

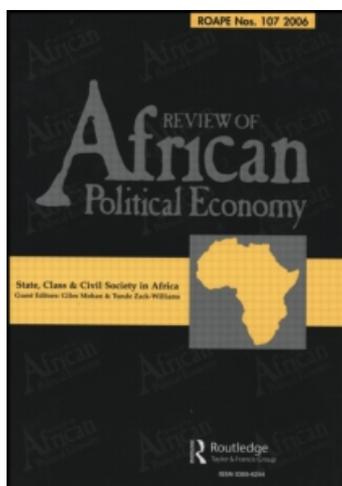
This article was downloaded by: [York University Libraries]

On: 13 May 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 910161614]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Review of African Political Economy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713443496>

(Sub)imperial South Africa? Reframing the Debate

Melanie Samson

Online Publication Date: 01 March 2009

To cite this Article Samson, Melanie(2009)'(Sub)imperial South Africa? Reframing the Debate',Review of African Political Economy,36:119,93 — 103

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/03056240902888774

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056240902888774>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

(Sub)imperial South Africa? Reframing the Debate¹

Melanie Samson

You can watch MNET's hit soap opera *Egoli* in Dakar, eat South Africa's version of peri-peri chicken at Nando's in Maputo, make a withdrawal from a Standard Bank ATM in Harare, buy Ceres juice fresh from the Western Cape at Shoprite in Lusaka and do it all dangling a de Beer's diamond from Botswana on your pinkie. As the post-apartheid South African state manoeuvres to ensure the implementation of NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for Africa) and assume the mantle of peace-broker, leader of the African Renaissance and voice of the continent, its imprint stretches as far and wide across the continent as that of South African capital.

With this kind of presence of both South African capital and the state in the rest of Africa it is not surprising that the word 'imperialism' is on many people's lips. Whilst few deny the growing hegemony of South Africa on the continent, there is heated debate in academic and activist communities about how to characterise these developments. At one end of the spectrum Ishmael Lesufi (2004, 2006) sees them as evidence of South African imperialism; at the other end, Patrick Bond (2004, 2005, 2006) argues that South Africa is a sub-imperial agent of American imperialism.

So, what is South Africa's role within the current conjuncture? Unfortunately the burgeoning Marxist literature on imperialism provides scant insight or guidance

to the South African debate. New theorisations of imperialism trace the differences between contemporary imperialism in which the American state ensures the maintenance and reproduction of global capitalism, and previous forms of imperialism that were associated with inter-imperial rivalry and the extension of formal political control over other territories. The heated debates within this literature are primarily pre-occupied with determining whether states have been superseded (Hardt and Negri 2002) or continue to play a pivotal and even increasing role in imperialist processes (Meikins Wood 2005, Panitch and Gindin 2005); whether a transnational capitalist class has emerged as the driving force of empire (Sklair 2001, Robinson 2004); and whether the actions of the US are driven by hegemony in decline (Arrighi 2005, Harvey 2005) or its relative dynamism and strength (Panitch and Gindin 2004). When Third World states are considered they are generally constructed as objects of imperialist expansion and control and sites for accumulation by dispossession. Issues related to the agency of regional powers have received particularly scant attention. For example, although Harvey notes the rise of 'sub-imperial' states in East Asia (and Europe) as a result of their pursuit of spatio-temporal fixes (Harvey 2005, p. 186) he does not theorise their relationship to American imperialism. Therefore, coming to grips with South Africa's role can make important contributions to broader debates on the dynamics of contemporary imperial processes.

However, the question of how to theorise South Africa's role is not merely of academic interest. Arguing that South

Africa must be seen as a sub-imperial agent acting as a 'proxy' or conduit for American imperial interests has one set of political implications for those engaged in anti-imperialist struggle. Casting it as an independent imperialist force suggests, on the other hand, radically different targets for, and forms of mobilisation.

This article argues that the ways in which Bond and Lesufi conceptualise imperialism and sub-imperialism lead to problematic silences and exclusions and as a result neither theorist succeeds in capturing the nuanced social processes through which South Africa's current role is constituted and contested. Ironically, neither refers to Ruy Mauro Marini's initial conceptualisation of Brazilian sub-imperialism (1965, 1972) which, it is argued, provides a useful starting point for addressing the weaknesses and gaps within their frameworks. This article therefore seeks to reintroduce Marini into the South African debate and identifies how more recent writing from South Africa, as well as other contexts, can be drawn on to begin to build a new approach to theorising South Africa's role.

The article begins by providing a brief overview and critique of the ways in which imperialism and sub-imperialism have been employed in the current South African debate. It then explores how Marini's theorisation of sub-imperialism can overcome the rigidities and divisions in the current debate. The final section identifies additional elements which must be incorporated into a theorisation of sub-imperialism in the current conjuncture and avenues for future research.

Ishmael Lesufi and South African Imperialism

Lesufi seeks, in a 2004 article published in *Current Sociology* (Lesufi 2004) and a 2006 expanded, popularised version of his

arguments (Lesufi 2006), to explain the South African government's active promotion of NEPAD, a neo-liberal continent-wide development plan. He argues that after the democratic elections in 1994 South African monopoly capital was finally able to use investments in other African countries to help address a persistent crisis of over-accumulation (Lesufi 2004, pp. 814–817, 2006, p. 28). In his view, the development and implementation of NEPAD followed in capital's wake and 'simply rubber-stamps a process that was already underway' (Lesufi 2006, p. 25).

Lesufi's explanation of the state's willingness to legitimise and meet the needs of South African capital hinges on his theorisation of the class-based nature of the state. For him, the working class experienced major defeats during the transition to democracy. He therefore asserts that with the transition, 'the capitalist classes had achieved what they had failed to do over decades of struggle. They managed to secure a black, legitimate government to preside over their own programme' (Lesufi 2006, p. 19).

Lesufi adopts an explicitly Leninist theorisation of imperialism as 'capitalist accumulation in that stage of development in which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital has established itself' (Lesufi 2006, p. 33). He asserts that 'South African capital bears all the essential features of imperialism as conceptualised by Lenin' (Lesufi 2006, p. 37) and that NEPAD is an expression of South African imperialism.

He tackles arguments that the South African state is sub-imperial head-on. For him:

The idea of sub-imperialism is firmly located within the tradition that [erroneously] views imperialism as economic and political relations between advanced, less advanced and backward countries. In this context, the less advanced

countries like South Africa are seen as conduits for the advanced countries' access to backward countries. Countries defined as sub-imperial are then described as sub-ordinated to advanced imperialist countries. There is also a sense in which imperialism is defined in geographic terms as a phenomenon that can only occur in the North, with everything in the South being victims of the northern monster. . . There is also a sense in which South Africa is seen as playing the role of a comprador state to US imperialism. (Lesufi 2006, pp. 34–35)

He rejects the position that South Africa is sub-imperial, both because he believes that such a position is based on an incorrect understanding of the nature of imperialism, and because it 'exonerates states like South Africa from their role in imperialism' (Lesufi 2006, p. 25).

Lesufi makes important contributions to the debate by deploying a theoretical framework that emphasises the role of internal class forces and the expansive needs of what he refers to as 'South African capital'. However, despite his theoretical emphasis on class struggle, he provides a crude analysis in which the working class has been so defeated that it ceases to exert any influence on the interests and actions of either the state or capitalists. This is a gross misrepresentation of the position and power of organised labour, the South African Communist Party and emerging social movements in contemporary South Africa. It grants no autonomy to the state and no agency or interests to the ruling ANC. Somewhat problematically, within Lesufi's account, the state simply executes the will of monopoly capital. Nor does he problematise 'South African capital', either by exploring the implications of the move by key 'South African' multinationals such as DeBeers and AngloAmerican to London, or by acknowledging the presence of foreign capital within South Africa.

Furthermore, although noting that neo-liberalism was implemented in a range of countries in response to the crisis of over-accumulation, Lesufi attributes this to the actions of 'capitalists throughout the world', even while overlooking the critical role of the American state in the advent of neo-liberalism (Panitch and Gindin 2004, pp. 20–23). Despite noting similarities between the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, NEPAD and the policies of the IMF and World Bank, he does not consider that either institution, or American imperialism more generally, influenced the South African state's policy choices. This is linked to his retention of a classical Leninist definition of imperialism, and the related notion of inter-imperial rivalry, in which each imperial state functions independently. Failing to heed Ellen Meikins Wood's (2005) cautioning against adopting ahistorical theorisations of imperialism, Lesufi neither historicises the context within which Lenin was writing, nor explores the implications of the transformations in the international political economy, coupled with the rise of US imperialism, for the form and nature of 'imperialist' actions by the South African state.

Patrick Bond and Sub-imperial South Africa

By contrast, as a leading proponent of the 'South-Africa-as-sub-imperial' thesis, Bond has sought in a series of publications (cf. Bond 2004, 2005, 2006) to analyse the relationship between US imperialism and the South African state's agenda in the region. In his view, investment in African infrastructure projects, and Cecil Rhodes' attempt to 'paint the map British imperial red from Cape to Cairo', provided important outlets for over-accumulated European capital in the first period of inter-imperial rivalry (Bond 2004, pp. 149–150). Africa's 'looting' through uneven and combined development played an important role

in that period and continues in the present day (Bond 2006). However, Bond argues that there has been a substantive shift in the form and nature of imperialism, which is now characterised by the hegemony of American imperialism. Following Harvey (2005) he argues that, 'modern imperialism necessarily combines neoliberalism and 'accumulation by dispossession' in peripheral sites like Africa along with increasing subservience to the USA's indirect, neo-colonial rule ...' (Bond 2006, p. 59).

Bond argues that liberalisation of trade and finance have cheapened Africa's products for northern consumption and drawn the continent 'deeper into global circles of crisis management' (Bond 2005, p. 221). He elaborates a number of crucial, unmediated engagements between American imperialism and Africa, including increased deployment of US troops to the continent, the recruitment of African mercenaries, boosting funding to establish an African peace-keeping force, and using conditions attached to Millennium Challenge Account aid to advance America's imperial interests (Bond 2005). Bond also meticulously details how the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank have re-oriented African states to facilitate accumulation by dispossession, the adoption of neo-liberal policies and the implementation of the American imperialist agenda across the continent (Bond 2006).

However, Bond notes that military spending alone cannot secure the imperial agenda of the US; and that, as so few countries qualify to receive Millennium Challenge Account aid, this has proven an ineffective imperial tool (Bond 2005, p. 27). Perhaps most significantly, he argues that:

... thanks largely to capitalist crisis tendencies and the current orientation to accumulation by dispossession, imperialism can neither deliver the goods nor successfully repress sustained dissent in

Africa, not least in sub-Saharan Africa, rife with 'state failure' and 'undisciplined neoliberalism' (witnessed in repeated IMF riots). The ideological legitimisation of 'free markets and free politics' requires renewal, therefore. For this, the US needs a sub-imperial partner ... (Bond 2005, p. 223)

Bond argues that despite their 'cheekiness' the politicians in Pretoria have proven to be ideal sub-imperial partners (Bond 2006, p. 100). In direct contrast to Lesufi he locates the genesis of NEPAD in the need for a 'homegrown Washington Consensus' (Bond 2006, p. 11) and South Africa's fulfilment of its sub-imperial role.

Bond leaves no doubt as to whether there is a hierarchy of beneficiaries of sub-imperialism, or who resides at the pinnacle, asserting that

... if Mbeki and his colleagues are benefiting from the high profile provided by NEPAD and all the other global-managerial functions discussed above, the real winners are those in Washington and other imperial centres who, increasingly, require a South African frontman for the ongoing super-exploitation and militarization of Africa. (Bond 2005, pp. 232–233)

Although Bond is clear as to who benefits from sub-imperialism, he does not explicitly elaborate a theorisation of sub-imperialism. As an aside he asserts that, in the earlier imperial period analysed by classical theorists, imperial capacity was 'reproduced through subimperial processes' (Bond 2004, p. 163). He also notes continuities in South Africa's sub-imperial project in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras (Bond 2004, p. 165). Despite his careful elaboration of the changing nature of imperialism, Bond presents an ahistorical, unchanging conceptualisation of sub-imperialism.

Bond's analysis is also hindered by his implicit assumption that the South

African state's engagement with the rest of Africa can be understood by focusing solely on the relationships between Pretoria and Washington and the multilateral institutions. Despite noting the important role played by South African capital in exploitative processes of capital accumulation in the continent, in his texts on sub-imperialism, Bond does not explore the relationship of South African capital with the state, while the state's interventions across the continent are presented as being rooted solely in its acting as a 'proxy' (Bond 2006, p. 104) for the US. Moreover, whilst the South African state plays a critical role within his framework of sub-imperialism, Bond does not provide a theorisation of the state, referring most often to the actions of particular politicians as proof that the state is playing a sub-imperial role.

Whilst Bond focuses mainly on external relations between Pretoria and Washington to support his position that the South African state is sub-imperial, Lesufi (despite theoretical pretensions that he is looking at class struggle and the social relations underpinning the capitalist state) looks only at the state's fulfilment of the presumed needs of South African 'monopoly capital' to argue that it is, *contra* Bond, imperial.

Ruy Mauro Marini and Brazilian Sub-imperialism

Clearly, what is needed to bridge the divide between Lesufi and Bond, and their respective frameworks of enquiry, is a theoretical approach capable of grappling with the nuanced interrelation of internal and external factors and social relations. This, as Simon argued in 1991, is a strength of Marini's theorisation of Brazilian sub-imperialism, which Simon correctly notes is a more useful conceptualisation of sub-imperialism than the structuralist approaches rejected by Lesufi (Simon 1991, pp. 23–24).

Writing in the mid-1960s and early 1970s Marini developed the concept of sub-imperialism to analyse transformations in Brazilian foreign policy and, in particular, the collaboration between Brazil and the US in their intervention in the Dominican Republic. His argument is that this cannot be understood by focusing solely on either the US or Brazil in isolation, or only on internal or external factors (Marini 1965).

Marini explores the impact of American investment within Brazil and seeks to trace its effect on Brazilian foreign policy and the export of Brazilian capital. He argues that American imperialism influenced Brazil from within the Brazilian social formation through its effect on internal social relations. In many ways his analysis prefigured Nicos Poulantzas's later, and better known, theorisation of the ways in which American imperialism is reproduced within other social formations (Poulantzas 1974).

Marini is careful to note that Brazil was not a passive recipient of American investment or mere object of American imperialism. He argues that, due to the class alliance between the Brazilian bourgeoisie and the latifundists, when Brazil encountered a crisis of realisation it could not rely on redistribution and sufficient domestic demand to resolve the crisis (Marini 1965, p. 23). Therefore, internal class relations determined that the only alternative was for the dictatorship to attempt foreign expansion and to export industrial products. However, this required increasing Brazil's technological level, which Brazilian industry was incapable of doing on its own due to low levels of development. Therefore, the adoption of this model was dependent upon foreign capital. As Marini notes:

imperialism accepted participation, but it imposed its own conditions. Big industry was denationalized; the exploitation of raw materials such as iron was

monopolized; the plan to electrify received considerable contributions from the international finance agencies... However, foreign capital declined to promote the development of those sectors reserved for the advanced nations, such as the aeronautic industry. Furthermore, the North American government stymied Brazilian attempts to master nuclear technology. (Marini 1972, p. 17)

Thus, foreign capital significantly shaped and influenced the nature of Brazilian industrialisation and played an important role in its ability to pursue an export-oriented strategy.

This increased alliance with foreign capital also led to a shift in foreign policy away from the more independent approach that had been followed by previous governments towards the *barghana leal* or loyal bargain in which Brazil became 'tightly bound' to the US (Marini 1965, p. 19). Marini is careful to emphasise that this was not just a regression to the acquiescence to the will of the US that had previously characterised Brazilian foreign policy:

For many, what is involved is simply a return to the Brazilian policy of submission to Washington (which was the rule in the period preceding Quadros), and the definitive conversion of Brazil into a colony of the United States. This is not correct. What we have, in reality, is the evolution of the Brazilian bourgeoisie toward the conscious acceptance of its integration with North American imperialism, an evolution resulting from the very logic of the economic and political dynamics of Brazil, and having grave consequences for Latin America. (Marini 1965, p. 12)

Thus, Marini argues that Brazil did not necessarily and automatically pursue the interests of American imperialism. Rather than being a simple 'proxy' for the US, the Brazilian state carved out its own role on the continent based on class

struggles and class compromises within Brazil (which, as noted above, were imbricated with US imperialism), as well as its own 'ideological premeditation'. In this respect, Marini 'appears to have anticipated the Marxian state-centred approach stressing the "relative autonomy of the state"' that later emerged in the debate between Poulantzas and Miliband (Zirker 1994, p. 115). The particular approach chosen by the Brazilian dictatorship was to position itself as:

the center from which imperialist expansion in Latin America will radiate ... It is not a question of passively accepting North American power (although the actual correlation of forces often leads to that result), but rather of collaborating actively with imperialist expansion, assuming in this expansion the position of a key nation. (Marini 1965, pp. 21–22)

It is on this basis that Marini argues that the Brazilian dictatorship was 'sub-imperial'. Whilst in his original article on the subject Marini described sub-imperialism simply as '*the form which dependent capitalism assumes upon reaching the stage of monopolies and finance capital*' (emphasis in the original, Marini 1972, p. 15), he later expanded on this, noting that:

subimperialism implies two basic components: on the one hand, a medium organic composition on the world scale of national productive apparatus, and, on the other, the exercise of relatively autonomous expansionist policy, which is not only accompanied by a greater integration in the imperialist productive system, but also is maintained under the hegemony exercised by imperialism on an international scale. (Marini 1978, pp. 34–35, cited in Zirker 1994, p. 117)

Within Marini's formulation, therefore, a sub-imperial state is neither simply a 'conduit' (Lesufi 2006, p. 34) nor a 'proxy' (Bond 2006, p. 104) for American

imperialism. The significance of Marini's contribution thus lies in his focus on the dynamic interplay between the influence of American foreign policy, the role of American multinationals within the Brazilian social formation, class struggle within Brazil, the dynamics of capitalist accumulation, and a state rooted in capitalist social relations which retains some autonomy. Drawing on Marini's analytical approach can, therefore, help to overcome the solitudes that plague the current literature on South African imperialism vs sub-imperialism.

Sub-imperialism in the Current African Context

However, this is not to suggest that Marini's theoretical framework can simply be transported across time and space and applied ready-made to the African context. Some key issues which require updating, theorising and further empirical exploration relate to Marini's focus on industrial exports, his economism, the concept of 'South African capital', the regionalisation of class struggle, issues related to race and gender, and the contested and differentiated nature of the African continent.

Capital versus Industrial Exports

The export of industrial goods assumes a central role in Marini's conceptualisation of sub-imperialism. While he observes that such exports are not a sufficient condition for sub-imperialism (as the key issue is the *mode* of export), he recognises that they are integral to the sub-imperial process (cited in Zirker 1994, pp. 117–118). However, this is at odds with classical theories of imperialism that focus on the export of capital (Zirker 1994, p. 117). It is also out of synchronisation with the emerging South African reality in which capital exports play an increasingly significant role (Bond 2004). Marini's specific formulation of sub-imperialism as grounded in industrial goods export is perhaps more relevant

to analysis of South Africa's industrialisation drive (and the role played by both multinational companies and the South African Customs Union within it) in the inter-war and post-war years (Gibb 1997, Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan 1998).

However, it should be noted that Marini himself is careful to locate his emphasis on industrial exports within a detailed analysis of the specific political and economic context and level of development of Brazilian industry in the mid-1960s. Whilst he erroneously builds this solution to a specific crisis in a particular historical conjuncture into the definition of sub-imperialism, it is arguable that his method of analysis can be fruitfully employed to explore the relationship between current material conditions, class relations, American imperialism and the form, nature and composition of exports from South Africa.

'South African Capital'

As far back as the 1970s, Seidman and Seidman (1977) and Makgetla and Seidman (1980) highlighted how multinationals from the US and other countries were using South Africa as a base to launch their products and operations into the rest of the continent. In keeping with Marini's understanding of the role played by imperial capital within the dominated social formation, this early research demonstrates the integral role played by these corporations in South Africa's industrialisation, domination of the region and in securing support from the American state for a less critical stance on apartheid.

Most current literature on South Africa's role in the region focuses on 'South African capital' and fails to explore the activities and influences of foreign capital based in South Africa. It is noted there is scant attention to the differential nature and activities of these companies and how they are shaping South Africa's engagement with the region. The Industrial and

Commercial Bank of China's (ICBC) purchase of a 20 per cent stake in Standard Bank for R36.7 billion drives home the impossibility of focusing exclusively on something called 'South African' capital when analysing South Africa's relationship with the rest of Africa. It highlights the utility of supplementing Marini's analytical framework with Poulantzas's insight that due to interpenetration of capital national bourgeoisies have been replaced by an 'internal bourgeoisie'. The challenge remains to identify the particular composition of that internal bourgeoisie within contemporary South Africa, and to trace the influence of its different parts on South Africa's continental engagements. The ICBC investment also raises the important question as to whether South Africa's regional activities are shaped primarily by relations with the US.

Overcoming Economism

Simon observes that despite the nuanced way in which Marini conceptualises sub-imperialism, his 'definition is still too economic, in that it implies that domestic capital formation and accumulation, and attendant class struggles are the sole cause or rationale for sub-imperial action. While there is obviously a high degree of interdependence between economic and political interests – the essence of political economy – a distinction is necessary' (Simon 1991, p. 24). Therefore, Simon argues that 'an essential characteristic of sub-imperialism is having *both* the economic *and* political/military power to dominate the surrounding periphery with a degree of autonomy' (Simon 1991, p. 24). The apartheid state's intention to preserve white minority rule is a clear example of how factors not strictly limited to capital accumulation influenced sub-imperial activities.

Moving away from economism also requires exploration of how US imperialism shapes the policy and practice of the state and capital other than through direct presence in the South African

economy via investment activities. Bond (2000) and Marais (1998) both provide detailed and insightful analyses of the role played by American consultants, the international financial institutions, and the hegemony of neo-liberal ideology in influencing the ANC's adoption of the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution macro-economic policy. Further detailed analyses of the processes through which South African economic and foreign policy towards the continent are developed, including a focus on contestations within the state as well as the influence of external factors could deepen our understanding of the mechanisms and processes of sub-imperialism.

Regional Class Struggle

Marini focuses primarily on the ways in which class relations within the sub-imperial power shape sub-imperial processes. Darlene Miller's (2004, 2005a, 2005b) analysis of the move by South African supermarket multinational Shoprite into southern Africa alerts us to the importance of having a broader, regional perspective on class struggle. Miller reveals how the mobilisations of workers employed by a South African multinational in Zambia and Mozambique are informed by their 'regional imaginaries', which are based on their interactions with South African workers, company information, shop floor experiences and their general understanding of the southern African region. Importantly, she demonstrates that 'regional working-class formation not only reflects...cross-national flows of capital, but also shapes the way the region is formed' affecting the investment strategies of Shoprite and other multinationals (Miller 2005a, p. 121).

Race, Gender and Class

When analysing how contested social relations underpin sub-imperial processes it will be important to be attentive to race and gender, and the ways in which they are intimately related to class

formation. Historically race has played a critical role in South African sub-imperialism. Simon (1991) highlights how the objective of preserving white minority rule was a central driving force of South Africa's sub-imperial regional strategy during apartheid. The South African state was willing to act with a high degree of autonomy and defy international opinion to pursue this goal. The specific regional strategies adopted were further shaped by race and class dynamics within particular social formations in the region (Simon 1991, p. 40). Within literature on the current period there is frequent reference to the fact that the end of white minority rule has facilitated increased South African investment in other African countries. Miller highlights how South African capital consciously represents itself as 'African', and as bearer of the African Renaissance, to legitimate this process (Miller 2004). She also explores how racial hierarchies within managerial structures in South African multinationals in the region, combined with racist stereotypes on the part of white South African managers, affect labour relations and managerial strategies within companies (Miller 2005b). A further area for research could include assessment of the relevance of black economic empowerment and efforts to create and consolidate a black bourgeoisie for investment strategies and priorities within South Africa and across the continent.

Analysis of the relationship between gender, class and regional processes has been conspicuously absent from research on South Africa. With respect to the Asian experience Burkett and Hart-Landsberg (2000, pp. 111–112) have demonstrated that the gendered exploitation of women workers in Japan's early export industries played a pivotal role in enabling and facilitating the success of its specific export model and sub-imperial domination of other South East Asian countries. There is a pressing need for research to interrogate and unearth

similar connections between gender and sub-imperialism in the South African context. The differentiated ways in which South African investment in other African social formations is affected by and contributes to a re-articulation of local gender, race and class relations is also in need of scrutiny.

Contested Terrains

Alden and Soko (2005) caution not to treat Africa as a homogenous sphere when grappling with South Africa's role in the continent. They differentiate between three spheres of South Africa's economic engagement with Africa: the South African Customs Union (SACU) countries, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, and Africa north of the Zambezi. They argue that South Africa's hegemony is 'manifested' in SACU due to deeply entrenched structural inequalities created by the historically unequal nature of the SACU agreements (Alden and Soko 2005, p. 370). Within SADC they contend that South Africa's hegemony is 'contested' due to lower levels of trade and South African investment, the significant institutional problems encountered by SADC and the ways in which internal South African politics are creating barriers to developmental regional integration (Alden and Soko 2005, pp. 374–379). Most significantly, they argue that north of the Zambezi River, although South African investments have increased substantially and the banking and financial sectors have begun to make significant inroads, South Africa's hegemony is 'unrealised'. They argue that this was demonstrated by the fact that, unlike all other African countries, Nigeria, Egypt and Tunisia all had trade surpluses with South Africa (Alden and Soko 2005, p. 382).

Alden and Soko further note that, 'beyond its own region, a key determinant will be [South Africa's] relations

with the other leading African power, Nigeria, as well as its ability to compete with other external actors' (Alden and Soko 2005, p. 36). Within literature on South Africa's role in Africa surprisingly little research has taken up this challenge and explored in concrete terms the strength and influence of South African investment and foreign policy relative to that of other African and international powers. Such research will prove invaluable in assessing the extent and indeed existence of South African sub-imperialism in various parts of the continent.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Leo Panitch and Patrick Bond for comments at an early stage of the article.

Endnote

1. This article was originally received on 11 April 2007 and accepted for publication on 6 March 2008.

References

- Ahwireng-Obeng, F. & P.J. McGowan (1998), 'Partner or hegemon? South Africa in Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 16(1), pp. 5–38.
- Alden, C. & M. Soko (2005), 'South Africa's economic relations with Africa: hegemony and its discontents', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42(3), pp. 367–392.
- Arrighi, G. (2005), 'Hegemony unravelling – I', *New Left Review*, 32, pp. 23–80.
- Bond, P. (2000), *Elite transition: from apartheid to neoliberalism in South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- (2004), 'Bankrupt Africa: imperialism, sub-imperialism and the politics of finance', *Historical Materialism*, 12(4), pp. 145–172.
- (2005), 'US Empire and South African Subimperialism.', in L. Panitch & C. Leys (eds.), *Socialist register 2005: the empire reloaded*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 218–238.
- (2006), *Looting Africa: the economics of exploitation*, London and Durban: Zed Books and UKZN Press.
- Burkett, P. & M. Hart-Landsberg (2000), *Development, crisis, and class struggle: learning from Japan and East Asia*, New York: St Martin's Press.
- Gibb, R. (1997), 'Regional integration in post-Apartheid Southern Africa: the case of renegotiating the Southern African customs union', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23(1), pp. 67–86.
- Hardt, M. & A. Negri (2002), *Empire*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. (2005), *The new imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lesufi, I. (2004), 'South Africa and the rest of the continent: towards a critique of the political economy of NEPAD', *Current Sociology*, 52(5), pp. 809–829.
- (2006), *Nepad and South African imperialism*, Johannesburg: Jubilee South Africa.
- Makgetla, N. & A. Seidman (1980), *Outposts of monopoly capitalism: Southern Africa in the changing global economy*, Westport CT: Lawrence Hill & Co.
- Marais, H. (1998), *South Africa limits to change: the political economy of transformation*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Marini, R.M. (1965), 'Brazilian 'interdependence' and imperialist integration', *Monthly Review*, 17(7), pp. 10–29.
- (1972), 'Brazilian subimperialism', *Monthly Review*, 23(9), pp. 14–24.
- Meikins Wood, E. (2005), *Empire of capital*, London: Verso.
- Miller, D. (2004), 'South African multinational corporations, NEPAD and competing spatial claims on Post-Apartheid Southern Africa', *African Sociological Review*, 8(1), pp. 176–202.
- (2005a), 'New regional imaginaries in post-Apartheid Southern Africa – retail workers at a shopping mall in Zambia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31(1), pp. 117–145.
- (2005b), 'White managers and the African renaissance – a 'retail renaissance,' or a new colonial encounter at South African companies in foreign African countries. Paper presented at Codesria 11th General Assembly, December, in Maputo.

Panitch, L. & S. Gindin (2004), 'Global capitalism and American empire', in (ed.), *Socialist register 2004: the new imperial challenge*, London: Merlin Press.

Panitch, L. and Gindin, S., 2005. Towards a theory of the capitalist imperial state. (Electronic version from authors).

Poulantzas, N. (1974), *Classes in contemporary capitalism*, London: Verso.

Robinson, W.I. (2004), *A theory of global capitalism: production, class, and state in a transnational world*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Seidman, A. & N. Seidman (1977), *South Africa and U.S. multinational corporations*, Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co.

Simon, D. (1991), 'The ties that bind: decolonisation and neo-colonialism in Southern Africa.', in C. Dixon & M. Heffernan (eds.), *Colonialism and development in the contemporary world*, London: Mansell.

Sklair, L. (2001), *The transnational capitalist class*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Zirker, D. (1994), 'Brazilian foreign policy and subimperialism during the political transition of the 1980s: a review and reapplication of Marini's theory', *Latin American Perspectives*, 20(1), pp. 115–131.

Plans for a Zimbabwe Aid Package: Blueprint for Recovery or Shock Therapy Prescription for Liberalisation?

Sarah Bracking & Lionel Cliffe

In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein presents Bolivia as an early case of neo-con, neoliberal strategies for capitalising on disasters in order to promote liberalisation. Here we ask whether Bolivia is a harbinger of Zimbabwean futures or a cautionary tale.

In 1985 Bolivia faced hyperinflation up to 14,000 per cent, and there was a massive accumulation of external debt. There had been economic meltdown and a flight of thousands to seek incomes in neighbouring countries, Spain and US. However, the country had not gone as far as others in Latin America in following Structural Adjustment prescriptions. In these circumstances of economic crisis there were the first elections for over 20 years. The newly elected government of President Paz then adopted a 'shock therapy' plan to end hyperinflation and to promote a new economic strategy, which was to radically dismantle the entire state-centred economic model. This had been put together behind the scenes, despite the elections, using a blueprint from Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs (who was to bring the same shock treatment plan to Russia in 1991, although he now has the image of a pro-poverty reduction heterodox develop economist).

The chief instrument for combating inflation was to raise prices, opting to put the resulting burdens on the poor: food subsidies and price controls on essentials were eliminated, public service wages were frozen, government expenditures were severely cut, the

economy was fully opened up to outside trade and investment, parastatals were downsized ready for privatisation. Inflation was brought under control but the overall plan, of liberalisation by shock treatment, led to massive impoverishment. There was also a political concomitant: repression of demonstrations about lay-offs and food prices, the detention of most trade union leaders and their supporters, amounting to a 'state of siege' through a 'civilian coup d'etat'.

A Zimbabwe Recovery Plan?

In the light of this example, consider media reports about 'recovery plans', which began to appear alongside the tumult over the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe and the delay in releasing the results. These suggested that a programme for economic restoration was ready in outline to be implemented should there be a change of regime in Zimbabwe, and it was in fact discussed at the Spring 2008 meetings of IMF/World Bank (*The Guardian*, 14 April 2008).

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) also announced that they were working out a substantial programme. International donors are thinking in terms of a three-point programme to which they are ready – immediately – to commit enormous financial resources:

- A currency stabilisation fund and strategy
- A vast expansion of humanitarian support
- Regularisation of land tenure and property rights.

These initiatives raise several worrying implications. First, they show that 'recovery' is seen as an opportunity to invoke complete liberalisation. Second, they reveal the unsavoury nature of holding numerous conferences and gatherings externally to plan what would or

will happen when the regime is gone, when the energy of participants could have more usefully be engaged with how to prevent state authoritarianism and deterioration and support victims of the crisis. This type of 'planning' is based on an unrealistic view of how states reform: there will be no magical date on which 'The Old Man' will die and good governance will be restored, as if by magic. There is likely to be a much longer process of struggle. Second, this planning is undemocratic and exclusivist, since it does not invoke procedures to include Zimbabwean popular opinion. Finally, but perhaps most significant, it is absurd that neoliberal shock therapy, with all its proven inadequacies should have emerged as the policy package that donors are advocating, especially at this moment of global failure of free market prescriptions. There is an urgent need for elaborating a more appropriate type of development, in terms of democratic reconstruction, should such an opportunity arise.

Later, as ZANU-PF and MDC-T and MDC-M signed the *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU), or power sharing agreement in September 2008, the promise was of more aid and liquidity in exchange for ZANU-PF cooperation. The (MOU) talks of the normalisation of Zimbabwe's external relations, an end to its negative reputation internationally, and its imminent accommodation with the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI). The language of rights to international borrowing is used. Shortly after the MOU was signed, more detailed reports started to emerge, including a UNDP 'recovery package' (UNDP 2008). Both the MOU itself and the UNDP document contain overtones of economic policy orthodoxy, and in the case of the former, outright inconsistencies on the economic path to be followed, such as resumption of BWI debt repayments, and a proposed increase in social investment.

However, there are at least three areas in which the interests of the workers and destitute in Zimbabwe are not being met:

- (1) Within the transition process;
- (2) In terms of the transitional institutions that are taking shape; and
- (3) Because the prescriptions for change and 'development' which are set to follow this period of normalisation are neoliberal, and do not secure their economic interests.

In terms of the first, popular and democratic interests have been thus far been locked out of the elite pact process sponsored by Mbeki, and remain locked out of the discussion with donors, and are thus effectively excluded from the transitional process. Suffice to say that popular opinion and the more structured inputs from the civic sector and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) are required in order to secure for society a stake in the democratisation process, if there is to be one, and the new republic. Their exclusion so far does not bode well for the type of transition that will occur, since a lack of democracy is likely to be magnified and reproduced in later stages. At the time of writing, the great performance of the MOU, the act of 'normalisation of crisis', and the excitement which followed the ceremony have waned with the realisation that there were no dates which fix its implementation, and power predominantly still belongs to Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

In terms of the MOU and the proposed Government of National Unity, Munyaradzi Gwisai, of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe, wrote of the unacceptability of an elite pact 'around a Western-supported full neoliberal economic programme' (Gwisai, 2008). Observers like Gwisai conclude that locking civil society out of negotiations has critically demobilised the opposition, marginalised the historical support base of the MDC and left critical issues of transitional justice unattended. Lovemore Madhuku

further termed the signing of the agreement by the MDC 'capitulation' (SWRadio Africa 2008a). The ZCTU concluded that the MOU 'Creates a government that is in itself not a transitional government but a structure incorporating losers' (ZCTU 2008). In the words of COSATU of South Africa, the deal ensures that 'the loser has become the winner and the winner the loser' (COSATU, at Pambazuka News, 2008). The majority view is more generous, perhaps overly so, as expressed by Brian Raftopoulous, that it represented an opening of political space by unequal parties and that this is the best they could do in the circumstances (SWRadio Africa 2008b). At the time of going to press, the MOU appears dissembled, as cholera and hunger tear into the fabric of society, and ZANU intransigence prevents the Agreement being implemented.

A second concern raises issues about the dimensions of the institutions taking shape, or indeed occurring as a de facto result of the non-implementation of the Agreement. The MOU itself leaves many strategic powers in Mugabe's hands – such as decisions over war, declaring a state of emergency, chairing the Cabinet, and even appointing the Prime Minister. But let us accept for the moment the argument that it was all Tsvangirai could get without resorting to violence under the asymmetric negotiating forum supplied by President Mbeki, and in order to restore some semblance of food security to the hungry held hostage to Mugabe's intransigence. A further implication for social and economic change is partly related to the first, in that the demands from civil society for transitional justice, and political and social priorities have already been downgraded relative to the donor-led obsession with the macro-economy first, which is typical of the shock therapy approach. Important issues of justice and rehabilitation, not least for the families of those hundreds of people murdered during the recent violence, have been swept under the carpet

in the name of reconciliation and 'necessary' economics. A third dimension is that the donor plans that do exist, even if they are currently an ill-kept secret, contain an archetypal fascination with large top-down approaches, which will inevitably underwrite and support the same type and model of highly unequal social change that was 'supported' last time around, during the 1990s.

The MOU itself promises an acceptance of all current property ownership, but then an inventory of all holdings and also the elimination of multiple farm ownerships. It demands the end to imperial aggression, alongside a call for greater donor cooperation (available in full from Sokwanele 2008). In parts it agrees between the parties policy change that none of them, even together, can deliver, including the reversal of sanctions legislation in the US Senate and a restoration of full IMF drawing rights. Both within the MOU and more particularly in comments made by Tsvangirai, it is clear however that a full, immediate and large influx of liquidity and donor grants is anticipated and requested. It is seen as axiomatic that this should be developmental, both by ZANU-PF, who juxtapose their cooperation with the restoration of international finance as response and reward and by the MDC who cite development finance as a necessary part of reconstruction. The problem is that both conceive of the role of development finance un-problematically and within flawed frameworks. ZANU-PF, because donor money is not principally seen as a development good to be invested, which would lead to an income stream to ensure its repayment, but simply as a reward for good behaviour to be collectively consumed by the elite. From the MDC perspective, incoming money at this point would have a contradictory effect, which it does not fully understand or appreciate. It would, for example, re-liquidate parts of the

economy and industry which fuel ZANU-PF patronage, fill off-shore bank accounts and help fund the spoils politics model that has become the norm. A prior democratisation and adequate regulation of the economy is required to prevent this outcome.

More generally, however, it is the nature of the policy package that is being imported which represents a significant hazard. For example, the UNDP document imports a wholesale acceptance of the neoliberal formula of price, investment and trade liberalisation, restoration of a conventional Central Bank and acceptance of IMF and World Bank instruments (UNDP 2008). This is all very odd for an organisation which has historically resisted this policy paradigm, particularly since the global crisis has contributed to undermining it elsewhere. In fact, some 'emergency' measures look distinctly neo-conservative, such as to restructure or privatise the Ministry of Finance and introduce cost-recovery for public services. That these are inappropriate should be intuitively self-evident to a Zimbabwean, who would know that when there are no goods in the shops, liberalising their prices is a somewhat academic exercise.

The same lack of logic applies to cost recovery for schools and clinics. A Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) Discussion document on the 'Recovery' contained similar neoliberal orthodoxies, despite its preliminary nature as a 'living' document, which acknowledged gaps in knowledge required by 'stakeholders'. Ironically, the 'Zimbabwean Economic Recovery Programme' (ZERP) relies somewhat prematurely on a 'government' to implement it; which is what Zimbabwe lacks. Despite this obvious drawback, the document still outlines a 'stabilisation framework of '(a) exchange rates unification, (b) deregulation of prices, and (c) improved management of public expenditures' (MDTF 2008). Alongside a safety net for the poor

during stabilisation (only), it concentrates on public financial management, fiscal adjustment and private sector regeneration.

Academic contributions are not necessarily suggesting improvements to these intergovernmental blueprints. They often reproduce the ways donor analysis creates a necessary role for donor intervention and refinancing. For example, it is persistently argued, here by Bird and Busse (2007) that:

Years of economic and social damage are not easily reversed, and the economy and key economic institutions have now declined to such a point that recovery will be impossible without significant external assistance. (Bird and Busse, 2007, p. 15, citing Hawkins 2006)

However, this is not such an obvious proposition as it appears. The counterfactual is equally true, that since institutions are so weak, recovery will be impossible with external assistance, since local demands and positions will be railroaded under the negotiating pressure of those with the money. In addition, past donor intervention may be implicated in the concentration of political power that led to the crisis in the first place (Bracking 2005). The supposed necessity of intervention is then followed by lists of things to do. Moss and Patrick (2006) propose a list of donor interventions as a framework for Zimbabwe's recovery, reproduced in Bird and Busse, which includes, alongside the less contentious humanitarian forms of assistance, a coordinated donor effort and Trust Fund, the formulation of a 'National Reconstruction and Development' plan, an investment conference to attract back money and a 'quick' normalisation of Bretton Woods relations (cited in Bird and Busse, 2007, pp. 15–16).

These interventions would ensure that a neoliberal, dependent development pattern would ensue, without any proper demo-

cratic debate or consideration of how far this type of development was implicated in the current crisis in the first instance. When Bretton Woods institutions invested before, using these types of conduits, perhaps about one half of the loans went bad (a conjecture based on the British case), and about \$1000 million remain on the books. However, the current Zimbabwean elite, and many of the most notorious anti-democrats among it, were put on the road to riches by projects that allowed and condoned their participation as equity owners and 'new, indigenous entrepreneurs'. A future Zimbabwe protected as far as possible from patrimonialism would not use these types of private sector development vehicle, but more grassroots, cooperative and mutualist conduits. Suffice to say here, that this debate needs to be had. A 'quick' normalisation with Bretton Woods could also be an expensive one.

Moreover, Zimbabwe is not the economy that most assume it to be, but has arguably morphed into one with profound likenesses to a minerals extractive rentier state during its protracted crisis. In this regard, many commentators have missed the significant investments into its minerals sector during the past five years, many from London. Zimbabwe, despite its crisis, is riding the boom in minerals commodity prices and earnings from British companies in Zimbabwe have actually stood up remarkably well. Thus these companies and stakeholders will also want a place at the table, and with Bretton Woods re-engaged could quickly re-liquidate their assets before a review of the legality of property claims has had time to report. As Pogge remarks, the sovereign right to dispose of assets is a morally hazardous one where corrupt elites are concerned (Pogge 2002), and the Zimbabwean polity at large might want to review deals that have been done recently in this regard, before economics is returned to 'normal'.

In June 2008, for example, Anglo, now a UK listed company, and in the context of

extreme election violence, announced a \$400 million investment to develop a platinum mine at Unki (*The Times*, 2008). In total, by June 2008, over 200 UK and South African companies remained substantially invested in Zimbabwe, in the face of a newly passed Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, which aims to force them to hand over majority ownership to Zimbabweans, including Lever Brothers, Barclays Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Standard Bank, Stanbic Bank, Impala Platinum, Angloplat, Mettalon Gold, Rio Tinto, Edcon, Merchant Bank of Central Africa and several enterprises owned by Anglo American (*The Star* 2008). Earnings from British investments in Zimbabwe between and including the years 1997 to 2006 totalled £498 million (from Office for National Statistics, *Foreign Investment Surveys*, Table MA4 3.1). Despite the crisis, between 1997 and 2006, £378 million of new investment flows were made by British domiciled companies in Zimbabwe (ibid). In other words, despite the 'sanctions', the real minerals based economy has shored up a rentier elite, and the pressure from the owners of these enterprises will steer the debate on public debt if allowed to do so. It is the authors' opinion that *only* sufficient liquidity to refinance a democratically controlled Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe should be accepted in the short term. The humanitarian response should be grant aid. The debate on writing off odious debt should be had, *before* reengagement with the BWI.

Such a review of contractual obligation might determine, for example, that a windfall tax on the newly arrived minerals companies could raise just as much as the IMF might offer, while Zimbabwe holding out for full Paris Club cancellation is the only option for such a stock of odious debt. An estimate of Zimbabwean debt in 2007 was of a combined stock of principal and cumulative arrears totalling US\$ 4.9 billion (USAID 2007). If reengagement with BWI is con-

templated without a deal to cancel debt stock, the issue of the moral weight of how far Zimbabweans should be expected to honour odious, misappropriated and otherwise bureaucratically added 'arrears' in their debt stock will be sidelined. On the other hand, an incrementalist approach would deliver to the donors successive public relations opportunities on pieces of debt relief, which would be recounted as ODA, and would give a false sense of generosity. Leverage is a political moment and the debt stock is not so significant as to be able to determine all political positions. However, the donors will want to give the impression of an intractable obligation which delivers Zimbabwe into their hands.

Anti-inflation Measures

The IMF is said to believe that inflation can be curbed within 12 months, but that price and exchange rate liberalisation would be prerequisites (*The Guardian*, 3 April 2008). One wonders how much more liberalisation they have in mind? Indeed, tough measures would be needed, probably involving price rises and holding down of wages, possibly the loss of jobs and cuts in public spending. But would a strategy necessarily concentrate on price increases for essentials without compensatory measures, or merely provide emergency social protection rather than livelihood promotion? How might it be shared across all sectors and classes rather than just the poor? But again, most of these promised interventions would not correspond to real conditions: there are few if any goods to buy and a residual number of workers to target. Most public sector pay is worthless. In this circumstance, even development assistance can be inflationary. A revised currency could be used to target social assistance.

Questions also need to be asked about the political concomitants of such shock therapy: what plans for containing food riots or other protests? What political

agency would play this role? Specifically, what would be the consequences for a party like MDC, if it were to be centrally involved in government, if it had to curb the trade unions, as in Bolivia, which were a vital core element in its growth?

Humanitarian Support

There is indeed a great need for humanitarian aid to meet emergency needs of those impoverished by the past melt-down and directly affected groups such as ex-farmworkers and other farm dwellers, the urban displaced from the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina (literally, 'disposing of rubbish'), as well as the especially vulnerable like HIV/AIDS affected adults and orphans.

There has also been a steep decline in the provision of education, health and social protection as a result of the decline in the state's own financial and human resources, which has only been partly compensated by initiatives by NGOs, some of the latter attracting financing from donors whose sanctions policy means the restriction of aid funds to emergency rather than development purposes, mainly funnelled through NGOs as opposed to state bodies. For example, there has been provision of food aid, and a melange of projects from school feeding to vouchers for food and for live-stock and inputs provided by NGOs, some of which went slightly beyond mere emergency relief, such as the UK's Protracted Relief Programme (PRP).

However, what would be implied by an orthodox current stabilisation policy, involving price hikes and job losses, is a further short-term increase in the need for these humanitarian measures – dimension number two of the package. In addition, presumably these would be conceived within a framework of only providing a safety net targeted to the most vulnerable and the worthy poor. Programmes such as PRP could be

scaled up, but could not substitute for the reconstruction of nation-wide, sustainable social services institutionalised and made sustainable within guaranteed budgets, which Zimbabwe used to have but which will not easily be restored within a strategy that seeks to downsize the state role.

There is a further risk if this liberalisation orthodoxy provides the model for planning and if donors are the ones drafting the policy details – that of putting the emphasis on the 'social protection' focus, currently so much in vogue, without complementary stress on rebuilding productive capacity. To take but one, yet crucial example, subsidising fertiliser, seed and other inputs for small farmers has proved to have boosted food availability, livelihoods in Zambia and Malawi (against the initial advice of donors, who have, like the World Bank in its latest annual report, finally come round to see the benefits). This type of initiative could have a profound impact on production in Zimbabwe, including that of the thousands of smallholder recipients of land reform. The available evidence, although partial, does indicate that the loss of production in all sectors, including that in the communal areas (which could not have been due to land take-overs) has to a major extent been a result of non-availability of farm inputs. Moreover, Zimbabwe has a historical advantage over its neighbours in having an indigenous fertiliser industry, the restoration of which would avoid importation (whether paid for commercially or by aid) and have a multiplier effect. Yet its restoration is only a remote possibility without the right kind of state-led role in planning, prioritising of provision of spares and thus foreign exchange, protection against imports, and maybe also direct participation in the equity. This one case of a potentially strategic component of rebuilding productive capacity is but one example that highlights the choices that have to be made in drawing up a plan for recovery, and the need to

link humanitarian assistance to an alternative development plan.

Fortunately, some discussions and drafting of alternative plans for recovery have been taking place among Zimbabwe intellectuals, professionals and civil society bodies despite all the immediacy of the political crisis. One 'think-tank' has specifically been developing position papers along lines that recognise the need for more realistic relations with the international economy and with donors and potential investors, but that also questions whether such a 'normalisation' need be on the basis of full liberalisation of the economy, and on the basis of the giving up all aspects of public involvement in the economy. This discourse needs to be recognised by outside observers and dialogue with them pursued. The Zimbabwean public can afford to wait while this happens, since the argument for full normalisation with Bretton Woods, excepting RBZ liquidity and humanitarian support, is very weak.

Future of Land Reform?

There are several issues, discussed below, resulting from the Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR) which certainly need attention but which also involve choices between options, some more compatible with a broadly liberalisation approach and alternatives that are arguably more appropriate to crisis conditions in Zimbabwe. However, as one early contribution to the future policy debate (Scoones, Internet 2008) has argued, the starting point for any debate about options is to get a clear idea of what is the actual situation on the ground. They assemble survey data to refute certain crude 'myths' that abound, arguing that it is too simplistic to see the FTLR as a 'total failure', that 'political cronies' have been the only beneficiaries', that 'there has been no investment', that 'agriculture is in complete ruins' and 'the rural economy has collapsed'. It is surely correct that the realities the FTLR have

created have to be appreciated, but their data from one province in the south east, Masvingo, may not be representative of other parts of the country and needs to be put alongside other survey data such as that by Moyo and Matondi (2008) who have far more data than reported in this published article. Scoones (2008) in qualifying charges that most land has gone to 'cronies', does not discuss the widely reported trend for patronage to be used in allocations to lead potentially to a form of new landlordism (see below).

National and International Acceptance of the Post-land Reform Realities

It is unlikely that even the most orthodox international actors expect a complete reversal of land redistribution, although there might be arguments for the return of a few former owners, especially of strategic enterprises such as seed producers, breeding stock ranches or high-tech irrigation. In this regard the MOU clearly states that there will be no reversal of the Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR). However, donors are likely to want to save face before accepting that reality by some legal formula about acquired land that would legitimate in their own eyes the resumption of aid and investment in the economy as a whole, as well as support for the land reform sector. Negotiations to find a compromise that would satisfy this need without it involving too great impositions on the new landowners and the overall economy might yield a formula acceptable on all sides. Here some of the elements of what UK and the Government of Zimbabwe had negotiated in 1996–98 on land reform might be revisited – after all the two countries came close to an agreed, widespread and funded programme but for the intervention of political leaders on both sides. (It is ironic, and possibly provocative and counterproductive, given this history and Mugabe's anti-colonial power rhetoric of recent years that reports about the 'Plan'

suggest that responsibilities for the lead role in this area have been assigned to the UK).

Sorting Out the Land Tenure Entitlements on the FTLR

The tenure rights of those who received land are by no means clear and unambiguous in legal terms. As a result of the still un-issued documentation of allocations, with beneficiaries so far receiving only letters or permits, there is a lack of clarity about leasehold tenure, continuing legal challenges by former owners, the ambiguous role of chiefs – and also in practice – as a consequence of overlapping and even multiple entitlements to the same plots and widespread disputed claims, the competing roles of a range of government, party, chiefly and other would-be bestowers of patronage. Some of the confusion and resulting less than optimum use of the new land holdings is recognised by the provision in the MOU which calls for a ‘land audit’. However, specific measures will be called for once an accurate picture of conditions on the ground are revealed, among them:

- a *dispute settlement* and if necessary compensation process is needed to deal with the many contested claims, as well as the inventory provided for in the MOU;
- *secure title*, not simply ‘permits to use’ or conditional leases subject to the whim of self-selected land committees, is needed for those who received land, especially the smallholder A1 recipients. This would boost their confidence and determination, and ideally it should put an end to the prospect of a de facto ‘landlordism’ by elites who control access that has tended to emerge; this should in turn be linked to some system of making credit available to them not based solely on offering titles as security for loans with the attendant risk of repossession;

- evidence, although partial, suggests that the medium size A2 beneficiaries are having less success, which if true, prompts the need for a *mechanism for the reacquisition* of unproductive land, perhaps to pass on to A1 farmers.

Programmes for Revitalising Production in All Sectors

There is a strong need to increase production on farms in the communal areas, old (1980s) resettlement farms, both A1 and A2 farms created by FTLR, remaining and returning commercial farmers – through a variety of measures such as input supply, extension, fairer and improved (but not necessarily totally private) marketing. One of the strategic requirements is to resuscitate the indigenous fertiliser industry, which Zimbabwe, unlike most African countries, has had for decades, but which has barely survived the limited access to credit, to spare parts or to raw materials. Support for this mode of meeting crucial needs of all farmers will also increase productive potential and have a multiplier effect which the alternative of financing imports of fertilisers would not have. However, such a priority and the funding of state enterprise and the tariff protection it would require would be precluded by orthodox liberalisation formulae.

Conclusions

In Zimbabwe, the first need is for much greater transparency about planning by the international community, since the current processes at work are fundamentally anti-democratic. Outlines should be subject to broad-based, open scrutiny and critique to see how far they are premised on ‘shock’ therapy against inflation, and on outmoded formulae of wholesale liberalisation with only safety net provision for the poor. This formulaic prescription of a free market as prerequisite should not be tenable even in donor

circles, given the debacle of the international financial system.

Outside observers need to familiarise themselves with thinking that has already occurred and continues to go on in Zimbabwe. This should include approaches to recovery that adopt different social change paradigms, incorporating equity and social justice, like the notable contributions of the *Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development*. Alternative plans need to be discussed that incorporate a fairer social division of the necessary short-term costs of recovery; a reconstitution of production and livelihoods and not just humanitarian relief; and a rebuilding of those state mechanisms that will be needed for a democratised macro-recovery. A dialogue with international actors sympathetic to the Zimbabwean political and economic realities would be useful, but the premature precedents discussed here are adopting neo-colonial procedures and policies that would surely serve to strengthen only the ZANU-PF elite, rather than dislodge them. The coalition of social forces demanding change in Zimbabwe surely requires a different operating paradigm and the right to own the process, policies and outcome of (eventual) political transition. The likelihood that had become apparent by the end of 2008 was that any international aid would suffer from the overall credit crunch – all the more reason that the main strategising, and even resourcing, should come from the Zimbabwean side.

Sarah Bracking is Senior Lecturer, University of Manchester, UK, and **Lionel Cliffe** is Professor Emeritus, University of Leeds, UK.

References

Bird, K. & S. Busse (2007), *Rethinking aid policy in response to Zimbabwe's protracted crisis: a discussion paper*. Zimbabwe Discussion Paper, Overseas Development Institute. Available

from: http://www.odi.org.uk/pppg/Poverty_and_Inequality/Events/2007_Zim_Roundtable/ZimDiscussionPaper.pdf

Bracking, S. (2005), 'Development denied: autocratic militarism in post-election Zimbabwe', *Review of African Political Economy*, 32, (104/5), pp. 341–357.

Gwisai, M. (2008), Zimbabwe: elite deal does not resolve underlying crisis – a luta continua! Available from: <http://links.org.au/node/647>.

Hawkins, T. (2006), Still standing. The economic, political and security situation in Zimbabwe 2006 and its implications for the SADC region. Paper presented at the Security 2006 Conference, Pretoria, The Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 4 May.

Moss, T. & S. Patrick (2006), 'After Mugabe: applying post-conflict recovery lessons to Zimbabwe', *African Policy Journal*, Spring. Available from: http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kssgorg/apj/issues/2006_issue/pdfs/Moss.pdf

Moyo, S. & P. Matondi (2008), 'Interrogating sustainable development and resource control in Zimbabwe', in K. Amanor & S. Moyo (eds.), *Land & sustainable development in Africa*, London: Zed Books.

MDTF (Multi-Donor Trust Fund). (2008), *Zimbabwe Emergency Recovery Program*, 2nd draft for discussion, September Harare, Zimbabwe.

Pambazuka News, (2008), Zimbabwe has the Kenya virus, 18 September. Available from: <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/50603>

Pogge, T. (2002), *World poverty and human rights: cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms*, London: Polity.

Scoones, I. (2008), A new start for Zimbabwe? Available from: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/about-ids/news-and-commentary/september-2008-news/a-new-start-for-zimbabwe/news-at-ids-a-new-start-for-zimbabwe>.

Sokwanele (2008), Agreement between ZANU-PF and the new MDC formations, on resolving the challenges facing Zimbabwe. Available from: <http://www.sokwanele.com/>

SWRadio Africa. (2008a), SWRadio Africa Transcript Available from: <http://www.swradioafrica.com/pages/hotseat250908.htm>,

originally broadcast on 25th September (accessed 21 April 2009).

SWRadio Africa (2008b), 'SWRadio Africa transcript. Available from: <http://www.swradioafrica.com/pages/hotseat140908.htm>, originally broadcast on 12th September (accessed 21 April 2009).

The Guardian (2008a), What the aid agencies plan, McGreal, C., 14 April. Available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/14/zimbabwe.aid> (accessed 21 April 2009).

The Guardian (2008b), Britain prepares £1bn-a-year package to aid Zimbabwe, Wintour, P, 3 April. Available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/03/zimbabwe.internationalaidanddevelopment> (accessed 21 April 2009).

The Star (2008), Mugabe approves indigenous ownership law, Peta, B., 10 March, 5.

The Times, (2008), Outrage over £200 m UK investment in Zimbabwe, 25 June. Available from: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article4207971.ece>

UNDP, (2008), *Comprehensive economic recovery in Zimbabwe. A discussion document*. Harare, authored by D. Doré, T. Hawkins, G. Kanyenze, D. Makina, D. Ndlela and M. Simpson.

USAID. (2007), *Zimbabwe's economic performance assessment: a benchmark study*, Washington DC: USAID.

ZCTU (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions), (2008), Meets with Tsvangirai, rejects GNU. Press Release, 29 September.
