's well-developed economy, coupled with its high GDP and solid infrastructure has at times given it unfair leverage over other regional states, especially in terms of trade and economic integration. While economic integration is key, collectively achieving equal rates of economic integration is difficult if not impossible (Mlambo and Mlambo 2018); hence South Africa with its economy and infrastructure stands to gain from this regional inequality. Adding to this, Blumenfeld (2010) contended that the official position of the post-1994 ANC-led government has consistently been that, while South Africa has many foreign policy 'priorities', Africa is the overriding priority. From a regional perspective, early



policy statements appear to have been based primarily on two (rather soft) moral and political pillars, namely: that South Africa owes a huge debt to Africa in general, and the region in particular, on account of the sacrifices made and hardships endured in supporting and sustaining anti-apartheid forces; and because of the history of South African domination, there was a need to avoid being perceived as the continental – and, especially, the regional – bully. Saurombe (2010) argued that while SA prides itself on having an Afrocentric foreign policy, conflicts of interest will inevitably arise as a result, especially considering how over the years foreign policy has tilted between the West and East. Blumenfeld (2010) argued that SADC remained in many respects, an ineffectual organisation with no binding objectives, and it is at least an open question whether South Africa derives much more in the way of benefits from its membership than it already does from its bilateral relations with most of the individual members of the SADC. Moreover, despite its good intentions, South Africa has found it difficult to contain its hegemonic instincts.

In the region, member states have been allocated the responsibility of coordinating one or more sectors within the SADC to ensure that all member states are active and participate in their development. For SA, immediately after joining the SADC, it was given sector responsibility for finance, investment, and health. According to Saurombe (2010), this was a decision that was informed by South Africa's comparative advantage in these areas. According to DIRCO (2004), until 2001 the sector responsibilities within the SADC had been as follows: Angola (Energy Commission); Botswana (Agricultural Research, Livestock Production and Animal Disease Control); Lesotho (Environment, Land Management and Water); Malawi (Inland Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife); Mauritius (Tourism); Mozambique (Culture, Information, Sport, and the Transport and Communications Commission (SATTCC); Namibia (Marine Fisheries and Resources Legal Affairs); South Africa (Finance, Investment and Health); Swaziland (Human Resources Development); Tanzania (Industry and Trade); Zambia (Employment, Labour and Mining); Zimbabwe (Crop Production, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources). The DRC and Seychelles had no sector responsibility because they were not yet participating.

As per their financial sector responsibility, SA introduced the SADC Integrated Regional Electronic Settlement System (SIRESS) which is also known as the SADC payment system. This is an essential financial system that allows financial institutions to serve customers and clients across the world. It consists of a set of instruments, banking procedures and interbank fund transfer mechanisms that ensure the circulation of money regionally in the SADC and worldwide (Wentworth 2013). As of 2013, only nine countries have been able to have access to SIRESS. These countries are Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. (Wentworth 2013). The Central Bank of Seychelles, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) later participated in SIRESS, making a total of 14 out of 15 participants. Madagascar has indicated its intention to have its banks join SIRESS soon.



The SADC's Integrative Initiatives

The SADC since its inception has invested in efforts that would guide it towards its desired outcomes. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) was the region's comprehensive 15-year strategic product that was approved by the SADC Summit in 2003 and its effective implementation began in 2005 (the SADC 2012). The RISDP framework was meant to guide regional integration's agenda over fifteen years (2005-2020). It was designed to provide a clear strategic direction concerning the SADC programmes, projects and activities in line with the SADC common agenda and strategic priorities, as enshrined in the SADC treaty of 1992 (SADC, 2012). It was established that the RISDP would have to be revised to obtain greater efficiency. Subsequently, in 2015, the SADC concluded and endorsed the long-awaited Revised RISDP 2015 to 2020 agenda (RISDP). The RISDP was endorsed in Harare, Republic of Zimbabwe, in April 2015. And this ground-breaking revised RISDP marked the beginning of new impetus in the development agenda for the SADC (SADC 2015). In 2015, another strategic agenda was exhaustively deliberated and subsequently adopted and is now awaiting results. This is the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap (ISR) 2015 to 2063. The SADC announced the summit's approval of the ISR 2015 to 2063 in April 2015 as the second major achievement attained within the year. According to the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap (2015), the ISR was projected to materialise within a specified period of 48 years (from 2015 to 2063). During this period, the SADC economies will overcome their binding development constraints and progressively move through the growth stages from factor-driven to investment and efficiency-driven and ultimately to a high growth trajectory driven by knowledge, innovation and business sophistication. The SADC region will thus be fully transformed and become an important player in the continental and global landscape. The region is driven by national development strategies and the SADC Treaty and is also informed by the action plan for Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa (AIDA), and Agenda 2063. The implementation of Agenda 2063 will go through the following stages:

Phase I: Years 2015-2020

This phase was meant to coincide with the implementation of the revised RISDP (2015-2020). It was predicated on the consolidation and achievement of the remaining agenda and laying down firm foundations for long-term development. The target instruments and prime movers of the phase were conceived of as incorporating the following elements: The phase contained several directives and guidelines, including the following, (a) a growth guided strategy that was based on the transformation of production, (b) human capital with abilities to adapt to the changes in the production sector. This had to be done by all member states to foster competitiveness and self-sustaining economic development. During this phase, it was also indicated that the SADC countries would target per capita income growth of about 6 percent annually to achieve the lower-income band of the factor-driven stage of US\$ 2000



Phase II: Years 2021-2050

The Phase II scenario should be elaborated as a continuum to Phase I. During this period, the economy would move from factor-driven to efficiency-driven. It should focus on diversification and productivity of factors and sectors and competitiveness in close partnership between the government and the private sector, both domestic and foreign. To achieve the targeted GDP per capita of US\$ 9000 by 2050, this would entail aiming at a per capita growth rate of 8 percent annually from 2020 onwards.

Phase III: Years 2051-2063

During this phase, the economy would further transform, with its strength based on high levels of innovation and business sophistication. To achieve that status, GDP per capita would need to rise from US\$ 9000 in 2050 to US\$ 17000 by 2063, implying annual income growth of about 5 percent. This will necessitate an increased focus on and investment in frontier knowledge, development of unique skills, stimulating and nurturing innovation, sponsoring competitive enterprises and deepening the entrepreneurial culture. The three phases could appropriately be cast in a series of medium-term plans, cascading into a consistent whole.

Another initiative that the SADC made in the year 2015 was the launching of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) involving the SADC, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC). This is the amalgamation of African regions coming together to achieve extraordinary goals, and it has been appreciated as another big milestone that will see an expanded market for member states to trade and increase investment flows. In 2016, SADC announced the commencement of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union (EU) and the SADC EPA Group namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini.

South Africa's Opportunities in the SADC

South Africa has significant interests in ensuring the successful economic integration of the SADC. These interests include natural resources and economic gains as well as political power. It is a widely shared view in academia that regional integration broadens the market for member states concerned. One of the significant gains for SA is that the SADC has an export market for SA's internationally uncompetitive products. Furthermore, according to Alde and Pere (cited in Saurombe 2010), the SADC is the biggest export market for SA, but this market is normally overlooked and underestimated. This has remained the same even today. As the biggest economy in the SADC, Saurombe (2010) further mentions that this made South Africa very attractive in the labour market. The country has been able to attract labour from the SADC, from the unskilled and semi-skilled to the highly skilled. This helped SA to make up for her labour force lost to countries such



as those in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. Saurombe (2010) finds that SA suffers greatly from brain drain and that it has cost it 25% of its graduates to the US alone; 9.7% of its medical graduates left to practise in Canada; 45% of its medical graduates produced by the University of Witwatersrand left the country between 1965 and 2000; and according to South Africa's Bureau of Statistics, an estimated 1 million to 1.6 million people (skilled, semi-skilled, and professionals) left the country between 1994 and 2000. Saurombe (2010) comments that the SADC's labour market to SA will try and make up for this brain drain through regional recruitment. Even though the involvement of SA in the SADC has been inconsistent, since joining the SADC, the country has been active in dealing with continental issues such as transportation, communications, agriculture, trade, energy and mining. Significantly, the above-mentioned areas coincide with South Africa's points of focus in the region, particularly the mining sector and the water resource in the DRC (Saurombe 2010). South Africa's agricultural and industrial sectors, and by extension, the country's future development is highly dependent on the water resource of the SADC region. The SADC's economic integration has proven to hold numerous economic gains for SA, as outlined above. There have also been gains falling outside the scope of economics, but the boost to the economy given by South Africa's overall participation in the SADC justifies South Africa's involvement.

South Africa's Challenges within the SADC

The targets and aspirations that have been pursued by the SADC concerning economic integration and cooperation have, to some appeared as over-ambitious, and hence unrealistic. Nonetheless, this does not discredit the potential of the region, rather it remains to be proven upon the accomplishment of the process, and only then will the expected standards be tested against the actual standard at that particular time. The difference in the economic profiles of the SADC countries has also been depicted as a challenge that the region has to craft a way to cope with. Also, the ineffectiveness of the SADC in handling tribunal matters in bringing about peace and justice in the region is a challenge that has not been dealt with swiftly enough and will continue to affect the levels of sincerity, trust, and solidarity in the region (Mapuva, Muyengwa-Mapuva 2014).

In light of the prerequisites of economic integration, the SADC integration is ideal, given the fact that it is characterised by many countries with small and common economies, which is an environment that is ideal for interstate trade and forging of economic links. However, the economic status of SA alone accounts for a significant economic difference that has been said to be problematic for economic integration (Rossouw 2006). But in the context of the above-mentioned conditions for economic integration, SA's economic strength carries with it the threat of pulling the SADC to the ground as a result of the gap that its economic strength accounts for in the region. However, even with the biggest economy, SA cannot afford for the SADC region to collapse, since it needs the SADC as much as the SADC needs it, therefore, SA needs to be in the region regardless of its economic strength,



and it needs the region to stand, grow and not collapse. Consequently, it can be argued that the success of the SADC economic integration agenda depends on South Africa's willingness to support it. Carim (1997) asserted that "the objective of promoting regional economic development and security emerged from the view that the destiny of South Africa is intimately tied to that of its Southern African neighbours.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined South Africa's post -1994 multilateral drive in selected regional international organisations. We were particularly interested in South Africa's participation in the SADC and its role within the regional body considering its advanced economy. We also sought to ascertain the challenges and prospects for the country as a result of its participation in the SADC.

Our findings show that South Africa's involvement in the SADC has been heavily linked with fear for the economy and the political instability of the country and other African states. This has been because of the risks that this relationship holds for South Africa and subsequently the rest of the continent. However, it has been also established that these relations promise great potential for positioning South Africa and the continent in the evolving global politics. From the inception of the SADC back in 1992, there have not been many activities in terms of framework crafting and initiative-taking. This became evident through the following: the decision by the SADC to revisit the RISDP; the crafting of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap 2015- 2063; the amalgamation of regions forging unity, and lastly the adoption of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the SADC EPA Group in 2016.

Of all the 35 summits that have been held by the regional bloc, it was only the 35th that produced sound resolutions and initiatives that were aimed at transforming the region and continent. The resolutions adopted by the SADC in 2015 are designed to address regional and continental economic issues at a gradual pace, hence they are long-term initiatives. The SADC is challenged by slow-growing economies that impede the rate of economic integration in the region, hence the need for gradualism. Accordingly, the SADC region does not promise spontaneous change, rather, its road maps to development are time-aware planned, thus giving realistic targets that can be met in due time (in the long term). However, this might create room for regional leaders to hide behind gradualism when they have to account. It is in this context therefore that in the course of gradualism, regional leaders must exhibit the utmost level of good governance, openness, transparency and accountability. This will in turn yield forbearance and regional stability. Since joining the SADC, South Africa has been instrumental in leading the SADC towards strategic policy formulation and regional economic integration. However, the SADC is not yet a fully integrated regional bloc. Regional economic integration encompasses, inter alia, lower barriers to the movement of resources and capital, and market integration, but the SADC has not yet met these foregoing requirements. Furthermore, the SADC has not yet met the



conditions and is not even attempting to move towards the conditions that have been said to be the mother of successful economic integration.

The findings indicated that there has been a low level of activities within the SADC which has led to a low level of economic interaction. This slow economic interaction is also a consequence of the slow process of the integration of the region. The inclusion of South Africa in the SADC has tried to bridge this gap but it has not done enough, since the integration is not yet completed. Lastly, South Africa stands to gain indirect economic gains that will in turn contribute greatly towards South Africa's economic growth and development. These are, inter alia, an export market for SA, access to human capital and mineral resources (including water and energy which South Africa is in serious need of). It is therefore in the context of the findings of this study that we make the following recommendations to reposition and strengthen the role of South Africa in working towards constructive leadership that will promote and support development in the region. South Africa needs to change its strategy of engagement in the region by ensuring that it not only engages the SADC through yearly summits but ensures that there is an active interaction between the country and the SADC. South Africa must take a constructive leadership role within the context of the Troika System to make sure that important decisions are made and implemented expeditiously in the region. This will lessen the challenges caused by bureaucratic formalities that contribute to the slow pace of implementation in the region.

Moreover, South African foreign policy elites must ensure that the country's foreign policy does not undermine the developmental aspirations of the region but instead strengthen and reinforces them. South Africa could achieve this through its participation in strategic multilateral forums such as the G-20 (Group of 20 world-leading economies), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and other important forums of global governance. South Africa remains the only African country with the membership of the G-20 and the only African economy to serve in the G-7 plus, so the country should take advantage of its association and participation in these important world formations and use them to advance not only its interests but those of the region as a whole. South Africa must demonstrably advance development in the region through its position as a gateway to Africa and must represent the region and continent in the strategic multilateral formations that it is part of in the world.

In addition, we recommend that South Africa take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) recently launched to accelerate multilateral trade between African countries. The AfCFTA portends dramatic opportunities for the continent, and South Africa because of its position in the continent, could benefit significantly. The World Bank notes that AfCFTA "connects 1.3 billion people across 55 countries with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) valued at US\$3.4 trillion" (2020:1). South Africa as the leading economy in the SADC must ensure that the region benefits from this major opportunity presented to the continent to bring millions of people out of extreme poverty



and elevate the income of others and significantly improve the standard of living in the region and continent. Finally, we recommend that South Africa must play a lead role in pushing the implementation of AfCTFA resolutions and assist in forging mutual interplay between AfCTFA and other existing regional economic frameworks in the continent.

References

- Afesorgbor, S. and van Bergeijk, P.A. (2011). Multi-membership and the effectiveness of regional trade agreements in western and southern Africa: A comparative study of ECOWAS and SADC. Institute of Social Sciences Working Paper, (520).
- African Union Peace and Security. (2015). African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AU PCRDR). Available from: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/70-postconflict-reconstruction> [Accessed on 12 June 2020].
- Aral, S. and Van Alstyne, M. (2011). The diversity-bandwidth trade-off. *American journal of sociology*, 117(1), pp.90-171.
- Blumenfeld, J. (2010). South Africa: 'In Africa' but still not 'of Africa'. Available from <https://hsf.org.za/publications/focus/focus-58-september-2010-south-africa-and-the-changing-world/JBlumenfeld.pdf> [Accessed on 12 May 2020].
- Carim, X. (1997). Multilateral Trading, Regional Integration and the Southern African Development Community. *South African Journal of Economics*. Vol no 65: 3, pp 335-353.
- Chingono M and Nakana S. (2009). The challenges of regional integration in Southern Africa. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 3: 10, 396-408
- DIRCO (Department of International Relations and Cooperation). (2004). African Union in a Nutshell. Available from http://www.dfa.gov.za/au.nepad/au_nutshell.htm [Accessed on 02 March 2021].
- DIRCO. (2004). International Labour Organisation (ILO). Available from <http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/inter/ilo.htm> [Accessed on 18 October 2020].
- DIRCO. (2004). SADC history and present status. Available from: <http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/africa/sadc.htm> [Accessed on 05 September 2020].
- Ebaya, S.E., (2010). Regional integration and conflict management in Africa. *African Research Review*, 4(2).
- Feng, Y. and Genna, G. (2003). Regional integration and domestic institutional homogeneity: A comparative analysis of regional integration in the Americas, Pacific Asia and Western Europe. *Review of International Political Economy*, 10(2), pp.278-309.
- Geda, A. and Kebret, H. (2008). Regional economic integration in Africa: A review of problems and prospects with a case study of COMESA. *Journal of African economies*, 17(3), pp.357-394.

- Haas, E.B. (1971). The study of regional integration: reflections on the joy and anguish of retheorizing. *International organization*, 24(4), pp.607-646.
- Heinonen, H. (2006). Regional integration and the state: the changing nature of sovereignty in Southern Africa and Europe. Interkont Books.
- Jiboku, P.A. (2015). The challenge of regional economic integration in Africa: Theory and reality. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 3(4), pp.5-28.
- Laursen, F. (2008). Theory and practice of regional integration. *Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series*, 8(3), pp.1-22.
- Louw-Vaudran, L. (2019). Power and influence: identifying champions of change in SADC. *Institute for Security Studies*, Policy Brief.
- Madyo, M.R. (2008). The importance of regional economic integration in Africa (Masters dissertation). University of South Africa.
- Mapuva J and Muyengwa-Mapuva L. (2014). The SADC regional bloc: What challenges and prospects for regional integration? *Law Democracy and Development Law Journal*. Law Vol.18 No. 1. Pp. 22-36
- Mashayekhi, M., Peters, R., Saygili, M. and Vanzetti, D. (2011). Regional Integration and Employment in SADC. *Report prepared for UNCTAD for the International Collaborative Initiative on Trade and Employment (ICITE)* [Accessed on 17 April 2020].
- Mlambo, V.H. and Mlambo, D.N., 2018. Challenges impeding regional integration in Southern Africa. *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*, 10(2), pp.250-261.
- Nagar, D. and Malebang, G. (2016). Region-Building and Peace-building in Southern Africa. Centre for Conflict Resolution, Policy Brief, 28, pp, 1-7
- Nkonjero, M., and Roberts., S. (2020). Regional integration and industrial development in Southern Africa: Where does South Africa stand? *South African Institutes for Internatioal Affairs*, pp. 140 -159
- SADC. (2012). Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). Available from: <https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/818> [Accessed 12 August 2020].
- SADC. (2012). SADC OVERVIEW. Available at: <http://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/> [Accessed on 18 November 2020].
- SADC. (2015). SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap. Available from: [https://www.sadc.int/files/4514/9580/8179/Action Plan for SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap.pdf](https://www.sadc.int/files/4514/9580/8179/Action%20Plan%20for%20SADC%20Industrialization%20Strategy%20and%20Roadmap.pdf) [Accessed on 12 June 2020].
- Saurombe, S. (2010). The role of South Africa in SADC regional integration: the making or braking of the organisation. *Journal of International Commercial Law and Technology*, Vol. 5: 3, pp 124-131.
- Schimmelfening, F. (2018). Regional Integration Theory. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics*
- Shoba, M.S. (2017). An assessment of South Africa's membership in the BRICS formation in relation to IBSA and SADC (Master's dissertation) University of Zululand.



- Shoba, M.S. (2018). South Africa's foreign policy position in BRICS. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 7(1), pp.173-188.
- Sønnesyn, J.S. (2014). BRICS and a New World Order. Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Department of Sociology and Political Science [Accessed on 06 March 2021].
- Tau, L.M. (2000). Regional economic integration in Southern African development community: problems and prospects (Master's dissertation) University of Johannesburg.
- The World Bank (2020). The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects. 27 July 2020. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area> [Accessed 07 July 2021].
- Zeb, M. (2012). Native Peoples of the World: An Encyclopaedia of Groups, Cultures, and Contemporary Issues, Vol. 3. Armonk, NY: *M .E. Sharpe*, 674-675.
- Zubane, P.S. (2017). A historical analysis of South Africa's post-1994 multilateral drive in selected international multilateral organisations (Master's dissertation, University of Zululand).

