

DISCUSSION PAPER 27

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and
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ZIMBABWE – THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DECLINE

Compiled by Henning Melber

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Contents

Preface	5
Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Zimbabwe's Development Impasse	7
<i>Suzanne Dansereau</i>	
From Social Justice, to Neo-Liberalism, to Authoritarian Nationalism: Where is the Zimbabwean State going?	
<i>Mario Zamponi</i>	27

Preface

“Looking to the Future: Social, political and cultural space in Zimbabwe” had been the title of an international conference organised by the Nordic Africa Institute from May 24 to 26, 2004, in Uppsala. The event brought together a blend of scholars and civil society actors from within Zimbabwe, Zimbabweans from abroad as well as scholars committed to research matters related to Zimbabwe from various other countries. The aim of the debates was to assess the character, causes and impacts of Zimbabwe’s crisis in different social spheres and to discuss possible future perspectives. The participants shared as a common denominator the loyalty to the people of Zimbabwe and were guided by values and norms transcending narrow (party) organisational links. They were motivated in their discourse and deliberations to explore and occupy the “space in between” the polarised frontiers to secure – as much as possible under the given circumstances – common sustainable ground beyond the we-they dichotomy and divide. Papers and comments were presented in three thematically oriented sessions sub-divided into socio-economic and socio-political issues as well as cultural production. They were conducted under the responsibility of the three co-organising researchers at the Institute: Amin Kamete (programme “Gender and Age in African Cities”), Henning Melber (project “Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa”) and Mai Palmberg (project “Cultural Images in and of Africa”) respectively. Karolina Winbo was in charge of the organisational and administrative support.

Some contributions were processed further in various forms. A Current African Issues (no. 27) has been published by the Institute on “Media, Public Discourse and Political Contestation in Zimbabwe” with the revised papers by Sarah Chiumbu (Zimbabwe chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa) and Dumisani Moyo (Media and Communications Studies Programme at the University of Zimbabwe). This Discussion Paper highlights through two other revised papers originally presented to the conference some socio-economic aspects of Zimbabwean society. The two chapters raise relevant issues that have tended to be neglected given the recent concentration on political events. While this is understandable, the analyses to follow add insights into important socio-economic sectors of society. These offer information on the present constraints of the decline, which helps us to understand the structural legacy that any future government will have to deal with. The elections in Zimbabwe in 2005 provide an ideal moment to discuss such matters beyond the sphere of the political. The compilation thereby hopes to contribute constructively to the analysis of the overall picture in Zimbabwe.

Particular thanks go to my colleagues for the successful collaborative effort in the conference, without which this result would not exist. Funds, for both the conference and this publication, were generously provided by Sida and are herewith gratefully acknowledged. I also wish to thank the two authors for their willingness to revise their original contributions and Inga-Britt Isaksson-Faris for her assistance in the editing, as well as my colleagues in the publication department for another job well done.

Finally I wish to dedicate this volume to the memory of Björn Lindgren. As a committed young scholar he had spent substantial parts of his life with Zimbabwean affairs and was close to the people in Zimbabwe. One of his last professional activities was participation in the conference, upon which this publication is based. He lost his courageous and dignified but short battle against cancer in November 2004, and we mourn the loss of a gentle and modest colleague and friend.

Henning Melber
Uppsala, December 2004

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Zimbabwe's Development Impasse

Suzanne Dansereau

Shortages of food, pharmaceuticals and petrol, inflation rates hovering between 400 and 600% a year, a drop in tobacco sales to a quarter of the 2000 level,¹ unemployment and poverty at about 75%, as well as documented human rights abuses and press censorship are but some of the indicators of Zimbabwe's current crisis. Many outside observers blame the crisis on an ageing dictator trying to hold onto power by ignoring the rule of law, with solutions resting in the hands of popular opposition forces, merely awaiting free and fair elections to put things right. This simple dichotomy is reiterated by the two main political parties. ZANU-PF presents itself, as the bulwark against Britain's efforts to recolonise the country while it describes the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as a-historic, in search of a rapprochement with the forces of globalisation.² The MDC on the other hand, offers itself as the way to return to normality, blaming ZANU-PF for 'two decades of misrule and poor governance at the hands of a rapacious clique of power-hungry politicians (that) have transformed the jewel of Africa into a failed state'.³ This dichotomy reveals the depth of the country's polarisation, but the prolonged nature of the crisis, the difficult search for a way-out and the lack of alternatives reveal a profound impasse stemming from the lack of development options available to the country.

The situation in Zimbabwe resembles that of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing increasing conflict and instability after rising debt levels, and the introduction of structural adjustment and governance conditionalities weakened the national economy, narrowed state capacities and political options. The state is left with few tools to meet rising demands from popular groups and others excluded from the benefits of development, especially as they conflict with pressures from business and donors. Instead, the ruling elite, in a bid to protect itself, takes the carrot proffered by donors, along with the stick, drawing economic benefits from its proximity to the state, while entrenching itself politically through state repression. In some cases, conflict generated by the exclusion of the many, contributes to state collapse, particularly if it coincides with regional cleavages, and especially when fuelled by an illegal trade in natural resources. Zimbabwe's experience demonstrates

1. *Business Report*, South Africa (SA), March 29, 2004.

2. T. Ranger, "Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 30 no. 2, 2004.

3. *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), Jan. 30, 2004.

that it can also result in a social or class-based struggle over the direction of the country's development programme. The lack of development options can result in growing resistance from popular groups and intransigence from the ruling elite, which can also contribute to state collapse.

This paper will demonstrate the failure of both the inward-oriented development strategies adopted in 1980 and the export-driven model in 1990, supported by structural adjustment. It will document the key role played by Bretton Woods institutions in transforming state-led development into a market economy, protecting the interests of foreign-owned mining companies and commercial farmers, and reducing state capacities to intervene against growing economic and social demands resulting from rising unemployment and poverty, at a time when capital and donor agencies pushed for further liberalisation. The inability to meet those demands resulted in the emergence of an opposition, shaped less by regional factors¹ than by the country's labour and urban groups, eventually coming together to challenge ZANU-PF in parliamentary and presidential elections. In 2000, the government, feeling its survival threatened, returned to promises of land reform in an effort to consolidate its economic base and retain what it considered to be its electoral base in the rural areas. It took refuge in greater repression against popular demands and isolated itself from external influences, abandoning all pretence of adherence to fiscal austerity and good governance. The paper will then examine proposals put forward by ZANU-PF, the MDC and Bretton Woods agencies in the light of these failed development strategies, revealing their lack of alternatives, and thus the depth and complexity of the impasse facing the country.

How we got here: The impasse

In ZANU-PF's construction of 'patriotic history', little mention is made of the modernising, reconstruction and welfare agenda of the 1980s.² This was an internal response to 'the grossly inequitable pattern of income distribution and predominant foreign ownership of assets' both by promoting economic growth and reducing socio-economic disparities, with the state as engine of growth and development.³ Yet, the state-used Marxist-Leninist language took a gradual, staged approach

1. Soon after independence, conflict did take on a regional character as government troops sought to quell 'dissidents' in the Matabeleland provinces. This history is highly contested, subjected to partisan and other conflicting interpretations. (See J. Alexander and J. McGregor, *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.) By 1987, ZAPU, whose membership was concentrated in the Matabeleland provinces, agreed to join the government. Joshua Nkomo, ZAPU President, became one of the country's two vice-presidents, and other ZAPU members were given ministerial posts. Tensions did not disappear altogether between ZANU and ZAPU but they now tend to be intermingled and cross-over current conflicts.

2. Ranger, op.cit.

3. Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), *Growth with Equity*, Feb. 1981

emphasizing the dual objective of growth and redistribution. The 1982 *Transitional National Development Plan*¹ continued this direction, outlining increases in state economic control to be carried out through investment guidelines and public sector investment, aimed at stimulating private investment, improving skills and creating employment. It recognized the role of the private sector, but aimed at reducing the control industry and commercial agriculture had enjoyed during the colonial period and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) as it was only state ownership of productive capacity that would guarantee the removal of growth constraints and direct growth benefits towards national and collective objectives.

Post-independence industrial policy planned for the expansion of the manufacturing sector. It would do this by creating more linkages between sectors and making greater use of domestic inputs. At the same time, it would alleviate foreign currency requirements by reducing the sector's reliance on intermediary imports and undertake import substitution. The energy sector was targeted as a strategic sector. In mining, one of the country's largest export earners, the state took over all mineral marketing with plans to take over the direction of mineral development. Agricultural policy attempted to balance the continued earning capacity of the commercial sector in both domestic food production and export earnings, with increased input and productivity gains in the communal sector. A land resettlement scheme would address issues of landlessness based on a willing buyer-willing seller arrangement with commercial farmers. A socialised sector would be developed through the introduction of producer co-operatives and state farms.²

Other reforms did away with many of the colonial restrictions around the movement of people including the exclusion of African workers from the category of employees. Limits were imposed on the hiring of skilled expatriates, and investments made in local skill development and trade testing, all aimed at removing the job colour bar. Labour laws and trade unions were strengthened, along with the establishment of tripartite institutions, including a retrenchment committee requiring employers to seek approval before retrenching, again aimed at protecting employment levels. A national minimum wage was established to increase wages among lowest-paid workers.³

These ambitious plans were formulated in the early days of independence, at a time of record-breaking economic growth, reaching 26% over two years (1980 and 1981) largely due to a return to peace and the end of sanctions against the UDI gov-

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1. GoZ, *Transitional National Development Plan: 1982/3–1984/5*, Harare, Government Printer, Vol I: Nov., 1982, Vol. II: May 1983.
 2. D. B. Ndllela, "Problems of Industrialisation: Structural and Policy Issues", pp. 141–164, and C. Mumbengegwi, "Continuity and Change in Agricultural Policy", pp. 203–222, both in I. Mandaza (ed.), *Zimbabwe, the Political Economy of Transition, 1980–1986*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1986.
 3. S. Dansereau, "State, Capital and Labour: Veins, Fissures and Faults in Zimbabwe's Mining Sector", *Labour, Capital and Society*, 33, 2, November 2000, pp. 216–255.

ernment, coupled with record high gold prices. International recession resulting in falling commodity prices, deteriorating terms of trade, a two-year drought and the influence of the Bretton Woods agencies moved the government away from this strategy as early as 1983–84. After joining the IMF in 1980, Zimbabwe borrowed US\$30 million in April 1981 and, by 1983, it began to feel the weight of loan conditionalities. The drought shrank the GNP by 1.9% in 1982 and a further 3.4% in 1983.¹ The country borrowed again from the IMF in 1983, this time the loans were higher and conditionalities were heavier. While the contents of the 1983 IMF agreement were not made public, it is widely believed that it required an increase in support for the export sector but a reduction in government spending on infrastructure and food subsidies while holding the lid on the yearly minimum wage increases.² Even though Zimbabwe was considered under-borrowed at that time and its economy robust, loan conditions required the government to abandon centralised planning in favour of yearly budgeting.³ Thus after two years of increases in government spending after independence, the 1982–83 spending reversed that trend with a decline in real terms of 18%.⁴

In 1984, the government was able to avert a more substantial financial crisis by freezing access to foreign currency. It reduced import allocations by 60%, gained access to the blocked external securities pool, including the ‘invisibles’ such as profits and dividends, paid out largely with foreign currency. These were replaced temporarily by government bonds.⁵ The IMF suspended its agreement until the government returned these assets to the private sector and demonstrated its willingness to engage in austerity measures and support the export sector in the *First Five Year National Development Plan* in 1986.⁶ Loans increased as did the debt-service ratio, from only 2% in 1980 to 30% in 1983–84,⁷ falling to 23.1% in 1990.⁸ Debt

1. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Quarterly Economic Review*, 1, 1986.

2. Economist Intelligence Unit, *Quarterly Economic Review*, 2, 1983 and *Africa Research Bulletin*, March 31, 1983.

3. R. Riddell, “Zimbabwe: The Economy Four Years after Independence”, *African Affairs*, 88, 333, Oct. 1984, pp. 463–476.

4. *Africa Research Bulletin*, Aug. 31, 1983.

5. GoZ, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, *Budget Statement 1984*, Harare, July 26, 1984, pp. 42–44.

6. GoZ, *First Five Year National Development Plan, 1986–1990*, Vol. I, Harare, April 1986.

7. *Africa Research Bulletin*, Aug. 31, 1983.

8. World Bank, *Global Development Finance: Country Tables, 1999*, pp. 600–602.

levels increased with the government's eventual agreement to honour the foreign debt accumulated by the UDI regime.¹

Support to the export sector demanded by the IMF resulted in currency devaluation of 48% between 1980–84,² and higher domestic prices. The government was up against the clout of some of the world's largest mining companies – Rio Tinto, Anglo American and others – demanding grants to offset falling international mineral prices and rising electricity costs. Government provided only loans instead, in order to protect jobs and avert mine closures. Mining was the only sector to receive such support. Austerity measures reduced government's capacity to become significantly involved in the direction of mining development, with it purchasing only a few ailing mines to protect employment. One exception was the purchase of Wankie Colliery, seen as strategic to energy production. Largely foreign owned, the industry responded by limiting investment in exploration, thus reducing the value of reserves. Only one new mine opened during that 10-year period with only Z\$7 million raised outside the country. Gross capital formation fell³ as did employment levels, from 66,200 in 1980 to 51,400 in 1990.⁴ The value of production fell by 13% between 1980 and 1990⁵ due to falling mineral prices, yet the volume remained somewhat steady⁶ reflecting a reluctance to make new investments either through exploration or new production activities, but an apparent willingness to continue existing activities.

State intervention in other sectors was also limited. Government's Industrial Development Corporation had bought only a 4.6% share of the manufacturing sector by the end of the 1980s, concentrated mostly in pharmaceuticals, food processing, and Zimbank, with a majority holding in the Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Corporation but with little control over management decisions.⁷ Nor was headway made in the agricultural sector as the entrenched interests of white commercial farmers, clearly opposed to reforms, but benefiting from falling exchange rates, especially the large number of tobacco growers, made them unwilling to sell their land for resettlement, resulting in rising land prices and an incomplete resettlement programme.⁸ Greater inputs into communal agriculture increased its share of crop

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1. P. Bond, "Zimbabwe's Economic Crisis: Outwards vs. Inwards Development Strategy for Post-Nationalist Zimbabwe", *Labour, Capital and Society*, 33:2, Nov. 2000, pp. 162–191, p. 172.
 2. GoZ, *Quarterly Economic and Statistical Review*, No. 1, 1986.
 3. GoZ, *Quarterly Digest of Statistics*, Sept. 1991.
 4. GoZ, *Quarterly Digest of Statistics*, March 1985, and *National Accounts 1985–1998*, Jan. 2000.
 5. *Financial Gazette*, June 15, 1990.
 6. GoZ, *Quarterly Digest of Statistics*, Dec. 1988 and Sept. 1991.
 7. P. Bond, *Uneven Zimbabwe: A Study of Finance, Development and Underdevelopment*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1998, pp. 161–162.
 8. Mumbengegwi, op.cit. p. 212.

and livestock sales from 5% in 1980 to 18% in 1989.¹ By the end of the 1980s, the World Bank also imposed the end of government support to the socialised sector, including agricultural cooperatives.²

The combination of international recession, drought, the opposition of important sectors of the domestic economy – in mining and commercial agriculture – and the vulnerability of the economy to outside shocks, imposed serious limits on economic transformation. Economic problems soon after independence prompted the early intervention of the IMF whose conditionalities diverted the government away from more ambitious aspects of its early inward-looking development strategies, replacing government attempts to exert control through state-led planning with incentives to the export sector and reductions in spending on social programmes. By the end of the decade, the country was faced with economic stagnation, lack of investment, rising debt levels and shortages of foreign exchange. Social transformation was replaced with rising unemployment while real wages sank below 1979 levels, from Z\$2,756 to Z\$2,091 in 1987.³

In 1990, the government adopted a structural adjustment programme, essentially an externally-driven ‘development’ model. The objective was to ‘stimulate investment activity and remove existing constraints on growth’ while purposefully moving away from the redistributive policies of the first decade of independence. Large-scale public sector investment was to be replaced by incentives to investment in the country’s lagging productive capacity by doing away with many economic regulations, allowing market forces to operate in directing the pace and course of economic activities. Changes to the financial system were particularly targeted, aimed at making it more flexible.⁴

The programme, labelled as homegrown, was nonetheless ‘encouraged’ by the World Bank, arguing that Zimbabwe’s growth was impeded by the lack of foreign exchange generated by the primary sector alone. For development to take place, the World Bank claimed, manufacturing would have to become export oriented, and this could only be achieved by liberalizing the whole economy, including a currency

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1. Calculated from the Summary of Sales of Principle Crops and Livestock, *Quarterly Digest of Statistics*. Harare: Central Statistical Office, Various years.
 2. P. Bond, “Zimbabwe’s Economic Crisis: Outwards vs. Inwards Development Strategy for Post-Nationalist Zimbabwe”, *Labour, Capital and Society*, 33, 2, Nov. 2000, pp. 162–191, p. 173.
 3. P. G. Kadenge et al., *Zimbabwe’s Structural Adjustment Programme: The First Year Experience*. Harare: Sapes Books, 1992, p. 9.
 4. Republic of Zimbabwe, *Economic Policy Statement and Budget Statement*. Harare: Government Printer, 1990. Interestingly, this new direction follows proposals found in a 1989 World Bank study, which concluded that the biggest constraint to growth and foreign investment in Zimbabwe was the state itself. The state needed to create a more favourable environment for investment decision making and intangible perceptions of future risks. M. Dailami and M. Walton, *Private Investment, Government Policy, and Foreign Capital in Zimbabwe*. Washington: The World Bank, Country Economics Department, Working Papers, August 1989, pp. 1, 16, 20, and 47. www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDS, 18 March 2002.

devaluation of 25%.¹ The programme included the usual package of macro-economic adjustment and trade liberalisation, currency devaluation, export promotion and cutbacks to social services and food subsidies. Liberalisation of the financial sector reforms was aimed at facilitating new entrants, with a support programme for the indigenous business sector. Labour relations and wage controls were deregulated, allowing greater independence of collective bargaining, a move welcomed by both labour and management but the teeth were removed from the retrenchment committee, making it easier to retrench workers.

State policy shifted away from intervention in production, reforming policy so that it supported the 'creation of an enabling environment'. As part of governance conditionalities, ministries adopted a stakeholder approach to economic management, requiring partnership between government and economic agents in agriculture, mining, industry and other sectors, 'based on mutual trust and understanding'. Decisions would now be made in consultation with public representatives, economic agents, employers and workers, public officials and the general public.² The state was removed as principle economic agent, returning this role to the private sector which was now the new 'partner in development'. The state would now provide broad regulations on economic activity and reduce its role almost to a service-delivery and support function. 'Service to ...' had replaced 'control of ...', alongside cuts to social services.

Mining industry growth would be undertaken by private sector producers who would now benefit from incentives such as tax credits. The government retained control of mineral marketing but reduced its involvement in production to the ownership of the same 5–7 smaller mines. Instead, the state now sought to commercialise ministry services in view of eventual privatisation.³ Mining further benefited, as did the entire exporting sector including agriculture, especially the large tobacco sector, from currency devaluation throughout the 1990s, allowing it to offset rising local costs. Mining responded to the changed investment climate by increasing investment throughout the 1990s – gross capital formation from Z\$ 166 million in 1990 to Z\$666 million in 1996 (constant 1990 prices).⁴ Exploration prospecting applications increased steadily from 43 in 1990 to 289 in 1998. The unit value index increased as well, from a base of 100 in 1990 to 682.3 in 1998, with the volume of production index rising from 20.2% between 1990 and 1998.⁵ The number

1. P. Carmody, "Neoclassical Practice and the Collapse of Industry in Zimbabwe: The Case of Textiles, Clothing and Footwear", *Economic Geography*, 74, 4, Oct. 1998, pp. 319–343.

2. *Budget Statement*, 1990, pp. 15–17.

3. Dansereau, op. cit., 2000.

4. GoZ, Central Statistical Office, *National Accounts 1985–1998*, Jan. 2000.

5. GoZ, Central Statistical Office, *Quarterly Digest of Statistics*, March 1999.

of workers remained low between 1990 and 1993, but rose thereafter, peaking at 61,200 in 1998.¹

As evidenced by the growth of the mining sector in 1996 and 1997, advantages remained in the export sector, including mining and agriculture, in part because of the growing differential between the value of domestic and foreign currencies. Yet they continued to demand improved economic conditions, including lower domestic costs in the face of rising labour demands and a greater share of foreign currency earnings. By contrast, the manufacturing sector collapsed in spite of World Bank calculations that it would generate additional foreign currency, resulting instead in massive deindustrialisation² including the textiles, clothing and footwear industries, after growing at 12% a year in real terms during the 1980s. Between 1990–1995, employment fell in clothing from 24,000 in 1991 to 17,000 by mid-1996. Textile output fell by 61% in 1995 alone while output fell by 20% in clothing and footwear, with important closures in all three sectors.³

Patrick Bond attributes the end of structural adjustment to the 74% drop in Zimbabwe's currency caused by speculators withdrawing foreign currency from the country on November 14th 1997, made possible largely by the deregulation of financial sectors. Government action returned a little of the currency's value but the long term result was the import of unprecedented inflation,⁴ creating further economic difficulties. The Mugabe government began to face pressure from many sides as persistent inflation was added to price increases throughout the period of structural adjustment. Food prices rose by 516%, medical care, transport and education by 300%, between 1990 and 1995 at which time 62% of households could no longer afford all the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and transport.⁵ Real wages declined by 36% between 1990 and 1996 and unemployment rose by 35 to 45%.⁶ Government responded by unbudgeted spending increases, the most important of which was the compensation package to increasingly vociferous war veterans.⁷ Persistent job actions resulted in wage increases in the private sector and a

1. GoZ, *National Accounts 1985–1998*, Jan. 2000.

2. Bond, op. cit., 1998.

3. Carmody, op. cit., 1998.

4. Bond, op. cit., 2000, p. 182.

5. GoZ, *Poverty Assessment Study Preliminary Report*. Harare: Government Printer, 1995.

6. Standard Chartered Bank findings reported in *Southern African Press Agency (SAPA)*, 14 Jan. 1997.

7. Again we have to see the war veterans as a diverse group. Those demonstrating in 1997 were clamouring for increased support and compensation but not all became involved later in land invasions. There are many war veterans who claim that the land invaders are in fact an extension of ZANU-PF and represent only a small portion of all veterans. (Interview, War Veteran – name withheld, Harare, 30 July 2002). Another group of war veterans have constituted themselves as the Zimbabwe Liberators Platform, a non-partisan group advocating good governance and especially a transparent land reform programme. See their advertisement placed in *The Standard*, 28 July 2002.

public sector strike in 1996 resulted in wage increases to public sector workers, yet neither group could keep up with inflation.

Deepening poverty among the peasantry prompted spontaneous land occupations precipitated by rising prices and land hunger in areas bordering some of the more congested communal areas. Government had not been successful in bringing about promised land reform, a promise made during the independence struggle and again in the first independence decade in the form of a land resettlement scheme. These promises were re-iterated during each election campaign, with the tone becoming more forceful after the adoption of structural adjustment. Yet significant constraints had slowed down the land reform process. Requirements in the Lancaster House Agreement bound the state until 1990, requiring that land, obtained by government for resettlement, be obtained on the basis of a willing buyer, willing seller, at a fair market price. Few white commercial farm owners made their land available even on this basis. International experts said it would cost US\$40 billion to redistribute land at 'market price' and provide input to farmers. Nor was money, promised by donors to make the purchase possible, forthcoming. The US pledged US\$1.5 billion in 1976 but delivered only US\$45 million.¹ In all, only 44 million of the promised hundreds of millions have been forthcoming, promised by donors to reassure whites as a guarantee of compensation abroad if property rights were abused. Promises of loans to purchase land were also made to the leaders of the liberation forces, Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, and these are widely believed to have allayed their concerns over these clauses protecting owners of commercial farms from widespread land reform.² In 1983, the World Bank insisted the government slow down the resettlement plans as it argued this would result in a slow-down in output and employment in the commercial sector. By contrast in 1998, at the International Conference on Land Reform and Resettlement, donors began supporting land reform, linking it to the new requirements of poverty alleviation as access to land would create income opportunities for those on overcrowded communal lands, farm workers and women. Yet they continued the same pattern, offering only US\$6 million to do this.³

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1. Carol Thompson argues that only the Republic of Ireland and Zimbabwe, and now Namibia and South Africa, have been required to undertake land reform on this basis. See "Zimbabwe: Intersection of Human Rights, Land Reform, and Regional Security", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Commentary, Nov. 2000, 4 pages. www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/commentary/zimbabwe_body.html. Downloaded March 8, 2004.
 2. M. Holman, "A Shaky Grip on Zimbabwe's Moral High Ground", *Financial Times*, April 13, 2000; as referred to in N. H. Thomas, "Land Reform in Zimbabwe", *Third World Quarterly*, 24, 4, 2003, pp. 691–712, p. 697.
 3. L. Sachikonye, "From 'Growth with Equity' to 'Fast Track' Reform: Zimbabwe's Land Question", *Review of African Political Economy*, 96, 2003, pp. 227–240.

At the same time, further unbudgeted items were incurred as government continued its costly involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,¹ a move that was highly criticized by multilateral agencies and is widely believed to have benefited Zimbabwean businesses engaged in agriculture and mining activities, long after the fighting stopped.² The government found it difficult to meet donor conditions to reduce budget deficits and the IMF suspended aid in 1999.³ It insisted in 2000 that major economic reforms be undertaken in exchange for economic aid such as a further significant dollar devaluation and drastic cuts to the government budget deficit, all of which the government refused to do until after parliamentary elections scheduled for later that year.⁴

Rising opposition and crisis

The failure of two independence strategies – an inward-oriented one and an externally driven one, left government in an economic policy vacuum with higher debt problems and heavier loan conditionalities and especially unable to curb inflation and address problems of growing poverty, unemployment and land hunger. The government now faced increasingly vociferous labour groups who continued to face deteriorating real wages. Government's lack of response to their problems eventually turned their dissatisfaction to resistance and then opposition.

Early development documents, saw labour characterised by the state as a small and privileged urban wage-income elite in contrast to hardworking peasants, though both remained under the protection of the state. Workers' opposition began with disenchantment with state actions against the strike wave in 1980–81 and grew with the introduction of the labour bill in 1984 that limited the right to strike, giving the Minister of Labour significant power to intervene in disputes and establish minimum wages. By the end of the decade, the labour movement had distanced itself from the ruling party and the protest grew after the introduction of structural adjustment as working and living conditions deteriorated.

Large-scale strikes aimed at individual employers had begun in 1994, eventually becoming politicised with the 1996 public sector strike. The level of politicisation increased with government's heavy hand, laying off entire sectors of workers, including doctors and nurses. Winning wage increases and the right to return to work by public sector workers, after their strike, gave workers a political victory even though high rates of inflation meant few real wage gains, further politicising the struggle as labour saw the need to demand changes at the macro-economic

1. World Bank, *Zimbabwe-Enhanced Social Protection Program*, Project ZWPE68947, 29 June 2000. www.worldbank.org, 16 March 2002.

2. "Mugabe's Costly Congo Venture", BBC News Online, 25 July 2000.

3. *The Star* (SA), 9 Feb. 2001.

4. *Financial Gazette*, 24 Feb. 2000.

level.¹ Labour groups demanded participation in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum, alongside business and government in order to negotiate a new social contract. Government's refusal prompted the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to organise a national three-day stay-away in 1998. Labour was finally invited to participate in February 1999 but pulled out in protest when government allowed further price increases but especially because of government's imposition of a ban on mass actions, imposed in response to labour's threat of a further five-day stay-away.²

Limits on labour's capacity to organise and express its opposition imposed by the ban on mass actions pushed it into an alliance with groups demanding constitutional change. Demands for constitutional change had been on the increase since the failure to bring about change through the electoral route in spite of the government's decision to abandon the one-party state in 1990 and the adoption of governance conditionalities. Yet the increased use of intimidation and violence against opposition parties in successive elections, as well as the use of government resources to finance ZANU-PF campaigns³ led to a growing belief, especially after the 1995 elections, that constitutional change was a necessity, aimed particularly at limiting the powers of the President. The alliance now included a broad coalition of labour and citizens groups such as churches, cooperatives, human rights organisations, and student groups, organised into the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).⁴ In May 1999, the coalition then created a broad-based people's movement, the National Working People's Convention. Four months later, it became the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), organised with the intention of mounting a political challenge to the ruling party by contesting the 2000 parliamentary elections.

Faced with this growing opposition, ZANU-PF organised a constitutional review culminating in a referendum in February 2000. This failure, ZANU-PF's first electoral defeat since independence, precipitated a crisis. The government took refuge in drastic measures in order to retain its hold on power. It abandoned even the appearance of compliance with donor governance requirements in the face of

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1. S. Dansereau, "Rebirth of Resistance: Labour and Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe", *Labour, Capital and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (April), 1997.
 2. S. Dansereau, "Labour's Search for a New Emancipatory Project in Zimbabwe", *Socialist Studies Bulletin*, 59, Jan.–March 2000, pp. 39–60.
 3. Welshman Ncube documented problems during the 1985 elections in "Constitutionalism, Democracy and Political Practice in Zimbabwe", in I. Mandaza and L. Sachikonye (eds), *The One-Party State and Democracy: The Zimbabwe Debate*. Harare: Sapes Trust, 1991, pp. 155–178. In the same volume, John Makumbe documented similar problems with the 1990 elections; see his article "The 1990 Zimbabwe Elections: Implications for Democracy", pp. 179–193. J. Makumbe and D. Compagnon documented problems with the 1995 elections in *Behind the Smokescreen: The Politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 General Elections*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2000.
 4. J. Makumbe and D. Compagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen: The Politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 Elections*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2000.

growing protest and its own inability to provide solutions. Measures included an increase in security and limits on political freedom to buffer itself against growing opposition and electoral challenge as well as the institution of a far reaching land reform programme in which the ownership of all but a few farms belonging to white commercial farmers was transferred to government for redistribution.

Parliamentary elections took place a few months after the February 2000 referendum. The MDC won an unprecedented 57 seats, the first significant win by an opposition party since ZAPU's amalgamation with ZANU in 1987. The campaign was marred by intimidation and the MDC was barred from campaigning in the rural areas as voters and organisers were attacked by the land invaders and ZANU-PF youth. It was during this campaign that ZANU-PF intensified its nationalist language, vowing that it would never be recolonised. Britain was presented as the enemy, responsible for the original land theft and with white commercial farmers and the MDC now acting as its agents. One hundred people were estimated to have been killed between February 2000 and the presidential elections in 2002, largely MDC supporters.¹

In the run up to the presidential elections in 2002, the government hurriedly passed two bills, significantly limiting press freedom and dramatically increasing government's powers of detention and seizure. Welshman Ncube said of these two bills that they '... when taken together, ... complete the transition from a form of democratic society to a total dictatorship and fascist state'.² The new security bill was used extensively against the MDC, and had a significant impact on the party's capacity to organise both in towns and in the rural areas. The police broke up training sessions for polling agents and even small gatherings in private homes. 1400 MDC polling agents and election observers from civil society organisations were detained in the pre-election period.³ The MDC reported several problems with both the campaign and the voting process in the 2002 Presidential elections, contested by Morgan Tsvangeraai, formerly General Secretary of the ZCTU and now President of the MDC. Several international observers considered the elections neither free nor fair.⁴ Mugabe claimed victory nonetheless and the MDC refused to recognize the results,⁵ petitioning the Zimbabwe courts to order the elections be re-held.

1. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), *Analysis of Zimbabwe's Presidential Election, March 9th, 10th, and 11th 2002, in terms of SADC Parliamentary Forum, Electoral Recommendations*, Report dated 27 March 2002.
2. *The Times* (UK), 7 Jan. 2002.
3. *Financial Gazette*, 14 March 2002.
4. SADC, *Analysis of Zimbabwe's Presidential Election, March 9th, 10th, and 11th 2002, in terms of SADC Parliamentary Forum, Electoral Recommendations*, Report dated 27 March 2002.
5. Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), *Restart: Our Path to Social Justice. The MDC's Economic Programme for Reconstruction, Stabilisation, Recovery and Transformation*, Harare, MDC, Jan. 2004, p. 2.

Since the elections, intimidation and harassment continue. Morgan Tsvangirai and Welshman Ncube face two separate accusations of treason. Several journalists have been charged and some expelled from the country. By-elections continue this pattern of intimidation, violence, manipulation and now bribery, with an MDC supporter killed during a by-election in April 2004.¹ Negotiations between the two parties have been brokered by Nigeria and South Africa but these have not broken the political impasse. ZANU-PF requires the MDC to recognize that Mugabe won the elections, and insists on contrition before agreeing to talks.² At the same time, Mugabe is expected to announce his retirement in the near future, while divisions within ZANU-PF are becoming clearer. In the run-up to the 2005 parliamentary elections, the MDC has decided not to take part until there is significant electoral reform. It did not contest a by-election in September 2004, leaving ZANU-PF currently one seat short of the two-thirds majority in parliament needed to amend the constitution.

Now called the fast-track land reform programme, war veterans began spontaneous invasions of commercial farms owned by white farmers soon after the loss of the constitutional referendum. The war veterans are considered to have been allied to government since 1997, and the invasions and occupations were sanctioned by government, claiming the war veterans were really protesting against Zimbabwe's colonial heritage.³ The government indicated it would soon step in to subdivide and distribute the large commercial farms.⁴ The situation deteriorated into a constitutional crisis when the Supreme Court judged the farm invasions to be illegal. The government refused to abide by the Court judgment⁵ and the war veterans stormed the Supreme Court to protest the ruling. Two judges were called upon to resign and were replaced. In December 2001, the newly refurbished Court judged the government had restored the rule of law on commercial farms, concluding that land reform was a "matter of social justice and not, strictly speaking, a legal issue". One judge dissented.⁶

Where to go from here?

In the current run-up to the 2005 Parliamentary elections, the crisis continues. Government strategy is to continue operating in isolation from foreign influence. In the face of what they consider to be non-compliance with governance requirements,

1. *The Mail & Guardian* (SA), 7 April 2004.

2. *Financial Gazette* (Harare), 23 April 2004.

3. *Daily Mail & Guardian* (SA), 20 March 2000.

4. *Financial Gazette*, 16 March 2000.

5. *Financial Gazette*, 8 Feb. 2001.

6. Reports from *Daily Mail & Guardian* (SA), 16 Feb. 2001; *BBC News*, 10 Feb. 2001; *South African Press Association (SAPA)*, 5 Dec. 2001.

the rule of law and especially a non-recognition of private property rights, donors have ended most aid and loan programmes to the country, limiting themselves to humanitarian aid and HIV/Aids-related programming. The IMF refused to resume funding until the government put an end to the fast-track land reform programme and cooperate with the United Nations Development Programme to find a peaceful solution to the land problem. The government is further increasing its isolation by requiring the registration of NGOs, and banning foreign and local NGOs engaged in human rights and governance issues.¹

This isolation is presented by the government as a national strategy undertaken independently of the Bretton Woods agencies. The government claims the land reform programme is a success and local farmers have produced sufficient food, so that food aid will not be required in the coming year (2004–05). It claims that about 300,000 small farmers, with another 54,000 mostly medium and large-scale black commercial farmers have been selected to receive land² and the next stage is to provide inputs to farmers to solve production problems, thereby restoring the country's agricultural strength and consolidating support among the country's largely rural population. To this end, the Reserve Bank has been put in charge of re-distributing idle equipment from commercial farms to resettled farmers in an import substitution strategy for wheat that ultimately aims to mechanise the agricultural sector.³

There have been persistent rumours that many of the choicest farms have gone to ZANU-PF members, fuelling a mistrust in government intentions around land reform but more significantly indicating that the strategy is actually aimed at consolidating the position of an economic class close to ZANU-PF by providing it with economic opportunities. This would build on economic activities undertaken at the end of the 1990s in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – both in mining and agriculture. It is also linked to recent statements made by President Mugabe that mining companies would now be required to cede 49% of their investments to black empowerment groups,⁴ yet, the initial legislation supporting this move has been withdrawn by the Ministry of Mines.⁵ This is especially important as there have been new mining investments since 2003 – in platinum, coal and diamonds.⁶

1. *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*, United Nations (UN), 22 Sept. 2004.

2. Sachikonye, "From 'Growth with Equity' to 'Fast Track' Reform: Zimbabwe's Land Question", *Review of African Political Economy*, 96, 2003, pp. 227–240.

3. *The Herald* (Harare), 24 April 2004.

4. *Zimbabwe Standard* (Harare), 19 Sept. 2004. A similar statement was made by the Minister of Mines, namely that it would embark on a black empowerment policy similar to the South African model. *Business Tribune* (SA), 24–30 July 2003.

5. A. Robinson, "Zimbabwe Aiming for 50% Black Ownership of Mines", IDEX (US) cited on ZWNNews. www.zwnnews.com, Oct. 5, 2004.

6. S. Dansereau, "Win-Win or New Imperialism?: Public-Private Partnerships in Mining and Development", *Review of African Political Economy*, forthcoming 2005.

To uphold the notion that it is pursuing a well-thought-out national strategy, and dispel the sense of crisis, a new Governor of the Reserve Bank, Gideon Gono, was appointed to address the two principal problems of inflation and currency stabilisation. He introduced a foreign currency auction system¹ aimed at reducing the hold of the parallel currency system. He also launched a crackdown on some of the smaller private banks. This was the product of the liberalisation of the financial sector, which had been suffering the effects of cash shortages, high inflation, a weak local currency and under-capitalisation, all of which were threatening the collapse of several banks.² Gono has also been meeting with ambassadors and donor representatives, appealing for new lines of credit and balance of payment support. He has resumed some payments to the IMF, remitting US\$4.5 million in the past 3 months, out of a total of \$273.9 million owed to the IMF.³

The government has also launched an anti-corruption campaign, presented by Mugabe as the centrepiece of the next election drive, along with a cabinet shuffle creating the Ministry of Anti-Corruption and Anti-Monopolies, and targeting some prominent businessmen and politicians, even those close to Mugabe.⁴ At the same time, however, the cabinet shuffle revealed a disturbing trend with the appointment of military personnel to key government positions; military personnel were also appointed to positions within the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe, the Grain Marketing Board, the Ministry of Employment Creation and Youth, and a person from this same category was appointed as the Governor of Manicaland. John Makumbe calls this the 'militarization' of the government.⁵

As a strategy to dispel the sense of crisis, it is limited. While Gono makes overtures to the IMF and others, Mugabe is condemning the organisation in his recent speech to the United Nations, accusing it of lying about the situation in Zimbabwe, especially as regards food requirements and re-stating the commitment to the land reform programme as well as the anti-corruption campaign.⁶ As a development strategy, it offers little to the country as a whole. The IMF calculates that the GDP has fallen by 30% while inflation continues at high levels. While there is no independent assessment of the benefits derived by peasants through the land reform programme, large numbers of farm workers have been reduced to squatting. The regional Famine Early Warning Systems Network claims that food scarcity is emer-

1. *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 12 March 2004.

2. *IRIN* (UN), 19 March 2004.

3. *Business Day* (SA), 26 March 2004.

4. *Mail & Guardian* (SA), 5 March 2004.

5. Interview with J. Makumbe on SW Radio Africa (SA) and reported on *ZWNNews*, 10 Feb. 2004.

6. Statement by R.G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 22 Sept. 2004.

ging, while maize is actually being imported from Zambia and Malawi.¹ Unemployment remains high for urban workers and, increasingly, families have resorted to sending at least one family member out of the country to earn foreign currency so they can survive on remittances. The exodus of the best and the brightest produces a brain drain that further saps the country's skills, already sapped by the Aids pandemic estimated to have reduced life expectancy to 33 years, according to the United Nations most recent development report. The drain is aggravated by families sending their young people out of the country to avoid participation in the Green Bombers, ZANU's youth wing. Cynically then, it would seem the government has taken refuge in a strategy that benefits the few, supporting it with increased repression while it rewrites the history of its own development strategies.

Does the MDC offer any alternatives that could contribute to a way out of this developmental impasse? The MDC's most recent policy statements are articulated in *Restart: Our Path to Social Justice* (2004).² In keeping with previous statements, it continues to reflect an emphasis on economic growth, while maintaining principles of governance, constitutionalism, the rule of law, participatory democracy and sustainable development. It promises a massive growth-oriented recovery programme, designed to restore price and exchange-rate stability, generate jobs and alleviate poverty, rebuild social and humanitarian programmes and build a physical infrastructure. It will undertake an audit of previously concluded privatisation deals, land distribution and debt, with the intention of repudiating 'odious' debt and negotiating a rational repayment schedule for remaining portions.

There are no promises to establish a distinct job creation programme. Instead jobs will result from the return of normal production levels and economic growth and from entrepreneurship in the informal sector. Labour rights will be enhanced through a tripartite labour market commission and a new framework for labour laws and standards.

Production will be encouraged in mining by giving first priority to enhanced production in the hands of the private sector while minimising government intervention, reducing it to a stable legal and fiscal regulatory framework. It will also improve indigenous participation as a way of integrating marginalised groups, doing it through skills development and joint ventures, to encourage the participation of the small-scale sector, and enhance local mineral resource utilisation.

The proposed land policy respects individual property rights, as well as the need to revitalise the economy for the public good. It will not return to the pre-2000 status quo, or even the current status quo, but will undertake an audit to review cur-

1. Voice of America (VOA) News, 22 Sept. 2004 and *Zim Online* (SA), 22 Sept. 2004. www.zwnews.com 22 and 23 Sept. 2004.

2. Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), *Restart: Our Path to Social Justice*. Harare: MDC, Jan. 2004.

rent holdings and provide 'reasonable' compensation for the loss of property. It favours security of tenure even in communal areas, removing distinctions between private and communal holdings, so as to create an integrated model based on viable small and medium-sized family farms, with enhanced productivity and incomes, while creating rural industrialisation through a growth pole strategy.

It is committed to the principles of governance, promising to create an anti-corruption commission, requiring asset disclosure while the state is restructured to be fiscally responsible, with strong, relevant public institutions capable of delivering adequate services, but without a large bureaucracy. Decision-making will be participatory, and decentralised to include local government and the community.

The platform is articulated in socio-democratic language, with an emphasis on participation and sustainable development. It proposes the creation of several new tripartite institutions in which social partners will participate in developing a negotiated social contract based on a balance between growth and equity, wealth creation and the enhancement of the lives of the disadvantaged, including women and youth. To achieve this, balance will be maintained between the provision of economic opportunity and social and humanitarian programmes, between economic development relying on foreign investment and the development of domestic capacity, including the enhancement of backward and forward linkages.

Parties in opposition, and especially parties with no governing experience, usually present their platform as all things to all people, as this one does. It is nonetheless disconcerting to see the extent to which many of the World Bank's governance principles shape its overall approach. This includes a state, reduced to a regulatory role, leaving the market as the prime engine of development. The state will provide little more than a stable monetary and fiscal policy as well as support services to industry and the public, while decentralising to the local and community levels. Especially surprising in a party with such an extensive labour participation, is for job creation to be left as a fallout from general economic growth and entrepreneurship in the informal sector, reiterating a long held World Bank position. More recently the World Bank has also chosen to emphasize sustainable development and the participation of indigenous groups in the productive sector, especially in mining. Most telling and problematic is the proposal to remove distinctions between private and communal holdings, with security of tenure, even though the proposal is to maintain a balance between the need to use land as security as well as for collateral for credit.

Some authors portray the MDC's position as a '...typical advocate of market-based methods...(that) have accepted neoliberal terms...' ¹ The emphasis on governance and the extent to which many elements of World Bank development policy

1. S. Moyo, "The Land Occupations Movement and Democratisation: The Contradictions of the Neoliberal Agenda in Zimbabwe", *Journal of International Studies*, 30, 2, June 2001, pp. 311–330.

can be found in their platform might justify such a conclusion, yet it draws on many elements present in ZANU-PF's early development strategy – *Growth with Equity* (1981) – which is revealing. It has dispensed with the Marxist-Leninist language and state economic control but has retained the socio-democratic content in terms of a balance between growth and well-being, between the rights of the private sector and the state, between private wants and public needs, and especially between support for the export sector and the need to develop domestic capacities. It even proposes a balance between domestic interests and the Bretton Woods agencies in its commitment to honouring the debt but only after a process of determining what might be 'odious' debt, though it does not explain the process.

The MDC platform recalls many elements of early development strategies and includes many of the demands of good governance – as defined by donor agencies such as the World Bank and IMF, including support for the export sector and austerity measures – revealing the full depth of Zimbabwe's impasse. There is no reason to believe that the MDC or even a renewed ZANU-PF would fare any better in bringing about a balanced approach in development strategies especially since debt levels remain high. The IMF continues to demand austerity measures, the reduction of inflation levels, improved exchange rates and even less state control, including the deregulation of the Grain Marketing Board.¹ Again the emphasis is on stimulating exports through exchange rate devaluation while limiting the demand for imports. In keeping with the governance approach, it indicated the need to restart tripartite discussions and involve all social partners in discussions over ways to improve the economy.² Other donor agencies have responded that the government should provide a conducive environment for political dialogue, a debt repayment plan, the creation of a viable economy and a return to the rule of law, with a culture of accountability and credibility. They insist on a return to the decisions reached at the 1998 donor conference on land and its specific recommendations, meaning they do not accepting the current mode of agrarian reform.³ At the heart of the IMF position is the need to respect property rights 'in a way that would resolve investor confidence including observing commitments under bilateral agreements'.⁴

Early development strategies quickly ran up against the same IMF demands, diverting the state away from the balance between growth with equity and especially between support for domestic development and the export sector. Requirements of the structural adjustment programme made it impossible to maintain a social contract, especially once poverty levels contributed to significant social unrest. The

1. *Business Day* (SA), 26 March 2004.

2. International Monetary Fund (IMF), *IMF Statement on the Conclusion of 2004 Article IV Consultation Discussions with Zimbabwe*, March 31, 2004, in *ZW News* March 31, 2004.

3. *Zimbabwe Independent*, (Harare), 5 March 2004.

4. IMF report cited in *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 24 Sept. 2004.

reduction or elimination of redistributive, equity-driven programmes resulted in growing political opposition as workers and citizens reacted to increasing economic hardship. These demands could not be met within SAP's confines and the current government retreated into repression, isolation and a strategy aimed at the support of an economic elite close to the ruling party, using the state to eliminate barriers to its expansion. The sought-after balance between competing objectives was replaced by a deep impasse.

It can be argued that the economic and political measures advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions contributed to the very impasse we are in today. The situation cannot be reduced then to the simple dichotomies that require merely the replacement of one group of politicians by another, through freer and fairer elections. Instead it seems that either political party will have to contend with the significant role of the Bretton Woods institutions as the impasse is a product of a larger struggle shaping the country's political economy. Zimbabwe is caught in a dilemma similar to many developing countries, between a rock and a hard place, the struggle between an internally-oriented development strategy aimed at strengthening domestic forces through local accumulation on the one hand, and the requirements of Bretton Woods institutions to externalise the economy towards global economic interests, on the other. The failure to recognize this as the backdrop to Zimbabwe's problems might speed the country along a path towards an even more profound impasse and perhaps further conflict. The results from pressure the demands for reform of the international financial institutions and debt cancellation are unpredictable. In the mean time, donor agencies would do well to reduce the squeeze on the country if they are truly interested in moving out of the impasse.

From Social Justice, to Neo-liberalism, to Authoritarian Nationalism: Where Is the Zimbabwean State Going?

Mario Zamponi

Zimbabwe is currently facing a crisis of unimaginable proportions: the economy has collapsed and the majority of the population lives below the poverty line. The Zimbabwean opposition and civil society are struggling for democratisation while the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries have been unable, because of the lack of consensus, to find opportunities for a negotiated solution to the country's crisis.

This presentation is an attempt to look at the crisis in Zimbabwe from the perspective of the internal struggle over democratisation and the transformation of the political consensus within state institutions under the hegemonic pressure of the ruling party. Such an analysis requires a retracing of the political and economic history of the post-independence period. Indeed, the search for a negotiated solution that could favour the correct implementation of the 2005 parliamentary elections, may only occur by recognising the historical processes at the base of the country's fundamental problems: the legitimacy of its leadership and the role of the state; the issue of democracy and human rights; and the land question. In particular, as Moore suggests, the impasse of primitive accumulation; the simmering dilemma of the nation-state formation; and the democratisation process are still open issues (Moore, 2001). These are issues which have never been solved, which have been relegated to the background, and which only became explicit when the interests of the powerful white minority were challenged or, to put it better, when the post-independence 'elite consensus' was brought to a crisis, a consensus which, albeit subject to transformations over the years, had to some extent lasted until 1997. At that point, it became clear that the 'historic compromise' had come to an end, showing the crisis of the post-colonial state and the resurgence of the instrumental use of nationalism (at internal level) and regional solidarity (at regional level). It is worth noting that the Zimbabwean crisis has a strong regional dimension (it is sufficient to think of the land question in South Africa, and even more so in Namibia, where a new phase of land reform is starting). In this regard, as Raftopoulos explains: "Zimbabwe provides an important case study for broader economic and political problems in a region with certain linkages in the mode of colonial penetration, forms of liberation struggle, and problems of post-colonial development" (Raftopoulos, 2003a:2). Three elements seem to be of particular relevance:

- The crisis – which does not mean the exhaustion – of the post-colonial state. Particularly, by showing its inability to reach its economic goals, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) highlighted the limitations in fulfilling both economic efficiency and development in the context of globalisation. This resulted in a wide crisis of legitimacy which encouraged the abandonment of the neo-liberal policies, while no viable alternative project to ESAP was found;
- The role, transformation and breakdown of the ‘elite consensus’. In the 1990s the internal political cleavages and the increasing economic crisis fostered the breakdown of the post-independence consensus and transformed the internal struggle for democracy;
- The process of re-legitimacy. Even if this presentation deals with domestic issues, there can be little doubt that one of the most significant aspects of the current crisis in Zimbabwe has been its international character. In the need to regain consensus, President Robert Mugabe and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) articulated the crisis through a re-editing of a reinforced nationalist project and through an anti-imperialist and a Pan-Africanist position. In this respect, both the land question and the Congo war were used as a legitimate language of historical redress and renewed African solidarity.

In the next sections I will present and discuss these issues following three historical stages that were also marked by the three stages of land reform debates and policies:

- The first stage is the socialist and egalitarian phase of social justice, implemented in the 1980s, characterised by a high level of social redistribution and by the land resettlement programme;
- The second stage, related to the implementation of ESAP and to the indigenisation processes, deals with both the need for primitive accumulation and the need to redefine the economic structure without, however, radically transforming the ‘elite consensus’ of the post-settler state but reformulating it to three actors: government, white capital, and new black entrepreneurs;
- The third stage is the current crisis and the battle for internal and regional re-legitimisation at all costs. The disordered and controversial ‘Fast Track Land Reform Programme’ is the key element in the government's attempt to recover consensus within a context of increasing political authoritarianism and economic crisis.

The many faces of the crisis

Economic difficulties, land occupations, famine, violence, political authoritarianism and international isolation have created an explosive and ‘exceptional’ cocktail of

tensions. Apparently, the crisis started in February 2000 with the referendum for modifying the Constitution proposed by the government and rejected by the electorate and with the subsequent mass wave of commercial farm occupations by veterans of the liberation war, and by groups of peasants belonging to the most marginalised rural communities. However, the problems which exploded four years ago go back even further and demonstrate, above all, how the parties involved (government, white and black elites, donors) had underestimated the situation. In particular, since the independence of the country in 1980, the land question has always inflamed the political debate with periodic episodes of violence and land occupations while the question of democracy and human rights has remained marginal within the international agenda and debates.

It is difficult to draw a clear distinction between the economic and the political elements of the crisis. ZANU-PF has been constantly in power since independence and its leader, Mugabe, has held the reins of the government since then, paving the way for a political system that combines authoritarian and democratic elements and that “is neither a parliamentary democracy [...] nor a presidential regime [...]”. It is a system unbalanced and biased in favour of the Executive, and especially in favour of a President who concentrates most of the powers” (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000:42). Moreover, the process of post-independence reconciliation between the different political groups within the country and the policy of ‘africanisation’ (and later ‘indigenisation’) of the economic, bureaucratic and political cadres of the state have allowed the ZANU-PF leadership to co-opt under the government’s umbrella important sections of Zimbabwe’s business and civil society, including trade unions (Sithole, 2000; Raftopoulos 2001a, 2001b).

Even if there is wide consensus about the fact that nowadays the legitimacy of President Mugabe is seriously disputed, nevertheless, the problem of establishing an adequate explanation for the causes of the crisis remains open. We need to turn our attention to the structural and political limits and contradictions of Zimbabwe’s post-independence political economy. Meanwhile, we have to take into consideration the political stance of the actors that bear the brunt of major responsibility for the crisis: Western governments (by proxy, we can say international donors), white commercial farmers, and, last but not least, the Zimbabwean leadership. The Western governments did not recognize the explosive character of the land question when supporting the ESAP. Despite the enormous problems the economic reforms were creating to the Zimbabwean economy and society, the white commercial farmers remained intransigent in the protection of their property rights, insisting on the ‘willing-seller willing-buyer’ approach to land reform; and the ZANU-PF leadership (particularly since the end of the 1980s) showed itself unable to fulfil the promises of social development and to implement a viable land reform programme. In particular, the misguided policies of the ruling party implemented in the 1990s with the ESAP and after 2000 with a ‘fast-track’ land resettlement programme resulted in the

abrogation of the rule of law and major violations of human rights, including severe torture and death (Lee, 2003).

Things started to change in 1997 when the political and economic crisis sharpened and a high level of social confrontation became clear. After 1996 the social unrest was evident with mass demonstrations, strikes and riots, particularly in the main urban areas. 1997 witnessed the protests of the war veterans, while the government gazetted an initial list of commercial farms subject to expropriation. In January 1998 there was an imposing demonstration to protest against the expensiveness of essential goods. 1998 also saw the start of movements of land occupations which were spontaneous, peaceful and not orchestrated by the party, a process which reminded the government of the need to boost land reform. The land question, then, reached a decisive crossroads, as “a shift in power occurred within the ruling party, when the war veterans took centre stage, (and) the land redistribution initiative was brought back to the centre of the development debate, now couched in the more popular discourses of nationalism and liberation” (Moyo, 2001:313).

As the crisis deepened, the authoritarian stance of the ruling party became more evident. Looking for legitimacy and consensus, the government dealt with the crisis by means of instrumental use of the land question and by invoking the historical heritage of the liberation struggle. President Mugabe has affirmed that the present policy aims at redressing the ills of colonialism by returning land to the peasantry: “The Government of Zimbabwe intends to continue the land redistribution programme [...]. This programme will redress the racial imbalances in the economic sphere [...] ” (Government of Zimbabwe, 1998). The land reform was therefore presented as the continuation of the liberation struggle while economic interests represented by the opposition and its Western allies were depicted as alien forces operating against the state. Therefore the state was legitimized to intervene against forces that were seen as ‘unpatriotic’ and ‘puppets of the West’ (Raftopoulos, 2004).

Given that the new policy had to face a widespread national and international critique centred on property rights, human rights and the rule of law, the ruling party constructed an alternative discourse centred on renewed liberation struggle solidarity; on the continuing effects of African marginalisation within globalisation; and on the fighting against liberal imperialism (Phimister, 2004). The crisis was articulated through political dichotomies on land, governance and nationalism (Hammar, Raftopoulos and Jensen, 2003:17), between progressive anti-colonial forces and selfish economic interests. As Dansereau clearly points out, this sort of bifurcated characterisation is “a useful simplification for a group trying to generate legitimacy for itself in the face of growing popular dissatisfaction” (Dansereau, 2003:173).

Despite the authoritarian attitude of the government, it would be misleading to characterise Mugabe’s regime as just another case of an African neo-patrimonial

state and to address the present crisis in Zimbabwe as either simply the problem of a man (Mugabe) unwilling to cede power or of a group of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians determined to exploit state economic resources for their private benefit (Compagnon, 2001). Following this image, in Zimbabwe the problem would be Mugabe: “the culprit for Zimbabwe’s continuing slide towards the abyss is President Robert Mugabe” (ICG, 2002:1). If it is clear that in Zimbabwe the question of democracy is central, however, the analysis of the crisis does not imply a simplified picture of a monolithic neo-patrimonial power structure. In this regard, “there is a continuous reference to the ideal form of divide between the public and the private of the European liberal state, never mind that this itself is an imagined one” (Bracking, 2003:14).

Many scholars of African politics have embraced the neo-patrimonial model using various labels: politics of the belly (Bayart, 1993), state merchant capital (Moore, 2001), disorder as political instrument (Chabal and Daloz, 1999), prebendal politics (Joseph, 1987). Bratton and van de Walle argued that “the distinctive institutional hallmark in the ancient regimes of postcolonial Africa is Neo-Patrimonialism” (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997:61). However, the neo-patrimonialist analysis or the ‘personal rule paradigm’, as Leonard and Strauss critically describe it (Leonard and Strauss, 2003), does not permit adequate debate on the complexities and on the difficulties encountered in the construction of the nation-state, on economic development and, above all, on the redistributive policies in post-independent countries which had to face political and economic constraints, a legacy of the colonial period. Broadly speaking, the so-called good governance agenda – supported by donors and based on multipartyism, competitive elections, the reduced role of the state, the protection of private property and the support of market forces – has paradoxically determined new economic opportunities for ruling elites (Dansereau, 2003).

In the Zimbabwean case, there has not been sufficient consideration of the relevance of the historical compromise of the 1980s; of the fact that an economic ‘grabbing’ by the elite was more evident through the indigenisation project developed under the umbrella of the neo-liberal procedures of ESAP; of the fact that the unsolved land question was put aside; and that the political space was increasingly reserved for groups representing elite interests. Mass-based organisations, expression of grassroots participation, such as trade unions, were co-opted in the 1980s and excluded from the public arena in the 1990s (Sachikonye, 1995). The complexity of the national and international pressures that have historically been significant in the post-independence Zimbabwean state, and the evolution of the political and economic strategies that the Zimbabwean leadership has put in place to maintain its internal legitimacy and assure its survival, deserve a much more elaborate analysis. As Logan and Tevera have observed: “for the government of Zimbabwe, economic development in the decades following majority rule has been an exercise in balanc-

ing three interrelated needs – those of social justice, capital generation, and regime survival” (Logan and Tevera, 2001:103).

The 1980s: The developmentalist state and social justice

The 1980s were characterised by a state and a leadership that had legitimacy based on the legacy of the liberation struggle and on a broad developmental social programme. In 1980 the independent government assumed power with promises to redress colonial injustices (especially to solve the land question) and bring about a socialist transformation of the society. However, with the establishment of majority rule, the economic and social imbalances between the white and black communities were not solved. During the colonial period, a white settler bourgeoisie (both agrarian and urban) was created with strong connections to foreign capital (Bond, 1998). After independence, the state gained control of a significant section of the national economy, but the private sector remained largely owned by white Zimbabweans or by international companies (Raftopoulos and Compagnon, 2003).

The Lancaster House agreement, which legally entrenched the property rights of the white minority, especially in agriculture, impeded significant changes in the distribution of economic resources. Beyond Lancaster House’s constitutional constraints, Zimbabwe’s considerable economic dependence on world markets and on external capital favoured Mugabe’s compromise with the white capital and his national reconciliation policy. He allowed the white minority to maintain the control of a large section of the economy. The government was committed to the implementation of a welfare programme aimed at improving the living conditions of the black majority of Zimbabweans, by means of a policy of high levels of economic growth, of increased social expenditure and of promotion of rural development. The first economic policy document of the new government, *Growth with equity*, made it clear stating that “economic exploitation of the majority by the few, the grossly uneven infrastructure and productive development of the rural and urban distribution sectors, the imbalanced levels of development within and among sectors and the consequent grossly inequitable pattern of income distribution and of benefits to the overwhelming majority of this country, stand as a serious indictment of our society” (GoZ, 1981:1).

The reconciliation policy towards the white minority and foreign economic interests attracted support by the international community, giving Mugabe an international moral stature and the imprimatur as a stabilising factor in Southern Africa in the apartheid era. In that period, the very repressive government reactions to opposition or criticism were not important to research and debate (Laakso, 2003:4). (However, broadly speaking, we can say that they were not important to international observers either.)

An alliance between white settlers and the state developed a historical compromise between black nationalists and sections of the white economic groups. During the 1980s, a strand of leftist scholars and observers had presented the case of Zimbabwe as the creation of a post-settler capitalist state. They criticised the economic policy of Mugabe's government, arguing that it did not address the economic structure inherited by colonialism. Astrow criticised the petty bourgeois character of the new ruling elite (Astrow, 1983), while Mandaza affirmed: "The post-white settler colonial state acquires a special meaning in the context of the foregoing, precisely because of the historical legacy of white settler colonialism; the inherited economic and social structures that are associated with it; and its persistent and pervasive role within both the state itself and the society at large, as a viable conduit through which the imperialist forces of international finance capital can compromise and control the new state" (Mandaza, 1986:15). The continuity between the political economy of post-independence Zimbabwe and the colonial period was evident not only in the preservation of the property relations inherited through colonialism, but also in the large role that the state continued to play in the country's economy.

This is the context in which we have to take into account the land question. In the 1980s the main objective was the redressing of the historical imbalances in the access to land (redistribution within a social justice agenda). After an initially accelerated process of reform in the early 1980s, the programme slowed down and with the implementation of ESAP, the redistributive reform stopped, as we will see. The twenty years up to 2000 have shown that land reform was not an event but a process which depended on the broader political context, an area of clashes and an instrument for constructing ideological and political options.

In the 1980s, as already said, the government enjoyed broad consensus deriving from the liberation struggle. However, the attitude of strong state intervention in the transformation process was carried forward without assessing the effects on civil and individual rights. In particular, the trade unions at that time were co-opted within the political system and subordinated to the party. In this regard, Sachikonye affirms that "the first five years of independence witnessed dominant state intervention in labour relations with a visible bias to the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie" (Sachikonye, 1995:139). The authority of the ruling party was not questioned as the majority of the country's organisations aligned themselves to the state's developmentalist discourse and the message of national unity (Moyo, Makumbe and Raftopoulos, 2000).

However, national unity had already been torn apart by the Matabeleland crisis. The agreement for unity between ZANU and ZAPU in 1987 stopped the violence and led to a greater concentration of powers within the ruling party. The disparity between the rights enshrined in the Constitution and the *de facto* rules existing in the country provided the opposition with reasons for contesting the ruling party's policies (Makumbe and Compagnon, 2000).

The 1980s were characterised by a combination of expenditure for the social state, redistributive land reform, attempts at minimum wage guarantees and economic growth. However, the results were not those hoped for. At the end of the decade, the end of bipolarism and the expansion of the neo-liberal orthodoxy pushed Zimbabwe towards the road for structural adjustment. The new convergent interests between local business (both white and black) and the state elite looking for new ways of accumulation created the basis for changes to the development model (Dashwood, 2000).

The first decade of independence ended with economic problems on the increase, an opposition movement in the embryonic stage and signs of profound damage to the notion of national unity imposed by ZANU-PF, while the land question remained suspended.

ESAP and neo-liberal policies

According to the programmatic document which, in 1991, listed the ESAP reforms, the economic reform programme intended to support medium-long term growth by means of economic and commercial liberalisation (GoZ, 1991). ESAP established the abandoning of the welfare policies of the 1980s – including the land resettlement programme – in favour of the recovery of the ‘colonial economic model’ based on the domination of the white community, which was joined by the new emerging class of black entrepreneurs. Therefore, neo-liberal policies “reinforced broadly undemocratic policy-making practices, and influenced the evolution of land policy towards an elitist agenda”, while “large business, large white farmers, and a nascent black bourgeoisie [...] supported the resultant ESAP programme” (Tevera, 2003).

Indeed, the structural adjustment programme marked a clear turning point for the corporatist strategy (Bond, 1998:259) that ZANU-PF had pursued during the 1980s. The main argument put forward by proponents of the neo-liberal economic reforms like the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries and the Commercial Farmers’ Union was that state controls on prices, the high level of internal financing of the public deficit, and the protectionist trade regime were stifling the Zimbabwean economy. Only a radical strategy of economic deregulation and liberalisation would have removed the structural imbalances that were hampering economic growth in Zimbabwe (Skålnes, 1993).

The process was accompanied by strong requests for increased participation by the black entrepreneurial middle class, by means of indigenisation processes which had already characterised the economic processes of other African countries. In the case of Zimbabwe, Raftopoulos summarised that the ruling elite, fearing that a new bourgeoisie would be less easy to control, showed interest in courting the emerging black business groups who were guaranteed the conditions to find new spaces for

their accumulation project within the neo-liberal environment of ESAP (Raftopoulos 2001a; Raftopoulos and Compagnon, 2003). These processes led to the creation of a new alliance between the government, the new black commercial elite and the whites; the emerging indigenous capital, the white farmer associations, technocrats and many NGOs supported a change in the economic policy.

At this point, we must investigate the reasons for the serious crisis created by the ESAP, the impossibility of using the reforms as an instrument for economic and technological reform, and why ESAP was unable to deal with the regional and international challenges. Since 1990, the government of Zimbabwe has been implementing “with determination and persistence” (WB, 1997:3) the structural adjustment programme. Given that many extensive analyses have been conducted into the nature and effects of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe (Sachikonye, 1993 and 1999; Mlambo, 1997; Chipika, Chibanda and Kadenge, 2000; Moyo, 2000a; Kanyenze 2003a and 2003b), here I only refer to the structural pressures that the neo-liberal economic reforms have exerted on the Zimbabwean economy.

First and foremost, ESAP caused a worsening in living conditions for considerable sections of the population, especially the urban population; the collapse in salaries favoured a serious increase in poverty (Kanyenze, 2003a and 2003b) and increased social and economic inequalities, eroding the legitimacy of the government itself. The weight of the economic crisis was supported by the weak and vulnerable sector of the population. Sachikonye’s analysis shows how the socio-economic improvements of the 1980s have been eroded during ESAP (Sachikonye, 2002). Furthermore, the government was not able to reduce the negative impact of the effects of liberalisation which provided incentives for importing South African industrial products (often subsidised), fostering serious processes of de-industrialisation in Zimbabwe and a worsening in its balance of payments (Moyo, 2000b:7). The manufacturing sector’s contribution to GDP gradually fell, while the contributions of agriculture and services both expanded, signalling a sort of ‘re-primarisation’ of the economy of Zimbabwe, while a new and dangerous speculative economy developed, mirrored in the boom of the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange in recent years (Bond, 1998).

However, the main victim of the economic reforms was without doubt the redistributive land reform. The advantages of ESAP were mainly reaped by the commercial agriculture sector which benefited for a number of years from the export of non-traditional products and from agricultural tourism (Moyo, 2000a), fostering new conflicts between white and black elites, on one hand, and the rest of the peasants, on the other (Moyo and Matondi, 2001; Moyo, 2000a and 2000c). While there was emphasis on the growth of agricultural production for exporting, there was no adequate support in favour of the production of small producers. Therefore, while in 1989 the commercial agriculture sector accounted for 60% of agricultural production, in 1993 it accounted for 90%, while the Communal Lands sector, over the

same period, passed from 32% in 1989 to 26% in 1990 and 19% in 1993 (Logan and Tevera, 2001:120).

Moyo argued that new land use patterns and production oriented towards cash crops and global markets determined a shifting in government's priorities over land reform, fuelling by the end of the 1990s a new struggle for redistribution (Moyo, 2000b and 2001). As recognised by the Vice Representative of the World Bank in Zimbabwe, ESAP underestimated the need to deal with the country's history of economic dualism (van den Brink, 2000) while the policy of indigenisation was not accompanied by adequate development policies.

Finally, ESAP internationalised the land question: the donors ever increasingly expressed a different view from the government, losing the chance to support sustainable land reform, one of the many reasons behind the ever bigger room for manoeuvre for the hardliners within the party and the government supporting a radical land reform.

From 1997 onwards: Crisis and political authoritarianism

From 1997 Zimbabwe was marked out by economic collapse and deepening of the country's political crisis. The escalation of the crisis in the following years rendered ineffective all attempts to find a negotiated solution. As already illustrated, high levels of social and political confrontation developed, in particular after the 1996 strikes. The harsh urban social conflict led to a clear break in the social contract which had previously existed. The strikes during the period 1996–1998 met with massive support from workers, and without doubt contributed to the labour movement becoming one of the leading political forces in Zimbabwe at the end of the 1990s (Saunders, 2001). In 1999 this high level of social and political opposition paved the way for the formation of a big coalition of opposition forces, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Parallel to this process, a second level of social confrontation became evident. The ruling party had to deal with an even more demanding challenge which threatened its legitimacy: the challenge of the war veterans. Trying to assuage the claims of a social group that had historically proved to be a close political ally of ZANU-PF (Kriger, 2001), Mugabe offered the war veterans a one-off payment and a monthly pension in 1997.

In this context of social unrest and government's loss of legitimacy, the issue of land reform acquired a prominent role in the consensus-building strategy of ZANU-PF and, more generally, in the crisis that grips Zimbabwe. In November 1997, the government gazetted 1,471 farms for compulsory acquisition (with partial compensation). A new impetus for radical land reform in Zimbabwe had been set in motion. The difficult economic situation allowed the government to relaunch the ideology of land redistribution and, through this, to continue to domi-

nate the voting in the rural areas, while the authoritarian involution led to the donors' gradual abandoning of support for any reform. It can be argued that the deepening economic and social crisis and the growing mobilisation of some of the social groups that had been further marginalized by the implementation of the structural adjustment programme, pushed Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership to turn their backs on economic reforms and to gradually resort to an authoritarian and populist political strategy in order to maintain or re-gain their political legitimacy among the Zimbabwean electorate (rural in particular).

2000 was the year of reckoning for the problems of the preceding decade. The defeat during the February referendum led the government to launch a new land campaign. Through the support of the war veterans the ruling party orchestrated a nationwide occupation of commercial farms. As various studies have shown (Marongwe, 2001; Moyo, 2001), farm occupations were part of the political and social landscape after independence. However, in 2000 the increasing marginalisation of the rural poor – due to the neo-liberal policies combined with the threat of political defeat for the government – created a favourable environment for a mass operation of occupations led by the war veterans. If, on the one hand, the occupations marked the considerable level of grievances on the land question, on the other hand, they took place outside a context of political accountability and through the use of violence.

Furthermore, since the ruling party put forward its version of the redistribution, it became increasingly hostile to dissent and to civil rights policies, referring to them as the preoccupations of a minority hostile to the redistribution of the land and led by forces supported by the West. "Accompanying the physical violence, the ruling party launched a torrent of abuse on the opposition, designed to depict them as a privileged urban minority controlled by whites and foreigners, and 'tainted' with money from 'right-wing conservative racists associated with Rhodesia'" (Raftopoulos, 2001b:18). As affirmed in 2000, on the eve of parliamentary elections, by the Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo,

[t]he human rights NGOs supporting the MDC [...] are well known for using equal political and civil rights to justify unequal economic rights. And that is what the British want to see in Zimbabwe: a spectacle of getting the black majority to use political rights to defend unequal rights between blacks and whites under the guise of democracy (Raftopoulos, 2003b:218).

The question of the international attention on the Zimbabwean crisis being related to the preoccupation about the future of white commercial farmers was reinforced, for instance, in an ICG report in which it was emphasized that "the international media's over-concentration on the plight of white commercial farmers has given Mugabe's liberation rhetoric greater resonance in many African quarters, reinforcing belief that the West cares about Zimbabwe only because whites suffer" (ICG, 2002:1).

The electoral campaigns of 2000 and 2002 were characterised by tension and violence never seen before in the electoral history of Zimbabwe. The land question was central in the ZANU-PF election campaign: “Mugabe repeatedly emphasised the land as the sole authentic signifier of national belonging as defined by selective political criteria of the ruling party” (Raftopoulos, 2001b:19). In this liberation narrative of a common African history and of Pan-Africanist solidarity, the land played a fundamental role as the key marker of a new struggle, and of the ruling party’s construction of belonging, exclusion and history.

The ruling party based its campaign for land reform on the slogan ‘The Land Is the Economy, the Economy Is the Land’. The MDC, on the other hand, focused its campaign on the handling and management of the economy and reforms in governance (*chinja*: change). While ZANU-PF claimed that the opposition wanted to upset land reform as it had sold itself to the old colonial masters, the opposition accused the government of offering land to its friends and of turning the land question into its own monopoly despite its inability to solve it over twenty years (Moyo, 2001). Therefore, the land question, a historical necessity for the country, was made ‘political’ for electoral purposes.

In July 2000 the government started the implementation of its radical land reform: the so-called ‘Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme’ aiming, through expropriation, to transfer most of former white commercial farms to small peasant farmers and black entrepreneurs. The objectives are to provide the landless with opportunities, favour employment, overturn the country’s poverty, and reduce the pressure on the land and the political tension related to access to the land (GoZ, 2001a and 2001b).

Recent years have revealed the crisis of a political and social model which had guided the country for about twenty years, albeit in various stages. Farm occupations and the following Fast Track programme resulted in “a major response to the exhaustion of the structural adjustment accumulation model” (Raftopoulos, 2001b:17), that is, the end of the ‘historic compromise’ (or ‘elite consensus’) between the post-colonial state and the capital. Meanwhile, it was evident that the neo-liberal economic model and the political opposition represented in particular by civil society organisations had been unable to address the land issue that it was no longer possible to delay. As Raftopoulos affirmed, the political opposition of the MDC “support a pluralist approach of national politics, insisting on the imperatives of the democratisation and of the rule of law. However, this programme is managed in the name of a pure and hard neo-liberalism [...] leaving Mugabe the possibility to present his positions as anti-imperialistic in spite of the grotesque character of his political intolerance” (Raftopoulos, 2001a:50; my translation from French).

In this way, Mugabe was able to define the parameters of the debate on Zimbabwe on the continent in his favour, framing the crisis around the land question as an unconcluded part of the anti-colonial programme, managing to get people to forget

his errors and to maintain the support of the SADC countries. He erected a barrier of anti-imperialist solidarity around his domestic political project. It is worth noting that he has been helped by shortsighted Western, particularly British, intervention. The initial damage was done in 1997 when “‘new’ Labour’s arrogant denial of any responsibility for past colonial injustices in Zimbabwe, was hugely compounded by the Blair government’s subsequent embrace of so-called ‘liberal imperialism’” (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004). The ruling party’s rhetoric was able to construct a sense of belonging through the use of history. The history of the liberation struggle was translated into an official discourse aimed at giving legitimacy to the authoritarian nationalism, and to the selective image of citizenship reinforced by the instrumental use of the land question (Hammar, Raftopoulos and Jensen, 2003).

The period 2000–2004 has therefore resulted in a serious internal crisis and a political impasse. The political divide lasting from 2000 up to now and expressed by the polarisation of the Fast Track programme, the deepening of the economic crisis and the authoritarian stance of the government against opposition and civil society has impeded finding a negotiated solution. In particular there is a strong preoccupation with the question of human rights abuses. In regard to the Fast Track programme, it was – according to the government – successfully completed in 2003, while its opponents highlight the chaotic way in which it was conducted, the high level of violent confrontation and the collapse of agricultural production resulting in more poverty and an increase in hunger and famine (Sachikonye, 2003). Meanwhile, all attempts to resume talks, including SADC’s mediation, have failed, maintaining a high level of crisis and social conflict that impeded and made remote any chance for a negotiated transition.

Conclusion

We have to discuss in which way a negotiated political transition, including the solution of the land question, can be set in motion. Some analysts consider that the objective of inter-party negotiations to address the multiple aspects of that crisis appears to be no longer realistic (ICG, 2004). As published in Zimbabwe, “Mugabe’s insistence on contrition by the MDC as a pre-condition for the resumption of talks has reinforced the long held view that the ruling ZANU-PF is not interested in inter-party dialogue” (*Financial Gazette*, Harare, 23rd April 2004). The fact that ZANU-PF won several by-elections was part of the reason for the stalled talks. Recently MDC has threatened to boycott elections unless the government adheres to elections guidelines discussed during the August SADC Heads of State Summit held in Mauritius (*IRIN*, 25th August 2004). However it must be considered that with the prospect of 2005 elections it is of vital importance to create a framework of negotiation to restore an environment favourable for the taking place of free and fair elections. Indeed, according to South African Deputy Foreign

Affairs Minister van der Merwe, “we firmly believe that there is no alternative to the dialogue that must take place between the MDC and ZANU-PF to resolve the problems in Zimbabwe” (*Argus Cape*, Cape Town, 19th August 2004).

In conclusion, two questions are particularly relevant: *First*, up to now, the struggle for democratisation has not been able to favour the union of different social and political forces within a new social project aimed at the creation of redistributive social and political rights. Due to this and to the systematic use of violence and coercion by the ruling party, ZANU-PF has been able to maintain its political control in the rural areas. Indeed, “the path to democracy [...] was interrupted by two kinds of anti-democratic backlashes in early 2000: the sudden neo-liberal turn taken by the MDC [...] and Mugabe’s revival of a myth-heavy nationalism via promotion of land invasions alongside ridiculous assertions that the MDC threat was not indigenous” (Bond and Manyanya, 2003:xiv). *Second*, it is crucial to recognise that in Zimbabwe as well as in Southern Africa, the land question, as still unresolved, must be addressed in terms of equity and social justice. Democracy and human rights are linked to the solution of the historic struggle for land. For a long time, all the stakeholders have ignored the requirements for social justice contained in the requests for land reform. Therefore, it is necessary that the demands for democracy and political reform incorporate the land issue within economic development programmes. The land reform is possible and it must be democratic and redistributive; it cannot be only market-based and it may break with the past (Lahiff, 2003). In this regard, as mentioned above, the crisis in Zimbabwe has important repercussions on the post-settler state in Southern Africa. Its experience can be instructive if we realize that the country’s crisis does not depend on the land question *per se*, but on its relationship with the political and economic crisis (Sachikonye, 2002).

The question which remains unanswered is whether the future in Zimbabwe will be one of authoritarian nationalism, democratic nationalism or social democracy: “a one party state representing the General Will and in particular the will of workers and peasants has been both practically and theoretically discredited. But recognition of the need for pluralism and devolution of powers has not produced effective institutional change. Rights discourse in Zimbabwe, polarised around the tension between the state and civil society has not taken on board the fact of conflicting rights claims” (Ranger, 2003:26).

Having highlighted these aspects, we can agree with Bond and Manyanya when they say that “instead of the false choice of exhausted nationalism or looming neo-liberalism there still exist excellent prospects for a sustained social-justice struggle” (Bond and Manyanya, 2003:xvi). Indeed, the debate on the Zimbabwean crisis has laid open, for the international left, the challenge of moving beyond the imperatives of neo-liberal capitalism, without forgetting the question of democratic alternatives. One of the many risks in dealing with this crisis is that of being caught in the ‘trap’ of either reproducing the nationalist rhetoric of the Zimbabwean government (the

crisis is a land crisis) or adopting the neo-liberal approach (a crisis of governance). A very sensitive issue, caught by Yeros when he stressed the fact that Zimbabwean urban civic forces pressing for democratic accountability remain cognisant of the bourgeois nature of this platform while ignoring the democratic deficit of their position (Yeros, 2002).

We must recognise the need for new development policies that, in the particular case of the highly-divided societies of Southern Africa, need a central focus on land reform. We have to question the structure of the political economy in a region where society is highly dualistic, with a core well connected to the international economy and a large periphery made up of informal activities and a rural subsistence economy. In Zimbabwe, most of the stakeholders neglected the “demand for land reform and pretend that the simmering land occupation movement is insignificant, even though this movement has been crucial [...] in forcing the land reform issue onto the political agenda” (Moyo, 2001:329).

Therefore, the legitimate aspirations for democratisation, and for the reform of the internal political system have to deal with the land question, a question which cannot be used as a political instrument for the maintenance of the *status quo* by a worn-out power, nor can it be put aside. This is why it is necessary to recreate the premises for a strong link between democratisation processes and fair and equal distribution of the resources. A question never resolved in Zimbabwe and which must be tackled, whatever the government in power may be over the coming years.

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