



Chapter Five

Regional Integration in Southern Africa 32 Years after the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Intended Projections, Challenges, and Future Prognoses

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Abstract

Since the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 and when some African states were about to be freed from colonial oppression, the need for African solidarity became an essential doctrine for most African leaders. The effects of colonialism by European powers in Africa left many states in the continent in dire conditions that are still witnessed and felt today. This is where the need and doctrine of regional integration came to the fore, and it has manifested itself as an integral part of Africa's post-colonial economic growth blueprints. Narrowing this down to Southern Africa, the region witnessed immense political instability, especially from the 1980s, mainly driven by South Africa's apartheid destabilisation policies. Hence, one of the objectives of forming the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was to counter South Africa's destabilisation policies and reliance of some states on the regional hegemon (South Africa) because of its economic hub. In 1992, the SADCC became the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The SADC brought to



the fore more revamped development policies to steer regional integration geared towards uniting states and stimulating economic development and growth. However, this Regional Economic Community (REC) has also experienced many hurdles as an organisation. Driven by a qualitative research approach supplemented by secondary data, this chapter dwells on the operational mandate of the SADC since its formation in 1992 through the lens of intended projections, challenges, and prospects with the importance of adding to the body of knowledge on the importance of regional integration especially for developing countries such as those in Africa.

Introduction

Ever since most African states gained their independence from European colonisers, the idea of and need for regional integration has been seen as a viable development aspect driven by the notion that regional integration is critical in stimulating economic growth and development through the adoption of various policies (Mlambo & Mlambo, 2018). Thus, African heads of state have endorsed the idea of regional integration driven by the critical components of their diverse development strategies through numerous regional integration arrangements. This led to the rationale for the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) in 1980 and the Abuja Treaty a decade later.

The treaty emphasised African solidarity, self-reliance, and an endogenous development strategy (Hartzenberg, 2011). As Noyoo (2013) points out, to unpack regional integration, it is also important to outline what regional integration entails. In its simplest conceptualisation, Jiboku and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) contend that regional integration as a concept refers to formal cooperation and integration arrangements by neighbouring states aimed at facilitating or enhancing collaboration (due to a sense of shared identity and purpose) through the establishment of institutions that share and drive collective action. Over the last four decades, the development of integration studies has gone hand in hand with political developments, especially during the Cold War era. Furthermore, integration is a multidimensional social phenomenon, and its study has

generally been undertaken along disciplinary lines. However, after independence, regional integration was embraced mainly for political reasons and later as a development strategy to rise to the challenges of minor markets and being landlocked to benefit from economies of production and trade.

Today's globalised world and Africa's risk of further marginalisation in a multi-polar world dominated by trading blocs in North America, Europe, South East Asia, and China have made regional integration necessary for Africa (Tanyanyiwa & Hakuna, 2014). There has been growing consensus amongst scholars that critical issues on development and governance in Africa, which have for decades remained unresolved, continue to pose various obstacles to the continent's development blueprints. The continent continues to suffer relentless setbacks in its political and socio-economic development efforts. However, Mwashu's (2011) assessment shows that while regional integration offers myriad benefits to member states, these are not always guaranteed as they also depend on the degree and the extent of commitment from member states. Furthermore, the lack of engagement and participation contribute to regional integration challenges, including the reluctance of African states to pool their sovereignty, poverty levels, underdevelopment, political instability, and lack of political rights.

The 1980 Lusaka Declaration created the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) (SADC, 2025). This was to reduce economic dependence on South Africa, and to counter the political divisions that were caused by South Africa's regional destabilisation policy. While this did not go as planned, considering the political changes in Southern Africa in 1992, the SADCC was renamed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Mlambo, 2020). This stemmed from the fact that South Africa's destabilisation policies domestically and externally brought major repercussions for the economic growth of the Southern African region. It also impacted numerous aspects of Southern Africa, including social division, economic disparities, migration, political repression, and regional instability. Thus, this destabilisation shaped the region's social, economic, and political landscape.

The year 2024 marks 32 years since the formation of the SADC; while it has made considerable regional integration strides over the last two decades, it is still confronted with other challenges. With some Southern African states being young regarding their democracy and the SADC as a regional bloc, the chapter's contributions paint a nuanced picture of the importance of regional blocs (in this case, the SADC) after over three decades of existence. Further, regional integration in Southern Africa is crucial for several reasons, including economic development, political stability, collective bargaining, and social development. Hence, one may deduce that regional integration is essential, especially for developing states and Southern Africa, as it leads to a more resilient and prosperous region. This chapter dwells on the role of the SADC since its formation through the lens of intended projections, challenges, and future prognoses. It also ponders the challenges the REC has faced over the last three decades. Driven by a qualitative research approach supplemented by secondary data, this chapter aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on the importance of regional integration and the role of RECs in stimulating regional integration, in this case, the SADC.

Regional Integration: A Brief Historical Overview

The European Union (EU) is the most successful regional integration initiative globally, starting with the very modest beginnings of functional cooperation between six states in Western Europe. According to Tanyanyiwa and Hakuna (2014), we may draw the historical evolution of regional integration in Europe from the 1950s with the forming of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). From an Afrocentric perspective, most African states have pursued the idea of regional integration since the 1960s, when the OAU was born. Article 2(1) of the OAU stipulates that its charter aims to:

- Promote unity and solidarity of African states;
- Coordinate and intensify their cooperation and effects in achieving a better life for the people of Africa;
- Defend the sovereignty, territory, and independence;
- Eradicate all forms of colonialism; and

- Promote international cooperation concerning the United Nations (UN) charter and the Universal Declaration of human rights.

This is primarily motivated by the political vision of African unity; as recognised by African heads of state and policymakers alike, the cost of the continent's geographic, political, and economic fragmentation as its separation from international markets continues to rise. However, as alluded to earlier, regional integration has been at the forefront of economic development blueprint discussions in Africa since the massive movement toward independence in the 1950s and 1960s. This was primarily driven by the fact that working collectively had been a viable option since that period, considering that most African states were still economically too weak to survive independently. Thus, as Ewing (1967) echoed, the need for regional integration in Africa was made much more robust owing to the level of development and the limited significance of existing vested interests that militate against economic cooperation. According to Qobo (2007), the quest for regional integration was driven by pan-Africanism, which emphasises continental unity among Africans.

While African states believed in African unity, some were divided on achieving this and how to do so moving forward. This assumed an international form when the radicals held their conference in Casablanca in June 1961 (African Union, 2025). They were commonly known as the Casablanca powers, while the moderates had theirs in Monrovia and became known as the Monrovia group (African Union, 2025). While both agreed on the importance and need for regional integration, they disagreed on how this should be approached. At the first Summit of the African heads of state in Addis Ababa in 1963, which resulted in the formation of the OAU, the importance and need for regional integration was a meaningful discussion. This became an even more important discussion in Lagos in 1980 during an extraordinary summit that eventually led to what became known as the LPA. At the Abuja summit in 1991, the African Economic Community (AEC) constituent instrument was

finalised (Olubomehin & Kawanishe, 2004). Post this period, African leaders saw that regional integration could stimulate development in the continent through (1) economic integration (through creating significant markets), (2) security (reducing the number of conflicts), and (3) international politico-economic relations (which assists in increasing bargaining power) (Thonke & Spliid, 2012).

Regional integration has manifested itself historically, not only from an African perspective, in Europe as a vital element to facilitate the expansion of capitalism and political unification. As noted by van Nierkerk (2005), any regional integration formation may be robustly understood in the light of (1) geographical scope (such as the number of states in regional integration arrangements), (2) substantive coverage (public sectors or activity coverage like labour and trade) and (3) the depth of integration (the extent of sovereignty a particular state aims to surrender).

Apart from the oldest customs union in the world, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) formed in 1910, the earliest form of regional integration in Southern Africa may be credited to the Mulungishi Club (1970-74), the predecessor to the Front-Line States (FLS). This was a minor informal grouping of Southern African heads of state focused on the region's liberation. According to Bhebe (2015), the FLS was comprised of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland (current Eswatini), Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and this is where the FLS was born in 1975, while Mozambique joined a year later. The FLS quest for an apartheid-free Southern Africa reflected a pan-Africanist view that drove political instability in the region (Koltz, 2018). The key objective was to ponder the state of affairs that was taking place in Southern Africa at that time. While the FLS focused on regional cooperation, its pivotal imperative was regional security matters, particularly apartheid-driven South Africa.

This is why the FLS thought it had to diminish member states' economic dependence on South Africa because of its destabilisation policies. To counter South Africa's offensive

strategy, the FLS provided liberation movements fighting for the independence of Namibia (the then South West Africa), Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), and South Africa with invaluable material, diplomatic, and logistical support as some states in the region witnessed dominant white minority rule. Similarly, because of apartheid destabilisation policies, the FLS formed the inter-state Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) in 1975 to address various security challenges in Southern Africa (Hendricks, 2016). However, with the political landscape changing in Southern Africa from the 1990s, Namibia gaining its independence, and the apartheid transition taking place in South Africa, there was also a need to restructure the SADCC. The FLS was disbanded in 1994, having achieved some of its objectives of dismantling the colonial role in Southern Africa (Arnold, 2006). While one of the most critical aspects of its formation was to limit the dependence of its member states on apartheid South Africa, other factors were impetus in the communication and transport sector(s), for which member states relied heavily on South Africa. According to Evans (1984), these were driven by four objectives:

- To coordinate the reduction of dependency on metropolitan powers, especially that of South Africa;
- To create and operationalise equitable economic integration among its members;
- To master local and foreign resources to affect national, interstate, and regional policies; and
- To secure financial and technical resources from private and government sources.

This led to the SADCC member states signing the treaty on the 17th of August 1992 in Windhoek, converting the SADCC to the SADC (Mufune, 1993; Freer, 1995). Such was driven by the notion that the SADCC needed to be more successful as an organisation, and some of its timelines needed to be revised. Some of its member states continued to have relations with apartheid South Africa, such as Lesotho, Botswana, and Eswatini, which relied heavily on South Africa's port networks. The importance of the SADC's regional integration initiatives

is tied to that of the African Union (AU) on, among other things, regional integration, migration, and the continuous development of the continent. Thus, member states of the SADC commit to developing policies envisioned for the progressive elimination of the obstacles to the free movement of people and labour, goods and services, and people of the region.

Regional Integration in Southern Africa: From Apartheid to the SADCC and the Birth of the SADC

This chapter intends not to provide a lengthy historical overview of South Africa's destabilisation policies in Southern Africa; however, it is crucial to touch on some of these aspects. To understand the elements and drivers of apartheid in South Africa, it is necessary to understand it in the geographical context of Southern Africa and the historical context of colonial Africa. The South African state emerged in 1910 when the Union of South Africa came into being, with the majority black population excluded from political participation.

Kibble and Bush (1986) noted that because of the National Party's (NP) apartheid and destabilisation policies and ongoing pressure against the South African government led to what was not expected by many. This was the reform of apartheid, continuous strikes (especially from townships) from 1973 onwards, the Soweto Revolt in 1976, the increasing resistance from schools and consumer boycotts, the strengthening black trade union movement, and mass political organisations together with pressure from the African National Congress (ANC). This led to the State President, Pieter Willem Botha, declaring in early 1986 that the apartheid strategy would need to be re-looked at despite robust resistance from the Afrikaner community.

According to Luiz (1998), numerous statutory laws secured and institutionalised enforced social segregation. However, when the National Party (NP) came into power in 1948, it further shaped South Africa's political landscape as its manifesto was driven by apartheid and Afrikaner empowerment. Fresh from gaining power, the NP government was driven by

Afrikaner nationalism by introducing new discriminatory laws to uplift the white population further. From 1978 to 1984, South Africa's domestic and regional policies were regularly oriented towards a coherent strategic vision of the conditions necessary to ensure the survival of apartheid, known as the total strategy (Potgieter, 2012). The Department of Defence (DoD) of South Africa provided intelligence that the country faced a 'total onslaught' and advocated mobilising a full range of resources. The strategy sought to restructure specific aspects of apartheid capitalism to preserve its basic parameters, defend against mass unrest, and reduce South Africa's international isolation. Apart from its core objectives of forging a Constellation of Southern African states (CONSAS) (Tsie, 1993), the total strategy rested on five related objectives:

- Ensuring that neighbouring states abstain from supplying the armed struggle led by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia and the ANC in South Africa and obliging them to act as virtual policing agents for Southern Africa by prohibiting political activity by South African and Namibian refugees in their territory;
- Confirming that Soviet-Bloc Powers would gain neither a political nor military foothold in the region;
- Strengthening existing regional ties; and
- Ensuring that black states in the region would not support calls for mandatory sanctions against South Africa and that they shield South Africa from such sanctions.

However, the dream of CONSAS was dashed as (1) Muzorewa did not win the elections in Zimbabwe and (2) most neighbouring states shared the fear of a communist onslaught. Still, and because of the CONSAS being dashed, the NP government continued to wage a bitter war against the black majority in the country and region in defence of the apartheid regime. Thousands of individuals were killed, displaced, tortured, detained, thrown into prisons, and forced into exile. From this period, South Africa invaded and attacked Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, and Zambia and also obstructed supplies in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique,

Zambia, and Zimbabwe while also at times attacking railways providing import and export routes. From 1980 to 1994, this destabilisation policy had already cost the region close to US\$ 10 million, severely affected development projects, and further reduced the living standard of most individuals. One may conceptualise destabilisation as a deliberate and systematic policy by the NP government to engage in insurgency actions in neighbouring states to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of their lawful governments. South Africa's destabilisation policy was grouped into three stages.

The first was the need to launch the CONSAS. The phase consisted of sophisticated destabilisation strategies, and it was selectively related to particular targets and covered the period between 1980 and 1981. The second was the period from 1982 to the end of 1983, which was made up of applying destabilisation tactics in a relatively generalised and indiscriminate manner. The last phase covered the period of the Nkomati Accord¹ in 1984 (Chikane, n.d). Like most African states after the colonial era, most, including those in Southern Africa, faced numerous problems, especially from the 1980s, apart from their underdeveloped economies and the dependent nature of their fragile and unstable political institutions. The economic, military, and political pressure from South Africa further compounded these states' problems.

South Africa's actions were meant to destabilise the economic and political systems of neighbouring states and, by doing so, to achieve two objectives: (1) the neutralisation of the ability of such states to provide a springboard for the increasing activities of the ANC and SWAPO and (2) the perpetuation of the divisions that exist within and between such states. This reinforced their dependence on South Africa and frustrated their efforts to reduce this via regional cooperation in the form of the SADCC (Bardill, 1988).

1 Was a non-aggression pact signed on the 16th of March 1984 between the Peoples Republic of Mozambique and Republic of South Africa. It enabled that each country would no longer support the other states opposition movement (the ANC in South Africa and Renamo in Mozambique).

However, the democratic transition gained impetus when Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, and the NP unbanned the ANC in the same year. These changes thus paved the way for open dialogue between the ANC, NP, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and other third parties. Hence, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) that took place in Johannesburg in December 1991 may be regarded as a pivotal starting point in the transition phase of the new democratic South Africa as it brought together the NP and non-white political parties to the negotiation table (Oomen, 2005). Here, 19 of the 21 parties present, signed a declaration of intent; when discussions continued at CODESA 2 in 1992, negotiations broke down as the parties disagreed on a constitution and interim government.

Fundamentally, CODESA 2 did not end well. Also, disagreements about power-sharing and majority rule led to much violence, including the Boipatong Massacre in June of the same year. However, these negotiations resumed on the 1st of April 1993 under what was known as the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum (MPNF), which paved the way to move forward (Handelman, 2014). The MPNF drew up the interim constitution endorsed by parliament, a draft constitution as South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy. It came into effect on the 27th of April 1994 until February 1997, when a final constitution came into force.

Drawing from the above, South Africa's pariah state had ended. Now that a democratic government was steering Pretoria, it was obligated (per its foreign policy) to involve itself in regional, continental, and global politics (McCarthy, 2003). This was to be achieved via a robust foreign policy instrument mainly geared to enhance, among other things, the development and peace of Southern Africa and the continent at large. In the same year (1994), South Africa was granted its SADC membership. According to Molefi (2003), globalisation gave much impetus to further and strengthen regional integration frameworks globally and in Africa. From a Southern African perspective, most member states could not steer their internal policies as they lacked economic diversification. Globally,

successful cooperation needs a system of dynamic collective governance that requires participation by an active and capable set of institutions from the public and private sectors, both at the national and provincial levels. Thus, some institutions' weaknesses will likely hold back successful regional integration protocols (Makamunana & Moeti, 2005). Drawing on this, one can conclude that successful regional integration must include:

- Allowing certain economies of scale which will facilitate the restructuring at a higher level of productivity;
- Creating a climate that will facilitate Foreign Direct Investment (FDI);
- Assisting in creating the kind of competitive environment to facilitate innovation;
- Assist in strengthening the bargaining position of the countries of the region in an asymmetrical world;
- Promoting the free movement of human resources, thereby increasing output productivity; and
- Helping to create an environment conducive to non-violent conflict resolution (Davies, 1994).

This outlines the need for regional integration, as one may deduce that African states are not strong enough to survive in the world markets on their own. Being military fragile, some cannot defend themselves and, therefore, need to belong to a regional group to increase their influence and ensure their security. Developing states need to integrate their national political and economic systems to counter the efforts of a turbulent global political and economic system. Regional integration enhances regional interdependence, and for it to succeed, it must focus on equitable regional development. As Hentz (2005) noted, such entails a high level of political cooperation and is driven by a centrally planned strategy for regional production and investment and a balanced distribution among the regional states involved. As the continent continues to engage at the periphery of the global economy, more crucial regional integration becomes necessary, and there is a need for the SADC and its member states to work collectively to champion this in the short and long run.

Regional Integration: Progress on Paper, Obstacles on the Ground

As mentioned in this chapter, after the 1960s, the need to solve Africa's numerous political and economic development challenges led to numerous regional integration programs. However, despite this, numerous obstacles were recorded on the ground. One may deduce that the need for cooperation and integration in Africa has long been on the lips of African visionaries and pan-Africanists, albeit through some of the obstacles witnessed along the way. Looking at the level of development for most SADC states, one may deduce that regional integration is complex and challenging (Sesa, 2006). Nevertheless, despite these leaders' great strides and actions to steer the notion of African development forward, one must also note the challenges facing regional integration. Thonke and Spliid (2012) pinpoint three megatrends that pose a significant challenge. First, the population is increasing (especially the youth). The continent is expected to be home to more than 2 billion people by 2050, of whom more than half will be younger than 30, driving increased urbanisation.

If not properly managed, this will pose a serious hindrance, and millions of unemployed youths can quickly drive instability or join rebel groups for survival, as in other African states such as Sudan, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Second, climate change will further intensify demographic challenges. The continent possesses the lowest carbon emissions but will be most affected by climate change. Third, the world is driven by globalisation and has become increasingly competitive. In this case, and despite possessing a solid regional integration agenda and being supported by robust frameworks, the SADC still faces challenges, such as the slow domestication of agreed policies and legal frameworks. Such is drawn from the fact that various member states sometimes have diverse processes toward ratifying and domestication of regional statutes. For some states, getting a regional protocol through the internal process might take months or even years, thus causing a significant delay in regional integration initiatives.

According to Mkhize (n.d), challenges may be country-specific or trans-border and spill over to neighbouring states. It is true that in Africa, progress has been slow as most of the integration has yet to make a positive impact on envisioned development. However, there is no denying that the situation in many cooperating countries could have been even worse had regional integration not existed. However, Adedeji (2002) avers that the most common regional integration challenges include:

- Lack of political will to establish effective and dynamic supra-national institutions and to implement agreed treaties and protocols;
- Lack of sanctions against non-performance;
- Overlapping membership, most member states are unable to manage effectively nor fund adequately the many regional arrangements they belong to;
- An inadequate mechanism for equitable sharing of the costs and benefits;
- Unrealistic time frames;
- Non-observance of the rule of law and good governance, and
- Poor private sector and civil society participation.

The points above are fundamental long-term factors that continue to hinder successful regional integration frameworks in Africa. Hence, much-needed development will remain ineffective until some of these are addressed. Other than this, persistent conflict and political instability in some states in the region have, over the last few decades, continued to cause instability and hinder development and economic growth. Political instability in states such as Lesotho and Zimbabwe and the rebel conflict in the DRC continue to be a significant challenge for continental and international observers since no instability leaves neighbouring countries unharmed, as what begins as a minor dispute can quickly engulf an entire region (Mlambo, 2020). African states and RECs have yet to succeed in their regional integration endeavours. They hoped to achieve at the continental level what they had failed to do at the domestic level, namely economic development, through a combination of

sound policies. Thus, as most African states are weak and some are small physically and in terms of population, the continent's states could be more economically sustainable.

Also, most differ in development and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while some are incredibly heterogeneous with diverse languages, cultures, societal norms, and natural resources endowment. Similarly, most post-colonial leaders have not been good in the affairs of their state. National integration has been a challenge in most African states in the face of endemic poverty, inequitable distribution of natural resources, poor governance, political corruption, ethnic factionalism, ethnocentrism, and nepotism. These have dire political and economic implications for national sub-regional and regional development. Notably, the continent's continued weak economic integration and development are linked to the workings of post-independence African states and their institutions of governance. In some cases, states' weaknesses and poor leadership, divisive politics, the prevalence of weak socio-economic policies, and lack of concern for the needs and welfare of citizens have stimulated intra-state and inter-state conflict, which brings with it negative impact on regional integration (Jiboku & Okeke-Uzodike, 2016). Thus, the SADC needs to organise itself into an engine for the region that deals effectively with regional poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

The SADC's structural design and the role of both national parliaments and the regional SADC parliamentary forum are essential in hastening the ratification and domestication of SADC protocols and policies for its regional integration agenda. However, the implementation of such protocols and policies remains patchy.

Discussion and Future Prospects

While it is no hidden fact that colonialism and apartheid had tremendous repercussions on most states' current lack of development, some of the policies adopted by African post-colonial leaders have been too fragile to sustain and drive

much-needed development. If it is not political instability, it is terrorism or military coups. Clapham (1998) contends that regional integration is intended to provide a suitable avenue for African solidarity and development. It has been recognised that the political and economic setting, both global and continental, within which African regional integration may or may not take place has changed dramatically since the first three decades from the end of colonialism. While undermining most of the specious assumptions on which earlier integration schemes were based and destroying the delusion that African states could only develop by insulating themselves as far as possible from the exploitive tentacles of alien capitalism, these changes have enhanced the prospects and practical integration. Apart from the challenges, one must note that regional integration is an essential doctrine for African states. However, for regional integration to produce the needed and expected gains, it will depend on how regional institutions with adequate competence and capacity can stimulate and manage the regional integration process effectively and efficiently.

Hence, the SADC must drive regional integration protocols through its member states as a REC. This has been a success in Europe, as states such as Germany and France have, in most cases, taken the lead in regional integration. However, drawing experience from Europe shows that regional integration is likely to succeed if one state serves as a regional hegemonic power. While the level of development, infrastructure, GDP, and FDI is different between Europe and Africa, South Africa has a vital role in regional integration post-apartheid dispensation in Southern Africa. Since 1994, South Africa has made Southern Africa an essential component of its foreign policy. Over the years, it has invested (also through its private sector) heavily in regional infrastructure, such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the Mozambique corridors. In addition, through its South African National Defence Force (SANDF), South Africa has played an essential role as the mediator in peace negotiations, as evident in the DRC, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. So, for SADC's regional integration to steer forward, South Africa must play an important oversight role, even though successful regional

integration requires complete devotion from all involved member states, such as robust laws, political will, and strong institutions. However, other elements, such as political stability, will need to be realised for the SADC to realise its regional integration goals.

There is also the tendency for a significant number of the Southern African population not to be aware of the SADC or its mandate(s). Thus, there is a need for the SADC to become more visible to the region's population. This could be done through various social media platforms and roadshows. Apart from this, there is also a need for member states to robustly partner with numerous stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector. This is even though in some states, such as the DRC and Zimbabwe, civil society organisations need to be taken seriously and granted the platform to carry out their duties without fear.

As mentioned earlier, regarding South Africa's regional role, its private sector and civil society have made great regional integration strides since 1994 in collaboration with the SADC. Hence, if other African states (those with the aptitude to do so) could follow suit, great regional integration strides could be achieved in the region. In addition, bringing regional parliaments to the SADC's regional integration agenda can be substantial. It may help speed up some of the regional policies and protocols at the national level, thus eliminating delays and setbacks (Nager & Mutasa, 2017). African heads of state will have to move beyond the gestures and abstract visions to assist the SADC and be more focused on gradual steps carefully executed at the domestic level. These should be bold and sustainable political and economic reforms.

Conclusion

Apart from all African states and regions driven by RECs, they must work collectively to acquire the desired economic growth prospects. This is not to say that this is not the case; however, with diverse levels of economic growth, some states tend to lag. Thus, regional integration in Southern Africa, driven by the SADC, is crucial for a broader and nuanced aspect of economic,

social, and political development. By working collaboratively, states in South Africa can overcome individual limitations and build a more resilient and prosperous South Africa. Driven by a qualitative research approach supplemented by secondary data, this chapter aimed to draw a nuanced appraisal of regional integration in Southern Africa through the SADC, delving into the need for regional integration, hindrances, and future expectations.

The chapter shows that regional integration has been a crucial African doctrine since the 1960s, and over the decades, significant strides, with both successes and failures, have accompanied regional integration initiatives. The importance of regional integration in Southern Africa was mainly born because of South Africa's destabilisation policies to neighbouring states. This led to the formation of the FLS, the SADCC, and eventually the SADC when the transition period started in South Africa. However, the region and SADC continue to face many challenges. These will continue as long as other challenges include multiple memberships, weak development level, lack of collective agreements, political will and leadership, and political instability. Such a consequence will continue to be a challenge to the SADC both in the short and long term. The private sector and civil society will need to be more effective in assisting the SADC in its regional integration frameworks, so as to ensure there is a good chance for a successful integration in the region.

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