

## SADCC as the First Step of Regional Integration in Southern Africa

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**Abstract.** The formation of regional blocs and groupings in recent years became a stable feature of the world politics after 1945. The Conference on the Coordination of Southern African Development (SADCC) was formed in 1980 and later transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with the focus on integration of economic development. On the one hand, the main goal of the SADCC was to oppose South African apartheid, as well as to expand regional economic cooperation through effective coordination of the use of specific characteristics and strengths of each country and its resources. On the other hand, SADCC's objectives went beyond just reducing dependency to encompass basic development and regional integration.

This article reveals a brief history of the formation and evolution of SADCC as regional bloc and analyses the bilateral relations between SADCC/SADC and the Russian Federation. Methodologically, the article employed qualitative research by relying on the broad sources of data such as the United Nations official documents, and statistics of the specialized organizations. By applying a situation-structural approach to analyze and explain the development of institutionalized regional integration, the authors argue that, more than anything, the greatest success of SADCC/SADCC since its formation, was not only in creating a regional identity, but in cultivating a sense of common destiny among the member states.

**Keywords:** SADCC, SADC Regional Integration, Southern Africa, frontline states, Russia, the United Nations, economic cooperation and development, public diplomacy, decolonization, sanctions, African liberalization, regionalism

**Acknowledgment.** The research was funded by the Russian Science Foundation (project № 23-28-01195).

**For citation:** Singuwa Chimuka (Zambia), Svetlana A. Bokeriya (Russia). SADCC as the First Step of Regional Integration in Southern Africa. *Asia and Africa today*. 2023. № 1. Pp. 49–56. DOI: 10.31857/S032150750024037-2

## САДКК как первый шаг региональной интеграции на юге Африки

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**Резюме.** В статье представлена история создания организации Конференция по организации развития Юга Африки (САДКК), а также анализируются двусторонние отношения между САДКК/Сообществом развития Юга Африки (САДК) и РФ. Применяя ситуационно-структурный подход для анализа развития институционализированной региональной интеграции, авторы утверждают, что наибольший успех САДКК/САДК достигло не только в формировании региональной идентичности, но и в воспитании чувства общности судьбы у жителей стран-участниц.

**Ключевые слова:** САДКК, региональная интеграция САДК, юг Африки, прифронтовые государства, Россия, ООН, экономическое сотрудничество и развитие, публичная дипломатия, деколонизация, санкции, африканская либерализация, регионализм

**Благодарность.** Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда (проект № 23-28-01195).

**Для цитирования:** Singuwa Chimuka (Zambia), Svetlana A. Bokeriya (Russia). SADCC as the First Step of Regional Integration in Southern Africa. *Asia and Africa today*. 2023. № 1. Pp. 49–56. DOI: 10.31857/S032150750024 037-2

## INTRODUCTION

The quest for regional integration in Africa has long been entrenched in the history of the continent [1]. Anchored in its diversities, African regional integration has been emerging from the politics of anti-colonialism, but on the basis of pre-existing colonial arrangements [2].

As a political response to both apartheid and colonial rule in the Republic of South Africa, Frontline States (FLS) emerged in 1975. The founding members were Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Nigeria (Nigeria, which was voted as a member of the FLS by Zimbabwe, participated in several meetings as an informal associate member), Tanzania, and Zambia, and after independence in 1980, Zimbabwe joined the loose coalition and served as the coalition's Chairman for most of its existence [3].

The evolution of regional security structures in South Africa has a history that predates decolonization [4]. In the first decades, at the beginning of this cooperation in the late 1950s, the focus by African countries was on decolonization and the end of the white minority regime in the former Northern and Southern Rhodesia, South-West Africa and Southern Africa at large. Indeed, during this period, decolonization throughout the African continent was the main theme of African political consciousness and became an important impetus in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Within the anti-colonial context, Front-line States can be seen as one of the most important mechanisms that emerged in the mid-1970s at a time when ending colonialism and racial oppression were the most pressing issues in the region, as well as on the continent. The activities of Front-line States were often adopted after the activities of the OAU African Liberation Committee (ALC)<sup>1</sup>, whose main task was to promote the process of decolonization in African countries. Besides, the Inter-State Defense and Security Committee (ISDSC) was established in 1975 as an important structure of FLS with a mandate to address various security issues, mainly related to the ideology of apartheid in South Africa, faced by member States in Southern Africa. The ISDSC played a crucial role in the liberation struggles against colonial and racist regimes and the maintenance of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states.

Apart from operating on the ideological foundations of Pan-Africanism, frontline state solidarity was based on three other factors. Firstly, the FLS operated within the framework of the decision-making principle with the presidential summit. The summit of FLS is attended by heads of state and government, as well as representatives of liberation movements. Secondly, the self-consistent restriction of FLS on membership had created a simplified governance structure and reduced conflicts within Front-line States. Thirdly, the informal nature of FLS had given members the flexibility to pursue independent policies [5]. Later after, these factors significantly influenced the structure and nature of the SADCC in terms of the special form of decision-making and the informal nature of the organization.

The FLS, as well as SADCC later, are not only focused on fighting for the independence and liberation of member states, but also on meeting some of their political as well as economic security needs. By the late 1970s, attempts by frontline states to counter their weaknesses in Southern Africa had evolved into a comprehensive search for a functional regional grouping to promote economic liberation through coordinated development initiatives.

African leaders were unanimous in their assessment of the threat that the regime in South Africa posed to the peace and stability of the region and its consequences if the international community would not take urgent and effective measures. African leaders were convinced that the main goal of South Africa was to consolidate and perpetuate the system of apartheid within the country and extend its domination to neighboring independent African States. The regime was hostile to cooperation between the independent African States and did everything in its power to sabotage such cooperation, especially in the field of transport and communications.

Although the goals of the South African regime have remained the same, it had developed a system of differential policies towards different countries in the region. It had occupied a large territory of Angola and was waging an open war against that country. South Africa supported the rebels and other hostile groups in Mozambique by providing funds and weapons. Concerning Zimbabwe, South Africa pursued a policy of destabilization at the economic, political, and propaganda levels. Its acts of destabilization, aggression, and ter-

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<sup>1</sup> The African Liberation Committee was a body of the Organization of African Unity that aimed to serve the goals of African liberalization.

rorism against Zambia included supporting and training rebel groups, violating Zambia's air and land borders, mining sites and abducting civilians, and attacking refugee camps. Botswana, which shares a long border with South Africa, was forced to shelter many refugees. Its airspace had been violated and there had been cases of abductions and attacks from its territory. Even countries such as the United Republic of Tanzania that does not border South Africa had not escaped the impact of Pretoria's destabilizing political, economic, and propaganda activities.

The FLS were deeply concerned about the growing military burden of the regime and the threat that this growth posed to their security and independence. South Africa's nuclear programs had further aggravated the situation and created a sense of insecurity in neighboring African countries.

In November 1977, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 418, which decided that all States should "cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related materiel of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and should cease as well the provision of all types of equipment and supplies and granted of licensing arrangement for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned" [6]. The mandatory arms embargo was imposed in response to the increasing violence of the apartheid regime in South Africa, including the response to the Soweto Uprising in 1976.

Some African leaders expressed deep concern about the cooperation of certain Western Countries with the apartheid regime, which allowed the latter to pursue a policy of aggression, destabilization, and economic war against the Front-line States. The continued political, economic, and military cooperation of some Western States and their transnational corporations with the South African regime allowed it to ignore the international community and created significant obstacles to the elimination of the inhumane and criminal apartheid system in South Africa and the achievement of self-determination, freedom and national independence by the people of Namibia.

However, while FLS had identified their role in economic cooperation outside the region as well as within, the key to leading the organization had been a strategy focused on political security, as a response to the destabilization of apartheid policies in the Republic of South Africa. The policy of destabilizing the white South African regime against black States in Southern Africa continued throughout the 1980s until the defeat of Southern Africa at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola in 1988 [7]. During that period, the destabilization of the region was carried out by the regime of Peter Willem Botha's "General strategy". That strategy was aimed at promoting economic and political cooperation with their neighbors on their terms and preserving access to regional resources without compromising their political system. That policy was formalized in early 1979 as part of the Constellation of South African States (CONSAS) program, which was to be confirmed by mutual security agreements, as well as various forms of political and economic Association<sup>2</sup>.

Under its strategy of establishing dominance in this region, South Africa continued and intensified its aggressive and destabilizing actions against neighboring Front-line States, thereby trying to weaken their economies and thus maintain their dependence on South Africa, using them as hostages to ease external pressure on this country, forcing them to abandon support for opponents of the regime and, indeed, physically destroy such opponents. The South African regime was increasingly using death squads to kill and kidnap freedom fighters in neighboring states [8].

Despite the positive nature of the sanctions, they had their limits. Their impact on South Africa's economic and military power is still negligible, if not completely erased by the multilateral assistance from the UK, USA and Israel still provided to the regime. Moreover, these sanctions had not changed South Africa's attitude, which continued to be characterized by a lack of flexibility at home, aggressiveness, hegemony in the region, and stubbornness and contempt internationally.

In this sense, the destabilizer sought to disband the newly independent black states in the region, by supporting the rebel groups politically, economically, and militarily. This implied that the region was a battleground in which it was split and even more fragmented among the newly independent states. This regional conflict, which was caused by apartheid South Africa, hindered economic development, as well as disrupted transport, created large numbers of refugees, and forced southern African counties to increase military spending.

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<sup>2</sup> CONSAS was to include South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (the so-called BLS countries), Rhodesia, Namibia, and the Bantustan states (Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, and Ciskei).

Subsequently, “there was increased militarization in the region, on the one hand by forces that viewed colonial regimes as hindering their freedom, independence and security, and on the other by colonial powers that saw their acquired benefits and interests in danger” [9]. In this regard, Front-line States were seen as an important opportunity for building and strengthening a realistic security perspective in the region, mainly focusing on military and state thinking.

Nevertheless, regional security helped eventually propel Front-line States to form a resistance throughout Southern Africa and beyond. Thus, despite some manifestation of destabilization in the region, the experience of anti-colonial struggle and pan-African liberation in accordance with independence, were fundamental elements in the formation of FLS [10].

In the asymmetric environments between the white minority in dominance and the black majority in submission or resistance, national sovereignty, which was centrally placed in the thinking of realistic security in the region, was slightly compromised by a cooperative initiative, rather strengthened to not only preserve the newly gained independence, as to strengthen the cohesion of African nationalism in accordance with the pan-African liberation. Therefore, the FLS, as the predecessor of the SADCC, determined and largely characterized the successors of the regional security mechanism.

### SADCC: FROM FORMATION TO THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference as an intergovernmental economic organization was created in 1980. The goal of the organization was to counter the economic dictates of South Africa in the sub-region. It provided the development of broad economic, scientific, technical, and foreign trade cooperation of the member countries and the expansion of their economic ties to achieve economic independence.

The Lusaka Declaration of 1980 provided the guiding Principles for economic liberation in Southern Africa. By adopting the Declaration, the SADCC leaders agreed to create a regional economic organization that would strengthen members, harmonize their policies, and reduce the influence of the Republic of South Africa in the region. As follows from this Declaration, the goals of the regional grouping were as follows: reducing the economic dependence of member States on the Republic of South Africa, creating and restoring a regional network of transport and telecommunications infrastructure as a prerequisite for genuine and balanced regional integration, resource mobilization for the implementation of national, bilateral, and regional development strategies and programs, coordinating actions to ensure international cooperation and support for SADCC projects, etc.

To achieve the goal of economic liberation in the region, SADCC member States had prioritized collective self-sufficiency to build the “political liberation of the region”. However, since SADCC emerged from the interaction of regional, continental, and global forces, its evolution should not be limited to the efforts of Southern Africa. Both the influence of Western actors and the African States themselves were largely responsible for the creation and development of SADCC. Therefore, it is important to note that the evolution of SADCC was a mixed and intertwined product of African initiatives and European influences. In this regard, the Director of the analytical center (Sapes Trust) in Harare Ibbo Mandaza states: “...Even left-wing analysts should be reminded of the dialectical relationship between imperialist domination and revolutionary pressure”. Not surprisingly, the antiimperialist/colonialist struggles of the 20th century drew inspiration from the Bolshevik Revolution: from Europe itself to China, Vietnam, and Cambodia in Asia, to Cuba and Nicaragua in Latin America, and to Africa itself. But it was in Southern Africa that this struggle was played out from the 1960s onwards, delicately poised in a Cold War in which the Western world stood behind apartheid and white settler colonialism, while the Socialist bloc, led by the Soviet Union and China, supported the liberation movements of South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

In 1987, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on Front-line States. In its resolution 42/201 of 11 December 1987, entitled “Special assistance to “Front-line” States”, the General Assembly urged the international community to continue to provide, in a timely and effective manner, the financial, material, and technical assistance necessary to strengthen the individual and collective capacity of “front-line” and other neighboring states to counter the effects of economic measures taken by South Africa or the international community against South Africa, by their national and regional plans and strategies [11].

The General Assembly also called on all states and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to support national and collective emergency programs prepared by the front-line and other neigh-

boring states to overcome the acute problems caused by the situation in South Africa. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize the organs, organizations, and agencies of the United Nations system to respond to such requests for assistance as might come from individual states or the relevant sub-regional organization and urged all states to respond positively to such requests. It also noted with satisfaction the assistance provided to front-line states by donor countries and intergovernmental organizations.

However, despite the huge support it received from Western donors in the Northern hemisphere, SADCC developed not only from considerations voiced by African leaders (such as Nyerere, Kaunda, and Khama)<sup>3</sup> in the early 1960s, but also because of its unique approach to regional cooperation. SADCC leaders had chosen their own projects or sector responsibilities, which differed from other organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the South African Customs Union (SACU), which are primarily engaged in economic (market) integration.

In addressing the issue of apartheid for three decades, the United Nations had consistently set out to eliminate apartheid altogether and help the people of South Africa build a democratic state that can play its rightful role in Africa and around the world.

Unfortunately, some influential Western states had tried to help the apartheid regime break out of isolation and exercise dominant influence in southern Africa by encouraging some adjustments to its policies to calm the growing national and international opposition. They had tried to resolve the serious situation in southern Africa through a settlement that would guarantee the continuation of the apartheid regime. In this sense, they gave the apartheid regime the opportunity to buy time to strengthen the apartheid system. They not only helped the apartheid regime to continue its inhumane policies, but also strengthened its aspirations to become the dominant power throughout southern Africa through acts of aggression and blackmail against independent frontline states.

South African forces, which remained in southern Angola, had repeatedly invaded the country, thereby using illegally occupied Namibia as a springboard against Angola. A week before the invasion, on July 28, 1987, the Angolan authorities reported that South Africa kept about 7 ths. soldiers in the southern part of Angola, and to support the bandits from Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA) some of these forces were stationed in Cuando Cubango province [15]. As a result of the aggressive actions of South Africa and UNITA forces, which were reportedly received military assistance from the United States, Angola has suffered heavy losses of life and, in addition, its economy has been severely damaged. In addition to the death of 60 ths. people, almost one-tenth of the country's population lost their homes, and another 150 ths. residents were forced to flee to neighboring countries [16]. It is estimated that the total amount of United States assistance to UNITA was \$30 mln, while South Africa's assistance to the organization was approximately \$200 mln per year [17].

As part of its policy of destabilization the region and in retaliation for neighboring states support of sanctions against South Africa, Pretoria suspended transit cargo from Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in August 1986 and February 1987. Under an order of 8 October 1986, it also threatened to expel almost half of the Mozambican workers from South Africa.

According to Yale University Professor Leonard Thompson, the colonial regime in South Africa provided a link to Western markets and served as an Outpost for those markets from the perspective of multinational corporations in Southern Africa<sup>4</sup> (see: [14]).

Even if the desire and the need to reduce economic dependence on South Africa had been identified as the main goal of SADCC, several states had increased rather than decreased their economic dependence [18]. Therefore, SADC (was formed in 1992 on the base of SADCC) should not be seen as an attempt to create a completely different region, but as defensive attempt to circumvent the consequences of a distorted integrative structure in the region. Thus, some scholars argue that the capacity of the SADCC was fundamentally limited and fragmented by the nature and structure of the organization.

<sup>3</sup> Julius K. Nyerere – Prime Minister of Tanganyika (1961–1962), President of Tanganyika (1962–1964), the first President of Tanzania (1964–1985); Kenneth D. Kaunda (b. 1924) – the first President of the Republic of Zambia (1964–1991). President of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) in 1960–1992 and 1995–2000, Seretse G.M. Khama – the first President of Botswana (1966–1980).

<sup>4</sup> Although the degree of dependence differs, South Africa played the leading role of trading partner with all the SADCC countries, except for Angola and Tanzania.

Professor of Economics at the University of Zimbabwe, Dr. Clever Mumbengegwi gives important point of view in relation to the formation and evolution of SADCC as follows: “The desire for collective independence from the rule of the Republic of South Africa was one thing, but the commitment to regional integration is another ... Therefore, cooperation in the SADCC was a free arrangement whereby a member state could avoid any serious consequences for its domestic economy. Thus, the SADCC’s claim to political strength and unity was its economic weakness” [12].

Although economic development was an important goal of SADCC members, the organization was, in fact, politically motivated by the FLS not only to prevent the hegemonic destabilization of the Republic of South Africa, but also to attract (more) foreign aid.

### SADCC/SADC RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Russia has a long history of bilateral relations with the countries of the Southern African Development Community. Russia, as part of the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), supported the concerted efforts of frontline states and liberation movements to fight apartheid in Southern Africa.

In this regard, the USSR provided technical and military support to most of the countries that were part of the frontline states such as Angola and Mozambique in order to achieve the complete liberation of the region. Even after the collapse of the USSR, Russia continued to play an important role in providing technical, economic, and military assistance to African countries, including SADCC member states. Therefore, SADCC/SADC countries’ relations with Russia are not new, they are very valuable and should be sustainable. Thanks to such significant historical ties, the SADC member countries and Russia have strengthened friendship and mutual understanding for the development of comprehensive, equal, and fruitful cooperation.

Currently, 10 SADC member states have embassies in the Russian Federation, namely Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. At the regional level, the SADC and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding on the basic principles of mutual relations and cooperation on October 23, 2018, in the following areas: technical cooperation and assistance; capacity-building; peace, security, conflict prevention and resolution; preventive diplomacy; trade, industry, finance and investment; infrastructure development and energy; information and communication technologies (ICT), transport, communications and meteorology, water, agriculture, ocean economy, food security; minerals, natural resources and environmental protection; education and science; healthcare; technology and innovation; culture, tourism and information exchange. In addition, in July 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the field of military-technical cooperation.

Russian Federation’s priorities are also in line with SADC priorities as evidenced by the priorities of the Foreign Economic Strategy in the region as indicated below: prospecting, mining, oil, construction and mining, purchasing gas, oil, uranium, and bauxite assets (Angola, Namibia and South Africa); construction of power facilities – hydroelectric power plants on the River Congo (Angola, Namibia and Zambia,); railway construction (Angola); creation of Russian trade houses for the promotion and maintenance of Russian engineering products (South Africa); participation of Russian companies in the privatization of industrial assets, including those created with technical assistance from the former Soviet Union (Angola) [13].

The Russia-Africa Summit and Economic Forum were held on October 23–24, 2019 in Sochi under the motto “For Peace, Security and Development”. This is the first time that Russia has no analogues in the history of Russian-African relations. Official delegations of SADC countries and business representatives expressed high interest in deepening and intensifying Russian African cooperation. At the end of the Summit, the participants adopted a final declaration – a document containing agreed goals and objectives for the further development of Russian-African cooperation in all its dimensions: politics, security, economy, scientific, technical, cultural, and humanitarian spheres. It is important to note that the declaration establishes a new dialogue mechanism – the Russian-African Partnership Forum – holding summits in the Russia-Africa format every three years but the pledge has not been fulfilled. The declaration also notes the mutual determination of Russia and African countries to bring this cooperation to a new level – meeting the challenges of the 21st century – when the importance of the exchange of technological products, generation and global trade in knowledge and competencies increases.

Russia and SADC highly appreciate the commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the desire to promote the establishment of a democratic and just world order, the strengthening

of regional and interregional ties to ensure peace, stability, socio-economic development, and mutual trust. On October 2018, Russia hosted the Russia and SADC Investment Forum, which provided great opportunities for business and partnership between Russia and SADC.

Of course, any foreign presence has its pros and cons from the point of view of the SADC countries, who have not forgotten about colonialism. In particular, local leaders in public do not question the vital importance of European economic assistance provided to Africa, especially since the migration crisis. The European Union expanded its activities in this direction, and Brussels provided Africa with a humanitarian aid package in the amount of \$998 mln in early 2020<sup>5</sup>.

SADC countries still see the USA, Western Europe and China as their main partners. Russia, however, is trying to build its bilateral relations using soft power instruments and taking into account the nationalist mood of Southern African elites, for whom sovereignty remains a fundamental symbol of freedom from former metropolises.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the formation of SADCC, the organization had succeeded to some extent in reducing and eliminating the fears of members who have lost their independence by allocating sectoral responsibilities to each member state to pay more attention to the issue of equality rather than justice. Nevertheless, SADCC had difficulties in reconciling national issues with regional ones, which caused serious problems for political and economic cooperation between member states.

However, regionalism in Southern Africa, which manifested itself in the FLS and SADCC, had evolved over time, with the roots being in the nature of a nationalist orientation of sovereignty and deeply rooted in the colonial history of the region. In this context, Southern African regionalism had demonstrated complex networks in solving regional problems. In fact, although one of the main goals of SADCC was to reduce dependence on the Republic of South Africa and the European imperialists, the member states had contradictory consequences, as a result of which they increased their dependence on the Republic of South Africa and foreign aid, rather than reducing influence.

Analyzing Russia's interaction with Africa, and in particular with the countries of Southern Africa, from the time of the USSR to the present, it can probably be found that Russia's public diplomacy has covered many forms. They included educational programs, cultural exchanges, and scientific programs for visitors and, of course, the use of mass media to highlight and project the problems of Africa from the Russian point of view. All these are tools and forms of public diplomacy that usually have an impact on the audience on the African continent and beyond and have a positive impact on what Russia can offer to the world. It can be seen as a form of "soft power", since its purpose is to attract partners. As a result, Russia should intensify the interaction with SADC, using the soft diplomacy instruments.

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Поступила в редакцию  
(Received) 09.10.2022

Доработана после рецензирования  
(Revised) 15.11.2022

Принята к публикации  
(Accepted) 20.12.2022