

Reflections on Mahmood Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'

Edited by Sean Jacobs and Jacob Mundy

Table of Contents

- 1 - 2 *Introduction* — Sean Jacobs
- 3 - 13 *Lessons of Zimbabwe: Mugabe in context* — Mahmood Mamdani
- 14 *Re: 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'* — Terence Ranger
- 15 - 17 *Re: 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'* — Timothy Scarnecchia, Joceyln Alexander, *et. al.*
- 18 - 19 *Re: 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'* — Mahmood Mamdani
- 20 - 27 *Zimbabwe: Where is the Outrage? Mamdani, Mugabe and the African Scholarly Community* — Horace Campbell
- 28 - 35 *Zimbabwe Ten Years On: Results and Prospects* — Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros
- 36 - 41 *Mamdani on Zimbabwe sets back Civil Society* — Patrick Bond
- 42 - 44 *The Measure of Just Demands? A Response to Mamdani* — Amanda Hammar
- 45 - 47 *A Reply to Mamdani on the Zimbabwean Land Question* — Ben Cousins
- 48 *Some Observations on Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'* — Elaine Windrich
- 49 - 53 *Mamdani's Enthusiasms* — David Moore
- 54 - 56 *Critique of the Article by Mahmood Mamdani* — Wilfred Mhanda
- 57 - 59 *Response to the Mamdani Debate* — Brian Raftopoulos
- 60 - 63 *Further Reading on Zimbabwe*

Editor's Introduction

Sean Jacobs (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Mahmood Mamdani, a university professor of anthropology at Columbia University in New York City remains one of the pre-eminent scholars of African Studies in the West. He also remains prolific, often taking the lead in unpacking controversial debates. For example, this month he has a new book out on the Darfur crisis, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (Knopf, 2009). And few can disagree about the impact of his previous two books. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (Pantheon, 2004) certainly contributed—especially in popular media—to our understanding of the historical roots of the “War on Terror”: to the United States’ engagement in proxy wars in Southern Africa, Latin America and Afghanistan and the antecedents of “collateral damage.” A decade earlier, his *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, 1996) became a must-read in universities.

So when, in early December 2008, the *London Review of Books* (hereafter LRB) published a long essay by Mamdani on the ongoing political and economic crises (at least for a decade now) in Zimbabwe, it was inevitable that it would provoke debate. As one critic of Mamdani’s concedes in this issue, “...whatever Mamdani writes he is always brilliant and provocative.”

In his LRB essay, Mamdani writes that “... it is hard to think of a figure more reviled in the West than Robert Mugabe,” but also that a pre-occupation with Mugabe’s character “... does little to illuminate the socio-historical issues involved,” or give any sense of how the Zimbabwean leader and his party, ZANU-PF, has managed to survive.

Mamdani then goes on to argue that Mugabe has not just ruled by coercion, but also by consent. That the land issue is at the crux of the crisis and that the “... the people of Zimbabwe are likely to remember 2000-3 as the end of the settler colonial era” (this is the period of intense political violence, invasion and settlement of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe following Mugabe’s loss of referendum vote and parliamentary elections). For Mamdani the political split in Zimbabwe is largely rural-urban, respectively in support of, or opposition to, Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Furthermore, an ethnic split characterizes Mugabe supporters on the one hand against that of the alliance of the Movement for Democratic Change and the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions. Mamdani concluded his piece with a warning to neighboring South Africa:

Few doubt that this is the hour of reckoning for former settler colonies. The increasing number of land invasions in KwaZulu Natal (province in South Africa), and the violence that has accompanied them, indicate that the clock is ticking.

Not surprisingly Mamdani’s piece provoked wide response. Not only did it reflect the importance attached to his writings, but it also pointed to the passions that the Zimbabwe situation arouses.

The responses were quick and fast. For example, the distinguished Africanist Terence Ranger, of Oxford University, wrote in his letter to the LRB:

Mahmood Mamdani is correct to stress that Robert Mugabe is not just a crazed dictator or a corrupt thug but that he promotes a program and an ideology that are attractive to many in Africa and to some in Zimbabwe itself. Mamdani takes care to balance this by recognizing Mugabe’s propensity for violence. Yet this balance is hard to maintain and towards the end of his article Mamdani lets it slip.

Another early response came from 35 academics, who wrote a collective letter to the LRB. We

publish that letter in full here, as well as Mamdani's response to his critics in the LRB.

But it was not long after that the debate about the article extended beyond the pages of the LRB. Horace Campbell, author of *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation* (Africa World Press, 2003) wrote an opinion piece for *Pambazuka News*. Sam Moyo (based at the Africa Institute for Agrarian Studies) and Paris Yeros (Catholic University of Minas Gerais) wrote a piece for *Monthly Review's Zine* website. We reproduce those articles here.

A number of other academics, researchers and commentators have written commentaries on Mamdani's original LRB piece since then and are published in this issue of ACAS Bulletin too: Patrick Bond (director of the Center for Civil Society at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa), Amanda Hammar (program coordinator at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala in Sweden), Elaine Windrich (Stanford University), David Moore (University of Johannesburg) and the former Zimbabwean liberation war Senior Commander and leader in the Zimbabwe Liberation Veterans Forum, Wilfred Mhanda.

Apart from Moyo and Yeros, this issue also includes contributions from two other scholars cited by Mamdani in his original essay: Ben Cousins, director of the Program on Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa — described by Mamdani as "... one of the most astute South African analysts of agrarian change" — as well as Brian Raftopoulos, one of Zimbabwe's leading intellectuals. Raftopoulos is a former associate professor of the Institute for Development at the University of Zimbabwe and now director for Research and Policy at the Solidarity Peace Trust in South Africa.

The contributions of so many politically engaged scholars demonstrate how the debate over the Zimbabwe situation of the past nine years has never been simply an "academic" debate. At the same

time, Mamdani's contribution has helped to bring the more specific Zimbabwean debate to the attention of a wider audience.

While some may suggest that the frame of the debate has shifted since the formation of the unity government in Zimbabwe in February of 2009, it is important to fully consider how the fault lines in this debate will continue to shape domestic and international responses to the ongoing crises in Zimbabwe. How best to rebuild the economy and carry out sustainable land reforms, for example, or to locate sufficient international and regional support to end the cholera epidemic and restore much needed health services, are all questions that, in one way or another, must deal with the fundamental issues raised by the scholars included in this Bulletin.

This issue — like the last two on the crises in Zimbabwe — reflects ACAS's new focus to intervene publicly — and timely — as well as to disseminate widely key debates about contemporary African affairs, especially on-line.

A few final notes: We retained the British spelling and quotation style from the LRB and *Pambazuka*. We want to thank the editors of the *London Review of Books*, *The Monthly Review Zine*, and *Pambazuka News* for allowing us to reprint articles and letters here.

Finally, I'd like to thank Jacob Mundy, Bulletin co-editor, for layout and design of the issue, Wendy Urban-Mead and Blair Rutherford for their edits and ideas, Amanda Hammar and David Moore for coordinating and facilitating contributions to this issue from other key Zimbabwe experts, and most importantly, Timothy Scarnecchia, for collaborating on the idea for the special issue back in December, for cajoling people to write, and for coordinating collection of the articles.

Lessons of Zimbabwe: Mugabe in Context*

Mahmood Mamdani (Columbia University)

It is hard to think of a figure more reviled in the West than Robert Mugabe. Liberal and conservative commentators alike portray him as a brutal dictator, and blame him for Zimbabwe's descent into hyperinflation and poverty. The seizure of white-owned farms by his black supporters has been depicted as a form of thuggery, and as a cause of the country's declining production, as if these lands were doomed by black ownership. Sanctions have been imposed, and opposition groups funded with the explicit aim of unseating him.

There is no denying Mugabe's authoritarianism, or his willingness to tolerate and even encourage the violent behaviour of his supporters. His policies have helped lay waste the country's economy, though sanctions have played no small part, while his refusal to share power with the country's growing opposition movement, much of it based in the trade unions, has led to a bitter impasse. This view of Zimbabwe's crisis can be found everywhere, from the *Economist* and the *Financial Times* to the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, but it gives us little sense of how Mugabe has managed to survive. For he has ruled not only by coercion but by consent, and his land reform measures, however harsh, have won him considerable popularity, not just in Zimbabwe but throughout southern Africa. In any case, the preoccupation with his character does little to illuminate the socio-historical issues involved.

Many have compared Mugabe to Idi Amin and the land expropriation in Zimbabwe to the Asian expulsion in Uganda. The comparison isn't entirely

off the mark. I was one of the 70,000 people of South Asian descent booted out by Idi Amin in 1972; I returned to Uganda in 1979. My abiding recollection of my first few months back is that no one I met opposed Amin's expulsion of 'Asians'. Most merely said: 'It was bad the way he did it.' The same is likely to be said of the land transfers in Zimbabwe.

What distinguishes Mugabe and Amin from other authoritarian rulers is not their demagoguery but the fact that they projected themselves as champions of mass justice and successfully rallied those to whom justice had been denied by the colonial system. Not surprisingly, the justice dispensed by these demagogues mirrored the racialised injustice of the colonial system. In 1979 I began to realise that whatever they made of Amin's brutality, the Ugandan people experienced the Asian expulsion of 1972 — and not the formal handover in 1962 — as the dawn of true independence. The people of Zimbabwe are likely to remember 2000-3 as the end of the settler colonial era. Any assessment of contemporary Zimbabwe needs to begin with this sobering fact.

Though widespread grievance over the theft of land — a process begun in 1889 and completed in the 1950s — fuelled the guerrilla struggle against the regime of Ian Smith, whose Rhodesian Front opposed black majority rule, the matter was never properly addressed when Britain came back into the picture to effect a constitutional transition to independence under majority rule. Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe in 1980, but the social realities of the newly independent state remained embedded in an earlier historical period: some six thousand white farmers owned 15.5 million hectares of prime land, 39 per cent of the land in the country, while about 4.5 million farmers (a million households) in 'communal areas' were left to subsist on 16.4 million hectares of the most arid land, to which they'd been removed or confined by a century of colonial rule. In the middle were 8500 small-scale black farmers on about 1.4 million hectares of land.

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This was not a sustainable arrangement in a country whose independence had been secured at the end of a long armed struggle supported by a land-hungry population. But the agreement that Britain drafted at Lancaster House in 1979 — and that the settlers eagerly backed — didn't seem to take into account the kind of transition that would be necessary to secure a stable social order. Two of its provisions, one economic and the other political, reflected this short-termism: one called for land transfers on a 'willing buyer, willing seller' basis, with the British funding the scheme; the other reserved 20 per cent of seats in the House of Assembly for whites — 3 per cent of the population — giving the settler community an effective veto over any amendment to the Lancaster House terms. This was qualified majority rule at best. Both provisions had a time limit: 1990 for land transfers based on the market principle, and 1987 for the settler minority to set limits on majority rule. The deal sustained illusions among the settlers that what they had failed to achieve by UDI — Smith's 1965 declaration of independence from the UK — and force of arms, they could now achieve through support from a government of 'kith and kin' (as Smith called it) in Britain. In reality, however, the agreement drew a line under settler privilege.

The inadequacy of the Lancaster House provisions for the decolonisation of land ensured that it remained the focus of politics in independent Zimbabwe. The course of land relations and land reform in Zimbabwe has over the years been meticulously documented by Sam Moyo, a professor who directs the African Institute of Agrarian Studies in Harare. Transfers during the first decade of independence were so minimal that they increased rather than appeased land hunger. The new regime in Harare, installed in 1980 and led by Mugabe and his party, Zanu, called for the purchase of eight million hectares to resettle 162,000 land-poor farming households from communal areas. But the ban on compulsory purchase drove up land prices and encouraged white farmers to sell only the worst land. As the decade

drew to a close, only 58,000 families had been resettled on three million hectares of land. No more than 19 per cent of the land acquired between 1980 and 1992 was of prime agricultural value.

As the 1980s wore on, land transfers actually declined, dropping from 430,000 hectares per annum during the first half of the decade to 75,000 hectares during the second. The greater land hunger became, the more often invasions were mounted; in response, Mugabe created local 'squatter control' units in 1985, and they were soon evicting squatters in droves. At this point Zimbabwean law still defined a squatter in racial terms, as 'an African whose house happens to be situated in an area which has been declared European or is set apart for some other reason'. By 1990, 40 per cent of the rural population was said to be landless or affected by the landlessness of dependent relations.

When the Lancaster House Agreement's rules on land transfer expired in 1990, the pressure to take direct action was intensified by two very different developments: an IMF Structural Adjustment Programme and recurrent drought. Peasant production, which had been a meagre 8 per cent of marketed output at independence in 1980, and had shot up to 45 per cent by 1985, declined as a result of the programme. Trade-union analysts pointed out that employment growth also fell from 2.4 per cent in the late 1980s to 1.55 per cent in the period 1991-97. The percentage of households living in poverty throughout the country increased by 14 per cent in five years. There was now widespread squatting on all types of land, from communal areas to state land, commercial farms (mainly growing tobacco), resettlement areas and urban sites.

The demand for land reform came from two powerful groups at extreme ends of the social spectrum yet both firmly in Mugabe's camp: the veterans of the liberation war and the small but growing number of indigenous businesses, hitherto the main beneficiaries of independence under majority rule. At the end of the liberation war in 1980, 20,000 guerrillas had been incorporated into

the national army and other state organisations, and the rest — about 45,000 — had had to fend for themselves. They found it difficult to survive without land or a job, which is why land occupations began in the countryside soon after independence.

Mugabe and the Zanu leaders tended at first to dismiss complaints from veterans as expressions of resentment on the part of the rival liberation movement, Joshua Nkomo's Zapu, which had been marginalised in 1980. But after Zanu and Zapu signed a unity accord in 1987, former fighters from both groups became involved in land agitation. Their most significant joint initiative was to form a welfare organisation, the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) in 1988, which called for pensions to be paid and land redistributed. It soon gained a large membership drawn from most sections of Zimbabwean society and from the two ethnic groups — the Shona majority and the Ndebele — which had defined Zanu and Zapu respectively. Its members, about 200,000 of them, came from a variety of classes, employed and unemployed, urban and rural, with positions in different branches of the state and party and the private sector. Although their strength lay in the countryside, the war vets formed the only alliance that was both independent of Mugabe and Zanu-PF, and could claim to have national support, giving them a decisive advantage over the better organised but urban-based trade-union federation in the power struggle that would shortly tear the country apart.

War vets were among the first targets of Structural Adjustment, when its effects began to be felt in 1991. Entire departments and ministries that had been heavily staffed by ex-combatants were disbanded and the stage set for a series of high-profile confrontations between veterans and government. Mugabe accused the vets of being 'armchair critics' at the inaugural conference of the ZNLWVA in April 1992; they went on to organise street demonstrations, lock top government and party officials in their offices, interrupt Mugabe's

Heroes' Day speech in 1997, intervene in court sessions and besiege the State House.

After the Lancaster House Agreement had expired, the government tried to occupy the middle ground by shifting from the 'willing buyer, willing seller' formula with a new law, the Land Acquisition Act of 1992, which gave the state powers of compulsory purchase, though landowners retained the right to challenge the price set and to receive prompt compensation. By the late 1990s, market-led land transfers had dwindled to a trickle. So had British contributions to the fund set up to pay landowners, with a mere £44 million paid out between 1980 and 1992, much less than anticipated at Lancaster House. When New Labour took over in 1997, Clare Short, the minister for international development, claimed that since neither she nor her colleagues came from the landed class in Britain — 'my own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonised not colonisers,' she wrote to the Zimbabwean minister of agriculture and land — they could not be held responsible for what Britain had done in colonial Rhodesia.

This effective default coincided with a rise inside Zimbabwe of demands for compulsory acquisition. Veterans led land occupations at Svosve and Goromonzi in 1997, clashing with Mugabe and Zanu-PF. They were joined by local chiefs and party leaders, peasants and spirit mediums (who had played a key role in the liberation war against Ian Smith). The next year, a wave of co-ordinated land occupations swept across the country, with veterans receiving critical support from the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC), an affirmative action lobby set up in 1988 by members of the new black bourgeoisie. From now on, two very different elements huddled under the war vets' banner: the landless victims of settler colonialism and the elite beneficiaries of the end of settler rule.

It was largely for his own purposes, but also as a response to pressure from squatters, occupiers and their local leaders, as well as from sections of the new black elite, that in 1999 Mugabe decided to

revise the constitution drafted at Lancaster House. Two major changes were envisaged: one would allow him to stay in power for two more terms and would ensure immunity from prosecution for political and military leaders accused of committing crimes while in office; the other would empower the government to seize land from white farmers without compensation, which was held to be the responsibility of Britain. The proposals were put to a referendum in February 2000 and defeated: 45.3 per cent of voters were in favour. But only a little more than 20 per cent of the electorate had cast a vote. The urban centres of Harare and Bulawayo were three to one against adoption; voting in the countryside was marked by large-scale abstentions. Post-colonial Zimbabwe had reached a turning point.

Very early on, the colonial bureaucracy had translated the ethnic mosaic of the country into an administrative map in such a way as to allow minimum co-operation and maximum competition between different ethnic groups and areas, ensuring among other things that labour for mining, manufacture and service was not recruited from areas where peasants were needed on large farms or plantations. These areas, as it happened, were mainly Shona and so, unsurprisingly, when the trade-union movement developed in Rhodesia, its leaders were mostly Ndebele, and had few links with the Shona leadership of the peasant-based liberation movement (Mugabe belongs to the Shona majority). I remember listening to the minister of labour in Harare in 1981 complain that workers had failed to support the nationalist movement. When I suggested that it might be useful to turn the proposition around and ask why the nationalist movement had failed to organise support among workers, there was silence.

The Shona-Ndebele divide so conspicuous in the two guerrilla movements produced great tension after independence between the mainly Shona government and the mainly Ndebele labour movement, with Mugabe's ferocious repression in Ndebele areas in 1986 remaining the bloodiest

phase in post-independence Zimbabwean history. The slaughter in Matabeleland was followed by a 'reconciliation' that paved the way for a unity government in 1987, but Zanu-PF leaders thereafter suspected all protest — from whatever source — of concealing an Ndebele agenda.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, formed in 1981 with the blessing of the government, had by the end of the decade distanced itself from its Zanu patrons, purged internal corruption and elected an independent leadership. In the 1990s it spearheaded the national agitation against Structural Adjustment and the one-party state that acquiesced in it. Yet its organisation in the countryside was confined to workers on commercial farms. The ZCTU had at first been an umbrella body for private sector unions. The spectacular growth of ZCTU, its organisation of public sector workers, has been written about by two Zimbabwean social historians, Brian Raftapolous and Ian Phimister. After independence, workers in the rapidly Africanised public sector had retained close links to the government. But this began to change when the Structural Adjustment Programme led to public sector job losses and many African workers — especially veterans — were dismissed. When government workers came out on strike in 1996, the ZCTU was able to establish a base in the public sector. A general strike in 1997 and mass stay-aways the following year set the trade unions against the government. Civil servants — including teachers and health workers — who had declared allegiance to the ruling party and the state now began to affiliate to the ZCTU. In 1998, it organised a National Constituent Assembly, with the participation of civic, NGO and church groups.

By the time Mugabe put forward amendments to the Lancaster House constitution, an impressive alliance of forces — not only trade unions, churches, civic and NGO groups, but white farmers and Western governments — was arrayed for battle. The Movement for Democratic Change was formed a few months before the 2000 referendum, to campaign for a 'no' vote. The coalition was diverse,

containing, on the one hand, public sector workers trying to roll back the tide of Structural Adjustment; on the other, uncompromising free-marketeers such as Eddie Cross, the MDC secretary of economic affairs and a senior figure in the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries, who was intent on privatising almost everything, including education.

The veterans reacted to the defeat of the constitutional proposals by launching land occupations in Masvingo province. This prompted a split in the ruling party. With Mugabe out of the country, the acting president, Joseph Msika, told the police to torch the new squatter shacks. This was consistent with Zanu-PF policy: in the early days, Mugabe had been praised as a ‘conciliator’ by the international community for ensuring the security and property of those whites who remained in Zimbabwe, and evicting black squatters. Two decades later the position had changed: the support of the whites was no longer so important to Mugabe, and he was under enormous pressure from the veterans. With much to gain from casting his lot in with the rural insurgency, he returned from his trip and announced that there would be no government evictions. As land occupations spread to every province — 800 farms were occupied at the height of the protests — the split in the government and party hierarchy deepened. Inevitable tension between the executive and the judiciary undermined the rule of law; the executive sacked a number of judges, replacing them with others more sympathetic to land reform, and enacted pro-squatter legislation.

‘Fast-track’ land reform was now underway. The types of land that would be acquired compulsorily were specified by the government: unused or underutilised land, land owned by absentees or people with several farms; land above a certain area (determined by region) and land contiguous with communal areas. The white owners of around 2900 commercial farms listed for compulsory acquisition and redistribution were given 90 days to move out. Government directives specified that ‘owners of farms marked for redistribution will be

compensated for improvements made on the land, but not for the land itself, as this land was stolen from the original owners in the colonial era.’

The closing date for ‘fast-track’ land acquisition — August 2002 — came and went, but occupations continued unimpeded until mid-2003, and on a diminished scale for a year or so after that. Chiefs fought for land for their constituents and for themselves, and so did their counterparts in the state bureaucracy and the private sector. In Matabeleland, a minority of pro-MDC chiefs were sceptical of land reform, but later submitted claims. The black elite made a brazen land grab in direct contravention of the ‘one person, one farm’ policy, provoking a hue and cry in society at large and within the ruling party; the government set up a presidential commission to determine the facts. Crucially, in 2005 the government passed an amendment declaring all agricultural land to be state land. Land was seized from nearly 4000 white farmers and redistributed: 72,000 large farmers received 2.19 million hectares and 127,000 smallholders received 4.23 million hectares.

What land reform has meant or may come to mean for Zimbabwe’s economy is still hotly disputed. Recently there have been signs that scholarly opinion is shifting. A study by Ian Scoones of Sussex University’s Institute of Development Studies — in collaboration with the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape — challenges some of the conventional wisdom in media and academic circles within and beyond Zimbabwe. The problem with this wisdom is that certain highly destructive aspects of reform — coercion; corruption and incompetence; cronyism in the redistribution of land; lack of funds and an absence of agricultural activity — have come to stand for the whole process. In particular, Scoones identifies five myths: that land reform has been a total failure; that its beneficiaries have been largely political cronies; that there is no new investment in the new settlements; that agriculture is in ruins; and that the rural economy has collapsed. Researchers at

PLAAS have been quick to point out that over the past eight years small-scale farmers ‘have been particularly robust in weathering Zimbabwe’s political and economic turmoil, as well as drought’. Ben Cousins, the director of PLAAS and one of the most astute South African analysts of agrarian change — who had previously argued that the land reform would destroy agricultural production — now says that the future of Zimbabwe lies in providing small farmers with subsidies so that food security can be achieved. According to researchers at the African Institute for Agrarian Studies in Harare, new farms need to receive subsidised maize seed and fertiliser for a few seasons before achieving full production. Some might give up during this period, but not many — partly because the land tenure system doesn’t allow land sales; only land permits or leases can be acquired.

Zimbabwe has seen the greatest transfer of property in southern Africa since colonisation and it has all happened extremely rapidly. Eighty per cent of the 4000 white farmers were expropriated; most of them stayed in Zimbabwe. Redistribution revolutionised property-holding, adding more than a hundred thousand small owners to the base of the property pyramid. In social and economic — if not political — terms, this was a democratic revolution. But there was a heavy price to pay.

The first casualty was the rule of law, already tenuous by 1986. When international donors pressured the regime in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2000 by suspending aid and loans — a boycott favoured by the MDC and the unions — the government simply fixed the result in its favour. In the violence that followed, more than a hundred people died, including six white farmers and 11 black farm labourers. Some of the violence was government-sponsored and most of it state-sanctioned. The judiciary was reshaped, local institutions in rural areas narrowly politicised, and laws were passed which granted local agencies the powers necessary to crush opponents of land reform. Denouncing his adversaries in the trade unions and NGOs as servants of the old white ruling

class, Mugabe authorised the militias and state security agencies to hound down opposition, as repression and reform went hand in hand. In 2003, the leading independent newspaper, the Daily News, was shut down. While jubilant government supporters applauded the sweep of the revolution in agrarian areas, the opposition denounced the repression that accompanied it. Land reform had been ruthless, but in 2004, the violence began to abate. There was noticeably less violence surrounding the parliamentary elections of 2005.

In retrospect, it is striking how little turmoil accompanied this massive social change. The explanation lies in the participation of key rural figures in ad hoc but officially sanctioned land committees. When first introduced in 1996, these committees had mixed fortunes, some not functioning at all, others becoming instruments of this or that group of squatters. But a radical change occurred in 2000, when the committees were expanded to include centrally appointed security officials, ruling party representatives and local government personnel, as well as local veterans and traditional leaders. Charged with implementing fast-track land reform, these committees sidelined the old local administrative structures. They also had a national impact, since they reported to similarly constituted provincial committees, which in turn reported to the Ministry of Local Government. It was the infusion of veterans that gave the new semi-bureaucratic committees the edge over their wholly bureaucratic counterparts. Local committees usually comprised between 15 and 30 members. The veterans formed ‘base camps’ represented by ‘committees of seven’ which took the lead in identifying land for acquisition as well as finding prospective beneficiaries (mostly from veterans’ waiting lists and rosters in former ‘communal areas’). They also judged disputes, punished petty criminals and allocated farm equipment, seeds and so on. In a word, the committees co-ordinated everything, thus constituting new centres of power.

The second casualty of the reform was farm labourers. There were about 300,000 in all, around

half of them part-time. Fast-track reform resulted in a massive displacement of these workers, who were traditionally drawn from migrant labour. Nearly a fifth came from neighbouring states and were regarded with suspicion by peasants in communal areas; even if they'd been born locally, they were often seen as foreigners and denied citizenship rights. Migrants and women (many employed as casual labour) were the weakest links in the rural mobilisation for land reform. Many were thought to have been encouraged by landowners to vote against the government's constitutional proposals, and the anti-land-reform lobby certainly tried to organise farm workers, ostensibly to protect their jobs, but really to protect the white ownership of farms. When the workers rallied by the MDC, civil society activists and white farmers clashed with veteran-led occupiers, they came off badly. Occupiers held meetings to explain to workers what was at stake and eventually came themselves to distinguish between white farms, not only on the basis of size, proximity to communal areas, and the amount of unused land, but also on the basis of the farmer's attitudes, particularly on race and towards his workers, and whether he had participated in the counter-insurgency during the independence struggle.

Some of the 150,000 full-time farm workers threw in their lot with the occupiers, though usually not on the farms where they had been employed. About 90,000 kept their jobs on sugar and tea estates, and on new or already established tobacco and horticulture farms. About 8000 were granted land, but most were denied it on the grounds that they or their elders had come from foreign countries, though some were given citizenship. Many went from steady employment to contract or casual work; many others were forced to supplement their meagre incomes through fishing, petty trading, theft and prostitution.

The best publicised casualties of the land reform movement were the urban poor who hoped to benefit from extending land invasions to urban areas. The veterans spearheaded occupations of

urban residential land in 2000-1. Housing co-operatives and other associations followed their lead and set up 'illegal' residential or business sites. But the state feared that it would lose control over towns to the MDC if the land reform movement was allowed to spread and met these occupations with stiff repression, including Operation Restore Order/Murambatsvina, a surprise military-style intervention in 2005 in which tens of thousands of families were evicted. Not surprisingly, those who opposed land reform in rural areas were the strongest critics of government efforts to stifle occupations in urban areas.

The final casualty was food production: Zimbabwe, once a food surplus country, is today deficient in both foreign exchange and food. In 2002-3, half the population depended on food aid: this was a drought year and the figures improved in 2004-5. The UN now estimates that nearly half the country's 13.3 million inhabitants will once again be dependent on food aid in 2009, after another drought year. A million of these are poor, urban residents who can't afford imported food. The rest are peasants, most of them hit by drought. Climate change is clearly a factor here, its role most obvious in marginal land: the communal areas worked by millions of small farmers. A 2002 World Food Programme study noted that there had been three droughts in Zimbabwe since 1982 and that the 2002 drought, which also affected several neighbouring countries in Southern Africa, was the worst in 20 years. The WFP estimated that 12.8 million people in the region would require assistance as a result of that drought and that in Zimbabwe alone, overall production would decline by 25 per cent, with cereal production down 57 per cent and maize, the staple in the diet of ordinary Zimbabweans, down by a devastating two-thirds.

To separate out the effect of drought and that of reform — and thus to understand how land reform has hit production — one needs first to distinguish between three groups of agricultural producer: local white farmers, who were the target of the land reform; peasants with farms in communal areas; and

foreign corporations, whose large farms (except for small tracts of unused land) remain intact. Harry Oppenheimer, for example, lost most of his private land, but his firm, Anglo American, kept its sugar estates, which it then sold to Tongaat Hulett, a South African firm with 15,000 hectares in Zimbabwe. In a nutshell, white commercial farmers focused on export crops, whereas communal farmers were the major source of food security. The production of tobacco, hitherto the main source of foreign exchange, is concentrated in large-scale commercial farms; it has seen the most severe decline, almost entirely as a result of land reform. Maize and cotton are peasant crops and have not really been directly affected by land reform, but have suffered badly from prolonged drought — maize production was down by 90 per cent between 2000 and 2003. In contrast, the production of crops — sugar, tea, coffee — grown mainly by the large corporate plantations has remained steady.

Besides drought and reform, there is a third cause of declining production: the targeted donor boycott. Zimbabwe has been the target of Western sanctions twice in the last 50 years: once after UDI in 1965 (very ‘soft’ sanctions, which did not stop the country becoming the second most industrialised in sub-Saharan Africa by the mid-1970s) and again after Zimbabwe’s entry into the Congo war in August 1998. Zimbabwe’s involvement in the war was not well received in the West. Participants in the donor conference for Zimbabwe that year were decidedly lukewarm about committing funds. Britain announced a review of arms sales to Zimbabwe and, after the conference, again disclaimed any responsibility for funding land reform. The following year the IMF suspended lending to Zimbabwe, while the US and the UK decided to fund the labour movement, led by the ZCTU, first to oppose constitutional change and then to launch the MDC as a full-fledged opposition party. Its enemies have claimed that, by the late 1990s, the ZCTU was dependent on foreign sources for two-thirds of its income. Once ‘fast-track’ land reform began in 2000, the Western donor community shut the door on Zimbabwe.

The sanctions regime, led by the US and Britain, was elaborate, tested during the first Iraq war and then against Iran. In 2001 Jesse Helms, previously a supporter of UDI, sponsored the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery bill (another sponsor was Hillary Clinton) and it became law in December that year. Part of the act was a formal injunction on US officials in international financial institutions to ‘oppose and vote against any extension by the respective institution of any loan, credit or guarantee to the government of Zimbabwe’. In autumn 2001 the IMF had declared Zimbabwe ‘ineligible to use the general resources of the IMF’ and removed it from the list of countries that could borrow from its Poverty and Growth Facility. In 2002, it issued a formal declaration of non-co-operation with Zimbabwe and suspended all technical assistance. The US legislation also authorised Bush to fund ‘an independent and free press and electronic media in Zimbabwe’ and to allocate six million dollars for ‘democracy and governance programmes’. This was fighting talk, Cold War vintage. The normative language of sanctions focuses less on the issues that prompted them in the first place — Zimbabwe’s intervention in the Congo war and the introduction of fast-track reform — than on the need for ‘good governance’. In citing the absence of this as a reason for its imposition of sanctions in 2002, the EU violated Article 98 of the Cotonou Agreement, which requires that disputes between African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and the EU be resolved by the joint EU-ACP Council of Ministers.

Clearly, the old paradigm of sanctions — isolation — has given way to a more interventionist model, which combines punishment of the regime with subsidies for the opposition. So-called ‘smart’ sanctions are intended to target the government and its key supporters. In 2002, the US, Britain and the EU began freezing the assets of state officials and imposing travel bans. Only four days after the EU imposed sanctions, the US expanded the list of targeted individuals to include prominent

businessmen and even church leaders, such as the pro-regime Anglican bishop, Nolbert Kunonga.

Nonetheless, sanctions mainly affect the lives of ordinary people. Gideon Gono, governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, wrote recently that the country's foreign exchange reserves had declined from \$830 million, representing three months' import cover in 1996, to less than one month's cover by 2006. Total foreign payments arrears increased from \$109 million at the end of 1999 to \$2.5 billion at the end of 2006. Foreign direct investment had shrunk from \$444.3 million in 1998 to \$50 million in 2006. Donor support, even to sectors vital to popular welfare, such as health and education, was at an all-time low. Danish support for the health sector, \$29.7 million in 2000, was suspended. Swedish support for education was also suspended. The US issued travel warnings, blocked food aid during the heyday of land reform and opposed Zimbabwe's application to the Global Fund to Fight Aids — the country has the fourth highest infection rate in the world. Though it was renewed in 2005, the Zimbabwe grant is meagre. Agriculture has been affected too: scale matters, but no one disputes that subsidies are vital for agriculture to be sustainable, and sanctions have made it more difficult to put a proper credit regime in place.

Despite the EU's imposition of sanctions in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2002, Mugabe polled 56.2 per cent of the vote against Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC's 42 per cent. There were widespread allegations of Zanu-PF violence and last-minute gerrymandering, with polling stations in urban areas — Tsvangirai's electoral base — closing early and extra stations being set up in rural areas, where Mugabe's support was assured. Nonetheless, it was clear that support for Zanu-PF was higher than in the pre-fast-track elections of 2000. Bush and Blair refused to recognise the outcome, but Namibia, Nigeria and the South African observer team, which had monitored the elections, concluded that the result was legitimate. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Africans could

do little in the face of mounting Western pressure, from Britain especially: a three-member panel of Commonwealth countries — Australia, Nigeria and South Africa — was convened to consider the question of Zimbabwe. There were reports of intense pressure from Tony Blair on Thabo Mbeki. The panel suspended Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for a year. Zimbabwe withdrew from the organisation.

The experience of land reform in Zimbabwe has set alarm bells ringing in South Africa and all the former settler colonies where land shortage is still an issue. In South Africa especially, the upheaval and bitterness felt in Zimbabwe seems to suggest that the 'Malaysian path' to peaceful redistribution and development is not inevitable. An anxious South Africa and less powerful members of the Southern Africa Development Community tend to feel that sanctions, along with other destabilising policies pursued by the West against Zimbabwe, have only made matters worse. SADC states have long tried to reconcile the need to resist Western influence with the fact that they serve as a bridge between Africa and the wealthy Western economies, but South Africa's non-confrontational policy vis-à-vis Mugabe — which Mbeki pursued despite mounting criticism from the ANC and the unions in South Africa — along with its provision of fuel and electricity to its northern neighbour, set it at odds with Western governments. South Africa and the SADC states describe their approach as one of 'non-interference', 'stabilisation' and 'quiet diplomacy', but the West sees it as a deliberate effort to undermine sanctions, and critics in South Africa — most recently Mandela — have found the Mbeki line much too conciliatory.

In 2007, SADC called for an end to sanctions against Zimbabwe and international support for a post-land-reform recovery programme, but earlier this year Western countries brought their influence to bear on key SADC members — Botswana and Zambia — to split the organisation. Ian Khama, the president of Botswana, went so far as to announce publicly that he would not recognise the results of

the 2008 elections. The pressure on SADC came not only from Western countries, but from trade-union movements in the region, in particular Cosatu of South Africa, which has strong links with the ZCTU. Here is another striking aspect of the current Zimbabwe crisis: it is not just Western and pro-Western governments that have joined the sanctions regime, but many activists and intellectuals, for the most part progressives, have aligned themselves with distant or long-standing enemies in an effort to dislodge an authoritarian government clinging to power on the basis of historic grievances about the colonial theft of land. Symbolic of this was the refusal by Cosatu-affiliated unions to unload a cargo of Chinese arms destined for Zimbabwe when the *An Yue Jiang* sailed into Durban in April.

The arguments, which are not new, turn on questions of nationalism and democracy, pitting champions of national sovereignty and state nationalism against advocates of civil society and internationalism. One group accuses the other of authoritarianism and self-righteous intolerance; it replies that its critics are wallowing in donor largesse. Nationalists speak of a historical racism that has merely migrated from government to civil society with the end of colonial rule, while civil society activists speak of an 'exhausted' nationalism, determined to feed on old injustices. This fierce disagreement is symptomatic of the deep divide between urban and rural Zimbabwe. Nationalists have been able to withstand civil society-based opposition, reinforced by Western sanctions, because they are supported by large numbers of peasants. The tussle between these groups has even greater poignancy in former settler colonies than it had a generation earlier in former colonies north of the Limpopo, for the simple reason that the central legacy of settler colonialism — the land question — remained unresolved and explosive after independence. Southern African leaders have tried, with some success, to put out the fires in Zimbabwe before they spread beyond its borders. It is worth noting that the agreement between Zanu-PF and the MDC signed in September and brokered by Mbeki accepts land

redistribution as irreversible and registers disagreement only over how it was carried out; it also holds Britain responsible for compensating white farmers. In the wake of Mbeki's resignation as president of South Africa it is vital that this agreement remains in place. Few doubt that this is the hour of reckoning for former settler colonies. The increasing number of land invasions in KwaZulu Natal, and the violence that has accompanied them, indicate that the clock is ticking.

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Re: Lessons of Zimbabwe*

Terence Ranger (Oxford University)

Mahmood Mamdani is correct to stress that Robert Mugabe is not just a crazed dictator or a corrupt thug but that he promotes a programme and an ideology that are attractive to many in Africa and to some in Zimbabwe itself. Mamdani takes care to balance this by recognising Mugabe's propensity for violence. Yet this balance is hard to maintain and towards the end of his article Mamdani lets it slip.

'Western countries,' he writes, 'brought their influence to bear on key Southern African Development Community (SADC) members — Botswana and Zambia — to split the organisation. Ian Khama, the president of Botswana, went so far as to announce publicly that he would not recognise the results of the 2008 elections.' But Khama needed no Western influence to realise that the June presidential rerun in Zimbabwe was illegitimate. Every African observer mission — Botswana's own, the Pan-African Parliament's, SADC's — pronounced that Mugabe's victory was vitiated by the violence that went on right up until the polls, which the observers saw with their own eyes, and of which some of them were the victims. The problem is rather to explain why so many SADC states have continued to accept Mugabe as the legitimate president despite the first-hand reports of their own emissaries.

This isn't a minor flaw in Mamdani's article since it bears on his principal analytical point. He stresses the opposition between urban workers and rural peasants, the latter supporting Mugabe because of land restitution. Yet the violence between March and June this year took place overwhelmingly in the rural areas. It would not have been necessary had

the peasantry of Mashonaland and Manicaland solidly supported the regime. The March election showed that they did not, despite land redistribution. The regime lost virtually all the Manicaland seats and there were solid votes for the opposition even in Mashonaland constituencies which Zanu-PF had previously taken for granted. Indeed it was in such constituencies that the violence was concentrated.

Zimbabwean peasants confront hunger, disease, repression; they have no inputs of seeds, fertiliser and draught power. The redistribution of land has been conducted in a way that makes a mockery of the potentials of peasant production. Mugabe's policy may be an inspiration to those in South Africa who want to redress gross inequalities in landholding. But it should also be a warning of how not to go about it.

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Re: Lessons of Zimbabwe*

Timothy Scarnecchia (Kent State University)

Jocelyn Alexander (Oxford University)

And 33 others

For a number of scholars, Mahmood Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe' requires a further response, given Mamdani's stature as a scholar and public intellectual. Some aspects of his argument are uncontroversial: there was a real demand for land redistribution — even the World Bank was calling for it in the late 1990s as the best way forward in Zimbabwe — and some of the Western powers' original pronouncements and actions were hypocritical. There is a real danger, however, in simplifying the lessons of Zimbabwe. It isn't just a matter of stark ethnic dichotomies, the urban-rural divide, or the part played by 'the West'.

One of the more difficult tasks for scholars working on Zimbabwe is to convince peers working on other areas of Africa to look more deeply at the crisis and not to be fooled by Mugabe's rhetoric of imperialist victimisation. Mamdani has, unfortunately, fallen in with this rhetoric by characterising Zimbabwean history and politics as fundamentally a battle between what he sees as an urban-based opposition, supported by the West, and a peasant-based ruling party besieged by external forces. This flight of fantasy portrays Mugabe and his Zanu-PF cronies as heroes of a landless peasantry (which is how they see themselves) and the state — backed up by the paramilitary violence of war veterans and others — as the vanguard of a peasant revolution. We suggest that Mamdani acquaint himself with the large body of Zimbabwean scholarship, which is easily available, rather than selectively using the arguments of scholars such as Sam Moyo and Paris

Yeros on land reform, and Gideon Gono, Mugabe's Reserve Bank governor, as his source on sanctions. Citing Gono is rather like using Milton Obote's writings as a source for conditions in Uganda in the 1960s and 1970s. A starting point for more informed scholarship is the recent Bulletin* of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars.

Mamdani's portrayal of Zimbabwe's opposition politics is insulting to those who continue to endure so much in their struggle to build a better Zimbabwe. He argues that urban trade unions have always been marginal to the nationalist movement because of their supposed 'Ndebele leadership', and that the current opposition follows in this 'weak' trade-union tradition as well as being in thrall to Western interests. What he doesn't mention is the trade unions' hard-fought battle against repression before and after 1980. There were many challenges to overcome, among which ethnic politics was hardly the most prominent. That leaders such as Morgan Tsvangirai managed to reshape the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) from what had been a pro-Zanu organisation into a viable political opposition by the early 1990s reflects an Africa-wide and Africa-based phenomenon that Mamdani apparently missed. By accepting Zanu-PF's argument that the MDC is primarily limited to urban areas and is the product of the West, Mamdani's account loses credibility.

Mamdani has also sugar-coated his portrayal of political violence in Zimbabwe. He fails even to mention that many 'peasants' in Shona-speaking Zanu-PF strongholds turned against Mugabe and major Zanu-PF leaders in the March 2008 elections. It was this reversal that sparked a new round of state-sponsored violence against the same Shona peasantry that Mamdani cites as the beneficiaries of Mugabe's benevolent dictatorship. In addition, during the months preceding the run-off election (April-June 2008), food relief was denied to rural areas, leaving the World Food Programme and other groups to scramble to re-establish supply to the Zimbabwean peasantry Mamdani suggests are at the

* This letter originally appeared in the *London Review of Books* 31, n.1 (December 1, 2009) in response to Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'. It is republished here with the kind permission of the LRB editors.

* <http://concernedafricascholars.org/?p=123>

centre of Zanu-PF's concern. Repressive legislation and actions by Zanu-PF activists are magically transformed by Mamdani into acts of generosity to outsiders. After noting discrimination against farm workers in gaining access to land on the grounds they or 'their elders' came from another country, Mamdani adds that 'some were given citizenship.' Yet he omits the fact that just before the 2002 presidential election the Zanu-PF government removed citizenship from many farm workers and other Zimbabweans whose parents or grandparents had non-Zimbabwean citizenship rights. The disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of perceived opposition supporters disappears in Mamdani's analysis.

Mamdani's contention that the West, not Mugabe and the Zanu-PF government, is responsible for the current crisis is as dangerous as it is wrong. By selectively citing instances over the past eight years when the West has cancelled donor funding, Mamdani gives the impression that the West has not been involved in sustaining life in Zimbabwe. The reality is that there are whole sections of the Zimbabwean population that the Zanu-PF leadership would rather punish with starvation than allow to support the opposition. 'We would be better off with only six million people, with our own [ruling party] people who supported the liberation struggle,' Didymus Mutasa, one of the key insiders in Zanu-PF, said in 2002, when drought again threatened to kill thousands of rural Zimbabweans. 'We don't want all these extra people.' Western food aid has been a lifeline for 'these extra people' — when the state has allowed access.

Sanctions cannot excuse the callous disregard for human life Mugabe and his associates have shown, dating back to the Gukurahundi between 1983 and 1986 (which Mamdani glosses over as a brief bout of violence following from the tension between Zanu-PF and the 'Ndebele unions' in 1986), or the repeated land seizures which have been going on since the 1980s, the forced removals, violent reprisals, and the withholding of food aid.

Furthermore, Mamdani's suggestion that the fall in direct investment in Zimbabwe is the result of sanctions is dishonest. There are no sanctions against direct investment in Zimbabwe, as shown by Anglo American's willingness to invest \$400 million in Zimbabwe during the summer of 2008 to protect access to platinum mines. There have been large investments from South Africa, India and China, as Mugabe has bartered away the nation's resources for short-term interests. It is the kleptocracy and violence fostered by Mugabe and Co that has scared off other investors, not sanctions.

At a time when thousands of people in Zimbabwe are threatened by a cholera epidemic — in part at least as a consequence of Zanu-PF's decision to replace MDC municipal officials with Zanu-PF 'urban governors' — and international donors are scrambling to help deal with the collapse of the health sector and widespread hunger, intellectuals such as Mamdani should display more responsibility and less posturing in their attempts to draw meaningful lessons from Zimbabwe.

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Re: Lessons of Zimbabwe*

Mahmood Mamdani (Columbia University)

Returns in the 2008 election suggest that Zimbabwe is a deeply divided society. This is so whether you go by the official count or that of the government. I have argued that this split has three fault lines: urban-rural, ethnic and class. R.W. Johnson ([*London Review of Books*] Letters, 18 December 2008) and Timothy Scarnecchia et al [see this issue] disagree, but they have not offered a satisfactory alternative explanation. Instead, they suggest, apparently in unison, that the splits in Zimbabwean society are a result of the machinations of those in power — ‘Mugabe and his cronies’ — who wish to hang on to it at all costs.

In a utopian variation on this argument, Gavin Kitching gives a blueprint of policies that ‘should have been’ followed: he assumes that the will of rulers translates into policies, with no intervening factors, internal or external, historical or contemporary, acting as checks and constraints. Terence Ranger [see this issue] concludes that whereas ‘Mugabe’s policy may be an inspiration to those in South Africa who want to redress gross inequalities in landholding . . . it should also be a warning of how not to go about it.’ This is the same verdict I heard in Kampala in 1980 on Amin’s expulsion of Ugandan Asians: he should not have done it this way! My object is not to propose the ‘fast-track reforms’ as a model of land redistribution for South Africa, but to sound a warning about the kind of demagoguery that is likely to follow, should those in power continue to ignore historically just demands.

I do not question that Mugabe and Co desire to hang on to power — at considerable cost — but I do argue that this single fact cannot explain their ability to do so. Nor can fear or intimidation by

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itself explain why so many who have no power — almost half the Zimbabwean electorate — would vote for the regime. This is not just a split between state and society, as critics of my article suggest, but a case of a society itself being deeply divided.

In my article I identified two divisive issues in particular. The primary issue, in a predominantly rural society just emerging from the settler colonial era, was the land question. The second — whose importance is bound to grow in the aftermath of land redistribution — is the freedom to organise independently of the regime.

The government responded to the exercise of that freedom with a mixture of repression and incorporation. Critics of my article focus only on the former. Repression — especially of trade unions and civil society organisations — has been very marked in the urban areas. A far more nuanced relationship developed between the regime and the war veterans’ organisation, partly because of its historical links to the liberation struggle, and partly because it straddled the two major divisions, between state and society and urban and rural.

The explanation for the fast-track reforms of 2000-3 does not lie in the machinations of government, as these letters suggest, but in the success of the veterans’ mobilisation. The regime’s response evolved as the organisation grew: as I explain in the article, the same government that was initially showered with plaudits for using force to evict squatters was later condemned for using force to redistribute land. I do not believe the official embrace and co-option of the veterans’ organisation can be explained as a conspiracy; the debate on how to respond culminated in a split at the highest levels of power.

Scarnecchia et al dismiss the destructive impact of Western countries, both as drivers of sanctions and as powerful opponents of any regional effort to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis. Let me recall that the sanctions predated fast-track reforms: they were a response to Zimbabwe’s involvement in the

Congo war. As early as November 2001, Jack Straw as foreign secretary publicly boasted of building coalitions against Zimbabwe. There were reports of British threats to withhold budgetary support — some claimed even food aid — from Malawi and Mozambique as the Extraordinary Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) opened in Blantyre, Malawi on 14 January 2002. During the summit, the Tanzanian president, Benjamin Mkapa, said Baroness Amos, who was then parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs, had urged him in a phone call not to support Zimbabwe; when that failed, he said, Straw phoned and attempted to bully him. In 2007, the SADC called for an end to sanctions and for international support for a post-land reform recovery programme. In 2008, Western countries managed to bring their influence to bear on key SADC members — Botswana and Zambia — to split the SADC.

I am not suggesting that there is a single explanation of Zimbabwe's rapidly accelerating economic crisis: the causes of the crisis are complex and multiple. My critics seem to think that the economic crisis is explained either by the regime's repression and incompetence or by the draconian sanctions set in place by the West. The fact is that neither one nor the other on its own, but both — and other factors, including recurring drought — underlie the crisis.

My disagreement with Johnson, Scarnecchia et al is both political and methodological. They seem to imagine only two options: either to romanticise Mugabe as a liberation hero or to demonise him as a post-liberation despot. I have suggested that these caricatures overlap for one reason: the liberation struggle against settler colonialism did not end with the guerrilla war and political independence in 1980, but continued through the fast-track reforms. In any case, the regime that championed land reform is the same regime that unleashes repression against anyone who dares to organise independently of it. Scarnecchia et al cannot fail to see this, but apparently they refuse to accept it; whence their insistence on an either/or conclusion, and their

tendency to scour all scholarship for a hidden agenda: is the author for or against Mugabe? Actually, that is beside the point.

Focused on Mugabe and eager to defend the opposition, they seek to portray my article as a piece of pro-regime writing, whereas it aims to free the debate about Zimbabwe from the narrow confines of a regime-opposition polemic by understanding Mugabe's survival as part of a far bigger picture: that of land reform and the historic struggles which underpin it — struggles that Mugabe and Zanu-PF championed in the liberation era, opposed during the period of structural adjustment and 'reconciliation', and turned to their advantage when faced with an effective opposition.

Zimbabwe: Where is the Outrage? Mamdani, Mugabe and the African Scholarly Community*

Horace Campbell (Syracuse University)

Concerned scholars should revitalise their opposition to Zimbabwe's Mugabe regime, writes Horace Campbell. While being against any form of opportunistic, external intervention in the country, Campbell argues that scholars must come to offer an effective challenge to ZANU-PF's persistent retreat into spurious anti-imperialist discourse. Heavily critical of writers like Mahmood Mamdani for echoing ZANU-PF's claims around the effects of economic sanctions levied against Zimbabwe, Campbell argues that blocking international payments would prove a far more efficacious means of tackling Mugabe's misappropriation of funds.

It was most apt that on the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights a group of 200 scholars at the 12th congress of CODESRIA expressed their concern over the threats of military intervention in Zimbabwe. The scholars pointed to the detrimental effects of military intervention, noting that:

'Military interventions exacerbate political and socio-economic crises and internal differences with profoundly detrimental and destructive regional implications. We recognize that threats of military intervention come from imperialist powers, and also through their African proxies.'

These scholars were signaling their opposition to the vocal calls for the removal of Robert Mugabe by

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the Secretary of State of the United States and by the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Kenya, Raila Odinga, had earlier raised the call for the removal of Robert Mugabe by the force of arms.

This scholar joins with African people everywhere who welcome the alertness of our colleagues against foreign military intervention. I also welcome their concern for the appalling situation in Zimbabwe.

It is important that the Mugabe government and the spokespersons for ZANU-PF do not consider the statement by scholars as an endorsement for the appalling tragedy that has befallen the Zimbabwean poor and exploited. After all, these CODESRIA scholars termed what is happening in Zimbabwe 'a nightmare'.

This was in the same week that President Mugabe argued that the imperialists were planning a military invasion and that the cholera outbreak had been based on biological warfare against Zimbabwe. The Minister of Information went further and in a statement in the Herald newspaper the minister claimed:

'The cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe is a serious biological chemical war force, a genocidal onslaught on the people of Zimbabwe by the British. Cholera is a calculated racist terrorist attack on Zimbabwe by the unrepentant former colonial power which has enlisted support from its American and Western allies so that they invade the country.'

This claim by Dr Sikhanyiso Ndlovu was an insult to the intelligence of humans everywhere in so far as cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by unsanitary conditions. The key to prevention of the disease is simple: clean water.

It is because of the simple nature of the cure that the response of the Zimbabwe government to the death of more than 1,000 persons is one more callous

response to the exploitation and brutal oppression of the Zimbabwean working peoples. Biological warfare is a serious matter not to be used for games of crying 'wolf'. One world figure is already leaving the stage with the record of this kind of crying wolf in Iraq.

While this writer will oppose any form of external military intervention by imperialists, it is important that concerned and progressive scholars oppose the crude anti-imperialism of the Zimbabwean political leadership under Mugabe. This writer awaits equal concern from my colleagues over the gender violence, repression of trade union leaders, wanton destruction of lives by the Mugabe government and the brutal repression of ordinary citizens.

At the same time that the statement of concern was being signed human rights activists were calling on the Zimbabwean government to account for the whereabouts of Jestina Mukoko, director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP). Mukoko is only one of the more than 20 known human rights activists who have disappeared in the past six weeks. Mukoko's 15 year-old child saw his mother being abducted from their home.

We must raise our collective voices against such kidnapping and abduction while opposing any imperialist plans for a military invasion of Zimbabwe. One question that immediately came to mind after reading the CODESRIA statement was whether our colleagues have become blind to the suffering of ordinary people in their struggle against the latest and more complex phase of imperialism in Africa.

Mugabe and the exploitation of anti-racist and anti-imperialist sentiments

The Zimbabwe government is very aware of the anti-imperialist and anti-racist sentiments among oppressed peoples and thus has deployed a range of propagandists inside and outside of the country in a bid to link every problem in Zimbabwe to international sanctions by the EU and USA. Anti-

imperialists in the USA cite the Zimbabwe Reconstruction and Development Act – passed by the US Congress in 2001 – as being a source of economic woe for poor Zimbabweans. While the scholars at the congress of CODESRIA hardly resorted to the same kind of praise for Mugabe as their counterparts writing in the special issue of *Black Scholar*, there is not enough evidence that there was sufficient attention paid to the gross violation of basic rights. If this debate did occur at the CODESRIA congress it was not reflected in the statement.

One of the key entrepreneurs of the Zimbabwe regime, John Bredenkamp, commands considerable experience in manipulating the question of sanctions for the enrichment of those in power, both in the time of Rhodesia and now Zimbabwe. Bredenkamp started on his way to fortune by breaking sanctions for Ian Smith. Bredenkamp has been involved in the politics and economics of looting southern Africa and is one of the key props of the ZANU-PF regime. His plundering activities also tie him to the political and financial leaders in South Africa who are being probed by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) in relation to the £100 million in bribes to ensure the sale of weapons to the South African government. This author is calling on members of the CODESRIA network to reveal their research findings on John Bredenkamp, Muller Conrad Rautenbach (a.k.a. Billy Rautenbach) and to recommend the arrest and charge of those involved in looting Zimbabwe and southern Africa. Both Bredenkamp and Billy Rautenbach (of the white settler forces) featured in the orgy of looting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and established long term business relationships with ZANU-PF's leaders. John Bredenkamp had matured in the art of manipulation while aligned with Ian Smith. He exulted in this dual service to imperialism and to African nationalists with the leadership of ZANU-PF, and his expertise has been placed at the service of the crude accumulators within the South Africa's ANC.

Instead of oversimplifying imperialist threats in Zimbabwe, those who want to see the demilitarisation of Africa must aggressively support the exposure of the arms deals that have linked Bredenkamp and Fana Hlongwane across the politics of repression in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The British arms manufacturer British Aerospace (BAe) has been involved with Bredenkamp and Hlongwane in Africa, along with corrupt elements in the Middle East. There have been calls for BAe to be prosecuted under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) of the USA. Such an investigation would have potentially seismic consequences for military contractors and arms manufacturers and would provide another means of opposing Western militarism in Africa.

Blaming Zimbabwe's problem on Zidera

The convergence of fraud, corruption and cover-ups in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Britain render simplistic conceptions of imperialism less than useful for those who want to see peaceful change in Zimbabwe. The Mugabe government blames all of its problems on the economic war launched by the USA and Britain. For the Mugabe regime, at the core of this economic war are the targeted sanctions against Mugabe's top lieutenants under its Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA), passed by the Bush administration in 2001.

What has been clear from the hundreds of millions of dollars of investments by British, Chinese, Malaysian, South African and other capitalists in the Zimbabwe economy since 2003 is that the problems in Zimbabwe have not been caused by an economic war against the country. Even when facing pressure from the British government, Anglo-American indicated its willingness in 2008 to invest an additional US\$400 million to continue its control of platinum mines in Zimbabwe. What has been most remarkable has been the ways in which the dictatorship in Zimbabwe has destroyed the rights of workers in the mining sector in order to facilitate and welcome foreign capitalists in the

diamond and mining sectors. Whole villages are being laid to waste in order to support and welcome external diamond mining interests.

If human rights activists and committed scholars were to expose the linkages between ZANU-PF arms dealers John Bredenkamp and Fana Hlongwane along with the wider linkages to international capital, then it would be clear that it is quite an oversimplification to argue that ZIDERA is at the centre of Zimbabwe's problems. Bredenkamp had been schooled from the Smith era to blame everything on sanctions while beating the sanctions with the help of apartheid South Africa. In the present period Bredenkamp is an ally of the ANC, ZANU-PF and British imperialist arms manufacturers like BAe all at the same time. It is also important for African scholars to join the call to the South African President Kgalema Motlanthe for an arms deal judicial commission, in order to bring to the attention of the wider public the dealings of individuals such as Fana Hlongwane.

Scholars, while alerting the world against foreign military invasion, must examine the conduct of the Zimbabwe military and especially those ordering Mugabe to remain in supreme control.

It is in the interest of concerned scholars everywhere to understand the conditions of farm labourers and mine workers in Zimbabwe. What was not expected was for Professor Mahmood Mamdani to use his scholarly knowledge to repeat ZANU-PF's sham argument that economic sanctions have aggravated the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. While the nationalists have been crude in their fawning over the 'revolutionary' credentials of Robert Mugabe, Mahmood Mamdani used his considerable international reputation to line up support for the Mugabe regime in a lengthy review published in the *London Review of Books*.

Is there a democratic revolution going on in Zimbabwe?

From the outset Mamdani located himself as a victim of forced expulsion, identifying the forced expulsion of the Asians in Uganda with the expropriation of the white settler farmers in Zimbabwe. In the process, Mamdani compared Robert Mugabe to Idi Amin of Uganda. Mamdani went on to explain the popularity of Amin's economic war against Asians and used the word 'popularity' in his characterisation of the current ZANU-PF leadership. Very few would doubt the 'popularity' of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa in the period of the anti-colonial struggles, but in the past fifteen years Mugabe has turned the victories of the people into a never ending nightmare of murders, killings, forced removal and brutal oppression. Idi Amin remains popular in West Africa, just as Mugabe is popular in West Africa and other parts of the world where there is not a full understanding of the real tragedy of what is going on in Zimbabwe. Idi Amin, like Robert Mugabe, is popular outside of his own country for the wrong reasons.

Mahmood Mamdani as a Ugandan is very aware of the extent to which the British government supported elements within the Amin dictatorship while using the British media to revile Africans in general, and Idi Amin in particular. Amin (who was promoted by the British and the Israelis in the military coup of January 1971) was useful as a propaganda tool for imperialism. As a scholar who has written extensively on Uganda and on the politics of fascism, Mahmood Mamdani is very aware of the role that Bob Astles played as an agent of US and British imperialism in eastern Africa. Bob Astles (ally and confidant of Idi Amin from 1966 to 1979) had been implicated in the scandals involving looted gold from the Congo in the 1960s and survived with Amin as a key confidant, until he left for Britain when it became clear that the Tanzanian military invasion of Uganda would succeed. Mahmood Mamdani had returned to Uganda in 1979 in the military train of the

Tanzanian military and political forces. This was a case where Mamdani recognised that it required regional African intervention to rid Africa of the manipulation of the British and the brutal genocidal politics of Idi Amin.

Contrary to his research on the Ugandan dictatorship, Mamdani's research skills seem underused while elaborating on the 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'. Professor Mamdani has maintained that, 'In social and economic – if not political – terms, this was a democratic revolution. But there was a heavy price to pay.'

This line of the 'democratic revolution' emanated from the Newtonian concepts of hierarchy that had been internalised by some who have called themselves Marxists. During the period of the Soviet Union, this discourse was used to support so-called revolutionaries such as Mengistu, the butcher of Ethiopia. Is it by chance that Mengistu has found his refuge in Zimbabwe?

Under this 'democratic revolutionary stage', African capitalists had to accumulate so that there would be a maturation of capitalism in Africa. Walter Rodney refuted this 'stages' theory in his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. In that study Rodney established the reality that there was a link between the development of capitalism in Europe and the forms of plunder, looting and genocide in Africa. Capitalism in Africa had been implanted in a very different form, and all over the continent those who supported capitalism have used the formulation of the 'democratic revolution' to support black capitalists. This is nowhere more evident than in South Africa, where the communist party, as one component of the tripartite alliance, has used this formulation to silence itself in the face of the crudest and fastest rate of accumulation by a fledgling capitalist class in recent history.

In his elaboration of 'the heavy price to pay' for this democratic revolution in Zimbabwe, Mamdani noted the impact on: (a) 'the rule of law'; (b) Farm

labourers; (c) The urban poor; and d) Food production.

What was most contradictory about Mamdani's line of argument is that while he recognises the impact of the policies of the Mugabe government on the urban poor and farm workers, he expends a great deal of his analysis on a critique of the absence of donor support for the people of Zimbabwe. Before the era of neoliberalism and the pseudo-humanitarianism of the so-called international non-governmental structure, these donors would have been called imperialists and there would have been a call for the government of Zimbabwe to use its resources to provide clean water, sanitation and healthcare for its people. Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF have selectively implemented a home grown neoliberal agenda to enrich one of the crudest of the capitalist classes in Africa while depending on international imperialist agencies to provide social services for the people. Mamdani overlooks the fact that the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange has been posting the most profitable gains under the Mugabe regime.

Mamdani is wrong.

While the discussion about whether Zimbabwe is going through a 'democratic' revolution can be debated, Mamdani is wrong on numerous grounds. As a scholar who has written on genocide, it is curious why he left out the close relationship between the leaders of the Interahamwe and the Zimbabwean military in the DRC. Mugabe's military trained those had committed genocide in Rwanda to fight for Laurent Kabila. He is simply wrong to use tribal formulations to describe the sharp class divide in Zimbabwe. It is here that the consistency of the donor language corresponds to the language of ethnic divisions in Zimbabwe. In describing the manipulation of Mugabe, Mamdani noted:

'Very early on, the colonial bureaucracy had translated the ethnic mosaic of the country into an administrative map in such a way as to allow

minimum co-operation and maximum competition between different ethnic groups and areas, ensuring among other things that labour for mining, manufacture and service was not recruited from areas where peasants were needed on large farms or plantations. These areas, as it happened, were mainly Shona and so, unsurprisingly, when the trade-union movement developed in Rhodesia, its leaders were mostly Ndebele, and had few links with the Shona leadership of the peasant-based liberation movement (Mugabe belongs to the Shona majority).'

What is this language of Shona majority? Is this not the old tribal discourse of the colonial anthropologists?

Mahmood Mamdani's benign criticisms cannot disguise the reality that his submission has been represented as one component of the anti-imperialist intellectual support for the Mugabe regime. Despite the atrocities, killings and abductions of grassroots activists, Mamdani has managed to use the term 'popularity' in the same sentence while describing the current Zimbabwe leadership. Nowhere did this writer take note of the fact that this 'popular' government withheld the election results in March 2008 for over a month. Mamdani says there is a democratic revolution at a high price. Indeed at the price of democracy itself and in its most simple expression: the right to vote.

Writing this backhanded support for Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF as a review of a number of books on Zimbabwe, Mamdani was inordinately dependent on the scholarship of those from the Agrarian Institute for African Studies in Zimbabwe. The papers from this institute have been fulsome in their praise of the 'land reform' process in Zimbabwe. The authors of these papers supporting Mugabe were the very same ones claiming that the horrors of 'Operation Murambatsvina' (the operation to round up hundreds of thousands of citizens) were exaggerated by the Western media.

Neither Mamdani nor the scholars from CODESRIA have expressed their outrage in relation to the repression and forced removal of 750,000 people from Zimbabwe's urban areas in 2005. If a white government had done this there would have been outrage. Current scholarly work on the displacement of Zimbabwean farm workers by Amanda Hammar will assist future scholarship focused on the reintegration of individuals scattered across Southern Africa. These citizens suffered from the xenophobic attacks against poor migrants in South Africa.

While merely recycling the scholarship of this agrarian institute, Mahmood Mamdani was careful to hedge his bets in noting that: 'What land reform has meant or may come to mean for Zimbabwe's economy is still hotly disputed.'

What is not in dispute is that the policies of the Mugabe government have destroyed the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe. In our examination of the fast track land seizures in the book, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, we exposed the reality that an examination of land reform cannot be separated from water, seeds, fertilizers and most importantly, the labour that has worked on a piece of land. It is on the question of workers and labour where one would have expected Mamdani to have drawn on the scholarship of Brian Raftopoulos and Lloyd Sachikonye. It is not too late to recommend to Mahmood Mamdani two books that will shed light on the relationship between land and labour: *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980–2000*, edited by Brian Raftopoulos and Lloyd Sachikonye; and Lloyd Sachikonye, *The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe*.

Idi Amin and Bob Astles; Robert Mugabe and John Berdenkamp

Qualifications on the disputed outcome of the 'land reform' by Mahmood Mamdani should not derail committed scholarship on what a democratic land

reform process could yield in the new southern Africa when there is serious decolonisation instead of the Africanisation of exploitation. Mamdani's analysis could not hide the reality that there is a capitalist class that is profiting from the misery and exploitation of the peoples of Zimbabwe. The present divide in Zimbabwe that is manipulated under ethnic terms cannot hide the opulence and disparity between those with power and the exploitation of millions, with hundreds dying of cholera. The billions of dollars being exported by those in the regime, along with the leadership of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, will only come to light when scholars, in general, and African scholars, in particular, support the UN Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative. African dictators from the Sudan to Equatorial Guinea and looters from Nigeria and Angola to Kenya want African scholars to be silent on the repatriation of stolen wealth. This writer opposes all sanctions against Zimbabwe (including ZIDERA) because sanctions do not work when there are experienced entrepreneurs such as John Bredenkamp and Billy Rautenbach in the service of ZANU-PF. What is far more important is a full analysis of Gideon Gono's exportation of money at the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. As a scholars in universities with the space and resources to do research, it is our collective duty in the context of an Obama administration to call on the US Justice Department to prosecute those of the British firm BAe who have been involved in corruption and fraud in southern Africa.

Additionally, African scholars and progressives must pressure the Obama administration to use the resources of the Treasury Department of the Office of Foreign Assets Control to democratise the information on the billions of dollars being stolen from Africa, and in this case, southern Africa.

As in the case of Idi Amin, imperialism can be very selective in releasing the information of the theft and export of capital by the Mugabe leadership. In the past month the Treasury Department of the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control slapped further sanctions on John Bredenkamp.

There is need for concerted research and exposure of the continued role of elements such as Bredenkamp and the alliance with those in the South African government who are profiting from the misery and exploitation of the Zimbabwean people. Is it by accident that the same forces aligned with Bredenkamp also supported the 'quiet diplomacy' of Thabo Mbeki? The countries of the European Union are also complicit in the looting of Zimbabwe. Decent individuals in Europe and concerned African scholars must pressure the democratic forces in Belgium to call on the Belgian Central Bank to expose the amounts of money being exported by Gideon Gono on behalf of Robert Mugabe and the dictatorship. The international banking system now relies on a network administered by Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) based at La Hulpe outside Brussels. SWIFT links 7,800 financial institutions in 205 countries, including Zimbabwe's banks, and processes about US\$6 trillions' worth of transactions each day. Although owned by banks, SWIFT specifically falls under the control of central banks and, in particular, the control of the Belgian Central Bank. Instead of speculating on whether the Mugabe regime is exporting US\$9 or US\$15 billion every year, the exposure of the head of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe is far more important than talks of removing Mugabe by force. Blocking international payments is far quicker and more effective than trade or other sanctions. This strategy can also be reversed as soon as its objectives are reached, without permanent damage to the economy or its infrastructure.

Committed scholars should be outraged at what is happening in Zimbabwe

People are being killed and brutalised. Homophobia and virginity tests reflect the most extreme forms of patriarchy and deformed masculinity in Zimbabwe. The women who bear the brunt of this oppression have called for international solidarity. Under the leadership of the group, Women of Zimbabwe Arise

(WOZA), these brave fighters have exposed those who mobilise sophisticated post-modernists and anti-imperialist discourse to support Robert Mugabe. Zimbabwean workers are being assaulted every day and it is the task of concerned African scholars to defend the rights of organised and unorganised Zimbabwean workers alike.

Unfortunately for Mamdani this article defending Mugabe came out at a time when there was news of the health emergency and the more than 1,000 who have died from cholera. Already, spokespersons for the Mugabe dictatorship have begun to use the writing of Mahmood Mamdani to give legitimacy to their anti-imperialist rhetoric. Mahmood Mamdani opposed the expulsion of the Asians from Uganda. This author opposed the expulsion of the Asians from Uganda on the grounds that it was racist. Mahmood Mamdani has recognised that after the removal of Idi Amin the top Asian capitalists returned to Uganda. In order to ensure that imperialism and the white settlers are not the beneficiaries of the quagmire and nightmare in Zimbabwe, there is a need to explore new agricultural techniques rooted in the experiences of farm workers to develop cooperatives as a means of breaking the domination of the new black capitalists. It was the democratic right of the Zimbabwean people to reclaim the lands seized by British colonialists, but progressive scholars must oppose all forms of exploitation, whether black or white.

At this time, this author supports the Zimbabwean farm labourers and opposes both the settler capitalist classes in Zimbabwe and their African allies seeking to continue the exploitation of the country's workers, poor peasants and traders.

Western imperialism understands the delicacy of the balance of forces in Zimbabwe. It is for this reason that the West is pressuring neoliberal elements in the MDC to join a government of national unity with the same group that has killed over 20,000 Zimbabweans and expelled over 750,000 urban dwellers from their places of shelter. The recent

scholarship on Zimbabwe offers one avenue for those who want to interrogate the links between ZANU-PF and the immense suffering of the country's (as reflected in the Special Bulletin of the Association of Concerned African Scholars)[1]. Mamdani is correct to draw attention to the influence of neoliberal forces such as Eddie Cross within the MDC, but neoliberalism is dead and the governments of western Europe and the USA are busy nationalising banks without democratic control and accountability. Zimbabweans who want transformation must oppose the neoliberal forces within the MDC to ensure that the suffering of working people does not continue after the ultimate departure of Robert Mugabe.

There is nothing democratic or revolutionary about what is going on in Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF. African scholars and progressive forces must use all of their resources to support producers as they seek new forms of emancipatory politics in the face of the global capitalist crisis. Africans, like decent humans in all parts of the planet, want to live in dignity and with basic rights.

Notes

[1] Timothy Scarnecchia and Wendy Urban-Mead, eds., 'Special Issue on Zimbabwe', ACAS Bulletin 80 (Winter 2008):

<http://concernedafricascholars.org/?p=123>

About the Author

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Zimbabwe Ten Years On: Results and Prospects*

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After a decade of political polarization and international standoff, the debate on Zimbabwe has finally been opened up to a wider reading public, thanks to Mahmood Mamdani's "Lessons of Zimbabwe," appearing in the *London Review of Books* (04/12/2008). Renowned scholars, within and without Africa, have broken their silence and have taken public positions. The debate now extends beyond a small group of specialists in Southern Africa and the UK and also goes deeper into the issues than what is readily available in the daily media. While we may wonder why it took nearly a decade for this to happen, there is good reason for the sudden change: during November-December 2008, Western governments and associated think-tanks began to test publicly the idea of intervening militarily in a small peripheral country and ex-colony, this time under the pretext of the "right to protect" Zimbabweans from a crazed tyrant. For many of us, this is dangerous talk; for others, it is either not serious enough, or serious and overdue. It is no surprise then that the knives would come out in the ensuing debate, and that this would intensify with the prospect of forming an "inclusive government" and resolving critical issues.

Mamdani's article set out from a simple premise: that Zimbabwe's deeply unequal and racialized agrarian relations were historically unjust and unsustainable. Restating this premise was significant, because during the course of the crisis the foundation of the debate kept shifting to other

issues, such as good governance, productivity, or even historiography. Mamdani went on to argue that the radical land reform of recent years has had various casualties, including the rule of law, farmworkers, urban land occupiers, and agricultural production. But even so, he argued, the land reform has been historically progressive and is likely to be remembered as the culmination of the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe. He concluded that similar, or even worse, convulsions are quite possible elsewhere, for example, South Africa, unless proactive measures are taken there. Mamdani approached a complex issue calmly and methodically, in stark contrast to the emotive analyses and distortions that we see in the daily propaganda war. His article was followed soon after by a public statement by 200 African scholars, attending a continental meeting in Cameroon, who denounced Western saber-rattling and any plan to re-militarize Southern Africa. Their statement was short, without detailed analysis of the Zimbabwe question, and written with the urgency of resisting a dangerous escalation.

These two statements were enough to blow the lid off. Concerned scholars of Zimbabwe in the USA and Europe scrambled to assert their expertise on the crisis, to label detractors as gullible victims of Robert Mugabe's anti-imperialist script, to vilify the whole land occupation movement, and to equate it with extreme human rights violations (Scarnecchia, et al). Even scholars on the Left, such as Patrick Bond and Horace Campbell, joined in to dismiss the threat of external intervention as mere Mugabe rhetoric and to dispute really existing imperialism in the country. Despite their evident ideological heterogeneity, they converged instantly around a shared focus on personalities rather than the issues and resorted also to underhanded methods of argumentation (as noted by David Johnson).

The basic issue in Zimbabwe, like in so many other ex-colonies, remains how to resolve the two historic questions, the agrarian and the national. The issue of democracy is intrinsic to both the agrarian and the national questions; one issue can only be

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enhanced by the other's advance. Let us recall that in Zimbabwe democracy itself was an historical conquest against settler colonialism. But this democracy fell far short of attending to the historic demands for social justice; instead, the newly independent state began to defend privilege in the name of rights and to criminalize demands for justice through the rule of law. Thus, when the deep antagonisms of this society escalated, civic organizations and ordinary citizens were faced with a confounding dilemma: either to tolerate the suspension of the rule of law and go for a historic breakthrough; or defend the rule of law and defend perpetual inequalities and backwardness. In our case, we defended the land reform not because we are "undemocratic," but because we believe in a deeper form of democracy, one that can only be set on a more meaningful and stable footing by structural changes. Despite the casualties identified by Mamdani, the land reform has indeed created the social and economic foundation for a more meaningful democratization. There is need now to address the deficiencies of the land reform process, to rebuild the hard-won democratic institutions, and to lay the seeds for the next phase of the national democratic revolution.

That deep structural changes have taken place in Zimbabwe is beyond doubt. This has been established by various studies undertaken by AIAS and associates between 2001-07 (see references on the social and economic outcomes). The only other serious study published to date is by Ian Scoones and his associates at the Institute of Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) in Cape Town. Taken together, these studies have shown that land reform was not "hijacked" by "cronies"; although cronyism has indeed operated, it has been marginal to the whole process. The land reform has been broad-based and largely egalitarian. It has benefited directly 140,000 families, mainly among the rural poor, but also among their urban counterparts, who on average have acquired 20 hectares of land, constituting 70% of the land acquired. The remaining land has benefited 18,000 new small- to medium-scale capitalists with an average of 100

hectares. A small segment of large-scale capitalists persists, including both black and white farmers, but their land sizes have been greatly downsized to an average of 700 hectares, much lower than the average of 2,000 hectares previously held by 4,500 landowners on the whole of this land.

Moreover, various new dynamics are underway in the countryside in terms of labor mobilization, investment in infrastructure, new small industries, new commodity chains, and the formation of cooperatives. And despite the adverse economic conditions, land utilization levels have already surpassed the 40% mark that prevailed on white farms after a whole century of state subsidies and racial privilege. That the crop yields remain low is largely due to input shortages, not the lack of entrepreneurial spirit or expertise by the new farmers, as is so often claimed. The new agrarian structure in Zimbabwe now holds out the promise of obtaining food sovereignty (which it had never obtained before), creating new domestic inter-sectoral linkages, and formulating a new model of agro-industrial development with organized peasants in the forefront.

Needless to say, a number of scholars have never recognized this potential. On the contrary, they continue to speculate about "crony capitalism" (Patrick Bond) and the "destruction of the agriculture sector" (Horace Campbell), without having conducted any concrete research of their own, or properly interrogated the new research that has emerged.

Deep structural change has been accompanied by recurrent state violence. The most serious contradiction of the whole process has been the shrinking of political space, especially for progressive social forces. The state apparatus has continued to resort to brute force, long after the land reform. In this regard, we have been accused of turning a blind eye to state violence (see Brian Raftopoulos and Horace Campbell). But this is not the case. To defend structural change is not to condone murder, rape, abduction, and torture. Our

approach to state violence has certainly been different; we have not chosen the path of listing the number of victims and moralizing about it. Rogue violence aside, our purpose has been two-fold: to analyze the changing class character of state violence so as to understand its function; and to provide concrete alternatives to avoid and resist state violence.

We have argued that in the early stages of the land reform (2000-03), while the leadership of the ruling party was struggling to appease and co-opt the land occupation movement, the use of force was used in defense of the landless and against the political forces allied to the white agrarian monopoly and Western interests. From 2003 onwards, as the land movement dissipated and as the enlarged black capitalist class repositioned itself within the ruling party, violence began to be used in defense of narrow class interests, but still against the forces allied to the West. This led to a series of tragedies between 2005 and 2008, especially as economic hardship deepened. The leadership of the ruling party replaced mobilization tactics by quick-fix, military-style operations: first against “illegal” urban dwellers (2005), destroying the new urban settlements that had emerged during the land occupations; then against “illegal” rural miners (2006-08), who had resorted to panning and smuggling for their livelihoods; then against profiteers (2007), in a price-control blitz whose effect was to further expand the parallel market; and finally, during the presidential contest of 2008, against those it could no longer convince. Indeed, these ongoing convulsions, combined with the economic hardship (see below), had the effect of undermining the “vanguard” claims of the ruling party itself, even in the countryside. This culminated in a deep and tense electoral polarization, with the opposition for the first time in the lead, which could only be defused through power-sharing negotiations. The violence (especially irregular detentions) has dragged on until now.

What were the concrete alternatives? It became very clear to us, as the rural and urban land movements dissipated or succumbed, that neither political party was capable of advancing the national democratic revolution to the next phase: if the opposition was a lost cause from the beginning, the ruling party had suffered a terminal class shift. We suggested that the only way forward was for social movements themselves to take the initiative, but not by contesting the control of the state apparatus. We called for a retreat from dogmatic party politics and a return to grassroots political work, with the objective of building durable and democratic structures in the countryside, especially cooperatives, building alliances with urban workers, and beginning once again to change the correlation of forces (Moyo and Yeros 2007a). For us, it seemed self-defeating to stand up to the state apparatus on a neo-colonial platform, or without adequate progressive alliances. For our detractors, however, the platform of the opposition was not neo-colonial.

This, in turn, has been among the most disheartening aspects of our colleagues' work: their failure to interrogate the external factor and penetration of Zimbabwean politics. Of course, as David Johnson has pointed out, many of our detractors “don't see contemporary imperialism as a category for analysis” anyway. But there are others who do, and they chose to abscond. Horace Campbell and Patrick Bond, especially, have gone to great lengths to say that there are no sanctions on Zimbabwe and that the economic decline is wholly self-inflicted. Indeed, they have given the impression that imperialism has suddenly been suspended in the case of Zimbabwe. Scarnecchia, et.al. have gone even further to call Mamdani “dishonest” for attributing blame to sanctions. This absurd chorus became complete when supposed ideological adversaries claimed that the West is actually saving Zimbabwe: “USAID was prolific in sending out its food support,” says Bond; “Western food aid has been a lifeline,” say Scarnecchia, et al.

The intrusive external factor is a constant in the history of Zimbabwe and the continent. In the case of Southern Africa, military, financial, and diplomatic support for the white minority regimes was crucial in dragging out the liberation struggles, destabilizing independent states, and sealing neo-colonial transitions. In the case of Zimbabwe, the Western achievement was to enshrine the colonial regime of property rights in the new constitution of 1979. Thereafter, great effort was made by various means, including via the IMF and World Bank, to co-opt internal politics in favor of structural adjustment. And then, in the early 1990s, when structural adjustment was at its height, and when the rest of Southern Africa was making a transition to majority rule, the USA tried to re-establish its military presence in the region, initially in Zimbabwe, and partially succeeded by building an air strip in Botswana. It should have been expected, therefore, that relations would heat up in the late 1990s, when Zimbabwe abandoned structural adjustment in 1996, initiated extensive compulsory land acquisition in 1997, mobilized Angola and Namibia in 1998 to intervene against the US-sponsored invasion of the DRC by Rwanda and Uganda, and finally turned on its neo-colonial constitution in 2000. This was a major shift in the correlation of forces. Did the West really turn the other cheek at this point, as Campbell and Bond seem to suggest?

On the contrary, this is when destabilization was deployed anew. Mamdani has given a taste of this destabilization campaign, and we have also written about it (Moyo and Yeros 2007b and forthcoming a, b; see also Gregory Elich and Stephen Gowans). In short, Western capital went on strike, citing the lack of “investor confidence,” while Western governments dedicated themselves to financing the opposition. Suffice it to say that the combination of economic isolation and political penetration has been severe, giving rise to a war economy, with extreme shortages of foreign exchange and basic goods and inputs, unrelenting hyperinflation, loss of productive capacity, and under-investment in social

infrastructure, leading more recently to a very deadly cholera outbreak.

Many of our critics have sought to bolster their argument that there are no sanctions on Zimbabwe by pointing out the signing of new contracts in the mining industry. But whatever new contracts are being signed with Western, Eastern, or South African firms, they are slow in coming and a drop in the bucket. At the same time, the “food aid” that is being provided, and which has been hailed as a “lifeline,” must also be interrogated: this policy is in fact the corollary of a donor boycott against newly resettled areas; food aid would not have been necessary if inputs constraints had been lifted in these areas.

The Zimbabwean state confronted this destabilization campaign by becoming the most dirigiste in the world. It intervened across all sectors of the economy to control prices, distribution, and credit, to nationalize land, to reassert control over natural resources and export revenues, and to impose majority control by indigenous capital over the mining sector. Its economic strategy has included the resurrection of state-owned enterprises to direct the recovery and to diversify trade and investment to the East. But, its overall approach has been to fight the siege by promoting an indigenous bourgeoisie. This has been the basic internal contradiction which, besides its violent political outcomes, has opened the way for the financialization and informalization of business activity, the entrenchment of speculative interests, the profiteering by capitalists all around (white, black, ZANU-PF, MDC), and the excessive printing of money, all too often applied in the interest of the larger capitalists.

It is clear that the heterodox strategy has been insufficient and incoherent, creating a playground for opportunistic behavior. To be sure, the realities of isolation and penetration, combined with serial droughts and irregular rainfall, would have challenged any heterodox plan. Moreover, the fact that regional partners did not go far enough to

provide economic support has also complicated the economic environment. But even so, the heterodox policy itself has been insufficient, in that it has lacked ideological clarity from the beginning and has also failed to rise to the occasion in the course of radicalization. To take one basic example, the financial system should have been more thoroughly regulated from the outset, together with agrarian capital. This should have been seen as a prerequisite for the promotion of a whole series of politically defensive and economically developmental measures, from the financing of cooperatives in the countryside to the expansion of urban housing. Another example is the stock market, which became a hothouse of financial opportunism and was only regulated in late 2008. The policy framework has also been incoherent in that it has not made effective use of the market mechanism. Economic policy has relied on the wrong capitalists, the speculators as opposed to the producers, and bypassed the vast majority of producers, who are peasants. However, we must be clear that none of this is a problem of “patrimonialism”, as our detractors claim -- a problem which could be eradicated by “regime change.” The insufficiency and incoherence of economic policy is a reflection of the changing balance of class forces in the country and the weakness of urban and rural working-class organizations themselves. Regime change will not change this fact.

Suffice it to conclude with three issues that must now concern all genuine democrats: (a) the need for an economic recovery that is sovereign and socially just; (b) the opening of political space, in form and substance, for the re-organization and expression of the popular will, especially of the urban workers and small peasant producers; and (c) the fortification of the autonomy of the region by devising mechanisms of financial self-help.

In the course of the power-sharing negotiations in late 2008, various think-tanks and donors -- including a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank and a donor group called the

“Fishmongers” -- began to discuss the issue of economic recovery. The UNDP, however, took the lead and proposed that Zimbabwe should readjust to the world economy by means of shock therapy. This was an astounding conclusion, not only because the UNDP had previously distanced itself from IMF and World Bank orthodoxy, but also because shock therapy has been completely discredited worldwide, and because the world economy itself is collapsing. To what exactly should Zimbabwe adjust? As outlandish as it is, we nonetheless take this talk very seriously as well. Indeed, the greatest danger now is of an elite power-sharing pact that re-subordinates Zimbabwe to parasitical international financiers and offloads the costs of recovery onto the peasants and workers.

What is the alternative? First, as Ben Cousins has also pointed out, peasant production should be made the pillar of the economic recovery, through subsidized inputs, fair prices, and secure tenure (which does not mean freehold). Second, economic recovery requires a comprehensive framework for achieving food sovereignty for the country as a whole, not only for the rural producers on a “subsistence” basis. This requires the technical upgrading of agriculture under the control of an organised peasantry and the revival of agro-industries. It also requires the resolution of the farmworker question, an underclass of “cheap labor,” which remains to be allocated land on an equal basis, freed from labor tenancy, and which needs to be incorporated into a cooperativist and social protection system. Third, trade and industrial policy should be reformulated to secure the recovery of strategic industries and their re-orientation to wage goods and to the technical upgrading of agriculture. Fourth, the mining sector must also be guarded closely, as this is crucial to the earning of foreign exchange and public revenue. The regulation of this sector must continue to ensure that the mines are not sold to the highest briber and that the revenues are reinvested locally. Finally, state banks should be given the leading role in the economic recovery, given that the private banking system has not played its part and is

unlikely to do so. What is necessary, now more than ever, is a credit system that directs productive and compatible investments to agriculture, industry, housing, and infrastructure. Such a policy would be in line with emerging trends around the world, including the re-positioning of state banks (and even the nationalization of banks) in South America and the recent state interventions in the banking system in the USA and Europe.

Of course, many of our colleagues will again protest: the possibility of a heterodox recovery without IMF funding is naïve! But we would be naïve to believe that an external injection of finance, such as has been promised on the condition of “regime change,” will be delivered as promised. Zimbabweans will be made to beg for each tranche each day, while new conditions will continue to be invented long after regime change. This is a story we know too well. Moreover, we should bear in mind that aid resources have dwindled, and will dwindle further.

The most recent changes in economic policy indicate that policy-making is at a dead end. The ruling party has generally resisted normalization with international finance, but it has now endorsed “dollarization” and has also removed price and foreign currency controls. The policy change has formalized the loss of control over monetary and exchange rate policies in the hyperinflationary environment, but, ironically, it has also sought to retain an element of sovereignty by avoiding a wholesale return to the Bretton Woods institutions and the serial imposition of policy conditions. Its specific objective has been to improve the conditions for non-Western capital investments and to cajole domestic capitalists. Nonetheless, this policy alone can hardly be socially just, given that the poor are virtually shut out of a highly iniquitous hard currency market.

The opening of a political space for the re-organization and expression of the popular will is fundamental to the tilting of state power back to a sovereign and socially just economic program. This

does require inclusive government, which has now been realized, but not any kind of inclusive government. Contrary to what has been suggested (see Bracking and Cliffe 2008), the character of this government is still open to dispute. Of course, many have argued that the removal of Robert Mugabe and his replacement by Morgan Tsvangirai is the precondition for the re-opening of political space and “effective” economic policy. But Mugabe's removal would by no means guarantee the re-opening of political space, given that the opposition has been consistently clear about its support for an extroverted recovery program, which in turn could only be implemented on the back of a new round of political repression.

Defenders of “regime change” have sought to support their partisan argument by taking refuge in myths about the “progressive” nature of the MDC, or of “progressive tendencies” within the MDC. “The MDC and most in civil society have formally opposed Western-style sanctions,” declares Bond. But they never put up a fight, and this is because their main electoral strategy has always been to drive the economy into the ground, not to organize the working class on a working-class platform. “Zimbabweans who want transformation must oppose the neo-liberal forces within the MDC,” Campbell tells us. But who are these opposing forces within the MDC? And why should we expect them to bite the hand that feeds them? And if they did so, why should we expect them to be spared of a new round of destabilization? For us, the task remains for social forces, including the trade unions and farmers' organizations, to step back from their political party alliances and resist a return to an elite pact and IMF tutelage.

Such a strategy, finally, has a very specific foreign policy, which is to prevent the issue of aid and recovery from being transferred to the United Nations, the IMF, and the World Bank, and to resist the marginalization of the working peoples through superficial consultancy advice and ineffective “dialogues” with civil society. Discussions of aid and recovery must remain under the control of

Zimbabweans, within the SADC framework. The latter must now reinforce its strategic autonomy by devising mechanisms of financial self-help and a regional integration scheme based on equality, solidarity, and strategic planning. This, too, is in line with progressive initiatives elsewhere, especially in South America.

In fact, the least noticed aspect of the Zimbabwe question is the regional dynamic that has emerged towards the construction of a strategically autonomous region. To be sure, SADC regionalism remains deeply contradictory. On the one hand, a SADC Free Trade Agreement is now in motion, together with a plan to create a common currency (in which Zimbabwe has expressed interest). Although these developments have been hailed as breakthroughs, their reliance on market power and functionalist logic is most likely to backfire, by reinforcing unequal development in the region and harming solidarity. On the other hand, SADC now counts on a mutual defense pact, a rare if not unique achievement in the South. This pact was pioneered by Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia in 1998, at the outset of the DRC intervention, and was extended to the rest of SADC in 2003. This new strategic posture is based on the principles of equality and solidarity and, thus, runs contrary to the functionalist logic of the economic integration underway. For this reason, we believe there is much more at stake now in Zimbabwe than our critics recognize -- and imperialism knows it. A critical aspect of this is the ongoing East-West scramble for minerals and energy throughout the region. No wonder the destabilization campaign has also taken aim at SADC, putting pressure on member-states (particularly Botswana, Zambia, and Tanzania) and trying to undermine SADC solidarity.

Nonetheless, SADC has repeatedly and successfully denied the West direct involvement in the negotiations. Indeed, the intensity of the destabilization campaign against Zimbabwe and the dirty tactics against SADC have forced regional members to look into the mirror and realize that

they share something very valuable: a common sovereignty regime, conquered collectively by heroic sacrifices and struggles against imperialism. Thus, while SADC members continue to cling to the logic of the market, they have also judged correctly that what the West really wants in Zimbabwe is the total dismantling of black nationalism, the total defeat of an integration scheme that is strategically impervious, and the wholesale return to the dark ages of neo-colonialism. This has finally yielded an agreement on an inclusive government, which the West views sceptically and continues to threaten with the "stick" of sanctions.

Some of our critics continue to see all this differently. They believe that the inclusive government is evidence that the region lacks the nerve to stand up to tyranny. We believe it is a step forward: there is a realization in the region that only a political project that upholds regional autonomy in the face of external imposition will succeed in marshalling internal forces to wage a consistent struggle for democratization.

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Mamdani on Zimbabwe sets back Civil Society

Patrick Bond (University of Kwazulu-Natal)

Although Mahmood Mamdani is an inspiring intellectual and political writer, one of Africa's greatest ever, his *London Review of Books* article 'Lessons of Zimbabwe' invites debate and disagreement. To begin, consider Mamdani's 'abiding recollection of my first few months back' in Uganda when his compatriots did not oppose Idi Amin's expulsion of 'Asians', saying only that 'It was bad the way he did it.' The Zimbabwe case is so different as to repel such comparisons. The 4000 whites who controlled the bulk of good land until February 2000 included beneficiaries of the historic colonial theft, while others bought into the system by purchasing farms after independence. Most had vast swathes of underutilised land, but many were extremely productive, using racially exclusive networks for credit, inputs and marketing, especially to growing international markets during the 1990s liberalisation era. Helter skelter, they were all removed; a few hundred remained on their farms through the late 2000s because they cut deals with local elites or in some rare cases, had the support of neighbouring Communal Area constituencies for whom they provided services.

Rather than confuse matters with the Uganda comparison (which related mainly to urban Asians and those in commercial circuitries), the following is more 'likely to be said' of the situation prevailing in February 2000:

- land transfers to the majority were necessary and long overdue, since the free market model agreed at Lancaster House [the independence agreement between the liberation movement and the British government] and in subsequent World Bank loans wasn't working (nor was it meant to), and since structural adjustment had generated vast profits for tobacco, horticultural and other (mainly white) agro-exporters, while

peasants lost economic ground during the 1990s (a point important for understanding resentments against wealthy white farmers);

- notwithstanding a record of hostility to rural squatter movements, Mugabe turned from a defeat in the national constitutional referendum of February 2000 to desperate encouragement of war veteran invasions of white farms (especially after white farmers were shown on TV writing cheques to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change), which does represent a profound change in tenure to be sure, but moreso represented a desperation power grab;
- Mugabe allowed far too many of his cronies to get good farms (as even a state investigating commission conceded), and didn't set up proper agricultural support systems for those millions of landless who should have benefited from redistribution, leading to a huge decline in agricultural output, food aid dependency on Western donors and NGO distributors, and the repeated prospect of mass starvation (points that Mamdani skirts).

For Mamdani, both Mugabe and Amin 'projected themselves as champions of mass justice and successfully rallied those to whom justice had been denied by the colonial system.' Naturally, there are a wide variety of such rulers who used a fake anti-imperialism and anti-neocolonialism to rally support, from Marcos in the Philippines to the Argentine generals, back to the characters Frantz Fanon described in *Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. It's an old trick, but Zimbabweans are not so blind as to 'remember 2000-3 as the end of the settler colonial era. Any assessment of contemporary Zimbabwe needs to begin with this sobering fact.' And yet two countervailing 'facts' also stand out:

- 2000-03 was the moment when — reminiscent of the early/mid-1980s in Matabeleland — an electorally-threatened Mugabe used brutal violence against his opponents, terrorising the society and

vindicating those who claimed Mugabe's rule would necessarily end in dictatorship, hence leaving the early 2000s the definitively 'exhausted' state of Mugabe's ultra-nationalism (insofar as it stopped delivering goods and instead switched to coercion); and in any case,

- 'settler colonialism' easily transformed into post-settler neocolonialism nearly everywhere, and Zimbabwe is no exception, for while the society may now have less than a quarter of its former peak of white inhabitants, the economy is still oriented to activities that, if not controlled by white Zimbabweans or white South Africans or white Brits, mimics that control through compliant local black ownership -- in finance, commerce, mining and residual manufacturing especially (while a preponderance of white senior managers remains).

For Mamdani, 'The best publicised casualties of the land reform movement were the urban poor who hoped to benefit from extending land invasions to urban areas.' There was, in reality, a huge disconnect between what was happening in the countryside and the cities, so that this sentence is misleading: 'The veterans spearheaded occupations of urban residential land in 2000-1. Housing co-operatives and other associations followed their lead and set up "illegal" residential or business sites.' Actually, the housing coop movement was firmly established by the mid-1990s and did not follow the war veterans' lead -- but instead joined hundreds of thousands of atomistic urban residents in setting up illegal or informal economic activities and residential situations in the overcrowded, underhoused cities. They did so in an incremental way beginning in the 1980s, hence there were an estimated 700,000 people whose shelter and livelihoods were destroyed by Operation *Murambatsvina*, including those of Mugabe supporters.

For Mamdani, 'the state feared that it would lose control over towns to the MDC if the land reform

movement was allowed to spread' - an unusual formulation to explain *Murambatsvina*. Mugabe had a simple rationale for invoking *Murambatsvina*: demonisation/intimidation of opposition supporters (and even, by accident, some of his own urban supporters). Victims included the broader progressive political project of those in civil society - e.g. many Zimbabwe Social Forum affiliates - who consistently supported poor people both through radical rural land reform advocacy and through 'rights to the city' projects such as informalisation of survival activity. To conflate these complex and thoroughly contradictory processes with no concrete evidence is far beneath Mamdani's capacity.

Turning to Mugabe's faux anti-imperialism, Mamdani blames much of the hostility from the West upon 'Zimbabwe's entry into the Congo war in August 1998.' But recall that in 1998 Mugabe was supporting Laurent Kabila (who came to power in part through global mining interests), and his own allies' and generals' personal interests in that process are well documented. No doubt some geopolitical factors related to control over the eastern DRC were also in play, with the US lining up with Uganda and Rwanda for medium-term control of the region's resources. But Mamdani forgets that the IMF explicitly allowed huge financial transfers from within the Zimbabwe fiscus to finance the war (so long as cuts in other programs paid for it), and expressed much more concern about a new set of late 1990s economic policies that reflected structural adjustment's failure: introduction of selective price controls, increased tariffs, import licensing on some goods, procrastination in meeting regional liberalisation targets, pegging of the exchange rate, suspension of foreign currency accounts, introduction of new export incentives and application of new levies on tobacco and consumer goods.

For Mamdani, 'Participants in the donor conference for Zimbabwe that year [1998] were decidedly lukewarm about committing funds', yet they had been the whole time since 1980. For Mamdani,

there followed another alleged punishment: ‘The following year the IMF suspended lending to Zimbabwe.’ Hang on, by then, Mugabe had stopped repaying IMF loans, and was violating several of the neoliberal conditions placed on earlier loans. For Mamdani, another indication of the fall-out in 1999 was that ‘the US and the UK decided to fund the labour movement, led by the ZCTU, first to oppose constitutional change and then to launch the MDC as a full-fledged opposition party.’ Yet international donor support for the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions’ more conservative initiatives dated back to the 1980s, in part through the AFL-CIO’s cold-warrior dominated Solidarity Center and the African American Labor Center (as I recall from personal victimization when a left project gathered pace within the ZCTU).

Mamdani agrees with Mugabe that sanctions can serve as an explanation for Zimbabwe’s crisis, because after land reform finally began in 2000, ‘the Western donor community shut the door on Zimbabwe.’ The data collected by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development suggest otherwise. In 2007, the last year full statistics exist, the West gave \$465 million to various Zimbabwe projects, representing 10 percent of the country’s GDP and – at \$40/person – a higher per capita amount than that of SubSaharan African countries receiving aid (\$39), and more than twice as much as all Third World countries (\$17). The G7 donations were \$294 million, higher than the 1980s average (\$254) when Zimbabwe was a donor favourite. Britain gave \$94 million (\$65 million average during the 1980s) and the US gave \$139 million (\$58 million average during the 1980s).

The 2000s downtick in imperialist donations to Zimbabwe – a fall by 50% from average 1990s figures, until 2007 – can be blamed on various factors: the uptick in state repression, Mugabe’s zigzagging away from neoliberal economic policies, and a sense that Mugabe would soon lose to Tsvangirai in an election. But \$277 million flowed each year, on average, during the 2000s, hardly a ‘shut door’. US AID in particular was prolific in

sending out its food support, replete with branding logos all over the maize bags and cooking oil tins.

Mamdani’s ‘door shut’ metaphor is incorrect and so is this comparison: ‘The sanctions regime, led by the US and Britain, was elaborate, tested during the first Iraq war and then against Iran.’ The only real US sanctions were the smart sanctions against the elites. Instead of imposing genuine economic sanctions, George W. Bush left Zimbabwe to his ‘point man’ (sic), Thabo Mbeki. Mamdani makes much of the idea that Bush and Jesse Helms invoked a law to oppose the World Bank and International Monetary Fund from lending to Mugabe’s government. Surprisingly, he does not mention the most profound reason for the IMF’s above decisions: Mugabe’s failure to repay overdue loans. Moreover, when in 2005-06, Mugabe (egged on by Mbeki) tried to clear \$210 million in extreme arrears (with more than \$1 billion in other arrears to the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank still outstanding), he had not put in place the neoliberal economic policies required by the IMF for ongoing support.

My own understanding is that at no time did the US have to exercise the veto over IMF loans it has been notorious for in other cases. The ‘sanctions’ Mamdani describes were simply not a factor -- Mugabe had himself imposed sanctions on himself by not repaying the Bretton Woods Institutions starting in 1999, and by adopting non-neoliberal economic policies following his celebrated imposition of structural adjustment through 1996 (‘highly satisfactory’, opined the World Bank that year – the highest possible rating Washington gives). In any case, ‘sanctions’ by the Bretton Woods Institutions should be no barrier to a country’s growth, if it is managed properly, as Argentina showed after its 2002 default on \$130 billion in foreign loans. It then led Latin America in recovery from the ‘lost’ 1980s-90s neoliberal era.

One of the most dangerous fallacies about the country’s economic crisis is that it stems from sanctions, a point to be proven in coming days and

weeks as the Government of National Unity compels a rethink of the donor aid bans, international financial boycotts and other economic ‘sanctions’ that are allegedly holding Zimbabwe back. The awful tragedy played out the last week of February was SA foreign minister Nkosozana Dlamini-Zuma’s call for ‘an end to sanctions’ against Zimbabwe. Specifically, SA finance Trevor Manuel aimed to clear at least \$1.2 billion in arrears by sanitizing Mugabe’s old loans with a new mega-loan that will immediately repay the Bretton Woods Institutions, precisely the way Manuel sanitized Mobutu’s loans through a June 2002 credit to the DRC which went straight to the IMF.

It is here Mamdani amplifies what can be considered Mugabe’s greatest myth: economic destruction and inflation unprecedented in recorded human history is due to ‘sanctions’. First, it must be recorded that, contrary to his claim that the MDC and unions favoured a suspension of aid and loans ‘in the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 2000’, the only sanctions publicly advocated have been ‘smart sanctions’: personal bank account freezes and travel bans on about 200 ZANU-PF and state officials. The Durban dockworkers’ refusal to offload weapons and three million bullets from a Chinese ship in April 2008 was applauded, no doubt, but Zimbabwe’s oppositional forces have rarely expressed support for specific sanctions, and the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition specifically rejected anything beyond smart sanctions.

Mamdani has been led to believe that ‘sanctions have played no small part’ in ‘laying waste’ to the economy. My own view – documented in *Uneven Zimbabwe* and *Zimbabwe’s Plunge* – is that a deeper capitalist malaise engulfed Zimbabwe since around 1974, the year that per capita wealth began to decline. The problem can be summarized as a classical case of overaccumulated capital and, by the time of structural adjustment in the early 1990s, a turn to the speculative/parasitical mode of not only capital accumulation but also state management. These deep-rooted problems cannot be reduced to Mugabe’s ‘policies’, but instead are

problems all state managers have faced, nearly everywhere in the world. Mugabe had much more leverage -- because politically he is a dictator -- to adopt a unique zig-zag technique. He has weaved between market liberalisation, crony-capitalist corruption and state interventions, leaving Zimbabwe with the highest inflation ever recorded in human history, at a time when neighbouring states’ inflation was declining substantially due to more pure versions of neoliberalism. But zagging right again in January 2009, he authorized a nearly complete liberalization of Zimbabwe’s monetary sector, which immediately caused a reported \$45 million capital flight by his cronies.

In comparison to such deep-seated endogenous processes, exogenous ‘sanctions’ have played a very small part in the present manifestation of this long crisis. Moreover, instead of ruling ‘by consent’ and instead of land reform measures winning ‘him considerable popularity, not just in Zimbabwe but throughout southern Africa’, as Mamdani posits about Mugabe, we should understand his zig-zag dirigisme as last-gasp measures to retain power through patronage on the one hand, and to bail out crony-capitalist allies on the other. The insistence on bloating out the Cabinet to 71 members is only one reflection of the addiction to patronage that his rule embodies.

Sadly, Mamdani’s source for sanctions evidence is the notorious, corrupt central bank chief, Gideon Gono, who has long abused the forex control system. Mamdani doesn’t mention that Zimbabwe has had the third worst outflow of capital flight of any country in Africa (only Nigeria and Angola have suffered a higher proportion of their GDP moving abroad, illegally, since the mid-1970s, according to the most rigorous study -- by Leonce Ndikumana and James Boyce), not to mention ubiquitous luxury good imports for Mugabe’s cronies.

In dealing with foreign debt, Mamdani laments that Zimbabwe’s arrears soared starting in 1999, but this is a matter of controversy. After all, the Jubilee

movement (locally represented by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development) repeatedly requested that Mugabe stop repaying foreign loans. But instead of Mugabe following a principled strategy linked to other Third World leaders in a debtors' cartel, as Jubilee South (and Julius Nyerere and Fidel Castro) advocated a quarter century ago, there was a simple reason for default: he ran out of forex. In 1998, Zimbabwe paid more in debt servicing than any country in the world (as a percentage of GDP) aside from Brazil and Burundi.

Having stopped repaying -- except for the silly strategy of partial IMF repayments in 2005-06 -- naturally arrears increased dramatically. The Jubilee movement was disgusted by the IMF repayment and advocates that Zimbabwe's entire foreign debt -- \$5+ billion -- be repudiated, and indeed declared as 'odious debt' under international law, since the vast majority of people who suffered because of those loans (which mainly funded the 1990s structural adjustment destruction of the economy and social wage) were not properly consulted by the Mugabe regime.

In a related argument, Mamdani worries that 'Foreign direct investment had shrunk from \$444.3 million in 1998 to \$50 million in 2006.' But the Zimbabwe economy has been the fastest-shrinking in the world, so this is only to be expected -- it's not a sign of sanctions. And when he records the shrinking support to the state for health (e.g. the Danish state's aid suspension), he fails to note the systematic abuse of aid -- both in day-to-day activities (as the World Development Movement and ActionAid have documented) and also in Zimbabwe where forex used for aid has been systematically looted by the central bank and government departments. There are a great many providers of humanitarian aid, as well as NGOs, ready to supply the Zimbabwe countryside with food and other services -- but Mugabe has systematically prevented them from operating.

Further, when choosing evidence that can legitimize Zanu-PF, it is regrettable Mamdani reverts to the

2005 bogus electoral statistics, and in turn to findings by Namibian, Nigerian and South African official observers, given how readily African elites (from Windhoek, Abuja, Pretoria) support other African elites (in Harare) - against the mass of Zimbabweans.

Moreover, in contrast to Mamdani's hope that settler colonialism has been solved by the land invasions, ultimately, thorough-going *pro-povo* land reform will again be needed in Zimbabwe, so as to dislodge Mugabe's cronies who have merely taken over existing plantations, leaving many wrecked. Mugabe's rural victims have a right to a better future than the rancid deal negotiators from the region have imposed. Mugabe's land reform measures were 'harsh' (Mamdani) -- to a few thousand white farmers yes, but most importantly, to millions of black peasants and urban workers now starving or unable to buy food, and hundreds of thousands of rural farmworkers -- not to those outside Zimbabwe who support him (who remain well-fed). Hence the middle-ground phrasing Mamdani employs here sets the tone for a false balance.

But land aside, the September 15, 2008 'powersharing' agreement Mamdani endorses is a disaster in many other respects, as it combines the worst of both worlds: looming neoliberalism if the business faction of the MDC influences economic policy (the MDC gets the finance ministry, but while it is presently held by a leftist, Tendai Biti, the real power over reconstruction financing is being imposed from Pretoria, Tunis and Washington) on the one hand, and on the other, ongoing crony capitalism through Mugabe's extensive patronage system within the Zimbabwe state. Add to this the monopoly of violence re-legitimised: a more actively repressive arm of the state for those in civil society who would protest the new elite transition, e.g. the Women of Zimbabwe Arise members arrested in late February, and so many other dozens of human rights advocates rotting in Chikurubi and other prisons at the time of writing.

Finally, a few matters on South Africa. It would be nice if 'The experience of land reform in Zimbabwe has set alarm bells ringing in South Africa', as the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) hoped would be the case by raising this spectre in 2001 at the World Conference Against Racism and in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Not so, for tragically, the LPM was subsequently destabilised, and there is presently no rural South African social movement with the weight necessary to raise an alarm bell that the Zimbabwe experience will be repeated.

Mamdani also misreads SA civil society by claiming that 'many activists and intellectuals, for the most part progressives, have aligned themselves with distant or long-standing enemies in an effort to dislodge an authoritarian government clinging to power on the basis of historic grievances about the colonial theft of land. Symbolic of this was the refusal by Cosatu-affiliated unions to unload a cargo of Chinese arms destined for Zimbabwe when the An Yue Jiang sailed into Durban in April.' In reality, there was no alliance with enemies, for what happened in April 2008 was simple: a local progressive church leader, Bishop Rubin Phillip (whose political roots are in the black consciousness movement), and the anti-Mugabe South African trade union movement together raised the alarm about crates of guns and about three million bullets moving from Durban to Harare, and prevented the unloading there and across the region (and they were assisted by a lawyer based at Open Society's regional arm). The most important alliance began in that process: people-people solidarity across the Limpopo River. After xenophobic attacks on tens of thousands of Zimbabweans here in May-June 2008, this point is ever more crucial to note. It means that instead of an 'alliance' between progressive activists (like Phillip or COSATU) and 'long-standing enemies', the way forward is cross-border cooperation by oppressed peoples of both countries.

From the top-down, in contrast, the picture painted by officials and the corporate media in South Africa

resembles the world view of a vulture. Consider a suggestion last September for Tsvangirai from Investec Bank's Roelof Horne: "austerity from within". At the same time, the SA Independent newspaper group editorialized that the Mugabe/Tsvangirai government should "introduce drastic policies, including slashing government spending and freeing up price, currency and other controls" as "conditions for receiving foreign aid." Particularly in the weeks following Tsvangirai's acceptance of the prime ministership chalice in February, with Manuel and the African Development Bank preparing belt-tightening strategies for the world's thinnest people, a deep critique of Pretoria/Johannesburg's subimperial designs on Zimbabwe is vital. This project, which I think is consistent with Mamdani's prior, inspiring work on African politics, is set back a little by the myriad confusions raised in his Zimbabwe analysis.

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The Measure of Just Demands? A Response to Mamdani

Amanda Hammar (Nordic Africa Institute)

Judging by the passionate and wide-ranging responses to Mahmood Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe' (London Review of Books, 4 December 2008), he has struck a deep chord amongst scholars of and from Zimbabwe – as well as others concerned more broadly with questions of African politics – both with the particular issues he has raised and those left starkly absent from his analysis. The present ACAS Bulletin is doing us all a valuable service by usefully bringing together the different responses evoked by Mamdani's original piece and his subsequent response to his critics (London Review of Books, 1 January 2009). Although in disagreement with much of what he has written in these two pieces, I nonetheless express my appreciation for his efforts to stimulate serious public debate about Zimbabwe beyond partisan rhetoric (even if he himself has not entirely avoided such rhetoric). This is certainly welcome.

Much has already been written by eminent scholars as part of this debate, with whom I concur (among others, Patrick Bond and Ben Cousins). Having already added my name to a wider critical chorus (the letter to the LRB by 'Scarnecchia et al', 1 January 2009), I will limit myself here to a few additional points where I feel Mamdani's analysis would have benefited from more considered reflection, and engagement with a wider selection of sources. These points relate to his somewhat idealized reading of the land occupations and position of war veterans in this process; his underplaying of the Zanu (PF) party-state project; and his unexpectedly narrow definition of 'the people'.

One of the key premises of Mamdani's analysis of the apparently 'democratic' nature of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land revolution is that it was largely

driven by an authentic 'land occupation movement', a thesis developed largely by Moyo and Yeros (2005) and which Mamdani accepts uncritically. One cannot deny the significant role played by war veterans in initiating the land invasions and occupations both in the late 1990s and from 2000 onwards, alongside a range of other interested, mainly local actors (Sadomba 2008, Marongwe 2003). However, to account for the extent of the nationwide operation that perhaps started with more spontaneous occupations but then led fairly quickly into the 'official' fast-track land reform process, (primarily) in terms of "the success of the veterans' mobilisation", seems a rather exaggerated claim. Not only is there little evidence to substantiate the claim of a *pre-existing*, organized 'land occupation movement' prior to 2000 as Moyo and Yeros and now Mamdani claim.¹ In addition, despite contributions from varied independent sources (Sadomba 2008), it would have been materially, let alone politically, highly unfeasible for under-resourced veterans to sustain such national-scale mobilization independently of extensive party and state backing on multiple levels. Logistical, financial and other forms of support, as well as protection from legal prosecution for property-related or violent crimes, provided the basis on which many of the occupations were organized and sustained for as long as they were (Kriger 2006).

To represent the regime as somehow passively following the lead of the war veterans, or conveniently jumping on their bandwagon as a matter of elite cooptation of an established agrarian land movement, is to over-estimate the capacities, resources and scale of the veterans' 'organisation', and to significantly under-estimate the overlapping (and persistent) projects of sovereignty and hegemony of the Zanu (PF) party-state. As post-independence history has amply demonstrated, there

¹ Indeed, Moyo himself in earlier work noted the *absence* of "a nation-wide political movement and/or peasant rebellion, over demands for land" (Moyo 1999, 5). This is not to suggest that there wasn't an active war veterans movement especially during the 1990s, but this cannot be assumed automatically to be the same as a peasant or land occupation movement.

has been no organization or group to date in Zimbabwe that the ruling regime has been unable or unwilling to crush if so desired. As such, it seems strange for Mamdani to so resolutely downplay the party-state capacity and inclination to keep control of the country's key political and economic assets, least of all land. It seems equally misplaced for Mamdani to dismiss as 'conspiracy theories' the attention given by some scholars to the explicit and largely violent practices of state-making that have accompanied if not superseded the land revolution, not to mention the largely undisguised elite accumulation linked to party loyalty. Naming this as such is not a question of conspiracy but of *politics*.

Furthermore, to look at the land occupations in isolation from the broader political landscape of post-2000 Zimbabwe, and most critically the evolution of a viable political opposition and its threat to Zanu (PF) hegemony and state control, represents a key blind-spot in Mamdani's analysis. Certainly one needs to look at the land redistribution project in terms of 'historically just demands'. But one also needs to examine this project in its broader contemporary setting of wide-scale party-state attacks on any form of opposition, and the mass displacement of both rural and urban Zimbabweans. If one opens up the picture in this way, surely one cannot suggest comfortably, as Mamdani does, that "it is striking how little turmoil accompanied this massive social change" of radical land reform.

It remains hard to fathom why there is such an insistence by Mamdani, Moyo and others, on ignoring or down-playing the extensive evidence of the party-state project itself, and the profound contradictions between what the regime has claimed to be doing, and what it has actually done. And why do 'historically just demands' (defined uncritically within the paradigm of a singular and static Land Question) automatically outweigh or supersede *currently* just demands not for only land, but for the basic conditions of life: health, food, shelter, safe water, safety, and the right to exercise one's

democratic right to vote or even voice objection to one's suffering? Surely these are *all* valid.

Drawing attention to the limitations of the war veterans' thesis and to the need for more analytical emphasis simultaneously on the party-state project is not to argue against the need for a radical land redistribution process (albeit one that doesn't undermine national and local economies, or one that violates basic human rights). Nor is it to deny the depth of grievances or the genuine activism of many war veterans and other land hungry or economically disadvantaged citizens in Zimbabwe. It is rather to ensure a less idealized and more honest account of both the meaning and realities of the so-called radical land revolution that Mugabe has so successfully and cynically peddled as heroically anti-imperialist.

Finally, it is hard to understand why, with so much evidence on the brutal intimidation of the electorate both directly by force and indirectly through structural violence, Mamdani would claim so glibly that "almost half the Zimbabwean electorate" is in support of Mugabe and Zanu (PF). Certainly some are. Certainly there have been selective benefits and uneven successes related to the land reform process and other forms of redistribution of assets. But this has been overtly linked to party loyalty, and counters the too-easy assertion made by Mamdani of this being 'a social and economic – if not political – democratic revolution'. Democratic for whom? In relation to this, there is a sense, to paraphrase George Orwell, that 'some people are more equal than others', or rather in the case of present-day Zimbabwe, some get to be validated as 'the people', while others are regarded as mere surplus. And so when Mamdani says "The people of Zimbabwe are likely to remember 2000-3 as the end of the settler colonial era", one has to wonder which 'people' this refers to, and what will others, who have been violently excluded from the benefits of this revolution or worse, remember of this time.

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A Reply to Mamdani on the Zimbabwean Land Question

Ben Cousins (University of the Western Cape)

The most useful aspect of Mahmood Mamdani's article "Lessons from Zimbabwe" (London Review of Books, 4 Dec 2008) is his challenge to influential stereotypes of land reform commonly found in the media and elsewhere. Citing Ian Scoones' note on five myths of land reform in Zimbabwe¹, Mamdani points out that the massive redistribution of farms since 2000 has not resulted in complete agricultural failure. Provisional research findings from the Zimbabwe component of our three-country study of the impacts of land redistribution, which form the basis for Scoones' article, do indeed show that some of the new occupants of former commercial farms in Masvingo Province have produced good crop harvests in years of reasonable rainfall (such as the 2005/6 season).

Other research by Scoones and colleagues² demonstrates how the livestock sector in southern Zimbabwe has remained vibrant through a fundamental restructuring of both production systems and commodity chains.

As pointed out by Mamdani and as is evident in our research sites, drought has played a key role in constraining crop output from land reform farms in recent years, and is undoubtedly a key factor in the current food crisis. Other factors include the completely inadequate supply of inputs such as seed and fertilizer, partly as a result of the wider economic crisis, and exacerbated by corruption in the allocation of these inputs as well as a dire shortage of foreign exchange. The collapse of the old commercial farming economy, together with non-production on some of the farms taken over by

the new elite, have contributed to that wider crisis, for sure, but are far from the sole causes.

This complex interplay of factors affecting the agricultural sector is rarely acknowledged in the media, or in ill-informed commentary³ where all the problems of the economy are sometimes ascribed simply to the impact of radical land reform.

More problematic is Mamdani's core argument that the Mugabe regime has survived in large part due to its popular support, located in particular amongst the rural peasantry. Despite occasional acknowledgement of the authoritarian and repressive nature of the regime, the violence that has accompanied land occupations, and corruption by members of the ruling elite, the overall thrust of the article is to de-emphasize repression and highlight popular support for Mugabe.

As other responses to Mamdani's piece have shown⁴, his characterization of the political dynamics at work in Zimbabwe is simplistic and specious. He over-emphasizes ethnicity, the urban-rural divide, donor support for civil society, rich country sanctions, and the degree of rural support for Zanu (PF). He under-plays class divides, the extent of state violence and intimidation, the withholding of food aid to opposition supporters, the manipulation of election processes and results, and the support provided to the regime by Mbeki and SADC governments. Key instances of repression, such as the Matabeleland massacres of the 1980s, the deprivation of farm workers' and others' citizenship rights, and the massive assault on the urban poor in Operation Murambatsvina are mentioned but downplayed. Ignored are effective rule by and through the state security apparatus, and the role of a politically connected rentier class (overlapping substantially with ruling party

¹ See <http://www.lalr.org.za>

² Mavedzenge, B.Z., J. Mahenehene, F. Murimbarimba, I. Scoones and W. Wolmer (2008), 'The Dynamics of Real Markets: Cattle in Southern Zimbabwe following Land Reform', *Development and Change* 39(4): 613-639.

³ See for example RW Johnston, *London Review of Books*, Letters, 30 (24), 18 Dec, 2008.

⁴ *London Review of Books*, Letters, 31(1) 1 January 2009; Patrick Bond in *Links, International Journal of Socialist Renewal* (<http://links.org.au>)

bigwigs) in manipulating the foreign currency market for parasitic wealth appropriation, thus buffering the elite from the economic meltdown it has helped to bring about, but contributing further to that meltdown⁵.

Mamdani's professed aim in his intervention is to "free the debate about Zimbabwe from the narrow confines of a regime-opposition polemic". This a worthwhile objective, given the debilitating effects of a political discourse that sets up an opposition between the politics of rights and the politics of redistribution, as Brian Raftopoulos and others have pointed out, and the need for fresh ideas on a way beyond the present impasse. Unfortunately Mamdani has succeeded only in stoking the fires of the polemic, through a selective and myopic use of writing about Zimbabwe. In some cases he appears to simply invent his own evidence, as in his attribution to me of a view that I have never held (that previous to our research I was of the opinion that "the land reform would destroy agricultural production"). Mamdani's analysis of Operation Murambatsvina is similarly fantastical.

However, one key point not acknowledged sufficiently by Mamdani's critics is the highly effective way in which Mugabe and Zanu-PF has used both the land issue and anti-imperialist demagoguery to win support in both urban and rural areas, and across the region. Even in the most recent elections there was evidence of continued support for Mugabe despite the very extreme hardship being experienced by most people. This forms part of the complexity of the political situation that moral correct denunciations tend to obscure.

To return to questions of land and farming, there is an urgent need to gain a nuanced understanding of the new realities that have emerged in the Zimbabwean countryside in recent years, to help

inform thinking about land and agricultural policies in the post-Mugabe era. At present we have only a partial picture of these realities, and there is little debate (in public at least) about what those policies should be. Ideologically driven stereotypes will hinder rather than help, and critical scholarship has a key role to play in subverting such constructs.

The MDC view that a future land policy must focus mainly on restoring the health of the large scale commercial farming sector, in part by restoring private property rights, is problematic. As Scoones points out, the old agrarian structure, premised on a stark divide between large-scale (mostly white) and small-scale (black) farmers, has given way to a more complex and less polarized structure. This reality should form the basis of policies to enhance the sector's performance. On the other hand, an "agrarian populism" that idealizes peasant production and homogenizes the rural population is not very helpful either. It ignores the short-term need to restore export earnings from estates and other specialized, capital- and knowledge-intensive production regimes, and the importance of feeding large urban populations, and does not sufficiently acknowledge class differentiation amongst land reform beneficiaries and peasants.

A better starting point is a disaggregated analysis of existing and potential agrarian structures. This must take account of variability and difference in terms of scales and forms of production, class and gender identities, as well as agro-ecological region. Investment in up-stream and downstream linkages to provide inputs to producers and to market their surpluses will be critical. Secure property rights are, of course, important, but these need not take the form of freehold title; *conditional leasehold*, as well as renovated forms of communal tenure and strengthened institutions for common property management, could provide both security and a means to ensure that agrarian reform objectives are met. Crucial will be effective, transparent and accountable institutional frameworks to oversee agrarian reform and guard against the corruption that has become so pervasive in Zimbabwe. Only a

⁵ Davies, Rob (2004), 'Memories of Underdevelopment: A Personal Interpretation of Zimbabwe's Economic Decline', in Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage (eds), *Zimbabwe, Injustice and Political Reconciliation*, Cape Town, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation: 1-18.

government with real democratic credentials can create such institutions, which is why a way must be found to exit Mugabe, his henchmen and the generals from the seat of power.

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Some Observations on Mamdani's 'Lessons of Zimbabwe'

Elaine Windrich (Stanford University)

By way of introduction, I would suggest that whatever Mamdani writes he is always brilliant and provocative. But he also tends to indulge in false generalizations and analogies, particularly when he compares his native Uganda with another African country which is not comparable.

- Here is an example of a generalization which is obviously not true. Replying to critics of Mugabe's land distribution programme, he writes that they sound "as if these lands were doomed by black ownership". No sources are given for this allegation at all, which would properly belong to a racist minority.
- Mugabe's policies have "helped lay waste the country's economy, though sanctions have played no small part". But the sanctions were targeted against the ZANU elites, who are on a list observed by the EU and the US, not against the people of Zimbabwe. The loss of international donor aid (such as the IMF's) was caused not by sanctions but by the Mugabe government failing to comply with the terms of various structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) adopted after 1990, which the government refuses to admit.
- The people of Zimbabwe are not likely to remember 2000-2003 as "the end of settler colonial rule", as Mamdani claims, but as the end of the rule of law, human rights and democratic electoral practices.
- "The inadequacy of land distribution did not ensure that it remained the focus of politics in independent Zimbabwe", he writes. But in fact Mugabe devoted few resources to it until he was threatened by the revolt of the war vets, the collapse of the economy and the loss of power.
- Britain's contribution to land redistribution had "dwindled to a trickle" by 1987, when the Labour Party took office. But Britain convened an international donor conference on land redistribution, which provided for transparency and accountability, but which the Mugabe government refused even to consider.
- Allegedly Mugabe responded with the 1999 constitution legalizing land seizures because the Aid Minister Clare Short had denied British responsibility, citing her Irish ancestry and opposition to British colonial rule. This joking irrelevancy was seized upon by Mugabe's government as an abdication of Britain's responsibility.
- "The ferocious repression of Ndebele in 1986" began long before then. Mugabe sent his all-Shona 5th brigade to suppress his ZAPU rivals in 1983, killing some 20,000 of them, until peace was made with the 'unity pact' in December 1987.
- The reason for Mugabe's electoral victory in 2002 was not that his support was "greater" than before the land redistributions but because there was massive fraud (at least 450,000 stuffed ballots), along with widespread violence and intimidation of the opposition MDC, leaving more than a hundred dead and thousands injured. The same tactics ensured a ZANU PF victory in the Parliamentary election in 2000. While these elections may have been endorsed by South Africa and Namibia, they were not acceptable to the overwhelmingly non-British and non-white Commonwealth, which suspended Zimbabwe's membership because of this fraud and violence.

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Mamdani's Enthusiasms

David Moore (University of Johannesburg)

Cape Town is 2182 kilometers south of Harare. At the Iziko Gallery, just beside the houses into which much of Zimbabwe's sovereignty has been deposited,¹ one of philosopher-artist William Kentridge's stupendous works is on display. The filmic *I Am Not Me: the Horse is Not Mine* ('a Russian peasant expression', Kentridge explains, for denying guilt) is a combination of Kentridge's take on Gogol's *The Nose* with a disturbing rendition of Nikolai Bukharin's 1937 trials. As Kentridge puts it in his textual accompaniment to the shadows on the walls, the tale of Bukharin's last gasps exemplifies the 'comedy of a world at odds with itself ... of inversion ... where logical argument is a sure sign of duplicity and lying is explained away as strategy'. The trial's transcripts are 'as if a mordant comedy is writing itself out'.² The shadows of dancing, searching, marching, climbing and exegesis were reminiscent of the academic and activist discourse around Zimbabwe. Harare's and New York's renditions of Zimbabwe's crisis bore uncanny resemblance to Kentridge's rendition of the end of the Stalinist — nay, even the Leninist/Bolshevik — dream. And Professor Mamdani may have lost his nose as the dreams of African 'difference' evaporated: only to find it with a higher rank than he.

This short intervention will investigate Mamdani's rendition of the Zimbabwean revolution that is not his. It will then offer an alternative notion of a 'real' revolution in southern African political economy. Finally, a challenge will be offered to Professor Mamdani.

¹ David Moore, 'Now onus is on SA to Deliver: Power-sharing arrangement makes regional sovereign responsible for building a decent dispensation', *Cape Times*, February 3, 2009.

² William Kentridge, *I Am Not Me: the Horse is Not Mine*, Johannesburg and Cape Town: Goodman Gallery, 2008, 19.

Mamdani is known for his expertise in sniffing out the cant and hypocrisy surrounding rural despotism, its transformation into genocidal mania, and American foreign policy. Indeed, I thought he was so good at it that in a publisher's review of one of his books I opined that he might be a new Edward Said. In the case of Zimbabwe, however, his enthusiasm for an apparently pro-peasant, anti-imperialist and 'Africanist' cause has rendered him lacking: in seeking to speak what he thinks is the truth to what he thinks is power, he ignores its seeping from where it ebbs to the peripheral recesses where it has become intricately and intimately imprecated. In response to his critics he has listed phone calls from Washington to its puppets and accused well-meaning liberals of falling into the interventionist human rights trap, as well as foolishly linking economic libertarianism with its political parallels: in short as being caught in the hard grip and soft webs of American power.

As if to confirm Mamdani's views, sometime around the time his version of Zimbabwe's lessons was published George W. Bush woke up and said 'Mugabe must go'. A chorus arose singing that tune. As if in response, a CODRESIA meeting in Yaoundé, at which the man praised in Mamdani's piece for writing the most truths about Zimbabwe was elected president, released a much-debated statement (opposed by most of Zimbabwe's young generation present) supporting Zimbabwe's anti-imperialist pretenses. A South African brokered 'government of national unity' in Zimbabwe vindicated the celebrants of an African diplomatic renaissance just a few weeks later, seemingly to prove the signatories correct. Imperialists were not necessary. Armchair critics from North America and England, along with their civil society comrades around the world should thus take note — and caution. True revolutionaries would have supported Mugabe and Mbeki all along.³ Empire's

³ Particularly notable in this discourse is Eddy Maloka and Ben Magubane, "Zimbabwe: An International Pariah: What are the Revolutionary Tasks of the South African Democratic Movement?" a paper circulated within the African National Congress in early May, 2008 to defend Thabo Mbeki's

mendicants opposing Mugabe and his peasant revolution are tools of neo-liberalism. They are either dupes or cynics.

The trajectory of Zimbabwe's transitional moment remains to be seen. In the case of the scribes, however, Mamdani's case has been taken up by a blogger named Stephen Gowans. Gowans' writing (his corporal person remains mysterious) is known to many academics and activists concerned with Zimbabwe for his venomous attacks on civil society activists he deems funded too generously by imperial philanthropists. His blogs, including one minimizing Zimbabwe's cholera epidemic, are printed ardently by the Zimbabwean state's organ, *The Herald*.⁴ He has labeled Mamdani's detractors as cynics stuck in the ruts of the 'comfortable slogans and prejudices that has marked much progressive scholarship on Zimbabwe'. Besides being liberal imperialists they are elite theorists, believing that Robert Mugabe's 'crude anti-imperialist rhetoric' easily manipulates the masses. This is the mirror image of Gowans' belief that all ZANU-PF's opponents are manipulated by puppet-masters in the evil west, but that is beside the point. There are no puppets; those who forget this soon face blowback. ZANU-PF'S history, shared with most liberation movements, is littered with benign, sanctimonious, misguided and malicious global assistance. Just ask Robert Mugabe: 'who looked after your wife for years in London?' Or, 'who convinced the British election masters in 1980 not to cancel the contest due to ZANU violence?' Thus it is hardly surprising that the National Endowment for Democracy and its ilk try their hands in Zimbabwe now: and the contradictions thereof will be just as intense, and unanticipated, as they were

support for Robert Mugabe in the wake of his electoral defeat. Just over twenty per cent of the document is borrowed from various English publications such as the *Guardian* in which the 'anti-imperialist' line is trumpeted on Zimbabwe.

⁴ Stephen Gowans, 'Cynicism as a substitute for scholarship', <http://gowans.wordpress.com/2008/12/30/cynicism-as-a-substitute-for-scholarship>, December 30, 2008; 'Zimbabwe: Questions About Zim Cholera Cases', *The Herald*, December 30, 2008, re-published, with telling responses, on <http://allafrica.com/stories/200812300666.html>.

forty years ago.⁵ The issue is not that, although it is important how recipients deal with donors. Rather, it is excessive enthusiasm — shared by the cosmopolitans and the patriotic agrarians.⁶

At least, that's the way Kentridge might see it. His melancholic reflection on the fate of the Russian revolution discusses not only the forced enthusiasm of the marches, May Day parades and accelerated five year plans — in Zimbabwe, the President's birthday parties, in which those sharing that holy date partake Kim Il-Sungian membership in the 21 February Movement, the screaming phalanxes of Mercedes-Benz, the sighting of which commands pedestrians to freeze, and the absurd budgets and annual reports of Reserve Bank Chairman Gideon Gono (cited approvingly by Comrade Mamdani) come to mind — but the genuine hope that is 'beyond self-preserving or strategic'. Mamdani and Gowans express that hope - one assumes they have no interest in maintaining Mugabe and the Joint Military Command's Mauser-like hold on power — as do the libertarians on the other side of the mirror. It is clear, though, that the hope to which Mamdani and Gowans cling is clouded. Indeed, it is covered by Mamdani's banal assertion that the ruling clique in Zimbabwe combines 'coercion and consent' as it contrives a century at the helm: this elides the murders, rapes, tortures and disappearances that mar Zimbabwe's history with some between-the-lines assertion of Gramscian realism. It's a well-trod road, though, by those in the Stalinist tradition of substituting a vague assertion of social rights for the supposed first generation. In addition, though, it allows an extraordinary rendition of sloppy scholarship — and this may be even worse for one whose reputation rests in an ivory tower. We need not worry about Gowans in this case, given his

⁵ David Moore., 'ZANU-PF and the Ghosts of Foreign Funding,' *Review of African Political Economy*, 103 (March 2005), 156-162; 'Today's 'Imperialists' were those who nurtured Mugabe', *Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg) January 20, 2008.

⁶ David Moore, 'Marxism and Marxist Intellectuals in Schizophrenic Zimbabwe: How Many Rights for Zimbabwe's Left? A Comment,' *Historical Materialism*, 12, 4 (December 2004), 405-425.

reputation rests only on the popularity of his blogs and the patronage of the Zimbabwean Minister of Information.

Even a casual newspaper reader wouldn't label the National Constitutional Assembly the National *Constituent* Assembly. An informed historian would balk at Mamdani's misrepresentation of labor history. A social theorist would wonder why such an extreme divide would be drawn between 'rural' and 'urban' in Zimbabwe, surely a country with the most mobile 'semi-proletarians' (to borrow a phrase from a Brazil-based ZANU-PF praise-singer) around. An urban geographer would wonder from whence Mamdani derives his guesses about *Operation Murambvatsina*.⁷ One political economist-cum-diplomatic analyst would wonder about the professor's assertions *vis a vis* sanctions while another, more theoretically inclined and with an agrarian bent, would query his take on Ian Scoones et. al's description of what could most optimistically be described as a rural form of petty commodity production in the context of a *possible* process of primitive accumulation⁸, but wonder why then he did not extend his investigations into other realms of crisis driven accumulation strategies such as 'informal' gold and diamond mining harking to the recent histories of Sierra Leone and Liberia.⁹

⁷ Maurice Vambe, ed., *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambvatsina in Zimbabwe*, Harare & Pretoria: Weaver Press & African Institute of South Africa, 2008.

⁸ David Moore, "'Intellectuals' Interpreting Zimbabwe's Primitive Accumulation: Progress to Market Civilisation?" *Safundi*, 8, 2 (April 2007), 199-222. More from the Scoones team is in Mavedzenge et. al., 'The Dynamics of Real Markets: Cattle in Southern Zimbabwe following Land Reform,' *Development and Change*, 39, 4 (2008), while more devastating is Fox, Rowntree and Chigumira "On the Fast Track to Land Degradation? A Case Study of the Impact of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Kadoma District, Zimbabwe", highLAND2006 Symposium, Mekelle University, Ethiopia, September 19-25, 2006.

⁹ Angus Shaw, 'Police move to curb diamond rush in eastern Zimbabwe', *International Herald Tribune*, September 3, 2007; Showers Mawowa, 'Tapping the Chaos: Crisis, State and Accumulation in Zimbabwe', MA Dissertation, Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008.

Mamdani's 'lessons' rely inordinately on the work of researchers intent on saving their international academic and 'social movement' reputation as 'leftists' while consulting simultaneously for anyone with foreign exchange or some notion of peasant empowerment (and remember that institutions from the World Bank and USAID to the Swedish International Development Agency did put money on the table during the 1998 land conference). In proving that their long-held desire for land to the tillers has finally been vindicated their work risks self-travesty. Here lies one source of the Zimbabwean enthusiasts. With the failures of 'African socialism' and industrialization projects in the past decades, success becomes measured with a fantastic finality that ignores the travails and tragedies of primitive accumulation — a process that could be celebrated with due respect for its brutally universal history but only if it is encountered honestly. Capitalism may indeed be re-inventing itself in Africa — perhaps with Chinese characteristics — but it's questionable if it should be called something else.

The other mode of enthusiasm is in the anti-imperialist trope, itself not antithetical to the rise of a new bourgeoisie that is continental in scope. Mamdani's support for Mugabe (sure, he makes gestures, writing hastily that 'there is no denying Mugabe's authoritarianism, or his willingness to tolerate and even encourage the violent behavior of his supporters' before going on to bite the liberal hands that feed him), along with many African intellectuals like him, goes back to the alter of the liberation struggles that used force — wielded by poor peasants, workers and noble youth — to take their petty-bourgeois leaders to statehood. The belief that this noble battle was never tainted by compromise with 'imperialists' — or that they were only betrayed by deals made at the *end* of what would otherwise have been revolutions to match those of Lenin and Castro — may well be at the root of this over-reaction to today's imperialism. Real history — and even realistic fiction along the lines of Stanley Nyambfukudza's *Nonbeliever's Journey*, Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*,

Alex Kanengoni's *Effortless Tears* or Charles Samupindi's *Pawns* — reveals the flaws in this selective memory very easily. In the meantime, however, imperial power from Africa's strongest capitalist centre can be ignored. To judge this in Zimbabwe's case, some history needs to be invoked. This enables assessment of the *real* revolution in southern Africa, that being the way in which South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' managed to keep ZANU-PF in power.

Real (Cynical) History, Revolutionary Changes

Such a story brings an infamously noisy diplomat into the history books. Henry Kissinger, an academic turned power broker, who probably lives not far from Mahmood Mamdani, in the northeast part of a country wherein many people think they can change the whole world. In 1976 Kissinger hastened the slow diplomatic process moving Ian Smith out of power and finding the right person to replace him. The person to compare with Kissinger, however, is Thabo Mbeki, oft regarded as a formidable intellectual himself. In the 21st century, the diplomacy that moved the Zimbabwean mountain was orchestrated by the regional hegemon, neither a colonial nor neo-colonial power although some analysts call it a 'sub-imperial power'. South Africa — neither the USA nor the United Kingdom — led the game. Thabo Mbeki, while South Africa's president and even after his unceremonious sacking, held the cards.¹⁰

In 1976 Kissinger and the then British Secretary of State, Anthony Crosland, worked very closely to put a flagging process of Smith-dumping back on track. Their collaboration led to a conference in Geneva lasting from October to the end of that year. As the conference approached an angry Kissinger wrote a letter (suggesting it be destroyed) to his British partner. Quietly diplomatic, Crosland hesitated to follow Kissinger's and South African Prime Minister Vorster's proposal to alter the black

majority on a proposed a transitional council of state. Kissinger advised Crosland to heed Bismarck. Good ideas were useless without force. If they weren't 'timid' the British could succeed. Crosland's power, said Kissinger, rested on the 'the black leaders'' need for the British. 'They can accept your proposals, not Smiths!' Furthermore, they were 'unable to do the job themselves. In short, they look to you to save them.'

The shuttle diplomat told his fellow traveler that his prevarications simply encouraged 'radical Africans'. The Russians would meddle. Chaos would ensue. Since 'the whole enterprise ... only makes sense as a firebreak to African radicalism and Soviet intervention' Her Majesty's Government daren't hint at 'different minds' between the Atlantic powers. If the British failed, Kissinger concluded, it would confirm 'the general fear that every potential peaceful Rhodesian settlement is built of sand'. Crosland replied that he would not 'cramp your style' but the continental crusader should be 'tolerant of our difficulties'. He pleaded: 'if you can pull this off where we have so often failed, it will be a major coup.'

The Geneva conference's chair, Ivor Richard, admitted in late 2008 the October to December 1976 conference's failure. The British wanted to annul it, but Kissinger's masters faced an election and so wanted to be seen active in Africa. In fact the conference served only to help the relatively unknown Mugabe. In the hotels and halls of Geneva — paid for, of course, by the imperialists — he patched together an alliance of Zimbabwean nationalists and convinced the west he controlled ZANU's soldiers. In 1977, with the failure of the conference and the newly elected Carter regime in confusion about matters Zimbabwean (they thought Muzorewa was worthy of support) the British tried to start an election. However, Mugabe was busy eliminating his perceived opposition within the ranks and was hard to find.

¹⁰ The following paragraphs constitute a much revised version of my *Cape Times* article noted above.

This is the history against which SADC's negotiators measure. If Mamdani and Gowans are gauging the power of a new revolution, they must start here. Their yardstick may be 'success' in the short and middle term, but the question the global humanitarians must ask is: has the South African brand of diplomacy improved on Kissinger's?

Has Kissinger's perception that 'the black leaders' can't manage their own affairs been altered? The South Africans say 'this was a Zimbabwean solution'. The regional powerhouse replaced imperialist intervention. Yet 'imperialism' is weak anyway. Bush was bluster; Obama uncertain still. Yet the local kingpins trust the Zimbabwean *people* no more than did their *realpolitik* mentor. Otherwise, elections since 2000 would not have been stolen, legitimized by Mbeki's obsequious 'observers', and finally replaced by negotiations entrusting few. SADC has managed an easy way out for the ZANU-PF ruling class, while the Americans and British eased it in.

The 'radical Africans'? For African nationalists, Mugabe is as radical as he was for the Cold War Kissingers. Thinking in terms of generations, though, Mugabe & Co. resemble Smith and the Rhodesian Front. Now, young democrats threaten the formerly red pretenders. SADC may have only temporarily slowed history. Are Mamdani and Gowans then on its wrong side?

Peaceful settlements? Mugabe and the Joint Operational Command wage low-level war. A war mode of production looms. The temporary cement of force has been central for ZANU-PF under Mugabe, from the liberation war, the *Gukurahundi* campaign killing an estimated 20,000 Matabeleland residents in the 1980s, and notably political violence from May 2008. Peace (let alone justice) remains a dream unless the recently abducted civil and political activists are released.

Foundations of sand? The Geneva conference in 1976 failed to produce a transitional state. Now there is a Joint Monitoring and Implementation

Committee. Facilitated (JOMIC) by the local Kissingers' minions, it is 'guaranteed and underwritten by the SADC Facilitator (still Mbeki), SADC and the African Union'.

There goes Zimbabwe's sovereignty. The myth has collapsed alongside its economic guarantor, its currency. JOMIC means South Africa is the regional sovereign. It must take that responsibility to its heights. Thabo Mbeki and his temporary heir are the Kissingers on the block. If they don't guarantee a decent Zimbabwean dispensation the political economy of Zimbabwean lives will tumble to unfathomable depths. South Africa's regional hegemony will sink into cholera infected sewerage, not just sand.

Mamdani and Gowans demonstrate an uncanny enthusiasm for the mechanisms of local power as the American form of imperial power dwindles.¹¹ They are representatives of a Kissingerian *intelligentsia*. As Kentridge quotes Mayakovsky, 'Comrade Mauser, you have the floor.'¹² While we hope they do not share his fate, we have to remember that contrary to Cabral's touching faith, the petty bourgeoisie do not commit class suicide: they reinvent themselves, often with a brutality as extreme as they are ideology crude, along the new contours of power and accumulation.

And the challenge...

Let Professor Mamdani and me choose our guides in Zimbabwe to lead us together through a documentary film, produced by an independent filmmaker or television network — al Jazeera perhaps — charting Zimbabwe's contradictions.

About the Author

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¹¹ John Gray, 'A shattering moment in America's fall from power', *The Observer*, September 28, 2008.

¹² Kentridge, *I Am Not Me ...* 23.

Critique of the Article by Mahmood Mamdani

Wilfred Mhanda (Zimbabwe Liberation Veterans Forum)

The contribution by Mahmood Mamdani to the *London Review of Books* on the situation in Zimbabwe would make good comical reading had the situation in Zimbabwe not been so tragic. The poverty and subjectivity of his analysis is nothing short of a mockery of intellectual discourse, and not befitting of a submission to the reputable review. To the broad masses of the people of Zimbabwe and to an objective and dispassionate observer, Zimbabwe is a tale of a man-made human tragedy that exceeds the atrocities and heinous crimes afflicted on the people of Zimbabwe by colonialism. In all fairness, it would be a tall order finding any redeeming feature of Mugabe's ruinous policies – other than the beneficiaries of his patronage.

Central to Mamdani's argument is that "Mugabe has not only ruled by coercion, but by consent, and his land reform measures, however harsh, have won him support not just in Zimbabwe but throughout southern Africa". It would appear that the term consent has a totally different meaning to Mamdani than to most people. Since his defeat in the February 2000 Referendum Mugabe stole one election after another until he was finally humiliated in the 29 March 2008 elections. State sponsored violence became a permanent feature of Zimbabwe's elections in flagrant violation of SADC's norms and standards for free and fair elections. And how does support for his so-called land reform manifest itself? Mugabe and his party have had to literally bludgeon the electorate into submission, both rural and urban – especially the latter.

Mamdani attributes Mugabe's political setbacks to Western support for the Opposition and Civil Society. However, whatever support and influence there may be from the West, it pales into

insignificance against the means and resources at his disposal to influence the electorate, including total control of the public media. Surely this base of oppositional support has to be something more than the role of the West.

The people of Zimbabwe willingly and freely offered wholehearted support to the struggle to liberate them from white, racist, settler minority rule at great personal risk to themselves and in spite of racist repression and open support for the Smith regime by the West. What could have changed for them now to be duped by the same white racists and the West into bartering their hard won independence? In the circumstances, it is not only an affront and the height of irresponsibility, but also an extreme insult to the intelligence of the people of Zimbabwe to attribute their principled opposition to Mugabe to manipulation by the West.

Mamdani terms Mugabe's disastrous, violent and chaotic land grab charade a "democratic revolution." Who are the beneficiaries of this so-called "democratic revolution"? Is the political, bureaucratic and military elite's dispossession of the white farmers – who happen to be Zimbabweans with full constitutional rights – "democratic" by any stretch of the imagination? At least the occupation of the farms by white farmers had a redeeming quality in that the country was not only self-sufficient regarding food, but also had a surplus for export to feed the region. Now, with Mugabe's henchmen on the farms, the nation has been starving since the farm occupations began. This has been blamed on a succession of droughts. If that were true, what are we to make of the people of Botswana and Namibia who inhabit perennially drought-prone deserts and are surviving without any food handouts from the West? Surely we have to face reality and call a spade by its name. Drought has very little to do with food shortages in Zimbabwe.

No one doubts the need for genuine land reform in Zimbabwe (which, by the way, is still necessary) and the redressing of historical imbalances. Talk of

the irreversibility of Mugabe's so-called land reform is irresponsible, reactionary, totally misguided and misplaced. The objectives of genuine land reform are:

- Alleviation of poverty
- Food security
- Economic development
- Decongestion of communal areas

None of these core objectives were realized through Mugabe's chaotic land grab. If anything, the very opposite is the case. There is grinding poverty and no food security with more than half the population relying on food handouts from the demonized West. The communal areas are still heavily congested, with horrendous environmental consequences. The economy has been brought to its knees through the destruction of the value chain both upstream and downstream of agricultural activity, which, thanks to the abuse of the need for land reform for political expediency and to shore up Mugabe's flagging political fortunes, has now been reduced to worse than subsistence farming.

The first casualty of Mugabe's madness was the rule of law, followed by democratic and property rights, the economy and service delivery, and culminating in the total collapse of health care and education infrastructure. All of these factors have reduced Zimbabwe to the status of a failed state. Thousands have needlessly died of the preventable cholera epidemic and from other diseases while Mugabe and his cronies are looting the country's resources on a grand scale in complete insensitivity to the people's welfare.

Much has been said of the effect of sanctions on Zimbabwe's economic well-being. If the truth be told, Zimbabwe lost access to multilateral donor support way back in 1999 through failure to service its still outstanding debts. And that was before the farm invasions, in backlash reaction to which the sanctions were supposedly imposed. As for the targeted and personal sanctions, Zimbabwe has on its part also imposed targeted sanctions on both the

EU and the United States. In any case, if the West has imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, the country still has a lot of friends in the East and the rest of the world who could easily help it weather the storms. Rhodesia, South Africa, China, Cuba and Libya are examples of countries that were subjected to real economic sanctions without having to experience the stratospheric levels of inflation and economic collapse that Zimbabwe is now facing. Evidently, there is more at play than the sanctions Mugabe's sycophantic apologists keep harping about.

To an objective observer, Mamdani's dogmatic support for Mugabe could at best be accounted for by a criminally unpardonable ignorance of the reality on the ground in Zimbabwe despite a tsunami of documented evidence of Mugabe's crimes and excesses against the people of Zimbabwe. At worst, the motivation might be a rewarding public relations service to spruce up Mugabe's battered international image.

With regard to the castigation of Botswana and Zambia as being under the spell of the West, it is instructive to note that it was these countries, alongside Tanzania, that constituted the Frontline States. They were the midwives of the liberation of Southern Africa. In the immoral defence of dictatorship and repression, the beneficiaries of their efforts and sacrifices are now claiming to be more 'revolutionary' than they. What Botswana and Zambia have done is nothing more than to publicly and steadfastly stand by the letter and spirit of the SADC protocols on good governance: respect for the rule of law and human rights, and free and fair elections – codes to which both Mbeki and Mugabe duly appended their signatures. If one suggested these protocols were dictates from the West, Mbeki and Mugabe would also be culpable of puppetry. On the contrary, it was these very values that were captured as the ideals of the liberation struggles, in support of which these same frontline countries took a principled stand. Furthermore, Zimbabwe is not only a signatory to a whole range of regional and international protocols founded on the

observance and upholding of the principles of good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights and free and fair elections, but more importantly, the country's own constitution is anchored in the same values.

The fundamental challenge for all progressive people, be they from the East or West, is to stand by the side of the long suffering people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to break free from the yoke of Mugabe's despotic rule – and not to condone it and prop it up for whatever reason. The latter would make them accomplices and enemies of the freedom of the people of Zimbabwe.

About the author

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Response to the Mamdani Debate

Brian Raftopoulos (Solidarity Peace Trust, South Africa)

Most of the responses to Mahmood Mamdani's article in this issue have challenged his interpretations of several areas in the political debate on the Zimbabwe crisis, including: the land question and the role of the war veterans; the benign position on state violence and underestimation of the enormous levels of displacement that have taken place under Mugabe's rule; the misreading of the history of the labour movement; the dismissive characterization of the MDC and the civic movement; the mistaken assessment of the contribution of sanctions to the crisis; the brutal closure of democratic spaces; and perhaps most astonishingly the evasion of the enormous loss of legitimacy of Zanu PF and its increasing recourse to coercion, particularly as evidenced in the 2008 elections, to remain in power. Together these responses should, at the very least, cause readers to pause for further thought in reading Mamdani's analysis of the situation in Zimbabwe, based as it is largely on the work of Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros. In addition to many others I have, in several interventions,¹ offered alternative readings of these events and will this year attempt to consolidate those positions within the context of a new *History of Zimbabwe*² currently being completed by a group of Zimbabwean historians.

It is clear that debate on these issues, particularly the form and outcomes of the land reform

¹ Eg: Brian Raftopoulos, 'The Zimbabwe Crisis and the Challenges for the Left', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32,2,2006; Amanda Hammar, Brian Raftopoulos and Stig Jensen (Eds), *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2003.

² Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo (Eds), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History of Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2009.

processes, will continue for a long time to come. However in the short and medium terms the livelihoods of both the peasantry and what remains of the urban workforce have been subjected to devastating attacks from the state, within the context of an economy that is now characterized by rapid informalization, enormous displacements of livelihoods, a rapid diasporization and loss of skills, hyperinflation, and a rentier state that has shown little evidence that it has anything resembling a coherent strategy to move beyond the current morass. Moreover, notwithstanding the anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Mugabe regime, the policies that have been pursued by Zanu PF have so weakened the economy and social forces in Zimbabwe as to make the country more vulnerable than ever to the imperatives of the international financial institutions, as well as forms of investment from countries like China that have yet to show their benefits for Zimbabwe's national interests.

Equally important has been the gross violations of the democratic political rights of Zimbabwean citizens, of which there is abundant evidence in the literature. This issue continues to be a central problem in the Moyo/Yeros work, and it is most startlingly understated in the Mamdani piece. For Moyo and Yeros the problem of the violence of the state is dwarfed by the broader structural violence that the 'radicalized state' in Zimbabwe is confronted with, and the criticisms of those who have highlighted these violations are dismissed for their "resort to 'human rights' moralism".³ For these two authors a 'deeper form of democracy' can 'only be set on a more meaningful and stable footing by structural changes.'⁴ Related to this, for Mamdani the 'support' of large numbers of the peasantry because of the land interventions, has allowed the nationalist to 'withstand civil society based opposition, reinforced by Western sanctions'.

³ Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, *The Radicalised State: Zimbabwe's Interrupted Revolution*, *Review of African Political Economy*, 111, 2007.

⁴ Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, *Zimbabwe Ten Years on: Results and Prospects*, www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/54037. 16/12.09.

The major problem with these propositions is that the authoritarian state that has emerged over the last decade in Zimbabwe has become a major hindrance not only to longer term structural economic changes, but to the development of a more democratic dispensation. The kind of 'anti-imperialism' that has been espoused by the Mugabe regime has been built on a systematic undermining of those democratic spaces that would have been essential to build a democratic base for the land project. It is therefore an 'anti-imperialism' built on widespread coercion and diminishing electoral support despite the state violence that has become central to the Zanu PF project. Therefore the 'sobering fact' that needs to be kept in mind about the period not just from 2000-3 but from the late 1990's to 2008, is not just the massive changes on the land, but the widespread state attack on the citizenry of the country that has been the modality of the politics of land. It is doubtful that the manner in which the Zimbabwean ruling party has behaved over the last decade will induce a memory of, in Mamdani's words, the 'end of the settler colonial era' for the majority of Zimbabweans. Rather Zanu PF's selective rendition of who 'belongs to the nation' and the violent exclusions and dispersals of large sections of Zimbabwean society over this period, have produced a more problematic conflation of colonial and post-colonial styles of politics, and a deep distrust of the revived nationalism of the state.

Writing in 2006 about Uganda after the Amin experience, Mamdani made an acute observation:

If we can draw one lesson from the Amin period, it is this: how the Asian question is defined and resolved will affect not only the Asian minority, but all Ugandans. The Asian questions can be defined in a racist and exclusive way, as it was by Amin, so that the fact of colour blurs that of citizenship and commitment. Or it can be defined in a non-racial and inclusive way so that we make a distinction between different types of Asian residents in today's Uganda, legally between

citizens and non-citizens; and socially between those for whom Uganda is no more than transit facility, and those for whom Uganda has been a home for generations.⁵

This statement could quite easily be transposed to the white settler legacy in Zimbabwe, where the Mugabe state has legally excluded, not only whites from citizenry but large numbers of farm workers. Moreover it has placed political exclusions on urbanites and their organizations that have a long history of a critical relationship to the violent exclusivism of nationalist party politics.⁶ The MDC and the civic movement in Zimbabwe have many problems, not the least of which is their lack of attention to the legacies of structural inequality in the country, and their slow realization of the need to understand the global frame of the Zimbabwe crisis. However, more than Zanu-PF, the forces of the opposition have opened up the discussion on the need for a more democratic citizenship and state that will be essential to dealing with the longer term structural challenges of the country.

Looking to the Future

The September 2008 political agreement signed between the two MDCs and Zanu PF and the Government of National Unity that was established in January 2009 were the result of pressure at various levels. For South Africa and SADC the policy of quiet diplomacy was premised on three issues: firstly South Africa's need to avoid diplomatic isolation in the region and on the continent; secondly the determination of the region to maintain diplomatic control over the Zimbabwe question in the face of pressure from the West; thirdly the assumption that any agreement on Zimbabwe had to have the support of the Zimbabwe military in order to avoid instability in the event of

⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *The Asian Question Again: A Reflection*, www.pambazuka.org

⁶ Timothy Scarnecchia, *Urban Roots of Democracy and Political Violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield 1940-1964*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, New York, 2008.

the defeat of Zanu PF at the polls. Thus from very early on Mbeki had as his goal the establishment of a Government of National Unity with the MDC as the junior partner irrespective of the electoral result. The politics of regional solidarity and stabilization, even under an undemocratic regime like Mugabe's, always took precedence in regional strategy over the democratic wishes of the Zimbabwean people. This version of 'anti-imperialist' politics once again has at its core profoundly anti-democratic propositions that have been challenged by civil society groups in the region. While I have argued for the necessity of accepting the outcome of the SADC mediation in Zimbabwe because of the balance of forces nationally and in the region, I have no illusions about the enormous obstacles that an authoritarian state will pose for the opening up of democratic spaces in the country. The centrality of regional politics in dealing with the Zimbabwe question has highlighted both the importance of such organizations in the current global configuration and the severe limits they place on democratic struggles within states. The irony of course is that SADC will now preside over a new regime of economic liberalization in Zimbabwe, led by South African capital.

In conclusion we are told by Moyo/Yeros that there is 'good reason' to surmise that the major reason for the late intervention of Mamdani and other African scholars into the Zimbabwe debate has been the recent 'Western sabre-rattling' and plans to remilitarize southern Africa.⁷ Apart from the fact that western military intervention in Zimbabwe was the least likely response to the Zimbabwe crisis, the position of African scholars who denounced such unlikely threats would have been much more credible if their criticisms of the violence of the Zimbabwean state over the last ten years had been equally audible. In the event the voice of African scholarship on this issue, with notable exceptions,⁸ has been all but inaudible. It appears that it still

seems safer for many African scholars to gather behind Mugabe's impoverished version of 'anti-imperialist' politics than against the glaring abuses of a former liberation movement. There is an urgent need for an anti-imperialist politics that places both political and redistributive/economic questions at the centre of its agenda. Until then there will be the temptation to keep holding on to the lesser nightmare.

About the author

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⁷ Moyo/Yeros, Zimbabwe ten years on.

⁸ Horace Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberalism*, David Philip, South Africa, 2003.

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