

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SADC

2.1 In the decade before apartheid was abolished in South Africa, its political and economic influence on its neighbours was the cause of much concern among them. The surrounding countries felt the effects of economic dependency on South Africa, and the South African government fostered considerable political instability in the region. At Lusaka in April 1980, representatives from the Front Line States (FLS), Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe met to organise the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC).¹

2.2 The goals of SADCC were to:

- Liberate the southern African economies from their independence (sic) on South Africa;
- Overcome economic fragmentation and to coordinate efforts towards national and regional economic development;
- Forge genuine links and equitable regional integration;
- Mobilise resources to promote the implementation of national, interstate and regional policies; and
- Provide concerted action to secure international cooperation within the framework of economic liberation.²

2.3 South Africa employed strategies to destabilise SADCC by controlling the region's railway network system. During the five years from 1980 to 1984, the economic cost of South Africa's destabilisation to the SADCC states was estimated at \$10 000 million, more than half the foreign aid they received during that time. However, SADCC was unable to reduce its economic dependency on South Africa and was forced 'to draw more frequently on South African capital, skills and communication links'.³

2.4 South Africa was pivotal to much of the strife occurring in Southern Africa from 1975 to 1990. This was to change, however, when in 1989, South Africa's new president, F. W. de Klerk announced new government initiatives that radically departed from the 'former highly repressive policies' of the apartheid State.⁴ Although the new South Africa had yet to emerge, the region benefited by the end of its military aggression.

The Cold War

1 DFAT, Submission, p. S441.

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid.*

4 Thede N. 'Introduction: Post-Apartheid in Southern Africa - An Era of Change?' in *A Post-Apartheid Southern Africa?* Ed: Timothy M. Shaw, Wiltshire: Macmillan, pp. 1-28.

2.5 South Africa's change of direction in the late 1980s was significantly influenced by the termination of the Cold War. Southern Africa had been the focus of super power rivalry during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the Soviet Union underwent a period of momentous change with the advent of 'perestroika' and 'glasnost'. Subsequent economic reforms in the Soviet Union resulted in a reduction in its military spending and consequently its military assistance to international liberation movements. Withdrawal of Soviet forces from Angola was achieved by negotiating with South Africa for Namibia's independence.

2.6 The influence of the South African military on the cabinet was declining. With increasing international sanctions because of its apartheid policy, South Africa began to experience deepening political and economic isolation.⁵ By 1989, the incoming de Klerk government was forced to resolve the worsening domestic crisis by beginning a process of constitutional negotiations.

2.7 The 'thaw' in the Cold War developing from 1986, began to have real effects in Southern Africa by late 1987. Dialogue between South Africa and the Soviets led them to believe that a peaceful settlement was possible in Angola.⁶ Tougher US Congress sanctions and the Soviet Union's decision to cut foreign aid by thirty per cent in 1990, forced South Africa and Angola to reconsider their positions. Although South African and foreign troops had withdrawn from Angola, the peace process was marred with internal deadlocks and fresh hostilities between the elected government and the *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola* (UNITA). With the intervention of the United Nations Security Council, peace talks commenced and the peace agreement finally signed in Lusaka, Angola in May 1995 after months of sporadic hostilities.

Creation of SADC

2.8 Newly independent Namibia joined SADCC in 1989. In August 1992, the SADCC countries signed a treaty at Windhoek in Namibia to replace the SADCC with the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It was intended that the Community become more formal and sought treaty aims such as:

- Deeper economic co-operation and integration, on the basis of balance, equality and mutual benefit, providing for cross border investment and trade, and freer movement of factors of production, goods and services across national boundaries.
- Common economic, political and social values and systems, enhancing enterprise competitiveness, democracy and good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, popular participation, and the alleviation of poverty; and
- Strengthened regional solidarity, peace and security, in order for the people of the region to live and work in harmony.⁷

5 DFAT, Submission, p. S263.

6 Thede, op. cit. p. 123.

7 DFAT, Submission, p. S442.

2.9 South Africa joined SADC in August 1994, and with the admission of Mauritius in 1995, the membership of SADC now has reached twelve. No further nominations are being considered for membership for the time being.

2.10 SADC headquarters are in Gaborone, Botswana, with a secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary, answerable to the SADC Summit, made up of Heads of State or Government of the member countries. The Summit is the ultimate policy-making institution, and sets the overall policy direction and controls the functions of the Community. The Summit meets at least once a year. The Summit is advised on policy matters by a Council of Ministers, which is responsible for overseeing the functioning and development of SADC and ensuring the policies are properly implemented. One of the major tasks of the Council is to decide upon sectoral areas of cooperation and the allocation of responsibility for carrying out these sectoral activities (each member state has responsibility to coordinate a sector or sectors on behalf of the others). Membership of the Council of Ministers is drawn from each member state. In addition to the Summit and Council of Ministers there are various Sectoral Committees and Commissions, a Standing Committee of Officials, and various national and sectoral contact points.⁸

2.11 SADC has been criticised as being overly bureaucratic, and while it had political symbolism, in reality it had little substance. Over the last year or two this has been changing somewhat, with SADC beginning to take on a regional security dimension. Sub-regional leaders 'have sent clear signals that political instability in one member state will be the concern of all, the more so if it threatens cross border stability'.⁹ The formation of the Association of Southern African States (ASAS) under the auspices of SADC has the promise of greater responsibility for regional security being taken by the member states. ASAS and the general issue of security are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Role of South Africa

2.12 The transition of South Africa to a multi-racial democracy in 1994 has added considerable stability to the region. President Nelson Mandela has facilitated a peaceful transition although internal violence remains a problem which threatens the new order. Since the admission of South Africa to SADC in August 1994, the likely impact of South Africa on SADC has been the subject of ongoing debate:

While it is yet too early to make any firm judgements, South Africa will clearly present new challenges as well as opportunities to sub-regional integration. South Africa is highly diversified, technologically advanced and capable of generating substantial amounts of foreign capital...The pressing question is how SADC will be able to ensure that its newest, and most economically powerful member will not dominate other members.¹⁰

2.13 To date, President Mandela has maintained a policy of cooperation and conciliation. He claimed that his country's internal problems are of paramount importance and that South Africa did not seek to take the dominant role in SADC. President Mandela,

8 Exhibit No. 68.

9 DFAT, Submission, p. S264.

10 DFAT, Submission, p. S443.

while stressing that regional economic integration is a priority, has dismissed fears that South Africa would dominate trade in the region and assured fellow member states that integration would be based on equal partnership.¹¹ However, the sheer size of the South African economy compared to the surrounding states, still gives cause for concern for other SADC members.

2.14 The Chairman of SADC's Council of Ministers has reportedly stated that 'the community does not expect South Africa to be the engine of growth for the region, nor a donor to the rest of the member states, but an equal player in the sub-regional relationship'.¹²

2.15 The view has been put to the Committee that the inclusion of South Africa has meant a revitalisation of the organisation:

...the recent SADC summit held in Johannesburg was a very important turning point in the organisation. The first meeting attended by South Africa has given the organisation some teeth. There are signs of cooperation in a number of areas...(and) at least there is a political will within the region from all of the 12 countries to make their region of Africa succeed.¹³

2.16 What is clear is that in post-apartheid Southern Africa, the increased level of political stability has meant that the countries of the region are now able to explore options for regional economic integration and concentrate more on economic development. As SADC Executive Secretary, Kaire Mbuende noted: 'Economic development cannot take place in an insecure environment, and now is the time to consolidate democracy and peace in southern Africa.'¹⁴

SADC Parliamentary Forum

2.17 A new initiative of SADC was the establishment in May 1995 of a SADC Parliamentary Forum. The forum is aimed at strengthening the implementation capacity of member states by involving Parliamentarians in its activities. It is designed to promote:

- the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, including the promotion and development of economic cooperation
- peace, security and stability on the basis of collective responsibility and supporting the development of permanent conflict resolution mechanisms in the SADC sub-region
- sub-regional solidarity and a sense of 'common destiny' among the peoples of SADC.¹⁵

11 Chidowore, R., 'Prevailing Peace Advances Cooperation in Southern Africa', in *Southern Africa News Features*, 20 January 1995.

12 DFAT, Submission, p. S443.

13 Sibraa, Transcript, 29 September 1995, p. 186.

14 Quoted in Chidowore, op. cit.

15 DFAT, Submission, p. S445.

2.18 A constitution for the Parliamentar Forum was endorsed at the SADC Forum in Johannesburg in August 1995. That constitution sets out that three representatives nominated by each SADC member country's parliament will be nominated to the Forum, and that each parliament should ensure equitable representation of political parties. The Organs of the Forum are to be a plenary assembly, an executive committee, a secretariat (based in Windhoek, Namibia) and standing committees.¹⁶

2.19 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade stressed in evidence that 'this is a very new body which we know very little about except for its constitution...' and that they would be continuing to monitor its progress. DFAT saw the possibility that there may be some way 'to inject some of our experience and thinking' into this process, but that at this stage they were unsure of the detail of how this might happen.¹⁷

2.20 The Committee believes there is great scope for expanding parliament to parliament contacts through the mechanism of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, as an adjunct to the usual series of bilateral parliamentary exchanges and delegations. There is scope, in particular, for the expertise of the Australian Parliament to be offered to the new Parliamentary Forum, regarding the development of standing committees and their operations.

2.21 The Committee recommends that:

- 1. the Australian Parliament and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, explore ways in which appropriate assistance might be provided to the SADC Parliamentary Forum.**

Australia and SADC

2.22 Australia participates in SADC's annual conferences and meetings, 'supports SADC and has an interest in its success'.¹⁸ The Committee believes that Australia should respond positively to any requests from SADC for assistance, particularly in its institutional strengthening.¹⁹ SADC has the potential to make a significant contribution to the Southern African region, providing a forum for the peaceful resolution of likely issues of dispute, and for the adoption of common solutions to problems that affect all of the member countries.

2.23 The Committee recommends that:

- 2. Australia respond positively to future requests from SADC for assistance, particularly in institutional strengthening.**

Diplomatic links

2.24 Australia's diplomatic representation in Africa is comparatively small. Diplomatic representation has reduced significantly in the last 15 to 20 years, with closures of

16 Exhibit No 7.

17 DFAT, Transcript, 25 August 1995, p. 25.

18 DFAT, Submission, p. S443.

19 One example of such assistance is the work done with the South African Parliament in establishing a committee system by former Australian parliamentarian, Mr David Connolly, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

posts in Addis Ababa, Lusaka, Dar es Salaam and Accra. While acknowledging that the costs of maintaining overseas posts are significant, as a general statement the Committee believes that Australia does not have adequate representation in Africa and that our limited presence sends an unfortunate message to much of Africa.

2.25 Out of the twelve SADC countries, Australia has high commissions in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. In Australia, there is a South African High Commission, a High Commission for the Republic of Zimbabwe and a High Commission for Mauritius.

2.26 Table 2.1 sets out Australia and SADC's diplomatic accreditation.

Table 2.1 Diplomatic Representation: Australia and Southern Africa²⁰

Country	Australian High Commission	Accreditation	SADC Representation
Angola	-	Harare, Zimbabwe	-
Botswana	-	Harare, Zimbabwe	-
Lesotho	-	Pretoria, South Africa	-
Malawi	-	Harare, Zimbabwe	-
Mauritius	Port Louis		High Commission in Australia
Mozambique	-	Harare, Zimbabwe	-
South Africa	Pretoria Cape Town		High Commission in Australia
Swaziland	-	Pretoria, South Africa	-
Tanzania	-	Nairobi, Kenya	Ambassador in Tokyo
Zambia	-	Harare, Zimbabwe	Ambassador in Tokyo
Zimbabwe	Harare		High Commission in Australia

2.27 The Australian High Commissioner in Harare, Zimbabwe is accredited to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, Malawi, Angola and Zaire. The Australian High Commission in Pretoria has post responsibilities for South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho.²¹ Australia maintained a mission in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania from 1962 to 1987 but it was closed because of budgetary reasons. The Australian High Commission in Kenya now has the post responsibility for Tanzania. The Tanzanian Ambassador in Tokyo is accredited as a non-resident ambassador to Australia.²² Australia's High Commission in Zambia closed in 1991. The Australian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe was thereafter accredited to Zambia. Zambia also has a non-resident Ambassador to Australia residing in Tokyo.²³

2.28 The Committee notes that while Australian posts in Southern Africa are few in number, the posts have responsibility for a number of countries and appear to be coping with the demands placed on them. The Committee notes in this regard the high level of service

20 DFAT, Submission, pp. S455-S477 & S599-S601.

21 DFAT, Submission, pp. S599-S601.

22 DFAT, Submission, p. S475.

23 DFAT, Submission, p. S476.

provided by a former Chairman of this Committee, the Hon Kerry Sibraa, as High Commissioner in Harare. The Committee is concerned, however, about the level of coverage required of the Australian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe, given current resources. The High Commissioner made the following statement about his diplomatic representation:

In a perfect world, I would like to have an additional officer that could spend some time in our office that we maintain in Maputo. I would not see that person there in a full-time capacity. It is very difficult to do it for more than a week at the moment, because we just do not have the staff to cover the seven countries.²⁴

2.29 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade indicated that there was no immediate intention of expanding the number of diplomatic missions in Southern Africa. The department stated that:

We would need to have some very concrete interest readily apparent to justify the deployment of personnel and the costs involved in this. If such interests and opportunities emerge we would obviously want to look very positively at them. At the moment, our assessment would be that we have our missions in the key countries where our concrete interests are apparent.²⁵

2.30 When asked by the Committee about a possible placement for the next diplomatic mission, the Department suggested that it would depend on circumstances but it may be 'somewhere like Angola'.²⁶ They indicated that this increase in representation was some years away and that economic factors would drive the department's decision to review its diplomatic representation in Southern Africa.²⁷

2.31 The Committee agreed that Angola was likely to be commercially important to Australia in five to ten years. However, there is evidence that the coverage able to be provided to the smaller SADC countries could be improved. The Committee believes that a redistribution of responsibility for the SADC countries among the existing three posts would not be a viable option as these posts are already fully stretched. Reallocation of responsibility between Harare and Pretoria would be undesirable for a number of the smaller countries, adding to, rather than resolving existing problems in providing adequate diplomatic coverage.

2.32 The Committee believes that Australia should approach diplomatic representation in the smaller countries with sensitivity and take their concerns into account. A Namibian delegation that visited Australia in 1995, told the Committee of its disappointment about Namibia's limited access to Australian representation and requested that a more balanced coverage of the region be considered.

2.33 In the light of ongoing financial restrictions facing all areas of government expenditure, the Committee realises that it may be a considerable period of time before funds are available to establish additional diplomatic representation in the southern African region. The Committee therefore would encourage the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to

24 Sibraa, Transcript, 29 September 1995, p. 175.

25 DFAT, Transcript, 25 August 1995, p. 13.

26 *ibid.*

27 *ibid.*

explore a number of other options to enhance Australia's diplomatic presence in the area. One such way might be through co-locating one or two personnel in an embassy or high commission already present in that country. Such an arrangement to share facilities is already operating with Canada (in Bridgetown, Barbados and Phnom Penh, Cambodia),²⁸ and there may be potential for it to be extended into areas such as Southern Africa.

2.34 Another option that could be pursued is the use of Honorary Consuls in those countries where Australia does not have a permanent representative stationed. The Honorary Consul would provide advice to the post that has responsibility for the country, assist where necessary in consular matters, and would be well placed to assist Australian business interests wishing to operate there. The cost of such positions would be significantly less than that of establishing a full diplomatic post.

2.35 The Committee recommends that:

3. **Australia review its diplomatic coverage of Southern Africa with a view to:**
 - (a) **establishing other forms of diplomatic representation (eg. sharing facilities with another country, mini-embassies, or creating Honorary Consul positions);**
 - (b) **providing additional staffing to the Australian High Commission in Harare; and**
 - (c) **in the longer term, opening an additional post, to be located in one of the smaller Southern African nations eg. Angola.**

28 Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, *Consideration of Estimates*, 24 September 1996, p. 370.