

Advancing Energy Security Through Regional Cooperation in Southern Africa: An Assessment of the Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract : Achieving energy security has, in the past few decades, become one of the main goals in the security agenda of every country around the world. For Southern African Countries (SAC) the aim is not different, yet these countries face a particular challenge in the pursuit of their energy security. More than just secure enough energy sources to fuel their industrial and societal needs, SAC have as well to ensure that they trade their rich energy resources to the global market in a way that promotes and safeguards their economic development objectives. Considering the relevance of this issue to the SAC, the present paper explores the possibility of these countries to achieve energy security through regional cooperation, under the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) platform. It discusses the challenges and opportunities for advancing energy security in this region through cooperation. After analyzing the data through the documentary analysis method, it was found that regional cooperation among SAC to improve energy security is not effective since cooperation in the region is still very susceptible to a plethora of challenges, such as political instability, lack of development of infrastructure and expertise, lack of good governance, lack of sense of cohesiveness, and most important lack of political commitment. It was also found that significant commitment on regional cooperation had been centered on the electricity sub-sector due to the region's huge electricity deficit. Thus less commitment is dedicated to the development and policy harmonization of the other sub-sectors such as the one of natural gas and oil, for instance. Hence, it is recommended that the leadership of the SAC is fully committed to cooperate and harmonize the policies, the strategic plans, as well as the infrastructure concerning to all the natural energy resources and its respective sub-sectors. This would provide the SAC significant leverage to negotiate for the energy market access, ensuring that the region's energy commodities are traded, while the countries themselves retain enough energy to sustain their economic growth and development, improving, therefore, their energy security.

Keywords : regional cooperation, energy security, economic development, political commitment

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