

PREFACE

To a great extent, this study has its roots in Southern Africa. It was during a semester abroad at the University of Namibia when my interest in African politics, the state in Africa and regionalism in sub-Saharan Africa began to take shape. In the course of my studies, I understood that there certainly existed several deep-rooted social and political characteristics on national and regional levels that distinguished the state and political context in Africa from other regions such as Europe. The legacy of colonialism and post-colonial patterns of interdependence to powerful actors overseas—and to South Africa as the dominant regional power—appeared in many respects to have an effect on countries, governments and peoples in Southern Africa. But there was also enthusiasm about African renaissance and a spirit of optimism towards regional integration within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which seemed to be a genuine regional solution to regional challenges and a beacon of hope for socio-economic development. Interestingly, I first came across the organisation when I registered as a student at the University of Namibia and was surprised by the fact that a substantial discount on study fees applied for students from SADC countries. Since then, the SADC became my constant companion and I became increasingly aware of the organisation's high political relevance, media presence, activities and dynamics.

For decades, the major part of political science research on regionalism has focussed on the integration process in Europe. This has led to an implicit Euro-centrism in most regional integration theories which weakened their

explanatory power with regard to regionalisms outside Europe. It is therefore not surprising that there exists only very little academic literature on the SADC—at least in bookshelves in the Northern Hemisphere—which goes beyond describing the characteristics of the organisation. As a result, prejudged and rather hasty estimates concluded in most cases and with reference to the shining “European example” that regionalism in the SADC has failed or is little more than a paper tiger. This not only confused but challenged me and ultimately sparked the research project.

Being aware of the research gap, I realised that there was a need to analyse and explain regionalism in the SADC from a non-Euro-centric perspective but with a focus on the countries and political situation within the region. Adopting cooperation theory became a viable solution. Besides that, a comprehensive analysis of regionalism had to include additional policy areas besides the economy in order to capture empirical evidence about the organisation’s wide range of activities. Finally, I deemed it necessary to provide an assessment of the performance of regionalism in the SADC in order to come increasingly on par with the literature and state of research on Europe. Once the project was under way, I realised that strong patterns of interdependence existed between regional and extra-regional actors in many policy areas. This implied external influence. As a consequence, this work adopts a modified situation-structural approach as a guiding theory for the study of regionalism which takes this particular structural aspect explicitly into account. This allowed me to highlight the role of the European Union and its ambivalent influence on regional integration in the SADC.

Before delving into the analysis and findings on regionalism in the SADC, I would like to thank the people who have made this research a pleasant and fruitful endeavour. The completion of this book could not have been accomplished without the support I received from many colleagues and experts from academia, friends and family. While being very grateful to everyone who has been involved in this process, I would like to express my special thanks to the following individuals.

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