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**Governance Transformation at the Periphery:
the Southern Africa Development Community and Regional
Economic Restructuring in Southern Africa**

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, African multilateral institutions have been trying to reshape African countries' governance institutions in order to promote their integration into the globalised economic system. After reviewing the priorities of the global governance project in Sub-Saharan Africa and the security and development implications of the new "Scramble for Africa", the paper analyses the role the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) has been playing after the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Using a political economy approach, the paper aims at critically analysing the economic development strategy SADC has been implementing during the last fifteen years and argues that behind the rhetoric of a supposedly "neutral" strategy of regional economic integration SADC is trying to foster the restructuring of the governance system of the Southern Africa countries in line with the neoliberal tenets of the Post-Washington Consensus. This approach downplays issues of power relations and economic polarisation among Southern African countries and hampers a debate on the nature on the dependent insertion of the Southern African region into the international economic system. However, available data show that economic and social polarisation among South Africa and the other SADC member states remains as deep as during the apartheid era, while the multiple effects of the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe put at risk the social stability of the all region. Moreover, while foreign direct investments in Southern Africa remain concentrated in the primary sectors, South African investors are actively promoting new patterns of capital accumulation along regional lines that deepen economic polarisation among Southern African countries. The paper argues that the emphasis on trade liberalisation and the lack of a regional industrial strategy hamper economic cooperation and fuel political competition and fragmentation among SADC member states. Given the neoliberal nature of the development strategy SADC is pursuing in Southern Africa, the paper concludes that SADC risks strengthening the peripheral position of Southern Africa in the world economy and questions the future ability of the regional grouping to play a meaningful role in both promoting balanced development among and within Southern African countries.

First came the state of justice, born in a territoriality of feudal type (...). Second, the administrative state (...). Finally, the state of government, which is no longer essentially defined by its territoriality, by the surface it occupies, but by a mass: the mass of the population, with its volume, its density, with the territory that it covers, to be sure, but only in a sense as one of its component (Foucault 2000: 221).

1. Introduction

Long considered an “extraverted” continent (Bayart 2000), since the debt crisis of the early 1980s Sub-Saharan Africa has been subject to the political influence of the International Financial Institutions’ (IFIs) to an unprecedented degree. As Harrison notes, through the structural adjustment programmes the global governance project penetrated African governments’ institutions with the aim of transforming the continent societies along neoliberal lines (Harrison 2007). Donor community’s influence on African countries’ economic policy making has had complex effects on the nature of democracy within the latter, since it severely constrained the policy options at their disposal (Mkwandawire 1999). This paper aims at investigating the role African interstate actors play in the definition of member countries’ governance and market institutions, and argues that they are instrumental in promoting the priorities of the global governance project on the continent.

With its emphasis on security, fight against terrorism, unimpeded access to energy reserves, poverty reduction and governance reform (Duffield 2001, Lee 2006), the global governance project aims at striking a balance between order and transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa (Brown 2006: 361), through «the development of often insidious new ways of defining, invigilating, managing and indeed governing social relations» (Selby 2003: 8).

Recent scholarly interest for the relationship between global governance and regional organisations has mainly focused on Europe, Asia and the Americas (Payne 2000). African multilateral organisations’ efforts aimed at transforming the African state and to link it up to globalisation have been poorly studied. Some authors even dismissed the role African regional groupings can play in (re)shaping national governance institutions, pointing to the difficulties they have faced in promoting democracy and the respect of human rights. Christopher Clapham argued that:

only West Africa (...) and Southern Africa (...) possessed regional organisations with any pretention to promote common standards of governance for member states; and in each of these peer pressure was undermined by internal divisions,

and the reluctance of other states to accept the leadership of the respective would-be regional hegemons, Nigeria and South Africa (Clapham 2003: 51).

Mainstream analyses of Sub-Saharan African continental and regional institutions downplay the role they play in the transformation of the economic and social – and so also the political – institutions of African countries. The difficulties continental and/or regional diplomacy experiences when faced with political turmoil within an African state cannot be understood if not analysed within the broader context of the limits and contradictions of the strategies of political cooperation and economic integration the same organisations are implementing.

The promotion of “good governance” is currently one of the central tenets of the *post-Washington Consensus* as performed within Africa. A cursory look at the massive development literature reveals the central place governance reforms occupies in the debate on how to foster democracy and economic growth on the continent. Together with national governments, continental and regional organisations are at the forefront of African efforts to promote good governance. At the continental level, the launch of the African Union (AU) in 2002 and the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) in 2001 have been heralded as a new dawn for African intergovernmental relations and for the promotion of democracy and economic development on the continent. At the regional level, during the last decade the formalisation of the new conflict prevention and resolution activities of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) on the one hand, and the ambitious programmes of regional trade liberalisation and market integration of the aforementioned organisations, the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) on the other hand, led some commentators to talk of a wave of “new regionalism” in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hettne 1994).

However, the literature on regionalism in Africa is strongly normative in nature and neglects to consider the complex history of regional integration efforts on the continent. The activities and performance of African regional and continental groupings are invariably compared with a model of regional integration built on a superficial reading of the European integration process. Not surprisingly, comparisons between regional schemes in the core and the periphery (and semi-periphery) invariably lead to accusations of protectionism, inefficiency, authoritarianism and patrimonialism levelled against African governments.

The taxonomies of “regioness” widely used in the literature (Hettne 2003) not only strengthen a hierarchical worldview of power relations and development progress

among developed and developing regions and countries, but also: (1) hamper an in-depth analysis of: (a) the region-specific ways processes of interstate integration discipline national political and economic institutions and promote regional capital accumulation patterns which benefit some countries and interests and hit others; (b) the historical evolution of political and economic relations among the countries of a specific region; (c) the peculiar problems and contradictions regional schemes in the periphery have to face; (d) the multiple forms of resistance which oppose the neoliberal transformation of the state at the regional level; (2) prevent a debate on the dependent nature of the insertion of peripheral regions into the globalised economic system; (3) reinforce the penetration power of the global governance project into developing countries' policy making processes. The paper argues that behind the technocratic rhetoric of a supposedly "neutral" strategy of regional integration aimed at promoting political stability and economic growth African regional and continental schemes promote the restructuring of African countries' governance system in line with the neoliberal tenets of the Post-Washington Consensus.

SADC offers itself as an appropriate case study of the transformation of African regional organisations after the end of the Cold War and the contradictory political and economic consequences of the market integration strategies they currently pursue. Within Africa, regional cooperation in Southern Africa had always a distinctive character, due to the independence struggles waged in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia, and the fight against apartheid in South Africa. During the 1980s the Front-Line States (FLS) and the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) promoted regional security and economic cooperation against colonialism and racialism and critically contributed to the liberation of Southern Africa. Generally considered the most successful case of contemporary regional economic integration in Sub-Saharan Africa, since its creation in 1992 SADC has witnessed a deepening economic and social polarisation among South Africa and the other countries of the region, while the crisis of Zimbabwe puts at risk the social stability of the all region. Moreover, while foreign direct investments in Southern Africa remain concentrated in the primary sectors, South African investors are pursuing with renewed dynamism capital accumulation strategies which closely track the historical paths already drawn by the colonial pattern of polarised regional economic development (Tsie 1996). The paper concludes that, contrary to mainstream emphasis on the mutual and "neutral" benefits of neoliberal regional integration, the market-driven nature of SADC development strategy fosters both political competition and fragmentation among its member states and the economic and social polarisation among South Africa and the other Southern African countries, and strengthens the peripheral position of Southern Africa in the world economy.

The essay is divided into two main sections. The first section considers post-Cold war dynamics of regional integration in Africa and focuses particularly on the relationship between the priorities of the global governance project in Africa and the security-development nexus at the base of contemporary interstate cooperation efforts on the continent. The second section explores the evolution of SADC development policy after the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Only a detailed analysis of the neoliberal regional integration strategy pursued by SADC and the interstate tensions and conflicts it fuelled allows us to understand the limits and contradictions of the policy later pursued by SADC towards the crisis of Zimbabwe. Some conclusions follow.

2. Regional scalar configurations and governance in Sub-Saharan Africa

2.1 Post-Cold War regionalism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Regional integration efforts have a long history in Sub-Saharan Africa. The rituals and rhetoric of continental unity and solidarity played in the past, and still play today, a crucial role in strengthening the political legitimacy of African governments at both the national and continental level. Historically, the perception of the vulnerability of the African states within the international system put a premium on strategies of continental and regional cooperation aimed at reinforcing African countries' bargaining position vis-à-vis the developed world and promoting their economic development.

A number of political factors hampered the implementation of African ambitious programmes of interstate integration. Crucial among them was the priority African postcolonial governments gave to nation-building, which helps explain the failure of the federal experiments attempted soon after independence in (Foltz 1991). At the continental level, this priority found expression within the text of the OAU Charter, which spelt out the two principles of «non-interference in the internal affairs of States» (OAU 1963: art. 3.2), and the «respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence» (Ibidem: art. 3.3).

The economic crisis of the early 1980s made it even more difficult for African governments to pursue strategies of regional economic integration, due to the strict national focus of the structural adjustment programmes. The latter emphasis on unilateral trade liberalization and export promotion fuelled economic competition among African countries and made the regional coordination of trade and development policies more difficult, if not impossible. Current neoliberal strategies of military, political and economic cooperation among African countries often neglect this historical legacy and risk sowing the seeds of further political divisions, economic disputes and social instability. Taxonomies of regionness inescapably depict Sub-

Saharan Africa as the Cinderella of regional integration efforts. While economic analyses stress the low level of intra-regional trade and investment flows within African groupings compared with other developing and developed countries' regional schemes (UNCTAD 2007a: 98-100), security analyses conclude that the continent lacks regional concert of power (Väyrynen 2003 :30) or security communities (Buzan 1997).

The taxonomies of regionalism provide legitimacy to the (more) politically interested and normative readings of regional integration put forward by international organisations such as the European Union (EU), the United Nations, the Western governments, and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Due to their location at the bottom of the staircase of regionness and their dependency on donors' financial resources, Sub-Saharan African regional organisations are required to adapt their integration strategies to the policy directives of powerful international actors. But far from being passive, the reshaping of African regional groupings' integration strategies in accordance with the changing realities and requirements of the post-Cold War and globalised international system is both an internalized and a contested process, that casts African regional organisations against developed countries' regional groupings, Africa governments against each other, and capital interests against labour concerns.

As in other regions of the globe, power struggles within African regional blocs involve as different actors as governments, regional and national bureaucratic interests, business groups, labour constituencies, ethnic minorities, etc., and take various forms, such as political and military rivalries, competition for export markets and FDI, conflicts over migration policy. So, there is an urgent need to undertake an in-depth examination of the multiple power struggles fought behind the only apparently technocratic discourses and practices of regional integration in Sub-Saharan Africa. As Swyngedouw observed in the case of the EU,

the continuous reshuffling and reorganisation of spatial scales are an integral part of social strategies and struggles to control and empowerment. (...) These struggles change the importance and role of certain geographical scales, reassert the importance of others, sometimes create entirely new significant scales, but – most importantly – these scale redefinition alter and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening the power and control of some while disempowering others (Swyngedouw 2004. 34).

However, the task of «critically assess[ing] the power structures, the underlying interests of the dominant actors, and the beneficiaries of these governance mechanisms» (Söderbaum 2004: 420) is still mostly unanswered in Africa, where mainstream discourses on the positive welfare effects of market efficiency and competition within regional blocs (Schiff & Winters 2003: passim) downplay the fact

that, as Phillips remarked, «Issues of regional economic governance must be conceived as intrinsically political processes, which cannot be separated from discussions about the region's prevailing power structures and the ways power is exercised» (Phillips 2005: 21).

The poverty of the theoretical debate on regionalism in Sub-Saharan Africa facilitated the emergence of a consensus among donors, scholars and African policy-makers on the three priorities of interstate cooperation on the continent: maintaining military security, opening African economies to foreign investments, and reforming the governance institutions of African states.

2.2 Security management

Due to Western countries' and United Nations' reluctance to be directly involved in military activities on the continent during the 1990s (Malan 1999), after the end of the Cold War African multilateral organisations were left with the task of preventing and resolving violent interstate and intrastate conflicts. While the legality of the regional mandate of ECOWAS and SADC military operations during the 1990s was uncertain and contested, the peace operations conducted by the African Union and African regional organisations have not gone without political divisions and tensions among the member states.

After the end of the Cold War, African interstate institutions have been at the forefront of the redefinition of the principles of territorial sovereignty and non-interference on the continent. AU's new responsibilities in the sphere of security and democracy received an enthusiastic welcome within academic and political circles (Magliveras & Naldi 2002). The AU Charter enlists among the Principles of the new organisation «the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity as well as a serious threat to legitimate order to restore peace and stability to the Member State of the Union» (African Union 2003: art. 4.h), the «respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance» (African Union 2000: art. 4.m), and the «condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments» (Ibidem: art. 4.p). The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) was given extensive powers for maintaining military security on the continent and promoting democratic standards, good governance and the respect of human rights within African countries.

Even if the African common defence policy is still under discussion (Touray 2006) and the formation of the African Standby Force has been delayed (Alusala 2004), the AU embarked on ambitious peace operations in Burundi, Darfur (Sudan), and Somalia. These conflicts revealed not only the many material difficulties the AU faces in

carrying out peacekeeping operations, but also the contested legitimacy of its new security role and the political divisions it sparked off among African governments.

Since the early 1990s Western governments have been financing bilateral and multilateral programmes aimed at fostering African armies' capacities to undertake peace missions on the continent (Berman 2003). While the G8 has repeatedly expressed its political support for the transfer of military security tasks to African multilateral institutions, in 2003 the EU created the *Peace Facility for Africa* to support the peacekeeping activities of the AU and African regional groupings. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States, the US administration intensified its training and arming programmes for African armies (Volman 2007). The US administration's interest in strengthening military security in Africa responds to two overarching strategic objectives: reinforcing African armies' capacities to prevent and combat terrorist activities, and guaranteeing the US unimpeded access to Africa's energy resources. In 2002 the Bush administration declared access to Africa oil reserves a national security interest (Klare & Volman 2006: 616), and in 2007 it took the historical decision to create a single US military command for the continent (AFRICOM).

The "scramble" for Africa (Lee 2006), which sees the US, Western countries and China competing for political allies, markets and natural resources (Carmody & Owusu 2007), opens serious questions on (1) the ambiguous aims of foreign powers' security policies on the continent and the development assistance they grant to selected African countries, (2) the anti-terrorism partnerships between African governments and interstate institutions on the one hand and the US on the other hand, which risk reinforcing the authoritarian features of African regimes, (3) and the long-term benefits of the commodity price boom for the African peoples. Some scholars drew attention to the militarization of US development cooperation (Hills 2006), and warned that US administration emphasis on the humanitarian programmes it finances in Africa aims at providing legitimacy to its security policy (Hesse 2005).

Notwithstanding the recent wave of UN peacekeeping operations on the continent, African multilateral organisation will still play a crucial role in preventing and resolving conflicts in the future, due to security partnerships they established with foreign powers, the selectivity of US and Chinese energy and security policies, the state of flux of French military policy, and the financial and political constraints on UN involvement on the continent.

2.3 Opening Africa's economies

Mainstream analyses of regionalism stress the need for African governments to focus their cooperation strategies on fully integrating their economies into the globalised

international market. In Sub-Saharan Africa regional integration has always been considered a vehicle for promoting economic development. The Lagos Plan the OAU adopted in 1980 stressed the need for African governments to actively pursue strategies of regional integration in order to enlarge their markets, diversify their economic structures, and solve the development crisis the continent was facing (OAU 1980). As in other regions of the world, however, also in Africa since the early 1990s regional integration «policies have been based on the belief that market liberalization and opening up to international trade and finance would lead to the best possible factor allocation in general, and raise productivity and accelerate technological upgrading in developing countries, in particular» (UNCTAD 2007a: 53). So, it has become more and more difficult to distinguish regional integration strategies from the neoliberal structural adjustment packages African countries have been implementing since the early 1980s.

As in the case of Latin American and Asian regional schemes, regional integration among African countries is considered instrumental in attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) into the continent. Clearly, this requires African governments to abolish barriers to trade and investments within the regional blocs and to coordinate macroeconomic and monetary policies (UNCTAD 2007a: 142-148). International donors such as the EU are pressing African regional groupings to adopt new legal regimes aimed at attracting FDI, such as liberalizing the service sectors, introducing new foreign investment protection regulations, protecting intellectual property, opening government procurement to foreign actors and fostering competition (Pallotti 2007). Due to the slow pace of negotiations on investment issues within the WTO, both the EU and the United States are using trade negotiations with developing countries' blocs to push for the introduction of new investment regulations which not only open the latter's economies to European or US capital, but also reshape their internal governance structures (Phillips 2005: 21).

Notwithstanding the trade liberalisation policies implemented by African governments at the regional and national level, Sub-Saharan Africa remains marginal within global trade flows and is still heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities (UNCTAD 2003). Moreover, intraregional trade within African economic blocs is still very low compared to other regional groupings (ECA 2004).

Available data show that Sub-Saharan Africa remains a marginal destination of FDI, attracting only 2.7% of global FDI inflows in 2006 (3.1% in 2005) (UNCTAD 2007b: 35). While during the 1970s Africa received 17.4% of total FDI directed to the developing countries (Sub-Saharan Africa's share was 14.8%), its share of global FDI inflows to the developing world plummeted to 5.1% during the 1990s (Sub-Saharan Africa's share was 3.5%) (UNCTAD 2005a: 5). The very low share of global FDI

notwithstanding, the value of FDI inflows to Africa increased from \$17 billion in 2004 to the record levels of \$31 billion in 2005 and \$36 billion in 2006 (UNCTAD 2006: 40, UNCTAD 2007b: 34). As a result, Africa's share of global FDI inflows to the developing countries increased to 9.3% in 2006 (3.2% for Sub-Saharan Africa) (UNCTAD 2007b: 251). Aggregate data hide the high concentration of FDI inflows to Africa in terms of both geographic and sector destination. Around 66% of FDI inflows to Africa in 2006 went to North African countries, while 44.5% of the \$ 12,2 billion Sub-Saharan Africa attracted went to Nigeria (Ibidem: 36 & 251). Moreover, according to the World Investment Report 2007, «The top 10 FDI recipients in Africa accounted for \$32 billion (or nearly 90%) of the region's inflows in 2006, up from \$20 billion in 2005» (Ibidem: 35). Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Libya were among the top 10 Africa's FDI recipients in 2006. As for the sector composition of FDI inflows to Africa, they remain heavily concentrated in the primary sectors (*in primis* oil, gas and mining). According to UNCTAD:

A distinct feature of FDI flows to Africa is their sectoral bias. (...) A breakdown of stock figures for 1988 and 1997 shows a slight increase in the primary share from 51.8 per cent to 53.4 per cent of the total stock in Africa (...). Flows between 1996 and 2000 continued to be concentrated in the primary sector, accounting for nearly 55 per cent of total flows to Africa from major investors, but reaching as high as 80 per cent in some years (UNCTAD 2005: 9).

More recent data show that also in the period 2004- 2006 most of the FDI inflows to the continent was directed to extractive industries, due to the growing international demand for natural resources (UNCTAD 2005b: 40, UNCTAD 2006: 40, UNCTAD 2007b: 35). The concentration of FDI flows to Africa in the primary sectors raises serious doubts on the ability of good governance reforms to attract FDI to African countries (UNCTAD 2005a: 22), and deepens the long-term economic dependency of the latter on the extractive sectors, with all the negative consequences this trend entails for the sustainability of African countries' development policies.

2.4 Promoting good governance

The good governance paradigm proved itself instrumental in merging the development and security agendas within a technocratic discourse that stresses the need for African governments to renounce some of the prerogatives of national sovereignty in order to empower regional organisations to actively promote market efficiency and political stability within the member states. As the Economic Commission for Africa explained, «Sustaining good economic and political governance is key for ensuring peace, security, and stability. The African Union and the regional economic communities need to establish parameters for monitoring performance and to be given supranational authority to deal with conflict» (ECA 2004: 59). Reforming the African state has become the priority of regional schemes, which act as the transmission belt between

the imperatives of the neoliberal global project and the restructuring of national governance. What Donegan observed in the case of NAFTA (and Asian regionalism), fits well also African regional groupings:

The regionalism of NAFTA-model regional integration projects can be understood as a component of the broader neoliberal globalization project. The neoliberal project has as its final objective a particular programme of global government, that is, a conceptual map of a particular way in which social relations might be organised in global space. (...) neoliberal regionalism seeks to both produce 'the state' as a particular neoliberal subject-position within global space and, in doing so, to dismiss other possible positions – for example, the 'illiberal' or 'developmental' state (Donegan 2006: 24-25).

The NEPAD programme is the cornerstone of African continental initiatives to promote good governance. It stresses the need for African governments to reform their governance institutions in order to stimulate private sector-led economic growth and attract foreign investments, and appeals to the G8 countries to reward the governance accomplishments of African countries through debt reduction and additional financial aid.

As anticipated by the NEPAD, since 2003 twenty-five African governments acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The purpose of the APRM is «to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration» (OAU 2002: 1). Through a complex process of country missions, reports and public discussions, the APRM aims at putting pressures on African governments to reform their political and economic institutions so to attract foreign investors. The governance agenda the APRM promotes is in line with the post-Washington Consensus. While the APRM commits participating countries to «consolidate a constitutional political order in which democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, the separation of powers and effective, responsive public service are realised» (NEPAD HSGIC 2003: 5), its economic governance agenda is tightly restricted to the implementation of «measures of sound macroeconomic management (deficit to GDP and its sustainability, revenue to GDP, inflation rate, debt to GDP and its sustainability, and the share of deficit financed by Central Bank)» (Ibidem: 17). The concreteness of the APRM economic agenda vividly contrasts with the vague commitments of its social agenda.

Since 2003 the peer review process has been launched in 14 countries. While Anglin defined the APRM as «a vital link in the chain of reforms needed if the continent is to progress along the path to sustainable development and ultimate poverty reduction» (Anglin 2006: 266), the political limits to the criticism the peer reviewers can level

against sovereign governments on the one hand (Jordaan 2007), and the emphasis on macroeconomic rigour and a very formal definition of democracy on the other hand raise serious doubts on the APRM impact on the long-term welfare of the African peoples.

The latest expression of the continental consensus on the need to promote good governance was the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, adopted in January 2007 by the AU Assembly. The Charter aims to «Nurture and consolidate democratic governance by promoting democratic culture and practice, building and/or strengthening governance institutions and inculcating political pluralism and tolerance» (AU 2007: art. 2.6). The Charter establishes a direct link between good governance and market liberalisation when, «In order to advance political, economic and social governance», commits the member states to: «Improving public sector management; (...) Improving efficiency and effectiveness of public services and combating corruption; (...) Promoting the development of the private sector through, inter alia, enabling legislative and regulatory framework» (Ibidem: art. 27). The governance agenda of the Charter is clearly in line with NEPAD development vision, according to which the state should limit itself to creating a sound macroeconomic environment for private investors. The former makes a direct reference to the latter and commits member states to implement «the principles and core values of the NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance and (...) the African Peer Review Mechanism» (Ibidem: art. 36). It is too early to evaluate the impact of the Charter on the governance institutions of African countries. However, some authors already criticized the Charter, arguing that it lacks an effective enforcing mechanism and that, paradoxically, it could end up fostering the legitimacy of undemocratic governments (Ngarhodjim 2007).

In 2001 both ECOWAS and SADC were formally tasked with promoting good governance within the member states. Again, even if to date this mandate has been mostly confined to election monitoring, both the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the SADC Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation stress the need to reform the African state so to promote private-sector led growth, but leave unanswered the issue of how to redress deep social inequalities within the member states (ECOWAS 2001).

3. Post-apartheid regional cooperation in Southern Africa

SADC was formed in 1992 by the ten member states of the SADCC, the regional economic organisation created in 1980 by the independent countries of Southern Africa to reduce their economic dependence on apartheid South Africa (SADCC 1981). SADCC was a peculiar experiment of functional cooperation among African countries, due to the strong emphasis it put on the need to diversify the production

structures of its member states before proceeding to trade liberalisation. The shift from the Coordination Conference to the Development Community aimed at creating a stronger regional bloc, capable of accommodating South Africa within the regional community once it had completed its democratic transition.

The political vision which accompanied the transformation of SADCC into SADC found expression in a series of papers drafted by the SADC Secretariat in the early 1990s. The document tabled at the 1994 SADCC Annual Consultative Conference, for example, argued that:

Given the current levels of economic imbalances among the member States, it is critical that, as the content for cooperation is being defined (...) the principle of “equity, balance and mutual benefit” guides the deliberations. The aim should be for all governments to agree on instruments that will ensure that the programme of cooperation that will emerge for the Community will promote equity and develop mechanisms for addressing the interests of the economically depressed regions of the Community, and that the well-off members of the Community will ensure that surpluses from within their boundaries are channelled to these regions. In return, the well-off members (...) will be welcome to invest across the borders into the economies of the depressed member States. Therefore, (...) unless the programmes and projects of the Community are seen to be based on the desire to ensure that each country is an equal player, the success of the integration process may be jeopardised. To this end, member States (...) should put in place cooperation arrangements (...) that will forestall polarisation (SADC 1994: 13-14).

SADC early political vision espoused a variant of development regionalism deeply rooted in the solidarity politics which motivated the economic cooperation among the Southern African countries during the previous decade. After the human and material destruction brought about by the Botha’s government destabilisation policy in Southern Africa, it was anticipated that the new South African democratic government would be sensible to the development needs of the neighbouring countries.

The discussion among the SADCC leaders over the need to abandon their loose coordination approach and to adopt a model of deep integration was strongly influenced by the perception of a regionalisation trend under way within the international economy, and the danger of further economic marginalisation for Southern Africa. In 1991 Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe expressed SADC countries’ concerns, arguing that:

If, as is increasingly evident, the 1990s are likely to be a decade of trading blocs (...) particularly with the consolidation of Europe into a Common Market in 1991, the establishment of the United States-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Areas [sic], the Australian-New Zealand Free Trade Area, and similar

arrangements in Asia, then Africa must surely strive harder at economic integration and cooperation during this current decade. (...) we are convinced that the challenge of the 1990s is to develop SADCC from being a sectoral coordination machinery to that of a full economic integration programme. (...) Indeed, we cannot afford to do otherwise unless we want to abandon our goal of collective self-reliance, preferring, instead, to relegate ourselves to being a perpetual collective “begging bowl” (SADCC 1991: 53).

However, the Treaty of Windhoek of 1992 opened the door to the implementation of a market integration strategy aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development through regional trade liberalisation and private sector-led growth. Since its creation, SADC has tried both to promote security and economic development in Southern Africa. However, to date SADC was less able to influence the political institutions of Southern African countries than to promote a development model which severely constrains the economic policy options of the member states. Contrary to the experience of ECOWAS in West Africa, during the 1990s security cooperation split SADC member states, and since 2001 they concentrated their efforts on interstate confidence building measures. The SADC Summit was constantly briefed on elections held in the region and in 2004 it adopted the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, which aims at the «consolidation of democratic practice and institutions» (SADC 2004).

The economic policies SADC implemented after 1992 (and South Africa’s membership in 1994) did not translate into reality the grouping’s early political vision of more balanced development for Southern Africa. Unable to find a consensus on an industrial strategy for the all region (Pallotti 2004), the member states concentrated their integration efforts on the liberalisation of the regional trade regime. In 1996 they signed the SADC Trade Protocol (TP), which committed them to the establishment of a free trade area. The implementation of the TP has not been a smooth process, due to the bitter disagreements which soon split SADC member states over trade tariff cuts. Far from being a politically neutral exercise, the negotiations over trade liberalisation sparked off deep political tensions among Southern African countries, each individually struggling to get the best terms of access for its exports into the other SADC markets on the one hand, and to defend its own productions from regional competition on the other hand.

Given the deep development gap among SADC countries, their different negotiating capacities and their urgent need to find export markets, the South African government could push for the setting up of a regional trade regime which facilitated the restructuring of its manufacturing sector, and guaranteed the supremacy of the country’s manufacturing in Southern Africa. Post-apartheid South Africa economic strategy in the region has been a continuation of the policy Pretoria has been

implementing since the 1930s in Southern Africa (Martin 1990). Contrary to the idea that centre-periphery pattern of relations among South Africa and its neighbours developed as the “natural” outcome of their resource endowments, South Africa historically used trade agreements with Southern African countries to secure the supremacy of its manufactures over their regional competitors, *in primis* the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean ones.

The success of the trade strategy pursued by the post-apartheid South African government within Southern Africa was facilitated by the deep crisis of the Zimbabwean economy, which during the 1990s was irreparably weakened first by the structural adjustment programme the country leadership implemented during the first half of the 1990s, and then by the economic havoc brought about by the political crisis which followed the 2000 parliamentary elections (and which is still in need of a solution). After the trade war South Africa waged with Zimbabwe during the 1990s (Lee 2003: 100-102), during the TP negotiations Zimbabwe manufacturers impotently faced South Africa’s determination to impose a SADC system of rules of origin that protected its producers from regional competition, e.g. in light manufacturing (Pallotti 2004).

In the space of a decade, the vague hypothesis of developmental regionalism SADC had formulated in the early 1990s was completely eclipsed by a strategy of market integration which, as Balefi Tsie observed, was going « to lock the region into a structure of static comparative advantage inherited from the colonial period» (Tsie 1996: 94). The data on trade flows among South Africa and the rest of the region show that even if South Africa’s trade surplus with Southern African countries has fallen during the last few years, the pattern of trade within the region still shows a centre-periphery relationship (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan 1998). SADC exports to South Africa increased since 1994, but they are heavily concentrated on primary products, while South Africa exports to the other SADC countries mostly manufactured products.

South African investments to the SADC (and other African) countries recorded a dramatic increase after the end of apartheid (Hudson 2007). However, the nature of South African investments in the SADC countries raises several questions on the welfare impact and long-term sustainability of the FDI friendly policies implemented by Southern African governments. Simon captured the regional trend arguing that «a small number of large corporations in the mining, banking, telecommunications and media, and certain manufacturing sectors such as brewing, along with tourist related and financial services industries and supermarket retailing, have undertaken the bulk of South African FDI in the rest of Africa» (Simon, 2001: 389). It is remarkable that, except possibly for tourism, these investment sectors are not only heavily capital

intensive, but have no meaningful backward and forward linkages with the rest of the host economies (the case of Mozal aluminium smelter in Mozambique is an obvious case in point) (Castel Branco 2002). Accusations of neo-imperialism have often been voiced against South African investments in the SADC countries, due to the competitive pressures they put on local producers and their effects on the labour market.

The analysis of the trade and investment policy post-apartheid South Africa's leadership pursued in Southern Africa shows that the multilateralisation of South Africa's foreign policy within SADC was not confined to the cooperation within the fields of security and democracy promotion (as in the case of the crisis of Zimbabwe) (Kagwanja 2006), but extended to the economic sphere. As Lieberman remarked, «South Africa [was] able to exercise an unprecedented level of hegemony through “organisational cloaking” in post-apartheid Southern Africa. (...) the SADC's loss of an ideational project left it subject to capture by a powerful political actor that could use the organisation to disguise its self-interested actions, without altering the organisation's formal structure or mission» (Lieberman 1997: 88). Pretoria was able to build a consensus within SADC that allowed the South African leadership to translate its neoliberal vision of economic development (Marais 1998) into a regional project which left in tatters SADC early vision of developmental regionalism. No doubt, this outcome was facilitated by the neoliberal economic policies SADC member states have been implementing since the early 1980s, a process which weakened first SADCC, and then SADC development projects.

The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) SADC adopted in 2003 as “a coherent and comprehensive development agenda on social and economic policies over the next fifteen years” (SADC 2003: 8), considers poverty reduction as the natural outcome of an economic strategy based on regional trade liberalisation and macroeconomic rigour within each member state (Ibidem: 23). The RISDP echoes the neoliberal development vision of the NEPAD and, as the latter (Keet 2006), does not offer any real chance of economic diversification to the countries concerned. To the contrary, due to the lack of a regional industrial strategy, the RISDP emphasis on trade liberalisation risks deepening Southern African countries' dependence on the export of primary commodities. As in the rest of Africa, also in Southern Africa the high growth rates recorded during the last few years are mainly due to the commodity boom, and FDIs to the region have been mainly directed to the extractive sectors. Small wonder that also a large share of South African investments in Southern Africa is currently concentrated in energy and mining, and that trade between South Africa and Southern Africa still follows a centre-periphery pattern.

The economic integration model espoused by the RISDP tries to transpose the EU experience within the Southern African context. The document envisages that after the creation of a free trade area in 2008, SADC member states will move to establish a custom union in 2010, a common market in 2015, and finally a monetary union in 2018 (SADC 2003: 66-67). The attainment of these ambitious goals is premised upon the implementation of a macroeconomic convergence policy disciplined by the Finance and Investment Protocol adopted in 2006. The Protocol commits the signatory countries to the respect of a number of macroeconomic convergence targets, such as inflation rate at 9.5% in 2008 (5% in 2012), fiscal deficit at 5% of the GDP in 2008 (3% in 2012), public debt at 60% of the GDP in 2008 and current account deficit at 9% of the GDP in 2018 (3% in 2018) (Jefferis 2007: 9).

Far from being a passive actor of global governance, SADC exerts a profound influence on the economic governance institutions of its member states through its trade and macroeconomic convergence policies. It has not only promoted the liberalisation of regional trade and the opening of Southern African economies to FDIs, but it has also legitimised a model of economic democracy which to date did not deliver inclusive development within Southern African countries. Small wonder that to date SADC proved unable to confront dramatic problems such as the crisis of Zimbabwe.

The current political and economic crisis of Zimbabwe has been one of the most contentious and difficult issues SADC had to deal with from its creation. Because of the key political and economic position of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa, and the regional spillovers of the growing instability in the country, it was inevitable for the SADC to be involved in the search for a solution to Zimbabwe's crisis. High expectations developed at both the regional and international level about the active role SADC could play in solving the crisis. It didn't take long before these expectations turned into a sense of frustration, since SADC neither suspended Zimbabwe, nor adopted sanctions against it, nor was able to effect a change of political leadership in the country.

If to date SADC has proved unable to play a meaningful role in stopping the crisis of Zimbabwe, this doesn't mean that Southern African countries have not tried to promote a solution to the spiral of political authoritarianism and economic collapse in the country. Since 2000 SADC attempted to mediate a compromise between the political conditions put forward by the Western governments for resuming aid to Zimbabwe and Mugabe's determination to maintain the reins of power through a radical land reform and political repression. In 2001 SADC sent a Task Force to Zimbabwe in order to help restore the rule of law in the country and to reopen the political dialogue between Harare and the donors. The mediation attempted by the

SADC Task Force was left in tatters by the determination of Mugabe and ZANU-PF to win the presidential elections of March 2002. After the decision of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) of Abuja in December 2003 to fully suspend Zimbabwe from the organisation the OPDS critically stated that «this decision will do nothing to assist the people of Zimbabwe overcome their present difficulties». Contrary to the position prevailing within the Commonwealth, the OPDS argued that «the present situation in Zimbabwe calls for engagement by the Commonwealth and not isolation and further punishment» (South African Department of Foreign Affairs 2003). In March 2007 the SADC Summit launched a new mediation effort. After reaffirming «its solidarity with the Government and people of Zimbabwe», the SADC leaders mandated the South African government «to facilitate a dialogue between the opposition and the government» and the SADC Executive Secretary «to undertake a study on the economic situation in Zimbabwe and propose measures on how SADC can assist Zimbabwe recover economically». Finally, the SADC Summit «reiterated the appeal to Britain to honour its compensation obligations with regard to land reform made at Lancaster House»(SADC 2007).

The limits and contradictions of SADC policy towards Zimbabwe should be analysed within the framework of the many historical and political factors intertwined with the crisis of the latter. Firstly the regional policy towards Zimbabwe was shaped by the nature of the SADC development strategy, that made it impossible for the regional grouping to elaborate or finance measures and programmes aimed to stabilise the ailing Zimbabwean economy. Given SADC exclusive emphasis on regional trade liberalisation, its member states argued that only the donors and the international financial institutions (IFIs) possessed the material resources required to stabilise the dramatic economic situation of Zimbabwe and to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the land reform in the country. Therefore South Africa and SADC opposed the international isolation of the Zimbabwe's regime and tried to facilitate a dialogue between the latter and the Western governments. While this mediation effort was carried out, the Zimbabwean government saw its political role gradually reduced within the SADC.

Secondly, the Zimbabwean government has been wary of any external interference in the internal affairs of the country. It not only castigated Western governments and the IFIs for the suspension of financial assistance and the adoption of sanctions to engender political change in Zimbabwe, but it also cautioned the other African governments from involving themselves in the Zimbabwean affairs without the consent of Harare. Thirdly, the SADC policy towards Zimbabwe was influenced by the political divisions that soured regional relations during the 1990s and in particular by the South African government's need not to deepen its political isolation within Southern Africa (Shoeman & Alden 2003). Since the early 1990s Pretoria's efforts to

forge a consensus on a neoliberal discipline of regional relations premised upon the promotion of good governance and the liberalisation of trade and investment flows met with the resistance of Zimbabwe, the SADC country most severely hit by the “normalisation” of post-apartheid regional relations. The Zimbabwean leadership, unable to stimulate the recovery of its ailing economy, has constantly been among the most vociferous critics of South Africa’s aggressive penetration of the regional markets and the foreign policy stances of the Mandela’s presidency. Small wonder that Thabo Mbeki has constantly tried to intervene in the Zimbabwean crisis not only at the bilateral level, but also through the regional institutions and with the political backing of the SADC.

Fourthly, the nature of the political and social issues raised by Mugabe and ZANU-PF within Zimbabwe had a strong echo in the other Southern African countries. Far from being just a Zimbabwean issue, the question of the biased racial ownership of the land is a critical problem also in South Africa and Namibia. The neoliberal economic reforms implemented by the governments of the region since the 1980s made the problem of access to the land explosive all over Southern Africa (Moyo 2000). Therefore the governments of the region had to strike a delicate balance between donors’ request of a clear condemnation of Zimbabwe’s land reform and the risk of upsetting their national constituencies and undermining their own political legitimacy.

SADC policy towards Zimbabwe was weakened by the contradiction between its endeavour to exert soft pressures for the restoration of democracy in the country on the one hand, and the negative effects of regional trade liberation on the ailing Zimbabwe’s economy on the other hand. Due to the neoliberal approach to regional integration and the lack of financial resources, SADC could not help stabilise the economy of Zimbabwe and was left paralysed by the land issue. In the end, SADC faced powerless the country’s economy collapsing and the autocratic Zimbabwean leadership destabilising the all region brandishing the issues of Third-World Solidarity against imperialism and globalisation, social democracy and land restitution.

4. Conclusions

African regional organisations may well be currently unable to promote free and fair elections and the respect of human rights, but they help both maintaining security and redefining the economic policies of African governments according to the global governance project priorities for Sub-Saharan Africa.

Often considered Africa’s most successful economic grouping, after the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa SADC has actively promoted trade liberalisation and macroeconomic convergence among its member states. Far from being politically neutral, the economic integration project pursued by SADC provides legitimacy to a

neoliberal development model which bears direct influence on the economic policy options open to Southern African governments. So, SADC policies help redefine the nature of the democratic project its member states follow at the national level. As in the case of South Africa's sponsored NEPAD, SADC promotes a model of private sector-led growth which considers poverty reduction as the natural outcomes of market liberalisation and foreign investments.

However, the implementation of SADC integration project does not go without its own contradictions. Firstly, Southern African countries are still heavily dependent on primary commodity exports and the pattern of trade between South Africa and the other SADC countries still follows a centre-periphery pattern. SADC has abandoned SADCC emphasis on productive diversification, but it remains to be seen if and how SADC market integration model would promote sustainable development and poverty reduction within Southern African countries. Secondly, SADC proved to date unable to help stabilising Zimbabwe's ailing economy due to lack of financial resources and the neoliberal regional integration model it is pursuing, which offers no lasting solutions to issues of social inequality and does not shield member states from the pressures of international competition. To the contrary, South Africa and SADC uncritical embrace of the post-Washington Consensus is going to leave the region in a precarious equilibrium between the disciplining power of the global governance project and the complex political and economic dilemmas of economic dependence, widespread poverty and social inequality the SADC governments have to address.

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