

AN ASSESSMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMIC DOMINANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the economic hegemony of South Africa in the SADC Region, by answering the primary question: What is the extent of economic dominance by South Africa over its neighbours who belong to the same club, commonly referred to as SADC? Three central issues were examined, namely, indicators that stand as evidence of that country's hegemony, initiatives of integration that are evident, and the role played by South Africa in progressing such initiatives. Literature review was cited to demonstrate views held by theorists and researchers on the subject of hegemony. Several theories about hegemony were highlighted, including: the conventional approach (Gilpin, 1981); the neoliberal approach (Krasner, 1982); the Gramscian approach (Gramsci, 1971); the radical approach (Laclau, 2000). Gramscian theory was preferred, and its two tenets were explained as domination that is based on coercion, and hegemony that is based on consent. The Survey design was applied to assess thoughts, opinions, and views held about hegemony by personnel from the different embassies of SADC countries, and these were selected using purposive sampling. Two methods of data elicitation were used, namely, the questionnaire and semi structured face-to-face interviews. One of the key findings was that South Africa has, and continues to play a positive role in enhancing, not only the economic integration of SADC member states, but also the social welfare and integration of member countries.

INTRODUCTION

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a region commonly known as Southern Africa, not all countries are at the same level in terms of economic development (in particular), and socio-political development in general. South Africa seems to be the most advanced economically, and there is evidence that it has some kind of economic dominance over the other countries. There is a gap in knowledge about the influence of the said dominance on regional integration, hence the motivation for the present study to assess the influence of such hegemony by a single country on its neighbours.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an inter-governmental organization headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana. Its goal is to further socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation among 15 southern African states. It complements the role of the African Union. Researchers (e.g. Lalbahadur, 2015, p. 15) recognize that "...South Africa cannot escape the inevitability of its dominance in relation to its immediate region..." In this regard, South Africa enjoys some kind of hegemony over the SADC countries with which it shares a common destiny. The most visible hegemonic feature is its economic prowess, by virtue of a number of factors, chief of which are high industrialization that is buttressed by a wealth of natural resources, and a highly developed infrastructure. What the country calls 'the African Agenda', in its foreign policy (Vickers, 2015), is an initiative to ensure integration (the upgrading of cooperation) among the countries.

Economic dominance is inextricably interwoven with political, social, and cultural hegemony. It is, therefore, the aim of the present study to assess what influence the South African dominance/hegemony at the economic level (in the first instance), has on regional integration. By extension, the study will also touch on political and related aspects shared by the countries. It is argued that guesswork can send public opinion about the influence of economic dominance on regional integration in diverse directions. Systematic research will bring harmony to disparate expectations regarding the South African impact and influence.

Keywords

The following terms will be frequently used, and below are definitions, showing how they are to be understood in this study.

Dominance refers to power and influence over others, e.g. when one country has more power over its neighbours, it is considered to be dominant.

Economic dominance is a situation based on the economy of a country that is said to dominate its neighbours. An economy or economic system consists of the production, distribution or trade, and consumption of limited goods and services by a country or its different agents in a given geographical location.

Hegemony is synonymous with dominance. The term is from the Greek *hegemon* "leader." Wealthy lender nations hoping to determine political outcomes and trade decisions have established hegemony over the debtor nations they lend to (<http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/hegemony>).

Integration is a process in which neighboring states enter into an agreement in order to upgrade cooperation through common institutions and rules.

Background of the Study

Abernethy (2000) has referred to countries that dominate others economically as core countries. Examples given by the author are United States of America, Japan, and Europe. the core countries are the industrialized capitalist countries on which so-called marginal countries depend. These dominant countries control and benefit from the global market. They are usually recognized as wealthy nations with a wide variety of resources and are in a favorable location compared to other states. They have strong state institutions, a powerful military and powerful global political alliances. This seems to be the position occupied by South Africa relative to countries in the SADC Region. . It is commonly acknowledged that South Africa occupies a position comparable to first world industrialised countries, hence for purposes of the present study, it is considered a dominant country, and is said to be hegemonic. The only difference is the extent of economic and political hegemony the country has.

Altogether, there are 15 SADC countries, constituting the Southern African Region. At some point, all the countries were under colonial rule. For example, Mozambique and Angola were under Portugal, while Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland were under British rule. However, South Africa was under the Afrikaners. For as long as memory recalls, South Africa has been the country of destination for job seekers from many countries that today have SADC membership. This trend has manifested itself in various forms e.g. recruitment from neighbouring countries for cheap labour in the mines. The Wenela

Company was well known as the main recruiting company with offices in most neighbouring countries. Today both legal and illegal migration to South Africa is very common. Further, companies headquartered in South Africa, such as retail chain stores (Spar and Payless), have opened branches all over Southern Africa, a business practice that countries which host such businesses cannot do in reverse. Banks such as STANBIC First National Bank (FNB) have opened branches in different SADC countries. The same phenomena apply to mining. South Africa has mining interests in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. The common practice is that there are no processing factories of the raw materials in the countries where SA conducts mining activities. Instead processing is done back in SA then the finished products are sold back to the countries where extraction originally took place.

This background speaks a great deal about the strength of the economy of that country, which, according to Habib (2009) is 40 times larger than the average sub-Saharan economy. It is, therefore, possible to understand how SA can appear to cast an imposing shadow over its neighbouring countries.

Statement of the Problem

What motivated the present study is the problem of economic dominance by South Africa. There is a general perception by the other countries that while there could be positive influence, the dominance seems to have some negative influence as well. This is instanced in the way SA takes certain unilateral political decisions that other SADC member countries may not approve. On account of its economic prowess, the country has been a destination for many nationals in search of economic opportunities. The country has not often welcomed foreigners, judging by some discriminatory laws, and restrictive policies for certain countries. This has not gone down well for purposes of integration, also mainly because the much-talked about issue of xenophobia targets nationals from fellow African countries to the exclusion of nationals from countries like China or India.

What is inevitable is that economic hegemony, which is primarily focused on in the study, bears direct influence on the political and social stability of member countries. The extent of the influence remains unknown since there is no known documented research on the problem. It has, therefore, become compulsive to carry out research as a way of addressing the problem of hegemony and the extent to which it impacts on integration initiatives.

Research questions

The problem that has been specified above has led to the formulation of research questions that will serve as guide to the investigation. The main or primary question is:

What is the extent of economic dominance by South Africa over its neighbours who belong to the same club, commonly referred to as SADC?

In the attempt to answer this question, data will be solicited to also establish why some of the neighbouring countries perceive that South Africa dominates them economically, as well as politically. To complement the broader and more inclusive primary question, these subsidiary questions, are posed:

- i. What indicators stand as evidence of South Africa's economic dominance?
- ii. What initiatives of integration are evident in the sub-region?

- iii. What role has South Africa played in progressing the initiatives?
- iv. How do the other countries, regarding the objectives of integration, perceive the role played by South Africa?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In literature (e.g. Andersen and Taylor, 2006), economically dominant countries are said to control and profit the most from the world system, and thus they are the "core" of the system in their particular region. These countries possess the ability to exercise control over other countries or groups of countries with several kinds of power such as military, economic, and political power. Shannon (1996), on the other hand, observes that the main function of the dominant countries is to command and financially benefit from the world system better than the rest of the world, and that this is a matter of policy.

Michalet (1997) extends the argument by pointing out that in order for a country to be considered a core country nominee, the country must possess an independent, stable government and potential for growth in the global market and advances in technology. It is noteworthy that although these factors will not completely decide where a company chooses to invest – they do play extremely large roles in such decisions. A main key to becoming or remaining a core is determined by the country's government policies to encourage funding from outside.

While research in the field is evident in countries with a history of economic dominance, we do not seem to have studies that have been carried out in the context of Southern Africa. One study, closest to the present one had to do with South Africa's foreign policy and domination conducted by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) (Lalbahadur, 2015.). The study explored key perceptions emanating from respondents representing countries in Southern Africa and provides insights aimed at a better understanding of how politics in this region unfolds around South Africa. The participants were foreign policy practitioners in the foreign and diplomatic corps based in South Africa and Ethiopia. The study pointed at the transitional nature of independent South Africa's role to reconcile the erstwhile apartheid regime of unleashing a destructive agenda on neighbouring countries as a strategy to quash support for the liberation movement, and the new direction of integration of neighbouring countries.

Sidiropoulos (2014) (as cited in Lalbahadur, 2015, p. 7) makes this observation:

Since Mandela assumed office in 1994, his and successive administrations have stressed the South African government's commitment to 'working as a full and equal partner towards the realisation of a better region for all'...

It is, thus, against this background that the present study is conducted to confirm or disconfirm South African participation in the perceived common agenda; to seek guidance from policy positions on how the issue of integration is currently being handled; and to establish the level of consistency in the way South Africa complies with its perceived obligations. Confidential IPSOS (2012) makes an insightful remark, namely, that Recognition of the relative sophistication of South Africa's economy is often coupled with the belief that South Africa can still do more to ensure that economic prosperity results in greater opportunities for its neighbours. It is also noteworthy that economic dominance is closely linked with political dominance, especially where South Africa has caused a stir among neighbours by making unilateral political decisions and pronouncements. One typical

example was the support by South Africa of a no-fly zone in Libya. There were many South African neighbours who considered the matter a Western conspiracy. In combination with other comparable instances, this may not augur well for the integration agenda.

Theoretical grounding

Contemporary International relations (IR) research has used the concepts of the hegemon and hegemony to examine and analyse dynamics, strategies, attitudes, entities or properties that focus on, cut across or transcend the traditional three images of world politics, i.e. the individual, the state and the international system (cf. Hill, 2001). According to Antoniades (2008, p. 2) the great majority of works that deal with the concept of hegemony share a common element, which can be taken to be the key defining characteristic of the concept of hegemony in IR.

There are numerous theories and approaches to the explanation of hegemony, relative to economic dominance. Among them are: the conventional approach (Gilpin, 1981); the neoliberal approach (Krasner, 1982); the Gramscian approach (Gramsci, 1971); the radical approach (Laclau, 2000). For the present study, the Gramscian (1971) approach has been selected., and is presently explained in some detail.

Gramsci (1971, p. 366) argued that there are two types of political control: domination that is based on coercion, and hegemony that is based on consent. Hegemony, for Gramsci signifies the process through which the leading group – or country in the present instance- transforms its own interests and values into ‘common sense’ for members of the society/countries. Along these lines, Neo-Gramscian scholars have argued that in order IR to conceptualise how hegemony operates in the international system, it must move from a state-centric reading of the world system, where social forces are seen through national lens, to a reading of this system as a ‘totality,’ as explained by Gill (1993a, p. 41-42).

In Cox’s (1993, p. 61-62) terms ‘hegemony at the international level is “...not merely an order among states... World hegemony is describable as a social...an economic...and a political structure... Hegemony...is expressed in universal norms...” The hegemon has institutions and mechanisms which lay down general rules of behavior –whether implicitly or explicitly- for states and for those forces of civil society that act across national boundaries. The rules would support the dominant mode of the hegemon.

The Gramscian approach locates the subject of hegemony not in a powerful state but in transnational social forces and initiatives that dominate in the mode of production, and impact on the interfacing of nations as well as on integration initiatives. Without diminishing the importance of material power and dominance over material resources, hegemony is understood not in terms of coercion, but in terms of consent, shared beliefs and commonsense.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings about the problem of South African economic dominance in the SADC, and its influence on Regional integration. As stated in the first chapter of the study, the primary question was stated as:

What is the extent of economic dominance by South Africa over its neighbours who belong to the same club, commonly referred to as SADC?

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was developed and, it was used in two ways, namely, written fill-in responses and oral interviews. The two methods of data collection complemented each other as written answers have their own merits vis-à-vis spoken ones (See Section 3.2 where the distinction of the two methods is made). Thus, data analysis was carried out thematically according to the objectives targeted in the questionnaire, which directly address the research problem. These are:

1. Ascertaining initiatives, past and present that have been undertaken to enhance SADC economic integration by member states.
2. Determining South Africa's role to promote regional integration.
3. Establishing the perceptions of other SADC member states about South Africa's economic dominance in the region.
4. Identifying indicators of South Africa's economic dominance of the SADC regional grouping

This systematic clearly shows that the purpose of the chapter is to: establish an understanding of the data, and say what they mean; describe what has been found, and how that can be used to answer research questions; and function as a stepping-stone to the Discussion section by presenting the framework on which the Discussion can be built.

What follows are the raw data from 18 respondents representing nine out of the 15 SADC member states. The participants represented three main fields of specialization, namely, economics and trade, the military, and politics. Ten of these were drawn from Zimbabwe embassies in Harare, while eight were from embassies in Gaborone. The representation stood as follows:

Country	Respondents
Botswana	3
Zambia	2
Malawi	2
South Africa	2
Zimbabwe	2
Angola	1
Lesotho	2
Mozambique	2
Swaziland	1

Ascertaining initiatives, past and present that have been undertaken to enhance SADC economic integration by member states

These initiatives clearly came out from participants, and these were the commonest from both oral and written responses.

Initiative 1

The Economic Regeneration of Africa through the millennium partnership for the African Recovery Programmes led by the former President Mbeki.

Initiative 2

Deployment of troops for peace keeping and mediation headed by South Africa, which creates a climate that is conducive to economic growth.

Initiative 3

South Africa has bailed out troubled economies in order to prevent total collapse.

Initiative 4

South Africa has broadened the trade market through the South African Customs Union (SACU), thus integrating the region.

Initiative 5

South Africa charges low tariffs of goods entering through its borders from other countries, thus stimulating growth of neighbouring economies.

Initiative 6

There are many SADC citizens working in South Africa (both legal and illegal), and this has helped improve the welfare of those who benefit from their relatives working in South Africa.

Initiative 7

South Africa's membership to BRICS assists in adding the voice of the Region in the international arena.

Initiative 8

Because of its 'Big Brother' status, SA is can positively influence the decision of international organisations towards smaller embers of SADC e.g. the inclusion of the continent in the UN Security Council.

Initiative 9

SA, as the gateway to its Northern neighbours, has established trade corridors (highways, airlines, and railway lines, which have been to the advantage of other SADC countries.

Initiative 10

SA has given direct financial support to SADC countries in the form of bilateral agreements.

Initiative 11

Promotion of free movement of SADC citizens by the removal of visa requirements.

Initiative 12

Promotion of military cooperation by holding exercises, which bind the regional grouping together, thereby promoting mutual trust

In turn, member states have complemented the initiatives, according to respondents, by:

- a. *increasing trade with South Africa*
- b. *allowing many South African companies to open for business in their countries*
- c. *encouraging companies and individuals to open business ventures in South Africa*

These initiatives have been effective among SADC countries in a number of ways, including:

- a. *making member countries less dependent on South Africa*
- b. *removal of visa restrictions has allowed easier trade and holiday visits by members of SADC countries*
- c. *cross border movement of goods between member states has been facilitated*
- d. *initiatives have enhanced cooperation among SADC member countries*
- e. *Transfrontier Parks promote regional benefit in the tourism industry*
- f. *Norms of governance have been strengthened through benchmarking*

The conclusion drawn from these initiatives, as articulated by respondents is that South Africa has, and continues to play a positive role in enhancing, not only the economic integration of SADC member states, but also the social welfare and integration of member countries.

Establishing the perceptions of other SADC member states about South Africa's economic dominance in the region

In the present section, respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which the role to promote regional integration is perceived by SADC countries. The following responses were evident in both the questionnaire.

- a. *South Africa tends to attract expertise from neighbouring countries, thus leading to brain drain for the rest of the countries.*
- b. *Because it is a strong economy, even the uneducated are attracted to leave their countries to work for low wages, and this has led to straining of social relations between South Africans, and foreign nationals. This has resulted in xenophobia, which, at times has been violent.*
- c. *There is evidence of dependence on South Africa by other states, something which has made South Africans overly arrogant.*
- d. *SA dominance impacts negatively because most of the benefits accrue to it, thereby leaving less developed countries worse off*
- e. *SA dominance impacts negatively by reducing the market share of other countries, thereby affecting economic growth for the less developed countries. There is no fair competition.*
- f. *Economy is an important element of power in the region. Thus economic dominance by South Africa implies unequal distribution of national power, at political level, in the region.*
- g. *Unfair competition has resulted in the collapse of other countries' local industries.*
- h. *SA tends to pursue its own interests, not regional ones, and this has caused some countries to look to countries like China for fair trade.*

The responses shared above, lead to the conclusion that South African dominance is two-dimensional, namely, the positive and the negative dimension. The views expressed above definitely indicate that if integration at different levels is to be achieved, there are some negatives that SA and its neighbours ought to consciously address.

Oral interviews yielded more specific responses in terms of typical country examples, and these extracts go to show the perceptions.

- a. *South Africa has the capacity and economic muscle to force its way in countries to the North. It floods them with its goods across the board –food, hardware, cars, etc. However, our countries have placed high customs duty on goods that are commonly found in the countries. In particular, car import duty is exorbitant. This is to ensure people buy local goods.*
- b. *The customs duty fee has created a dilemma for citizens who want to bring in SA goods. Local goods in Zambia or Zimbabwe, for example, are poorly packaged, and are often rated of poor quality.*

Asked what views the countries held about South Africa's dominance in the region, the answers were varied as the citations below show:

- a. *South Africa should take some of her investments e.g. FDI to the rest of SADC countries, especially in the industrial sector that depends on raw materials. That would lead to employment of larger numbers of locals.*
- b. *Together with the other countries, South Africa should spearhead establishment of centres of excellence that cater for politics, science, economics, peace and security.*

- c. *The country, being economically more powerful, should introduce policies and regulations to curb crime rate in order to lessen the cost of doing business in that country.*
- d. *It is up to the other countries to sort out their political and economic problems and catch up with SA.*
- e. *South African companies should enter into equitable joint ventures with businesses in other countries in order to help improve their economies. More often than not, SA tends to be the majority shareholder in most cases, or remain monopolistic. A win-win approach would help other countries develop*
- f. *Economic dominance is not a bad thing on its own. However, SA foreign policy should adopt a more positive regional outlook.*

From the foregoing responses, the conclusion arrived at is that South Africa's neighbours do have suggestions on how to improve the status quo towards promotion of regional integration. However, currently it seems no effort has been spared to get South Africa realize that there is need to re-examine the different policies and protocols that govern relationships with SADC member countries.

As to whether the respondents foresaw South Africa's economic dominance easing out any time soon, the majority of the research participants were skeptical, and said they did not see this happening any time soon. The reasons they gave varied as follows:

- a. *War-weary countries like Mozambique and Angola are still recovering from the ravaging war of liberation. The devastation and the internecine conflicts that have continued, do not seem to be the right environments for investors.*
- b. *Countries like Malawi and Zambia continue to experience poverty, and the departure of the white man is often associated with poor management. Corruption continues to take a toll on the good intentions of all governments.*
- c. *Many post-colonial countries show evidence of deteriorating infrastructure and social services. These are critical for a healthy workforce that can think creatively towards a vibrant industry.*
- d. *The brain drain in South Africa's neighbours is a well acknowledged phenomenon that has deleterious effects on productivity. Nurses, doctors, professors, lecturers engineers, to name but a few, have migrated to South Africa at the expense of SADC countries. This has left in many countries mostly the elderly and the poorly trained whose service delivery cannot rival that of South Africa.*
- e. *There are disturbing developments in South Africa, while its dominance may not end soon, the endless strikes, some of them misinformed about economics, are likely to gradually bring South Africa to the level of its neighbours if they remain unchecked. The thinking that education should be for free, and that skin colour brings entitlement for top jobs, instead of qualification and experience, has the potential to bring South Africa to the same level as its neighbours.*
- f. *With the under-capitalised industries in many SADC countries, the story is very similar. In the lack of foreign direct investment, the level of unemployment has reached a high level. This is against a background where the more privileged loot the meager resources. Thus, it is not easy to foresee South Africa's dominance easing out.*

From this research evidence, it is concluded that SADC countries are aware of their plight, but seem not to be able to do anything about it. They watch helplessly as social and economic structures deteriorate. Against this background, therefore, the easing out of economic dominance by South Africa is not likely to occur any time soon.

The question about lessons learnt by different countries from the economic dominance of South Africa, attracted different views from both the questionnaire and the oral interviews as the following citations are indicative.

- a. *There is lack of a culture of economic governance and correctness in running industries. One often wonders why industries that were run well by colonialists are crumbling like a pack of cards, leading to mass retrenchments and grinding poverty. The lessons are far too many, and one cannot rule out some degree of incompetence and limited skills by the new players in all aspects of our economy.*
- b. *In Zambia, corruption has dealt a severe blow on creativity, and recruitment patterns reflect favouritism even though those offered jobs might have better qualifications, competencies, and experience than those offered.*
- c. *We in Mozambique have learnt that as long as we continue to fight among ourselves, there is no time to be productive. Many citizens are internally displaced, and because of these disturbances no investor would spend their hard-earned money to start any business in a destabilized environment. We can never rival South Africa. Not any time soon. We shall remain the dormitory town of the white farmers where we go and get paid pitiable wages, or the mines and the cities where we continue to be discriminated against.*

From the feedback, it is concluded that citizens of neighbouring countries have learnt and continue to learn painful lessons about their lack of comparability with South Africa. Seemingly, there is no end in sight about those countries woes, as options to improve are meager.

The key indicators of South Africa's economic dominance

One of the subsidiary questions, as specified in Chapter 1 was:

What indicators stand as evidence of South Africa's economic dominance?

The responses gave a broad array of indicators as follows:

- a. *South Africa is heavily industrialised right across from Mafikeng to Durban, hence has the capacity to employ many people unlike in the neighbouring countries.*
- b. *South Africa is not landlocked like some of its neighbours. Its seas (Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean) give it an advantageous position in terms of access to the world and access to goods.*
- c. *The Agriculture of South Africa is highly mechanized, and there is a wide variety of crops and other farming activities for which the other countries are not privileged to have. This is an important indicator as many migrants from SADC countries end up in farms.*
- d. *The education system of South Africa is an important indicator of its economic dominance. This is especially true at university level where South Africa has some of the world class universities such as University of Cape Town, University of Kwazulu Natal, to name but a few. These universities have attracted some of the best brains (professors and lecturers) from SADC countries, leaving the erstwhile popular universities in those countries poorly staffed, and a poor shadow of their former glory.*
- e. *South Africa boasts one of the best health systems in the sub-region. This is a clear reflection of how the economy is carefully planned to cater for the population. Most countries around South Africa are struggling to provide the basic health services, hence those who can afford tend to go to South Africa to access better services.*

These responses led to the conclusion that there are clear indicators showing South Africa's dominance. These become glaringly so when compared with the performance of economies of SADC members, which are no match to that of South Africa.

DISCUSSION

As observed earlier, the significance of the present study is that it fills the gap that exists regarding our understanding of the extent to which South Africa's economic dominance impacts on its neighbouring countries. The discussion is guided by the primary research questions, as well as the subsidiary ones. The primary research question reads:

What is the extent of economic dominance by South Africa over its neighbours who belong to the same club, commonly referred to as SADC?

Thus, in the conclusive section,

- The audience is grounded in the main findings through a summary of what Chapter 4 amplified in considerable detail. The findings are considered valid, given the views expressed by insiders.
- We discuss how the findings relate to those in the literature, as well as the theoretical implications.
- Based on conclusions drawn from the findings, palpable recommendations are made, and in the same breadth, future directions for research in this area are discussed.

THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions drawn from analysed data were that:

South Africa continues to play a positive role in enhancing, not only the economic integration of SADC member states, but also the social welfare and integration of member countries. This is manifest in the numeracy of initiatives the country undertakes.

South African dominance is perceived to be both positive and negative, and this was substantiated as respondents offered reasons.

South Africa could do better in its effort at promoting regional integration if it took into account suggestions by its neighbours on how to improve the *status quo*.

SADC countries are aware of their plight regarding the unequal competition with South Africa, both economically, and socially but seem not to be able to do anything about it.

Citizens of neighbouring countries have learnt and continue to learn painful lessons about their lack of comparability with South Africa.

There are clear indicators showing South Africa's dominance in all areas of the economy such as industry, manufacturing, agriculture, and transport.

Perceptions by neighbouring countries

Responses showed that South Africa has taken conscious initiatives towards promoting regional integration (See Section 4.1). At no point in the findings is there indication that South African hegemony is coercive. This echoes the view expressed by Alden and

Schoeman (2014) in the literature, namely that South Africa's hegemony is symbolic rather than coercive.

The findings showed that although there are negatives, South Africa's economic hegemony has been beneficial to member countries in a number of ways such as increasing trade, allowing foreign nationals to work in SA, enhancement of cooperation among member states, and encouraging individuals and companies to open businesses with less restrictions.

In line with the topic: *An assessment of South African economic dominance in SADC and its influence on regional integration*, assessment findings reflect neighbouring countries that express dissatisfaction over a number of aspects such as causing brain drain, some evidence on overdependence on South Africa, having most benefits of its initiative accruing to it rather than to member countries, and monopolizing the market share, hence unfair competition. This seems to be nothing unusual when considering what Nathan (2012) has called the lack of shared values among SADC countries. The cultures of the 15 countries are extremely varied. When South Africa comes up with initiatives, these may be interpreted differently in different countries, and the result is negative perception.

South Africa has its own priorities and urgent problems, and it would be pursuit of limited thinking to presume that it should do more than what it can. The weakness of South Africa has been demonstrated in the literature (Alessi, 2013), and is evident in its weak material basis of power on the continent as reflected in its weakening domestic economy confronting a host of deep-seated structural problems. Assessment based on the results shows a country that seems to be getting increasingly helpless to successfully exercise influence over other African regimes, which deliberately act against its core interests.

To conclude, this part of the discussion has demonstrated that South Africa has come up with integrative initiatives, but member countries have often not unanimously interpreted these. It was also noted that member countries should not have too high expectations about what South Africa can do.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

At theoretical level, the study has applied the theory of Gramsci (1971) to shed light on the character of South Africa's economic hegemony. As stated earlier, the theory states that hegemony signifies the process through which the leading group – or country in the present instance- transforms its own interests and values into 'common sense' for members of the society/countries. The initiatives that have been reflected in the results are an indicator of the attempt by SA to integrate the countries hoping that they appreciate the common sense.

In the context of SADC and having South Africa at the top of the grouping, the Gramscian approach locates the subject of hegemony not in a powerful state but in transnational social forces and initiatives that dominate in the mode of production, and impact on the interfacing of nations as well as on integration initiatives. This has led to one of the conclusions that South Africa continues to play a positive role in enhancing, not only the economic integration of SADC member states, but also the social welfare and integration of member countries. Evidence of this lies in the findings where respondents expressed that although countries continue to depend on SA, there is evidence that its initiatives have made member countries less dependent; removal of visa restrictions has allowed easier trade and holiday visits by members of SADC countries; there is increasing cross border movement by citizens of

member countries; and that the attitude of dominance by South Africa, at least at national and policy levels, rather than at individual level, is becoming more tolerant of member countries. At application level, the study has made a tremendous contribution by closing a gap in the literature. While studies such as the SAANA Consulting Report (2014), which were cited in the literature review chapter outlined barriers to integration such as:

- slow progress towards integrating Southern African markets;
- delays in removing tariffs and other barriers to trade; and
- prevalence of political economy realities of that frustrate regional integration.

This study has come up with concrete evidence of where member countries should focus in order to improve their competitiveness economically, socially and politically.

The bold statement by some respondents that:

It is up to the other countries to sort out their political and economic problems and catch up with SA

sums it up well. Countries have to do a great deal of self-introspection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present section, recommendations are made, and these are based on the conclusions drawn from findings.

1. South Africa continues to play a positive role in enhancing, not only the economic integration of SADC member states, but also the social welfare and integration of member countries. This is manifest in the numeracy of initiatives the country undertakes.

It is recommended that member countries accommodate this realization, and as they plan their economies, formulate more friendly policies towards South Africa if they are to benefit from her more organized economy and social services.

2. South African dominance is perceived to be both positive and negative, and this was substantiated as respondents offered reasons.

It is recommended that member countries exploit the positives more consciously, and convert that optimism to their advantage in their strategic plans. Regarding the negatives, member countries ought to do some self introspection, and frankly assess and evaluate the way they play politics and economics, and strive to improve instead of remaining at the rhetorical level.

3. South Africa could do better in its effort at promoting regional integration if it took into account suggestions by its neighbours on how to improve the status quo.

It is recommended that by virtue of its privileged position in the region, South Africa should be a good listener to its neighbours. This could possibly be contrived by having a specific body that deals with inter-country dialogue.

4. SADC countries are aware of their plight regarding the unequal competition with South Africa, both economically, and socially but seem not to be able to do anything about it.

It is recommended that countries that feel shortchanged by South African hegemony should change tact and act positively to improve their status in a meaningful and scientific way that is not influenced by prejudices.

5. Citizens of neighbouring countries have learnt and continue to learn painful lessons about their lack of comparability with South Africa.

It is recommended that each of the member nations develops a strategy to educate the individual citizen about diligence and self-reliance instead of always beholding to the government to do everything for its people. Education is a critical component in transforming the mindset.

6. There are clear indicators showing South Africa's dominance in all areas of the economy such as industry, manufacturing, agriculture, and transport.

It is recommended that member countries leverage on the capacity of South Africa by benchmarking on how South Africa is doing it. This initiative would have transfer value to member countries on the proviso that there is good will and reasonable funding. The latter should be judiciously managed and its disbursement monitored with transparency.

CONCLUSION

This study has assessed South Africa's economic dominance in the SADC region. It has become manifestly clear from the findings that not all countries are at the same level in terms of economic development (in particular), and socio-political development in general. This was acknowledged as the problem that motivated the investigation. It was noted that South Africa, the more developed and the more economically advantaged country of the group has initiated moves to integrate the countries. Assessment has showed that the initiatives have not been received well in a unanimous manner by the countries. This came out in the responses where a questionnaire and oral interviews were the preferred methods that complemented each other. Conclusions were drawn from the findings, and from the latter, recommendations were made. For the future, it has been suggested that a study with a broader scope ought to be undertaken, bearing in mind that the cultures, the economies, the politics, and the social characteristics of the SADC countries are intertwined, and that a more conscious effort is an imperative.

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