MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS
WITHIN SADCC

by

I.N. Mazonde

Introduction

The problem that SADCC states face with respect to communications in their dealings with South Africa can best be understood within the broader framework of the Republic's destabilisation of its independent African neighbours. While it is recognized that this paper must focus on transport or communications, it is quite imperative that the overall picture of destabilisation be highlighted first, if only to lay the foundation for the discussion of the progress that SADCC seems to have achieved in the area of communications. For that reason, this paper begins by presenting a general discussion of SADCC problems. This brief discussion of the general situation is followed later by a more detailed discussion of the transport scenario within SADCC in the past decade and a half. Although it is contended that communications cover more than transport, the discussion dwells more on rail and road transport because the economies of the African countries in the sub-region are dependent more on surface transport than on air transport, telephone and telex. Postal services are not discussed since they depend on the aspects of communications that are covered in the paper, viz, road, rail, air and sea transport.

General background

The destabilisation of Southern Africa by the apartheid regime of South Africa has virtually become a daily affair, one with which the inhabitants of the sub-continent as well as those far removed from this part of the world

are familiar. It is now fully accepted that South Africa uses, as a pretext for attacking its black neighbours, the presence in these countries, of refugees from within its own borders. These are the so called wanted persons, or people deemed by the Republic to be a threat to its security. Gradually, it has become clear to most observers that the real purpose for destabilisation is to keep the countries of the sub-continent perpetually dependent on it economically. The aim of the Total Strategy and the overall idea of a "Constellation of Southern African States economically controlled by the Republic", both of which were propounded by South Africa's Prime Minister in the late 1970s and the mid 1980s was basically to break the backs of the economies of countries around the Republic so that such countries would continue to provide a market for South African goods. Nevertheless, South Africa deploys many apparently different destabilisation strategies in an effort to mystify both the reason behind the destabilisation and the tactics of destabilisation. For example, South Africa has of late reduced military incursions into its neighbours and has strengthened the technological weapon of coercing them to use its transport facilities through containerisation as I show later in this paper.

Another objective of destabilisation is to complicate and make impossible the application of comprehesive sanctions that some developed countries constantly threaten to apply against South Africa. Perhaps South Africa has achieved some success in pre-emptying the application of unlimited sanctions against itself by the West. The soft approach that Britain is taking in this matter may be construed to be evidence to this claim. I return to this point later.

It is estimated that for the period 1980-1984 only, the destabilisation cost the SADCC states some US $10 billion (Saasa 1989: 17). This amount is roughly equal to one third of the export earnings of these countries for the same period. The amount is also more than their combined foreign receipts.

There is often a tendency to assume that SADCC states would be a solid united block if the problem that is posed by South Africa was removed. My view is that while South Africa is seen as the main problem for the moment, there could be greater problems within SADCC in relation to economic cooperation in the aftermath of apartheid. Already, the forging of economic cooperation among the various countries of the grouping is proving to be a daunting task. SADCC has set out to pursue the following goals, through coordinated action:

- the reduction of economic dependence on South Africa,

- the promotion of regional cooperation in a manner that equitably shares the benefits of that cooperation among the member states, and

- securing international support for its strategy and aid for its projects.

It is well understood that SADCC does not aim to integrate the economies of its member states; its function is merely to coordinate them. A widely held belief, among the donor countries as well, is that the potential exists for this aim to be achieved. And there is a plausible reason for that: individually, SADCC countries are small and weak (see Table 1). Yet as a group, the region may command considerable strength, even though such strength would still be far less than that wielded by South Africa. As Table 1 indicates, SADCC had a total of 60 million people and a GNP of US $21.5 billion in 1980. There is therefore merit in establishing a regional grouping for the purpose of bargaining not only with South Africa but also with the rest of the world. A crucial pre-condition in the realisation of this potential strength is to make such a grouping viable.

Table 1: Population, National Product and Per Capita Income SADCC Countries and South Africa, 1980.			
Country	Population (mill)	GNP ($ mill)	GNP per capita($)
Botswana	0,8	370	910
Lesotho	1,3	520	390
Swaziland	0,6	380	680
Mozambique	12,1	2810	230
Angola	7,1	3320	470
Zambia	5,8	3220	560
Zimbabwe	7,4	4640	630
Malawi	6,1	1390	230
Tanzania	18,7	4780	280
Total SADCC	56,9	21490	359
South Africa	1,0	66960	2290
N.B. Namibia	1,0	1420	1410
Source: Africa Insight, 13(8), 1983.			

So far, the Conference has met problems in its bid to make its grouping viable, since its inception in 1980. The problems have been many and diverse. Perhaps at the centre of them all is that SADCC states differ in the degree of their economic ties with South Africa. Also, the colonial background of these states is similar in some but not all respects. Equally, the ideologies of the member states are as different as are the levels of the economies of these countries. With respect to trade for example, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are partners with South Africa in the Southern African Customs Union, while in addition, Lesotho and Swaziland are members of the Rand Monetary Area. The Southern African Regional Tourist Council embraces Malawi, Swaziland and South Africa. There is some amount of trade between South Africa and Angola, and even much

less between South Africa and Tanzania. The rest of SADCC member states have strong trade links individually with South Africa. A significant portion of this trade is in the areas of transport and employment (see Table 2 for transport).

Table 2: Rail Freight Traffic between South Africa and Neighbouring Countries - 1979/80, 1980/81and 1982/83 (tonnes)			
To/From	1979/80	1980/81	1982/83
Botswana, Zimbabbwe, Zambia, Zaire, Malawi:			
Northbound	1529791	2866452	1575816
Southbound	2654063	2472982	1460394
Swaziland, Mozambique			
Eastbound	2932533	2581792	1391862
Westbound	1267435	1518469	1385350
Total	8383822	9439695	5813422
Source: South African Transport Services, Johannesburg.			

In terms of political ideology, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and to some extent Zambia, are following various forms of socialist development policies, while the rest adhere to the market economy path. SADCC countries have registered different economic performances since their independence. While Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland were achieving favourable rates of economic growth until they encountered adverse economic conditions not of their own making in the 1980s, the economies of Tanzania and Zambia have stagnated and deteriorated. Those of Angola and Mozambique have deteriorated even more rapidly after independence. Four SADCC countries, Angola, Lesotho, Malawi and Tanzania were by

1984 classified as least developed i.e. they are among the poorest nations of the world (Maasdorp 1984: 39).

The above factors are a setback in any move towards forming a viable SADCC. These differences have been seen to create problems in the way of cooperating on development projects. A past incident seems to support this pessimism. In 1980, different foreign policies within the group caused some tension at the Maputo Consultative meeting when it became clear that ideological differences were frustating certain projects. Because Angola and Mozambique have strong ideological ties with the East and are not signatories of Lome II, projects located in these countries could not qualify to receive EEC aid. The EEC could not fund key port and rail projects in these countries. This caused concern among the remaining seven SADCC states. Another case of contention relates to the different levels of economic development and economic performance. Top officials in the Lesotho Government have been qouted as expressing their fears that SADCC may become a vehicle for Zimbabwean regional dominance (Weisfelder 1982:16). It has been said that Botswana is not keen to escape from the South African frying pan only to land in the Zimbabwean fire (Anglin 1982:37). Fears about the regional dominance of Zimbabwe over other SADCC countries surfaced in 1982, following the temporary termination of preferential trade between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Zimbabwe which had been exporting 75% of its manufactured exports to South Africa looked to SADCC for the replacement market. But the individual SADCC countries wanted to protect their own manufacturers of similar goods. They are entitled to do that since there is no free trade area within the group.

In turn (or in retaliation?) Zimbabwe restricted clothing imports from Botswana. The clothes in question were actually produced by firms which moved from Zimbabwe mainly to Francistown in order to evade Zim-

babwe's stringent foreign exchange control and also to take advantage of cheaper labour in Botswana. Trade in manufactured goods by hawkers has grown between Botswana and Zimbabwe, because of shortages of such items in Zimbabwe. In an effort to rationalise its imports, Zimbabwe banned rice imports from Malawi, its traditional supplier, and instead purchased cheaper rice from Korea. Comparative advantage is not always the only consideration, political considerations are sometimes weightier. In 1982, for example, Zimbabwe decided to proceed with its Hwange power project in order to halt the importation of cheaper hydro-electric power from Zambia. From the SADCC point of view, it would be preferable for Zimbabwe and other SADCC states to make use of the already installed electric capacity of Zambia and Mozambique rather than for them to develop alternative power sources in their respective countries.

The incidents cited above testify to one thing, namely that SADCC is failing to strike a balance between national and regional goals. The achievements of the region in the area of communications as discussed towards the end of the paper should not be construed to mean that the grouping has succeeded in forging closer links among its member states. The funding for the projects was done on bilateral arrangements, and not on a regional basis.

In order for them to earn foreign exchnage, SADCC countries must engage in international trade. The issue of international trade is likely to lead to an increase rather than a decrease in trade between the individual countries and South Africa. Pessimistic about the success of SADCC given such circumstances, Weisfelder writes "only exceptional circumstances and ingenuity can sustain solidarity within so diverse a group" (Weisfelder 1982:79).

The Transport Situation

Transport will be the basis for the envisaged trade between South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. The fact that transport networks form the lifeblood of the economy of any country, be it developed or still developing, cannot be disputed. The stern intention of the West to keep the gulf between Iran and Iraq open at all costs in recent times, perhaps bears testimony to this. Transport wise, South Africa has considerable advantage over the rest of the sub-continent. Because of its geographical position on the map of Africa, it is surrounded by both the Indian and the Atlantic oceans. As a result, the country has major ports and harbours all round its very extensive coastline. South Africa's railway network is equally extensive. Of the 39,000 km of rail in the sub-continent, 23,000 km (about 60%) is in South Africa and South Africa ruled Namibia. Furthermore, the Republic has 60% of road network in the region. Its vast stretch of coastline gives it, in terms of numbers, 60% of ports and international harbours in sub-saharan Africa.

South Africa has decided that the best way to undermine the economies of its neighbouring states and the viability of their democracies is to disrupt especially the communications network within and between such states. For many of the countries of the sub-region, this has been a paralysing blow because as Saasa rightly observes, a dominant feature of the region is the heavy dependence of SADCC states on South African ports, rail systems, roads and communications networks in such a way that the South African regime has taken advantage of this phenomenon in its political and economic relations in the sub-region (Saasa 1989:2-3). Such heavy dependence on South Africa is a product of history and nature. It has also become a deliberate policy of South Africa. Out of the nine majority ruled

SADCC states, six are landlocked. For that and other reasons, these countries find themselves relying on South African ports for overseas trade routes. Seven of them have a common border with South Africa.

Another decisive point which is linked to the first is that historically, Southern African countries have been individually integrated into the economy of South Africa. The developing newly-independent states of Southern Africa do not find it easy to disentangle their economies from the South Africa economy that has dominated them since the last century. The difficulty of developing economies to disengage from the developed ones is a common feature of the world political economy, and is by no means unique to sub-saharan Africa. Much as the SADCC countries would like to avoid South Africa's transport network, they find themselves coerced by economic considerations to use it. Because bandits have effectively closed the railway line from Zambia to the Angolan port of Lobito since 1975, and because of insecurity of the Mozambican rail and the congestion of the port of Maputo, South Africa has been handling an increasing proportion of the foreign trade of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Zaire (see Table 2). No data are available with respect to road transport but there is a considerable volume of road traffic between South Africa and its black neighbours. Zimbabwe has switched the haulage of its petroleum to Mozambique. Despite this switch, it is estimated that even after the Mozambican ports have been rehabilitated and improvements implemented in accordance with SATTC plans, South Africa will still handle some 30% of Zimbab-wean traffic (Maasdorp 1984: 52).

Zaire and Zambia are both considering to route their freight through Beira, but continue at present, to use the South African transport network. In their aims to use Beira, there is an economic hindrance that these countries are finding too difficult to overcome. For the financing of their budgets, both rely on quick payments from their copper exports. Consequently, they

cannot afford the delays that occur in the use of the Mozambique line. Except for oil, the goods that Zimbabwe routes via Mozambique tend to be those that are not urgent.

There are other reasons for the envisaged growth of South Africa's role in the transport sector of the whole region. Transport costs to and from the rest of the world are very high in comparison to what they are between South Africa and her neighbours. As a result, the Republic has become the chief supplier of different kind of goods to much of Africa beyond the sub-region. Due to its proximity to the rest of Africa vis-a-vis the alternative suppliers in the US or Britain and mainland Europe, the delivery time is shorter. In 1983, for instance, South Africa was Zimbabwe's major trading partner, taking 22% of Zimbabwe's exports and in turn supplying it with 28% of its imports. In the same year, trade with Zambia had increased so that South Africa was Zambia's second important supplier. The Republic remained until 1984 the chief source of imports for Botswana and Malawi.

SADCC countries face another setback in their efforts to do trade among themselves. They tend to produce a similar range of manufactured goods so that they do not supply each other's needs. Hence, it seems likely that "officials concerned with trade promotion will be promoting trade with South Africa as energetically as with other partners, despite the overall SADCC intention to move towards disengagement from South Africa" (Maasdorp 1984:64). African countries find it more convenient to trade with South Africa than with the rest of the continent because South African firms supply a wider variety of goods and also pay promptly for imports, while other African countries have a reputation of tardiness in paying (Africa Report, May-June, 1986).

However, in the case of sub-saharan Africa, the dependence of the developing economies on South Africa is very much strengthened by particularly the lack of a coast line in most of these countries, as observed above.

The colonial policy was to keep the region underdeveloped so that it would supply South African mines and farms with labour. This policy of subjugating other nations to the Republic also laid a very strong base for dependency of the region on South Africa, virtually in all sectors of the economy, and particularly in transport. Dependence on South Africa's transport infrastructure brought about a situation in which the little infrastructure within the countries have been very much affected by South African aggression.

Table 3: Railway Distances to Major Ports					
(Kilometres) Beira	Maputo	Nacala	Durban	E-London	
Zambia					
Lusaka	2.026	2.035		2.812	3.116
Ndola	2.334	2.352		3.130	3.434
Zimbabwe					
Harare	698	1.178		2.077	2.404
Bulawayo	1.181	1.061		1.859	1.951
Botswana					
Francistown	1.377	1.257		1.663	1.725
Gaborone	1.813	1.693*		1.409	1.298
Malawi					
Blantyre	567		840	3.342	3.669
South Africa					
Johannesburg		636		777	1.016

*   Distance is via Bulawayo. An alternative route via Johannesburg is 1.268km.

Source: Hanlon, J., "SADCC: Progress, Projects & Prospects" EUI Special Report No. 182, 1984.

My account so far may give the impression that SADCC countries have been so overwhelmed by South Africa to the extent of being spiritually demoralised. That is not the case. SADCC states have not taken a resigned attitude to their huge internal and external problems. The group, with financial support from some developed countries particularly the NORDIC countries, has tried to put up especially physical infrastructure to promote development in an effort to fight South Africa and also to develop its individual countries. In the face of all this destabilisation, SADCC has formed a special body, SATCC, whose role is to address solely the problem of communications. The main objectives of this body are:

-   to provide coordination in overcoming transport and communications problems in the region;

-   to provide economic and efficient means of transport and communications in the region;

-   to realise these objectives, SATCC in turn identified these priorities for implementation:

-   the rehabilitation and upgrading of existing links and civil aviation facilities;

-   the development of new transport facilities where proven necessary and viable;

-   the commissioning of feasibility studies for further additions to the regional infrastructure.

As may be expected, SATCC is focussing on the rehabilitaion of the already existing facilities than on building new ones. Funding has come

from external sources in the developed countries as already stated. Of the 250 projects which had already been approved by first donor countries in 1984, requiring US $4 billion, most were in communications. By the end of 1985 a billion US dollars had been pleged. As stated earlier, most of these projects are funded on bilateral arrangements.

Although the bombings have been directed principally to railways, roads have also been affected. Because roads have had to be used as alternatives to railways, most ot their stretches have been damaged so that the rehabilitation programme includes roads as much as as it does the railways.

Most stretches of road within the region have been used beyond their life span and therefore need upgrading or even reconstruction. A fuller list of priority areas in the rehabilitation of communications is as follows:

- roads
- railways
- ports and water transport
- civil aviation
- telecommunications
- meteorology, and,
- postal services.

SADCC has about five regional ports, Beira, Dar es Salaam, Lobito, Maputo and Nacala. The grouping is currently focussing on the repairs that are necessary on these ports to make them operational.

Within the broad area of surface transport systems, various items, e.g. roads, railways, ports etc. are grouped according to the corridor principle. According to this principle, the links and the supporting facilities that provide connections to a regional port constitute the transport system of that port.

Developments In Other Sectors of The Communication Network

For many years, it was not easy to fly direct from one capital of a SADCC country to another. This was a result of the nature of the dependency of these countries on South Africa. Flights had to be made via Europe or via Johannesburg. In order to ease especially passenger movement between SADCC states, a lot of development in the area of civil aviation has taken place within the region. Several new airports have been developed. They include the Dar es Salaam airport, the Seretse Khama airport in Gaborone, the Kilimanjaro airport in Tanzania, the Lilongwe airport in Malawi, Maseru airport in Lesotho and Matsapa airport in Swaziland. Existing airports need not only modernisation but also improvement and repairs. Such airports are mainly the older ones which are in these cities: Beira, Harare, Lusaka, Luanda and Maputo.

There have been related developments in other sections of civil aviation such as navigational and traffic operations. Departments of meteorology have also been developed to improve weather forecasting as a way of strengthening civil aviation in general. All these developments in civil aviation have resulted in increased traffic flows and connections between SADCC member states.

Another area of communications that has received attention since SADCC was launched is the telecommunications system. In this area also, it has been previously very difficult to communicate by telephone within the region. Telephone calls had to be routed via either South Africa or Europe as was the case with air flights. The SATCC programme has concentrated on the development of PANAFTEL terrestrial radio microwave systems, the building in the different SADCC countries of earth satelilite stations, international telephone and telex transit switching centres and other tele-communication service that are associated with the transport sector in general.

Assesment of the relative success of SATCC

In spite of the success that SATCC has achieved in the area of communi-
cations, South Africa seems posed to continue its control of the region by
manipulating the transport sector. The Zimbabwean case may be used to
exemplify this situation. Zimbabwe had by 1982 succeded in increasing its
exports through Mozambique from a third to one half. But due to the
destablisation of the transport network in Mozambique by South Africa, by
the year 1986 Zimbabwe was exporting a mere 20% of its exports through
Mozambique. The rest (80%) was being routed through South Africa. The
switch from using Beira port in Mozambique to using Durban port in South
Africa cost Zimbabwe a staggering Z$ 250 million annually (Abrahamsson
1988:5). Only as far back as 1986, South Africa used the transport weapon
to silence Zimbabwe and Zambia when these two SADCC countries called
for sanctions against it. The Republic immediately levied a 25% surcharge
on all freight costs for exports and imports to and from these two countries.

South Africa, in certain sectors of transportation has caught up with the
industrialised countries. Around the 1970s the Republic decided to join the
industrialised countries in the containerisation of cargo. This move has
given it added advantage vis-a-vis SADCC countries. Specifically, the
move has enabled South Africa to:

- minimise the number of its main ports
- reduce transport costs through increased efficiency
- improve transport frequency
- earn cash more rapidly, and,
- reduce interest costs for immobilised capital.

South Africa's containerisation mechanism has seriously undermined
investments in the transport sectors of SADCC countries such that these
countries will have more reason to use the transport facilities of the

Republic. For instance, the frequency of cargo movement to western markets is crucial in the computation of freight costs. A cargo ship sails every week from Durban but only once in three weeks from Maputo. Frequency of cargo movement through Durban, as compared with Maputo, compensates for extra transport costs which arise from using Durban instead of Maputo. Furthermore, cargo attracts port storage costs depending upon the length of time taken to keep it in such ports. In other words, cargo that is shipped via the slower ports of Maputo and Lobito may actually end up costing more than would seem when only the distance factor is taken into consideration. Consequent upon all these factors, SADCC countries are finding it economically more rational to use the distant South African ports rather than use the nearer ports of black Africa.

Of itself, containerisation of cargo introduces a new technological dimension in South Africa's destabilisation tactics. Since SADCC countries are not likely to afford this high technology for some time, South Africa may be said to be succeeding in undermining the forward strides that SADCC countries are making in the area of transport.

Conclusion

There are about three salient points to be highlighted in the conclusion of this paper. First of all, SADCC has reacted to South Africa's aggression by creating SATCC, an organ of the grouping that is solely concerned with the coordination of communications. Under SATCC, the already existing ports are being rehabilitated, new airports have been built, old ones are to be revamped. The telephone, the telex and the fax systems have been developed. As a result, it is easier now for residents of SADCC states to travel and communicate among themselves than was the case before SATCC was launched. Secondly, while SADCC states have been successful in raising foreign funds to make these developments and improvements

in their communications network, South Africa has also found ways of undermining these developments militarily and technologically. For that reason, South Africa seems posed to control SADCC states using transport as a political weapon. The third point is that SADCC states have alot of potential to disagree among themselves, whether South Africa disrupts their economies or not. South Africa is capitalising on internal conflicts within SADCC to make firm its grip on their economies. The combined effect of all these phenomena is that in spite of the developmnets in the field of transport within SADCC, the domination of the region by South Africa is likely to continue for quite some time.

References

Abrahamsson, H.
    1988   "Transport Structures and Dependence Relations in Southern Africa", Paper for the SIAS/SADRA Conference on Regional Cooperation in Post-Apartheid Southern Africa. Harare, Septemeber.

African Business
    1982   December.

African Report
    1983   May-June

Anglin, D.G.
    1982   "SADCC versus PTA: Competitive or complimentary Approaches to Economic Liberation and Regional Cooperation in Southern Africa", Paper presented at 25th annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Washington D.C., November.

Davies, R.
    1985   "South African Strategy Towards Mozambique In The Southern African Periphery", Proceedings of a Workshop on SADCC held at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, December.

Hanlon, J.
   1984   *SADCC: Progress, Projects & Prospects*. EUI Special Report
          No. 182.

Kibble, S. and Bush, R.
   1986   "Reform of Apartheid and Continued Destabilisation in South-
          ern Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24 (2).

Malan, T.
   1983   "Regional Economic Cooperation in Southern Africa", *Afri-
          can Insight,* 13 (1)

Maasdorp, G.
   1984   *A Post-Nkomati Evaluation,* The South African Institute of
          International Affairs, Johannesburg.

Mazonde, I.N.
   1989   "Botswana In The Destabilisation of Southern Africa by South
          Africa", Paper presented at a UNESCO sponsored Confer-
          ence on Coordinating Research Effects of South Africa's Des-
          tabilisation Policies on Southern Africa, Harare, 20-24 Febru-
          ary.

Saasa, O.S.
   1989   "SADCC Transport and Communication System And The
          South African Destabilisation Policies: An Overview", Paper
          presented at the UNESCO sponsored Conference on Coordi-
          nating Research Effects of South Africa's Destabilisation
          Policies On Southern Africa, Harare, 20-24 February.

Tostensen, A. and Leys, R.
   1982   "Regional Cooperation In Southern Africa: The Southern
          African Coordination Conference", *Review of African Politi-
          cal Economy*, 23, Jan-April.

Weisfelder, R.F.
   1982   SADCC, *South Africa International,* 13 (2).

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES