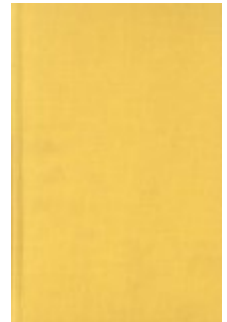




**James J. Hentz.** *South Africa and the Logic of Regional Cooperation.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005. xii + 276 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-253-34464-9.



**Reviewed by** Jose Mota da Lopes

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This book is a well-researched, in-depth study of the conditions through which the post-apartheid South African state has been defining and assuming its Southern Africa economic policy of regional integration and economic cooperation, in general and in particular as an integral member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). James Hentz, an associate professor of international studies at the Virginia Military Institute, looks at the ways, means, and dynamics of how the most important South African social and political actors, including the African National Congress (ANC), the still-powerful Afrikaans bureaucracy of the old apartheid state, what he calls "big capital," organized labor, and other old and new social movements compete and interact among themselves and in relation to the state to impose their interests, objectives, ideology, and institutions on the country's regional policy. The book is also an important contribution to understanding, over and above the rhetoric of public political discourses, the local conditions, the regional and global limitations, the manipulations, and the compromises through which the

ANC is charting and implementing, often not without confusion, South African policies today.

It is not easy to summarize briefly a work so comprehensive. Hentz creatively uses "positive liberal international relations theory" or an "open policy approach" to characterize the international and regional organization of the politics and economy of South Africa. With that objective he analyzes the changes in South Africa's regional policies for cooperation and development during a period of about ten years, starting with the legalization of the ANC in 1990 and ending with the second post-apartheid election of June 1999. He divides this first post-apartheid decade in Southern Africa into two main phases: before and after the adoption in 1996 of a new ANC economic plan for Growth, Employment and Redistribution, or GEAR. As shown by Hentz, the question of how the new state would formally integrate itself in the region was extensively debated during this period of transition from apartheid to democratic freedom in South Africa.

Three main alternatives of institutional regional cooperation are identified by Hentz in that

debate. The first is the one represented and historically defended by the ANC and South African labor with the unexpected but understandable support of Afrikaans small business. Hentz calls it the "developmental integration/cooperation alternative." It argues that the South African relationship with the region has to be preferential but also through it the new South Africa has to actively contribute to the equitable development of Southern Africa as a regional community of the world system. The second alternative, "market integration/cooperation," was and continues to be defended by the Afrikaans bureaucracy of the old apartheid state in the name of efficiency and the successful experience of past projects like SACU, and consists mostly of the extension to the whole region of the apartheid-era project previously known as COSAS. Although still implying the participation of the state, it is mainly based on an ideology of open markets and free trade. It counts, to a great extent, on the ideological (although passive) support of International Financial Institutions like the IMF and the WTO. Finally, the third alternative is also a form of continuity with previous forms and means of regional relationships. Hentz calls it "ad hoc cooperation." It describes the procedures of business relations increasingly followed since the last years of apartheid between South African firms or businesses and their existing or potential interlocutors in the region. This is the alternative that continues to be favored by South Africa's capital-intensive industries and by the largest financial institutions to which they are linked. It continues to be the dominant form of relationship in the region, with ties based on bilateral, business-to-business contractual deals without institutional or state interference. Hentz points out that the main aspects of these regional alternatives are not mutually exclusive (p. 11) but this is only true in a South African perspective. I can add that South African delegations to regional meetings continue to defend the extension of SACU as an alternative to the SADC project of forming a monetary union—something looked at

with understandable suspicion in the rest of the region.[1]

As presented and discussed by Hentz, the South African internal debate about regional cooperation assumes its full meaning within the context of larger processes of social and political changes in South Africa and, among them, that of the historical trajectory that has been followed by the ANC in power. *Grosso modo*, the ANC's two contrasting political positions in relation to Southern African cooperation can be seen as coinciding with the chronological limits of Hentz's study. The first, actively defended during the last years of apartheid and the first phase of a democratic South Africa, was that of a liberation project based on a policy of self-sustained and equal South African development—capable of actively helping or contributing to the general reconstruction of the rest of the region. The second, that of present-day politics, is characterized by practices designed to dominantly serve local and international capital, its regional interests, and strategies. As Hentz clearly shows, this radical change was assumed to the detriment, if not against, the ANC's own social base formed by the great majority of South Africans and including organized labor. To be sure, this policy goes also against the interests of other regional states and, in particular, against stated expectations of SADC.

Hentz's detailed study of the reasons, conditions, and dynamics that led the ANC government to assume such a different, if not opposite, political choice leads him to conclude that it was a direct result of the strong pressure and demands of big business in South Africa, "a powerful elite who had been enriched by apartheid" (p. 3). He also emphasizes how the ANC government during that trajectory was construed as a neo-liberal, globalized state, in reality reduced to little more than a power broker or mediator between labor and capital—trying more often than not to manipulate the former in order to be able to enter into increasing compromises with the latter.

Regarding previous ANC regional policy and promises, the evidence is that not even its former rhetoric is now used but has been forgotten and buried in the past as happened with so many other projects and promises of regional liberation movements now in power. Hertz reminds us that the situation is still quite fluid but, presenting his main conclusions, adds that the elements allowing us to see the direction it is taking are already in place, permitting a clear picture of the dominant trend.

This multi-dimensional reading leads to a number of reflections not only about the potential and effective role of South Africa in the (re)construction of Southern Africa today as an integrated region of the world economy, but also about the present direction of South African political and economic development. It constitutes, as well, an enlightening analysis about the effective limitations of political decision-making in semi-peripheral countries of the world economy, that is to say, and as described by Hertz, in semi-industrialized economies with "a foot in two worlds" (p. 181): the international core and regional peripheries. With very similar features to what today happens in India or Brazil in relation to their immediate regions of economic and political influence, the case of South Africa in relation to the rest of Southern Africa and as analyzed here becomes, thus, an important case study for a better understanding of other similar, semi-peripheral conjunctures.

Given its main focus, the book does not address in similar detail what has been happening within SADC and the idea of Southern African co-operation within the region and its recent history. Yet to reiterate this history allows not only for a better understanding of the importance of Hertz's work but also helps the reader appreciate the full dimensions of the present South African regional policies that he discusses. We must recall that SADC started in 1992 not as an institution of integration of the economies of the member states

but, less ambitiously, as an aid-coordinating body for the region. This was how and why the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was created in 1980 by the Front Line States and following a suggestion, in the name of greater efficiency and centralization, by the British government of Margaret Thatcher. Contrary to what is often stated, SADCC was primarily formed neither as a response to CONSAS (P. W. Botha's proposal for a Constellation of Southern African States) nor as an economic instrument to directly confront South Africa's apartheid. Basically, its objectives were administrative and coordinative in what concerned investments and aid from the West. Only sporadically did SADCC channel demands for international support in name of the national liberation movements still confronting Rhodesian rebel colonialism and South Africa's apartheid in the region, sometimes (but not always) centralizing resources attributed to them. From its initial nine members, the organization is presently constituted by fourteen countries (including South Africa, Namibia, the Congo Republic, Mauritius, and Madagascar) and may be going to fifteen--if Rwanda's recent request to join the community is accepted.

For the near future, SADC's integrative project can be summarized in four important stages: the formation of a free trade area until 2008; a Customs Union in 2010; a Common Market in 2015; and, finally, a Monetary Union with a corresponding regional Central Bank in 2016-2018. These goals will only be achieved, however, with an accentuated decline in regional inflation to 10 percent in two years and to 3 percent by 2018; with the contraction of the ratio between government loans and national GDPs to less than 5 percent in 2008; and with regional economic growth of 7 percent. The reality today is that none of these conditions seems to be even remotely achievable. [2] Just as importantly, the reality today is also that SADC is being increasingly considered, both in the region and internationally, as a "not yet credible organization," as lacking "commitment in

crucial trade negotiations," as "irresponsible," and as "unable to define its priorities." [3] Hentz's book can be read as a reflection, from the South African perspective, about some of the reasons for these mounting problems within SADC.

A number of minor and not-so-minor problems mar *South Africa and the Logic of Regional Cooperation*. There is too much repetition from chapter to chapter. There is also some incongruence: the date of the birth of the modern South African state, for example, is given as 1953 on p. 19 and changed to 1909, without any explanation, on the following page. Such problems would have been avoided by more professional editing. Moreover, the study neglects important elements central to understanding the regional construction of Southern Africa, notably the fact that, since the late nineteenth century, the fate of modern South Africa has been very much linked to access to regional resources, especially migrant labor. These forces are still present in today's regional conjuncture. Also neglected by the author are the conditions (to follow the characterization of his subject matter, those internal to the apartheid state and its strategic and tactical objectives) that led to a full decade of generalized military destabilization and systematic destruction of the region. This omission is quite regrettable: the book discusses relations between South Africa and Southern Africa as if the region had not been the tragic site of a protracted and ever-escalating war from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, one that directly involved South Africa and its military as a major and constant aggressive power.

Nevertheless, Hentz's book is an important, multifaceted contribution to the understanding of today's political realities in South Africa within the interrelated contexts of both the Southern Africa region and the neo-liberalized, structurally adjusted world economy.

#### Notes

[1]. The proposal was formally presented during the 2006 Maputo meeting of the SADC Central

Bank Governors by Tito Mboweni, the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank. See *Noticias* (Maputo), 13 April 2006.

[2]. *Noticias* (Maputo), 13 April 2006.

[3]. See, among other recent statements: Aziz Pahad (South African Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs), interview, *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 15 November 2005; Ivano Carella (European Union General Directorate for Trade), interview, *Business Day*, 9 March 2005; and Noria Mashumba, "Action Time for SADC," interview, *Business Day*, 13 January 2006.

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