

themselves to the task of regional cooperation, regional identity amongst them is still remote. Attachment to national identity and sovereignty dominates the focus of the summit agendas, and the reluctance to hold errant and despotic leaders accountable is evidently based on a sense of fraternity. However, it may be that this reluctance is actually part of a policy of constructive engagement or quiet diplomacy. On the ground, indications are that SADC is still far from being consolidated as a regional bloc with a common agenda. Moreover, it is being hamstrung by the majority of the states' overlapping memberships of other regional integration networks such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC).

The region thus represents a matrix of competing interests and contending difficulties. Nonetheless, it is one of the more robust regions on the continent, with increased movement toward a free trade area and democratic practice. Many donors and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) alike estimate that southern Africa's reasonably well-developed infrastructure and diverse natural resource base have the potential to lead the rest of Africa towards a more prosperous 21st century.

The core focus of this profile is to provide an understanding of the main developmental and institutional challenges that confront the region by:

- Analysing its political, economic and social contexts, and identifying common trends;
- Reviewing progress made in the promotion of greater regional integration; and
- Investigating the extent to which member states adopt a regional identity.

Political Context

The political situation in the region is characterised by a diversity of political systems and varying levels of political stability. These systems range from a traditional and increas-

ingly authoritarian monarchy to constitutional democracies. There are also no-party and one-party dictatorships, and democratic systems with more widespread participation by civil society and media independence. Democracies of the region are young and fragile, with many countries located between a stage of democratic nation building and institutional reform but prone to occasional constitutional setbacks and clampdowns on freedom of speech (Southall 2003).

As Table 1 suggests, the past few years have produced some movement towards the building of democracy in most of the region. This is reflected in developments such as the holding of free and fair elections in a number of countries, the general acceptance of election results between political parties, notably in Lesotho, and increased respect for national constitutions so that heads of state are prevented from entrenching themselves in power. However, several factors militate against these developments, notably:

- The deteriorating political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe, affecting, in particular, Botswana and South Africa;
- The increased centralisation of executive power in Namibia;
- The mounting levels of repression in Swaziland and the increasingly lawless nature of the rule by monarchy;
- The ongoing regionalisation of the DRC conflict, which is producing destabilisation and internecine conflict in the sub-continent.

Alongside these concerns is the issue of human security or the creation of an environment necessary for the furtherance of human development. Food security², for example, is fundamental to the development and maintenance of human security. Acute food shortages in many parts of the region, as well as fairly large-scale levels of internal migration, are placing a strain on the region's natural resource base. This is compounded by periodic climate shocks in the form of drought and flooding. In several countries of the region, food

shortages have led to hunger and poverty, and a burgeoning informal market. These problems already play a major part in regional relationships and they will intensify as the AIDS crisis worsens.

A further significant and persistent threat to regional security is the abundance of cheap and easily accessible small arms and semi-automatic weaponry. In large part, this is the legacy of decades of civil war in the region. In Mozambique, for example, up to six million arms were imported during the civil war. After the 1992 peace accord, a UN peacekeeping mission collected some 190 000 weapons, but most of these found their way back onto the streets or were 'exported' to neighbouring states. A similar situation is likely to unfold in Angola and the DRC during the arms demobilisation phase.

These concerns have brought to the fore worries about the level of political democracy in the region. With many countries in the region only now beginning to adopt democratic practice as a yardstick of good governance, southern Africa has a long way to go before democratic consolidation can be attained. But the signs are encouraging. Political elites increasingly recognise the link between development and democracy, and seem more committed than ever to address conflicts, end hostilities and abide by the rules of democratic practice. Another positive development is the attempt to address corrupt practices in the region. In spite of a number of countries in the region being poorly ranked in terms of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, the adoption of an anticorruption protocol by the heads of state and governments of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in August 2001 represents a progressive commitment to redressing the situation. The protocol, adopted at the Malawi summit, focuses on a range of preventive measures, which include codes of conduct, access to information and protection for informants. Moreover, it requires governments to criminalise the bribery of foreign civil servants, thereby making corruption an extraditable offence (Lodge 2003).

Table 1: A general survey of the state of democracy in the region

| Country | Political status | Threats to democracy |
|----------------|---|---|
| Angola | 1994 peace accord shattered. Renewed political and civil strife. Death in 2002 of Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi, produced a ceasefire agreement and a rapprochement between UNITA and MPLA. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demobilising soldiers. 2. Internal displacees and returning refugees. 3. High levels of corruption. 4. Weak civil society structures. 5. Controlled media. |
| Botswana | Single-party dominance by Botswana Democratic Party since independence in 1967 reflects both its (Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)) good governance record and the ethnic dominance of the Bamangwato people. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HIV/AIDS levels. 2. Refugee inflow from Zimbabwe. |
| DRC | Peace agreement in 2003 facilitating democratisation process. Prospects of stability and peace fragile as a result of continued hostilities and armed resistance to the peace process between government forces, various factions and rebel groups. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethnic cleansing and faction fighting. 2. Weak political institutions. 3. Lack of media independence. 4. No civil society structures. |
| Lesotho | Legitimate election held in 2002 following disputed 1998 election, which generated an attempted coup d'état. Vigorous attempts presently being made to combat corruption and consolidate nation building. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excessive dependence on exports to the US market (AGOA). |

Table 1 cont.

| Country | Political status | Threats to democracy |
|------------|---|--|
| | | 2. Economy reliant on migrant remittances. |
| Malawi | Signs of political maturity with sustained opposition forcing President Maluzi to abandon attempt to change constitution to enable him to stand for a third term in 2004 election. | 1. Levels of poverty exacerbated by severe drought and famine. |
| Mozambique | General peace agreement reached in 1992. Multiparty elections in 1994 and 1999 but Renamo claimed it was denied victory in 1999 poll. President Chissano has announced he will not seek a third term in 2004. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High levels of corruption. 2. Tensions between Renamo-controlled provinces and central government over delegation of powers. 3. Independence of political and institutional structures such as the judiciary compromised by influence from Frelimo. 4. Asymmetrical levels of development between regions. |

Table 1 cont.

| Country | Political status | Threats to democracy |
|----------------|---|---|
| Namibia | Formal independence since 1990. Increasing centralisation of power in presidency. Nujoma has changed constitution once to stand for third term. Conflict over the Caprivi strip, bordering Botswana, threatens to spill over into the region. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak opposition. 2. Centralising tendency within Swapo and increasing hostility to dissent. |
| South Africa | Democracy since 1994. Entrenchment of democratic procedures. Stable. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak opposition and single-party domination with tendency to centralisation. 2. Extreme levels of socioeconomic inequality. |
| Swaziland | Least democratic state in region. Ruled by authoritarian monarchy with increasingly despotic tendencies. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extreme levels of poverty. 2. Collapse of independent judiciary. 3. Curbs on media expression. |
| Tanzania | Mature, functioning democracy. Successful election in 2000. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Separatist movement in island of Zanzibar. |
| Zambia | Stable multiparty system. Attempt by President Chiluba to change constitution to enable him to seek third term resisted. 2002 election resulted in stable transition. Attempts to address corruption. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High levels of poverty and unemployment. 2. Weak economy and excessive dependency on global terms of trade. |

Table 1 cont.

| Country | Political status | Threats to democracy |
|----------|--|--|
| Zimbabwe | Collapse of democracy and rule of law. Steady degeneration to fascism. Independence of judiciary destroyed. Dissident media crushed. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Famine and starvation. 2. High levels of violent repression, especially in rural areas and opposition strongholds. |

Source: EISA (<http://www.eisa.org.za>) and World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr>)

Economic Context

Economic activity and development Despite the relatively small size of the southern African market, the SADC's gross domestic product of US\$226.1 billion in 2001 is more than double that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and more than half of sub-Saharan Africa's aggregate GDP. Even so, the regional economy continues to reflect a strong dependence on the primary sectors of production, specifically the exporting of agricultural and mining commodities. These account for on average more than half of the GDP (Kritzinger-van Niekerk & Pinto Moreira 2002). With uneven levels of socioeconomic development and the exigency of addressing the pervasive poverty afflicting the region, many member states embarked upon IMF/World Bank-directed stabilisation and adjustment programmes in the early 1990s. The aim of these programmes was to promote macro-economic stability and higher growth alongside improved social service provision (SADC FANR 2003).

While most SADC countries recorded high-growth performance during the 1970s, economic growth in the region slowed down in the 1980s, partly because of deteriorating terms of trade and policy failures. As Table 3 illustrates, a degree of recovery occurred in the 1990s, albeit unevenly.